



Riding Develops Ability

Julie and Zhane Graduate

www.pegasusact.com.au

My name is Julie Morris and I am a volunteer at Pegasus on Saturday mornings.

I have had horses since I was twelve years old (which is unfortunately many moons ago now) and had always had the desire to be a volunteer at a place like Pegasus. I was initially drawn to Pegasus, because I believed it allowed some very special children a chance to feel the same freedom and wonder that I have had the privilege of knowing whilst riding my beloved ponies.

With family commitments, a busy work schedule and horses of my own, sufficient time never seemed to be available, but with a change in my circumstances I found I finally could dedicate enough time to becoming a volunteer at Pegasus.

I initially started as a stable hand, where I got to know the wonderful personalities of the permanent residents of Pegasus, whilst grooming, saddling and just generally picking up after them (of course, I am talking about the four legged variety here not the two legged).

Not long after that, I was asked to lead in one of the classes as the regular leader unfortunately could not make it anymore. That day I met the young boy that I have had the privilege to "lead" for the past two years. When I first met Zhane, I discovered that he had a bright and bubbly personality but could get a little distracted, especially if he got to talking about his magic and all the games that he loves to play. At that time he was riding on the lead, but was starting to move ahead with the responsibility of doing all the steering and stopping of his wonderful horse Red Jack, with me just at his side.

As time went by the lead rein was taken off more often, even whilst trotting. Eventually, I realised that I had the easiest job of all the volunteers, as all I had to do was stand in the middle of the arena and watch him go about independently doing the tasks, which were set by Barbara (his coach) for him and the rest of the riders in his lesson.

Zhane's riding improved so much that his coach assessed that he was ready for a new challenge, so during the recent school holidays he was offered individual lessons with Jo, another of the wonderful Pegasus coaches. I was so delighted for him that I decided to come along and support him from the stands in the arena. Jo's intent was to see his true level of riding and maybe to work on preparing him to be able to canter towards the end of the week. You can only imagine my joy when on the first day of lessons he CANTERED INDEPENDENTLY!!! Not just once, but at least three times and made it the majority of the way around the arena.

Of course, this is all a little bittersweet for me as it looks like Zhane will now progress to regular individual lessons, with the ultimate aim of him riding in the integrated classes alongside his able bodied peers. For me to know that I have been able to play my small part in assisting him to "graduate" is a great feeling that will stay with me for the rest of my life.

I often think of a conversation I had with Michael, another regular volunteer on Saturdays, when he said to me "that I can't think of a better way to begin the weekend, than by being with the kids and ponies at Pegasus". Believe me I couldn't agree more!



Zhane learning some new skills on Tully