

JULY 31ST 2021, ISSUE 15

# Ride On!

*RDA Victoria Update E-Newsletter*

A new instalment of the monthly newsletter to keep you 'in the know' about all things RDAV.



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# From The President

“Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart.”  
(Elizabeth Andrew)

When looking for motivation for this month's article, I came across the above quote and it made me think of all the people that have given so much to the organisation over its 50 years of operating.

There are literally thousands of people who, over the years, have given of their time, their resources, hearts and souls to their local RDA Centre in a bid to facilitate inclusion and bring a little bit of enjoyment, fun and happiness into the lives of our riders and carriage drivers.

People who choose to volunteer do so for many reasons and give what they can. For RDA Victoria, the reality has been that "no act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted" (Aesop), rather it is embraced and it is those acts of kindness that have enabled us to provide the services we have for the last 50 years.

The average length of service across our 1000+ RDA Victoria volunteers is approx. 15 years. Many have volunteered for over 20 years; some for over 40 years!

It is a testament to our RDA community that our volunteers choose to keep giving of themselves to the organisation for as long as they do.

In this month's newsletter we invited RDA Centres showcase some of their longer-serving volunteers. They are amongst the many unsung heroes of RDA Victoria.

**Andrea Lucas**

President & Interim Executive Officer

RDA Victoria



# Call for nominations for the 2021 RDA National Volunteer Awards

RDAA are calling for nominations for the 2021 RDA National Volunteer Awards. The RDAA will again be running the 2021 Awards in the same way as the previous 2 years and will collect videos from all the winners to announce at the AGM in November.

Important dates for nominations for RDAA 2021 National Volunteer Awards

- \* July 1: Invitations open to RDA Centres and States to nominate volunteers
- \* August 31: Nominations to State Office close
- \* September 30: Nominations for National Awards to be submitted to the National office
- \* November: Award Winners Announced

If you have any questions or would like a nomination form, please email [admin@rdav.asn.au](mailto:admin@rdav.asn.au).

Our volunteers are backbone of the organisation and deserve our recognition.

We can't wait to see all the nominees and the amazing work they do!

## Champion Stable Systems Saddle Trolleys Donation

Wow! Thanks to our wonderful friends at Champion Stable Systems, all of our RDA Centres are being donated these wonderful saddle trolleys! Champion Stable Systems will be couriering these beauties to RDA Centres across Victoria.

Champion Stable Systems are a family-owned operation, located in Swan Hill, and founded in the 1970s as a manufacturer of building products in rural Victoria. Champion Stable Systems has been delivering stable facilities to passionate horse trainers, breeders, riders, owners and rescue rehabilitation centres around Australia

We truly appreciate their generosity. Thank you Champion Stable Systems!.





# Update from RDA Melton

RDA Melton is back in full swing this year with Riders, Horses and Volunteers super excited to be back to the new normal.

We were blessed in term two with great weather for the Special Olympics event we hosted, a great day was had by all our riders and their support crews.



Melton was able to showcase the new Sensory garden and Working trail area's as well. We have been very lucky to get grants and donations that have made both of these new areas possible. We look forward to the growth of our fruit trees and indigenous ground covers.



Our volunteers have enjoyed two training days during the holidays, including a visit from Mary Longden which is always informative and fun. Our school equine groups will be eager to get back into the swing of things in term three.



# 50 Year Anniversary Showcase - RDA Bairnsdale

RDA Bairnsdale began 31 years ago in August 1990 with local horsewomen Anne Rees, Sue Svetik and Marion Dawson as the driving force. Anne and Ron Rees provided horses and the venue at their Coonawarra Trail Riding property. Riders came from Bairnsdale and surrounds and included a group from Maffra further to the west. Volunteers made the 40 minute journey from Bairnsdale.

In 2002 we moved to share the Bairnsdale Pony Club grounds. The mounting ramp and hydraulic hoist were installed with help from local service clubs. As the wonderful Coonawarra horses were no longer available, volunteers brought their own horses and ponies and this arrangement continues today. RDA is only a small part of the lives of most of the horses, as they are also ridden for pleasure in a number of other disciplines and this seems to keep them fit and happy.

Our program has evolved with more responsibilities than before with the various rules and regulations as RDA has become a bigger entity. Today we have around 30 volunteers, most with hands on horse experience. A roster is emailed out before our Monday programs so everyone knows what their day will entail. We have a wonderful group of dedicated, caring and very capable helpers ...Without them we would have no RDA.

With our 20-25 riders we require 8 horses/ponies to maintain our 3 rider ratio. We have 2 brumbies and can highly recommend them as RDA ponies. Another brumby who was only 5 gave brilliant service until his owner moved away. We have found Standardbreds to be "tried and true" in our program. New horses and ponies fortunately do seem to pop up as we need them. We have a number of independent riders and lots just getting to that stage. All have a lot of fun, and we all look forward to the surprise of how one of our volunteers will dress up her pony as each week.

The Pony Club grounds have old timber horse yards and this year we received a grant to build a roof over them. It not only helps our horses but also all the other users of the facility. Our relationship with the Pony Club works so very well.

COVID has been a challenge for us as it has for everyone. Following hard on the heels of our devastating bush fires we managed 1 volunteer training day in March 2020 before everything stopped. As soon as we were allowed to recommence in November 2020 we began with our 3 independent riders following strict protocols. The next able riders were included in 2021 again following strict COVID procedures. Riders were exempt from masks but all volunteers had to comply. Rather than adjusting stirrups for each rider, we purchased a set for each rider which they keep in a bag with their own helmet. This is such a great time-saving system and sanitising is easy. We have found that over the years RDA has brought together people with a common desire to help others and with an interest in horses. Some great friendships have flourished. When family members are rounded up when jobs need to be done the friendships are extended even further.

Our Centre today is doing well. We are supported financially by donations from many groups and service club members as well as running raffles ourselves. Our parents and carers are very supportive and ensure riders arrive on time. Our coaches inspire riders and volunteers to do the best they possibly can. Our future looks bright with an enthusiastic Centre committee.

Our Committee meetings are held in a building on the agistment property where some of our RDA horses live. The owner sells plants, flowers and locally made crafts and generously donates 10 percent of all sales to our RDA Centre. We are so very fortunate to live within such a caring community. With the benefit of such a great foundation for our Centre, we look forward to continuing to service our community through RDA well into the future.



RDA Bairnsdale celebrated 25 years of service to the community in June 2016. From left, :Betty Smith our 1st Secretary, Anne Rees, founding coach, Ron Rees, co-owner of Coonawarra Trail Rides, supplier of horses and facilities, Ted Smith, volunteer from 1990 to 2021, Sue Svetlik, founding coach, 1st President...and present back up coach, and Marion Dawson, founding coach who was a board member at RDAV for many years. Each leaves a legacy of excellence. True volunteers all!



We are very proud to have 2 brumbies in our program. Here Circles is with Mackenzie with Rob and Jan .Kozi is a strong 14.3hh pony. Apollo was with us till Dec 2019 as a 5year old 15hh brumby. Wonderful personalities and we can highly recommend brumbies for RDA.





Our community is our lifeblood. We have small groups and service clubs who give so generously. Here the Bairnsdale Lions Club presents a giant cheque with our 10am group cheering them on. Volunteers in covid mode. We also run raffles and acquire grants where possible.



Fun at Christmas 2019. Nathan has been riding with us since he was 8. Our horses get decorated and the riders love it. Nathan and his Mum Pam are having a special moment with Moshie and brumby Kozi with volunteer Ian getting into the spirit.



Jessie, Teagan and Hurley completed their Christmas obstacle course and are very proud of their ribbons.



# Pablo – RDA Shepparton's Rocking Horse



Pablo is Shepparton RDA's "Trainee" steed.

In the attached photo Pablo was taking a break from RDA and enjoying a short spell at the Shepparton Branch of the Bendigo Bank.

Pablo has been residing at Shepparton RDA for nearly 30 years. He was made by a Retired Shepparton Resident. When Pablo first arrived, he had the length of his legs adjusted to make him "Shetland" size.

Our Treasurer, Keren has formed a good working relationship with the Shepparton Branch of the Bendigo Bank, so in 2018 when staff offered up a space to advertise Community Groups, Keren and husband John took up the challenge, floating Pablo into the Branch, along with a banner and several posters to complete the display. Pablo holidayed at the Branch for four weeks and we received an incredibly positive response from the Community.

Over the years Pablo has helped many reluctant riders gain the confidence to lead a pony and then hop on a pony. Just recently Pablo helped a rider regain his confidence that he lost during last year's COVID break.

We are sure Pablo will be with us for many years to come and continue to help instil confidence in reluctant riders.



# Occupational Therapy Students

## Working with RDA Victoria

RDA Victoria is proud to team up with universities to provide placement opportunities for their students. A recent placement involved two Occupational Therapy students from the Australian Catholic University. Hafsa Aziz and Shania Philip resiliently coped with COVID restrictions and worked with Lyndsay Davies at her facility at Oaklands.

Their project was to explore different methods and technology to improve coaching efficacy and communications between riders with a visual impairment and their coaches.

The students worked closely with riders, coach and volunteers to explore the different options. Their recommendations included using paired bracelets, such as Bond Bracelets or Hey Bracelets, that allows the coach to use a set of bracelets to wirelessly communicate directly with the rider, who wears to corresponding, linked pair of bracelets. By tapping their bracelets, the coach can relay taps or gentle squeezes to the rider to indicate an action.

For example, the coach can tap the bracelet on their left wrist which is then felt as a tap or squeeze by the rider through the bracelet on their left wrist. This may be used to let the rider know to turn left. Different signals can then be used to communicate different actions to the rider. For example, one tap could mean turn, 2 taps could mean pick up more left rein contact – rider and coach can work together to design what works for them.

The students worked with Edwina and Lyndsay to apply for the bracelets to be accepted formally by RDA Australia as a recognised item of adaptive equipment. This was accepted pending final details. The students explored other technologies, such as bone conducting headphones (where vibrations are sent directly to the inner ear) and a haptic system (where a console worn on the body of the rider is wirelessly connected to an app on the coach's smart phone. The coach can then communicate messages via touch to the relevant body part of the rider).

Currently both bracelet companies have been approached for a sample set to be trialled by riders. Watch this space!

We appreciate the opportunity to work with students who are passionate about their future roles. By the end of their time at RDA, they are also passionate about the programs!

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Hafsa and Shina for their wonderful work!



ACU Occupational Therapy  
Student, Hafsa Aziz.  
Together with her partner,  
Shania Philip, they explored  
new options for teaching  
riders with a visual  
impairment.

# Volunteer Showcase - Jenny Field, RDA Bundoora Park

Jenny Field started as secretary, then took on more roles and is now president at RDA Bundoora Park.

She has been volunteering for over 11 years but has been involved with RDA for 20 years when her son Matthew started riding at Mernda RDA with Maree Castles, and now is riding at Warrandyte RDA with Dannielle.



Matthew riding



Maree at work!





# Volunteer Showcase - Georgie Gibbs, RDA Mornington

Georgie Gibbs has been a volunteer at the Mornington Carriage Driving centre for longer than she can remember [over 25y} She has seen many changes and has been involved in much progress at the centre over the years , one of the biggest being our move from our little shed to our new facility , with kitchen, office, toilet and heating/cooling at the Mornington Racecourse.

Georgie has filled many roles, Treasurer, Secretary, volunteer and coach, but her best is her talent for finding new volunteers. She is still a vital member of our team, her energy and enthusiasm for RDA Carriage Driving has never faltered, even being in her 80s doesn't stop her.





# Volunteer Showcase - RDA Moorabbin



Barb Burrridge, volunteer since 1995

Barb is an extremely reliable attendee who has a calming way of working as a pony leader. Her input into our Therapeutic Riding sessions ensures her riders receive optimum movement and allows their riding skills to develop where possible.

Barb contributes to the success of RDAM at all levels, never shirking poo pick up or extra gardening and interacts with fellow volunteers in a welcoming way.



Tony Marshall, volunteer since 1999

Tony has an outstanding repour with our riders and is able to defuse many behavioural outbursts, allowing the rider to continue in the program. Having his RDAA Mounting /Dismounting Module has enabled him to assist coaches across 3 riding days.

Tony goes out of his way to maintain an informal volunteer social network which has been INVALUABLE during Covid times.

Being able to juggle a footy tipping competition in these weird times is applaudable. Expat volunteers interstate or OS are all kept up to date with RDAM news and greatly appreciate being included and remembered.



John Beilharz, volunteer since 2004

John is a site keyholder and a very willing call out to fix all those mini crisis a centre has: fencing, water, mowing, liaising with contractors, dealing with council and so much more. He has been on committee and been our Site Manager.

John has a deep feel for horses and is open to new ways of understanding their responses. Similarly he interacts in a meaning full way with many of our riders and enables them to gain much from their horse interaction.

A worker at all levels John has willingly involved himself in all that RDAM does.



# Volunteer Showcase - RDA Bairnsdale

Bairnsdale RDA has such a great team of volunteers it would have been too difficult to choose who to include in this feature – but to make it easy on ourselves we've selected those who have been volunteers with RDA Bairnsdale for over ten years. There are still quite a few!



**Megan Jackson** has been a volunteer for many years. In this photo taken at Coonawarra she could run and Marlene as coach also keeping up the pace. Both a bit slower these days.



**Marlene Hardy** has been a dedicated coach at Bairnsdale Centre for nearly 30 years. This photo was taken in our early days at Coonawarra Trail Rides before our move in to Bairnsdale Pony Club grounds. Well done Marlene ....and THANK YOU.



**Julie Coster** has been a long term volunteer and has brought in horses for our riders for over ten years. She is our Centre President. Jenny Atkinson has volunteered since Coonawarra days and has also brought in her horses for RDA over the years. Jenny is camera shy so no early photos of her in those days. Here she is more recently getting Duke ready for his next rider. Julie and Jenny's RDA horses have included some wonderful standardbreds.



**Ted Smith** was an original. Here he is with his son Stephen who was one of our first riders at Coonawarra. Ted retired in 2021 after doing ramp duty, horse leading and side walking - a truly amazing volunteer.



**Our Pioneers:** To celebrate 25 years of our Centre in 2016 we had a great lunch at the Barn, Coonawarra. Pictured here from Left...Betty Smith our 1st Secretary, Anne Rees, Founding coach, Ron Rees, co owner of the horses and facilities at Coonawarra, Ted Smith, volunteer, Sue Svetlik, founding coach, and Marion Dawson, founding coach. We are so grateful for the legacy they have left us.





**Gayle Scott** began volunteering at RDA Bairnsdale over 10 years ago and has become a coach, a coach educator and our Centre Committee Secretary. In this photo Gayle is explaining to a young Smokey that he might be allowed to come to RDA if he learns some manners. Gayle took Smokey as a 2 year old wild brumby colt and now enjoys taking him to adult riding club. Smokey shares his paddock with 2 other brumbies...RDA Circles and RDA Kozi. Gayle and Megan care for them. THANK YOU Gayle!!!



**Astrid Rose** was also an early volunteer at Coonawarra. Astrid takes valuable time from her farming to continue volunteering at Bairnsdale RDA.

Astrid Rose took time out on her birthday at the Grand Canyon during her trip to Los Angeles in 2015 to support RDA Special Olympics World Games Competitor Andrew Tanner - a wonderful experience for four RDA Bairnsdale volunteers



**Sue Svetlik** was the originator of our Centre. She coached many riders over the years before taking time out to further her career in disability services, then set up her current EFL business. Sue returned to give more special years of coaching with our Centre and currently returns to help out when needed. Sue has been so very generous with her knowledge and is highly regarded in the RDA world. Here she is helping Zoe with her riding skills on Lennie. THANK YOU, Sue!



**Kelly Crombie** has been a valued volunteer for over 10 years and brought her pony Zeke to RDA until he retired. Kelly has also donated two horses, Polly and Duke, to RDA, and is our very respected Horse Welfare Officer. Kelly and Zeke are in the photo with rider Meg, Kelly's daughter Katie and volunteer Chris.



# Hamish, Moses and Royce



## Hamish

Last month RDAV were contacted by a lovely lady called Leeann. Leeann had volunteered at Moorabin many years ago and had fell in love with one of the RDA ponies named Hamish. Hamish was a beautiful old highland pony and he inspired Leeann to purchase one of her own.



Moses arriving at Sally's

## Moses

At 4 years old the beautiful Rosemarkie Moses joined her family and she adored him. Initially, she rode him around the farm but over the years the riding stopped and he, instead, became a much-adored paddock ornament. In time Leeann's circumstances changed, meaning she could sadly no longer keep Moses.

Reminiscing how much joy Hamish had given her she quickly called RDAV hoping Moses could do the same for others.





Moses and Royce

I visited Leeann and Moses but as he had not been ridden for six years and was a little head shy I quickly realised that he would need a lot of work before he would be ready for a centre. Moses is now at Sally's for training so that hopefully, one day, he can carry on in Hamishes foot steps!

- Lyndsay Davies

# Competitions from Lyndsay Davies

We are continuing along with our exciting competitions for the year:

## **The State Championships**

Due to the recent COVID lockdowns, we have decided to replace the live event at Werribee with an online/video competition instead. The classes will be mostly the same with few added extras! Schedule coming soon.

**RDA Victoria Spring Show and Special Olympics Event @ Glenlyon Pony Club on 23rd October**

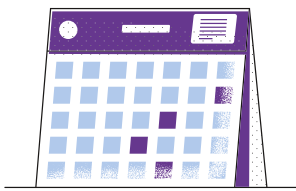




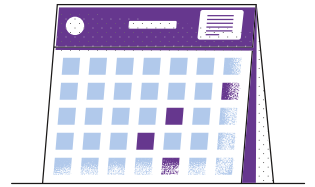
# Training Updates

## Training Ideas Wanted

The Training & Competition committee meet bi-monthly and are looking for training ideas, so please forward any ideas to: [events@rdav.asn.au](mailto:events@rdav.asn.au)



## Event Calendar



## 50TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR FOR RDA VICTORIA

### RDA Victoria Online State Championships

**24th September– Volunteer/Coach WorkshopDay – held at RDA Knox  
(Rug Fitting, Saddle Fitting, Horse Welfare, Sally Francis and more)  
Details to be confirmed soon**

**23rd October – RDA Victoria Spring Show and Special Olympics Event  
@ Glenlyon Pony Club**



RDA Victoria is supported by the Victorian State Government

RDA Victoria Patron The Honourable Linda Dessau A.M., Governor of Victoria

If you have anything you would like to share with our community please email [events@rdav.asn.au](mailto:events@rdav.asn.au)  
Remember to like us on Facebook and to check in for further updates and information!



RDA Victoria - Riding for the Disabled Association of Victoria