



## Volunteer Handbook

### Riding the Winds of Change

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Volunteer Coordinator \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor \_\_\_\_\_

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to Lenawee Therapeutic Riding. We are a volunteer-based, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization operating in Lenawee County.

Therapeutic horseback riding for people with disabilities was first started in England in 1954. In 1969, Lida McGowan, with the help of the Kellogg Foundation, started the “Cheff Center for the Handicapped”, now known as “Cheff Therapeutic Riding Center,” in Augusta, Michigan.

Lenawee Therapeutic Riding was founded in 1987 to provide horseback riding to individuals with physical, cognitive and emotional disabilities. Our program Instructors are certified through Path, Intl., the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship, International as well as through Michigan State University Proud Equestrians Program and Cheff Therapeutic Riding Center. Instructors are responsible for rider evaluations and admission into the program, evaluation and training of horses to be used in the program, coordination of classes and documentation of results achieved during each riding session. Generally, riders are grouped into classes of four or five riders, riding for thirty minutes per class.

LTR has two seven week sessions per year: Spring session begins in April and Fall session begins in September. We have 50-75 specially trained volunteers who assist the riders as well as serving on our board of directors, committees and doing other essential tasks. It is the dedication and commitment of our volunteers that makes this dream possible for our riders. We may not have the chance to personally thank you for your time each week, but please know that your efforts are greatly appreciated. This program could not be successful without the countless hours of time donated by our hard-working volunteers. Please take the time to become familiar with the materials provided in this Volunteer Handbook. Please note that it has been updated to fulfill current Path, Intl. standards for accreditation. We look forward to working with you.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

Lenawee Therapeutic Riding provides horseback riding in a specially designed program involving the use of horses and ponies. Our mission is to enhance the lives of children and adults with physical, cognitive, emotional and behavioral impairments through therapeutic riding.

## **WHEN YOU MEET A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY**

1. Remember, first and foremost, that the person with a disability is a person.
2. Be yourself when you meet her/him. Talk as you would with anyone else - do not use patronizing or condescending tones or words.
3. Help only when it is needed or requested. Use your judgment and don't allow yourself to constantly assist riders who need to develop more independence. Give the rider the opportunity to prove him or herself and to make and learn from his or her own mistakes.
4. Ask permission before you touch or adjust a rider in any way.
5. Be patient. Let the rider set his or her own pace. When a person does things for him or herself, they learn better than when things are done for them.
6. Be supportive rather than overprotective or overly solicitous. Don't shower the person with a disability with kindness or be excessively sympathetic.
7. Allow the rider to remain with his or her wheelchair or other assistive devices until you are asked to move them. Do not move them without permission.
8. Don't offer pity or charity. The person with a disability wants to be treated as an equal and given the opportunity to prove him/herself and to improve him/herself.
9. A disability need not be ignored or denied between friends, but, until your relationship is one of friendship, show interest in the rider as a person only.
10. Don't make up your mind about a person with a disability ahead of time. You may be surprised at her/his interests or abilities.
11. Enjoy your friendship with the person with a disability. Her/his philosophy and good humor may inspire you.

## **VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION AND TRAINING**

*\*Note: All new volunteers must attend a Volunteer Orientation and Training Session prior to working with the horses or riders. Returning volunteers need not attend an additional volunteer orientation and training session if they have volunteered during the previous year.*

**Performance at Orientation will determine who has the ability to lead and who has the ability to sidewalk safely in our program. Determinations are made by the Head Instructor and Volunteer Coordinator.**

Volunteer training will include:

1. Orientation to the facility, program, and therapeutic riding in general
2. Volunteer responsibilities
3. Emergency procedures
4. Confidentiality issues
5. Safety rules and regulations
6. Hands-on practice
7. Evaluation of leader skills for those interested in leading

Specifics relating to these training areas appear in other sections of this Volunteer Handbook. Volunteer job descriptions are also included in this Volunteer Handbook.

Volunteers (or the volunteer's parent/guardian if under age 18) will be required to complete emergency medical treatment and liability release forms once per calendar year.

After orientation, the Head Instructor and/or Volunteer Coordinator will determine where the volunteer is best suited to work. A volunteer's ability to assist a rider during lesson activities and in an emergency situation as a leader or a sidewalker will be evaluated prior to assignments being made.

On-going training in specific skills and activities will be offered periodically.

**Emergency drills will be conducted at least once every Spring and Fall session with riders mounted to assure staff, volunteers and riders are comfortable and knowledgeable with the process outlined.**

## **VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. To maintain the dignity and integrity of Lenawee Therapeutic Riding with the public.
2. To be sincere in the offer of service and believe in the value of the job to be done.
3. To carry out duties safely, promptly, and reliably.
4. To accept the guidance and decisions of the Instructors, staff and coordinators.
5. To be willing to continue to learn and participate in orientation and training programs.

## **VOLUNTEER ATTIRE POLICY**

1. Volunteers must wear closed-toe, hard soled shoes when working with or near the horses. Volunteers must wear shoes that offer adequate protection, not open-toed shoes or sandals.
2. Dangling jewelry is unsafe to wear with some riders and horses.
3. Perfume and after shave is not recommended. Perfumes can attract bees and other stinging insects and can trigger a reaction in sensitive riders/volunteers.
4. Shorts may be cooler, but please remember that there are always biting flies and mosquitoes around horses.
5. Logos, pictures, and words on clothing must be appropriate and non-offensive.
6. Cell phones should be left in your vehicles and never worn in the arena.
7. If you have a lot of keys, coins, etc. in your pocket, please leave these items in your vehicle to reduce the "jingle" factor.

## **VOLUNTEER CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY**

Lenawee Therapeutic Riding shall preserve the right of confidentiality for all individuals (volunteers, riders and staff) in its program. As a volunteer, you must maintain the confidentiality of sensitive information regardless of how it is obtained. Information which must be kept confidential should include, but not be limited to: all medical, social, referral, personal and financial information regarding a person and his/her family. Breach of this confidentiality may result in either reprimand and/or the loss of staff job and/or volunteer position.

## **VOLUNTEER CONDUCT REVIEW POLICY**

Allegations of misconduct by volunteers including, but not limited to, inappropriate and/or abusive behavior toward others, failure to follow established safety procedures, incidents due to the use of drugs or alcohol, and mistreatment/abuse of equines and other animals at Lenawee Therapeutic Riding will be evaluated. Decisions will be made on appropriate action to be taken by (in this order):

- A. Instructor relevant to occurrence
- B. Volunteer Coordinator
- C. Executive Committee

## **VOLUNTEER INSURANCE INFORMATION**

Volunteers are covered for liability by our insurance policy with Markel. In order to be covered, all volunteers must sign in the Sign-In book each time they volunteer. For our insurance to cover you, we must be able to prove that you were assisting with the program on the date and time in question. Volunteers must also complete new emergency medical treatment and liability release forms each calendar year.

## **VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE INFORMATION**

As a volunteer with LTR, we ask you for a weekly commitment to your assigned day or evening of classes for the full session. For reasons of safety, we need a specific number of volunteers per rider. If you cannot attend your assigned lesson(s), it is essential that you **telephone** the Volunteer Coordinator **as soon as possible**. If we do not have enough volunteers, a rider may have to be sent home without riding. If you have a few days notice of your cancellation you may email but if it is 24 hours or less please call as voice mail is checked more often than email at that point.

Unfortunately, we are not always told of a rider's cancellation, even though the parents are also told that is crucial to notify us ahead of time. Therefore, we may sometimes have more volunteers at the barn than we need. We apologize in advance for this situation. However, there are often other tasks which need to be done and we are always grateful for help. Just ask your Class Coordinator, the Volunteer Coordinator, or other staff members for ideas.

When you arrive to volunteer please:

- Put on your name tag and sign-in.
- Check the information boards for your assigned rider, horse and position.
- Remember to sign out in the Sign-In Book when you leave.

If you have any questions regarding the rider with whom you are working, ask the Instructor. It is important for you to have enough information about the riders to know how best to help them during classes. However, we must also protect the riders' privacy and will not divulge details such as specific diagnosis and treatment plans. The Instructors would appreciate any feedback you may have on how well your rider is doing, how the horse is behaving or any general comments on the class.

As you will soon see, class time can sometimes be hectic with tack changes, rider or horse changes, delays and other unexpected events. We may run late, but we will try to give each class thirty minutes of riding time.

## BARN RULES AND SAFETY GUIDELINES

### Barn Rules

1. There is no smoking anywhere on the property – inside or outside.
2. Stay in the Observation Room or in mounting area unless otherwise directed by an Instructor.
3. Only touch horses with permission and under supervision.
4. Do not feed horses unless directed and supervised by an Instructor/horse owner. They may be on specially supervised diets and extra food items could cause them to become ill.
5. Always use quiet voices and calm behavior while on the property.
6. Only riders, Instructors and trained personnel are allowed on ramps and mounting blocks.
7. LTR leases only the indoor arena and observation room. All other areas of the farm are off limits to everyone at LTR without prior permission from farm owners.
8. All children must be closely supervised and remain with an adult in the Observation Room.
9. No dogs are allowed on the property or in vehicles parked on the property.
10. Personal cell phones are the only available phones available for LTR use.
11. If you have any questions about ANYTHING, please ask. There is no such thing as a stupid question!

### Safety Guidelines

- 1. Always walk around horses and in the barn. No running.**
2. Always speak to a horse when approaching it and before touching it. Never approach any horse directly from the rear.
3. Pet a horse on its shoulder or neck, not on its face, nose or mouth.
4. Always be quiet and calm around horses. They may become frightened by loud noises or sudden movements.
5. Control your temper when working with horses and never mistreat them. A horse will respond best when you are kind and gentle. Never tease a horse in any way for any reason.



6. Wear appropriate clothing when working with a horse. Sturdy shoes or boots and long pants are required.
7. Keep your feet clear of the horse's feet. Do not kneel or squat around horse's feet. They outweigh you.
8. Never wrap a lead line around your hand or body. Hold lead line with two hands.
9. When riding or leading a horse, always maintain at least one horse's length between you and the horse in front of you.
10. Do not enter a horse stall or paddock without permission. Do not duck under or climb gates, ropes, stall guards, or fence rails. Undo or open them first.
11. LTR uses borrowed horses – for class, the leaders are designated by the instructor. Only the owner may give permission to lead horses outside of the use of the program for any reason.
12. Whenever you get out equipment, it is your responsibility to put it away properly.
13. If LTR volunteer or staff puts horses into stalls, the horse owner's wishes will be respected in regards to any needs of that horse.
14. Never leave a horse in the stall with its reins, bridle, or lead rope still attached.
15. No matter what you are doing, the safety of rider, volunteer and horse is the main priority.
16. No one – leader, sidewalker, rider, staff or anyone else may tease, taunt, harass or purposely annoy, scare or irritate any horse for the purpose of exercises or games solely for the client's benefit. All horses will be treated with respect, understanding and in a humane manner at all times.

## **WARNING**

Under the Michigan Equine Activity Liability Act, an equine professional is not liable for an injury to or the death of a participant in an equine activity resulting from an inherent risk of the equine activity.

## EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

All persons should know the location of the following items:

- Telephones and listings of emergency numbers and directions to the barn
  - There will be a cell phone at the white boards at all times.
- Listings of emergency numbers and directions to the farm are located in the observation room.
- All exits from the stable and the arena will be pointed out during orientations.
- Fire extinguishers are located in observation room and in LTR tack trailer.
- First Aid Kits (Human and Equine)
  - Human first aid kit is in the observation room
  - Equine first aid kit is in the observation room.
- Fuse box is located in the observation room.
- Cold water can be obtained at all hydrants.

The first week of lessons in every session, rider and volunteer teams will go through “Emergency Drills” so that they are familiar with all emergency procedures from an arena standpoint.

In all emergencies:

- the Instructor is responsible for making decisions on actions to be taken and for designating persons to assist them;
- the Class Coordinator is responsible for organizing the safe movement of people;
- the leaders are responsible for the horses and
- sidewalkers are responsible for the riders.

The most important things to remember in any emergency are to remain calm and to help the riders remain calm and feel safe. Until the rider can be returned to their parent, a sidewalker must remain with the rider.

If an emergency of any kind (e.g. illness, injury, fall, seizure, storms, or fire) should occur, please listen carefully to the Instructor’s directions.

- All riding will STOP until the Instructor gives further directions.
- No-one, including parents, will be permitted to enter the arena during an emergency unless authorized by the Instructor.
- There should be no excessive talking or noise.

- Sidewalkers will position themselves to protect and support their riders and will explain the situation calmly and quietly.
- Leaders will position themselves in front of their horse and maintain control of it at all times.
- No matter what happens, the leader must remain responsible for the horse and the sidewalkers remain responsible for the rider.

**If the arena or stable must be evacuated for an emergency situation, all persons should meet on the north side of the parking lot towards the house, keeping roads and parking areas clear for emergency vehicles.**

All volunteers and riders must be signed in the Sign In book at the front door to allow for a head count during emergencies.

If any person is injured at Lenawee Therapeutic Riding an incident form will be completed at the time of the injury. If this is not possible, one will be completed as soon as possible thereafter. Even seemingly minor injuries must be reported and documented.

### **INCLEMENT WEATHER**

Class may not be held during inclement weather including thunderstorms, lightning and high winds. A tornado, hail storm or severe thunderstorm warning, lightning, rain or strong winds, or power outages are all conditions that may warrant canceling classes. We will make every effort to contact you if classes are canceled. **Please make sure that we always have accurate and up-to-date contact information for you.**

If weather conditions deteriorate while classes are in progress and include any of the conditions listed above, classes may be dismissed and subsequent classes may be canceled. Periods of severe weather may cause classes to be temporarily suspended while waiting to see if conditions improve. If classes are canceled, all riders will be returned to their parents or caregivers. Therefore, it is crucial that these persons remain on the premises at all times.

If a tornado or dangerously high winds occur while lessons are in progress, horses will be turned loose in the indoor arena and all people will proceed to interior stalls to take cover.

### **FIRE**

In case of fire, all persons would proceed quietly to the nearest exit. Any person holding a horse would proceed out of the barn with that horse if possible and release them into the nearest paddock. The Instructor will designate an individual to call 911 to report the fire. Barn staff or individuals designated by the Instructor will release any remaining horses to a paddock if possible. If the horses are difficult to lead, blocking their vision by tying a jacket over their head may help. Some horses may become so panicked that it may not be possible to lead them safely and they must remain in their stalls or in the arena.

**The barn is to remain evacuated until given the “all clear” by emergency personnel. All humans are to go to the north end of the parking lot closest to M50 and the pastures and wait in the grassy area.**

## **MEDICAL EMERGENCY**

Lenawee Therapeutic Riding's Instructors are all certified in CPR and First Aid. The Instructor will designate individuals to get the first aid kit and/or call 911 if needed. There is a sign in the observation room with the barn address and directions to get here so that emergency personnel can locate us. Do not hang up the phone until the 911 operator tells you to do so. Medical forms for all riders, volunteers, and staff are kept in the LTR tack trailer.

The first aid kits are kept in the observation room. Latex gloves are kept inside the first aid kits. Everyone should be aware that there is a risk of transmission of disease whenever anyone comes into contact with human bodily fluids. If you are assisting during an injury where such exposure is possible, please wear gloves.

## **ARENA ACCIDENTS**

If an accident/incident occurs in the arena during class, all leaders must take their horses to the opposite end of the arena and await further directions from the Instructor. Some horses are calm at the halt; others do better walking around quietly.

### **Sidewalkers:**

- Remain calm and keep the riders from becoming anxious while awaiting directions from the Instructor.
- If a horse becomes overly agitated or excited, both sidewalkers should immediately assume the high leg lock position
- If a horse's behavior puts the rider at risk of falling, the Instructor may ask the sidewalker to perform an **emergency dismount**. If an emergency dismount is needed, the sidewalker to the inside of the arena notifies the rider that she/he is going to dismount. While the sidewalker wraps an arm around the rider's waist, the rider will be asked to remove her/his feet from the stirrups (with assistance from sidewalker on the other side as needed). When the rider's feet are clear, he/she will be taken off the horse and will remain with the sidewalkers until directions are received from the Instructor. The Instructors will review this procedure with you during the Volunteer Orientation and Training Session.

### **Leaders:**

- Remain responsible for keeping the horses quiet.
- In case of an emergency safety dismount, leader should keep horse still while rider is dismounting then walk the horse away in a straight line. This prevents the horse's back end from being turned to face the rider on the ground.

The leader and sidewalker(s) assigned to the horse and/or rider involved in the incident have the same responsibilities listed above. If necessary, the Instructor will designate someone to call 911 for emergency medical services. The Instructor will notify you if class can continue or if all riders must dismount and leave the arena.

## **VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTIONS**

**Job Titles:** Sidewalker, Horse Leader, Tack Assistant, Mounting Assistant

**Supervised By:** Instructors and Volunteer Coordinator

### **General Description of Duties**

- Report to stable in a punctual manner and sign in on the appropriate page in the Sign In book
- Follow the directions of Instructors and staff
- Treat all humans and animals with respect and consideration
- Notify Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible if you are unable to attend your assigned class
- Become familiar with volunteer handbook. Ask questions if anything is unclear
- Wear appropriate attire. See Volunteer Attire Policy p. 4
- No smoking, drugs, alcohol, or inappropriate language on the premises

### **General Qualifications**

All Volunteers must:

- Be fit enough to walk and/or jog for half an hour at a time in thick, uneven footing
- Be dependable and able to make the commitment for the full session
- Possess a reliable means of transportation
- Complete a Volunteer Orientation and Training Session and all required paperwork
- Enjoy and be able to work with individuals with disabilities and with horses
- Be able to follow instructions and help riders to follow directions
- Be 14 years of age or older.

### **Specific Job Responsibilities**

#### **A. Sidewalker**

- primary responsibility relates to the rider
- assist rider as directed by Instructor
- sidewalkers must be constantly aware of the rider, the rider's position on the horse and what the rider is doing
- assist rider with balance as necessary
  - some riders just need sidewalkers to walk beside them as a precaution

#### **B. Horse Leader**

- primary responsibility relates to the horse
- assist rider with control and guiding when necessary
- take control of horse in an emergency situation

#### **C. Tack Assistant**

- groom and tack horses as directed by the Tack Coordinator
- clean and store tack in appropriate manner
- maintain tack area in a clean and organized manner

#### **D. Mounting Assistant**

- assists Instructor in mounting riders onto their horses
- special training and permission of the Head Instructor required

# THE ROLES OF VOLUNTEERS

## THE ROLE OF THE SIDEWALKER

- Remember that the role of all volunteers is not to teach but to keep the rider's attention on the Instructor and to assist the rider ONLY as directed by the Instructor.
- The sidewalkers are responsible for the rider and should base their interactions on the instructions of the Instructor. The rider's attention must be focused on the Instructor and the task at hand.
- Allow the rider time to understand and apply the instructions in the best way he or she is capable. This is called "processing time". Some riders need more processing time than others.
- ***Choose one sidewalker to do the talking and allow silence for processing time. One sidewalker is interactive; one is supportive.***
- Casual conversation is a distraction and should be avoided.
- Do not try to teach the rider; let the Instructor handle that.
- Since the sidewalker is always close to the rider, you (and the rider) may find yourselves chatting during the lesson. Please limit chats to time before and after class, and re-direct the rider's attention to the Instructor. Most riders cannot focus on what you are saying and what the Instructor is saying at the same time.
- Similarly, please wait to chat with other volunteers until the lesson is over. It is very distracting to both the riders and the Instructors to have a lot of extra talking going on.
- The Instructor will give instructions to the riders by name so be sure you know the name of your rider.
- The sidewalker will assist the rider in maintaining his/her balance if he/she cannot maintain it alone. Depending on the rider's needs, one or two people may be asked to serve as sidewalkers. Other riders need a sidewalker to help as they learn new skills, for confidence, for help in emergencies, etc.
- The sidewalker should give only as much help as is needed and no more, to allow the rider to develop new skills and improve existing ones. THIS IS NOT A PONY RIDE.
- The Instructor will inform you of your rider's needs and show you how to assist him or her.

- When in position, a sidewalker will be next to the rider's leg, even with the center of the saddle.
- Do not walk behind the saddle, next to the horse's hindquarters, or in front of the saddle, next to the shoulder.
- Do not lean on the rider or horse. You may push the rider off balance or get kicked.
- If a rider is sliding off to one side, the sidewalker on the opposite side should gently pull the rider's hip back towards him or her. Do not **push** a rider back into position as this can be scary to the rider and cause them to overreact and move further the other way. Pushing may also throw the horse off balance.
- If you constantly hold a rider up or support them, they will lean on you rather than doing it themselves. Do **not** hold them up.
- If you need to switch sides (tired arms, etc.) ask the rider to come into the middle of the arena first. One sidewalker should stay in position while the other comes around the front of the horse.

### **At the Mounting Ramp and Block**

- The sidewalker(s) wait at the bottom of the mounting ramp. If there is only one sidewalker for a rider, that person should be on the right side, the opposite side to the leader, unless told otherwise by the instructor.
- The Instructor will inform you as to the rider's needs, how to place your hands, what to expect, etc. Listen carefully to these instructions.
- The Instructor will give instructions to your rider by name so make sure you know with whom you are working.

### **Mounting from the Ground**

- The Instructor will assist the rider with mounting. Do not attempt to mount the rider yourself or allow the rider to mount without the Instructor's directions. While waiting for the Instructor, make sure the rider remains in the observation room.
- The Instructor may ask you to counterweight the saddle by holding on to the off-side stirrup while the rider mounts. This helps to prevent the saddle from slipping when the rider places his or her weight in the stirrup.
- Once the rider is mounted, the Instructor will give him or her directions as to how to proceed. If you have any questions about your rider, ask the Instructor.

## **How Much to Help?**

- The amount of help each rider will need will depend upon his or her experience with riding and ability level. The Instructor will let you know how much to help.
- Each rider should be permitted to be as independent as possible without jeopardizing safety.
- Do not help the rider more than he or she needs.
- If a rider does not follow directions, the interactive sidewalker, (see p.11), should say "(Instructor's name) said "pull your left rein and turn to the left". Do not add or subtract words or change the directions.
- Let the Instructors teach the lesson. Do not add tasks such as "keep your heels down", "squeeze with your legs", etc. until your Instructor has asked for these behaviors. The rider may not be capable of these things, or he or she may only be capable of focusing on one task at a time, and your additional items are not the day's tasks.
- When handling a rider, avoid touching areas of the body that would be covered by a bathing suit. Hips, shoulders, knees, and feet are good places to touch to help a rider maintain proper body position. Do not pull or press on joints.
- We use three main holds - high leg lock, low leg lock and ankle hold. Some riders need to be held at all times; others need only to be held at the trot. Your Instructor will tell you what your rider needs.

## **At the Halt**

- Remain in position and focused on the rider. Be alert for balance issues when the horse stops and starts.

## **At the Walk**

- If the rider needs help with anything, or if there are tack issues to be addressed, ask the rider to take the horse into the center of the arena and get the Instructor's help. Do not address these situations yourself unless directed to do so by the Instructor.
- If you or your rider drops an item, leave it on the ground and notify the Instructor. Do not leave your rider for even the second it takes to pick something up. That second is always when accidents happen.



- Many riders have difficulty with spatial orientation and may not realize they are too close to the horse in front of them until too late. Sidewalkers should help the rider by prompting them far enough in advance for the rider to make a safe decision.

### **At the Trot**

- The rider should trot only when directed to do so by the Instructor.
- Sidewalkers should make sure the rider is prepared to trot - holding handhold, square in the saddle etc. - before he or she gives the “trot” command.
- As the trot is faster, the rider’s balance may suffer. Be alert for body position changes.
- Sidewalkers need to jog beside horse, holding arms in place, and looking up at rider the whole time. This is as tricky as it sounds and takes practice!
- If the horse will not trot, DO NOT tap it on the rump or belly unless specifically told to do so by an Instructor. This could cause the horse to bolt away or kick out.

### **During Exercises and Games**

- Continue to allow the rider to do as much as possible on his or her own.
- The point is not to WIN, but for the rider to improve personal skill levels. Please curb your own competitiveness and support your rider in his or her own efforts and accomplishments.

### **Dismounting**

- Riders dismount to the ground. Assist your rider in lining up his or her horse, keeping a safe distance between horses.
- The Instructor is responsible for dismounting all riders and will either do this him/herself or will assign trained mounting assistants to help. Riders must wait for either the Instructor or the mounting assistant before dismounting. Do not let your rider dismount until the Instructor or mounting assistant is there.
- Riders are expected to thank their volunteers and horses at the end of each lesson.

### **Working with a Leader**

- **The leader is responsible for guiding and controlling the horse. The sidewalker is responsible for the rider.** As a team, they work together to help the rider learn riding skills in a safe environment.

- Keep your leader informed of what the rider is doing in a subtle way. If the rider is trying to turn right and the leader is keeping the horse straight, say, “Great right turn, Suzie,” to cue your leader in to the rider’s efforts.
- Keep chats with other volunteers for times outside of class so as not to distract the riders and Instructor.

### **In Case of an Emergency**

- Falls are not common, but they do occur. Sidewalkers should keep the rider still and on the ground, talking to them in a calm and comforting tone. The Instructor will be there immediately.
- If another rider falls, talk calmly to your rider and keep him/her from becoming distressed.
- Occasionally a rider will have a situation that requires special attention while riding. If such a situation occurs, ask your leader for a halt and wait for the Instructor to come over.
- Overall, BE CALM. The Instructors are trained in how to deal with these situations and will take care of the rider. Just keep the rider calm and allow the Instructor to handle things.

## THE ROLE OF THE LEADER

- ***The Leader is responsible for the horse at all times and should have VERY limited interactions or conversations with the rider. Sidewalkers are the ones to interact with riders.***
- The rider's attention must be focused on the Instructor and the task at hand. Casual conversation is a distraction and should be avoided.
- Do not try to teach the rider; let the Instructor handle that.
- **LET THE RIDERS RIDE THE HORSES. This is not a pony ride.** You are there for safety and assistance only. The riders will not benefit from riding if everything is done for them. Your Instructor will tell you how much to help your rider. Let the riders make their own decisions and their own mistakes. If your rider decides to stop, turn, weave the cones, etc., let him/her do so as long as it does not create an immediate danger such as getting too close to another horse, turning or stopping too abruptly, etc.

### How to Lead a Horse

- Lead the horse on the left side with your body even with its eye. Do not walk in front of the horse or by its shoulder.
- Use body language and your own energy level to encourage the horse to speed up or slow down. Do not drag a horse to either slow it down or speed it up. It won't work, it will annoy the horse, and it will throw the rider off balance.
- Different horses naturally walk at different speeds. Adjust your step to that of your horse so you are neither pulling it forward nor constantly holding it back.
- In order for the rider to get the maximum benefit, the horse must move in a straight line. Be conscious about keeping the horse's head, neck, and body in a straight line throughout the lesson. Take care to keep the horse's head at a neutral height - neither up in the air nor down on the ground - as these extremes will pull the rider off balance.
- Hold the lead rope so that it is hanging between the reins, not on top of them, so that it does not cause increased pressure on the bit.
- Place your right hand on the lead rope about 6-8 inches from the clip that attaches it to the halter/bridle. Do not put your hand next to the horse's mouth. Your left hand should be at the end of the rope, by the knot.
- Keep the extra rope off the ground by coiling it in a figure 8 and holding it in your left hand.
- Always keep both hands on the lead rope at all times.

- Never wrap the extra length of lead rope around your hand or wrist.
- Carry the rope and your hand lightly with no weight pulling down on the halter/bridle. There should be a gentle loop between the snap and your hand; do not pull on the rope or on the halter. If the lead rope is too tight, the horse will get annoyed and the rider will not be able to exert as much control.
- Starts, stops, walk/trot transitions, and turns should be done as smoothly as possible, unless the Instructor has given you other instructions.
- Always maintain a safe distance between horses - a minimum of one horse's length - whether on the rail or lined up. Horses should not be allowed to touch muzzles.

### **At the Mounting Ramp and Block**

- Lead the horse in by walking in front of it, using your right arm to guide its head over the ramp or mounting block to encourage it to put its body close to the edge of the lift beside the rider.
- It is your responsibility to keep the horse quiet and still while the rider mounts.
- Stand directly in front of the horse, lightly holding onto the reins, not the halter. Don't hang on for dear life. Do not stand too close to the horse's head.
- When the rider is ready, the Instructor will speak to him or her directly, not to you. Wait for the rider to say "walk on" (or whatever indication he or she uses), then slowly walk away from the ramp, maintaining your light feel on the reins, as you encourage (not drag) the horse to follow you out.
- The Instructor may ask the rider to stop once you are clear of the ramp so he or she can adjust stirrups, speak with sidewalkers, etc. If you have any questions about your rider, ask your Instructor at this time.

### **Mounting From the Ground, if requested by instructor**

- The Instructor will tell you where to position the horse for mounting from the ground. In some cases, the rider will be asked to lead their horse to the proper position with your assistance.
- As at the mounting ramp, it is the leader's responsibility to keep the horse quiet and still while the rider mounts.
- Stand directly in front of the horse, lightly holding onto the reins, not the halter. Don't hang on for dear life. Do not stand too close to the horse's head.
- The Instructor will assist the rider with mounting. Do not attempt to mount the rider yourself or allow the rider to mount without the Instructor's directions.

While waiting for the Instructor, be sure the rider is standing quietly, not going behind the horse, etc.

- Once the rider is mounted, the Instructor will speak to him or her directly. If you have any questions about your rider, ask the Instructor.

### At the Halt

- Be sure that there is a safe amount of space between horses when you halt.
- Stand directly in front of the horse, holding the lead rope not the halter, to ensure that the horse stands still until directed to move.
- This is a breather for the horse so do not hold its head too tightly. Let it relax.
- If the horse gets restless, rub its neck and talk quietly. Do not rub the horse's head or nose or allow it to rub its head on you while at the halt.

### At the Walk

- Reinforce the rider's attempts to control the horse, but do not anticipate them. Sometimes it may be OK to walk into a corner or wall and stop there if the rider does not steer. We all learn better from making our own mistakes than from someone else doing things for us.
- PAY ATTENTION TO THE RIDER AND WHAT HE OR SHE IS TRYING TO DO. Do not march determinedly along on your own path. ***You are not in charge. The rider is. Look ahead, check rider, look ahead, check rider, etc. etc.***
- Walk beside the horse's eye and allow the rider to guide and control the horse with as little help as possible.
- Short tugs work better than a steady pull on a slow horse.
- Be sure to leave space for your off-side sidewalker to comfortably walk between the horse and the arena wall.
- Stops, starts, transitions to/from the walk/trot, and turns should be done smoothly unless otherwise directed by the Instructor.
- Maintain safe spacing between horses – always at least one horse length.
- Many riders have difficulty with spatial orientation and may not realize they are too close to the horse in front of them until too late. Sidewalkers should help the rider by prompting them far enough in advance for the rider to make a safe decision. Leaders should only step in if there is a safety concern.

- Do not assist the rider unless you are asked to do so by the Instructor, or if it is necessary for safety reasons. Know your rider so you can intercede only when you need to for safety.

### **At the Trot**

- The rider should trot the horse only when directed to do so by the Instructor.
- Leaders should make sure that the rider is prepared to trot - sitting squarely in the saddle, holding the handhold or however the Instructor has told him or her to prepare - and allow the rider to give the "trot" command.
- Do not start to trot until the command is given by the rider.
- Increase your pace and energy, say "trot" yourself if necessary, and encourage the horse to move into a trot.
- Do not get in front of the horse or try to pull it into a trot. This will not work and will annoy the horse. Stay in position at the horse's eye.
- Keep the horse at a steady, consistent pace and in a STRAIGHT line. This helps the rider to stay in the proper position.
- Most riders do not trot around the corners so smoothly transition back to the walk at the end of the long side, allowing the rider to regain his or her balance before turning the corner.

### **During Exercises and Games**

- When exercises or games are done at the halt, the leader should stand in front of the horse's head as described under "At the Halt". Leaders should not play along with games or exercises but should stand quietly in front of horse.
- When exercises are done at the walk or trot, the leader should ensure that the horse moves in a straight line, at a steady, controlled pace.
- Games allow riders to relax and have fun while using the skills they have learned.
- The point is not to WIN, but for the rider to improve personal skill levels. Please curb your own competitiveness and support your rider in his or her own efforts and accomplishments. As a general rule, do not make the horse move any faster than during regular class time walk/trot/turns.
- Leaders should listen to the instructions as well as the riders, but let the riders participate as independently as possible; don't play the game for them.

## **Dismounting**

- Riders dismount to the ground. Assist your rider in lining up, keeping a safe distance between horses. Then stand in front of the horse as at the halt.
- The Instructor is responsible for dismounting all riders and will either do this him/herself or will assign trained mounting assistants to help. Riders must wait for either the Instructor or the mounting assistant before dismounting.
- Riders are expected to thank their volunteers and horses at the end of lessons.
- The leader's responsibility is to keep the horse quiet and still at the dismount, not to assist the rider.

## **Working with Sidewalkers**

- Some riders need the help of one or two people walking next to the horse to help them maintain their balance.
- The sidewalkers are responsible for assisting the riders; the leader needs to keep his or her focus on the horse.
- Sidewalkers will keep the leader informed of any special needs the rider may have.
- Conversation between leaders and sidewalkers is distracting to both the volunteers and the rider and should be kept for times in between classes, not during classes.
- Be aware of your sidewalkers' positions and be sure that there is enough space for them to walk safely between the horse and the wall.

## **In Case of an Emergency**

- Falls are not common, but they do occur. Leaders should take the horse away from the fallen rider in a straight line, ensuring that the back end of the horse is away from the rider, not toward him/her.
- If another rider falls, all other leaders must take their horses to the opposite end of the arena and await further directions from the Instructor. Some horses are calm at the halt; others do better walking quietly around.
- Occasionally a rider will have a situation that requires special attention while riding.
  - If such a situation occurs, leaders should step in front of the horse and keep it halted and quiet.

- Hard as it may be, the leader must not attempt to address the rider's needs but must focus on the horse. **DO NOT LET GO OF THE LEAD ROPE.**
- Overall, **BE CALM.** The Instructors are trained in how to deal with these situations and will take care of the rider. Just keep the horse under control and allow the Instructor to handle things.



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