



2010 NARHA National
Conference and
Annual
Meeting in Denver,
CO November 3-6,
2010



Para equestrian - link to full social integration for people with disability

(Back to the future)

The tribute to Marjorie Kittredge, Jonquil Solt, my friends and teachers...and Matt Trot Para equestrian rider who does not ride any more...

Davorka Suvak

Spirit Open Equestrian Program, Inc.

11/3/2006

Why “back to the future”?

Para equestrian – what it is?

Social integration for people with disabilities as one of goals in our program, and worldwide...

Who is potential Para equestrian athlete?

What is the difference between already existing games/competition in therapeutic riding and programs and Para equestrian program?

How to start?

Risk?

What does it mean in real life...?

You don't have to be a superstar to be a hero

- By Will Swanton ; From: [The Sunday Telegraph](#)
- August 15, 2010 12:01AM



Inspiring...Nicole Kullen with her horses at her farm near Bathurst.

DEAR Nicole, You're my hero. And the most courageous athlete in this country.

You were 16 when you fell asleep with a headache and woke up four months later without legs. You had six weeks on life support while meningococcal meningitis septicemia did its damndest. Another six months in hospital, touch and go the whole way.

Four years later, in 2000, you lost both kidneys.

Every single day for a decade, you're on the dialysis machine to keep yourself alive. Hero isn't a strong enough word.

"I'm not supposed to be riding," you say. "Like, if I break an arm, I lose it. They'll have to take it off. That's a definite, there would just be no way of fixing it. But that's too bad. I have to keep riding. I had one accident where I was tangled in a fence and didn't know if my arm was still attached. I seriously thought it was gone. Blood was pouring everywhere. Me and mum had just done this first aid course - great timing. I was all, 'Mum, quick, I need some help - and you'd better bring the kit!'"

Related Coverage

You're my hero for saying that with the most infectious laugh in the history of the human race. You're my hero for the bravery: "After I got sick, I was going to ride again with approval from the doctors or not. I went to the Paralympic Games and signed all these forms saying I knew it was at my own risk of death. I'm old enough and dumb enough to make my own decisions.

"I've got to do this or I'll go insane. It takes a toll on my health but I'm not going to quit."

You're my hero because you endure. The photos of the son you lost when he was five days old are too beautiful. For three of those days, you were on life support yourself. You're my hero for doing

what your mum instructs: keep on keeping on. You had a heart rate of 250 beats a minute for two straight weeks - but lived. Not a bad trick.

"Must have a nice big heart," you say. You have no idea.

You're my hero for the bond with your mum.

"She's my strength, my backbone," you say. "I couldn't keep it together without her. She's my 24/7 career. Behind closed doors, she's the only one I can really talk to. She's the one who has seen me at my darkest, seen what I've gone through. We were both strong-willed people before I got sick and that's helped us. People told mum she was crazy for letting me ride again. Don't you think she's been hurt enough? What if something happens? Mum said I'd be more hurt if I couldn't do it. She was right. I love her."

You're my hero for the honesty: "I'm totally open to something going wrong. I know I'm pushing it but the love I have for this sport - I don't want to let it go. The diagnosis isn't great. I get check-ups all the time. I go in, the specialist takes my blood pressure and says: 'How are you going?' I tell him I feel like crap but he can't do anything. He just gives me a hug and says, 'I hope I see you next time'. I want to go to the London Paralympics, if I'm still here. I know I'm not supposed to be riding but I'd rather have what I've got now than another five years sitting in a chair. I'm not going to stop for anything."

You're my hero for looking across your paddock and saying: "It's so beautiful down there. If I get, well, if I get really sick, I've told Mum I want her to take me out and lay me in the paddock. I'm not going to go in a hospital bed if it comes to that.

"I want to be with my horses, my animals and her."

Thank you for having me at your place. My favourite bit? The whole time. You're my hero for travelling five hours, each way, for a single training session. You're my hero for representing Australia at sport. You won three national titles this year to make the Australian team for the FEI World Equestrian Games at Kentucky. You're supposed to leave next month but need \$20,000 to get there. Your grand total so far is 50 bucks. My sincere wish is that people read this story, get on nicolekullen.com and flood you with donations.

"It'll be a bit heartbreaking if I can't find the money," you say.

It ain't over yet, legend.

Go well.

Will.

Or this...



Dream...

Friendship...



Therapy...

Independence and competition...



Blue ribbons and moments of glory...

Gladstone 2006

Matt does not ride any more...his disease took his ability to control trunk and be able to ride...but no one can take away moments he spent in saddle, in dressage ring, blue ribbons and being recognized as equestrian athlete who has been invited to US Equestrian Team headquarters...

About speaker:

Davorka Suvak

- an Educator, Trainer, Therapeutic Riding Instructor and professional manager in equestrian industry. She has more than 30 years of experience in work as coach and educator in Equine Assisted Activities, and 15 years as Therapeutic Riding Instructor, with an international recognition, 10 years of Para equestrian international experience and success.

EXPERIENCE

Davorka is a founder and Program Director of Spirit Open Equestrian Program, Inc. www.spiritequestrian.org with visible recognition in NOVA community.

Since she immigrated to USA, 2005, works as riding instructor, horse trainer, and therapeutic riding instructor

Since 1985, Davorka works part time as equestrian professional, riding instructor for beginners, novice in show jumping, dressage and Para dressage, trainer, and coach for riders of all levels.

- Manager of **First Croatian Championship in Dressage for Handicapped 1999.**
- Selector and coach for Croatian National team at various international championships including **International Championship in dressage for disabled in the United Kingdom in 1999, Russia and Poland in 2002, Austria and Hungary in 2004, and World Championships in Denmark 1999 and Belgium 2003.**
- Acted as head of the Croatian equestrian team at **2000 Paralympic Games in Sidney, Australia and 2004 Paralympic Games in Athens, Greece**
- Organized **First Croatian Education on Therapeutic riding programs**
- Presented therapeutic riding programs at **Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France, 1999 (Sport as social cohesion)**
- Presented Croatian therapeutic riding at **9th NARHA's Congress in Seattle, WA**
- Founded **Therapeutic Riding Association of Croatia** in 2001.
- Presented own project at XI. International **FRDI Congress , Budapest, 2003.**

EQUESTRIAN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Davorka' s training and experience includes many hours of professional instruction with noted trainers in the Equestrian and Para equestrian disciplines

- Ulf Wilken – Sweeden, Chairman of Para equestrian International Educational Committee
- Marjory Kittredge – founder of NARHA, dressage and para dressage International judge
- Inger Bryant – GB, International dressage and para dressage International judge
- Missy Ramhousen – USA -National Team Coach for Para dressage

EDUCATION

- NARHA – Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor
- FEI – Riding Instructor
- University Zagreb, Croatia BA

PUBLICATIONS

- 2005 *Horsemanship of new age*
- 2004 Therapeutic riding publication *Preventive Programs for Therapeutic Riding*
- 2002 Therapeutic riding manual *Horsemanship for People with Disabilities*, the first Croatian educational publication about therapeutic riding

AWARDS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 2002 **Humanity Charter** in recognition of humanitarian deeds performed in Eastern Croatia.
- 2001 **Written acknowledgment** for achievements in the development of volunteer work in Croatia from the Government of the Republic of Croatia.
- 2001 **Plaque for excellence** in the field of sport for people with disabilities in the Republic of Croatia from the Croatian Sports Federation for the Disabled.
- 2000 **Anne Wright Instructor Award** for excellence in the field of therapeutic riding, from High Hopes Riding of Connecticut, USA.
- 2000 **Plaque for excellence** in the field of sport for people with disabilities in the Republic of Croatia from the Croatian Sports Federation for the Disabled.