

RIDE HIGH Newsletter

Spring 2022



Spring optimism...



It's fair to say that the last two years have been a challenge for everyone.

In particular, the pandemic has resulted in a significant rise in children presenting with poor mental health and wellbeing.

Consequently, we're under increasing pressure to support more children in need in our community. However, I feel a genuine sense of optimism about what we have already and can continue to achieve together this year... and the stories you'll read in our latest newsletter are just a small testament to this.

Emily, Finn and Emilija are representing 80 children who are currently benefiting from attending Ride High, and the difference we see in all of them from week to week is astounding. So as the days become longer and lighter, we continue to work to create more opportunities for children to make their futures brighter.

As always, we can only do this with your help, so I'd like to say a special thank you for your support thus far and invite you to continue your support in whatever way you can.

We have some great events planned this year including our Cycle Challenge and our first ever Charity Golf Day. But there are so many other ways to get involved - from volunteering to mentoring, from donating to shopping on Amazon Smile.

Whatever you choose your actions will help to change the lives of the most vulnerable children forever.

Olivia Sugdon

Olivia Sugdon
CEO, Ride High

Turning stress into success



Emily 17, was moving into her final year of A'Levels when she was referred to Ride High by the crisis team at MK Hospital. It was a very stressful time, and she was struggling with her mental health and her Tourette syndrome.

As she nears the end of her Ride High membership, Emily is able to reflect on how her experience has helped her to put things into perspective and to manage her anxieties... *"Coming to Ride High has allowed me a couple of hours each week to take my mind off everything, and to focus on something positive. Spending time with the horses has helped calmed me down and my Tourette's is much better with a big distraction!"*



Emily has also made friends at Ride High, and it's clear to see that she now feels happy and relaxed when she's with us. She's taken part in additional trips too and we're very proud of her for representing Ride High at our Charity Ball. What's particularly encouraging is how Emily feels just as confident in everyday life now as she does when she's at Ride High. She tells us how Ride High has helped give her the confidence to plan for the future - and she has just secured herself an unconditional offer to university. *"I'm hoping to study psychology and I'd like a career in therapy because it's really helped me"*.

Emily is such a thoughtful member of Ride High. She's so grateful for having the opportunity to attend and we're equally grateful for her dedication and determination. Well done Emily!

Out and about again



Now covid restrictions have been lifted we are excited to be able to reintroduce opportunities for our members to get 'out and about' again.

Fun and educational activities and visits are an important part of our programme and allow our members to gain new experiences and be inspired, to overcome anxieties, gain confidence, to achieve things they can be proud of... and to simply have fun.

In February half-term we took members for an action-packed visit to Newmarket, which included a tour of the National Stud and the National Racing Museum where they had a go on a racing simulator! Members also visited Marshall Amps where they received a fabulous tour of their state-of-the-art recording studio and factory. The children presented the MD of Marshall Amps with the Children's Artwork that they kindly purchased at the Ride High Ball. We're now busy planning an action-packed activity programme for the summer. This will give the children something extra-special to look forward to, and happy memories to treasure.

"Thank you for all you do. He was so proud of himself when he got home, and rightly so. Thank you for giving him this opportunity. You have no idea how much he looks forward to coming to Ride High each week. It's something he will treasure forever." Parent of a Ride High member.

Our Record Breaking Ball



Back in January the Ride High Masquerade Ball raised an **INCREDIBLE £140,000** – a record-breaking amount, which will help us to support in the region of **300 vulnerable and disadvantaged children in 2022** - more than we've ever helped in one year before!



Brandon

The ballroom was dressed in golden curtains and candelabras and guests added to the décor by wearing beautiful venetian masks. After such a long time apart, it was a wonderful occasion to bring all our supporters back together. Guests enjoyed a four-course meal alongside entertainment which included dancing the night away to live band Elevation, and our infamous Live Auction!

Thank you to everyone who made this amazing achievement possible: our sponsor Sysmex UK, our wonderful guests, those who donated prizes to our Live and Silent Auctions and raffle and those who bid and won them; Imagine Presentations, Collingwood Design, This is my Film, Kate Everall Photography, all of our amazing volunteers, including Lisa who sang two beautiful songs, and last but not least, our two ex-Ride High members, Brandon and Alex, who bravely stood in front of hundreds of people to share their stories - they were absolute stars and showed us all what is possible.

In the Spotlight

Volunteering at Ride High is a great way to give back to the community, but it's also personally very rewarding. Diana pictured below, has been volunteering with us for eight months now, read what she has to say about her experience.

"When we lived in Glasgow (many years ago!) I used to help at Riding for the Disabled and I loved it. When I discovered that Ride High were looking for volunteers, I thought that I would enjoy that too and that it would be the perfect opportunity to give back to the community. I have always loved horses, and combining being with horses and doing something of value is perfect for me.

Each week I lead the ponies while the children ride and in doing so help to ensure their safety. I give them lots of encouragement and build a relationship with them. I am certain that attending Ride High has a huge impact on the children. They go from being really quite nervous to thoroughly enjoying themselves. As their riding improves, they develop confidence, they communicate more, and they clearly love it.



It is tremendously rewarding watching how the children enjoy coming to Ride High and how they develop over the weeks and months... and it's great for me too as I'm able to do something useful. The team also make me feel so valued. Ride High, like all charities are reliant on volunteers so I'd encourage anyone who wants to make a difference to join us!"

For more information about volunteering email centremanager@ridehigh.org or call 01908 696169

Music to our ears



We are delighted to share the exciting news that our member Emilija, 18 has received an unconditional offer to study music at the University of West London!

She plays four different instruments no less!... She takes great strength from music and her dream is to become a Music Therapist so she can use her talents to help others. Emilija has experienced great trauma in her young life and moving to the UK from Lithuania just two years ago presented additional challenges. When it all became too much and her mental health was extremely low, she was referred to Ride High. A couple of months into her membership Emilija now describes her time with the horses as being as important to her as her music.



"To see, touch and hug the horses is so calming and is helping me to feel both emotionally and physically stronger. What I've been through makes it very hard for me to trust and confide in others, but by putting my trust in the horses I somehow feel like it's becoming easier to trust people again."

We are very proud of Emilija. She's come such a long way during her time at Ride High - the fact that she even shared her good news demonstrates tremendous progress. She is immensely talented, and we're pleased that she's starting to recognise it. We wish her lots of luck for the future.

We raised the roof!

We started the New Year with a new roof on reception and the charity house where the children's indoor sessions take place. With urgent repairs now complete our indoor facilities are protected and better insulated. With oil and gas price increases, we are even more grateful for the additional insulation. We owe a huge thank you to the Marshall Foundation, John Apthorp Charity, Screwfix Foundation and Bernard Sunley Foundation, for helping to fund this project, and to the fabulous team at Bailey MK for working so hard to complete the work.



Creating a brighter future

Finn has just turned 16. He's taking part in Ride High's first 'Portfolio Programme' which is specifically for young people not attending school.

Finn suffers with anxiety and depression and was incredibly nervous when he first started at Ride High. He had a huge fear of people, and initially his mum would stay for his sessions. Sitting and chatting to him four months into the programme, it's clear to see that Finn has made huge strides in his confidence and his ability to communicate with others.



For Finn one of the most important things Ride High has given him is the opportunity to make friends.

He wears a huge smile on his face whilst talking about Mark his Club Leader, and another member in his group.

Finn has never been to school,

so these relationships are extremely precious to him. Ride High is also Finn's first commitment - in particular, working with the horses has required him to be focused and take on an element of responsibility. This seemed almost impossible to begin with, but with support and by attending every week, Ride High has become a familiar routine - an alternative haven to home - and one which is helping him to control negative feelings and anxieties, and to adopt a more positive outlook.

But Finn hasn't stopped there. Ride High has helped him to step even further outside of his comfort zone and to engage in other rewarding experiences he'd never imagined previously. Finn attended the Ride High Ball in January and more recently visited Newmarket for the day - these experiences challenged Finn but he gained a great sense of pride from achieving them. He has even started to express hopes and desires for the future. In the Clubroom his artistic abilities have shone and where he once never considered what might lie ahead - he is now firmly considering a creative career path.

To help him we reached out to WSA - a creative agency in Milton Keynes, and much to Finn's delight (and ours) their MD Jerry is going to mentor Finn to help him make his dreams a reality.

The progress Finn has made whilst at Ride High is astounding. We're so proud of everything he's achieved so far and have every confidence that he'll continue to do great things in the future.

Challenge Champions



We'd like to give a huge shout out to the team from Smart Recruitment who took part in the David Goggins 4x4x48 challenge last month.

This challenge was new to us, but very impressive - they ran 4 MILES every 4 HOURS for a whopping 48 HOURS!... They only started fundraising one week prior to the event and they still managed to raise over **£1,500**.

Double Celebration

We are delighted to have been chosen as **Charity of the Year** by both **EMW** and **Tritax Symmetry**.

EMW is a law firm based in Milton Keynes. They're celebrating 30 years in business, and what better way to mark their commitment to Milton Keynes than by supporting a charity that works with hundreds of vulnerable children in the community each year.

Based in Northampton, Tritax Symmetry is the logistics development arm of Tritax Big Box REIT PLC. The organisation has supported Ride High for some years so we're looking forward to working even more closely over the coming months.

We've already had our kick-off meetings and we're making plans which will allow everyone across both organisations to get involved - through volunteering days, participation in events, fundraising and sharing time and expertise. Charity of the Year really is a great opportunity to encourage employee engagement and team building and we can't wait to get started!



Stimpson stars

"We're on week 4 of 6" the teaching assistant said - raising her voice so she could be heard over the sound of the children working together to decipher the colours of the horses. The noise level in the clubroom is significantly higher than it was on week 1... and that is in fact one of the outcomes Stimpson Avenue Academy wanted to achieve with this, the third group of children they've sent to Ride High for a short-term programme.

Jo Mackay, a Teaching Assistant accompanies the children each week. "We selected children who may lack confidence, who can be introverted and, at times, find it hard to express their feelings. In a short space of time, we've seen the children's confidence and self-esteem soar". The nervousness the children faced around the horses to begin with has been replaced with a sense of excitement, followed by the desire to share their experiences with anyone who will listen!



The journey to and from Ride High is filled with chatter about what's to come and what the 'best bits' were. Coupled with this the children have also developed a sense of calm and focus, and the ability to work together - all of which they're already applying back at school in the classroom.

Well done Stimpson!

Picture Perfect

Exclusive offer for Ride High supporters and clients

Professional equine and canine photographer and friend of Ride High, Kate Everall is offering Ride High supporters and clients 10% off equine and family portraits*.

For every booking she is also very kindly donating her creative fee to Ride High. Kate is a fabulous photographer who will capture the most gorgeous portraits of you with your four-legged friend.



Visit her website:
www.kateeverallphotography.com
or contact her at:
mail@kateeverallphotography.com
quoting 'RideHigh'.

**bookings must be made before 30th April
and sessions completed before
31st August 2022.*

2022 Events

Ride High Cycle Challenge Sunday 14th August

After the success of our first Cycle Challenge last year, it's returning bigger and better for 2022, and we'd love for you to join us!

You can cycle either 50 or 100 miles on our brand new routes AND we're introducing a 100 mile relay route too! Enter in teams of up to eight people or join one of our guided groups led by an experienced cyclist.

On the lead-up to the event we'll be running our Zoom sessions and training rides to help prepare and support you.

The road routes will start and finish at Ride High, and there will be scheduled stops and roaming support throughout. This is a fun and friendly challenge, open to everyone (aged 18+) and at the finish line there'll be a well-earned celebratory BBQ for you and your supporters, and medals hand-decorated by the Ride High children.

Registration is from £25 - £40 (dependent on your route) and fundraising targets apply.

For more information visit: www.ridehigh.org/cyclechallenge

Thank you to our sponsors:



A date for
your
diary!

Charity Golf Day at Woburn Golf Club Wednesday 19th October

Ride High is to host its first ever Charity Golf Day and we're delighted to announce that this will take place on what is considered the finest course at the prestigious Woburn Golf Club - the Marquess Course. This will be a truly fantastic day out and will raise vital funds for Ride High. The team cost is £1,500 (for 4 participants) and includes breakfast rolls and a three-course meal with entertainment.

To reserve a space for your team or to find out more about sponsorship opportunities please contact Helen Dixon: helen.dixon@ridehigh.org

A BIG thank you to all our supporters:

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