

## **Simple Changes Volunteer Job Description**

As a therapeutic 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 or occupational therapist. During lessons you will be an important assistant that facilitates the highest quality therapeutic horsemanship for our riders with special needs.

Volunteers should wear boots or shoes that offer foot protection, no open-toed shoes are allowed. Please do not wear dangling earrings (riders may grab at them) and do wear sensible clothing (no booty shorts or low cut tops, please!). Also, do not wear heavy perfume – it may attract bees.

You will be trained to assist with the following activities.

### **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

Volunteers who wish to work with our horses will be taught horsemanship skills. Our horses are handled by many different people, so we ask that all volunteers conform to our standards of horse care.

### **Grooming, Tacking Up and Preparing for Lessons**

- Be reassuring, calm, and firm around the horse
- Talk to horse so it knows where you are around its body
- Use curry comb and brush on body of horse
- Comb out mane and tail
- Pick hooves
- Use tack and pads set out by instructor

- 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.
- If not assigned to lead a horse, please wait for riders in waiting area.
- Bring helmets designated by instructor to rider waiting area.

### **Mounting**

- Only instructors or those specified by instructors 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

### **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

### **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

### **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 those specified by instructors 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

### **Dismissal from Volunteer Activities**

Volunteering at Simple Changes is at the sole discretion of Simple Changes. If at any time the Simple Changes' staff determines that volunteering at Simple Changes is not an appropriate activity for a volunteer, Simple Changes may remove a volunteer from the Program. Simple Changes will not tolerate any volunteer who engages in disruptive conduct, exhibits behaviors that are unacceptable or unsafe, is disrespectful to instructors, horses, other volunteers or riders, or fails to follow directions of instructors.