

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



HEALING BY HORSEBACK



HEALING BY HORSEBACK

We are thrilled you want to be a volunteer at Healing By Horseback. Our volunteers are the backbone of our program. It can take up to three volunteers to put each patient on a horse.

There are ways to volunteer here and we are confident you will find something here you will enjoy. Whether you become a side walker, horse handler, or barn help, every hour you donate to Healing By Horseback helps our patients move closer to improved health and greater independence.

You will find everything you need to know in order to volunteer in this handbook. We thank you, and honor you, for your willingness to give of your time and your heart to our patients and horses.

OUR MISSION

"Enhance physical, cognitive, and social well-being of persons with special needs/disabilities to support self-confidence through equine assisted activities of therapy"

The bond between horse and human is undeniable – and well documented. In a variety of ways, interacting with horses helps people with special needs to reach their greatest potential.

Therapeutic Riding is geared to meet specific riding and/or social objectives. The primary focus of therapeutic riding is to teach riding skills that build toward independent riding.

Hippotherapy is performed by licensed therapists, employs the movement of the horse as a tool to improve posture, balance, and movement, as well as fine and gross motor responses.

Equine Assisted Activities (EAA) are designed to build confidence and personal interaction skills through a series of non-mounted exercises.

Some disabilities that may benefit from the above include:

- Autism - Muscular Dystrophy - Down Syndrome - Multiple Sclerosis
- Cerebral Palsy - Fragile X Syndrome - Visual or Hearing Impairment

Helping physically, mentally or socially challenged people reach their potential is what Healing By Horseback, Inc. is all about

Because of the rhythmic, repetitive motion of the horse and the bond formed between rider and horse, hippotherapy activities can produce life-changing results.

OUR GOALS

*Respect for the special needs of every rider and client
Dedication to the success of every rider and client
Safety for every rider, client, equine and volunteer*



HEALING BY HORSEBACK

Working with Patients

Physical benefits:

- *Improve balance and posture*
- *Maintain and strengthen weak muscles*
- *Slows down muscle degeneration*
- *Relax tight muscles*
- *Improve fine and gross motor skills*
- *Improve hand-eye coordination*

Mental and emotional benefits:

- *Social interaction*
- *Animal connection*
- *Neuropathway development*
- *Coordination*
- *Structure and routine*
- *Responsibility*
- *Motivation*
- *Self Esteem*
- *Autonomy*
- *Channel anxious behavior*
- *Cooperation*
- *Sense of success*
- *Improve language skills*
- *Sequencing and planning*
- *Processing*
- *Increase attention span and self-confidence*
- *Physical and mental exercise*

Each of us at one time in our lives will have a disability – whether from an illness, injury or old age. A disability is nothing more than a body part – be it arm, leg, organ or brain – that does not work properly or does not work at all.

Individuals with disabilities do not want to be treated any differently than you or me. Respect, friendship and acceptance – these are the qualities that our patients seek from us and from the world in general.

When working with individuals with disabilities, simply follow the Golden Rule: Treat others as you would want to be treated if you were in their situation:

- *Be Friendly and Accepting. Our patients are people just like you.*
- *Respect our patients, many of them have faced hardships that we cannot imagine. Their courage and strength are to be admired, not pitied.*
- *Speak directly to the patient, no one likes to be referred to in the third person. Your attention should be focused on the rider, not on the people around them. If the patient has difficulty communicating, their caregiver or instructor will help facilitate communication.*
- *Offer assistance when asked or needed but don't overwhelm them with help. Independence is always our goal for patients.*
- *Choose words with dignity, Avoid phrases such as: crippled, deaf, dumb, stricken with, etc.*
- *Describe and think of our patients in terms of their personality or interests rather than in their disability*
- *Be patient! Give our patients time to process their surroundings and speak slowly and clearly when needed. Learn to listen with your eyes and instincts as well as your ears.*

Being around an individual with a disability or unique need may be a new experience to you. You may be overwhelmed at first with things you have never seen before or do not understand. This is a natural reaction. Allow yourself to get to know the patients. They do not look upon themselves with pity or sadness and they do not want you to either. Healing By Horseback is a place of strength, joy and – hope. Working with individuals with disabilities can be one of the most rewarding experiences of your life. Allow yourself the opportunity to share in our patients' joys and accomplishments.



HEALING BY HORSEBACK

Working with Horses

Handling Horses

Horses are prey animals and can be unpredictable.

Horses are “flight” animals that can become startled by sudden movements or noises.

Horses are “herd” animals and often feel the need to return to their group when frightened.

Horses have sharp peripheral vision but cannot see directly in front or behind their bodies.

Always approach the horse at the shoulder so he can clearly see you.

- TALKING to a horse - Always speak to a horse in a calm, soothing and/or assertive voice. Never yell or raise your voice.
- APPROACHING a horse - Speak to the horse before approaching to avoid startling him. Approach a horse from the side, never from the rear, so the horse can see you approaching. Never run up to or after a horse.
- MOVING BEHIND a horse - There are two techniques to pass behind a horse:
 1. Walk at least six feet away and around
 2. If you are not able to allow 6 feet, then keep a hand on the horse’s rump and talk to him as you slowly and steadily walk behind as close to the horse as possible. This reduces the risk of the horse being able to kick you.
- PETTING a horse - Pet a horse by placing a hand on his shoulder or neck, not the nose or face. The horse’s nose is a sensitive spot and some horses may be head shy.
- WATCH YOUR FEET! While a horse is very sure-footed by nature, it may accidentally step on a human’s foot when balancing itself or turning around. Always be aware of where your feet are when working closely beside a horse. If a horse steps on your foot, do not try to pull your foot out from under the horse’s foot. Rather, reposition the horse so that he removes hit foot from yours.



HEALING BY HORSEBACK

RULES AND REGULATIONS

While providing our patients, volunteers and families with services, safety is a top priority. These rules and regulations are set to insure safety. We ask you assistance in making sure that everyone follows them.

1. **Age Limitation:** Volunteers who work with the riders must be at least 14 years of age and be physically able to walk and occasionally jog for short distances during a 30-45 minute session.
 2. **Background Checks:** Because we work with children, volunteers may be subject to a background check.
 3. **Unsupervised Children:** are not allowed! No bikes or skateboards.
 4. **Pets:** Personal pets, with the exception of documented service dogs, are not allowed without prior consent.
 5. **Photos:** All volunteers, staff and families must be granted permission prior to taking photographs or videos.
 6. **Cell Phones:** No cell phones are allowed in the arena. If you feel you must carry your cell phone, please turn it to vibrate. Volunteers should refrain from taking calls in the middle of a session.
 7. **Dress Code:** Volunteers should dress appropriately for horse related activities around children.
 - A. wear comfortable, safe shoes for walking in soft dirt. NO sandals, open toed shoes, or clogs.
 - B. wear weather appropriate attire for physical activity (recommended to dress in layers)
 - C. no spaghetti straps, midriffs or revealing clothing. No dangling jewelry that can get caught or tangled on straps or grabbed by small hands.
 - D. no clothing advertising drugs, alcohol or other inappropriate subject matter.
 8. **Parking:** Leave personal belongings locked in your car. Healing By Horseback is not responsible for lost or stolen items.
 9. **Designated Areas:** Only staff and volunteers will be allowed beyond designated visitor areas. Off limit areas include but are not limited to: tack room, feed area, stall areas, mounting area and the arena.
 10. **Attendance:** Regular attendance is important. It is your responsibility to notify at least 24 hours in advance of your shift if you will be absent or late. Patients depend upon your arrival.
 11. **Bad Weather Notices:** Healing By Horseback will remain open and in operation during session hours with the exception of the following:
 1. Local school closings
 2. National Weather Service has issued a severe weather alert
 3. There are high winds, lightning, thunder, hail or tornado warnings.
 4. The arena is flooded or too muddy.For all other weather conditions, do not assume sessions are cancelled. If there are last-minute cancellations, Healing By Horseback will make every effort to call the volunteers for that day. If you are uncertain, be sure to call for more information.
 12. **Dismissal:** Volunteers serve at the request of Healing By Horseback. Dismissal of a volunteer is at the will of Healing By Horseback administrators with or without cause. Volunteers who do not adhere to the rules and regulations of the organization or who fail to satisfactorily perform their voluntary assignment are subject to dismissal. The volunteer may request an opportunity to discuss the reasons for dismissal with the administrators.
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HEALING BY HORSEBACK

RULES AND REGULATIONS CONTINUED

13. **Fire Extinguishers:** Fire extinguisher is located in the tack room area of the barn. Familiarize yourself with the location in case you need to use it.
 14. **Stay Hydrated:** Participation at the facility can require strenuous activity. It is very important - especially in the summer months - to stay hydrated!!
 15. **Feeding horses:** Check with the horse handler if you would like to reward the horses with a treat.
 16. **Demonstrate Consistency:** When working with horses and patients, we stress the importance of consistency. We ask that all of our volunteers follow the procedures and techniques demonstrated in training when working with our horses and our patients.
 17. **Arkansas Code Title 16. Practice, Procedure, and Courts § 16-120-202:** Under Arkansas law, an equine activity sponsor, livestock activity sponsor, livestock owner, livestock facility, and livestock auction market are not liable for an injury to or the death of a participant in equine activities or livestock activities resulting from the inherent risk of equine activities or livestock activities.”
 18. **Smoking:** Healing By Horseback maintains a smoke and tobacco free facility. No smoking or other use of tobacco or similar products (including but not limited to: cigarettes, electronic cigarettes, pipes, cigars, chewing tobacco) is permitted on any part of the property.
 19. **Harassment:** Company policy prohibits sexual harassment or intimidation, harassment due to sex, race, religions, color, origin, medical condition, physical or mental disability, age or any other basis protected by federal, state or local law regulation or ordinance. ALL SUCH HARASSMENT IS ILLEGAL.
 20. **Drugs:** Healing By Horseback prohibits the use, possession, solicitation for, or sale of, narcotics or other illegal drugs, alcohol or prescription medication without a prescription while on the premises.
 21. **Workplace Violence:** Healing By Horseback has zero tolerance policy for violence in the workplace including, but not limited to: physically aggressive, violent or threatening behavior, verbal or physical threats of any kind, excessive arguing, profanity, threats of sabotage to Healing By Horseback property, belligerent speech or a demonstrated pattern of refusal to follow facility rules and regulations.
 22. **Barn Safety:** Stop, look and listen. Use caution around horses. No running, screaming, or unruly behavior.
 1. Never stand directly in front of or behind a horse.
 2. Do not go into pastures, paddocks, or round pens where horses are present unless a designated staff member has cleared you to do so.
 3. Never use a bridle for tying
 4. Helmets must be worn by patients at all times
 5. Stall doors should be opened or closed completely.
 6. Do not enter stalls with a horse inside unless a designated staff member has cleared you to do so.
 7. Treat all equipment with care. Return helmets, tack, grooming items, toys, cones, tools, etc.
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