



CHALKDOWN GROUP, STAPLEHURST

Riding for the Disabled

NEWSLETTER – DECEMBER 2017

www.chalkdownstaplehurst-rda.co.uk

Welcome to **Chalkdown's** first Newsletter, which I hope will serve as a reminder of some of this year's most memorable events. Our wonderful **Chalkdown** family has continued to flourish and expand with many new riders and ten fabulous new volunteers. Through our constant fundraising over the year we have been able to purchase two more RDA ponies, Charlie and Finn (not exactly a pony) which brings our total to five, plus of course the handsome Merlin and little Comic, brought to us each week by owners Karen and Claire. Meanwhile Kay continues to bring faithful Franny and little Chase, who we wish well after his horrible illness.

We have made so many kind and generous friends over the year who have helped us to raise funds and spread the word

about what we do. For our riders, The Chalkdown Group helps to make dreams come true and as one little rider said to me today as she hugged her pony "I love him because he understands me". Our ponies and riders are all very special and they truly capture all our hearts.

I would like to thank each and every one of you for all your time, dedication and support. We simply couldn't do what we do without you.

So here are some happy highlights of the year.

Pauline Roestenburg, Chair



BIDDENDEN TRACTORFEST

We were thrilled to be asked to take a stand at **Biddenden Tractorfest** in August, for a second time, this year. We had a brilliant two days talking to all the visitors and introducing them to Lara who joined us on both days. The Chalkdown team pulled together and sold hundreds of cakes made by our volunteers, including amazing gingerbread ponies made by Jenny and Sarah! Together, with a lucky dip and the sale of trays of delicious fruit generously donated by Clockhouse Farm, we raised £662 over the two days. Tractorfest raised £25k for local charities and have given Chalkdown an incredibly generous donation of £1000.

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SUTTON VALENCE SCHOOL SHOW JUMPING EVENT

At the beginning of July, **Sutton Valence School** held their inaugural show jumping event at Duckhurst Farm to raise money for Chalkdown Group. In true Chalkdown style our volunteers baked hundreds of cakes which we sold on the day making £162. It was a fun packed day with a raffle at the end, including a wheelbarrow donated by Homeleigh Timber! SVS stunned us by raising £1500 for Chalkdown. It was such a success that they may repeat the event next year when we hope we can be involved again.

THE TRAILER

We were so thrilled to take delivery of our beautiful new trailer in late February. We had been saving for it for such a long time and it looked so smart with its Chalkdown name on the side. How devastating it was in July when it was stolen by heartless thieves but news spread far and wide on social media and in the local press.

Sometimes good things come out of bad and in September something quite amazing happened. **John Page Trailers** left us totally speechless when they presented us with a brand new trailer complete with bows and ribbons. Michala and William Page are two very special people. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.



HRH THE PRINCESS ROYAL

In April this year Susie, Caroline, Gill and Pauline went to the SE Regional Conference at Newbury Racecourse where Caroline was presented to our RDA President, HRH The Princess Royal, for her 35 years of dedicated service to RDA. It was a wonderful occasion and Caroline informed the Princess that they had both shared the same riding instructor in Benenden when they were teenagers, which the Princess remembered well!

We have another long service award coming up next year ... Now who could that be?



ROBERT'S TITAN AWARD

Our County Chair, Carole Mounce, visited us in October to make a surprise presentation of the RDA Titan Award to Robert for his outstanding achievement since he joined us a year ago. Robert rode as a boy in South Africa but he wasn't sure whether he would be able to sit in the saddle again after his massive stroke four years ago. He needn't have worried as it all came flooding back to him and he has gone from strength to strength and loves nothing better than either going out on a hack on Fenella or trotting around the arena. Congratulations from us all Robert and we look forward to more fantastic achievements next year.

RICHMOND STEAM FAIR

Moira and Jo represented us at the **Richmond Steam Fair** in Hawkenbury in August which raised a fabulous £1500 for Chalkdown. The Fair is run each year by Jenny and Jeremy Martin and the money raised specifically contributed to the purchase of Charlie in October.



RDA QUIZ NIGHT

What a night we had. The success of the RDA Quiz Night was entirely due to the fantastic teamwork of all the volunteers involved. Alison and Moira ran the kitchen team with military precision and produced nearly 200 plates of delicious food, Jane set up a bar to rival The Queen's Head which was efficiently run by Jedda and husband James. Heather and Sarah produced some first class raffle prizes with their charming powers of persuasion. Our quizmaster, Peter Hooper of The Maidstone Lions, so generously gave up his evening to present

the quiz and spent many hours and evenings writing all the questions and answers. On the night our techie and maths expert Emma entered all the scores on the scoreboard ably assisted by Gill and Jennie who had to work their socks off to speedily add up all the score sheets. Thank you to every single person who helped on that night. We raised £2500 and everyone wants to do it again next year!

