



Volunteer Manual

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WELCOME TO SIMPLE CHANGES THERAPEUTIC RIDING CENTER

Thank you for choosing to be a volunteer with Simple Changes. Our program is fueled by volunteer energy. Every volunteer hour is necessary to make our program a success. Therapeutic riding, done safely and in a professional manner, brings feelings of joy and accomplishment to all involved.

As a sport riding lesson volunteer you will be part of a professional team that consists of a certified therapeutic riding instructor and our therapy horses. As a volunteer for a hippotherapy session you will also work with a licensed physical therapist. During lessons you will be an important assistant that facilitates the highest quality therapeutic horsemanship for our riders with disabilities.

At Simple Changes we follow generally accepted horse practices. At times, however, we may do things differently than you are used to for safety or efficiency reasons. Consistency is important so please adhere to our practices while volunteering at our program.

Please use this manual as a reference and feel free to ask questions. We love what we do and want you to enjoy yourself. Your confidence and enthusiasm is contagious to our riders. Your commitment and dedication is vital to our quest for excellence – we thank you for being a part of our program.

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to enhance the lives of individuals with disabilities, their families and community through high-quality therapeutic programs, especially equine-assisted activities.

STAFF

Corliss Wallingford
Executive Director
Volunteer Coordinator
Registered Instructor

Jenny Spain
Program Director
Bookkeeper
Registered Instructor

VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION CHECKLIST

Paperwork

- Emergency medical treatment release
- Health history, liability release, photo consent
- Application, criminal history, interest form
- Confidentiality agreement

Overview

- Not-for-profit organization
- Fundraising/donations
- All instructors certified by NARHA
- Over 20 clients per week
- Meadowood SRMA – Bureau of Land Management property
- Importance of volunteers – if you don't come, riders don't ride

Therapeutic Horsemanship Program

- Sport riding program emphasizes riding skills while improving strength, balance, coordination and self-esteem
- Hippotherapy is a medical treatment with a licensed therapist
- Hippotherapy uses the natural movement of the horses' pelvis to accomplish treatment goals. It moves the same as a human's pelvis – laterally, front to back

Facility Orientation

- Emergency information – telephone/emergency information cards, first aid kit, fire extinguishers
- Please arrive one-half hour before lessons begin
- Common sense
- Attire
- Restroom
- Greeting riders
- Respect for Meadowood boarders
- Do not hand feed, or allow riders to hand feed, horses
- Tack areas
- Sign in sheet
- Name badges

- Valuables – please keep in your car
- Water bottles
- White board – lesson roster
- Expect learning curve of several months

Grooming and Tacking Up

- Be reassuring, calm, and firm around the horse
- Talk to horse so it knows where you are around its body
- Always groom horse in the cross ties, unless indicated differently by instructor
- Use curry comb and brush on body of horse
- Comb out mane and tail
- Pick hooves
- Use tack and pads indicated on white board
- Bridle and lead horse to mounting area
- Stand at left hand side of horse
- Hold lead rope in right hand, 12” from snap; hold slack in left hand in a figure 8 (do not wrap rope around hand)
- Walk alongside at the horse’s neck or shoulder; look straight ahead to where you want to go
- If horse won’t move forward, push horse away from you so it crosses its legs – that will give horse momentum.

Mounting

- Only instructors or instructors in training are allowed to mount riders
- Halt horse in the mounting area for the instructor to do safety check and tighten girth (stay at horse’s neck).
- Stand in front of the horse in halt position to provide a physical barrier
- If leading, be sure horse is paying attention to you (head up and in center, focused on leader) at all times; if needed, tug firmly on lead rope to keep horse’s attention, then release
- Instructor will assign sidewalkers and/or spotter.
- Wait for rider or instructor to cue horse to “walk on” before moving out of halt position.
- Varying degrees of assistance will be necessary, instructor will direct
- Enter the arena through the gate

- Lead horse into the arena and circle until all riders have entered – instructor may or may not check stirrups first.

Leading

- The primary responsibility of the leader is control of the horse
- Listen for your rider's name during the lesson; the instructor is also talking to you
- If you need to stop for any reason during the lesson, come off the track towards the center of the arena, halt, and get the instructor's attention
- Safe horse spacing – keep 2 horse widths and lengths between horses at all times
- Keep horse's attention on you at all times
- Keep turns gentle, unless otherwise directed by instructor – sharp movements will throw the rider off balance
- Remember your sidewalker – don't scrape them off into the rail

Sidewalking

- Primary responsibility of the sidewalker is the student/rider
- Listen for your rider's name – instructor will address the rider out of courtesy
- Sidewalker should walk at the rider's leg
- It is okay to talk with the rider before the lesson, once the lesson starts keep student's focus on instructor
- Always treat rider in age appropriate manner
- Use rider's name
- Conversation should be focused on the rider – not between volunteers
- Different holds include: arm over thigh, ankle hold, may hold under rider's arm or on back
- Give rider time to process directions, cue after 5 or so seconds
- Only one person at a time should speak to the rider

Riding Terminology

- Inside = towards the center of the arena
- Outside = closest to the rail
- Track right = your right side is towards the inside of the arena
- Track left = your left side towards the inside of the arena

Practice Sessions

- Identify which volunteers can lead – practice leading and sidewalking
- Practice arm holds
- Walk, trot
- Introduce therapy arenas

Emergency Situations

- Loose horse -- stop activity; leader goes into halt position; sidewalker stabilize rider; stay with your team and await instructions
- Falls from horse – leader move horse away from fallen rider (remember that body of horse will move in opposite direction that head moves) – instructor and/or medical personnel will attend to rider
- Seizures – leader halt and reassure horse and keep it still; sidewalker stabilize rider
- Emergency dismounts – make sure feet are out of the stirrups; if small rider, scoop off in your arms; if rider is larger pull off so that rider lands feet or bottom first (not head first).

Dismounting

- Line up at instructor's direction – straight and correctly spaced
- Await instructor directions -- only instructors or instructors in training are allowed to dismount riders
- Leader is responsible for horse
- Sidewalker(s) escorts rider from ring – never allow a rider to walk through ring without supervision
- Riders must continue to wear helmet until out of the ring
- Sidewalker delivers rider to a parent/guardian – only after rider is safely delivered are the sidewalker's responsibilities completed for that lesson

Please remember that at Simple Changes our standards of excellence include safety, respect, compassion and joy. These standards extend to our riders, volunteers, staff – both equine and human, the boarders and staff at The Stables at Meadowood and the entire community. Thank you for being an ambassador for Simple Changes.