

RIDE HIGH Newsletter

Spring 2018



Our 10 year celebration...



This year Ride High will celebrate its 10th birthday. I can scarcely believe that what started as a pilot project with just six children back in 2008, has

now helped to change the lives of over 1000 disadvantaged children and young people.

What better way to start our celebratory year than to move into our new permanent home at the Ride High Equestrian Centre! I'm pleased to report that we've settled in well and our children are already benefiting from improved facilities, increased space and first-class lessons.

The future is certainly looking bright and the next decade holds just as much promise now that we have the means to work with more children, and to offer additional opportunities such as work experience, apprenticeships and employment to our young people.

I hope you enjoy reading our newsletter and discovering how, with your support we are transforming young lives right here in Milton Keynes. We can only do what we do because of people like you so if you'd like to get involved (and there are so many ways to do so) please do contact us.

Yours,

Rachel Medill MBE
Ride High Founder and CEO

Exciting times ahead

Ben had a history of low mood, anxiety and self-harm which persisted despite other treatments such as cognitive behavioural therapy and anti-depressants. He had few coping strategies and suffered severe panic attacks. He was increasingly isolated and found it hard to leave home.

His love of animals meant he was very keen to come to Ride High and his favourite ponies helped him to keep coming, even in his low spells. He continued to be shy and withdrawn in the clubroom until he started working on a particular project which helped him to explore his hidden self.

In the course of that project he and other members of the group found they had things in common and discovered things that they admired in each other. This helped them to open up, share things that mattered to them and form friendships within the group. Ben built on his riding skills, increased his confidence and offered his support to various Ride High events. He shared his understanding of horses with less experienced members and became a welcoming support to new members.

Ben will be leaving us soon as he reaches his 18th birthday. He has exciting times ahead as he is off to study at university in September.



Ride High makes a splash at MK Swimathon

Ride High entered two teams into the Milton Keynes Rotary Swimathon in March. 'Seahorses' and 'Grandsplashanol' were amongst 96 teams diving in to raise money for nine Milton Keynes charities – one of which was Ride High.

A combination of Ride High children, volunteers and staff swam for 55 minutes. It was tough but we had a great time and between us swam over 210 lengths! A great team effort for a great cause! We'll report back on how much we raised in the summer...



"Ride High helped me a lot with my confidence and opening up to people about my feelings. I feel much calmer and happier in myself". Ride High leaver, aged 14.



Finding a friend

Stephen was struggling settling into a new school; he was being bullied and his confidence and self-esteem was very low. He started to turn some of the bullying strategies used against him on other children so became increasingly isolated. His behaviour at home, where he lived in the care of relatives, was also a cause for concern.

When Stephen joined Ride High aged 13 he was very anxious about how he would get on with the rest of the group, but his nerves quickly settled when he interacted with one of the ponies. The pony was gentle and trusting, he was interested in Stephen and accepted any amount of attention; he helped him to feel welcome and safe. What the pony started, the other members of the group continued: they welcomed him and quickly found they had things in common, including a sense of humour.

Stephen formed very close, supportive friendships which extended beyond Ride High. Together they completed projects which explored their sense of self, nurtured their confidence and self-esteem and encouraged them to do things for others.

One year on Stephen has grown so much in confidence and his desire to share his love of Ride High that he joined a residential trip to the New Forest and became an Ambassador for Ride High, often speaking to visitors, being interviewed for television broadcasts and speaking to guests at the Ride High Ball.

Ride High magic enchants Milton Keynes

The Ride High 'Enchanted' Fundraising Ball in January was a magical success enjoyed by over 290 guests. The annual event, now in its 8th year was sponsored by Milton Keynes-based firms, RSM UK, Sysmex UK and Imagine Presentations. The total raised will fund 27 children to attend Ride High for one year – quite possibly a year that will change their lives forever.

Magician David Penn amazed guests with his world class illusions and international band iPop provided the entertainment. But it was the Ride High children that made it a truly magical evening. A current member of Ride High, Louise Steen took to the stage and spoke confidentially about her experience at Ride High and how it has changed her life. Louise concluded her speech by reading her own poem (The Ride High Effect) and there wasn't a dry eye in the room.



New patron announced

Also at the Ball Rachel announced actress and author Sue Jameson as a new patron for Ride High. To mark the patronage Sue, who will join existing patron Jeremy Vine took to the stage and spoke of her admiration for Ride High. Sue who has visited Ride High on a few occasions said *"I am tremendously proud and honoured to have been asked to be a patron of Ride High. I am constantly amazed by the work the charity does to change the lives of young people and I look forward to supporting them in the future"*.



The Ride High Effect by Louise Steen (aged 13)

I instantly fell in love with Ride High
I didn't even have to try
Even when times were bad
And I couldn't stop feeling sad.

They find my true smile
Although it does take a while
But they have the power
To change my frown to a smile in just an hour.

Because that's what they do
They are here for me and they are here for you
With a reassuring smile
That stretches wider than a mile.



Save the date* The 2019
Ride High Ball will take place on
Saturday 26th January 2019



Keep in touch

From time to time we like to get in touch to keep you up-to-date with news from Ride High via our newsletter and emails. Due to changes in data protection regulations (enforced by the General Data Protection Regulation 2018) we require you to 'opt in' to consent to receive future communications from us.

To 'opt-in' please complete our online form at: www.ridehigh.org/keep-in-touch or send a letter or email clearly confirming your contact details and the best way to communicate with you to Ride High using the contact details on the reverse of this newsletter.

If we do not hear from you, we may be unable to send newsletters and other communication to you in the future.

Ride High is committed to protecting your personal information. Please visit our Privacy Policy on our website for details on how we collect, use and protect your personal information.



Recipe for raising funds...

Dine High 5th-8th July

Our annual fundraising campaign 'Dine High' is the perfect opportunity for you to gather friends, family and colleagues together for good food and good fun and raise vital funds for Ride High at the same time. Breakfast, brunch, afternoon tea or lunch – whatever you choose just ask your guests to show their appreciation by making a donation to Ride High.

INGREDIENTS

- Ride High Fundraising pack
- Food
- Fun
- Friends

METHOD

1. Order your fundraising pack
2. Decide on your event
3. Select a date and location
4. Invite your guests
5. Enjoy your event
6. Return your money to Ride High.

Just visit www.ridehigh.org/dine-high to get started.

New home for Ride High



2018 has already proven to be an eventful year for Ride High.

In January we welcomed back our members, full of excitement and anticipation about their first sessions at the charity's new home at the Ride High Equestrian Centre right in the heart of Milton Keynes.

To begin with the children were given a tour of our beautiful 37 acre site and were introduced to their new riding instructors and soon-to-be friends, the horses Shrek, Barny, Bonnie and Peggy to name a few. They also enjoyed their first sessions in the new clubroom. A couple of months on and it's as if they have always been here.

"It's amazing, I love it here. We have so much more space and it already feels like home. I can't wait to come back again next week!"

As well as being the charity's new permanent home, the Ride High Equestrian Centre is also a riding school open to the public. Over the next five years the profits from this social enterprise will fund a proportion of the charity's costs; helping to ensure that Ride High is still here, transforming children's lives for decades to come.

To coincide with our move, we have also recently launched our new virtual home: the new Ride High website (www.ridehigh.org). The website was created by local company WSaaS – Web Solutions as a Service, after we were chosen by the public to win their MK50 charity competition last year. Please take a look and let us know what you think!



Volunteer Spotlight Lisa Saunders



Lisa has been volunteering with Ride High for about 10 months.

"I had been looking for a volunteering opportunity for my day off on a Friday and Ride High seemed perfect as it combined my love of horses and my desire to help people.

I have been around horses since a very young age so I really enjoy helping the children to find their confidence with them. I help the children in my group (Shadowfax) to get kitted out with hats and boots, to mount and dismount and lead the horses in the school. In the clubroom sessions we have a great time doing crafts or projects; we talk about the riding lesson and in doing so help to develop the children's communication and social skills.

Every week brings about different highlights as the children achieve new skills and grow in confidence – for me to see them reach their goals is fantastic and so rewarding.

Volunteering at Ride High has definitely been a positive experience for me. Some of the children really struggle at first but over time it is clear that they benefit from the friendly and supportive environment at Ride High.

Helping at Ride High every week has definitely boosted my own confidence and general well-being and I would encourage anyone considering volunteering to just 'go for it'! It is a marvellous organisation and I am very proud to be involved.

Everyone is super friendly and there are many ways to help. I have even signed up as part of the Ride High relay team in the MK Marathon this year! **Come and join us"!**

Welcome to new supporters



Abbeymill Homes

We are excited to announce that two organisations; Scotts of Thrapston, a leading stabling manufacturer and Abbeymill Homes a property developer of character homes in Bucks, Beds, Northants and Oxfordshire, have agreed to support Ride High.

Both organisations are funding two children to attend Ride High this year. Scotts of Thrapston will also be renovating one of our stables with some of the Ride High children.

Ride High's important work with disadvantaged children would not be possible without the amazing support and generosity of our corporate partners.



Celebrating Success!

Congratulations to two of our young ladies – Becca and Emma for being accepted to study at University in September. Becca received offers for all five courses she applied to and has decided to accept an unconditional place at Winchester to study Psychology with Child Development. Emma – now a volunteer will be studying Veterinary Medicine at Harper Adams or Veterinary Physiotherapy at Nottingham!

We are very proud of their achievements and wish them lots of luck for the future.



Ponies bring out positivity

At just 14 Melissa was self-harming and talked of suicide. Academically she was very bright but her low self-worth made it impossible for her to recognise the many positive qualities that others saw in her and she couldn't find a way to change that.

When Melissa met the ponies she was worried that she wouldn't be able to ride well but her gentle, considerate manner meant they responded well to her and her riding skills progressed quickly.

In the clubroom she met another member who had similar problems and they formed a friendship which gave both of them confidence. They looked forward to their riding lessons and to being together and they worked through the programme learning to recognise positives in themselves.

Melissa is now working towards achieving the final stage (Expert) of the Ride High Award – this is a huge achievement.

Well done Melissa!



It costs just £3,500 to change a life forever - please help us change more lives like Melissa's.

DONATE TODAY: www.ridehigh.org/makeadonation

Thank you for your support



A BIG thank you to all our supporters:

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