

NARHA: 25 Years of People Turning Dreams Into Reality

Testimony to the therapeutic value of horseback riding spans the ages. But the origin of organized therapeutic riding is relatively recent. The achievements in the 1950's of one woman - Liz Hartel of Denmark - are generally regarded as the impetus for the formation of therapeutic riding centers in Europe. Polio impaired Madame Hartel's mobility but not her spirit. She rehabilitated herself from wheelchair to horseback and in 1952 she won the silver medal for Grand Prix Dressage at the Helsinki Olympics. Medical and equine professionals took notice and soon centers for therapeutic riding sprang up in Europe. It didn't take long for therapeutic riding to reach the shores of the North American continent. Canadians and Americans studied what was happening in England and quickly made plans to start centers. Two of the first were the Community Association of Riding for the Disabled (CARD) in Toronto, ON, which was organized by J.J. Bauer and Dr. R.E. Renaud; and the Cheff Center for the Handicapped in Augusta, MI, with Lida McCowan as executive director. Almost as quickly these and other individuals recognized the need for an organization that could be a clearinghouse for information on therapeutic riding. Hence, on Nov. 2, 1969, 23 like-minded individuals gathered at the Red Fox Inn in Middleburg, VA, and laid the groundwork for an organization named North American Riding for the Handicapped Association.