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Hello friends and supporters

Midwinter, and there's frost on the ground some days, mud others, but also lots of sunshine in spite of the season. We've had enough rain to make the grass grow a little, but we're feeding out enormous quantities of hay in the absence of our spare grazing that has been lost. It is a serious worry, but we're very grateful to Sue and Max Dixon who have opened up their paddocks for the school holidays so our own paddocks can be spelled. Our busiest horses will go there for a complete rest, while the others will have some training to bring them up to speed.

Leg-Up celebrated its 18th official birthday on July 4th, but it has effectively been going for nearly 21 years. Only two foundation members remain – the Old Grey Mare and trustee Charlie Janes. Incredibly, several of our original students remain in touch after all this time, even attending our annual general meeting. Some of our regular supporters have been around for almost as long, so we salute these people who honour us with their loyalty and confidence in our work.

Without the goodwill of our supporters we'd be sunk, so we wish to thank the following for their generosity:

- Royston Health Trust
- Trust house
- ECCT
- First Light Community Foundation, all of whom gave wonderful grants to keep us afloat. Thanks a million.

Donations from:

Vicky Currie, Stephen Watt, Lynette Fowler, Kim and Bron Thorp, Hannah Bell Mossman, Cynthia Kirk, Peak Vision, The Little Bookshop, Bluff Hill Bowling Club, Animal Advocates Collective Impact, St Andrews Parish Westshore, Two Fold Op Shop Taradale, Tamatea Women's Institute

Monthly donors: Speights Ale House, P Farnworth, JL Somers, Andrews Shalom Trust, WA and K Forrest, Priscila Cheah, R Lambourn, WA Buckland J and J Luty, AK Rodway and Bill Irwin. These people give us a strong backbone with their consistent input and we cannot thank you enough.

Horse gear, feed and other goods from numerous people, including Amy Roydhouse (Fiber Fresh Equine), Claire Wilson, Robbie Greenslade and Sue Glover. Huge thanks to all. Some of the horse gear is being passed on to others at a small cost as a fundraiser (see further down).

Student Sponsors

In our last newsletter we put out a call for horse and student sponsors, and we were extremely heartened by the response, particularly for students assistance. Owing to the generosity of the following, a handful of students whose funding had run out have been enabled to keep coming to us without draining our resources, as has happened in the past: M McNeill, S Bridgeman, St Andrews Anglican Diocese, Christina Lewis, Angela Rodway, Amanda Jackson.

Parents, teachers, caregivers and the children themselves are more grateful than words can express.

Service Clubs

We receive donations from several service clubs in the area, and I want to pay tribute to these groups.

Membership is waning in many cases because the younger generations are no longer willing or able to participate for several reasons. It is therefore left mainly to people nearing or past retirement age to put in the hard yards fundraising for organisations like ours. Already mentioned above are Two Fold Op Shop and Tamatea Women's Institute, both of whom raise money by their hard work, and donations have also been received from:

Havelock North Rotary Club: last year this club took on the enormous task of organising guard duty at Te Mata Peak while trees were being felled near some of the busy tracks. Through their efforts we received a large donation, and the club recently blessed us again from their fundraising efforts. They are very motivated, mostly older people.

Hastings Pioneer Lions recently funded new covers for three of our old horses. One of their members also donated some dining chairs for our room and they are in demand because they are so comfortable. Their fundraising is done with barbecues, raffles, marshalling at the Blossom Parade and selling tickets at the Speedway. They are always looking for new members and president Diane McKenzie would love to hear from anyone interested. Her contact number is 0273132233.

Spirit of Napier Lions: these intrepid women also pull out all stops in their effort to serve the community. One of their main fundraisers is catering roast meals for retirement villages in Taradale. They cook the meals, serve them and clean up afterwards. I happen to know that there are some very good cooks among them. They would also welcome new members; please contact Val Forward on 8440439 or email valf@xtra.co.nz .

HB Foundation's Night of Us

The 'Night of Us put on by the HB Foundation in March was an occasion to remember by all who attended, including the Old Grey Mare and trustee Di Romans. The video featuring Leg-Up was well received by the large audience and made for a poignant moment as one of the horses in the video, our beloved Benny, had died just weeks earlier. It was a fitting memorial to our special Kaimanawa horse. The main event of the evening, the auction of three methuselah wine bottles painted by eminent artists, yielded an incredible \$50,000 for the Foundation. Congratulations to the organisers who put in a colossal effort to make the evening a success. And no, the OGM didn't fall off her high heels, but it was a relief to go back to the comparative safety of work boots...

Homefree – riding for Leg-Up Trust

They did it!! Larissa and Sprite arrived back at the Clifton Station woolshed on April 12, six years after leaving from there to circumnavigate New Zealand. Together they have plodded around the edges of both islands, starting out and completing half the journey with Kendall Besselman (riding China) before Kendall left to marry her Erik. Calypso and the OGM accompanied Larissa and Sprite (with staffer Karys riding one of the days) for the last three days. Riding through the city of Napier put the OGM and Calypso out of their comfort zones (although Calypso could hardly be called an introvert like his rider) but it was a good challenge. We stopped off at the Little Bookshop in Napier to receive a donation owner Anne Emery had asked us to pick up sometime. She certainly didn't expect it to be picked up by riders on horseback!

Larissa's welcome at the woolshed attracted a lot of interested supporters, and huge thanks go to Kiri Forbes for helping organise things on behalf of Leg-Up and liaise with Larissa's family. Mayor Sandra Hazlehurst turned out in fairly unpleasant weather to welcome Larissa back to the Bay.

Larissa's efforts raised around \$17,500 for Leg-Up, as well as gaining us a new member of the team in Sprite, who has settled into her new job as a therapy horse. She is already melting hearts and bringing smiles to sad faces. Larissa is currently visiting Sprite and Leg-Up for the last time before heading down south to live and work there. She's a very organised young woman and is sorting through surplus horse gear to sell as a fundraiser. We always ask donors for permission to do this as we can't use every single item we're given.

Check out the Homefree – riding for Leg-Up Trust Facebook page for details.

Departures and arrivals

Sandy's face will be missing from Willow Farm from next week after five years on the job here. However, as she is starting a new bookkeeping business from home, and we will be her first customers, it's not really a farewell. Small businesses lacking the time or expertise to keep their books tidy can contact Sandy at Adds Up Bookkeeping for a chat and competitive quote. Call her on 0226076752. We wish her well in her new venture.

A new arrival is not really new as she's a familiar visitor at Leg-Up. For several years Suzanne Rogers has been bringing the St Matthew's boys for a Friday morning session, and from next term she'll be in charge of the office, so is likely to be the voice at the end of the phone and the smiling face that first greets you when you visit. There is also relief on the weekend front, with Amy Thomas coming for two hours on Saturdays and Sundays to ease the OGM's workload. It is appreciated more than I can say.

On the horse front, Tom has been rehomed to a fantastic new life playing polocrosse and mounted games. He'll love being busy and not seeing too many kids... Huge thanks to Dean for taking such good care of him.

Students

We have a wide variety of children, teenagers and older people using our services at present. The youngest children work with the minis and donkeys, as do older people in wheelchairs and some of those with severe mental health challenges. The littlies, as we call our herd of donkeys and miniature horses, play an important role in the lives of their humans, and we sometimes have to hide tears as we see wonderful friendships unfold, friendships that some seasoned competitive equestrians would envy. Small groups from at least ten schools (some of them combining to make up a class) will be attending next term, while individual day students from other schools or not in school add to the mix. Two schools are sponsored by Hastings District Council. We have some Gateway students on our books as well. Two former Gateway students have gained employment at Leg-Up in the last year or so. We're often told that for some of the more anxious young people, being with their horse is their 'happy place'.

Volunteers

With National Volunteer Week just behind us, it's a good time to recognise and thank the fantastic people who turn up week after week to muck out paddocks, help with classes, do various jobs and in general offer their friendship. The OGM, actually a volunteer herself, always looks forward to seeing old friends and new arriving to lend a hand. One is an old school friend from 57 years ago, while others have also been coming for so long that they are part of the furniture. They allow the staff to get on with their numerous chores while exchanging banter as they fling horse manure into the trailer, rake up leaves, sweep the deck, weed around the yards and do all those jobs that the rest of us haven't time to catch up on.

Counted among the volunteers are our trustees, all of them over 70 and three in their 80s. What a loyal and upstanding bunch of people they are! Old school, and staunch in upholding the ethos of Leg-Up, they understand why we stick to what some call old-fashioned ways: boundaries, discipline, honesty and manners.

Our AGM won't be too far away and will be advertised in the next newsletter. It is an opportunity for us to socialise with some of our friends and supporters once the short formalities are done and dusted, so keep an eye open for details once they are sorted.

We appreciate you all!

Ros Rowe