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saturday spotlight

Riding for the Disabled wants your help to name two special 'ponies'

By Mikaela Ian Pearman

In honour of an exciting, new enhancement for the riding programme at Bermuda Riding for Disabled, the facility is holding a competition to name two new equicizers, mechanical horses for riders to build strength, skill, balance, flexibility, fitness and confidence.



Photo By Tamell Simons Kate Terceira (left) and Karen Butler from Bermuda Riding for disabled have these new exercise equipment that will help special needs children be able to ride horses at Windreach Warwick. November, 14th, 2007.

The competition, to be held over e-mail, will see the winners receive a gift bag and ride on either the equicizer or equipony. The wooden animals were brought in as part of training people with special needs to ride horses without the distraction of actually being on one and students can basically do everything they could on a real horse.

According to the website, www.equicizer.com, the horse and pony can be used for therapeutic purposes offering alternative ways of conducting therapeutic exercises for children and adults with disabilities.

The website also said there are exercises beyond the typical horseback riding positions and can be applied with stretching, strengthening and balancing in a safe controlled manner with riders increasing their strength, stability, flexibility, balance, confidence and over all well being.

Kate Terceira, manager of Bermuda Riding for Disabled, said she had been looking for a new way to update the programme by researching other therapeutic centres around the world.

"I found out about the equipment from the website. They were made for rehab for jockeys. Through time, they got in contact with therapeutic centres to help with riders," she said.

Ms Terceira explained there are people in wheelchairs who find getting on a horse very uncomfortable. She also said the wooden horses are useful for people with special needs who are frightened of animals. Students can use the exercise machine for balance and mobility.

"Those who are timid of horses, it's a big help. We can focus on the student

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tacking up the horse instead of the animal itself."

Ms Terceira said she was excited about the equicizers and held a fundraising meeting to figure out how to pay for them.

Barbara Fullerton paid for the horse while Ariane Di Meglio bought the pony. Mrs. Fullerton said she bought the horse in

memory of her mother, Florence Stubbs, who died in June.

"I've been riding since 1993 at Spicelands. My mother has accompanied me over the years. It seemed fitting," she said.

She continued: "Kate's ideas and research for having a new brand for the programme really clinched me."

Ms Terceira explained helmets aren't always necessary on the equicizers because there are always two people accompanying a student, a sidwalker and a leader.

"We have children, who to just put the helmet on is traumatic. It's going to allow them to come in and have no anxiety. I think it's going to enhance what we are already doing and just open the programme."

The free riding lessons run from September to May with two sessions, September to January and January to May.

"The lessons are once a week and we help them with physical challenges, learning challenges and cognitive issues," Ms Teceira explained.

She said the students come based on recommendations for parents, schools and a therapist. The entire facility is run on donations and volunteers.

"It's a very expensive charity and we'd like to keep it free," Ms Teceira said.

Each equicizer come equipped with handles on the side to rock the horse giving the rider the same sensation as a walk, trot or canter on a real horse.

The naming competition will take place from today until December 14. All entries can be sent to [brd\[AT\]jibl.bm](mailto:brd[AT]jibl.bm). The winner will receive a gift bag and a ride on the equicizer or equipony. The names will be announced in the new year.

For more information about the programmes Bermuda Riding for Disabled offers or to be a volunteer, call 238-7433.

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