

Riding For Disabled Association QLD Inc



2021 ANNUAL REPORT

ABN: 985 824 305 76

Riding Develops Abilities

Accessibility Checked

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*The Riding for the Disabled Ass. of Queensland Inc
acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which RDA services are delivered.*

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Our Mission

Support member centres to provide high quality, safe, therapeutic equestrian activities to people living with disability, designed to improve quality of life, develop life skills, and attain personal goals.

Our Vision

RDAQ member centres across Queensland have the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to consistently provide high quality, safe, therapeutic equestrian activities to people living with disability in their community.

Our Values

Empowerment

Quality service

Ongoing improvement

Inclusiveness

Respect for diversity

Accountability

RDAQ recognises a 'disability' as *'any condition that restricts a person's mental, sensory and or mobility functions. It may be caused by accident, trauma, genetics, or disease. A disability may be temporary or permanent, total, or partial, lifelong, or acquired, visible, or invisible.'*



About Riding for the Disabled Queensland (RDAQ)

RDAQ was established as the peak body, in 1988, to provide leadership, professional development, resources, and accreditation and administrative support to all affiliated Riding for Disabled Associations in Queensland (Member Centres).

The Queensland Government identifies that 18.3% of the population, or just less than 1 in every 5 Queenslanders, live with a disability.¹

RDAQ Member Centres reach across physical, social, cultural, and economic barriers to provide opportunities for people living with disability, to develop strengths and overcome challenges, while experiencing joy and building confidence and self-esteem. The benefits of RDA are not limited to the participants. The Centres have a strong history of building a sense of shared purpose and inclusiveness among carers and volunteers drawn from across all parts of the community.

There are eighteen (18) Riding for the Disabled Associations registered as members of RDAQ (refer Table One). The membership comprises sixteen (16) active Centres and two (2) Centres that are currently in recess. They range from very small centres in remote locations to large multi-service organisations in urban areas. The Member Centres are all managed by a local committee of volunteers and operate under a variety of service models. Ninety five percent (95%) are volunteer led, not for profit, incorporated organisations that are reliant on community sponsors, donations, funding grants and rider fees to meet their operational costs. One Centre (5%) has joined with a major disability support provider to offer a mixed funded model to clients.

All Centres deliver unique equine-assisted services designed to build self-esteem, confidence, skills and knowledge and joy in people living with disability, aged from 3 years. All RDAQ affiliated centres must meet strict Riding for the Disabled of Australia Association Ltd (RDAA) Centre Accreditation specifications.

Those who do not wish to ride may still benefit from time spent just being with one of the RDA specially selected horses. Horses can help build trust, joy, and a sense of calm. With a horse you can live in the moment!

People living with all types and levels of disability are accepted into RDA programs, including but not limited to:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| ❖ Attention Deficit Disorder | ❖ Autism Spectrum Disorder | ❖ Anxiety disorders and phobias |
| ❖ Cerebral Palsy | ❖ Down Syndrome | ❖ Post-traumatic stress |
| ❖ Epilepsy | ❖ Hearing Impairment | ❖ Depression, anxiety, bipolar and other mood disorders |
| ❖ Multiple Sclerosis | ❖ Muscular Dystrophy | ❖ Amputees |

¹ www.qld.gov.au/disability/community/disability-statistics

❖ Spina Bifida

❖ Vision Impairment

❖ Stoke

Life with a disability can be frustrating and sometimes lonely. Therapeutic riding offers those living with a disability an opportunity to gain a sense of control over their bodies. (refer Attachment One-Benefits of RDA Programs)

The horse's body and motion can stretch and relax the muscles, and riding can also help the rider to gain muscle tone and body strength and improve posture. As the horse moves the rider is constantly thrown off balance, requiring the rider's muscles to contract and relax to rebalance. This exercising is similar to physiotherapy, reaching the deep muscles, but making the therapy more enjoyable and even fun! The three-dimensional rhythmic movement of the horse is similar to the motion of walking, teaching rhythmical patterns to the muscles of the legs and trunk. By placing the rider in different positions on the horse (therapeutic riding) different muscles are worked. Stopping and starting the horse as well as changing the speed and direction increases the benefits. Although not generally a focus of therapeutic riding, when muscle tone and strength are improved, there is often a resulting improvement in respiration and even speech.²

Member Centres

Northern Qld	Central Qld	Southern Qld
GemFields (Sapphire)	Bundaberg	Cartmill (Burpengary)
Mackay	Hervey Bay	Crowson Park (Greenbank)
North Qld (Atherton)	Maryborough	Lockyer Valley (Gatton)
Rockhampton		McIntyre Centre (Pinjarra Hills)
Townsville		Pender (Redcliffe)
		Samford
		Toowoomba
		Warwick
		Valley (Tallebudgera)

Table One: RDAQ Member Centres 2021

The RDAQ Board brings together a wide range of experience and skills to guide the organisation to achieve its core objectives:

- operate in accordance with the Association's values and guiding principles to achieve the Vision.
- support affiliated Member Centres to consistently deliver contemporary best practice equine-based services to persons, from 3 years of age, living with disability, and Riding for the Disabled (RDA) volunteers in Queensland.
- collaborate with government agencies, non-government organisations, industry, and community groups to progress the Association's mission.

² <https://www.crchealth.com/youth-programs/equine-therapy-disabled-kids/>

- build knowledge and understanding among key stakeholders and community members about the benefits to persons living with a disability of the services offered by Member Centres; and
- manage and build the financial and administrative capacity of the Association to support the safe delivery of quality services to meet the diverse needs of persons, aged 3 to 65 years, living with a disability, and to ensure the sustainability and viability of the Association.

2021 RDAQ Board Members:

President: Toni McIntosh (Townsville RDA)

Treasurer: Brenda Weller (Pender RDA)

Secretary / State Administration Manager:
Diana Adderley (RDAQ)

Board Member: Beverley Humphries (Valley RDA)

Board Member: Kellie Davies (Maryborough RDA)

The RDAQ Board is supported by a full-time Administrative Officer and a small part-time administrative team. Together they work to provide assist members to meet all financial, administrative, and legal requirements of the *Queensland Associations Incorporations and other Amendments Act 2020*, and the *Financial and Performance Management Standards 2019*.

RDAQ works closely with the RDAA Executive to develop policies and procedures that reflect the changing needs of its member centres, their volunteers and the people with disabilities who use their services. RDAQ advises on relevant national policies and accreditation standards for rider health and safety, horse welfare, coach and volunteer training, and Centre management. RDAQ collaborates with government agencies and industry representatives to raise awareness of the work of RDAQ and to secure support for its members.

RDAQ is funded by the Queensland Department of Sport and Recreation and receives ongoing sponsorship from Greg Grants Saddlery and Kohnke's Own.

RDAQ reports to, and is bound by the requirements of, the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission; the Queensland Office of Fair Trading and RDAA.

RDAQ Board Report

Following the huge challenges of the COVID pandemic, 2021 ends with a successful return to activities for most of our centres. The management committees of all eighteen centres must be congratulated for their determination and commitment to supporting their riders and volunteers through the past twelve months.

The achievements of 2021 show just how adaptable and innovative we can be when something as important as improving the physical and emotional wellbeing of disabled children and adults are our goals.

The individual successes of our members are many but collectively they include:

- ❖ **420** people living with disability supported to actively participate in a range of programs.
- ❖ **649** volunteers, aged from 12 years, gave freely of their time and energy to make RDA services possible in their communities.
- ❖ **Eleven** (11) volunteers qualified as RDAA Accredited Coaches.
- ❖ **Fourteen** (77%) of the 18 Member Centres assessed as successfully meeting the RDAA Centre Accreditation Standards, with eight (44%) Centres attaining 'Centre of Excellence' level accreditation. NB Two Centres are yet to be assessed due to Covid-19 restrictions.
- ❖ **Two** (11%) Centres placed in recess while they are supported to better meet all accreditation requirements and re-commence coaching in 2022.
- ❖ **Ten** (10) Registered Coaches assisted by RDAQ to attend the RDAA National Coaches Workshop via Zoom conferencing.

The RDAQ Board responded to the many challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic by developing flexible, innovative approaches to meeting the needs of each Centre These included:

- ❖ All eighteen (18) centres were provided with resource packs to assist with continuous training and improvement including ASLAN tools and Covid Safe resources.
- ❖ Twenty-eight (28) participants from eight (8) centres attended the 2021 Covid-Safe State Conference. The interactive two-day event was held at the Samford RDAQ Centre with participants remaining Covid safe while taking full advantage of the wealth of experience and knowledge offered by the four (4) highly qualified presenters. Sessions spanned both coach and volunteer training, with positive feedback provided by all. Sadly, the Covid restrictions meant that this was the only workshop held this year. However, planning has already commenced for several local workshops to be held in regional centres throughout 2022...Covid permitting.
- ❖ RDAQ State Championships were held as a 'Virtual Competition' with nine (56%) active centres from across Queensland submitting videos for judging by international RDA judges and Para Olympian coaches, Mary Longden and Sally Francis OAM. Over 100 riders competed in a range of events detailed in the *RDAA Test Booklet 2015* and the *Para Equestrian Tests: Equestrian Australia Dressage Rules*.
- ❖ Meeting, training, and assessment activities were held via Zoom teleconferencing.
- ❖ All centres were supported with resources and technical advice to meet or exceed the RDAA Accreditation Standards and Horse Welfare Regulations.
- ❖ All centres were provided with access to the tools and information they needed to meet state and national government COVID-19 requirements as well as their ongoing legal and financial obligations to their governing bodies.

- ❖ A *RDAQ Vaccination Position Statement* was developed to ensure that all centres were aware of the requirements of Queensland Health and SafeWork Australia to reduce the risk to all people who visit RDA centres of acquiring vaccine-preventable illnesses. The document complements the *RDA Position Statement Covid Vaccination Requirements for RDA* released in October 2021.

The Board also undertook a review of the *RDAQ Rules of Association* to ensure the rules continue to reflect the legal and administrative obligations of an incorporated, not-for-profit body in Queensland as well as to provide a governance framework able to meet the changing and diverse needs of all RDAQ members into the future.

I am delighted to confirm that our core grant funding has now been secured to September 2022, with Physically Active Participation and Capability Improvement being the primary goals of the funding. On behalf of the hundreds of people who benefit from the services offered by our members, I would like to sincerely thank the Queensland Department of Sport and Recreation, our major grant funding provider, and our other major supporter, Greg Grant Saddlery, for their ongoing invaluable support. Once again Kohnke's Own have supported the RDAQ centres through the drought by supplying horse supplements and horse care products.

It has been a tough year, but the RDAQ and its members have worked through the challenges while focusing on the people living with disability who benefit from our services! I am confident that 2022 will be another year of achievement and smiles on the faces of many.

Toni McIntosh
Chair
RDAQ Board



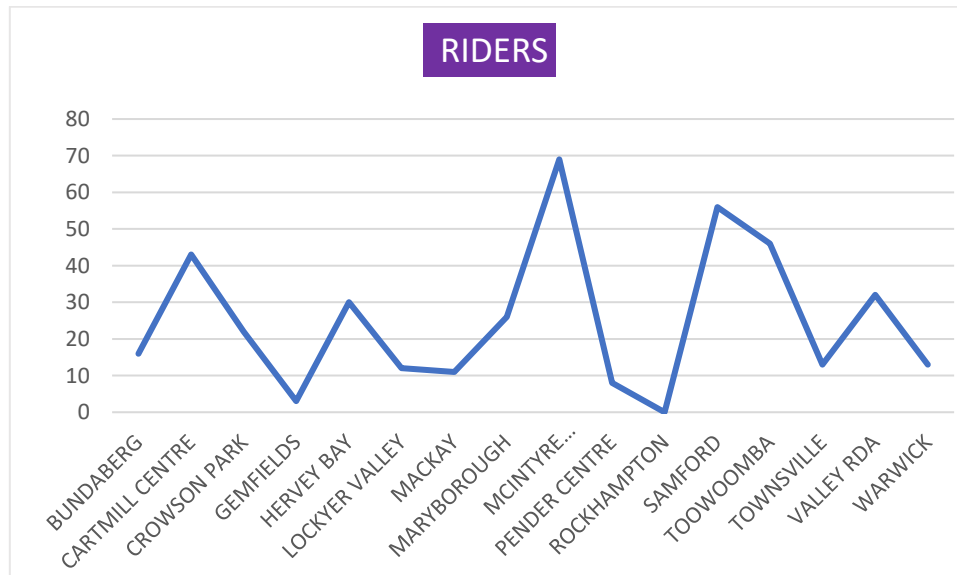
Being Covid Safe is important for everyone!

Key Statistics – 2021

Total Number of active member centres: 16

- ❖ Average number of sessions per fortnight – 19 sessions (range 1 to 134 sessions/ft)
- ❖ Average number of weeks open per year – 33 weeks per year (range 20 to 49 wks./yr.)
- ❖ No. of Member Centres offering:
 - Riding for physically challenged riders- 10
 - Riding for able-bodied riders -3
 - Carriage Driving –0
 - Vaulting - 0
 - Hippotherapy - 1
 - Unmounted interaction - 5
 - Competitions -7
 - School holiday programs -2
 - Fun Days - 4

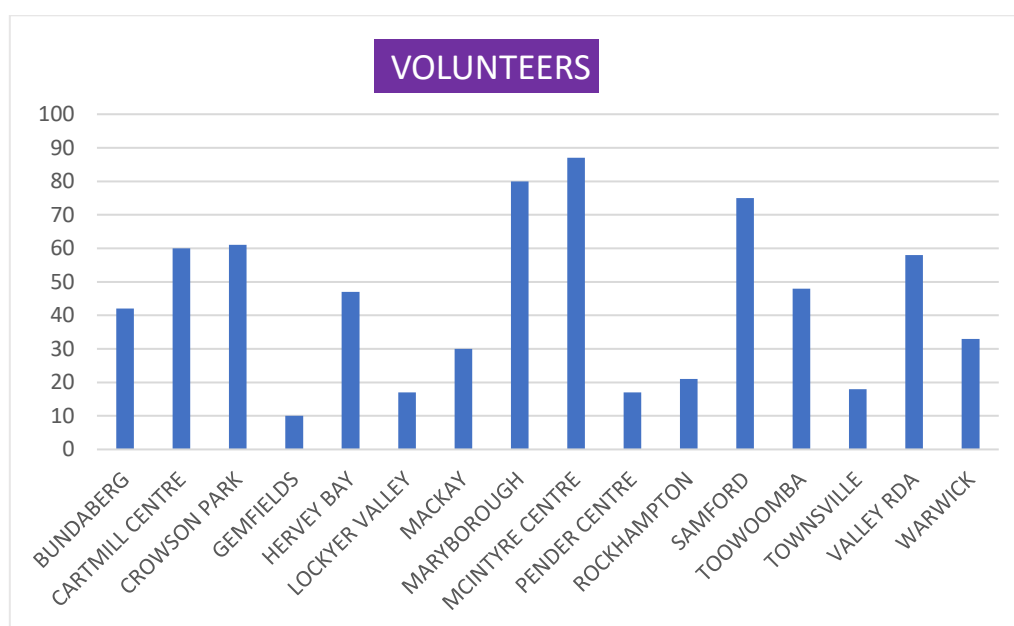
(*Incomplete data due to non-reporting by some centres)



Total No. of Riders - 420

- ❖ No. of Physically Challenged Riders aged under 18years -**275** (43% Female | 57% Male)
- ❖ No. of Able-Bodied Riders aged under 18 years – **1** Female
- ❖ No. of Physically Challenged Riders aged over 18 years – **127** (64% Female | 36% Males)
- ❖ No. of Able-Bodied Riders aged over 18 years - **17** (65% Females | 35% Males)

(* Incomplete data due to non-reporting by some centres)



Total No. of Volunteers – **649** (includes accredited and trainee coaches)

- ❖ Number of Volunteers aged 12 to 18 years – **115** (83% Females | 17% Males)
 - ❖ Number of Volunteers aged over 18 years – **534** (76% Females | 24% Males)
- (* Incomplete data due to non-reporting by some centres)



Nationally Accredited Coaches

- ❖ No. of Coach Educators - 4
- ❖ No. of Level Two Coaches – 4
- ❖ No. of Level One Coaches – 33
- ❖ No. of Level O Coaches – 14

Trainee Coaches

- ❖ No. of Level O Trainees - 11
- ❖ No. of Level One Trainees-1
- ❖ No. of Level Two Trainees - 0

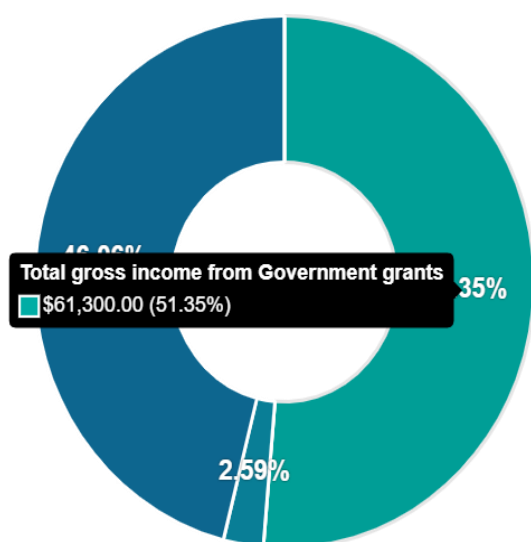


Financial Reports

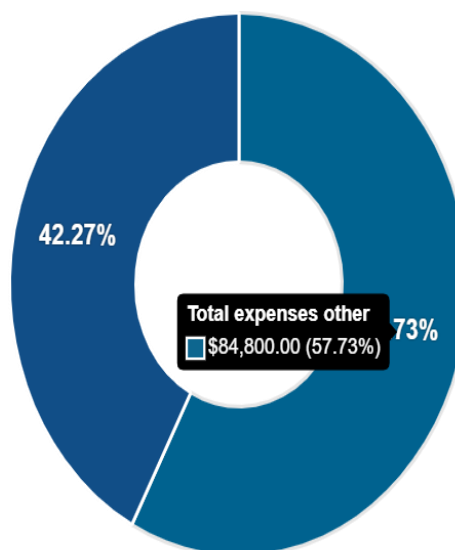
Statement of Profit or Loss for the Year Ended 30 June 2021

INCOME	2021	2020
	\$	\$
Revenue (Annual Affiliation Fees. Rider registration fees)	47,941.00	58,950.00
Finance (Interest)	578.00	926.00
Other (Government grant, Donations, bequests)	70,849.00	123,616.00
Total Income	119,368.00	183,492.00
EXPENDITURE		
Operational and Administration	62,083.00	68,277.00
Other (Insurance)	84,800.00	91,110.00
Total Expenditure	146,883.00	159,387.00
Profit / Loss*	(-27,515.00)	24,155.00

NOTE – Annual Revenue was significantly impacted by Co-vid 19.



Total income: \$119,370.00



Total expenses: \$146,883.00

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES (Year Ended 30 June 2021)

	2021	2020
	\$	\$
Cash and Cash equivalents	242,339.00	276,343.00
Trade and other receivables	7,004.00	310.00

Recognition Awards

Never underestimate the valuable and important difference you make in every life you touch for the impact you make today has a powerful rippling effect on every tomorrow- Leon Brown

Volunteers are the life blood of any non-profit organisation and RDA volunteers are no exception. All who volunteer at an RDA Centre make a difference to the physical and emotional lives of others. If it wasn't for their tireless support Riding for the Disabled Centres could not continue to deliver equine-assisted services in safe, supportive environments to people living with disability.

Queensland Award

In November, RDAQ was delighted to award **Beverley Humphries** an Honorary Life Membership in appreciation of her positive and invaluable services to the Association at both the state-wide and local levels.

Beverley has been an active member of the RDAQ Board since 2018 and will continue to work on the Board as a Consumer Representative – Riding on the Board in 2022. In addition to her work at the state level Beverley has volunteered for many years as an RDAA Accredited coach and as an energetic member of the management committee at the Valley RDA Centre, Tallebudgera.



National Awards

This year two very special volunteers have been formally recognised by the Riding for the Disabled Association of Australia for the huge contributions they freely make to the lives of people living with disability in Queensland.

Maggie Rippey (Maryborough RDA) was awarded the RDAA National Michael Field Memorial Award.

The award is the most prestigious national volunteer award offered by RDA Australia. The annual award is presented in honour of the late Michael Field who devoted his life to the development of RDA and whose tenacity, determination, commitment, and selflessness created the foundations of today's organisation. Nominees for this award must reflect the same values and commitment towards a harmonious, collaborative organisation. Their contribution should reflect activities at all three levels of the RDA organisation - Centre, State and National levels.

Peninnah Alston (Hervey Bay RDA) is the RDAA National Young Volunteer of the Year.

This award is bestowed by RDAA on a volunteer, aged under 18 years, who has made an outstanding contribution to their RDA Centre. This may include regular attendance, willingness to accept different roles and responsibilities, pride in what they do and an eagerness to learn and apply their knowledge within RDA. The young volunteer must have demonstrated outstanding customer service. This may include their ability to relate well to riders, coaches, and other volunteers.

RDAQ Board was delighted to see these exceptional people selected for these awards.

Highlights from 2021

2021 State Conference

The 2021 Covid Safe RDAQ State Conference held on Saturday 2nd and Sunday 3rd October 2021 at the Samford RDAQ Centre.



Twenty-eight (28) participants from eight (8) Centres took full advantage of the interactive presentations and workshops over the two days



Topics covered included:

- Saddle and bridle fitting.
- Coach training addressing Rider Assessment, Mounting and Dismounting, Understanding Rider Need.
- Klimke Poles Arena Exercises

2021 Virtual State Championships

The huge success of the 2021 State Championships is a clear demonstration of what can be achieved by the 'determined'.

Rather than allowing Covid to prevent RDAQ riders from coming together to showcase their abilities at the State Championships, the decision was made by the Board to invite the active RDAQ centres to participate in a videoed 'virtual competition'. The championships were held under the current RDAA Limited Rules (2008), with riders participating in events as set out in the *RDAA Test Booklet 2015* and the *Para Equestrian Tests: Equestrian Australia Dressage Rules*, with independent judges appointed to score each rider against set competencies.

Over several months all RDA centres supported their riders to build their abilities in one or more of the Championship events. A review of the event confirmed that many more riders from RDA Centres across Queensland were able to participate in the events than in previous years. The 'virtual' format removed the financial and physical challenges of getting riders and horses safely to a central venue and gave equal opportunity to all RDA riders to enjoy the fun of practicing and competing while in familiar settings.

Nine (9) centres, represented by over 100 riders from across QLD, submitted videos for judging. Each rider was then independently assessed by international Riding for the Disabled Judges and Para-Olympian Coaches, Mary Longden and Sally Francis OAM. Both judges were impressed by the skills of many of the riders and expressed their hope that they might see some competing at the Paralympic Games in 2032!

Dressage: Seven (7) Dressage classes were held with 88 competitors achieving scores of between 55.3 % and 84.3%.

Clarissa Michaluk, riding TK, (Hervey Bay RDA) was awarded the RDAQ Perpetual Cup after achieving the highest dressage score of all competitors.

Jayde Cloche, riding Bojangles, (Mackay RDA) was presented a RDAQ saddle cloth in recognition of her achievement of the second highest dressage score.



Clarrissa (left) receiving the RDAQ Perpetual Cup from long-time RDA supporter Mrs. Joy Munson (far right) watched by Sue Golchert and Cheryl Greer (Hervey Bay RDA)



Clarissa and TK

Working Trail Riding: Three (3) Classes were held with 26 competitors accomplishing scores of between 70 – 91 points.

Sophia Laing, riding Monty, (Maryborough RDA) nailed the obstacles on the Working Trail Ride Test to achieve the highest Trail's Riding score of 91.00%. Sophia was delighted to receive a beautiful RDA saddle cloth in recognition of her huge achievement.



Sophia with her trophy saddle cloth



Sophia and Monty

RDAQ would like to sincerely thank the [Show Horse Council Qld](#) for their generous donation of the RDAQ Perpetual Cup to the highest scoring rider in the Dressage Classes; and [Greg Grant Saddlery](#) for their ongoing support through the donation of two beautiful saddle clothes for the highest scoring rider In the Working Trail Classes and the runner-up in the Dressage.

The joy and pride that these beautiful trophies gave cannot be measured.

RDAQ Major Supporters



Kohnke's Own[®]



Thank you from all at RDAQ.

HOW RDA PROGRAMS HELP

Animals often create a special bond with humans, and this is especially true with horses.

The nonverbal communication between the person and the horse strengthens the emotional bond that is often created. Words aren't needed for each to be perfectly in tune with each other. Emotions find space to flow and the relationship between the person and the horse can create a love and understanding that is often indescribable.

The [Mental Health Foundation](#) highlights that *'finding an activity you enjoy can give you a goal to aim for and a sense of purpose. It can also be a great way to meet people, have a break from daily life and gain confidence. Other benefits include:*

- *less tension, stress, and mental fatigue*
- *a natural energy boost*
- *a sense of achievement*
- *more focus and motivation*
- *feeling less angry or frustrated*
- *a healthy appetite*
- *having fun.*

It's even better if you're able to get active outdoors. Research shows that being in nature can make us feel happier, feel our lives are more worthwhile, and reduce our levels of depression and anxiety'.

PHYSICAL BENEFITS

• Improved Balance

As the horse moves the rider is constantly thrown off balance, requiring the rider's muscles to contract and relax to rebalance. This exercising is similar to physiotherapy, reaching the deep muscles, but making the therapy more enjoyable and even fun!

The three-dimensional rhythmic movement of the horse is similar to the motion of walking, teaching rhythmical patterns to the muscles of the legs and trunk. By placing the rider in different positions on the horse (therapeutic riding) different muscles are worked. Stopping and starting the horse as well as changing the speed and direction increases the benefits.

Strengthened Muscles

Muscles are strengthened by the increased use involved in riding. Even though riding is exercise, it is perceived as enjoyment, therefore the rider has increased tolerance and motivation to lengthen the period of exercise.

- **Improved Coordination, Faster Reflexes and Better Motor Planning**

Riding a horse requires a great deal of coordination to get the desired response from the horse. Since the horse provides instant feedback to every action from the rider, it is easy to know when you have given the correct cue. Repetition of the patterned movements required in controlling a horse quickens the reflexes and aids in motor planning.

- **Stretching of Tight or Spastic Muscles**

Sitting on a horse requires stretching of the adductor muscles of the thighs. This is accomplished by pre-stretching exercises prior to mounting and by starting the rider on a narrow horse and gradually working to wider horses. Gravity helps stretch the calf muscles when the rider sits on the horse without stirrups. Stomach and back muscles are stretched by encouraging the rider to maintain an upright position against the movement of the horse. Arm and hand muscles are stretched by the act of holding the reins. The rhythmic motion and warmth of the horse aids in relaxation, particularly of the legs. Sitting astride the horse helps break the extensor spasms of lower limbs. Holding the reins helps to break the flexor spasm patterns of upper limbs. Fatigue helps to decrease spasticity by producing relaxation.

- **Increased Range of Motion of the Joints**

As spasticity is reduced, range of motion increases. Range of motion is also improved by the act of mounting and dismounting, tacking, grooming and exercises during the lesson

- **Improved Respiration and Circulation**

Although riding is not normally considered a cardiovascular activity, trotting and cantering do increase both respiration and circulation.

- **Improved Appetite and Digestion**

Like all forms of exercise, riding stimulates the appetite

- **Sensory Integration**

Riding stimulates the tactile senses through both touch and environmental stimuli. The many sounds of the outdoor setting helps to involve the auditory system.

PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS

Interaction with horses relaxes and de-stresses in equal parts, freeing the mind from day-to-day stress. Many psychologists recommend equine therapy to deal with anxiety and stress.

Spending time with horses or ponies also can help people relate to others. It can improve the self-control of emotions and teaches participants to express what they are feeling in an appropriate way.

- **Improved Self Confidence**

Confidence is gained in mastering new skills and developing new abilities that were not previously thought possible.

- **Unconditional Love and Acceptance**

The love and understanding that a horse can sometimes give can be much more enriching than what some people can offer. This is something that anyone who has spent time with a horse knows.

- **Improved Self Discipline**

The RDA programs are designed to improve concentration and attention span. The participant focuses on the relationship with the horse and the task at hand, listening for instructions from the coach and volunteers as they learn to guide the horse around an arena, groom the horse, complete a Trail Ride, or compete in a Dressage Test.

- **Identifying and Coping with Feelings**

Working with horses or ponies is a powerful way to get in touch with thoughts and feelings. Horses have a unique ability to sense emotions and react accordingly.

If you are angry or aggressive, the horse may become obstinate. If you are anxious, the horse may get skittish. But when approached by someone who is open and calm, the horse is more likely to respond in kind. Witnessing the horse's response promotes self-awareness and can help people see themselves in a more realistic way.

- **Communication & Interpersonal Skills**

Many people living with disability may have difficulty relating or getting close to other people. Yet they manage to establish close bonds with horses.

Through working with horses, people can often recognise their patterns of interacting with others. Horses do not speak, but they are excellent communicators. Learning to understand a horse's behaviour can help people learn that their own behaviour and body language impacts others.

Ground-based exercises as simple as haltering, leading, and grooming teach people how to approach others with respect and awareness.

- **Setting Boundaries**

Lessons may be as simple as how much physical space the horse needs to feel comfortable. Without any words at all, horses make clear when someone has crossed their boundaries. Trying to control or dominate will not work with a horse. Likewise, a detached or passive approach can make it difficult to lead a horse.

- **Overcoming Fears**

Horses are large animals. Their strength and size can bring up unmet needs, fears, past trauma and feelings of inadequacy or lack of control.

Some people may fear that the horse won't like them. They also fear the horse could hurt them physically or emotionally. Rather than giving in to their usual reaction – to escape or get defensive – people learn to tolerate and process the emotion.

In a safe environment, RDA clients learn to face their fears. They build confidence in their ability to overcome challenges. Many people feel intimidated and nervous at first. Later they discover how quickly they process those feelings and find comfort in their relationship with the horse. Empowered by the experience, people may develop the confidence to address other fears. They then transfer these lessons to day-to-day life.

- **Trust**

Horses are soothing, gentle animals. They are straightforward in their interactions without lying or manipulating. They do not judge or blame. Their presence alone can be healing. When people open themselves up to a horse, they grow in their ability to build relationships with others.

- **General Sense of Well Being**

Exercise in the fresh air of the country away from hospitals, doctors offices, therapy rooms, and home helps to promote a sense of well being.

- **Increased Interest in One's Own Life**

The excitement of riding or grooming a horse encourages the rider to speak and communicate about their activities.

Other benefits include:

- learning to accept responsibility
- taking care of oneself and others
- patience
- humility
- a sense of pride
- an appreciation for the simple joys in life.

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

- **Improved Reading**

Before one can be taught to read, it is necessary to recognise the difference in shapes, sizes and colours. These can be taught on horseback through games and activities. There is less resistance to learning when it is part of a horse-riding lesson.

- **Improved Mathematics Abilities**

Counting is learned by counting the horse's footfalls, objects around the arena etc. Because the concepts of maths are taught through games, the resistance to learning can be less.

- **Improved Sequencing, Patterning and Motor Planning**

Something as simple as holding a pencil requires a great deal of motor planning. Knowing which comes first in a sequence of events is an important part of most activities. These and other skills are taught on horse back through the use of obstacle courses, pole bending and many other games and activities. Even grooming a horse requires the groom to follow a sequence of activities.

- **Improved Hand/Eye Coordination**

Eye and hand coordination is necessary for skills such as writing. These skills are taught in grooming and preparing the horse as well as other activities and exercises.

- **Visual Spatial Perception**

This includes an awareness of form and space, and an understanding relationships between the forms in our environment. Included in this is directionality (knowing right from left), space-perception (knowing when items are close in shape but different), perception of depth (picking out an object from a background) and visual sequential memory (such as remembering patterns).

- **Differentiation**

The rider learns to differentiate significant from less significant stimuli in the environment. An improvement in this area occurs as the rider learns to attend to their horse and those things that may influence the horse rather than attending to the environment in general.

SOCIAL BENEFITS

- **Friendship and belonging**

Although riding can be a solitary activity, at RDA Centres lessons are normally performed in small groups often at the same time each session. Participants can develop friendships, share achievements, and build a strong sense of belonging.

The benefits of RDA are not limited to the riding participants. The Centres have a strong history of building a sense of shared purpose and inclusiveness among carers and volunteers drawn from across all parts of the community.

