

Ride-a-Thon for therapy program

By CHRIS AAGAARD
Herald Staff Writer

For over ten years, a Brampton group has organized a fund-raising event to provide a very successful, yet still unique form of therapy for physically and mentally handicapped youngsters.

It's called a "Ride-A-Thon" and will be held Sept. 26 at Rivercroft Stables on Milton's Lower Base Line. Having collected pledges, participating horseback riders will try to complete a 25-kilometer circuit which follows an old, picturesque pony trail along Sixteen Mile Creek.

Funds raised from the event will support Creditview Stables' remedial riding program. Working out of Brampton, Creditview's therapy program for youngsters and adults attracts people from all over the area and is administered voluntarily by a physiotherapist.

CO-ORDINATION

For individuals suffering from a physical handicap, the horseback riding helps build co-ordination and balance. Physically and mentally handicapped people and individuals suffering emotional and behavioral problems learn to ride under Creditview's attentive one-volunteer-to-one-rider program, developing confidence and a sense of self-responsibility.

Ride-A-Thon director Pat Marcotullio told The Herald Monday that remedial riding originated in England. The concept spread overseas to Ontario about a dozen years ago and there are now numerous remedial riding organizations throughout North America.

While Ride-A-Thon is concerned with raising money for remedial riding, Mrs. Marcotullio noted that it also stimulates interest in the program and often helps establish remedial riding programs in other parts of the province.

PROXY RIDERS

Most of the riders in the remedial program collect pledges for the Ride-A-Thon and have proxy riders participate in the event. Often, remedial rider participants can't manage a 25-kilometer course on horseback. Mrs. Marcotullio said. Last year, two young girls took turns riding the course, thus completing the route as a team.

Riders in the remedial program may take lessons for as long as they want.

"We've had some kids that stay with us for quite a long time," Mrs. Marcotullio said. "Some reach a point where they can go riding by themselves and some may even try a few jumps. It really depends on the person involved."

Only specially-trained horses are used in the program, horses which won't buck when a rider with heavy leg braces mounts up. Riders with spinal ailments require a special saddle with a back support and money raised from the Ride-A-Thon would help pay for this.

WAKE-UP

Organizers are hoping they'll get about 100 to 150 riders out for this year's event. Rivercroft Farms is located at 284 Lower Base Line (from Halton Hills, follow Trafalgar Road to Lower Base Line intersection and turn left. Rivercroft is between the Fifth and Sixth Lines in Milton).

The event gets underway at 9 a.m. Free wake-up coffee and donuts will be served, lunch provided, ribbons for participants given out and a trophy awarded to the rider with most pledges.

For more information, pledge sheets and registration, contact 457-4568 or 270-4813 between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m.



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