



Cowichan Therapeutic Riding Association

at Providence Farm 1843 Tzouhalem Rd., Duncan, B.C. V9L 5L6

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Jumpstart Funding Supports Inclusive Equestrian Program in the Cowichan Valley

This fall, Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities and the Canadian Paralympic Committee partnered to award 28 organizations from across Canada with funding through the 2018 Parasport Jumpstart Fund – a granting program focused on enhancing opportunities for sport and play among children with disabilities. The Cowichan Therapeutic Riding Association (CTRA) was one of the organizations selected for support.

CTRA is a Duncan-based charity dedicated to providing equine-based therapeutic services and inclusive equestrian activities for persons with disabilities. CTRA's program provides a range of therapeutic interventions and adapted/inclusive sport opportunities that include therapeutic horsemanship and adapted equestrian agility; therapeutic riding and para-equestrian training; and most recently – inclusive equestrian vaulting (a team-based discipline that combines dance and gymnastics aboard a moving horse).

Approximately 85-90% of CTRA's clients are children under the age of 18. While most of the youth participating in CTRA's program are children referred to the program with physical disabilities and/or psycho-social challenges (e.g. anxiety, PTSD, bullying), a limited number of "community riders" are integrated into the vaulting program and spring/summer horse camps when space allows. In 2018, CTRA will serve a total of 180 participants, 155 of who will be children, and of these – 134 have special needs (referred to the program by medical or therapeutic professionals, educators, and/or social service providers). In recent years, CTRA's program has grown incrementally to accommodate the rising number of vulnerable children in the Cowichan Valley. Each year, approximately 20-25% of program participants are children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder while 60-70% are youth facing mental health and/or social disorders. Both of these demographics are on the rise within the program's user population.

"Grady the Giant" and CTRA's Warmland Vaulting Club member Ava Morgan perform at the 2018 RCMP Musical Ride



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CTRA's program receives no contract funding from provincial or federal governments, which means that the charity must rely on community-level support (volunteerism, grants, donations, sponsorships, and fundraising initiatives) to sustain operations. Moreover, equine-based therapeutic services are not covered by the provincial medical service plan (nor private insurance programs), meaning that most families accessing CTRA's program must pay out of pocket for most if not all of their services.

"This Parasport grant is this kind of major funding that enables our association to keep our program accessible for families facing multiple barriers," says Anne Muir, CTRA's Executive Director. "Without the support of community partners like Jumpstart and the Canadian Paralympic Committee, our program would not be able to serve the same number or scope of children with special needs in the Cowichan Valley."

CTRA will use the \$20,000 grant to offset registration costs, thereby maintaining non-prohibitive user fees.

The Parasport Jumpstart Fund is part of Jumpstart's *Play Finds A Way* movement – which is itself a component of Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities' broader mission to help kids overcome financial and accessibility barriers to sport and recreation in order to provide inclusive play.

"At Jumpstart, we are committed to removing financial and accessibility barriers to sport and play so that all kids have the opportunity to get in the game," says Scott Fraser, President of Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities. "Through our partnership with the Canadian Paralympic Committee, the Parasport Jumpstart Fund allows us to expand our reach, help more kids, and work together to create a more accessible and inclusive Canada."

The Parasport Jumpstart Fund is delivered in partnership with the Canadian Paralympic Committee (CPC) – a non-profit organization dedicated to strengthening the Paralympic Movement so that all Canadians with a disability can have the opportunity to get involved in sport. Speaking of their collaboration with Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities, CPC CEO Karen O'Neill says, "it is so important to create access to sport and physical activity at all levels so that children across the country can be active and enjoy sport. Becoming a world-leading Paralympic nation begins with robust local programs and the creation of a strong, sustainable sport system."

About the Cowichan Therapeutic Riding Association:

CTRA has been using "horsepower to empower" the Cowichan Valley since 1986. The organization provides a vital place of inclusion and supports key social determinants of health in the community. At CTRA, a shared love of horses brings people together - bridging perceptions of difference, catalyzing human potential, and fostering a sense of belonging among participants, families, volunteers, and visitors alike.

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