



# ASHVA

The Hippotherapy Newsletter

ISSUE 4

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**Ashva** (अश्व) is the Sanskrit word for a horse, one of the significant animals finding references in the Vedas as well as later Hindu scriptures. The corresponding Avestan term is aspa. The word is cognate to Latin equus, Greek ἵππος (hippos), Germanic ehwaz and Baltic aswa all from PIE \*hek'wos.

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*Happy September HHH Family and Friends! The last few months have been full of exciting events and happenings at Sea View Stables that we just can't wait to share! Our summer has been full of fun and sun, as well as advancements in our program, our stables and our sponsorships. This issue of our newsletter highlights what we've been up to lately, as well as some upcoming events we'd love to share with y'all. (allyuh!) We are also very happy to announce the start of our government sponsored free hippo therapy program that is going to provide one year of free hippo therapy to 20 children with autism from disadvantaged backgrounds. As such, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to the Prime Minister, the Honorable Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar and the Ministry of Health for their funding and support of the autistic and differently-abled children of our nation. We hope you all have enjoyed your summer, and are as eager as we are for a new school year full of horses, fun and learning, and don't forget that we also offer horse experiences and riding lessons for everyone! Check out our facebook page and website for continuous updates and ways to get more involved!*

*Cheers,*

*The HHH Herd*

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Hannah is from Seattle and has been with HHH for almost a year now. A CHA Certified Riding Instructor, Assistant Hippotherapy and the program's Stable Manager, she loves everything about HHH and what it stands for. Bringing with her a wealth of horse and California YMCA riding camp experience, Hannah has been instrumental in helping HHH grow into the organization it is today. With her quirky and fun personality, Hannah is loved by everyone, especially the kids, and has been a great addition to the HHH team!



At HHH we not only serve people, but animals too! Part of our mission is to act as a sanctuary for horses with no place to go. The sad reality of horseracing in Trinidad is that many of the track's greatest stars have nowhere to retire and live out their days in a manner they deserve. At Sea View Stables we attempt to provide at least a few of these former athletes a peaceful forever home to relax and enjoy their later years. Our featured horse in this issue, Eleanor For Two, has one of these stories.

Eleanor came to us as a brood mare, retired from racing due to the condition of her legs. Racing puts an extreme toll on a horse's body, and Eleanor was no exception. Diagnosed with Degenerative Suspensory Ligament Disease or DSLD, Eleanor has become HHH's first fully retired horse, used only for groundwork and interaction. DSLD, which most commonly affects the hind legs, ultimately leads to the breakdown of connective tissue in the horse's suspensory ligament. As the supporting connective tissues of the limb break down, the fetlocks (or ankle joints) drop toward the ground, the horse develops a restrained range of movement and has a difficult time lying down and standing up. DSLD frequently leads to persistent, incurable lameness, especially of the hind limbs. The disease is slow and progressive, and affected horses often are euthanized.

Due to Eleanor's predicament she requires extra care and close observation to maintain her mobility and comfort level. A sweet and shy mare, Eleanor's quiet peace brings a tranquility and calmness to all those lucky enough to get to know her. Schedule a horse experience today to come meet this gentle girl, or give us a call to find out more about how to help with her care and upkeep!





Republic Bank and Horses Bring Hope for Luke

When we first met Luke’s parents Leonardo and Lisa Tull, his mother Lisa had the look in her eyes that we see all too often in parents of children with autism. It is a look of quiet desperation, of underlying, constant anxiety about the well-fare and future of their child, and the sheer exhaustion of the physical, mental, and emotional toll that living with a child with autism can take. Their son Luke, is 7 years old and has been diagnosed as autistic. At our initial session four months ago, Lisa told us that Luke did not speak, and that they had “given up” looking for a school for him as they could not find any that were willing to work with Luke, especially since they live near Toco, which is very far away from most of the available schools and therapies in Port of Spain and its environs.

Thanks to Michelle Palmer-Keizer and Republic Bank’s Power to Make a Difference Program however, Luke is receiving one year of free hippo therapy at HHH which his parents hope will improve his communication and social skills, help him to relax and maybe even enable him to go to school one day. Lisa wearily told me that Luke only sleeps for very short stretches of an hour and a half at a time, so she and Leonardo are often up at all hours of the night with Luke, even though they both have to be at work each morning. Living like this was taking an immense toll on all of them, and it was truly heart-breaking to see this beautiful family suffering so much due to the lack of therapy and school services that Luke so desperately needs. Thankfully, help and hope arrived with the sponsorship from Republic Bank, and Luke was chosen by the Autistic Society of Trinidad and Tobago (ASTT) to be the child to receive this very special therapy.

From the very first day of therapy Luke’s behaviour started to change as the allure of the horses was enough motivation for him to start to behave as we wanted him to. When he started therapy four months ago, Luke was extremely hyperactive and was always trying to run away as he disliked being held or restrained. He fussed, whined and cried and gave us very little eye contact. His mother was even doubtful that he would get on the horse because he was afraid of heights and also because he did not like to wear hats or helmets on his head. Luke also used only sounds but no words to communicate.



However, to his parents' amazement, Luke put the helmet on and climbed the stairs to mount Rainbow without hesitation, and from the time that the pony started to walk he became quiet and stopped misbehaving. The miracle of being on a moving horse was taking place and Luke was loving it. Luke began to babble and sing while on the pony, and even responded both verbally and with the sign for "more" when asked if he wanted to ride more or get off. Luke also immediately began using more eye contact and did not want to leave when the session was over. Since then, Luke has continued to steadily improve in all areas of his development. Luke's behaviour has changed dramatically and he is now much happier and calmer with less running away, and is starting to consistently use both simple signs and words to communicate with us and his parents. He also gives us a lot more eye contact and plenty of laughs, smiles and giggles, and absolutely adores JoJo who is his favourite horse.

Because of this dramatic change in Luke's behaviour, Luke's parents were able to celebrate his 7th birthday with him by taking him sailing for an afternoon, something that they would not have dreamed would be possible before. We are so grateful to Republic Bank for providing this life-changing opportunity for Luke and his family, and for continuing to make a difference in the lives of those who need it most here in Trinidad



Leonardo, Luke & Lisa - A Parent's Testimonial by Lisa Tull

As working parents of an autistic child, it felt like we have had enough. Uselessness, hopelessness and everything less is how our family felt. What else could we have done to help our son.... Nothing seemed to be working, so many advice, hiccups, closed doors...it seemed like a tornado going through our heads. Where and how do we start or continue? We had given up. That's it!! No more therapies, we had heard enough, we had definitely had enough.

My husband and I became still for a while. In the midst of the great stillness (almost a year), like a ray of light in the midst of the darkness, we came across an article on a daily newspaper about 'Horses Helping Humans'. One day I mustered up the courage and hesitantly enquired from my support group. It took some time, and months after we got feedback that our son has gotten the opportunity to receive Hippo therapy through an initiative sponsored by the Republic Bank Limited. Our son was chosen! How happy we were on that day.

I had no idea what this therapy was about, only in my mind that our boy is going to ride a horse and we were very excited. We met with Karen Stollmeyer and her team and all our doubts and questions gradually faded. After looking on at a few sessions, seeing this soft genuine soul and her team lead our son into pet grooming, feeding, stretching exercises, riding the horses and more, we his parents felt like we needed therapy ourselves.

Luke is now seven years old, he is non verbal and has a lot of sensory issues, hyper active and the list can go on. He is into his fourth month of hippo therapy and has shown a lot of improvements to us at home. Since he started therapy, he is making an effort to communicate verbally, and even uses signs to request items. His understanding has come a long way since he responds a lot better now by following instructions to certain directives given to him. Before, he would not respond to any. He would not tolerate a hug or even a gentle kiss on the cheek. As his mom he would not allow me to come close to his face, lately he is putting his arms around me and kissing me on the cheeks.

We are deprived of sleep...moreso peaceful sleep due to his autism. We still struggle, but we have now been able to re-introduce a bed time story before the light goes out. He is usually a run- away kid but lately we are able to get him to stand still for a few minutes or seconds, it all depends on where we are at (our surroundings).

He sits for an hour at his table at home and is able to work with a volunteer, a friend of our family who happens to be a retired teacher. She comes over to work with him. These achievements may seem small, but the truth is they are major milestones to our family and we are truly grateful.

Words can't express the comfort and peace we feel, looking at our son achieving what may seem small to others but major milestones to us. We look forward to receiving the many miracles that the horses and the team have in store for our son Luke.

We say thank you to these walking angels, Karen Stollmeyer and her team of HHH, a special thank you to the horses, and also to Republic Bank who without their intervention and assistance, this may not have been possible.

Lisa & Leonardo,



This summer, during my much needed, yet ever too brief vacation, I decided to heed the advice of my doctors and do some alternative therapy. You see, two years ago I was diagnosed with a brain tumor, and despite doing radiation my tumor locally advanced to a grade 3 Anaplastic Astrocytoma. My doctors have been advocating for me to either get a dog/cat or to engage in animal therapy of some sort to complement my modern medicine treatment. Since a dog/cat was not possible I chose to experience hippo therapy by volunteering at Sea View Stables in their Horses Helping Humans program.

Nestled in the lush hills of the Maracas mountains, I found these quaint stables that boast of a simplistic charm. I was greeted by the stable manager Hannah, a relocated American whose personality is both lovable and enthusiastic! Later I met the stable founder Karen Stollmeyer, whose passion for horses is visibly evident! All the animals at these stables, from the 6 horses to the turtle and the resident mascot Russell the pup, are all rescued animals. After being introduced to all the animals and initiated by mucking out the very dirty stalls, I had a moment to sit and embrace the feeling of being at home. It's such beautiful poetic justice that these horses are the providers of hippo therapy to children and adults with varied emotional, behavioral and cognitive deficiencies, when they themselves have been retired due to some issue with their health.

I volunteered at HHH for 3 weeks during my time at home. I currently reside in China where I am receiving treatment for my cancer, and where horses or stables are as hard to come by as clean, crisp air! I relished every moment I got the privilege to interact with these horses and the team in charge of them. The HHH team is a very warm and welcoming group of talented people. Karen, Hannah, Ernie, Aasan and Marcus make you feel so at ease and an integral part of the team. The other volunteers Alyssa, Nick, Adaeze, Leiana, Michelle and Ori, were just as easy going and it was reflected in our "after-volunteering limes".

We hosted several horse interaction and therapy sessions with children with autism, summer camp kids, and children from disadvantaged homes. During these 3 weeks I have never felt so at ease, so alive, and so healthy! The energy of the horses, the yoga tips from Karen, and the enthusiasm of the team, made me forget that I was sick and it made a considerable difference in my overall health! As long as I am given the opportunity, HHH will be a regular volunteer spot for me each time that I visit Trinidad. I highly recommend a visit to the stables for anyone wishing to witness the beauty of these creatures and to meet these amazing people I consider family! Thank you again to the entire HHH team for such a magnificent experience.

Raeisa, Brain Cancer Warrior  
China





*HHH Board and committee members Dominique Heffes-Doon and Michelle Douragh at the YOPRO event at Paprika*



*Republic Bank's Autism Awareness Walk around the Savannah*



*Light it Up Blue! Celebrating Autism Awareness at Movietowne*



*Karen receiving her FEI Level 1 Riding Coach Certification from FEI Instructor Javier Jeri Leigh*



**INDEPENDENCE DAY RACES**  
Monday August 31st, 2015  
RACE DAY 30



*Karen & Michelle receiving Massy donation cheque from Mr Roger Hadeed*

Special Thanks to Mr. Roger Hadeed, the Arima Race Club and MASSY for their kind contribution to Horses Helping Humans at the MASSY Independence Day Races on August 31st, and for recognizing our work with both retired racehorses and special needs children, in commemoration of Mr. Bernard Dulal-Whiteway. Their kind donation will go towards buying specialised therapeutic mats for our horse stalls, thereby ensuring our horses long term health and happiness.



# An Afternoon of Tea & Delights

On June 9, 2015, HHH held our first annual fundraising tea party in support of our Sponsor-A-Child Free Hippotherapy Program. It was a lovely, 'sophisticated-but-fun' afternoon of celebrating old friendships and making new ones. Our elegantly-dressed tea party guests were charmed by the settings at the historic, stately residence of the British High Commissioner, Charge d'Affaires Mr. Charles Moore, our gracious host, and the presence of our honoured guest, Her Excellency Mrs. Reema Carmona, all while enjoying sumptuous delicacies and exquisite teas from Chef Bianca Bianco, Rachel Stollmeyer-Callahan and Gina's Chocolate Truffles.

There was excellent entertainment - from the soul-stirring music of Ecuadorean world music group Yuyaric Kayna to performances by pianist Rachael Williams, all led off by a beautiful rendition of the national anthem on the steel pan by HHH volunteer Leiana Wilhite. The afternoon also featured an art auction with stunning pieces generously donated by top local artisans Helen Shair-Singh, Bunty O'Connor, Kristen Alexis, Mary Hart, Jade & Annelie Solis, and Faith Gurley, and wonderful door prizes by Stecher's, Cocobel Chocolates and Nicole Joseph which were won by a lucky few.

We also have to thank Sandees Floral and Gourmet Gifts for the beautiful flowers that adorned our tables and the bouquets presented to Her Excellency Mrs Reema Carmona and other distinguished guests.

Our Sponsor-A-Child Program provides critical services to autistic and other differently-abled children in Trinidad and Tobago who cannot otherwise afford it, and all proceeds from the tea party went towards that ongoing program which currently supports three children. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to our generous hosts, Charge d'Affaires Mr Charles Moore and Mrs. Cheryl Noriega, and to everyone who came out to support the event.

We hope to see you at next year's event to share a cup of tea and a lovely afternoon with us while giving your support to HHH's Sponsor-A-Child Program.

Cheers!

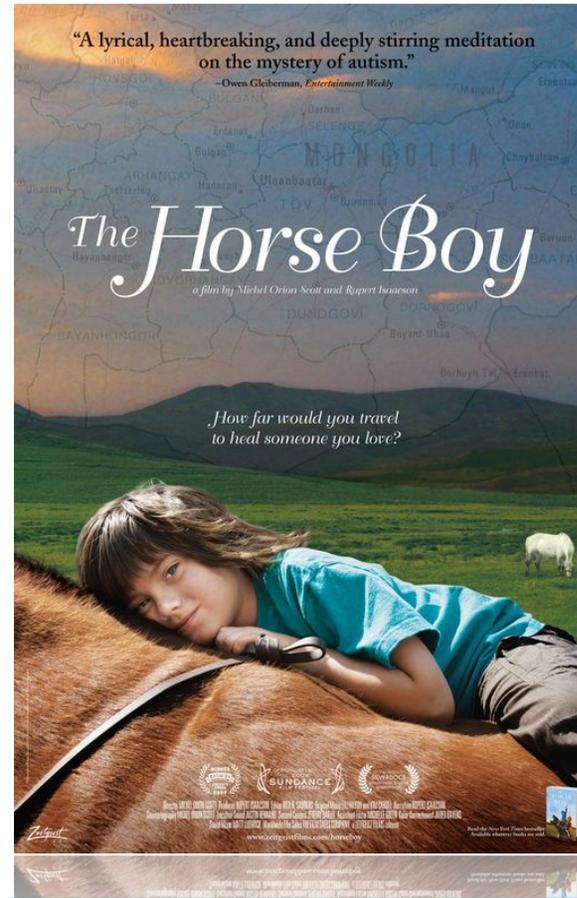


## FUNDRAISING LUNCH AT Chaud Cafe



Deliciousness personified! That's the only way to describe Horses Helping Humans' upcoming fundraiser. Our fundraising lunch at Chaud Cafe will take place during the week of September 7th-11th. Purchasing a ticket will guarantee both gastronomical satisfaction and that good feeling of giving back to society. Tickets are \$125 for Chaud Cafe's delicious chicken, fish or vegetarian pasta pomodoro, and can be collected on any day during this week. All funds raised are going towards much needed stable and fence repairs, and our ongoing sponsor a child program

Please call 768-6394 / 768-6386 or message us on FB at Horses Helping Humans for tickets!



“An autistic pre-adolescent prone to tearful outbursts, Rowan Isaacson rarely talks to family members, but he seems to have a special bond with horses. Frustrated that Rowan isn't responding to traditional treatment methods, his parents take him on a journey from their home in Texas to a shaman's hillside abode in Mongolia. This documentary depicts how Rowan responds to the shaman's unusual combination of healing ceremonies and horseback riding.”

chronicles the journey of the Isaacson family as they travel through Mongolia in search of a mysterious shaman who they believe can heal their autistic son. This film delves into the world of autism, horses, shamanism, and Mongolia while telling the story of a family that will go to the end of the earth to find a way into their son's life.

Date: 24th November 2015

Time: 7:30pm

Location: MovieTowne

Tickets are \$200, with exciting door prizes and so much more available! To purchase please contact us on Facebook (search Horses Helping Humans) or via email at [horseshelpinghumanshhh@gmail.com](mailto:horseshelpinghumanshhh@gmail.com)

Tel: 768-6394 / 768-6386 / 688-8112



HHH would like to express our deepest thanks to Mr. Andre Pooran and the Blue Horse Foundation for their generous contribution towards our Sponsor a Child free hippo therapy program which currently supports 3 children. Your contribution will ensure that one of these children will receive 6 months of free hippo therapy sessions and for that, we are truly grateful!!!

HHH would also like to express our deepest gratitude to Mrs. Carol Demko for her kind and generous contribution towards our Sponsor a Child hippo therapy program. Thanks Aunt Carol!



HHH would like to extend our appreciation to The Children's Ark for their kind donation of therapeutic riding equipment for our program.



HHH would like to sincerely thank Anthony and Charmaine Gopaul of Gopaul Lands Hardware for their generous donation of materials for the building of our round pen and pasture.

We would like to thank all of the private donations received through the donation boxes at Movietowne POS & Chaguanas as well as through the HHH account at RBC. Private donations can be made to our RBC account #10000002193685

Veg Out's profanity jar has once again proven it's worth as Veg Out made yet another contribution to HHH. Thank you for your continued support Veg Out!

We would also like to express our gratitude and appreciation for Mr. Derek Chin for his ongoing support of HHH with the showing of our fundraising movie in Movietowne Theatres





*Having fun! Hannah, Noah and Storm Street*



*Rainbow meeting the kids from the Strategic Learning Center*



*Pure love, JoJo and Kizzy*



*Elise is all smiles aboard JoJo*



*Gareth relaxing on Boogie Blues*



*Hannah, Jacob & JoJo admiring the view of Maracas Bay*



*Karen and Elijah*



*Olivia the Unicorn girl!*



*James on Boogie Blues*



*Savannah on Rainbow who they painted like a rainbow!*



*Chad practicing vaulting on Edmundo*



*Joseph loves coming for his sessions!*



*Smiles from Jisiah!*



*Our sweet Jacob and his wonderful drawings!*



*Ernie, Jacob and Boogie Blues*



*Jessie, Hannah and JoJo the magical pony!*



*Here's awesome Emma!*



*Shivana, Brandon and Edmundo enjoying their horse experience together!*



*We're matching!*



*The kids from the Strategic Learning Center arriving for their horse adventure*



*Caribbean Cross Training Camp kids*



*Keneisha and Karen in session*



*Leyla, Boogie & Ernie Lexi, Storm & Ziva*



*Max concentrating on cleaning Rainbow's hoof*



*2011 Gold Cup winner Boogie Blues loves his new sign*



*Rainbow, Eleanor for Two, Storm Street and JoJo admiring their view*



*Our sweet Edmundo*