



# **Volunteer Manual**

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## **Welcome to Simple Changes**

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 or occupational 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, Instructor  
Jenny Spain – Program Director, Instructor  
Anne Fontanella – Administrative Assistant, Instructor  
Jill Wagner, MS, PT – Hippotherapy  
Sophia Scott, MS, PT – Hippotherapy  
Connie Kohler, MS, OT – Hippotherapy

## **VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION**

### **Paperwork**

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

### **Overview**

- Not-for-profit organization
- Fee for service and 501(c)(3) funded by donations
- All instructors certified by PATH International
- Over 50 clients per week
- Lorton -- Meadowood SRMA – BLM property
- Catlett – Farm owned by Melinda Freckleton, DVM and Jenny Spain
- Importance of volunteers – if you don't come, riders don't ride

### **Therapeutic Horsemanship Program**

- Sport riding program conducted by PATH Intl. certified instructors
- 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 horse to accomplish treatment goals. Horse 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 boarders
- Do not hand feed, or allow riders to hand feed, horses
- Tack areas
- Sign in sheet
- Valuables – please keep in your car

- Water bottles
- Expect learning curve of several months

### **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 – 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 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.

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 and the entire community. Thank you for being an ambassador for Simple Changes.