

Volunteers needed

Handicapped kids riding high on benefits from local therapeutic horse program

KATE GILDERDALE
Correspondent

Horses and children have always been a winning combination.

When the children involved face special handicaps, organizations such as T.R.A.C.K. (Therapeutic Riding Association for Challenged Kids) provide not only physical benefits, but significant psychological and social advantages as well.

The registered, non-profit, charitable organization has been offering therapeutic riding programs for physically and mentally handicapped youngsters since 1987.

Jaymie Cushing of Stouffville, who has cerebral palsy, is just one of the many children who have derived enormous benefit from the program, and these days she is one of its most enthusiastic boosters.

"Jaymie started in C.A.R.D. (Community Association for the Riding Disabled) when she was four," explained her mother, Debbie. "She only rode with them twice and then we got into T.R.A.C.K. in Uxbridge."

She has come a long way since then, stressed her mother. "Riding has helped to stretch her muscles and has given her more mobility in the hips. It teaches the children

not to be afraid of the horses."

Jaymie, who celebrates her ninth birthday this fall, bubbles with enthusiasm when she talks about her experience in the regular T.R.A.C.K. program and at the organization's summer camps.

"I like being with the horses and I like being with the people there, because they're nice and I never get bored. I was at overnight camp and we slept in tents. We stayed for two nights and three days and I had so much fun."

In addition to the therapeutic benefits and the sheer enjoyment of riding, Jaymie is involved with the grooming and feeding of the horses she loves. "She wants a horse of her own, but she's learning it isn't all fun," observed her mother.

Much of T.R.A.C.K.'s success with its riders results from the quality of instruction, and teacher Dee Cuthbertson has been an inspiration to Jaymie and her family, said Debbie.

"I made friends with her daughter one year at camp and we've been friends ever since," explained Jaymie. "She's the same age as me and she helps out too."

The family first heard about therapeutic riding programs when Jaymie was 3, Debbie

recalled. "We used to live in Fergus and the therapist at the Kitchener-Waterloo Rotary Centre mentioned that riding would help her hips a lot more."

"We moved here and the Easter Seals nurse told us we should get our name in right away, because there was a two year waiting list." Sadly, that list is a lot longer now, said Debbie.

"If people would only realize what this therapy does for the child. It's completely changed Jaymie's outlook - a few years ago she wouldn't have done interviews like this."

The confident youngster attends St. Mark's School in Stouffville where she will enter Grade Four in September.

Like the majority of parents whose children are enrolled in T.R.A.C.K., the Cushings are regular volunteers in the program.

Anyone can refer a child to T.R.A.C.K. and participation in the program is not restricted by region or area of residence. At least 60 children have enrolled in this year's program, which takes place at Springwood Stables in Uxbridge.

Despite tough financial times, T.R.A.C.K. endeavors to keep program costs down



Photo: KATE GILDERDALE

Jaymie Cushing enjoys her participation in the TRACK program.

through fund-raising, so that financial constraints will not prevent a child from entering the program.

With each child requiring the assistance of three volunteers,

more help is desperately needed, advised Sandi Vasey of T.R.A.C.K. For more information about volunteering with the organization, call 852-6591.

Annual rumors about post office closing untrue: spokesman

Despite rumors circulating again this year, Canada Post has no plans to close the Stouffville Post Office on Main Street, according to a spokesman this week.

"There is absolutely nothing happening at this time and no time in the foreseeable future," said Canada Post communications manager for York division,

Jim Craig.

Craig said rumors circulating throughout the area — for the third year in a row — that the company plans to close the local post office doors this October is just that - a rumor.

"There is no change in status for the Stouffville Post Office, I can assure you," Craig said.

He said people are probably

reacting because of Canada Post's re-structuring process to change some of its business to a franchise operation.

"When there's a natural opportunity we move in that direction, but there is no such move expected for Stouffville," Craig said.

A call to *The Tribune* this week indicated Canada Post

planned to shut down the local post office and hand the service to several private contractors.

But that's not true, Canada Post maintains.

- Tracy Kibble

Crime

Driver kicks car; leaves

A driver kicked the doors and jumped on the hood of another car at a Stouffville intersection.

Police said a woman was cutting in and out of traffic in Stouffville Friday afternoon. At Main St. and Hwy 47 the woman jumped out of her car and damaged another stopped vehicle. She got back in her car and drove off in an unknown direction.

Police were called but no one noted the suspect's licence plate number.

Stuffed animals stolen

More than \$10,000 worth of stuffed animals was reported stolen from the Stouffville Flea Market last week.

Sometime Thursday or Friday the stuffed toys and other carnival-type prizes went missing from the Tenth Line sales barn where they were stored in two trailers.

The culprits managed to pry the locks off the trailers.



Photo: STEVE SOMERVILLE

They made their point

Don Turner, Peter Scott, Rod Peacock, Ralph named York Region division champions in Antrobus, Graham Hoad and Allan Hogg were darts at the Earl of Whitchurch last week.

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