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# BITS & PIECES



OUR MISSION IS TO PROMOTE HEALING WITH HORSES THROUGH EQUINE-ASSISTED THERAPEUTIC AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR PEOPLE OF ALL AGES WITH DISABILITIES, REGARDLESS OF ECONOMIC STATUS.

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**UPCOMING EVENTS:**

**PIZZA FOR A PURPOSE**

Tuesday, July 17, 2018

**STOMPING THE DIVOTS 2018**

Saturday, August 4, 2018

**25**  
**YEARS**  
 1993 - 2018



# 25th anniversary

## OF JACKSON HOLE THERAPEUTIC RIDING ASSOCIATION

Spring has finally sprung in the Tetons! The sun is shining and the arena is full of smiles and laughter as Spring Session is underway at Jackson Hole Therapeutic Riding Association. Though the atmosphere bursts with the same sights, sounds and smells as it has for so many years, 2018 is different. This year we celebrate a major milestone—the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of JHTRA!

broken, and every long day and excruciating night spent ensuring a future for Jackson Hole Therapeutic Riding Association. Because of you, the Robin Lightner Arena continues to serve as an environment of encouragement and support for individuals with disabilities throughout Teton County and across the nation.

out to the arena for lessons, and every staff member who dedicated their career to bettering the lives of our participants that is deserving of a standing ovation. Without each and every kindhearted soul who has touched this program, JHTRA would not be what it is today.

What began as only a daydream decades ago is now a thriving program serving hundreds of riders each year. This milestone, however, would never have come to fruition if it were not for the dedication, hard work and tenacity of our founders. So today, as we celebrate a quarter century of JHTRA, we also celebrate the three women whose vision paved the way to 25 years of life-enhancing services. To our founders—DeDe McDonald, Elaine Infanger and Robin Lightner—on behalf of all the individuals whose lives have been forever changed by the program you tirelessly strived to establish (riders, parents, volunteers, and staff alike), we would like to thank you for every tear shed, every nail

Like our founders, this milestone would not have been achieved without the support of

So, as 2018 begins and we take in the same sights, sounds, and smells as we have every year, we proceed forth with a unique appreciation—an appreciation for all that has come before us and all that future generations of instructors, riders, donors, and volunteers will do to safeguard and honor the vision that three extraordinary women held 25 years ago.

*What began as only a daydream decades ago is now a thriving program serving hundreds of riders each year.*

our community of volunteers, donors, family members, and staff. Over the course of 25 years, the list of individuals deserving of thanks has become too numerous to mention everyone by name. But it is every individual who donated their time as a volunteer, every person who contributed financially to the betterment of the program, every parent/grandparent/aunt/uncle and sibling who rearranged their schedule to transport their rider

TORI FANCHER  
Executive Director

## OUR YEAR AT A glance

We are back in action at Jackson Hole Therapeutic Riding Association, so pull out your cowboy boots and join us at the arena for some fun in the sun as we celebrate 25 years of Healing with Horses. Mark your calendars for an eventful year:

### SESSION DATES

### SPECIAL EVENTS

- **Spring Session:**  
*April 30 - May 25*
- **Summer Session I:**  
*June 11 - July 20*
- **Summer Session II:**  
*August 6 - August 31*
- **Fall Session:**  
*September 17 - October 19*
- **Pizza for a Purpose:**  
*Tuesday, July 17*
- **Fair Horse Show:**  
*Saturday, July 28*
- **Stomping the Divots:**  
*Saturday, August 4*
- **Community Horse Show:**  
*October 3*
- **Aspiration Summit:**  
*September 6-8*
- **Old Bill's Fun Run**  
*Saturday, September 8*

## A TRIBUTE TO OUR former leaders

From the solid foundation established by our founders to the executive directors who have evolved the program to what it is today, JHTRA would not be the strong organization that it is without its leaders.

### FOUNDERS

DeDe McDonald  
Robin Lightner  
Elaine Infanger

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Kay Northup, 1993-1998  
Kerri Ellis, 1998-2006  
Kelly Merriott, 2006-2013  
Donna Johnsen, 2014-2015

Our heartfelt appreciation to these visionary and passionate women who have given so much to so many.

Thank you!



CALL TODAY TO LEARN MORE:

307-733-1374

# blast from the past

## A FOUNDER RECALLS THE EARLY DAYS

In 1982, my daughter Emily was born prematurely and was diagnosed with cerebral palsy. For many years we ventured to Texas in order for her to receive the therapy she so desperately required. While at home, she was able to work with DeDe McDonald, a physical therapist at the Children's Learning Center.

Emily progressed in her therapy and eventually began to participate in Pony Club.

There, I connected with Robin Lightner, whose daughters were also involved. Many conversations arose from our time on the "sidelines," and we found ourselves carrying forward the same topic from week to week: the possibility of bringing children with special needs and gentle-trained horses together.

In order to make this dream a reality, I knew I needed to connect these two women from very different backgrounds. And so, in 1992—10 years after the birth of my daughter, Emily—DeDe McDonald, Robin Lightner and I met for the first time to set this dream in motion.

We soon found our roles. Robin provided the business acumen, horse sense and funding, DeDe offered therapy skills and a willingness to do anything, and I filled in the gaps on whatever task needed to be done. After a demonstration by the founder of the Cheff Center (1<sup>st</sup>

therapeutic riding center in the nation), the program was soon flourishing.

By 1993, JHTRA was an established 501(c)3 nonprofit and was attracting the attention of individuals throughout the valley. In February, we hired our first Executive Director, Kay Northup. Together with Jody (our first instructor), selfless volunteers, and arenas lent to us by generous individuals throughout the community (Emily Stephens, P. Sue Dunlap, the town of Wilson, and Bill and Robin Weiss), we had what we needed.

For five years we moved to various arenas to provide services until, in 1998, the Robin Lightner Arena was established as a result of the significant efforts of Robin Lightner and the Board of Directors. This meant a permanent home for JHTRA and its riders—still home to JHTRA today.

Despite all the hurdles in the early years, JHTRA is now running very efficiently and successfully. It is with huge pleasure that I watch this amazing program flourish and grow under the management of a marvelous staff, all the volunteers and Board of Directors, and our

***We heartily thank all those who have stepped forward and taken the lead to nurture, protect and keep JHTRA alive and prospering.***



Pictured above (left to right): DeDe McDonald, Robin Lightner, Elaine Infanger at Stomping the Divots

community who provides fabulous financial support...and of course, all the very special horses who are the core of the program's mission.

On behalf of Robin and I, we heartily thank all those who have stepped forward and taken the lead to nurture, protect and keep JHTRA alive and prospering.

ELAINE INFANGER  
*Co-Founder*

## VOLUNTEER & PARENT testimonials

The therapeutic value JHTRA offers is unequalled! Rider Sam Drueding is a young man with severe special needs and an uncontrolled seizure disorder. The seizures literally lock up his physical body. The carefully chosen horse with a specific gait, the prescription of movement and the outstanding team that protect Sam as he rides change his world. His muscles relax, his core is strengthened and non-verbal Sam's face relaxes after a session. My only wish is that Sam could ride twice a week instead of only once.

VALERIE  
*Mother of participant*

Volunteering at JHTRA is one of the highlights of my life. I consider it an honor and privilege to be a part of such wonderful organization with a mission of "Healing with Horses." Both the fulltime and seasonal staffs are a hardworking team of professionals committed to improving the lives of its many riders with special needs. Each of them will do whatever is needed to help a rider realize his or her potential. And for me to see the progress made over the course of a riding session is amazing and heartwarming. Seeing the proud smiles on a rider's face and on the faces of family members tells the whole story. JHTRA is all about love and giving.

TOM  
*Volunteer*



After volunteering for several seasons with JHTRA, I suffered a severe stroke. One blessing was the unique opportunity for me to become a rider and experience firsthand the incredible results obtained from the hard work and dedication of the horses, volunteers and staff at JHTRA. During the past year my core strength, balance and most of all my confidence grew at each weekly session. I still have a long road to recovery and hope to someday be a volunteer again.

*In loving memory of*  
MONICA BELL

My time at JHTRA is the highlight of my week and I always leave with a heart full of joy and gratitude, for the riders, their families, and the kind and amazing staff and other volunteers I get to work with. I can honestly say that I have received, in spades, so much more than I have given. I am very thankful to be part of this wonderful family!

SUSAN  
*Volunteer*

This program has been one of the best programs our daughter has ever joined. She thoroughly enjoys her riding time as well as grooming the horses. It makes her feel good as well as gives her the confidence that she needs that she can do something new. Thank you so much for providing her with a scholarship so that she can do these awesome things without it having to come out of our pocket because we would not be able to afford to do so!

SARA  
*Mother of participant*

As a clinical professional, I have been impressed by the wide skill sets and advanced education of the staff to provide creative and effective lesson plans to help each student achieve their goals.

KATELYN  
*Volunteer*



I have been volunteering at JHTRA for over seven years. When I first started I thought what an amazing opportunity to help children and adults with disabilities to have a wonderful experience with a beautiful animal. I soon came to understand the importance of the physical therapy component of this experience, to see how it benefits these individuals both physically and mentally was truly amazing. I did feel empowered but more important was to see how empowered these people, young and old felt. It is an experience where they can feel in control and also extremely beneficial in helping them deal with their challenges in life. I leave everyday with a smile on my face knowing I did something to help another person and my joy comes from their joy.

SUSAN  
*Volunteer*



## A PARENT REFLECTS ON a life enhanced

early years. I truly believed that this was what his life, and ours, would be like forever. That Spring, through the encouragement of an amazing Physical Therapist, DeDe McDonald, my son Collin started a very new program called Therapeutic Horseback riding. DeDe was sure this would change his life. I wasn't sure what it was, or how it worked, but I would cling to anything that gave me hope for my child.

Jump ahead to March of this year, as Collin celebrated his 26<sup>th</sup> birthday, and we have celebrated him as "differently-abled" since that infamous spring at the Hardeman Barn on Wenzel Lane in Wilson, WY. It is not any longer seeing the things he "can't" do; but recognizing what he CAN do in a different way. I envision DeDe holding his hand in hers, patiently stroking the horse, Collin straining against her touch, then finally giving in to the softness of the horse's hair gliding through his fingers; the smile on his face as he gazed at the kind animal who had such trust in his eyes. I watched with tears of my own as she sat my boy on a saddle, and taught him how to say "walk on" with two taps to the horse's reins, and to watch the animal respond. Those abilities, as minute as they may appear to some, are milestones we never thought we would see. In our family, JHTRA, and the therapists (both human

***Gentle giants and kindred spirits— some magic just cannot be replicated, no matter how hard we try.***

and equine) that it employs are a special gifts that belong only to Collin, and he looks with pride and confidence at every day he is able to spend there,

There are many types of therapy available to children with special needs: P.T., O.T., Speech. We took advantage of all of them, and are forever grateful for the therapists we have had over the years. Many friends and family were skeptical of what a horse could provide that these other therapies could not. Horses are gentle, and Collin mirrors that. Horses are trusting, and Collin senses that trust is mutual. Since he is

non-verbal, much of his frustration can manifest in self-aggression, but Collin would never display this behavior toward a horse. Gentle giants and kindred spirits—some magic just cannot be replicated, no matter how hard we try.

BETSY GRANDE  
*Mother of Participant*



Collin smiles during a therapeutic riding lesson in the early years of JHTRA.

Everyday is a painful learning experience when you have a child with disabilities. I do say *DIS*abilities because my child was 2, an age when a young family should be celebrating all the things their child "can" do. Instead we were constantly bombarded with all the things he COULDN'T do: he couldn't walk, he couldn't even begin to talk, and the biggest heartbreak of all for young parents, he couldn't stand to be touched. If we tried to hug him, he would squirm uncomfortably in our arms, if we rubbed his back to help him calm down, he would pull away, and we couldn't even hold his little hand as he went through barages of medical tests and needles in his



Johnny thanks his volunteers in 2010.

# good for the soul

## VOLUNTEER TAKES A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE

One of the first kids I worked with was Johnny. Though I was new to the program, Johnny was a regular who had been an avid JHTRA participant for several seasons. Little did I know at the time, this small child with a contagious smile and vibrant personality, along with the program he was a part of, would leave a tremendous impression on my heart for years to come.

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In fact, the little boy my memory so vividly recalled—now 28-years-old—can still be found atop a horse during lessons at the Robin Lightner Arena. To see him today as a thriving young man who continues developing his skills through JHTRA services makes me proud to be a part of an organization that has nurtured so many and demonstrated that people are not bound by their limitations.

RENEE HOLIK  
Volunteer & Board Member

After volunteering for two seasons, life took me away from the program I fell in love with so instantly. But, just as life has a funny way of doing, it led me back once again in 2016. All those years later, despite having grown to serve hundreds of individuals in a facility all its own, the program maintained the same enthusiasm and charm that it did that initial day at the Spring Creek Equestrian Center.

In the summer of 1995, while riding at the Spring Creek Equestrian Center, I came across a group of people and horses and inquired about the enthusiastic activity. Knowing the impact horses had on my own life, my interest was immediately peaked. That moment would be my introduction to JHTRA and the window into equine assisted therapeutic riding and its benefits.



## CONSIDER THESE ways to help

For 25 years, JHTRA has depended on the generosity of our community to ensure our life-enhancing services remain affordable and accessible for our participants. Your donation is essential to supporting our mission to empower, enrich and educate through horses. The ways to give to JHTRA are as diverse as our donors. Whether you want to make a difference for a rider, care for a therapy horse or leave a legacy, every contribution made impacts the lives of those we serve.

Please consider the following giving opportunities:



Become a monthly donor



Volunteer your time. Our biggest need is lesson volunteers.



Include JHTRA in your estate planning



Make an unrestricted gift to allow JHTRA to designate funds to the most crucial areas of need



Support our Monica Bell Memorial Scholarship Fund



Sponsor one of our four-legged healers



Support upcoming events – check our website throughout the year for information—[www.jhtra.org](http://www.jhtra.org)



Internet shoppers—Make purchases through [AmazonSmile.com](http://AmazonSmile.com) and name Jackson Hole Therapeutic Riding Association your charity of choice and JHTRA will get a percentage of every sale.

# giving from the heart

## RECOGNIZING JHTRA VOLUNTEERS

Over the last 25 years, thousands of individuals have joined the JHTRA family of volunteers. They have come from all walks of life, all parts of the world, and brought all levels of experience; but despite their differences, they have always shared one similarity—the desire to help others. And help is what they have done. Year after year, these selfless individuals have given their hearts and souls

to those we serve. They have dried crying eyes, they have held nervous hands, and they have applauded every milestone and achievement made. It is through their kindness and compassion that JHTRA has truly become a family. No matter if they have donated one hour or one hundred hours, every single kindhearted soul that has selflessly given their time and energy to JHTRA is deserving of a heartfelt thank you; for it is them that allow our riders to thrive and our program to flourish. So, on be-

*"He who wishes to secure the good of others has already secured his own."*

-Confucius

half of the JHTRA staff and Board of Directors, thank you for continuing to give from your heart to the betterment of others and thank you for being the backbone of JHTRA.

### 5 Reasons to Volunteer:

1. Help a cause that lights you up
2. Meet new people
3. Connect with your community
4. Develop new skills
5. Expand your horizon.



## BE THE DIFFERENCE YOU WANT TO SEE IN THIS WORLD.

The fees our riders pay cover only 10% of expenses. Your generous gift will allow us to continue providing exceptional, life-enhancing services at an affordable price.

TO DONATE ONLINE OR TO LEARN MORE:

[jhtra.org](http://jhtra.org)

PLEASE CONSIDER SUPPORTING JHTRA