



## Riding for the Disabled Association SA Inc

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# MEDIA RELEASE

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### **HORSES' BIRTHDAY BRINGS AWARENESS OF RIDING FOR THE DISABLED**

Next week, more than 90 Riding for the Disabled horses will be patted and hugged and given special treats to celebrate their official "birthday" on August 1.

Then they will be saddled and bridled for their regular "job" providing horse riding as basic therapy and active recreation for more than 500 people – mostly children – with disabilities in South Australia.

August 1 to 7 also marks Riding for the Disabled "Awareness Week" throughout Australia, local celebrations honouring horses used by RDA.

Leading into Awareness Week, RDA SA will hold its annual Badge Day on Friday (July 29) in Rundle Mall, where RDA pony Pixie will be the star attraction of an RDA display from 10am until 3pm.

RDA has operated in South Australia since 1969, and was formalised as an association in 1972. This means RDA SA will celebrate its 40th anniversary next year.

In those four decades, RDA SA has helped thousands of people with disabilities attain important life skills through contact with horses, supported by hundreds of volunteers, at one of 13 RDA centres in South Australia, some country, some metropolitan.

Over the years, countless horses have helped riders improve mobility, hand-eye co-ordination, core strength, balance and ability to interact with others.

Taking part in a healthy outdoor sport in a safe place helps most riders simply feel better, through a combination of stimulating exercise, challenging activities and fresh air.

Stories abound of how riders' lives have been enriched through RDA experiences.

Riders like Liam and Lachlan, whose first words ever spoken were their ponies' names.

Liam's mum cried when she heard her son's voice for the first time as he called out "Mickey! Mickey!" when he arrived one day at an RDA centre.

Teenagers Belinda and Maggie rose through the ranks as RDA riders and eventually competed in RDA dressage at state level, boosting their self-confidence immeasurably.

They now volunteer at their centre, helping younger riders benefit from their riding experience, and helping other volunteers with RDA promotions in their town.

Matthew and Gage couldn't sit up when they started horse riding at RDA. Their horses' movement made their muscles work and strengthen. Many riding sessions later, they can both sit up unaided.

Every week, RDA horses help hundreds of people with disabilities. Awareness week is when RDA celebrates its horses and applauds the achievements of its riders.

To see a delightful RDA pony close-up, come to the Rundle Mall and Gawler Place intersection on Friday and wish her a happy birthday.

**##ENDS**

*Call Kay Milton on 0421 163 920 for further information and interviews.*