

Women Who Care members donate \$21.5K to Shining Horizons therapeutic charity

Ben Silcox Telegraph-Journal

Saint John - The 100 Women Who Care has donated \$21,500 to Shining Horizons Therapeutic Riding Association.

Shining Horizons is a group that organizes therapeutic horseback riding for children four and up who have physical or mental challenges.

The 100 Women Who Care donates a sum of money, usually between \$20,000 and \$30,000, four times a year, and selects the charity by inviting groups to present to their members. The Saint John chapter has donated to 14 local charities so far.

Laura Vlaming, a volunteer co-ordinator with Shining Horizons, said the announcement that they were selected for the donation is a moment she'll never forget. "I actually jumped up and shrieked and started crying because this means so, so much," she said.

Vlaming said horseback riding is often one of few physical activities their participants can take part in, due to the barriers they face. She said beyond the physical activity, the children take home many benefits from riding, including improved social skills.

"The actual riding itself is the smallest part. What happens to the rider before, during and after is where the true impact truly lies, and it goes far beyond what any spectator can see," she said.

Debbi Rathwell, a co-founder of 100 Women Who Care, said the group's presentation stood out. "I think it was raw emotion. I think it was very real. Karen Lawton [the presenter] – she's the mother of a rider, she has a young son. I think it just resonated with everyone. It was a very real, very heartbreaking yet inspirational story."

Vlaming said the \$21,500 will go a long way in assisting their cost of operation, and allows Shining Horizons to look ahead to expanding their capacity. The group recently bought a new horse, and with the donation, can afford another.

The purchasing of these horses is not as expensive as the upkeep, which Vlaming said costs around \$7,000 a year. With this upkeep covered for the next two years, Vlaming said Shining Horizons is looking into purchasing its own facility in the future, and will be fundraising to accomplish their goal.

The 100 Women Who Care will have their next meeting to decide on a donation on Dec. 6. The cheque to Shining Horizons Therapeutic Riding was presented Tuesday.

Picture at Top: (from left to right): Stacey Hope, instructor; Laura Vlaming, volunteer co-ordinator; Karen Lawton, parent of a rider and presenter on behalf of Shining Horizons; Kent Grass, Chairman of Shining Horizons; Debbie Rathwell, co-founder of 100 Women Who Care. Photo: submitted

