

# TAILS FROM THE BARN

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



Edited By  
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## Program Update by Cindy Howells, Program Director

Following the early winter storms in Southern California, we have been much more consistent in our therapeutic riding programs. Consistency is crucial for the continued progress of our riders, especially newer riders. The weather presents challenges for everyone at Tara's Chance, as our riders miss the consistency they need, and our volunteers and staff miss working with the children. Additionally, it's very challenging to feed, clean, and care for horses in the rain, but it has to be done 24/7, 365 days a year.

Since the new year we expanded the Equine Assisted Riding (EAR) program. We currently are serving 85 children with special needs weekly and 261 students annually through our partnership with Discovery Mood & Anxiety. We have seen numerous developments, advancements, and achievements of therapeutic goals this quarter.

Jason began riding in the EAR program only four months ago and has since gained much independence. He has built a strong connection to his horse, Kona, and learned how to groom, saddle, and care for Kona all by himself. This has improved his ability to handle new situations and feel comfortable asking for help. Through connecting with Kona, we have seen his confidence grow and his social engagement with others improve.

Hallie is another rider in our EAR program who has come into her own and grown to appreciate her horse in many ways. She has learned how to better express her emotions towards her horse and those around her.

She is increasingly curious about how her horse thinks and acts, and beginning to understand that her horse and people do not need her to be perfect, which has been a huge milestone for her.

Sarah has mastered independent riding and her confidence has drastically improved both on and off her horse. Her smile lights up the entire barn when she comes down to ride her horse, Taffy. Jason, Hallie, and Sarah are just three examples of the many accomplishments we have seen at Tara's Chance this quarter in the EAR program.

In the EAT program, King accomplished a milestone goal in his communication skills by letting us know what to do next. As a nonverbal child with Autism, this is a huge accomplishment in communication. Oia, who also rides in our EAT program, can now sit up on her horse, Riley, unsupported for 25 minutes. When she began in July 2021, she could only sit up unassisted for one minute. It has been incredible, as it always is at Tara's Chance, to see so much joy and accomplishments made by our riders.



# The Ryan Nolan Memorial Golf Tournament

by Matt Howells, Executive Director

Tim and Laryn Nolan joined Tara's Chance in 2016 as parents when Ryan, their son, began in our program. When Ryan passed away in 2019, Tim and Laryn didn't leave Tara's Chance, but they found ways to carry on Ryan's spirit. They raised funds in Ryan's memory to purchase a therapy horse and launched the Ryan Nolan Memorial Golf Tournament.

Since the inception of the tournament in 2019, it has been a huge success and raised over \$168,000 for Tara's Chance in Ryan's memory. These funds allow us to serve our riders with special needs, care for our therapy horses, provide financial aid to our families in need, and continue to expand so we can serve the 65 children just like Ryan who are currently on our waiting list. Tara's Chance is blessed to have the Nolan family as part of our family. Tim and Laryn not only believe in our mission but also take action to ensure that we are successful in serving our mission. We are truly grateful for their love and generosity.

Tim and Laryn do an amazing job with the Ryan Nolan Memorial Golf Tournament. The tournament has been so successful that it has sold out in the past two years, and it's almost sold out again this year. It's an amazing tournament that features photos with Ryan the horse, auction items, a live band, pre-golf massages, a hole-in-one opportunity to win a car, and much more. It's the best charity tournament of the year, and everyone who plays has so much fun. Even if you cannot attend, you can sponsor the tournament or make a donation in memory of Ryan to support Tara's Chance. I hope to see you on May 1st at the 4th annual Ryan Nolan Memorial Golf Tournament. For more information, visit [Ryannolan.givesmart.com](http://Ryannolan.givesmart.com).





## Philanthropy - Tim & Laryn Nolan

Our son Ryan was born with Cerebral Palsy and severe scoliosis that required rods to be placed in his back. We learned about therapeutic riding when he was 16 years old. We were always advocating for therapies that would help Ryan so he began riding at an equine therapy center in Huntington Beach. As residents of La Habra, when we learned about Tara's Chance in Fullerton we were so excited to have Ryan ride closer to home. We got Ryan on the waiting list and 3 months later we received a call saying they had a spot for him. Right away, we could tell that it was a great fit! At first he was hesitant to try new things, but it didn't take him very long to adapt. The next thing we knew, he was turning around on the horse and riding backwards while tossing a ball to a volunteer. He couldn't wait to go to his weekly sessions!



Ryan gained confidence and muscle strength. He even got to be a part of the annual showcase at Riding with the Stars. We were thrilled to find a place that felt as if it was personalized just for him. At Tara's Chance, we felt like a part of a larger family. When Ryan passed away in 2019, we wanted to have all donations made in his memory go to Tara's Chance. So many people donated that Tara's Chance was able to purchase a new therapy horse. They named him Ryan. Ryan the horse continues to serve children who are just like his namesake at Tara's Chance every week.



We realized that it's extremely expensive to care for a horse each year. We decided that a great way to support Tara's Chance and honor Ryan was to hold an annual golf tournament. The first year was challenging but it has since been a success, and this year will be our fourth tournament on May 1st! We found a way to keep Ryan's memory alive and support Tara's Chance at the same time. People tell us that they look forward to the golf tournament every year. We strive to make each year better than the last. We love seeing how so many people show up, and are so willing to help. It is an awesome feeling to raise money for such a great cause, and we feel so good knowing that more kids can get the opportunity to experience what Ryan did. It's wonderful to see Tara's Chance grow, and to financially help Tara's Chance families who need it. It's incredibly rewarding for us, and we are honored to continue being a part of the Tara's Chance family.

# Rider Spotlight-Jude

by Jeni Brennan

Jude was an energetic kid who loved animals, riding his bike and the outdoors. Our life completely changed when at 7yrs old, he was diagnosed with Medulloblastoma, a cancerous brain tumor. Since it had already spread throughout his brain and spine, he needed emergency surgery, which left him paralyzed and unable to speak.

Over time, he gained most of his movement and speech back, but was left with left side muscle weakness, expressive/receptive speech disorder, poor fine motor coordination and balance issues. Chemotherapy and radiation to the brain killed the cancer but caused permanent cognitive damage such as slow processing speed and reaction time, difficulties with planning and organizing thoughts, memory issues and visual/ spatial integration problems. Although he has come a long way, and he is now 20 yrs old, he won't be able to drive a car or live independently. It's been lonely for Jude because he isn't able to keep up with his peers. Although he doesn't ever complain about his situation, he was getting depressed and had no real motivation for anything. My friend had told me about Tara's Chance, and since Jude loves animals, I thought it would be a great idea, so we signed up and got on the waiting list.



I had no idea how much it would change his life! Jude is in the EAR program and absolutely LOVES it! Not only has he been learning riding skills, but he has been learning how to handle, groom, and tack up a horse all by himself! Before Tara's Chance, I never even knew this was possible for him. Now, he has found his passion! Tara's Chance is his favorite place to be and he loves all the horses, especially Kona. He is constantly talking about what he learns in his lessons and inviting friends and family to come watch. He is motivated now like I have never seen before. He looks at the clock to make sure we are there on time and gets his boots and helmet ready without me reminding him (which is huge!)

He has a purpose and direction now in life that he never had before. He now has a goal of working with horses and having his own one day as well, and with all the things he's learned, I know he can do it. He takes in all the skills Meghan teaches him, and he believes in himself because she always says she believes in him! Being in the EAR program has given him confidence and he is so much happier. He has something that's all his own and a reason to keep going in life. I'm so grateful for all that Tara's Chance has given Jude. Thank you for your patience, kindness and truly caring about Jude and his progress...and showing us both what is possible!



# Volunteer Spotlight - Jan Ford

by Jan Ford



My name is Jan Ford and three years ago I met Tim Howells through an agency that helps organizations connect. While I was becoming familiar with Tara's Chance and the great things they do, it became very clear to me that the two areas so important to me, children and animals, are really important to Tim and Tara's Chance. Since I lived in Fullerton and wanted to know more about this organization, I set up a meeting with Tim and he introduced me to all of the therapeutic horses and the little donkey. I immediately fell in love with the animals and Tara's Chance.

When Tim explained how they help the children through therapeutic horse riding/training, I knew I wanted to do whatever I could to help this unbelievable organization. My whole life I wanted a horse (as a teenager, I went horseback riding every weekend with my friends).

I have a son and daughter, and seven grandchildren, ranging in ages from 9-25. Something I have always been grateful for is the fact that my children and grandchildren were born healthy, which has been another reason I wanted to help in any way I could. I spent over 45 years working in the architectural, engineering, and construction fields as a Business Development Manager and Proposal Manager and Writer. My thought was to use this experience in a way that would help Tara's Chance!

My first opportunity to help came when I was involved with a 3-month training program. One aspect of the training was a requirement to help a non-profit organization in some way. We had a very short timeframe to do this, but there was never a doubt that the organization I wanted to help was Tara's Chance. The only problem was, what could I do to help? A friend of mine suggested I start a GoFundMe for this organization. I didn't know how to do it but being a very self-sufficient 71-year-old woman at the time, I figured it out. In a very short time, I was able to raise over \$800 for Tara's Chance. I soon received a phone call from Matt Howells thanking me for my help.

That short time has now turned into two years that I have been volunteering for this organization and working directly with Matt. Research has always been a big part of my job as a Proposal Manager, writing proposals for every city, county, and state agency in California so Matt asked if I would be interested in doing research for potential grant opportunities and helping put grant proposals together. My response to Matt's question was "definitely yes." Over the past two years, between grant opportunities I found, and reaching out to agencies, we were able to get approved for over \$20,000 in grants.

Four months ago I moved from California to Bullhead City, Arizona and I am still helping in any way I can. I genuinely believe in the way that Tim, Cindy, Matt and the entire crew help every child possible through the use of therapeutic horseback training, and I am so proud that I am able to support them in any way I can.

## Board Bits

by Susan Smith, Board President

I don't know about you, but the holidays flew by and here we are into the second month of 2023. Tara's Chance was blessed to finish out 2022 by lowering the number of students on our Equine Assisted Therapy Program (EAT) wait list, increase the number of students who are participating in the Equine Assisted Riding Program (EAR), secure more horses, and expand its ability to support programs that work with special needs individuals. This didn't happen by accident.

The work of your Board of Directors has guided implementation of Tara's Chance strategic plan over the last three years. This focused effort has resulted in our ability to serve more students. A key factor making this possible has been you, our donors, who have given so generously to our organization. In December we were honored to receive many gifts from individuals throughout our community.

As the priorities established in our current strategic plan are coming to completion, the Board is now embarking on the development of a new plan aimed at moving us forward toward a future where we are even better equipped to expand and meet the needs of those we serve.

Thank you for your dedication and partnership. With your investment, Tara's Chance mission of promoting the physical, cognitive, and social well-being of those with special needs through equine-assisted activities and therapies is becoming a reality.

Susan B. Smith

President, Tara's Chance Board of Directors

## New Horse - Taffy

Since 2012 Taffy has served as an equine therapy horse. She began her career in Northern California. She came to Tara's Chance from Redding C.A. following the passing of Bailey. Taffy loves attention and people. She will stand and watch children ride from her stall for hours. She is also the cleanest horse in the barn, always staying under cover when it rains, never rolling in the dirt, and using the bathroom in the same corner. This makes her a blessing to groom.

Thank you to Kimberly Ann Williams and the Orange County Community Foundation Animal Welfare Fund for purchasing Taffy.







# 4th Annual Ryan Nolan Memorial Golf Tournament

Monday May 1, 2023  
Los Coyotes Country Club-Buena Park



[ryannolan.givesmart.com](http://ryannolan.givesmart.com)

## 2nd Annual Mom's Valentine's Day Brunch

On Sunday February 12th, board member Miriam Everette hosted our second annual Mom's Valentine's Day Brunch for our Tara's Chance Mom's. They did some yoga and had a light brunch. Thank you all to attended and helped put on this event.





*"We make a living by what we get, but  
we make a life by what we give." -  
Winston Churchill*

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