

Newsletter

Spring 2021

# Elisabeth Curtis Centre Riding for the Disabled

Charity No. 1137217; Company No. 7302917



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# From the Chair...



Sadly since our last newsletter, the Centre has had to remain closed to our participants and the majority of our volunteers. Whilst, we had reached the point where we had received sign off from RDA National Office, that we were able to re-open just before the November lockdown, unfortunately the rising number of cases of Covid-19 meant it wasn't sensible to proceed with our plans at

that time. The hard work put in by our coaches and trustees will not be wasted though, it meant we were in a better position to start moving towards re-opening following the end of the most recent lockdown. We have now started to welcome a number of volunteers back to the Centre for some training, and have just started to welcome back our participants for some initial meet and greet sessions, which is a huge step forward for the Centre.

While there is hopeful news in this newsletter, I do also have sad news to share, as the Centre has said very sad farewells to a number of long term supporters, volunteers and one of our coaches and trustees. Each of these pieces of news has been made more difficult by the fact that we aren't together as sessions and committees so haven't had the opportunity to share memories and remember these individuals as we would wanted to. I do though want to take this opportunity to extend my thoughts and sympathies to all those who have lost friends and family members, and as trustees we will be looking at how best we can recognise and remember those that we have sadly

## **From the Chair...**

lost over recent months.

While the Centre had been closed, our ponies have been very well cared for by our grooms, Anna and Kristina, with the support of Gina, our Pony Welfare Officer. I would like to say a huge thank you to Anna, Gina and Kristina for all their hard work, especially during the challenging winter weather conditions. I would also like to thank Kyle and the volunteers who have stepped in to provide support when our grooms were taking some well deserved annual leave. I also want to welcome Midnight Blue Equestrian to the team, who have joined the Centre to provide leave cover, and thank them for all their support.

I would also like to thank my fellow trustees and our coaches who have continued to work hard behind the scenes while the Centre has been closed. In addition, I would like to welcome some new members of our Management Committee who are all very welcome to the team.

Of course, while we had to remain closed, we did still have to cover the costs related to running the Centre, feeding and caring for the ponies, so we have been very grateful to everyone who has been sending donations, either of money or of items from our Amazon Wishlist. Your continued support is really appreciated, especially at such a difficult time when lots of individuals, families and other charities are also struggling.

Sadly we are having to say farewell to Anna, as she is moving away from the area, I want to take this opportunity to thank Anna for her contribution to the Centre and wish her all the best for the future.

We hope that everyone continues to stay safe and well and we are very much looking forward to the time when we can welcome everyone back to the Centre.

**Victoria Liston**

*Chairman, Elisabeth Curtis Centre*

## **Why not take a look at our new and improved website!**

Meet the management and coaching teams, ponies, keep up to date on our committee minutes, find out ways to help and more!

**[www.elisabethcurtiscentre.co.uk](http://www.elisabethcurtiscentre.co.uk)**

### **The Elisabeth Curtis Centre Needs You!**

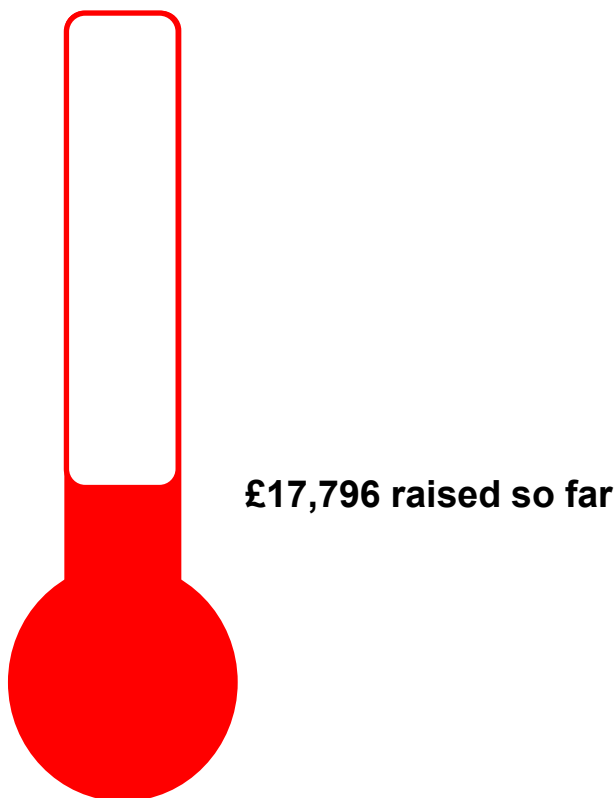
#### **Would you like to become more involved?**

- ⇒ Does helping with the Newsletter appeal to you? How about writing an article for the newsletter, or helping to produce the newsletter?
- ⇒ Perhaps fund-raising appeals to you? New suggestions are always welcome, as is help at our events.
- ⇒ There are plenty of other opportunities. Any help, in whatever form, will be greatly appreciated!

**If you can give us any help, please contact a member of the Management Committee**

## 2021 Fundraising Target

The Centre costs over £60,000 per year to run. An appeal page has been set up on our Virgin Money Giving page to collect donations and to track our progress towards this target. Here is how we are getting on so far;



This is an amazing total, but we do still have some way to go, so any donations towards this target are very gratefully received.

Donations can be made via the following link;

[Another 40 years - 2021 Fund \(virginmoneygiving.com\)](https://www.virginmoneygiving.com/another40years2021fund)

## **In Memory of Eileen Nash**

Eileen started volunteering on a Tuesday p.m. at about the time ECC was officially opened.

Eileen organised fundraising pony rides at local fetes and demonstration rides.

She was the first to take a rider to the Special Olympics where they were very successful.

Her rider's did well in their Grades and I think one even attained a gold.

Eileen subsequently had riders that qualified for the National Championships where they all did very well.

One of her riders even went on an RDA holiday in Portugal.

During the many years Eileen has been with the RDA she has served on various committees and has been Chairman as well as treasurer of the Centre and latterly a trustee.

She became press correspondent, gave talks on the Centre, County Chair, County Coach, Examiner, Countryside Challenge Judge and Trainee Adviser.

Paul Hooley was the ECC President and worked with Eileen for the good of the ECC. During his year as President of a local Rotary Group he awarded her the high accolade of a Paul Harris Fellowship for her work with the charity.

Liz Riding

## **Margaret Isherwood**

It is with great sadness that I am writing this after Margaret lost her life recently to a terminal illness.

Margaret joined the Wednesday afternoon session about 20 years ago. She was already a busy lady with many other commitments, including looking after her grandchildren, but she was willing to make some free time to volunteer at the Elisabeth Curtis Centre. She, Moira, and Betty Hewitt used to come together.

She became an invaluable member of the team. Former Wednesday afternoon Coach, Liz Riding, remembers Margaret as, "quick to learn the 'ropes' but it took us a while to train Margaret to lead a horse correctly - not like a dog!"

Margaret's favourite pony to lead in the early days was JJ. He was on long term loan to us and had been a fellow Turvey resident by coincidence.

However as time went on, Margaret was happy to lead the bigger horses, which, with her petite stature was no easy task.

Always willing, she was good with the riders and popular with the other volunteers.

She had such a sunny disposition, it was like a ray of sunshine when she entered the Centre. Always one to have a good joke, sometimes at her own expense. Always a ray of sunlight even on the dullest of days. Her fellow volunteers remember Margaret as always cheerful with a fabulous laugh, warm and kind, always with a story to tell, often involving her grandchildren, of whom she was very proud.

She was also good at getting our well-earned cups of tea/coffee ready which was much appreciated by all.

Since her diagnosis and treatment Margaret did manage to come back at least once. It was so good to see her again. We had missed her sparkle.

Our thoughts are with her husband Tony and all the family at this sad time.

Gina Dunn

Coach Wednesday PM

# From the Coaches...

Since March and before Equine Training (ET) sessions were allowed later in the lockdown, Gina, who is also the ECC Pony Welfare Officer, and Kristina and Anna, the ECC grooms, have spent quite a bit of time with the ponies, lunging, doing various loose schooling exercises, such as pole work, grid work and even a bit of trotting and cantering to get them moving! Like all of us, they need their exercise too! There are some lovely photos and short videos you can see on the ECC Facebook page. Even if you are not on Facebook, (like me), you can still access the page and see the footage of the ponies having fun exercising and relaxing out in the field. Thank you to the grooms and others for sharing pictures on the Facebook page.

Gina and the grooms have also spent time ensuring the ponies wellbeing with such things as trimming feathers to help with mud reduction and trimming manes and tails too, to keep them looking neat, tidy and manageable! Lolly enjoyed her 'pedicure' from Gina who invented a foot rest for her! Grateful thanks to Kristina, Anna and Gina for their dedication to the ponies.





## **From the Coaches...**

Kyle has devoted some of his spare time to tidying up the office and other areas. Initially this was for a re-opening of the centre in the New Year but of course this has had to put on hold..... Anyway, following both Government and RDA National Office guidelines on Covid security, the centre is now as Covid secure as it can be and when the time comes that we can get back to business, you might notice a few differences.

Kyle has also spent a considerable amount of time consolidating and updating the ECC documents and procedures onto a single shared platform. Most of our documents and procedures can be accessed electronically and have been stored on a server making them much easier to share. All the coaches and trustees have access to a dedicated email address which makes it easier to contact each other and keep updated with administration. Both the Coaches Riding Committee and the Trustees Management Committee have been meeting regularly since March, on Microsoft Teams. Thanks Kyle!

I am now responsible for managing the Waiting List, which is now on a spreadsheet and can be shared and updated with other coaches! It is reassuring to know that there are many people who would like to make use of the ECC and join in the sessions and there are over twenty names on the Waiting List. We should never forget the benefits that the ponies and the RDA offers to its riders but unfortunately at the moment, like most RDA centres, the ECC cannot take on any new riders. We are all looking forward to the day when we can restart our activities.

**Charlotte Dunham**

*Monday AM Coach*

## **Derek Woods ( 1927 - 2020)**

It is with great regret that I write to inform you of the death of Derek Woods.

Derek joined the Elisabeth Curtis Centre in the early 2000s, looking for company and a distraction from his grief at the recent loss of a much loved partner. He became a volunteer with the Wednesday afternoon session, with riders from the former Rainbow School.

Derek could lead a pony but preferred side helping with all the riders. He had a particular affinity for one rider who was mute, but always had a lovely smile for Derek.

Derek enjoyed the camaraderie of the Wednesday helpers and thoroughly enjoyed social events such as the Christmas dinner. When he decided to move to Suffolk, he was greatly missed by the Wednesday team.

But working as a volunteer was only part of Derek's involvement with ECC. He began making financial donations when he realised what an amazing place the Centre is, and how expensive it is to run. When he moved away he began sending annual donations which gradually got bigger and bigger. Eventually his contribution reached almost six figures. We were very happy to make him an Honorary Life President and he was delighted with this title.

He was our most generous supporter to date, possibly for ever?

I kept in touch with Derek from the time he moved to Suffolk,

sending “Thank You” letters. birthday cards, small gifts and cards at Christmas. Derek would phone me regularly to say thank you and ask about the Centre. I continued to be in contact with him even after I left the Centre myself. It was the lack of a call after Christmas that alerted me to the fact that something was amiss.

In the Autumn of 2019 Derek became ill and was hospitalised. He was never well enough again to return to his own home and moved into a care home. He died there in April 2020, just three months short of his 94th birthday.

Thank you, Derek. Your support of the Elisabeth Curtis Centre has been outstanding.

Jan Tozer

### **Iva Barr BEM**

We were also saddened to hear the news of the death of Iva Barr last year. Whilst Iva is most recognised for her marathon running achievements, she was also a much valued volunteer at the Centre, helping on a Tuesday morning, and those who volunteered alongside her have fond memories of her. Our condolences go to Iva’s friends and family.

# Pony welfare update...



When writing for our last newsletter, I was looking forward to the return of our riders, and I hadn't imagined that all these months later, we would still be waiting to welcome our riders back! Although life at the Elisabeth Curtis Centre has been very different since we closed in March 2020, the care and management of the ponies continues.

Despite the ponies not having their normal work routine, they still require daily care and routine treatments. The farrier has continued his 6 weekly visits, and the vet has regularly attended for routine vaccinations and dental treatments. In September, the saddler and osteopath visited the Centre. Ponies tend to change shape throughout the year, and the saddler usually visits twice a year to check that the saddles correctly fit each pony. This involves the saddler making adjustments to the saddles, or in some cases, changing the saddle a pony uses. The osteopath treated all the ponies, and advised on individual exercises for each pony, to support their treatments. Our ponies have also been enjoying, and benefiting from equine sports massage treatments, kindly provided by Alice Mills. In January, the ponies had their annual health check, in which the vet checks each pony's heart, lungs, eyes, weight, soundness and general condition.

Due to COVID 19, a great deal of time and effort was put into the introduction of infection control measures at the Centre. We then needed to familiarise the ponies to these measures. This included introducing the ponies to people wearing face masks

## **Pony welfare update...**

and shields, and to the scent of hand sanitiser, and the products used for sanitising the tack and stable equipment.

Following six months of not being ridden, the ponies resumed ridden exercise in September. We rely on several volunteers to exercise our ponies. The focus was on getting the ponies fit, ready for reopening the Centre. The ponies enjoyed being ridden again and by December they were all looking fit and ready for the Centre to reopen, and then we went into tier four, at which point we had to suspend ridden exercise. The ponies were finally able to resume ridden exercise in late March, and we are currently working on their fitness in preparation for the return of our participants. Thank you as always, to our dedicated volunteers who support us in exercising and training the ponies.

The early part of this year brought some very challenging weather. We had so much rain, and some snow, the fields became extremely wet and muddy. We decided to temporarily stable the ponies overnight to give them some respite and protect the grazing. Our grooms, Kristina and Anna, worked hard to accommodate the changes in the ponies' routines. Following nearly 3 weeks of being stabled overnight, the ponies returned to living out again.

Our new pony, Bobby, was officially signed over to the Centre at the end of October. Introducing a new pony to the herd can take time as the ponies adjust to changes in the herd dynamics. Bobby has settled in well and enjoys being part of the herd. Bobby has made good progress, and we look forward to introducing him to our participants.

With restrictions easing, we have finally been able to welcome

back some of our volunteers for training sessions. These sessions have been much enjoyed by all, including the ponies! I am really looking forward to seeing the return of our participants, and seeing our ponies return to the wonderful work that they do.

Gina Dunn

Pony Welfare Officer



# Thank you...

Thank you to everyone for the continued support with donations and also purchases from our Amazon Wishlist.



## Fundraising

March 2020 saw the (temporary) cessation of face-to-face fundraising that we were so accustomed to. Optimistically, we thought this would be for a couple of months or so, and by summer it would be 'business as usual.' How wrong could we be?

As the Fundraising Group had planned a 2020 programme including several different events, we were looking forward to a busy and profitable summer! Different events, could attract different volunteers, was our thinking? Hopefully, we will be able to pick up where we left off and run these in 2021/2022.

We continued with our Collecting Tins in local shops and, surprisingly, we've done better than expected! Other fundraising has largely been online. Considerable amounts have been raised from online donations and we have been fortunate with generous purchases from our Amazon Wish List. Donations, large and small, have helped tide us over the difficult months. Although the group isn't familiar with on-line fundraising, with 'a little help from our friends' various initiatives are set up, so we have online sales of jewellery and various other social events arranged!

'Mologic,' based at Thurleigh Business Park, has raised money for us, and Sharnbrook W.I. is planning to fundraise for us when they can.

Looking to the future with fingers tightly crossed, we plan to hold an Open Day/ Autumn Fair held largely outside; this is planned for Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> October. The format will have to be different and, if any Covid restrictions are still in place, we must adhere to the rules. Of course, there are so many unknowns at



the moment, but we need to have a goal, something to work towards.

We have recently had a new member join the team, Veronica Bradley, she is most welcome and it will be great to share her ideas.

We have started meeting up again and will continue to do so, combining face to face and Zoom.

Do keep an eye on the ECC website, to see if there is a fundraising event that you can take part in! Looking forward to getting to the 'new normal.'

Ros Ward



## **The Elisabeth Curtis Centre Spring Online Show**

We are pleased to announce the first Elisabeth Curtis Centre online show.

Class 1—Best Spring photo

### **Dogs**

Class 2—Best puppy dog eyes

Class 3—Best action shot

Class 4—Best fancy dress

Class 5—Best rescue dog

Class 6—The dog the judges most want to take home

### **Horses**

Class 7—Best 'show' photo

Class 8— Best 'home' photo

Class 9—Best action shot

Class 10—Funniest moment

Class 11— Best Friends – Horse and owner selfie

### **RDA Participants special classes**

Class 12—Favourite RDA moment

Class 13—Favourite RDA pony photo

Class 14—Pet the judge would most want to take home

### **Any pets**

Class 15—Best action shot



Class 16—Best rescue animal

Class 17—Funniest moment

Entry fee—suggested donation of £3 per class. Fees can be paid via Virgin money giving;

[Elisabeth Curtis Centre online show \(virginmoneygiving.com\)](https://virginmoneygiving.com)

or can be paid directly into the Centre's account—please include your name in the payment reference so we can link the payment to your entry.

Photo plus completed entry form to be emailed to;

[fundraising@elisabethcurtiscentre.co.uk](mailto:fundraising@elisabethcurtiscentre.co.uk)

Entry form can be downloaded [here](#)

**Access [HERE](#)**

Entries close on Wednesday 11th August and winners will be contacted shortly after this date and announced on our website and Facebook page.

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