

# TAILS FROM THE BARN

*The latest news and updates from Tara's Chance  
"A place where therapy feels like play"*



Edited By  
Miriam Everette

## Progress Report

By Cindy Howells, Program Director

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Thanks to all of our supporters, Tara's Chance is emerging from the pandemic in a very strong position. We have consistently returned riders into our program since the stay-at-home order was lifted. It has been so amazing to see them return. Currently 65% of our riders are back in the saddle with more coming as they become vaccinated.

The pandemic had severe physical implications for many of our riders. Their core, balance, and mobility has declined while not being able to participate in equine therapy. Some riders before the pandemic were thriving for 30 minutes during therapy and when resuming could only ride for 10 minutes. We are working very hard and making great progress to reach our physical capacity before the pandemic and growing even further. Contrast to physical challenges, mentally our riders have jumped right back to where they

were. When a child first rides, we often have a challenging time with crying, hitting, or screaming. But despite having a year away from the ranch, every child returned with smiles and joy to be back on their favorite horse. Thank you to all our supporters for standing with Tara's Chance during the pandemic; allowing us to take our mission on the road and remain engaged with our riders, their families, our volunteers, staff, horses, and community.



While bringing back our riders we are also growing and adding children off our waitlist. We are working to bring 9 children off our 46-rider waitlist. We are performing evaluation rides to add children for our summer session and keeping spots available for our riders that have not yet returned. We cannot wait for the day when all of our riders are ready to return and see their smiles again.

## What's New?

*by Matt Howells, Executive Director*

A special thank you to Joe Lins, Brian Helleland, and St. Jude Hospital Fullerton for partnering with Tara's Chance and allowing our staff to be vaccinated in February. A vaccinated staff allowed us to safely return riders to our program that otherwise would not have returned. We have successfully had zero COVID-19 transmissions at Tara's Chance and are continuing our protocols to ensure that our riders, parents, staff, volunteers, and community remain safe.

Thank you to all our sponsors, donors, players, volunteers, and especially Tim & Laryn Nolan for making the second annual Ryan Nolan Memorial golf tournament an amazing success. We raised \$40,000, which goes directly to keeping Tara's Chance affordable and accessible for our special needs families. We hope to have all of you join us again next year.

Tara's Chance is off to the races on the first two phases of our Capital Campaign! Our campaign is focused on transforming our property to serve more children, adults, and veterans. In phase one, we are working with the City of Fullerton to finalize our office. In phase two we are working to add our lower arena into our program. This would allow us to add 12 riders on Saturday's with the ability to add 104 riders to our program in the future. To add our lower arena we need to build a retaining wall to keep it dry during the winter months. The final phase of our campaign will include retrofitting our stalls, building a new tackshed, restroom, and arena cover to better serve our riders.





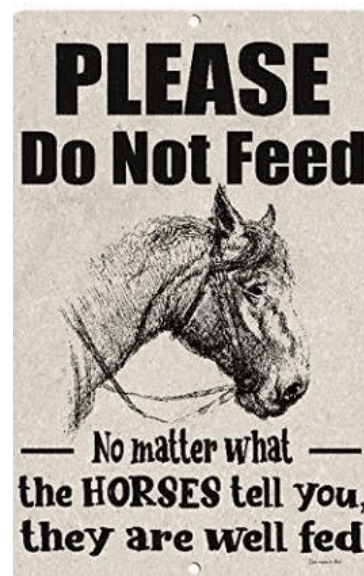
This last week we met with Fullerton City officials to finalize engineering specifications on our office. We also met with engineers to design our lower arena retaining wall. Our capital campaign is focused on expanding our mission and improving our program impact. We need your philanthropic support to make it possible, so please make an investment in Tara's Chance today.

## Board Bits

by Louise Hernandez, Board President

We are delighted to have more riders back in the saddle again! With most restrictions finally lifted, there is understandably a buzz of happiness at the ranch and, more importantly, the need for volunteers. Kathy Cazares is our Office Manager and newly appointed Volunteer Coordinator! I recently observed a volunteer orientation at the ranch. My eyes were certainly opened to the enormous responsibilities of taking care of our most prized possessions...our riders, along with some misconceptions on the caring and feeding of horses. As a result of this orientation, we have more volunteers and can take children off the Waiting List!

Hats off to Kat and the volunteers who take their assignments very seriously and create an atmosphere where therapy feels like fun. On behalf of board members, Miriam Everette, Francine Flores, Rudy Lara, Carol Geisbauer, Larry Houser, Judy Metzger, Leslie Sorrells, and our newest board member, Nancy Capel, we want you to know that the passion of Tara's Chance continues to be first and foremost on our minds and in our hearts.



### Have a Story?

If you have a story, pictures, or something you would like in the newsletter please email them to Miriam

Everette at [info@taraschance.org](mailto:info@taraschance.org)

# Employee Spotlight

by Holly Webster

My journey with Tara's Chance began about 6 years ago. Back then I had no idea that this organization and the community of wonderful people along with it would come to hold such a special place in my heart. Though I was initially drawn to volunteer because I enjoy working with horses, it wasn't long before I discovered my passion for guiding, coaching, and supporting others. This was first realized through training the horses and those wanting to learn horsemanship skills, then progressed to coaching and motivating Tara's Chance rider's and training volunteers, before finally evolving into my current role as a consultant. In my new role, I am responsible for various program development projects to foster continuous growth in the organization, along with developing and co-leading group trainings for volunteers and staff. I have also authored a detailed handbook to be used as a reference tool for Tara's Chance staff and volunteers in order to support present and future learning as the program steadily expands.

While I deeply miss my old role that involved consistently working directly with riders, volunteers, and my horse and human coworkers, I am grateful for the opportunity to continue supporting the program remotely as I finish my MSOT degree to become a licensed occupational therapist (OT). And I look forward to using all of my clinical knowledge and skills to continue to cultivate growth and expansion in the program. After all, Tara's Chance has not only supported me toward this goal but even played a large role in my aspiration to become an OT. I was especially inspired by the individualized and comprehensive approach taken with each rider in the program. This parallels the holistic approach to treatment within the field of OT, an aspect of the profession that is totally unique within mainstream medicine. I would not be where I am today without the foundational skills I acquired in all my time at Tara's Chance, and I will forever hold dear SO many of the beautiful memories made with each one of you.







## Jessica's Return

*by Jessica, Sharon, and Frank Canino*

Here comes that smile... Jessica rejoins Maggie and her amazing team at Tara's Chance!

Our Jessica is a fairly complex young rider, who as her team has come to understand, is often challenged by her tentative nature of transitioning into her riding lesson. Thankfully, for all of us, (family & Jess) her team has embraced this challenge and the payoff is the full blown joy she expresses once she mounts Maggie and engages with the never ending grace and compassion of her riding

team. Her smile is infectious, her songs inclusive and her sense of belonging, palpable. Jess was blessed to start riding with Tara's Chance in September of 2018 and the strengthening of her core muscles, the improvement in her circulation and respiration and the quick- ening of her pace upon dismounting was amazing. This tangible progress against the lifelong seizures, ataxia, hypotonia and movement issues (all symptomatic of her Dravet Syndrome) was profound. All of these gains became even more apparent when the pandemic hit. Jessica's balance and strength suffered, her gait deteriorated and the weekly gift of inclusion and encouragement disappeared. To say that we were heartbroken by the temporary separation is mild, and yet to say that we are absolutely overjoyed to be back riding is an even greater understatement.







Jessica may not be able to verbally express to her team and her Maggie just how much they mean to her, but please know, those smiles and winks are her very own eloquent forms of communications, and you are all treasured by Jessica and her family & friends.

## Volunteer Spotlight

by Laurie Nadelman

Wow, what can I say about my volunteer experience with Tara's Chance? Awesome, fortunate and rewarding to be a small part of an amazing organization. I moved to SoCal almost 4 years ago. Then a couple years later I retired and was looking to do some volunteer work. I was lucky enough to meet another volunteer and learn about Tara's Chance. Having grown up with horses most of my life, it was a natural fit and from there I was hooked. During the pandemic the ranch was a great place to be able to go to every day and being able to go with Cindy to take the horses out to the children was just so fun seeing how happy the kids were to see the horses again.

I have a new appreciation for Non Profits especially one like Tara's Chance, where everyone works so hard every day to bring joy and care to the children who come to the program. It's been fun to be involved with horses again from mucking out stalls, riding, grooming and the other fun stuff that the ranch comes with. Cindy Howells, the founder of Tara's Chance, will forever inspire me. Thank you for the volunteer opportunity and to be around horses again.





# Ryan Nolan Memorial Photos





# Thank You to Our Sponsors

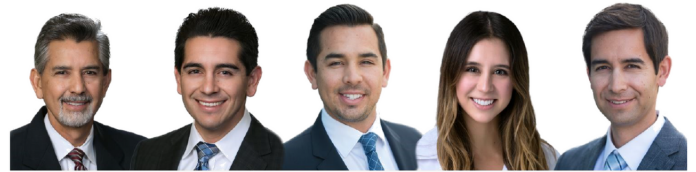
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