

Heather Dyble's success is but one of many achieved by the Powell River Therapeutic Riding Association's program. Riders with physical, emotional, social, and learning challenges receive multiple benefits. It is an empowering form of therapy.



In addition to their Adult Riding Program, of which Heather is one of 15+ participants, The Powell River Therapeutic Riding Association serves 60+ riders each week from Preschool to Grade 12.

PRTRA acknowledges financial support from the Province of BC



Please help!



As the program has no permanent source of funding, the Association is continually seeking donations. Horses cost money to feed, staff have to be paid, and there are building upkeep costs.

Please help if you can by sending your donation to:

Powell River Therapeutic Riding
4356 Myrtle Road,
Powell River, BC V8A 0T2

If you would like a tax receipt (donations of \$10 or more), please include your full name and mailing address. Memorial donations welcome. Please call 604 485-0177 for info on monthly electronic donations.

www.prtherapeuticriding.com



Therapeutic Riding Tips her Balance:

Heather's Story



"Meet it and beat it" is the mantra that Heather Dyble, aged 61, has used since she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis twenty-seven years ago. It has served this gutsy lady well. Despite her debilitating disease, using grit and determination, she has not only found ways to halt the deterioration of some of her motor functions but also to improve them. Sometimes she needs a little extra help.

At first she tried different exercises and even Tai Chi, but her balance continued to spiral downwards. She would not give up. At that time, she walked with two canes or pushed a wheelchair, which she refused to use in the conventional manner.

Get rid of the canes!

Eight years ago, a physiotherapist at an MS support group meeting suggested she try therapeutic riding. Equine movement is multidimensional. It is variable, rhythmic and repetitive. The horse provides a dynamic base of support, making it an excellent tool for increasing trunk strength, control, balance, building overall postural strength, endurance, addressing weight bearing, and motor issues.

Every week since then she has ridden a series of different horses. In the indoor arena, she walks up a gentle ramp until she is high enough mount the horse. A volunteer leads the horse, and one more walks on each side to support her. Once settled in place, she tells the horse to "walk on" to where the riding instructor performs a safety check on the tack, and ensures Heather's posture is correct.

She and two other riders and their teams ride round the arena to warm up while the instructor watches to be sure they are comfortable. Heather has tried several

saddles but the most effective is a sheepskin. The warmth of the horse and its rhythmic movements help relax her tight muscles so she is better able to strengthen her core and thighs.



Outside the arena the team rides along the quiet winding forest trails lined with mosses and ferns, smelling the fresh air and the cedar and hemlock boughs on the towering trees. It takes about half an hour to circle the property which at different times is used by the PR Trail Riders Equine Club, Farmer's Market and Archery Club, so there is a lot to look at. Although mostly on the flat, some areas involve going up and down gentle slopes so she is continually correcting her posture.

All this has definitely been worth the effort. Her gait has improved enough that when at home she walks unaided. This is a great freedom. She states her balance has improved from a 6 to an 8 on a scale of 10. On April 7, 2013 she plans to walk the five km Powell River MS Walkathon with no canes and no wheelchair.



She credits therapeutic riding with much of her success. "I really appreciate, respect and admire the efforts of the staff and committed volunteers managing and directing the program," she said. "I am determined to restore my balance." In addition, she repeats this affirmation several times a day and has recently begun a core strengthening course with an experienced personal trainer. Never will she give up.