

TAILS FROM THE BARN

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



Edited By
Miriam Everette

Program Update

By Cindy Howells, Program Director

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We are excited to welcome ELEVEN new riders into Tara's Chance: Vincent, Logan, Niko, Charolette, Salma, Josiah, Colton, Stone, Steel and Timmy!

Sometimes when a rider steps away from mom and dad for the first time and approaches a 900-pound animal, it's challenging. Sometimes riders run right up to our horses and jump into equine therapy immediately. Some riders slowly increase balance, strength, and confidence over months while some riders improve in just weeks. Everyone learns and grows at Tara's Chance in a different way. Our program is designed specifically to serve each client on an individual basis. No two children

are the same and no two children are treated the same at Tara's Chance.

We sadly lost the life of our third horse to serve in our program, Willow. She came to Tara's Chance in 2014 and served for six years before retiring. During her time providing lessons in our program, she served over 30 riders and provided 730 hours of therapeutic riding lessons. After retiring from the program Willow continued to serve at Tara's Chance by being cared for by our students and providing a calming presence. Thank you to the Orange County Community Foundation for sponsoring Willow.

We are currently searching for an additional pony to add to Tara's Chance. Three of our five current horses are over the age of 24 and will soon be retiring. We need additional horses to ease the lessons these horses currently provide and assume their roles when they retire. If you know of anyone in the horse community who is aware of a pony between 12 and 13 hands, stocky build and possesses a calm character, please reach out to me at (714) 230-6247 ext. 1. It is challenging to locate a horse that meets these specifications and is suitable for our program, in that keeping our riders, staff, and volunteers safe, is paramount. They are very special in that they are able to provide equine therapy despite any environmental changes they experience.

What's New?

by Matt Howells, Executive Director

Thank you to everyone who made this year's Riding with the Stars successful. Our riders Mia, Kyle, Caleb, Tianyu, Oia and Bao inspired all of our guests, just as they inspire all of us at Tara's Chance each week. Thank you to all of them and their parents for sharing their stories of perseverance, hope and love. Together the Tara's Chance community raised \$111,000 in support of our programs and mission. With the funds raised from this year's event we will be able to expand our program to serve more individuals with special needs on our waiting list, care for our herd, acquire more horsepower and improve our facilities. Thank you to all our event sponsors, guests, investors and vendors for allowing miracles to continue to happen at Tara's Chance. Thank you to our Board of Directors, staff, volunteers, committees and parents for helping make this special event possible. Mark your calendars for next year's event, October 1st, 2022. If you missed Riding with the Stars this year, you can still watch it on YouTube by searching "Tara's Chance."

Following the success of Riding with the Stars, our staff scheduled 11 evaluation rides and added 11 riders to the program within three weeks. This was the fastest addition of new clients to Tara's Chance, ever! This progress reduced our waitlist from 41 individuals with special needs to the pre-pandemic number of 30. Currently our program is serving more individuals with special needs than it ever has. We are tracking the growth of our three-year strategic plan to serve 65 riders in three years. To serve 65 riders in three years, we need your continued support to build our staff, volunteers, add horses and improve our facilities.

Thank you for continuing to stand with Tara's Chance and believing in the healing power of equine therapy for individuals with special needs.





Board Bits

by Louise Hernandez, Board President

‘Tis the season for Hallmark Holiday Movies! A sentiment from a recent one hit home with me, ...The most important tree is the family tree. I am happy to report that our Tara’s Chance Board of Directors’ family tree has increased by one. Susan Shaw is a Fullerton resident and, raising horses of her own, she is certainly no stranger to the equestrian community. We welcome Susan’s unique perspective and look forward to a long-term relationship.

On behalf of all other board members, including Nancy Capel, Miriam Everette, Francine Flores, Carol Geisbauer, Larry Houser, Dottie Jensen, Rudy Lara, Judy Metzger, Susan Smith and Leslie Sorrells, we wish nothing but joy for you and your family throughout the holiday season.



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



Rider Spotlight-Lukas

by Chelsea Kiser

Lukas is a 9 year old boy who had a stroke in utero which has resulted in left-sided hemiplegic cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and ADHD. He came to Tara's chance at 4 years of age. We had been searching for an equine therapy program for quite some time, but the programs we were finding were in general either cost prohibitive or too far to travel. We were referred to Tara's Chance by a family that went to the same physical therapy center as my son. Shortly thereafter we were riding!

Our initial goals for therapy were to encourage core strength, improve his gait, and work on movement with his left arm, which is affected by paresis. While we certainly gained improvements in these areas, we also found other unanticipated benefits.

First and foremost, therapy didn't feel like therapy! Riding a horse with a fun group of volunteers all the while playing games and laughing..... it was obvious this was going to be a "therapy" that didn't feel like another hurdle for our son. It was FUN! The volunteers are always able to get my son to do "horse sit ups" to work on his core, hold on with lefty to work on his strength in his lefty, and work on his balance without him even being aware he was working! They also know my son loves sports and utilize this during his sessions. He plays catch with the football on the horse and they even incorporate basketball!

In addition to the physical progress and the fun, he also benefits from a social connectedness to the volunteers and the animal and earth connection that is often overlooked in importance. I think that our family benefits as well, as we are always excited to get outside and see the volunteers, the horses, and of course, Oliver, the very endearing donkey.

Lukas has made so many strides in the last 5 years. He is walking, running, playing sports, and we continue to work on being able to use both hands....we get a little further each year. We are so very thankful that we have gotten to be a part of the "Tara's Chance Family".



Volunteer Spotlight

by Gigi Miller

I found Tara's Chance online when I was searching for volunteer programs with horses. When I visited their website I knew I wanted to be a part of the program. In my early childhood...my father took us to work where he was employed as a peace officer for the Lanterman Developmental Center in Pomona.



This is where I was exposed to people with special needs and the wonderful people that worked there in support of the community. This is why Tara's Chance fulfilled my desire to work with horses and surprised me in finding out it was to help children with disabilities to give them a chance to develop their skills.

I currently work as a full-time seamstress at Disneyland. On the side I practice my commercial art skills and have left my mark in mural paintings. I am a part time student at Fullerton City College where I continue to pursue trade courses in Fashion, Theatrical Costuming and Interior Design classes.

Tara's Chance Calendar Events

December 2021

- 12/18 Last day of Fall Semester
- 12/25 Christmas-Office Closed

January 2022

- 1/01 New Years Day-Office Closed
- 1/05 Winter Semester Begins
- 1/04 New Volunteer Orientation
- 1/18 New Volunteer Orientation
- 1/29 Open House

February 2022

- 2/26 Under the Stars For a Cause Golf Tournament

Employee Spotlight

by Meghan Howells

I have been very blessed to have been given the opportunity to witness Tara's Chance grow from the ground up. Over the past decade, I have watched my parents build this amazing non-profit into what it is today. We started out with a tiny little girl coming to the stables in her wheelchair and we could instantly see the sparkle and hope in her eyes as she wanted to ride a horse. That beautiful little girl is the famous Bella. She was the push and the motivation that we needed to get this program up and running quickly, so that we would be able to witness more amazing children experience their joy of riding a horse.

Growing up, I was never as interested in horses as my mom. I always loved and admired them as animals, but I was never a big fan of riding or jumping, and I was definitely not excited about cleaning up after them! I was lucky enough to have two precious Shetland ponies when I was younger, that I loved. As I got older, I started to phase away from horses and found a love of teaching. I spent six years as an aid in a special needs class at church. It was there that I found my passion for working with these children and helping them grow. Once Tara's Chance came along it was like fate. I was able to spend my time with my family, in a place that I love, and doing what I love. During the pandemic I came to truly understand that this place has become my therapy as well. I am so honored to become the assistant program director for Tara's Chance, and I cannot wait to see where we continue to grow.



Riding with The Stars Gala 2021



Under the Stars For a Cause Glow Ball Golf Tournament

Saturday February 26, 2022

5:30 Check In & Restaurant opens

5:45 - 6:30 Putting Contest

6:45 Shot-Gun start

9:00 Post Event awards



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