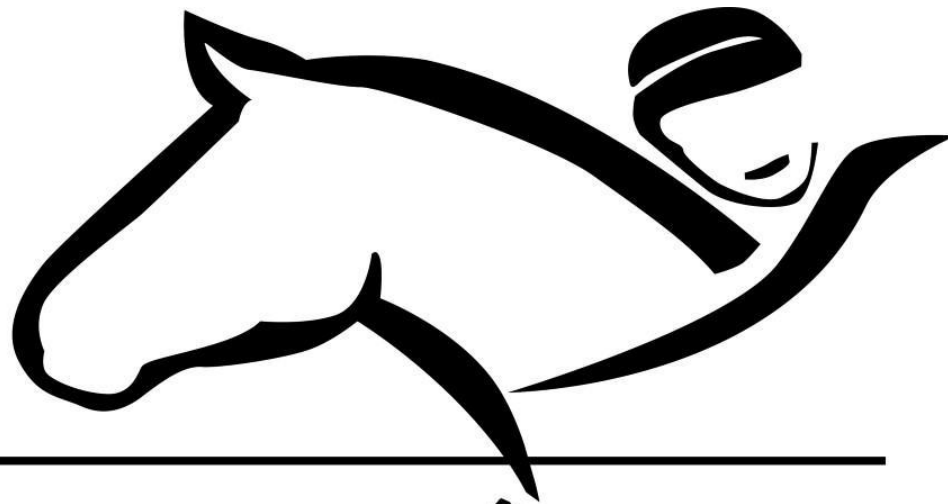




FREEDOM HOOVES
THERAPEUTIC RIDING
C E N T E R

Volunteer Handbook

www.fhtrc.org

Your hard work and dedication is truly important to us! Your time and commitment is deeply appreciated

Table of Contents

BARN RULES	P.3
WELCOME!	
Mission and Vision	P.4
About us.....	P.4
Volunteer Oppurtunities.....	P.4
Volunteer Physical Requirements	P. 5
Confidentiality Policy	P.5
Volunteer Training Information.....	P. 5
Conduct/Behavior.....	P.5
Communication/Questions.....	P.5
VOLUNTEER GENERAL INFORMATION	
Sign In/Out Procedures	P.6
Volunteer Time Consideration and Cancellation.....	P.6
Physical Consideration	P.6
What to Wear	P.6
Parking.....	P.6
EMERGENCY PROCEDURES	
First Aid Kits	P.7
Emergency Situations	P.7
Horse and Rider Emergencies	P.7
Emergency Dismounts	P.7
VOLUNTEER PROFICIENCY LEVELS	P.8
SIDEWALKING	
Sidewalker Overview.....	P.9
Holds.....	P.9
Helmets.....	P.9
Mounting/ Dismounting	P.9
GROOMING.....	P.10
UNDERSTANDING HORSE BEHAVIOR.....	P.10
GLOSSARY OF PHYSICAL AND COGNITIVE DISABILITIES	P.12
OTHER WAYS TO HELP FHTRC	P.15
VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTIONS.....	P.16

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First Things First! - Barn Rules

- There is absolutely **NO SMOKING** while in or around the barn!
- Volunteers must be at least 16 years old, unless otherwise approved by FHTRC staff.
- Volunteers must sign in and put on their name tag prior to volunteering
- Volunteers are only allowed on the barn premises while FHTRC staff are present. Please do not arrive at the barn before your scheduled time. For insurance purposes there cannot be visitors at the facility when FHTRC staff members are not present.
- Helmets must be worn by anyone riding or driving a horse for FHTRC
- Close all gates that you open
- All phones must be turned to silent or vibrate when in the barn
- Please do not feed the horses any treats. Giving treats can promote biting, also some of our horses are on a special diet, and treats can be detrimental to their health. Please do not allow horses to lick your hands as this encourages biting.
- Do not enter a stall or outside pen unless asked to do so by a FHTRC staff member
- Only approved horse leaders will be allowed to get horses from outside pens and lead horses into the barn or designated area.
- Keep the aisle way clear at all times. All wheelbarrows, tools, and grooming buckets need to be kept out of the walking path.
- If you are not directly involved with a session, please keep all activities and conversations to the designated waiting areas or check the volunteer board to see what additional tasks need to be done.
- The instructor is ultimately responsible for all aspects of the session from the time the first horse is taken out of the stall until the last one is put away. Please listen and follow all directions given by the session instructor.
- Some horses on the property are not owned by FHTRC, please **DO NOT** pet horses not owned by FHTRC.
- **NEVER** sit, kneel, or lay on the ground near a horse
- The cats are cute and fun to play with but remember they can bite and scratch. Playing with cats is done at your own risk.
- **NO PETS PLEASE.** Please do not deny your pet the comfort of home. **PETS ARE NOT PERMITTED.** Service dogs are welcome.
- No Goodies please! Be aware that some riders may have medical conditions such as allergies, diabetes, etc. which make certain foods off limits or incompatible with their medication. Check with the staff or the family before sharing “goodies.”
- Adhere to a **10 MPH** speed limit at all times while on the property

WELCOME to Freedom Hooves Therapeutic Riding Center!

Thank you for becoming a part of the volunteer team at Freedom Hooves Therapeutic Riding Center (FHTRC). As a non-profit organization Freedom Hooves relies strongly on the strength of our dedicated volunteers to assist our riders and staff in a variety of areas. We recognize your time is valuable and we appreciate your willingness to support our riders.

This manual is to serve as a guide for any concerns or questions that you may have regarding your job as a volunteer at FHTRC. Please take the time to read it, as it contains valuable information about our program. Because of the nature of our work and the people we serve, it is so important that everyone be as knowledgeable and consistent as possible.

Volunteering is a wonderful way to make great friends while making a difference in the lives of our special riders. Thank you for joining us!

Our Guided Statements:

Mission: Freedom Hooves Therapeutic Riding Center is dedicated to unlocking the full potential of anyone with a physical, emotional or behavioral disability through equine-assisted services.

Vision: To be the standard of excellence in affordable equine-assisted therapy for those experiencing the challenges of disability.

About Freedom Hooves

Freedom Hooves Therapeutic Riding Center was founded in 1999 as a 501©3. We operate at D&J Ranch in Wichita, Kansas. Our program is growing, and currently serves close to 400 individuals a year, with the assistance of over 65 volunteers.

As a Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship center (PATH), Freedom Hooves Therapeutic Riding Center adheres to PATH standards and guidelines to promote a safe, quality therapeutic riding program. Our riders have a variety of backgrounds and disabilities. Therapeutic Riding works by involving the rider's body and mind to promote increased confidence, strength, self-esteem, while also improving posture, balance, hand-eye coordination, and muscle tone.

We have a diverse herd of horses, with a variety of experiences including the show ring and ranch work.

Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers help with a lot of the work at FHTRC. There are many opportunities available:

- Program Volunteers – work in the ring as side walkers, leaders, and prepare horses for sessions
- Office Volunteers – assist in writing thank you cards, making copies, etc
- Special Events and Fundraiser Volunteers – help throughout the year with our annual events. Duties may include assisting with coordinating an event, serving on a committee, and/ or assisting the day of the event.
- Special Skill Volunteers – Help with various projects throughout the year using their skills such as photography, preparing mailings, and more.
- Equestrian Volunteers – These are advanced equestrians who assist the program in the exercising and training of the program horses. Prior to being accepted these volunteers must schedule a riding evaluation to determine their riding skills and comfort level with horses. All Equestrian Volunteers need to assist the program in another area, such as sidewalking or leading through an entire session. **This is an invitation only position.**

Volunteer Physical Requirements

Volunteering with us gives you the opportunity to make a true difference in the lives of others. It is not always an easy job, and we want to make sure our volunteers are able to safely work with us and with our riders. Requirements to volunteer with us include:

- Must be able to walk, with short distances of jogging, for 30 minutes at a time. This may also include supporting the weight of a rider with your arm above shoulder height.
- Able to walk over varying degrees of uneven terrain, able to work in cold, hot, or humid conditions
- Must listen and communicate to the staff and volunteer team, and be able to work without direct supervision needed.

Communication and Questions

The instructor is ultimately responsible for each rider, horse and volunteers. All directions should come from the instructor, including the assignment of riders, horses and volunteers, the time and method of mounting, and the structure of the lesson. **Unless notified otherwise, all volunteers must defer to the instructors' decisions. This is extremely important to help ensure safety.** If at any time, you are unclear regarding your volunteer role or responsibilities, please direct questions to the instructor, program staff or an experienced volunteer.

Volunteer Training and Orientation Information

All new volunteers are required to attend a new volunteer training & orientation before they are allowed to assist at the barn. This training provides our volunteers with the knowledge to keep them safe while with us. The volunteer training covers safety and emergency procedures, a tour of the barn, and instructions and time to practice the skills necessary to work with our riders. We also provide more in-depth training for those interested in leading in classes, and being more hands-on with our horses.

Training is mandatory, and is offered numerous times throughout the year

FHTRC Volunteer & Guest dismissal policy

FHTRC reserves the right to dismiss a guest or volunteer from the facility and the program if their behavior is putting themselves, a student, staff, other volunteer, or horse's mental or physical health in jeopardy.

If an individual's performance jeopardizes the safety of themselves or others, the effectiveness of the program, the individual will receive a warning. If the behavior continues, or numerous reminders are needed, the individual may be asked to leave the premises. The following behaviors will result in immediate dismissal:

- Abusive behavior (including verbal, emotional, and physical) to humans or horses
- Inappropriate behavior or comments based upon race, color, religion, gender, nationality, culture, age, sexual orientation, and/or disability status
- Performing duties under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs

Confidentiality Policy

Freedom Hooves Therapeutic Riding Center has strict confidentiality guidelines regarding the right to privacy for individuals involved with the program. This policy extends not only to program participants and their diagnosis/special needs and any sensitive information, but also extends to protect the privacy of others involved with the program including volunteers and staff. It is extremely important that volunteers and staff respect the individual circumstances of those involved with the program. You may talk with others about volunteering at FHTRC, but **DO NOT** use names or other identifying information. Please do not take the personal information of our participants beyond the facility.

Volunteer General Information

Volunteers come to the program with a wide range of knowledge and experience. However, it is important that while working with FHTRC riders and horses that you follow and teach **ONLY** the methods taught at your training, in the manual, or by our staff. There has been significant thought put into the methods used for our riders and our horses. Using multiple methods can be confusing to them.

Be realistic about your knowledge of horses. If you are asked to perform a task that you are not comfortable with, do not have the training, or feel unable to perform on a particular day.

Be patient and sensitive to the rider's needs and the needs of their family. Patience is important, allowing you to adjust to the slow movements and rates of progress of some of our riders. We often have to adjust to the rider's pace of communication and response.

Sign In/ Out Procedures

Your time spent volunteering is important to us! Upon arrival at the barn, make sure to put on your nametag. It can be used for certain grants and allows us to recognize outstanding volunteers. We will record your hours in the Volunteer Software, Wranglr, so make sure to sign in and sign out on the clipboard provided in the office lounge.

Volunteer Time Considerations and Cancellations:

Volunteers have flexibility with their schedule, and we work hard to provide you a time that works for you. Volunteer times can be as short as 45 minutes per week for an 8-week session.

Be punctual. We ask that you arrive 15 minutes before the class is scheduled to begin. This allows you time to assist in tacking up. Please treat your volunteer commitment as if it were your profession. We, and our riders, count on you. You are a vital part of the team!

If you are unable to attend your scheduled class, and know ahead of time, please let the volunteer coordinator know as soon as possible. If you suddenly become ill or must miss your volunteer time that day, please call 316-733-8943.

Physical Considerations:

Side-walking and leading in the arena, as well as assisting in the stable and facility, can be physically demanding at times. It is important for you to inform FHTRC staff if you have a condition that may prevent you from working a half hour in the arena at a walk or a jog, or walking on trails. If you feel that being a riding program volunteer is not something you are physically unable to do, volunteers are needed in many other areas of the program.

What to wear!

Volunteers should wear comfortable and sensible clothing for both safety and comfort. Loose clothing can get caught and tangled in equipment. Long pants, such as jeans, riding breeches or other comfortable pants are recommended. **For the sensitivity of our riders, revealing clothing (exposed belly shirts, low cut shirts, skin tight clothing, and see through clothing) should NOT be worn.** Dangling jewelry should not be worn, as it can be unsafe. **Close toed shoes are REQUIRED!** Sturdy shoes and boots provide good protection as well as assist with stability on the uneven footing of the ring, and out on the trail. Boots are highly recommended, but tennis shoes are acceptable. Open-toed shoes, and sandals are not allowed when working near equines. **NO CROCS or HEY DUDES.** If you do not have appropriate shoes you will not be allowed to participate in classes that day.

Do dress weather appropriately (gloves, jackets, sunscreen, etc.)

Parking/ Driveway

Please use caution when driving at the facility – Drive slowly, **adhere to a 10 mph speed limit**, and check for pedestrians and horses!

Volunteer parking is located near the trailers on the North end of the barn. Parking in front of the barn is reserved for riders and their families.

Emergency Policy and Procedures

The emergency number for Police, Fire, or Ambulance is: 911

DESIGNATED EMERGENCY AREA AT FREEDOM HOOVES: On the front porch

Volunteers are responsible for – knowing and following all safety rules, emergency policies and procedures as indicated, supporting all efforts to promote safe working conditions, making full use of safety equipment, reporting immediately any unsafe working condition or behaviors, and knowing the location of first aid kits, fire extinguishers, emergency exits and emergency plans.

In the event of an accident or an emergency:

- The instructor is responsible for incident management and must assess the situation, and apply any first-aid needed. No persons are to enter or leave the arena without direction from the instructor. If necessary, the instructor will designate a person to call 911.
- Remain with your team. Leaders will halt and stand in the center of the ring. Side walkers will remain with their rider. Stay calm and follow the instructor's directions.
- The safety of our riders, and ourselves is our first priority. Our next priority is the safety of our horses.

First Aid Kits: The human first aid kit is located in the bathroom in the white cabinet. The horse first aid kit is located in the FHTRC tack room.

Other Emergency Scenarios:

- **Severe Weather** – Anytime there is lightning in the area, extremely high winds, or the threat of tornadoes, sessions will be canceled.
- **Power Outages** – If a power outage occurs after dark, sessions will be immediately discontinued.
- **Fire** – If a fire should occur, all volunteers, participants and observers should vacate to the designated area by the horse trailers to the north of the barn. **No one should enter the facility.**

Horse and Rider Emergencies

- **Spooked Horse** – In the event that a horse becomes frightened or overly nervous, side walkers are to “close in” and provide a full hold to the rider. The horse leader should attempt to halt the horse and head it off. Side walkers need to continue to support the rider, staying close to the horse as it moves. Follow direction from the instructor.
- **Loose Horse** – Should a horse become loose in the arena while a session is in progress, the session immediately stops. Horse leaders should immediately halt and head off their horses; side walkers should “close in” and provide a full hold to their rider. Only the instructor or a staff member should approach the loose horse.
- **Fall Rider or Medical Emergency** - Should a rider or volunteer become injured or have a medical emergency during a session, the session is to come to an immediate halt. The instructor will assess the situation and will inform volunteers and staff if medical assistance is needed, the nature of the injury, and if 911 should be called. Volunteers may be asked to assist by retrieving items from the first aid kit. No one, including riders' parents, should enter or leave the arena without direction from the instructor.

Emergency Dismounts – During riding sessions it is always the instructor, or volunteers trained in mounting, that will perform rider mounts and dismounts. However, in an emergency the instructor may ask volunteers to perform an emergency or “safety” dismount. Emergency dismounts are **ONLY** performed at the discretion of the instructor. Safety dismounts are performed as follows:

- Horse leaders halt and head off their horse. The side walker located behind the leader will perform the dismount by –
- Inform the rider that they will be dismounted, requesting that the rider remove their feet from the stirrups. (The side walker not performing the emergency dismount should follow the POP/PUSH/POSITION method)
 - Pop the stirrup off the rider's foot
 - Push leg up and over so it clears the saddle
 - Position – Move to horses' shoulder so that if the horse shifts their back end over you are not knocked over by it.
- The side walker who performs the dismount will grip the rider's waist, bring their body to theirs and shuffle backwards, moving away from the horse.

Please keep in mind that these procedures are only suggested guidelines and that the specific circumstances may warrant changes to be made by the instructor or staff.

Volunteer Proficiency Levels

To accommodate the growth and advancement of FHTRC volunteers, the following system has been designed to identify horse experience as well as experience working with disabilities through the designation on each person's name badge. All volunteers are *required* to attend the New Volunteer Orientation *regardless* of previous experience, and all volunteer placements are made at the discretion of FHTRC staff.

To show interest in moving up a level all volunteers must spend a minimum of 4 weeks, or the equivalent of 8 hours at each level, approval by 2 staff members is also required. Keep in mind that additional training will be required, whether in a group or a private session to advance once a star volunteer.

White Star/ New Volunteer Badge

A volunteer who has completed the volunteer training, these volunteers may assist an established volunteer with grooming and tacking the horses for classes. This volunteer is trained to sidewalk in a class, and is aware of safety protocols. They have received a **Disabilities Overview** and are aware of the most common disabilities served. All White Star volunteers must work with an established volunteer when around program horses regardless of prior horse experience.

Green Star

In addition to the duties mentioned above, this volunteer can safely and correctly place a halter and a bitless bridle. They can also safely groom and clean the hooves of the Green Star horses. They are able to understand basic saddling techniques and need minimal reminders. This volunteer is able to demonstrate proper hand and body placement while leading. This volunteer will also receive a **Tacking Certification** when trained, and are able to tack program horses without supervision.

Red Star

In addition to the above, this volunteer is able to demonstrate a thorough understanding of tacking and leading a program horse through experience or skilled trainings. Has been a Green Star Volunteer for at least 4 weeks, or has approval of 2 staff or Purple Star Volunteers and is able to recognize behavioral changes in the horse. This volunteer is required to obtain a **Bridle Certification** to bridle green and red level horses.

Purple Star

In addition to the above this volunteer understands quality horse movement, and is able to influence tempo, rhythm, and frame while leading any program horse. This volunteer is able to control energy and forward movement of the more challenging Purple Star horses. They are able to see changes in horse behavior, and predict the horses response to stimuli and effectively deescalate or redirect unsafe equine behavior, able to adjust leading styles in reaction to situations and able to physically handle an energetic or big-strided horse. These volunteers are also required to obtain a **Long-Lining Certification**, and are able to safely long line in a class with 2 sidewalkers. They understand how to handle a spooking horse when long-lining and can demonstrate this.

These volunteers are able to handle strong horses, fussy horses in the mounting area, misbehaving horses and are able to react appropriately in various emergencies involving either horse or rider. Purple Star Volunteers must attend at least one training a year to maintain their level. They also agree to serve as mentors to less experienced and new volunteers, accept authority, and communicate clear instructions if needed. They must be able to follow directions, and accept corrections. This level *must* be approved by staff.

Please see a staff member or instructor when you believe that you are ready to move up to the next volunteer level. You will receive the "Star Volunteer Handbook" with more information on requirements.

Sidewalking

The Sidewalker

Side walkers are the ones who normally get the hands on duties in a session. **They are directly responsible for the rider.** One or two side walkers may be assigned to each rider depending on the rider's needs. Side walkers should greet their rider, and assist the rider to the mounting area when the instructor indicates that it is time. The side walker's primary role is to walk alongside the horse and assist the rider in maintaining balance. They may also reinforce the instructor's direction, or act as spotters for more independent riders. Sidewalkers are not in charge of teaching riders, that is the instructor's job.

Reinforcing a Direction: Always allow the rider plenty of time to process the instruction given. If the instructor says "Turn to the left, toward me," and the rider seems confused; gently tap the rider's left hand and say, "left" to reinforce the command. You will get to know your riders and will learn when they need your help, and when they are just not paying attention.

Holds:

- **Spotting** – Walks beside the rider's leg assisting only when needed. Be sure to stay in position.
- **Thigh Hold** – Places the arm closest to the rider over the rider's thigh and grasps the front edge of the saddle.
- **Ankle support** – The side walker cups the riders' ankle to stabilize the riders lower leg
- **Full hold** – Occasionally, a rider needs support provided by doing both an arm over thigh, and cupping the ankle. Also used if the horse spooks

Helmets: *All participants and personnel (staff and volunteers) of FHTRC are required to wear protective headgear that is ATSM-SEI approved for horseback riding while mounted or driving.* To be effective the helmet should fit firmly. The helmet should sit level on the head, with the front edge just above the eyebrows. Once the chin strap is fastened, adjust each slide glide so that it sits directly below each ear. You should only be able to fit two fingers between the strap and the rider's chin.

Mounting and Dismounting:

Only instructors, and volunteers trained in mounting and dismounting may assist a rider!

Mounting and dismounting are two of the most important phases of a therapeutic riding program. They may be relatively simple for an able-bodied, agile rider, but mounting and dismounting a rider with special needs can be complex. The procedures used will depend on the weight and needs of the rider, and assistive devices such as wheelchairs, crutches, walkers, or canes. The instructor will determine the mounting and dismounting procedures and whether the rider will mount from the ramp or a mounting block. It is important the entire team is communicating with each other during this time. The goal is to get the rider on as safely and efficiently as possible.

- **Mounting Block:** Sidewalkers on the offside (the right side) should put weight in the stirrup if the rider is using a saddle. If there is no saddle, assist the rider by helping their leg clear the horse and helping them sit balanced. When dismounting, make sure the rider's foot is out of the stirrup, and clears the horse.
- **Mounting Ramp:** Sidewalkers on the offside will help the rider bring their leg over. (By grabbing the knee and gently bringing it into place, NEVER force a rider into any position!)

The Leader – *This position requires further training!*

As a leader, your first responsibility is the horse. If you are working without sidewalkers, you must be constantly aware of the student also. Bring your horse into the arena five minutes prior to a session, to allow the horse time to warm up. If others are in the arena, please call “door” before entering, wait for the response, “enter”, closing the arena barrier behind you. **Further information on Leading can be found in the “Star Level Volunteer Handbook,” or in the volunteer job descriptions at the end of this handbook.**

Grooming

Grooming, tacking, and learning the parts of the horse all take place in the cross ties. We have set up the following guidelines for grooming and tacking a program horse. This is to ensure that everyone is teaching the same thing to all students. **Remember that the students will imitate the things you do, even if you tell them something different! That is why it is vital that you follow the instructions given here.**

Before grooming, students and volunteers should walk up and greet the horse in a quiet and unhurried manner. Please be sure that all brushes are returned from where you got them after they have been used. Grooming is done in the following order:

- **Curry Comb** – A round, rubber grooming tool used to loosen the dirt in the horse's coat. It is used in circular motions. Always start near the poll (behind the horse's ears) and work toward the tail. The curry comb is not used on the face or the legs.
- **Stiff (hard) Brush** – This is used to remove the dirt brought to the surface by the curry comb. It is used in short, flicking strokes in the same direction that the hair grows. Start at the poll and work toward the tail.
- **Soft Brush** – This is used to remove any dirt missed by the stiff brush, as well as smoothing and adding shine to the horse's coat. It is used in long, smooth strokes, moving in the same direction that the hair grows. Start at the poll and work toward the tail. This may be used gently on the face and legs.
- **Mane and Tail Comb** – Used to remove tangles from the mane and the tail. Start from the end and work in small sections. It is used on the tail by standing to the side of the horse's hindquarters, **NEVER BEHIND THE HORSE.**
- **Hoof Pick** – The feet should be cleaned thoroughly as part of the grooming procedure. Students should not generally do this, but they enjoy watching. (If you are uncomfortable doing this, please ask another volunteer or instructor to help you.)

Understanding Horse Behavior

When developing relationships with horses, communication is key. It is critical to provide a safe environment in a therapeutic riding setting. Beginning a process of understanding the horse's senses, instincts, and implications is a step in predicting behaviors, managing risks, and increasing positive relationships.

Smell – A horse's sense of smell is thought to be very acute, and it allows them to recognize horses and people. Smell helps a horse to evaluate certain situations.

- Allow the horse the opportunity to become familiar with new objects and their environment by smelling
- Do not carry treats or food in your pockets

Hearing – A horse's sense of hearing is very acute. A horse may also combine their hearing and sense of sight to become more familiar with new or alerting sounds. “Hearing and not seeing” is often the cause of a fright/flight response. Forward ears communicate attentiveness and interest. Ears that are laid back often communicate that they are upset and/or showing aggression.

- Horses are wary when they hear something but do not see it. If a horse is nervous you can talk in a calm and quiet voice to reassure him.
- Avoid shouting, as this can be frightening to a horse.

Sight – The horse's eyes are set on either side of the head; they have good peripheral vision, but poor frontal vision. A horse focuses on objects by raising or lowering its head.

- The horse may notice something that is different in the arena or out on the trail. Allow the horse an opportunity to look at new objects.
- There are two blind spots, directly in front and behind the horse. They have good peripheral vision, so the best way to approach a horse is at its shoulder, so you do not startle him.

Touch – Touch is used as a communication between horses, and between horses and people. They are sensitive to soft or rough touch with a person's hands or legs.

- Horse handlers should treat the horses gently, but firmly
- Be familiar with each horse's sensitive areas
- Watch the rider's leg position, as they may accidentally cause the horse discomfort.

Taste – Taste is closely linked to the sense of smell, and helps horses to distinguish palatable foods and other objects.

- Avoid letting the horse lick your hands, as this can promote nipping.

Sixth Sense – Horses do have a "sixth sense" when evaluating the disposition of those around him. Horses can be hypersensitive in detecting the moods of their handlers and riders. A good therapy horse is chosen for their sensitive response to the rider. **At times there may exist a personality conflict between handlers and horses. It is important to let the instructor know if you're having a difficult time relating or getting along with a particular horse.**

Flight as a Natural Instinct

Horses would rather turn and run away from danger than face and fight it.

- At a sudden movement or noise, the horse might try to flee. Speak calmly to the horse and relax your hold. **A tight hold can make a spooked horse more nervous.**
- A frightened horse that is tied up or being held tightly may pull back to try to escape. Relax your hold or untie him in this situation,
- If flight is not possible the horse could either turn to kick out or face the problem and rear. Be aware of this when in a tight space, such as a stall. Alert staff if a horse appears frightened.
- Most horses chosen to work in a therapeutic riding setting have less of an instinct to flee. The horse may look to you for reassurance. It is helpful if the volunteer remains calm.
- If you are struggling with a horse that is frightened or fearful, it may be helpful for someone with more experience to handle the horse. Let the instructor know immediately.

GLOSSARY OF PHYSICAL AND COGNITIVE DISABILITIES

The following are brief, non-medical descriptions of some disabilities and conditions of participants one might encounter in a therapeutic riding setting. This is not intended as a comprehensive explanation of a specific disability. Rather it is a general overview with an explanation of how therapeutic riding can be beneficial.

Arthritis

Inflammatory disease of the joints.

Types: Osteo-, rheumatoid and juvenile rheumatoid.

Characteristics: Pain; lack of mobility; loss of strength.

Benefits of therapeutic riding: Gentle rhythmic movements to promote joint mobility and to relieve pain; increase strength.

Autism

A central nervous system dysfunction which challenges learning style, sensory integration, social interaction, communication, and motor planning.

Characteristics: (any combination of the following can be present): Unresponsive to the presence of others, withdrawal from physical contact, severely delayed and disordered language, self-stimulating behaviors, unusual or specific fears, insensitivity to pain, unawareness of real dangers, hyperactive, passive, unusual behavior such as smelling or licking objects, ritualistic behaviors, developmentally delayed, unusual response to sounds, clumsiness, social withdrawal, resistance to change.

Benefits: Provides sensory input and promotes sensory integration. Promotes communication skills (expressive and receptive). Develops strength, coordination, muscle tone, and gross and fine motor, and social skills

Cerebral Palsy

Brain damage occurring before, at, or shortly after birth. It is a non-progressive motor disorder.

Types and characteristics:

Spastic: increased muscle tone, muscle imbalances and equilibrium. Increased startle reflex and other pathological reflexes.

Athetoid: Extensor muscle tension, involuntary movements, difficulty maintaining upright posture.

Ataxic: weakened muscles, poor balance, difficulty with quick, fine movements.

Benefits: Normalization of muscle tone, muscle strengthening, development of posture, balance and motor coordination. Promotes socialization and confidence.

Cerebral Vascular Accident (CVA) – Stroke

Hemorrhage in the brain, which causes varying degrees of functional impairment.

Characteristics: Flaccid or spastic paralysis of arm and leg on same side of the body. May impair thought, speech, sight, balance, coordination and strength.

Benefits: Promotes symmetry, stimulates balance, posture, motor planning, speech, socialization and confidence.

Developmental Disabilities (DD)

A general term applied to children functioning two or more years below grade level

Characteristics: Varied, but can include processing delays, and delays in physical, motor and social development.

Benefits: Increase confidence and self-esteem, stimulates processing, speech and body awareness, provides opportunity for sport and recreation, promotes socialization.

Down Syndrome

A genetic disorder in which a person is born with an extra chromosome (chromosome 21).

Characteristics: Mild to severe learning disabilities, low muscle tone, speech impairments. Usually hypotonic with hyper-mobile joints.

Benefits: Promotes expressive and receptive language skills. Increases gross and fine motor skills, balance, coordination, posture and muscle tone. Promotes social skills. Increases confidence and esteem.

Emotional Disabilities

Social, emotional or behavioral functioning that is not age appropriate and affects a child's academics, social relationships and self-care.

Characteristics: Difficulty coping with everyday life situations and interpersonal relations, inappropriate affect or behavior responses, depression, anxiety, physical symptoms, difficulty learning, withdrawal, and aggressiveness.

Benefits: Increase confidence and self-esteem, provide opportunities for accomplishments, promotes positive socialization.

Epilepsy

Abnormal electrical activity of the brain marked by seizures with altered consciousness.

Types and Characteristics:

Petit Mal: Brief loss of consciousness with loss of postural tone. May have jerky movements, blank expressions.

Grand Mal: Loss of consciousness and postural tone.

Hearing Impairment

Congenital or acquired hearing loss varying from mild to profound.

Characteristics: Difficulties in communication or communication through sign language, lip reading or finger spelling.

Benefits: Increases confidence, self-esteem and sense of accomplishment. Provides recreational activity with opportunity for socialization. Stimulates balance, posture and coordination.

Learning Disabilities

Characteristics: Difficulties with reading, writing, speech, computing math. May affect development and social skills.

Benefits: Stimulates attention span, group skills, cooperation, language skills, posture, and coordination.

Mental Impairment or Mental Retardation (MR)

A disorder in which a person's overall intellectual functioning is below average with an IQ of 70 or less. Impaired ability to cope with common life demands and daily living skills.

Characteristics: Impairments in learning, communication, social interaction, self-care.

Benefits: Increases balance, coordination, strength and posture, improves gross and fine motor skills, promotes Socialization, increases confidence, reinforces life and vocational skills.

Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

Progressive neurological disease with degeneration of spinal column tracts, resulting in scar formation.

Characteristics: Most commonly occurs in the 20 to 40-year-old range. It is progressive with periods of exacerbation and remissions. Fatigues easily. Symptoms include weakness, visual impairment, fatigue, loss of coordination and emotional sensitivity.

Benefits: Maintains and strengthens weak muscles, maintains balance, increases confidence and self-esteem.

Muscular Dystrophy (MD)

Deficiency in muscle nutrition with degeneration of skeletal muscle. Hereditary disease that mainly affects males.

Characteristics: Progressive muscular weakness, fatigues easily, sensitive to temperature extremes.

Benefits: Provides opportunity for recreational, physical, and social activity. May help slow progressive loss of strength, stimulates postural and trunk alignment, allows for movement free of assistive devices.

Scoliosis

Lateral curve of the spine with a C or S shape with rotary component.

Characteristics: Shoulder, trunk and waistline asymmetry. May have back pain and postural fatigue.

Benefits: Stimulates postural symmetry, strengthens trunk muscles.

Spina Bifida

Congenital failure of vertebral arch closure that results in spinal cord damage.

Characteristics: Varying degrees of paralysis of the lower limbs coupled with sensory loss. It may also be associated with hydrocephalus, lordosis, scoliosis and hip dislocations.

Benefits: Stimulates posture and balance, increases strength, balance and coordination, promotes confidence and self-esteem.

Spinal Cord Injury (SCI)

Trauma to the spinal cord resulting in a loss of neurological function.

Characteristic: Paralysis of muscles below the level of injury – can be flaccid or spastic. Fatigue, sensory loss and pressure sores.

Benefits: Stimulates posture and balance, strengthens trunk muscles, and provides opportunity for recreational and social activity.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Accidental injury to the head resulting in impairment of cognitive, emotional and/or physical functioning.

Characteristics: May include deficits in gross and fine motor skills, balance, coordination and strength. May have deficits in language, communication, processing, memory and perceptual skills.

Benefits: Stimulates balance, posture, coordination, and gross and fine motor skills. Stimulates speech and perceptual skills. Increases confidence.

Benefits of Therapeutic Riding

***Physically,** it is the horse's movement that has a dynamic effect on the rider's body. The horse stimulates the rider's pelvis and trunk in a manner that closely resembles the normal gait of a human. This movement can be used to produce specific physical changes in the rider including normalization of muscle tone and improvements in posture, balance, coordination, and increased endurance.*

***Sensorial,** the horse and the riding environment offer a wide variety of input to participants. Movement exploration on the horse combined with so many other sights and sounds one encounters in the riding program contribute to the overall sensory experience.*

***Emotionally,** the success of overcoming fear and anxiety and the ability to achieve riding skills help a rider to realize self-worth and increase self-esteem. For those involved with the various activities of a therapeutic riding program, the companion animal bonding and development of new skills are critical components to the success of the experience offered. Relationships develop between riders, volunteers, horses, and staff and are all an integral part of a positive, emotional experience provided by a therapeutic riding program.*

***Cognitively,** the horse provides a strong motivator for riders. Riding sessions incorporate activities and games on horseback designed to help each rider achieve specific goals such as following directions, staying on task, color and number recognition, and reinforcing existing skills as well as learning new ones.*

***Socially,** therapeutic riding programs and their associated activities provide an excellent opportunity for participants to interact with their peers, program volunteers and staff in a positive and enjoyable environment.*

The horse, rider, instructor and volunteers make up a unique treatment team providing an opportunity for physical, emotional, social, recreational, and educational gains for participants with disabilities.

Other Ways to Help FHTRC

Any donation is appreciated! Here are some of the ways you can easily support FHTRC!

FHTRC Merchandise

On different occasions throughout the year FHTRC will have T-shirts, hats, hoodies, etc, for sale. We will always make these available for purchase for our volunteers and our families.

Goodsearch.com

Yahoo has a search engine called GoodSearch. Once you log in at www.goodsearch.com you are able to designate a charity of your choice. Every time you do a search they donate one penny to FHTRC. You can add their toolbar to your browser page and assist in raising money for FHTRC every time you make a search on the internet!

Dillons Plus Card

Enroll your Dillons Plus Card online at www.dillons.com/communityreward. Select 34747, “Freedom Hooves Therapeutic Riding Center” as the organization you choose to support. This means that every time you shop with your plus card you will be supporting our horses and their riders.

Additional information about any of these programs and many more ways to help can be found on the FHTRC website (www.fhtrc.org) under “How to Help”!

Side-walker Job Description

Job Title:

Side-walker

Reports to:

Instructors and Volunteer Coordinator

Works With:

Participants in therapeutic riding sessions and group sessions

Description of Role:

Side walkers are directly responsible for the participants in therapeutic riding lessons. They must stay within reach of the rider and be aware of everything that's going on with the rider while assisting the rider in focusing and completing tasks given by the instructor.

The amount of support required is dependent on each individual participant.

Primary Responsibilities:

- Help prepare horses for classes if needed
- Greet participants and assist in helmet fitting
- Assist with rider support during mounting and dismounting as necessary
- Give support as needed to keep participant safe while riding, while possibly providing assistance with position changes
- Help the participant follow directions that are given by the instructor

Qualifications Needed:

- Ability to hold arm above shoulder for extended periods of time, with sufficient strength to provide support.
- Be able to walk consistently for 30 minutes with short intervals of jogging
- Comfortable around horses and people
- Vigilant – Constantly alert to what is happening in the immediate area
- At least 14 years old
- Reliable and committed

Training:

Initial, mandatory training required, as well as additional support and training as needed.

Time Commitment:

- 8-week commitment.
- Time per week is flexible, with a minimum of 45 minutes

Horse Leader Job Description

Job Title: Horse Leader

Reports to: Equine Manager and Volunteer Coordinator

Works With:

- Participants in therapeutic riding sessions and group sessions
- Horses in the therapeutic riding program

Description of Role:

Responsible for the equine before, during, and after each therapeutic riding session. Horse Leaders will ready the horse for each class and lead during the class. During a lesson, the leader's sole responsibility is to maintain control of and provide support for their assigned horse. The leader must be constantly aware of the horse, note any problems, and inform the instructor as needed. When a class is over Leaders will put the horse away and will correctly put away tack and equipment.

Primary Responsibilities:

- Have the horse groomed, tacked, and ready for the start of time of the lesson
- Warm up the horse in the ring (in hand); showing him any equipment being used
- Notice behavior, mood, and needs of the horse
- Be alert and aware of the entire lesson environment. Maintain safety in each riding session by maintaining a safe distance from other equines, people, and items in the arena.
- Ensure that the equine is put back in the appropriate stall or pasture
- Follow FHTRC policies for horse handling and behavior

Qualifications Needed:

- Able to perform all tasks assigned safely
- Good knowledge of horse behavior
- Vigilant – Paying constant attention to the horse's attention, behavior, and movement
- Must be 14 years of age with equine experience or staff approval
- Must participate in Horse Leader training and pass a leading assessment
- Able to walk and job for 30 minutes over uneven surfaces
- Able to recognize equine behavior and react appropriately

Training:

Horse Leader training required

Time Commitment:

- 8-week commitment.
- Time per week is flexible, with a minimum of 45 minutes

Volunteer Mentor Job Description

Job Title: Volunteer Mentor

Reports to: Volunteer Coordinator

Works With:

- Participants in therapeutic riding sessions and group sessions
- New program volunteers

Description of Role:

Participate as a Mentor in the Volunteer Mentor program, to assist volunteers in gaining equine experience to gain the skills necessary to become a Horse Leader.

Primary Responsibilities:

- Able to work with mentee for at least 45 minutes per week
- Provide Feedback to the Volunteer Coordinator on the progress of the mentee
- Follow all instructor and staff directions
- Work as a team with staff and volunteers

Qualifications Needed:

- Able to perform all tasks assigned safely
- Must be approved by at least 2 staff members
- Must be 16 years of age with equine experience
- Able to interact with mentees in a personable and professional manner
- Able to provide appropriate and productive feedback

Training:

Volunteer Mentoring training will be provided.

Time Commitment:

- 8-week commitment.
- Time per week is flexible, with a minimum of 45 minutes