



P. O. Box 376 Barrington, IL 60011- 0376 Office/Fax: (847) 381-4231

Volunteer Handbook

Volunteers are the backbone of all therapeutic and hippotherapy riding programs. Duties include leading horses in class, sidewalking participants , horse care and assisting in the barn. Working directly with horses not your thing, you can help with the many unmounted tasks needed to keep Walk On running smoothly: office assistance, preparing participants for lessons, gardening and much more.

Every time you volunteer, you change the life of another person.

Program Director -- Ms. Mary Illing
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 376 Barrington Il 60011-0376
Barn Address: 26665 W. Cuba Road Barrington, IL. 60010
Phone numbers: (847) 381-4231
Fax Number 381-4288
Walkonfarm@comcast.net

Walk On is a therapeutic horseback-riding program located in Barrington. Walk On works with children and adults with disabilities in a safe and enriching environment. The program runs six days a week.

Directions

The barn is located at the corner of Cuba Road and Hart Road.

From North/South - Take Route 59/Hough St north to Cuba Road. Turn west on Cuba Road. Barn is on the south side of the street. Please enter/exit from Cuba Road.

From East West - Take Route 14 to Hart Road. Turn north on Hart Road to Cuba Road. Turn east on Cuba Road to entrance, approximately 100 yards on the right.



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Responsibilities

We ask that volunteers commit to a regularly scheduled time one day per week. Participant scheduling depends on the number of volunteers available each day. We do understand that illnesses, work responsibilities, etc. will occasionally conflict with your attendance. If you must be absent on your regular day, please contact us as soon as possible so that we may contact a replacement volunteer. If you are unable to attend on a future date, please sign up on the volunteer absentee sheet in the barn, or call the office number to notify us. Please leave a message if there is no answer.

Please be sure to arrive prior to your scheduled time. Upon arrival at the program:

Sign in on your sign-in sheet in the Daily Log.

Report to the instructor for job assignment.

Sign out before leaving the program.

As much as we try to avoid times when classes are cancelled or when volunteer to participant ratio is not balanced, this can occur. During these times we may not need your help with the participant's, however we will make every effort to find alternate duties for you. We appreciate your understanding during these times.

Should the staff deem it necessary to cancel the program due to weather or other unforeseen reasons, every effort will be made to contact you prior to your scheduled arrival. If you have questions concerning the program schedule, please call us.

Your observations, concerns and questions are vital to the success of the program and they should be voiced to the instructors.

Dress

Dress in a fashion appropriate to work around horses.

1. Closed shoes are required for safety. Tie shoes must be laced and tied.



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2. Dress for the weather, in comfortable work clothes. No halter, crop or tube tops, no shorts less than three inches above the knee. No tight or loose clothing that inhibits your ability to move safely.

Special Information

No electronic devices allowed in the arena.

Please inform the staff of any accidents immediately, so an accident report can be filed and appropriate action taken.

All photographs must be cleared by the riding instructor before being taken, participants, volunteers and staff are protected by a photo release and a confidentiality agreement.

The Leader

The leader's job is to assist the participant in controlling and guiding his or her horse. A leader's first responsibility is the horse but you must be particularly aware of the participant as well as the instructor, other volunteers and potential hazards in the arena.

Know your participant's name. The group will be addressed by the participant's names.

How to lead:

- In order to be in the best position to control the horse, walk about halfway between the horse's head and shoulder.
- At Walk On, we lead from the side of the horse closest to the middle of the arena. Talk to the horse; most of them know "whoa," "walk on." and "trot". Watch where you are going and what's happening around you. **Do not walk backwards to look at the participant.** It's dangerous for everyone.
- Use short tugs rather than a steady pull to get a lazy horse moving. The horse can set himself against a steady pull, but tugs keep him alert. Move out, about 65 steps per minute, to provide the most therapeutic benefit.



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- When you halt for more than a few seconds, stand in front of the horse with your hands on the horses halter pieces (if the horse permits) or loosely hold the lead line or reins. Stand in front is a psychological barrier to the horse and he will stand more quietly.
- Hold your elbow out if you need to push the horse away if he is too close to you.
- Do not drape the lead over your shoulder or wrap around any body part, participants will imitate you.
- Horses respond to the people around them. The quieter you stand, the more definite you are with your commands, and the easier it will be for the whole team.

Lead lines are attached to the halter for most classes. If your horse is wearing a bridle, the lead line should hang between the reins so as not to increase the pressure on the bit. The hand closest to the horse holds the lead line 6 to 8 inches from the ring. Extra lead line needs to be kept off the ground by folding the line back and forth in your hand. **DO NOT** wrap the lead line around your hand.

An effective leader pays close attention to the participant's needs as well as to where the horse is going. This reinforces the participant's attempt to control the horse. You should not execute an instruction for the participant before they have had time to process the information and make an effort to comply first. Sometimes it may be appropriate to walk into the corner and stand until the participant figures out what to do.

Avoid the temptation to talk to the participant and/or the other sidewalkers. A participant may get confused by too much input and not be able to follow the instructors directions. You may reinforce what the instructor is saying by repeating a command if the participant has had sufficient time to process the command and appears not to understand.

Be sure there is sufficient room for you, your participant, your horse and the sidewalkers to pass through openings, go around cones in the arena or when playing games.



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Sidewalker

The sidewalker's job is to assist the participant with whatever is needed. Sidewalkers are very important, as they must be constantly aware of the participant and what they are doing. The effectiveness and safety of the lesson depends on the Sidewalker's attention to what is going on.

When sidewalking a participant, it's important to maintain a position by the participant's knee. There are several ways to hold onto the participant without interfering. The amount of support needed or type of disability will determine which hold to use. The most common hold is the arm-over-the-thigh hold. The Sidewalker grips the front of the saddle or pad with the hand closest to the participant. The forearm rests gently over the participant's thigh, being careful not to dig in with the elbow. In cases where pressure on the thigh cause muscle spasticity, the therapeutic hold is used. Hold the leg at the knee and ankle joints.

Some participants don't need to have a Sidewalker hold on all the time, but just need to have a Sidewalker present. Stay with your participant, you must be within arm's length of your participant at all times.

Lesson Preparation

Sidewalkers should meet their participants in the waiting area and check the participant's helmet fit. The participant will then be brought into the mounting area/barn when the instructor indicates.

Some participants will groom, tack and bring their horses to the arena. The leader is responsible for assisting the participant in the barn. Position yourself to protect the participant should the horse move unexpectedly.

Some participants will need their horses brought to the arena for them. Upon entering the arena, line-up to mount as directed by the instructor. Check that the girth is tight, stirrups pulled down, and left stirrup is placed over the horse's crest.



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Mounting:

Sidewalkers will stand on the right side of the horse to assist with the mounting. This may involve assisting the participant's leg over the back or assisting the participant's hips into the saddle appropriately.

Swing as wide as possible to bring the horse up to the ramp. When entering the ramp, step in front of the horse to allow the horse to get as close to the ramp as possible. Stay in front of the horse till the mount is complete and the instructor/participant has asked the horse to "walk on". Keep the horse as close to the ramp as possible and move forward. It is important to remain close to prevent the instructor from having to jump off the ramp. Walk clear of the ramp before stopping to adjust stirrups.

Participant's Position:

A participant' hips should be centered in the saddle as much as possible and to the participant's ability. They should sit up straight. If a participant is not centered, ask the participant to center themselves. If participant is unable to center themselves, assist by supporting/moving their hips. Legs should be under center of the body at all times unless participant's leg is structurally unable to be placed in that position. Leg position is a particular issue during exercises and standing.

Reins should come up from the bottom of hand and out between thumb and first finger. There should be a straight line from hand to bit.

Exercises are an integral part of lessons. Assist a participant to complete exercise correctly at first, if they are unable to do so, see if they can complete the exercises without assistance. Assist only as needed. Exercises done incorrectly are a waste of time.

Some participants need hand-over-hand assist to complete activities. To do this, the Sidewalker places their hand over the participant's hand and helps them complete the task.

Do not stop and stand still while the horse is circling as you will be too far away if something is happens. Always move with the horse!



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Allow the participant time to process the command then assist as needed.

It is the volunteer's job to assist the participant.

Dismounting:

Line up as directed by the instructor. Stand in front of your horse's head as the participant dismounts. If possible direct the participant to run up their stirrups. If the participant is unable to run up their stirrups do so for them.

Spotting:

In preparation for independent riding, some participants ride without leadlines. The leader still needs to be in a position to assist the participant if necessary.

Some thoughts:

- Do not allow your horse to graze before, especially when outside, during or after the lesson. Once they start it is very hard to stop. A horse that stops to graze can unseat their participant.
- If you are having difficulty with your horse, please inform the instructor by calling them over. Do not yell across the arena, as this can scare the participant.

Emergency Procedures

Fire:

The instructor will be in charge and will direct the staff, participants, guests and volunteers. The instructor will designate someone to call 911.

All participants will be dismounted and given their assistive devices to facilitate in the evacuation process.

Participants, volunteers, guests and staff will move to the sensory field. Follow the directions posted throughout the building for the nearest exit.

The Instructor in charge will designate one person to bring the volunteer sign-in book and participant sign-in book.



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No one is to leave the property unless cleared by the instructor in charge.

Designated staff and volunteers will handle the care of the horses.

Weather:

In the event of inclement weather, volunteers may call Walk On to find out if program is running.

Tornado:

The instructor will be in charge and initiate emergency procedures and direct the evacuation process.

All participants will be dismounted and given their assistive devices. Participants, volunteers, guests and staff will move to the basement of the house, away from the windows, until the weather permits safe movement. If time does not permit safe travel to the house, participants, volunteers, guests and staff will move to the bathroom in the barn.

Designated staff and volunteers will handle and care for the horses.

The Instructor in charge will designate one person to bring the volunteer sign-in book and participant sign-in book.

No one is to leave the property unless cleared by the instructor in charge.

Since staff is working in the barn, staff is not always aware of impending poor weather. It is the responsibility of the participants/parents to determine if weather conditions are not suitable for safe travel to riding program.

Falls from horse:

The Instructor is in charge of the scene. Volunteers will halt all participants and will supervise their assigned participant. The Instructor will determine immediate needs of fallen participant and act accordingly such as call 911, provide first aid or remount.

******* The First Aid kit is located on the shelf in the feed room. *******



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Dismissal Policy:

Walk On reserves the right to dismiss any volunteer for the following reasons:

- The volunteer's interaction with the horse, participant, parents, guests and staff is detrimental to any of the above. This includes behavior that endangers any person, animal or the premises.
- The work environment/responsibilities are detrimental to the volunteer's health.
- The volunteer is unable to complete the required tasks because of pressure, coping skills, or emotional instability.

The proceeding list is intended to give you notice of possible reasons for volunteer dismissal. It does not include, however, every type of unacceptable behavior or event that can or will result in a volunteer member's dismissal from Walk On's program. Walk On reserves the right to dismiss any volunteer member as it sees fit in its sole and absolute discretion.

WARNING

UNDER THE EQUINE LIABILITY ACT, EACH PARTICIPANT WHO ENGAGES IN AN EQUINE ACTIVITY EXPRESSLY ASSUMES THE RISKS ENGAGING IN AND LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR INJURY, LOSS, OR DAMAGE TO PERSON OR PROPERTY RESULTING FROM THE RISK OF EQUINE ACTIVITIES.



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Volunteer Handbook Checklist

I have read and understand the volunteer handbook and attended a volunteer training program.

- _____ Illinois equine liability act
- _____ Emergency information
- _____ Dismissal policy
- _____ First Aid kit location
- _____ Proper attire
- _____ Volunteer responsibilities
- _____ Confidentiality Agreement
- _____ Leading duties
- _____ Sidewalking duties

Signature of volunteer and/or Guardian

Print name