

Volunteer Needs for Stock Hands Horses for Healing

There will be training sessions held for all volunteers, contact Stockhands Horses for Healing for further details.

Stable hands

- The duties included with volunteering for this would include but are not limited to
 - Stall cleaning
 - De-cob webbing
 - Haying
 - Watering
 - Other stable chores
- Person must be 14 years and older

Groomer

- Duties included with volunteering for this would include but are not limited to
 - Grooming the horse for a lesson
 - Tacking the horse for a lesson
- When taking up the horse for a lesson the volunteer should look over the lesson plan provided by the instructor to confirm what tack is to be used.
- If there are any issues with pieces of tack they are to let a staff member know so that a solution can be found before the lesson starts
- May also be asked to warm the horse up if leader cannot be available to.
- Person must be 14 years and older

Ring Assistants

- Duties included with volunteering for this would include but are not limited to includes
 - Setting up the arena for lessons
 - Tearing down the arena arrangement after lessons
- Arena set up will be included in the lesson plans provided by the instructor and should be viewed by the volunteer prior to the lesson.
- May also be asked to be part of the lesson for some activities
- Person must be 12 years and older

Leader – Information on another sheet

Sidewalker- Information on another sheet

The Role of the Sidewalker

Riders who are not able to maintain a secure/safe position on the horse, independently, may require the assistance of one or two sidewalkers. Sidewalkers may provide riders with stability, sensory input (touch, hearing, vision), musculoskeletal cues, position assistance, riding skill support, socialization, etc. In therapeutic riding, the sidewalker(s) do/does *not* hold the rider in an upright position – the rider must be able to hold their head and trunk up on their own (this does not mean that they must be correctly balanced). Therapeutic riding does not preclude using alternative positions on the horse, such as facing rearward and providing sidewalker support.

Sidewalkers should realize that their position on the team is very important and they are committed to the lesson time and rider. Many riders do not respond to change well and having a team member rotating in and out can be counterproductive for the rider. In addition, sidewalkers must be in sufficient physical condition that they are able to walk briskly around the riding enclosure for the length of the lesson – this may include repeated trots for prolonged periods of time.

Perhaps one of the most important responsibilities a sidewalker has is the potential need for performing an emergency dismount. All sidewalkers must be of sufficient height, strength and flexibility to perform an emergency dismount, whether dictated by the instructor or the leader.

Dependent upon the rider's needs and progression, sidewalkers may be utilizing full support hand holds such as over-the-thigh, providing simple stability/position support with a heel hold, provide limited contact by resting a hand on the horse, or simply walking next to the horse and rider for safety. The instructor *may* have the sidewalker(s) perform other duties such as:

- Overseeing a rider's warm up while another rider is being mounted
- Perform a safety check and/or stirrup adjustment
- Provide auditory cueing such as reiterating the instructor's directions
- Provide physical cueing such as pointing, providing a light tap, and hand-over-hand cues
- Converse with the rider in a social fashion
- Hand items to the rider or hold items for the rider

Additional Notes

- If there are two sidewalkers providing physical input for the rider, it is important that they are of similar height so their input to the rider is as equal as possible.
- Be sure that the instructor directs switching sides so that one sidewalker is not using the same arm for the entire lesson – this can be quite tiring.
- Sidewalkers should be aware of their position and not cause the horse discomfort (leaning an elbow into the horse's side) or interfere with quality of movement.
- Notify the leader if they are not being given sufficient room around corners, against kickboards, etc.
- If only one sidewalker is required, it is usual (but not cut in stone) that the sidewalker is on the rider's affected side.
- If the rider is young or non-verbal, pay close attention to their reactions to handholds used – an individual who has tactile defensiveness may react negatively, in some way.
- Be sure that the instructor provides input to the sidewalker(s) when they perform a posture check – one sidewalker may have a “stronger” hold than another and will not realize it until the instructor notes the postural change in the rider.
- Sidewalkers should *not* carry on private conversations – this is distracting to the rider and may be inappropriate in content.
- If an instructor indicates that they want the sidewalker(s) to converse with the rider, be sure to discuss with the instructor what topics are recommended.

The Emergency Dismount

On rare occasions, it is necessary to perform an emergency dismount with a rider. The call for the dismount may come from the leader, who is losing control of the horse, or from the instructor who sees the whole picture and believes the rider may be compromised. If there are two, both sidewalkers

must be physically able to perform the dismount. Dependent up the direction tracked, an emergency dismount should not compromise the rider further by dismounting them into a wall or fence.

It is impossible to give a step-by-step process for performing an emergency dismount. There is not time to break the dismount down into components. Suggestions follow:

- As soon as someone calls for an emergency dismount, the leader slows the horse (as much as possible) but must maintain forward motion so the rider comes off more easily.
- The sidewalker on the inside reaches up and grabs the rider by the waistband and draws the rider off toward them. As the horse continues to move, the rider should be free of the stirrups.
- As the rider clears the horse, effort should be made to support the rider from a fall, but if not possible, bring the rider down on top of you (so your body cushions the rider).
- Leader should do everything possible to move the horse forward away from the rider.
- If standing, turn rider away from horse. If on the ground, roll to protect the rider from the horse.

The Role of the Leader

Not all riders in therapeutic lessons require leaders, however, if a leader is necessary, the leader is a very important member of the team.

The horse leader must understand equine behavior. Horses are herd animals and the herd depends upon a lead mare (alpha) to keep the herd safe. A herd will follow the alpha mare without question. A mare becomes the alpha in the herd through maturity, experience, aggressiveness/assertiveness, and innate instincts. In a lesson, the leader must possess the same qualities to become the alpha in the herd of two.

In order for a horse to accept the leader as the alpha, the leader must set boundaries from the moment they take control of the horse until the horse is removed from the setting. The leader must be able to gain the respect of the horse through consistent leadership and reinforcement of directives. There are many levels of enforcement – it can range from a turning of the head and a look, use of voice, incorporation of disciplinary movements, etc. The leader must be confident in their skills to employ these methods when called for and *not* use them indiscriminately.

The leader must be skilled in the use of the aids for changes in pace and tempo, transitions, bend, squaring, and impulsion.

Basic Skills

- Must be familiar with equipment for leading
 - Types of lead shanks
 - Methods of attaching the lead shank to halter, bridle, bitless bridle, etc.
 - Whip
- Must be familiar with the horse
 - Reactions to stimuli
- Must be familiar with riding skills and the use of the aids
 - Striding, tracking, tempo, engagement, elevation of the forehand, etc.
- Must be familiar with the rein aids and use the lead shank as a rein
- Must be able to square a horse
- Must be able to use progressive corrective measures

Position – must be able to perform all duties from both sides of the horse

- Hold the lead shank a few inches from the clip with the excess held loosely in the opposite hand (do not wrap around hand in any fashion)
- Maintain a position between the horse's nose and shoulder
- Use appropriate body language to develop good movement in the horse
- When in a prolonged halt, head the horse – this position is not used in all programs, but is expected in this program
- Do not look at the horse unless using this position as a behavior reinforcement
- Do not distract the horse through petting, stroking mane and forelock, etc.

Additional Notes

- The leader must communicate the needs of the horse to the instructor. For example, if the horse is not behaving correctly prior to or during a mount/dismount, the instructor must communicate this to the instructor and take appropriate actions.
- In an emergency setting, the leader must control the horse in a manner conducive to protection of the rider.
- The leader's attention should *always* be on the horse. The leader should not be expected to adjust a rider's position, carry on a conversation with the rider, or carry equipment not associated with the leading of the horse.
- The leader must be able to listen to the instructor and take their directional cues from the instructions being given to the rider.
- The leader must maintain sufficient physical condition to perform the required gates/speed required by the lesson, for the duration of the lesson.