

RESEARCH

HHRF awarded \$100,000 in research funding in 2008. The first of two awards, and HHRF's first international award, went to the Université de Sherbrooke in Quebec, Canada. The team, led by Dr. Helene Corriveau, Dr. Claude Dugas and Danielle Champagne, plans to measure the effect of a ten week hippotherapy intervention on the control of head and trunk movement for children with cerebral palsy. The research design incorporates appropriate baseline and outcome laboratory measures,

but is unique in using novel instrumentation to chart the subject's progress in therapy, while simultaneously controlling the movement of the horse.

The second award went to the Good Hope Equestrian Training Center in Miami, Florida. This study, led by Dr. Margaret Bass, will evaluate the effect of therapeutic horseback riding lessons (TR) on the social function and attention of children, ages 7-12, who are diagnosed with autism.

VALIDATION

Researchers from the Washington University Program in Occupational Therapy released findings from an HHRF funded research project. The study looked at the therapeutic impact of equine therapy for children with cerebral palsy. The study found that hippotherapy, the use of the rhythmic movement of a horse to effect therapeutic gains, improves both head and trunk stability and upper extremity function in children with spastic diplegia due to cerebral palsy.

"We have shown that hippotherapy is a therapeutic tool that makes a measurable and visible difference in basic skills that form the foundation of most functional activities of everyday life," reports Tim Shurtleff, occupational therapist and lead researcher. The year-long study primarily involved measuring stability changes in children with cerebral palsy after 12 weeks of hippotherapy treatments.

Dramatic research results showed that children actually sustained the benefits of hippotherapy for several months after their riding sessions stopped. "They actually maintained a continuum of measurable improvement—better head and trunk stability and improved control of their arms as they reach—even months after their hippotherapy sessions ended," said Molly Sweeney, HHRF Board President. "That was a really exciting revelation for us!"

The research team plans to follow up this study by conducting a randomized clinical trial (RCT) of hippotherapy. "If this and other studies can produce the evidence to convince more insurance companies that kids with this disability can benefit from using horses as a therapy tool, more kids will be able to gain from it and become more functional as they mature into adults," concludes Shurtleff. "This is a therapy tool that makes a difference. While it is fun, it is not recreation. It is therapy disguised as fun."

EDUCATION

Outreach efforts also included four postal and e-newsletters and regular press releases. The information provided by the HHRF website (www.horsesandhumans.org) was updated to include guidelines and tips for writing a proposal and posting of all previously awarded applications as samples for inquiring researchers. Ongoing research project updates and results are also posted.

HHRF hosted information booths at sev-

eral regional and national EAA/T conferences in 2008. Friends of HHRF in Connecticut, New York and Washington D.C. also hosted information and networking receptions.

The University of Washington team continued work toward peer-reviewed journal publication of their research results, which is expected in the first half of 2009. A final abstract detailing research outcomes was distributed and published worldwide.

"One mother told me that her five-year-old son with cerebral palsy no longer hangs out at the edge of the playground watching the other kids...After his twelve week hippotherapy intervention he now climbs up the slide and plays on the equipment. Without any urging from anyone, he just started doing it. If [we] can produce the evidence to convince more insurance companies that kids with this disability can benefit from using horses as a therapy tool, more kids will be able to gain from it and become more functional as they mature into adults."

-Tim Shurtleff, lead researcher of a groundbreaking HHRF-funded project

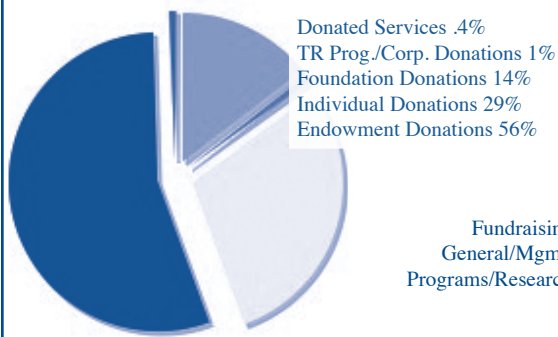
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2008 Income Breakdown



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Expenses: \$198,438.00

2008 Expenses Allocation



NOTE: 56% of the donations received were designated towards our endowment fund to be used for future program/research.



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P.O. Box 480

Chagrin Falls, OH 44022

www.horsesandhumans.org

info@horsesandhumans.org

(440)543-8306