

HCBC Bob James Volunteer of the Year Award 2018 – Margot Vilvang

A dedicated professional to equestrian sport and learning, Margot is an international level equestrian, a coach at Southlands Riding Club (SRC), and a willing volunteer in many capacities for our equestrian community.

Margot has represented Canada both as a riding participant (Prince Philip Games (PPG) in 1976 and Student World Cup Dressage and Show Jumping in 1984), and as a coach (Canadian coach for PPG 2010 and 2012 and Canada Inter Pacific Exchange Show Jumping coach 2011 and 2013). Her volunteering covers a broad spectrum where she works tirelessly for horse welfare, learner equestrians and children and adults with development issues. She is;

- a long-term coach for Pacific Riding for Developing Abilities (PRDA) where she not only instructs but also co-ordinates volunteers and ponies, making the program fun and achievable for all participants;
- A generous Stable Management Instructor to Vancouver Pony Club, passing on her wealth of knowledge to our next generation of equestrians, sharing her resources and equipment with them and encouraging them to learn, strive for excellence and improve their horsemanship skills in a theoretical and practical sense;
- A volunteer trainer for New Stride Thoroughbred Adoption Society, helping retrain ex racehorses for their new lives as riding horses and particularly helping the other volunteers with training questions,
- A volunteer with the SRC Horse Rescue and Rehabilitation program, helping as needed from feeding to medical care to training.

In addition to these volunteer activities, Margot is the primary organizer of “Playdays” at SRC, the first exposure many kids have to showing, again she volunteers her time to set up the courses and classes and runs the ‘show’ on the day. She is also the first person to call upon in a crisis, from colic to horses in the ditch to loose shoes. She is the primary figure in the ditch rescue team, having participated in 15 ditch rescues involving getting into the frigid muddy waters with the frightened horse, removing tack if needed and strapping a sling on to the horse to enable the tow truck and/or helpers at the sides to get the horse out. It is a dangerous, dirty and cold task. Margot has sustained injuries from being kicked by terrified animals in this position but it has not deterred her from being the go-to person in such a crisis.

Margot has an incredible work ethic, a sunny disposition and is an excellent ambassador and representative for our BC equestrian community. She is a regular and important contributor to human and horse programs and has taken great personal risks to save the lives of horses in trouble. She is such a positive influence on and role model for our next generation of equestrians. Her hands-on approach defines her ethos.