



VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Volunteers are extremely important to the success of our riding experience, when you commit to your volunteer role, you are truly needed and appreciated.

- **RESPONSIBILITY / ACCOUNTABILITY**

1. Volunteers arrive at least 15 minutes prior to the beginning of each camp or pony party session. A 24 hour notice is to be given if unable to attend a session to which you are assigned. Failure to do so will result in a loss of an earned hack.
2. Upon arrival, volunteers must sign in on the Volunteer Attendance Log.
3. Qualities of a Volunteer – reliable, flexible, punctual, patient, and have a positive attitude with common sense.
4. A parent must sign a Volunteer Liability Waiver for their child (volunteer) prior to their first day.

- **ATTIRE**

1. Long pants, blue jeans, riding pants – even on hot days
2. T-shirts – no spaghetti straps
3. Closed toe shoes – no sandals or flip flops – boots are preferred.
4. Please have appropriate clothing for the temperature changes that occur throughout the day in Louisiana.
5. All volunteers are required to wear a helmet at all times while riding.

- **BASIC SAFETY**

1. All cell phones will be on silent during camp hours. While leading a horse with or without a rider, there will be no texting, reading text messages, or calling of any kind... Your responsibility is that child and that horse...they both deserve your undivided attention.

2. During therapeutic riding lessons there are a lot of children and horses together. Be alert and pay attention to everything that is going on around you. We are very accustomed to horses and the risks involved, these children are not. We must be their protectors!
 3. Remember the basics of safety around horses: approach the horse from the side, go to the shoulder first, speak to the horse as you approach, allow time for the horse to see you and face you before you walk to him/her, place a hand on the hip before walking around the back of a horse, use quiet voices, don't waive your hands or arms. The children as well as their parents will be watching how YOU work around the horses. Please teach them safe, correct horsemanship.
 4. No rider should ever be allowed to leave the group without a staff member, volunteer, or chaperone.
 5. Once you have been assigned a rider, you are responsible for being with them at all times, until the riders have completed their lesson and are back with their parent.
 6. The gate to the arena should remain closed at all times during riding
 7. Never leave your rider unattended with a horse at any time.
- RIDER EXPERIENCE
 1. These children are here to have a safe, fun, educational and usually completely new experience.
 2. The more excited and involved with your child you are, the greater the experience they will have.
 3. Let them know they are doing a good job and or help them to do a better one.
 4. Please notify the camp director or staff member of any behavior issue or concerns involving a child immediately.
 - CRAFT / GAME TIME
 1. During this time, volunteers are responsible for gathering the supplies, assisting with set up and clean up.
 2. Assist the campers with their activity without "doing it for them"
 3. Each volunteer must cheer on the children during games, encourage good sportsmanship and celebrate the victories.
 - HORSEMANSHIP
 - HORSE BEHAVIORS:
 1. Horses are like mirrors- they are extremely sensitive to your energy levels and emotions. They will "mirror" the way you approach them.

2. Prior to catching and haltering your horse, take a deep breath, blow it out and bring your energy level to low.
3. If you approach them going a hundred miles an hour, they will become nervous and on guard with you.
4. Be aware of your horses non-verbal communication such as:

Ears – Forward = attentive and interested

Drooping= relaxed, exhausted, or ill

Flat or Pinned= anger, threat, or fear

Pointing in two different directions=focusing on two things

Moving back and forth= listening, attentive, and interested

Eyes – Hard or wide open showing a lot of white= scared, on alert, ready to react

Half-closed= relaxed, feels no threat, calm, sleeping

Soft =gentle, relaxed, learning mode

Open and blinking= processing information, thinking

Nose – a horse will sniff things in their environment as a way to evaluate their situation and find any danger. Allow your horse to do this so that he is comfortable and not guarded.

Muzzle and lips – licking and chewing is stress release, acknowledgement.

Soft= relaxed

Flapping lower lip= nervous, unfocused

Tight and wrinkled = anxious, tense

Flaring= excited, working, nervous

Head and Neck Low=accepting and relaxed, High= fear, defiance and anxiety

Level= neutral, focused

Tail – Swishing=annoyed, irritated

Flagged or High=excited, happy, attentive

Low=submissive

Neutral/level=focused and normal

Clamped down=fearful

Legs – Pawing=frustrated

Standing square= attentive

Hind foot resting=relaxed

Hind leg lifted=warning, defensive

Stamping= flies, mild irritation

Striking= angry, threatening, fighting

Dancing around= nervous, excited,

- GROOMING

- NEVER leave a horse unattended in a cross tie

2. NEVER leave a rider unattended in a cross tie with a horse.

3. When grooming a horse, allow the rider to work with you at each step – give instructions as you go.

4. Be Patient with your rider this is new to them

5. Tell your rider what is important about each step of the grooming process.

6. Be sure to use good basic safety through the grooming process.

- TACKING AND UNTACKING

1. All tack should be organized prior to the riding portion of the therapeutic riding lesson.

2. Check all tack for condition and safety- especially the buckles on bridles and saddles.

3. The tacking and un-tacking should always include participation of the rider unless otherwise instructed by a staff member.

4. If the rider is too small or young for hands on during the tacking and un-tacking, talk them through each step as you go.

5. All tack should be cleaned and stored after use in the tack rooms

- LEADING A HORSE WITH CHILD RIDER

1. Your responsibility is to maintain control of your horse while allowing your rider to learn and follow the directions of the instructor.

2. Hold the lead line approximately 12 – 24 inches from the snap/halter to allow natural motion of the horses head and the rest of the rope in your left hand.

3. Never wrap the rope around your hand, fold it from front to back in the palm of your left hand.

4. Look forward, do not turn and look at the horse – that is a cue to stop the horse.

5. Always keep the distance of an “elephant” between you and the horse in front of you.

6. Listen carefully to the instructor and relay correct information to the rider.
7. Allow the rider to control the horse as much as possible – you keep it safe for them as they learn.
8. Stay on the left side of the horse unless in the arena in which case walk to the inside.
9. Talk through the steps for mounting and un-mounting with your rider first, and then assist them through it.
10. Remember that every move you make affects the movement of the horse and consequently the rider. No sudden stops or turns.
11. Keep non-instructional “chit chat” down so as not to interfere with teaching.
12. Remember to praise the child for good riding or good trying.
13. If your horse misbehaves do not punish them in any way in front of the rider. You may correct the behavior for the safety of the child.
14. If your rider becomes dismounted, move the horse immediately away from the rider and call for help.
15. In the event of an emergency, the leader always takes control of the horse.

- TYPES OF SIDE WALKING WITH A RIDER

The side walker(s) are in charge of the rider's safety and help the rider with balance and reinforce instructions given during the lesson. If there are two side walkers, the inside walker (the one closest to the center of the arena) will clarify the instructions given by the instructor. Too many people talking at the same time can confuse the rider.

*The method used for side walking depends on the needs of the rider.

1. The Thigh Hold: Place your arm that is closest to the rider across the rider's thigh and grasp the front edge of the saddle or pad.
2. The Hip Hold: : Place your arm that is closest to the rider across the rider's hip and grasp the front of the saddle or saddle horn.
3. The Heel Hold: Hold the heel of the rider to help stabilize the rider's leg

4. Using safety belts- Hold the Belt Loop with the hand closest to the rider and place the opposite hand on the riders ankle or thigh to stabilize.

- GUIDELINES FOR SIDE WALKING

1. Watch where you place your hands, as not to get too personal
2. Do not offer any more support that the rider needs
3. Observe the rider with your front and or side vision at all times- Never become so relaxed that you are not totally aware of the rider, horse, leader, instructor, and activities around you.
4. Be sure not to lean on the horse or riders. Pressure from your arm or hand may irritate the horse and or unbalance the rider.
5. Listen carefully to the instructor: You may need to reinforce the instructor's directions, assist the rider in carrying out the instructions, or direct the riders attention to the task.
6. Allow the rider time to process the information before you begin assist
7. It can be difficult to, but please don't do it for them !
8. Refrain from talking to the other side walker during the session unless necessary for safety.

Please remember being at the stables, in therapeutic lessons and around horses is not the time to act in an unprofessional manner or pretend to know more than you do. Volunteering is a gift to both the rider and the volunteer. We are grateful that you have decided to share your gifts, talents and time with the Reins of Hope program.