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G.C.V.O

CanTRA Caller

The Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association | L'Association Canadienne d'Équitation Thérapeutique

Registered Canadian Charity # 11883 6543 RR0001

President's Message

On reflection, as we leave 2023 behind us, it has been a year of steadily rebuilding CanTRA therapeutic riding programs, following the years of COVID 19. Programs have been working to rebuild staffing levels, maintain their horses, find new volunteers and rebuild finances. This has in many cases taken considerable effort and resourcefulness.

As 2024 begins, CanTRA is implementing new ideas and working to strengthen existing programs. The new Strategic Plan for 2023 to 2028 was launched at the last CanTRA AGM and the Board and Committees will be working to realize the goals that have been outlined to help CanTRA grow and develop.

The Certification Committee has been reviewing the CanTRA Certification process. Have a look at the Instructor Certification news section on the next page to see the plans that have been put in place. The new system of certification includes the discontinuation of the Technical Evaluation, the strengthening of the CanTRA Mentor program and the appointment of qualified Volunteer Certification Coordinators for the various jurisdictions across Canada.

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The revised CanTRA Instructor's Manual is proving a great success with many copies having already been ordered and dispatched across Canada. This new document has received lots of positive comments and is integral to the new certification process.

The Accreditation Committee will be addressing the backlog of centre accreditation throughout 2024. Having been through accreditation with the program where I work, we have found this a strengthening and confidence-building process for everyone connected with the program. It helps ensure a consistent level of client service across the country, together with a high standard of care for the horses.

Many CanTRA centres are preparing to include equine facilitated therapy in their programming. The EFW Evaluation Panel is beginning to look at the portfolios of prospective CanTRA EFW Mental Health Professionals and Equine Specialists.

During 2024, CanTRA will be connecting with members through *Constant Contact*. Please look out for the messages coming through to your desktop or device. Please check your junk mail to make sure you are receiving the messages in your inbox. All CanTRA events will also be posted on to Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association Facebook page.

Stand by for information about the CanTRA 45th Anniversary Conference on May 2, 3 and 4, 2025 that will be taking place at Sunrise Therapeutic Riding & Learning Centre and Crieff Hills Retreat Centre in Guelph, Ontario. This will be to celebrate 45 years of CanTRA and a wonderful opportunity to meet together again in person.

We begin 2024 with optimism and plenty to celebrate. We wish each and everyone of you success in your endeavours!

Christine Ross
CanTRA President



Christine Ross with Emma

PHOTO CREDIT – ANDREW BIBBY



CanTRA is pleased to announce the 45TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE

will take place at Sunrise Therapeutic Riding & Learning Centre and Crieff Hills Retreat Centre, Puslinch, Ontario.

Friday May 2, 2025

Saturday May 3, 2025

Sunday May 4, 2025

The Sensational World of Therapeutic Riding

Angela Meyer OT Reg.(Ont.)

What do you love about horses and riding? Is it the invigorating feeling of trotting? The sight and sound of a whinnied greeting and head toss from your favourite friend? Or perhaps the comforting smell of the barn?

Individuals with sensory processing issues don't just love these sensations, they need them to feel calm, alert or well regulated. Sensory processing is the ability to organize and interpret information received through the senses to produce a response. These senses include sight, hearing, touch, taste, vestibular (movement) and proprioception (messages from our muscles and joints telling us where our bodies are in space).

Sensory Processing

Imagine being on a roller coaster. Do you crave going faster and higher or does the thought of it make you feel nauseous? Roller coasters provide fast visual, vestibular and proprioceptive input, and each person has their own threshold for these sensory experiences.

If the stimulation is below our threshold, we may actively seek out or wait for more. If the stimulation is above our threshold, we may move away or even shut down.

In our day-to-day lives, many people manage to cope with these thresholds by seeking what feels right while avoiding what makes them uncomfortable. However, for those with sensory processing issues, these behaviours may be ongoing and begin to interfere with their learning and stress levels. This challenge is often experienced by those with conditions or disorders connected to sensory issues, including autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), developmental delay, traumatic brain injury (TBI) and others.

Children who seek movement and touch to reach their sensory threshold may have difficulty sitting still in a classroom without fidgeting, getting up, tapping their feet or playing with their papers. This lack of focus can affect their ability to attend and hear what is being said by the teacher. Now, picture the same child sitting on a horse that is walking around an arena with an instructor giving directions! With this added sensory input, their threshold can be met, allowing the child to stay alert, focused and ready to learn.

What can be done to help?

Identifying sensory processing issues falls within the role of Occupational Therapy (OT). OTs have developed checklists and standardized assessments that gauge where an individual's sensory threshold is based on a variety of behaviours. **This is important information for therapeutic riding instructors when they develop lesson plans.**

For instance, if a rider seeks vestibular or proprioceptive input, the instructor and therapist may choose a horse with a choppy gait. They may include lots of walk-halt activities, serpentine movements or, eventually, introduce trotting. In addition, the rider may be encouraged to help get the horse ready for the lesson. This can involve activities like brushing, carrying heavy tack or pushing and pulling a cart, which are all great ways



L-R: Side-walker Jason G, rider Mia G, horse Toby, hidden side-walker Abineya A. Sunrise Therapeutic Riding & Learning Centre.

Imagine being on a roller coaster. Do you crave going faster and higher or does the thought of it make you feel nauseous?

to meet their sensory needs while learning. If a rider has a low threshold for sounds, a quieter environment will be provided. Sudden noises, such as a horse whinnying or rain on the metal arena roof, will be explained to the rider prior to the lesson to help them to cope. In cases where vision is a strength, particularly in children with ASD, the constant movement in their peripheral vision while riding meets a visual sensory need. For these riders, learning may also be enhanced with toys that light up, bright pictures displayed around the arena or strategically-placed mirrors.

Is therapeutic riding simply a fun leisure activity?

If you ask the rider, the answer is yes! Children with sensory processing issues look forward to their riding experience because it is just plain fun! This is because they feel alert, well-regulated and calm when their sensory needs are being met. Both parents and children appreciate that therapeutic riding lessons are structured around a typical leisure activity rather than traditional therapy. Parents and instructors always agree: when the rider's sensory processing needs are met, learning happens and, with it, brings giggles, laughter and pure joy to their faces!

Angela Meyer has been a consultant Occupational Therapist at Sunrise Therapeutic Riding & Learning Centre (Puslinch, ON) since 2006. She is also a member of the CanTRA Medical Advisory Committee.

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L-R: Angela Meyer holding the ball, side-walker Jason G (hidden), rider Mia G, side-walker Abineya A, Leader Larissa P, horse Toby. Sunrise Therapeutic Riding & Learning Centre.

INSTRUCTOR CERTIFICATION NEWS

Candidate instructors have been increasingly well prepared for some time now, resulting in a large percentage of candidates achieving their instructor certification at the Technical Evaluation. This has led to the CanTRA Board of Directors approving the Certification Committee's recommendation to discontinue the Technical Evaluation segment of the Instructor Certification process, effective January 2024.

Candidates will now be given additional mentoring support through webinars/clinics, and by providing an increased number of CanTRA certified mentors available to assist candidates, either in person or virtually.

CanTRA has also appointed volunteer Certification Coordinators in jurisdictions across the country, who will be in regular contact with the programs in

their respective jurisdictions to answer questions and assist the Certification Administrator, and the Certification Committee Chair. Their names and contact information appear in this newsletter.

CanTRA Examination Centres across the country have been asked to provide exam dates for spring and fall 2024 and these will be publicized on the CanTRA website and directly to members through Constant Contact, the new CanTRA communication system.

For all questions related to Instructor Certification and for the current Candidate Instructor application form, please contact Certification Administrator, Eliane Trempe in the Quebec, CanTRA Head Office hub at ctr1@golden.net or phone 1-450-556-1062

CanTRA Volunteer Certification Coordinators & Contact Information

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Accreditation News

Following the COVID Pandemic we are very behind with CanTRA member centres receiving their accreditation updating.

We were able to successfully complete some accreditation virtually during the pandemic and the decision has been made to continue with this system for all regular member centres, but remain with on-site visits for all Examination Centres.

The following are established examination centres, plus (where indicated): are receiving updating accreditation due to moving to new facilities and/or changes in Instructor personnel.

List of CanTRA Exam Centres

December 2023

British Columbia

- Comox Valley - BI/BI-2 due to arena size. (Teg Harper)
- Cowichan TRA - all levels Exam & Training Centre (Jane James)
- Valley TRA - pending accreditation - all levels (Pippa Hodge)
- Creston Valley - BI/BI-2 (Christine Ross)

Manitoba

- Urban Stable - BI/BI-2 (Hayley Edwards)

Ontario

- TEAD - all levels - (Hilary Webb)
- Sunrise - Exam and Residential Training Centre - all levels (Suzy Bender)

Quebec

- Centre Équi-Libre - pending accreditation - (new facility) all levels (Kendra F. Stronach)
- Les Amis de Joey - pending accreditation - (moved) all levels (Eliane Trempe)

New Brunswick

- Shining Horizons - BI/BI-2 (Paula Bernard)



PHOTO CREDIT - CANTRA

UPCOMING WEBINARS IN 2024

CanTRA will be presenting webinars for CanTRA Members and Certification Candidates throughout 2024. Watch for information about the webinars on Constant Contact and the Canadian Therapeutic Riding Facebook page.

The CanTRA Guelph Head office hub will continue to dispatch all manuals and other educational materials, process memberships, insurance and accreditation administration. Presently the Guelph Head Office phone is being monitored daily by Eliane Trempe, Certification Administrator, and the email daily by JoAnn Thompson Franklin, CanTRA Treasurer.

All educational materials are being dispatched by Ann Caine, Accreditation Chair. Orders through the Guelph Head Office only by email to ctra@golden.net. Once a new Guelph Head Office Administrator is hired, this will be communicated by Constant Contact and on the CanTRA Facebook page.

DONATIONS TO CanTRA

Generous financial support to CanTRA from

Dr. Dorrit de Demeter

Shelene Williams

Jane James

Dr Bob and Arlene Wright

Don McDermott

Daphne Davey

Margaret Tibbo

Daena VanAgteren

In Memorial Donations to CanTRA from

JoAnn Franklin in memory of Aileen Wright

JoAnn Franklin in memory of Ross and Marian Chartley

Nicolas Reilly in memory of Ann Reilly

Sarah Lawrence in memory of Dr Gillian Lawrence

Gia Zopatti in memory of Lillian Alexandra Newhouse

Kathrin Turchin in memory of Linda Turchin

Ann Caine in memory of Donna Davies

Daphne Davey in memory of Donna Davies

Doug and Audrey Sandrin in memory of Donna Davies

Wanda VandenBroek in memory of Beverley Archer

Donating the Easy Way!

Would you like to make a donation to CanTRA? Go the CanadaHelps way! www.canadahelps.org Type in "Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association" in the "I want to give to" space. Your tax-deductible donation will support children and adults with disabilities right across the country!

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Mission Statement

The Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association - promoting excellence throughout Canada in therapeutic riding and equine-assisted therapies through certification, accreditation and education.