

Volunteer Handbook

Dear Strides of Strength Volunteer,

When you decided to volunteer at Strides of Strength, you became a very important part of a team. Our programs here at Strides of Strength could not operate without the assistance of dedicated volunteers. Taking that into consideration, please remember that we and the participants are relying on YOU. If a volunteer doesn't show up occasionally, or if they agree to help and then suddenly change their mind, it makes a huge difference. We cannot provide these wonderful opportunities to people who need them, if we don't have help from people like you.

There are many volunteer opportunities at Strides of Strength: as a side walker during sessions, Minis on the Move outings, helping with fundraisers, assisting with special events and horse care, etc. There are always opportunities to help around the farm.

As part of the Strides of Strength team, you help provide our participants with the many benefits of therapeutic equine assisted activities. Our philosophy is to teach horsemanship skills both on and off the horse that develops the independence of each participant as well as improving physical, mental, and emotional well-being. You make a difference in the lives of persons with disabilities and special needs, and you are giving back to your community.

All volunteers are required to complete their paperwork and attend an introductory training session before helping in an equine activity. Assisting participants in a session requires maturity and responsibility by the volunteer. Additional training is available for volunteers who want to learn more or take more responsibility. This handbook outlines what is expected of volunteers as well as general information concerning the program. In order to help you perform your job better, please read and study the information in the handbook.

WELCOME and thank you for your participation!

Sincerely,

Beth Gaston, Founder and CEO

Strides of Strength Therapeutic Riding, Inc.
2717 Gaston Farm Rd, Chester, SC 29706
StridesofStrength.org
Email: Beth.Gaston@StridesofStrength.org
803-374-6255

We strive to provide a comprehensive therapeutic equine program utilizing horses to facilitate growth, learning, and healing. Our population includes children and adults with mental, physical, emotional, and functional disabilities.

Policies and Guidelines

Volunteer Training

Typically, volunteers should be at least 14 years old to assist participants, but occasionally exceptions for younger individuals can be made. Please have respect for these younger volunteers as they are well trained and possibly have more experience with horses than some adults. All volunteers who work with the riders, as side walkers, must be mature enough to handle the responsibility of assisting and protecting the participant, and physically fit to walk up to two hours and jog occasionally. Strides of Strength (SOS) reserves the right to determine if a volunteer is not yet ready to take on the responsibility of assisting in sessions or working independently with the horses. Horses are large animals and it is a big responsibility to assist with these animals and the participants with disabilities and/or special needs. Volunteers are required to attend the orientation training session and one safety training every quarter. It is imperative that we offer our participants the safest environment possible. By training our volunteers to know how to handle certain situations and practicing on a regular basis, we are able to react to emergencies in a safer and more orderly fashion.

Volunteer Paperwork

Volunteer paperwork must be complete prior to volunteering at SOS. If you plan to volunteer with us for a while, please understand that paperwork will need to be updated annually.

Volunteer Sign-In

It is important for you to sign in when you come to SOS. Maintaining records of volunteer hours is a requirement of accreditation, helps with fundraising, and provides an accurate record for those who need verification of hours. Remember to sign in **every time** you volunteer. Please ask where to sign in at your training.

Arrival and Departure Times

Please plan to arrive at least 15 minutes prior to session time and plan to stay 15 minutes after the conclusion of the session. We may need help bringing horses in, tacking them up, etc.

Volunteer Information

We want to keep you informed of everything that happens at SOS. To do so, we post information on our Facebook and Instagram pages as well as on the office windows and bulletin board. We also send emails so please let us know if your information changes.

Absences

For the program to be consistent and successful, volunteers are suggested to commit for a specific session. We realize that emergencies and illness can occur but please try to let us know well in advance so that we can find someone to fill in.

Cancellations

At times it may be necessary to cancel a lesson due to severe weather. If you have any questions, please call Beth 803-374-62552 or the instructor for the class.

Water

We recommend that you bring your own water with you to the barn as we do not typically have drinking water readily available and we want you to stay hydrated, especially on hot days. There is a refrigerator in the barn if you would like to keep your beverage cold.

Restrooms

There is a bathroom in the Gaston Farm main barn.

Feedback

As a Strides of Strength (SOS) volunteer, your feedback is a valuable resource. Your ideas, comments, suggestions, etc. help us to constantly improve the programs. However, we request that you speak to the instructor or director before or after a session in private.

Ending your volunteer position

We understand that at some point your time as a SOS volunteer may need to come to an end. Please let us know as soon as possible of your plans to leave your volunteer position. If possible, find a replacement that is as dependable, enthusiastic, and dedicated as you.

General Emergency Procedure

Please inform the instructor or director of any accident, both animal and person related, no matter how minor it may seem to you. Equine and Human First Aid supplies are in the cabinets located in the bathroom of the Gaston Farm barn. For person related emergencies, if you are asked to call for assistance, dial 911. The address of the farm is:

2717 Gaston Farm Rd.
Chester, SC 29706

For animal related emergencies, the Veterinarian's number is located on the bulletin board in the bathroom.

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Dress Code

- Footwear: closed toed, comfortable shoes, no sandals. Hard soled shoes or boots with a low heel are preferred for riding.
- Long pants: No shorts, skorts, culottes, capri pants or dresses/skirts. Riding breeches, form fitting jeans or tights are acceptable.
- Shirts: tank tops with thick straps are acceptable on hot days, if unsure, please ask the program director. No low cut or midriff showing tops.
- Please dress appropriately for winter weather.
- Jewelry: no jewelry that can get caught in manes or tails ('dangling' earrings, necklaces, rings/bracelets, etc.)
- Perfume can attract insects and some participants may be allergic, so we advise only neutral perfumes and lotions.
- Electronic equipment: Cell phones should either not be carried, silenced or turned off, during sessions. Please do not answer a call while side walking. It is important to keep your attention on the participant or horse for which you are responsible.

Procedures and Safety Rules

The following rules apply to all SOS program participants, staff members, volunteers, and anyone visiting SOS at Gaston Farms Equestrian Center. These rules are designed to insure safety, a primary concern here at SOS. Please help us to enforce these rules.

- All volunteers must have an annually updated and fully completed application to participate.
- No abusive, threatening, or violent behavior towards people or animals will be tolerated on Gaston Farm premises.
- No running, screaming or boisterous behavior is permitted on the property.
- Alcohol, illegal drug use, smoking, open flames, or weapons of any kind are prohibited on Gaston Farm premises or at any SOS hosted events.
- Please do not handle program horses, feed, or pet horses.
- No one may ride a program horse unless supervised by a staff member.
- Barn aisles and cross tie bays must be kept clean and free of obstructions.
- Volunteers who arrive at SOS under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, or who bring weapons to SOS will be asked to leave immediately, and their association with SOS may be terminated.
- Please make sure gates are securely latched.
- Horses may be tied only as directed by the instructor. Never tie a horse by his bridle or to fencing.
- Horses cannot see directly behind them, so talk to them as you approach. Try never to approach from behind, always from the side or front. It's best to walk up to the shoulder/neck.
- When walking around a tied or held horse, do not walk under or over the lead rope or directly under the horse's neck.
- Do not kneel or squat around a horse.
- When petting a horse, stroke or pat gently, do not poke them.
- When turning a horse loose in a paddock, lead him in and turn him completely around so his head faces the door or gate before letting him loose so that you can easily exit without walking behind him.

Interacting with People with Disabilities

If you have never had the opportunity to meet people with disabilities, this aspect of volunteering can be intimidating and a little frightening at first. You may be feeling insecure about how to act or react to people who may look, sound, move, and behave differently from what you usually expect.

- Have fun! Talk about the same things you would with any other person. A disability does not limit or dampen a person's sense of humor.
- A person with a disability is an individual first and is entitled to the same dignity, respect, and considerations expected by anyone.
- Treat adults as adults. Only help a person with a disability if they ask for assistance. You may offer assistance, but if it is declined, do not be offended.
- When assisting an individual with a disability always ask "how" you can help. Do not take over.
- Self-satisfaction is important for the participant. Use the help sparingly because it is important that the individual experience the satisfaction of accomplishing the task him/herself.
- Always address a person with a disability directly. Do not speak about them as if they are not present.

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- Avoid asking embarrassing questions. If a participant wants to share, they will.
- Do not shout. Hearing aids make noises louder, not clearer. Blindness does not affect hearing.
- When speaking to someone with a hearing impairment speak slowly, clearly and face them directly while speaking.
- If a person has difficulty speaking, allow them to finish their sentence. If you do not understand what they are saying, tell them so. Do not pretend you understood if you didn't.
- When meeting a person with a visual impairment, always identify yourself and tell them you are leaving before you walk away.
- Do not push a person's wheelchair, grab their arm or try to help without asking first. Never move someone's crutches, walkers, canes, service animal or other mobility aid without permission.
- When speaking to a person with a disability who uses a wheelchair, find yourself a chair or crouch down at a comfortable distance so that you can converse on the same level.
- Respect the confidentiality rights, dignity, and privacy of the participant.
- Be optimistic about life in general and the participant's outlooks in particular, however, don't encourage unrealistic goals or attitudes.

“People First” Language

- The individual is always placed before the disability. It is a “person with a disability” – not a “disabled person.”
- Never refer to a person by their disability, for example a “paraplegic” or a “blind” person. The accepted terminology is a “person who has paraplegia” or a “person who is blind.”
- People are not “confined” or “bound” to wheelchairs. They “use” these devices for mobility and to enhance their freedom. It is more appropriate to say, “an individual who uses a wheelchair.”
- Completely avoid emotionally laden terms such as “suffering with a disease”, “afflicted with” or “burdened by”. A person with a disability may “have” an illness or may be “challenged” by a condition, but one should never assume that a person is suffering, burdened or afflicted.
- When writing or speaking about individuals with disabilities always focus on ability, accomplishment and quality of life.
- Avoid using “us” and “them” language when speaking of people with disabilities versus people who are able bodied.

Lesson Volunteer Positions

Many participants need assistance with equine activities. There may be as many as three volunteers with each participant. During mounted instruction there are several volunteer positions: leader, sidewalker, and spotter.

Horse Leader Instructions

1. Grooming and tacking is your time to get to know your horse and see what their behavior is like that day. Please check in with the instructor about any behaviors that you notice.
2. Maintain your “bubble.” This means that if your horse tries to get into your space, you gently push him back out again. This shows him that you are the leader and keeps him from trying to take advantage of you.
3. You should not talk to the rider during the session.
4. You need to pay close attention to your horse and concentrate on the session without getting distracted. Your cell phone should be turned off or left outside the arena.

The role of the leader is to control the horse from the time it leaves the stall or pasture area, throughout the session, and upon return to the stall or pasture area. The horse leader plays a major role in the learning process and safety of the rider.

Side walker Instructions

Before the Session:

- Arrive 15 minutes prior to the session.
- While waiting for your rider, you will receive instructions from the handler or therapist.
- Wait with the rider at the bottom of the mounting ramp until it is time to mount; this is a good time to get to know the rider.
- Do not enter the mounting area until you are instructed to do so.

The role of the sidewalker is to be an extension of the instructor in order to encourage the rider to grow and develop to his or her fullest potential.

Sidewalking is the most hands-on position in a therapeutic riding session and will have a significant influence on the success of the session. Sidewalkers are directly responsible for the rider and provide supervision for the rider from the

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time they arrive until they leave. Teams must work harmoniously and smoothly for the benefit of the rider. The role of the sidewalker varies greatly between riders. It is important to have an understanding of the rider's needs and knowledge of their goals. Please ask the instructor if you have any questions.

There may be many opportunities to talk socially with your rider and you are encouraged to do so. However, please do not disrupt the session. Many participants have trouble concentrating so please take care not to interrupt the direct line of focus between rider and instructor.

Riding Skills: It is not necessary for sidewalkers to have any horse experience, however, working knowledge of basic riding skills will help ensure the effective instruction and safety of the rider.

Physical Support

- Providing physical support to a rider can be tiring. Inform the instructor if you begin to fatigue so you can switch sides. Sidewalkers should decide who goes first and change sides one at a time, walking around the front of the horse and resuming the hold on the opposite side so the rider is never without a physical hold.
- Never apply a physical hold over a joint.

Thigh Hold – Sidewalker places a forearm gently over the thigh and holds the front of the saddle, pad or surcingle. Do not apply excessive pressure with your forearm. Pressure on the thigh can increase or cause spasticity, especially for people with Cerebral Palsy.

Ankle hold - Hold back of ankle/cup back of heel

Calf hold - Rest hand on top of rider's calf

Spotter position – Sidewalker walks beside the rider, prepared to give hands-on physical support if needed

During the Lesson

- Instructors will inform the sidewalkers about the kind of assistance the rider needs.
- If a rider has one sidewalker, the leader and sidewalker should walk on opposite sides of the horse.
- Sidewalkers should keep talking to a minimum but communicate with the team when needed.
- Never place your hand or fingers in any of the saddle's rings or buckles while side walking.
- If a rider or horse behaves inappropriately or in an unsafe manner, notify the instructor immediately.
- Never leave your position next to the rider. Never leave your rider to pick up a dropped item. Inform the instructor. If you need to stop for any reason the whole team stops with you.
- DO NOT interfere with the horse by petting, poking, leaning or bumping. Allow the leader to do the job of moving the horse forward.
- Inform the instructor if you cannot continue your role of sidewalker for any reason.

When there are 2 Sidewalkers:

- One or two sidewalkers may be assigned to each rider depending on the rider's needs.
- If physical supports are being used, ensure you are applying the same support and to the same degree so the rider is receiving even input on each side. Communicate with the other sidewalker if you are changing to a different type of physical support.
- If there are two sidewalkers, work together with the other sidewalker so you are not competing for the rider's attention.

Instructional Support:

- Some riders do not require any "hands on" assistance, just someone to walk beside them to keep them focused on the tasks.
- Sidewalkers should help the rider focus his attention on the instructor.
- Avoid unnecessary talking with the rider or other volunteers.
- Allow enough time for the rider to process directions. Too much input can be overwhelming to riders who have perceptual problems.
- Avoid being so competitive during games that the rider doesn't get to use his or her own skills because you do it for them in an all-out effort to win.

Dismounting & Conclusion of the Lesson

- Follow the instructor's directions during the dismount.
- The sidewalker may remove the rider's foot from the stirrup and help guide the leg over at the instructor's request.
- When appropriate, encourage the rider to thank the volunteers and give their horse a pat.
- If necessary, the sidewalker can assist the rider in putting his or her helmet away properly.
- Stay with your rider until he or she is returned to a parent or guardian or you are no longer needed.

Emergency Situations

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If an emergency dismount is required:

Emergency dismounts should be conducted quickly, efficiently, and safely. The purpose of an emergency dismount is to get the rider off and away from the horse and away from any other danger that may exist.

The rider will be dismounted by the sidewalker or spotter; if one spotter, the dismount occurs from either side, if two sidewalkers then on the sidewalker on the left, or if near fence, the inside sidewalker dismounts. The sidewalker/spotter will firmly grip the rider around the hips and pull the rider off the horse towards the sidewalker. The sidewalker then turns the rider away from the horse and places himself between the horse and rider. The rider is then escorted or carried to a safe place. If there are two sidewalkers, the sidewalker on the right side will ensure the rider's foot is out of the stirrup and help the rider off to the left.

Spooks

If a horse spooks, remain calm and stay with the rider as best as you can. Immediately assume a thigh hold to help keep the rider in the saddle. As the horse moves, sidewalkers need to continue their support to the rider, staying close to the horse's side as it moves. If the horse's behavior becomes dangerous, the instructor may call for an emergency dismount. When an instructor calls for an emergency dismount, horse leaders halt and turn to face their horse. The sidewalker informs the rider of the emergency dismount. Make sure the rider's feet have been removed from the stirrups before placing your arms around his or her waist and gently guiding him or her off and safely away from the horse. When possible, the sidewalker on the inside of the arena should perform the emergency dismount.

Falls

Though falls are very rare, they can and do happen. If your rider falls, stay with the rider and follow the directions of the instructor. Do not panic if there is a fall, stay calm so you are able to assist the rider and instructor. Sidewalkers may be asked to assist by retrieving a first aid kit, calling for emergency medical assistance (911), and locating the rider's emergency medical form (located in the rider file drawer in the main office). An Incident Report must be completed by staff and involved individuals for every incident.

Strides of Strength Risk Management Plan

Hazards Specific to the use of equines.

Mounted Emergency/Fall plan:

If there is an emergency while in session...

1. all horses should be halted
2. all leaders should position themselves in front of the horse's head
3. all sidewalkers will stabilize their riders and be prepared for emergency dismount
4. volunteers are to stay with their horse and rider unless otherwise directed by the instructor
5. if the riders need to dismount, the instructor advises the volunteers and gives directions on how to proceed
6. if circumstances call for the arena to be evacuated, the riders will be escorted out first and the horses will then be removed by their leaders
7. volunteers keep alert for directions from the instructor

If an emergency dismount is required:

See directions under Side walker Instructions

If the rider is injured:

1. The instructor will assess the need for first aid or emergency medical treatment.
2. If the EMS is required, the instructor will designate someone to call 911.
3. The instructor will complete the Incident Report and provide follow up with rider and or parents

Bodily fluids:

Follow precautions concerned with blood borne pathogens. Never handle blood or other body fluids from any source without gloves. Gloves are in the first aid kit.

IN AN EMERGENCY

1. The instructor will give the command to halt all horses, "Emergency Halt!"
2. Volunteers and participants respond immediately by halting.
3. Horse leader to assume halt position in front of horse's head, on hearing "Emergency Halt" command.
4. Sidewalkers/spotter are to stand beside their participant with hands in place for an emergency dismount.
5. If situation warrants emergency dismount, instructor will give the command "Emergency Dismount!"
6. Volunteers are not to leave their assigned participant and horse for any reason, except under instructor's direction.
7. All volunteers keep one eye on the participant and horse, and the other on the emergency situation.
8. All volunteers keep ears open for any instructor directives.

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9. Volunteers try to involve participant in some attention-getting activity. Ex: name parts of horse, stretching, etc
10. Return to normal riding activities when the instructor gives directive "Ride Resume"
11. Try to assess any effect the emergency situation may have had on the participant and/or horse.

***Inform the instructor if the effect is significant!

An emergency dismount must be done quickly and efficiently. The purpose of the emergency dismount is to get the participant off the horse and away from the horse and any other danger that may exist at that moment.

Procedure when there is only one spotter: The spotter will disengage the participant's left foot from the stirrup and get a firm grip on the participant (not the participant's clothes) and pull the participant off the mount toward the spotter. Walk or carry the participant a safe distance away from the horse and/or the danger. This dismount will be toward the spotter regardless of the side the helper is on at that moment.

Procedure when there are two sidewalkers: The sidewalker on the near (left) side of the horse will catch the participant in an embrace and pull or lift the rider from the horse. The sidewalker on the off (right) side of the horse will assist by disengaging the participant's foot from the stirrup and moving the participant (in mid-body area) into the near sidewalker's embrace. The sidewalker with the participant should turn away from the horse, so that he/she is between the participant and horse. Then, walk or carry the participant a safe distance from the horse and/or danger. If the horse is next to the fence, dismount the participant to the inside of the arena (away from the fence), even if that is the right side of the horse. Try not to dismount toward objects or obstacles in the arena.

Bottom line: The emergency dismount cannot be defined in a simple format. This process depends on the ability of the rider, and the severity of the situation. The process outlined above may also be reversed, dismounting to the far side, should the rider's disability warrant that solution.

Note: The emergency dismount should be practiced on a regular basis with volunteers in training sessions until, like a fire drill, it is automatic and smooth.

Loose Horse

- If a horse gets loose, please do not panic. Our horses are not likely to leave their herd. Ask a staff member to help you retrieve the animal. If no staff member is around, simply get a bucket with a small amount of feed in it and a halter with lead rope attached. Approach the horse slowly from the FRONT enticing it with the feed and as the horse tries to eat the feed slip the lead rope around its neck so the horse cannot easily evade you. Then slip the halter on its head and lead it slowly back to where it should be.
- If the horse gets loose in a lesson, due to a fall or any other reason, stop the lesson and have everyone remain standing until the horse is caught. If the situation becomes dangerous for any participants or volunteers consult the instructor for further direction.

Kicking/Biting/Aggressive Behavior

- If a horse is acting aggressively in any way please note the surroundings and your own personal body language first to see if you can find a cause for the problem. Our horses are not prone to aggression unless provoked or afraid. Horses mirror emotions and if you are angry or aggressive you may be causing the horse's behavior. If you are unsure of the cause, please discontinue your interaction with the equine and find a staff member to help you.
- If the aggressive behavior occurs during a session the equine may need to be removed from the lesson. Please ask the instructor what you should do in that specific situation at that time. If you feel that the situation calls for immediate response, move the equine away from the others in the arena and have someone perform an emergency dismount with the participant, then take the animal back to the barn or paddock and untack the animal. Aggressive behavior should be reported to the Program Director.
- If an animal bites or attempts to bite during a session, grab the side of the halter and hold the horse's head an arm's length away from you. Inform the instructor that the horse has bitten you. The animal may need to be excused from the lesson.

Horse Health Emergencies

- If a horse is injured, limping, or not acting normally, please notify a staff member immediately. If you cannot find a staff person immediately. If you cannot locate a staff member, please call Beth Gaston at 803-374-6255 and leave a message.
- Anything that is beyond your realm of knowledge needs to be dealt with by a professional. So, if you are unsure what to do or don't have horse experience, please contact a staff member on the premises or at one of the numbers above or call the veterinarian.

Unauthorized Entrance into stalls/pastures/paddocks

- Volunteers, participants, teachers, and parents are all made aware during orientation that they and the participants are not to enter stalls, paddocks, or pastures unless accompanied by a staff member.

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Natural Hazards to the site

- The following stinging insects and poisonous snakes are identified as possible hazards to the persons on the premises of Gaston Farms Road Equestrian Center (GFREC): fire ants, yellow jackets, hornets, wasps, bees, Copperhead snakes, Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnakes, and Water Moccasins, also known as “Cottonmouths”.

Fire Ant Information: Fire ants are small ants found only in the SE states. They can usually be located by small ant mounds. They are often found around fence posts. They can sting several times and the sting will eventually welt and start to itch. In a matter of a few hours a pustule will develop and if it breaks it can become infected. The reaction can be more serious if the person is allergic to the sting. Horses can be stung by fire ants as well.

Yellow Jackets, Hornets, Wasps, and Bee Information: Bee type stinging insects can be found at barns. Bees that are aggravated are more likely to attack and sting. Aggravation can occur when a person passes too close to a nest, or the person panics and flails at the bee when it comes near. Yellow jackets, wasps and hornets can sting repeatedly, and stings are very painful.

Stinging Insect Mitigation: If stinging insects are located on the premises, insecticide is applied to kill the insects. Mounting areas and blocks are inspected for nests. People are instructed not to wear perfumes or hair sprays as this will attract bees. People should be aware of the possibility of fire ants, yellow jackets, bees, wasps, and hornets. If ants are on a person quick action must be taken to remove them. Clothes and shoes may need to be removed to ensure all ants are found. An anti-itching cream (for ant stings) or bee sting gel can be applied to ease the sting. If a person is stung by a bee or ant, determine immediately if they are allergic to bee or ant stings. An allergic reaction requires immediate medical attention. A person who is allergic to bees often carries a bee allergy kit. If so, check the emergency information and respond accordingly. If the person stung is a participant, the appropriate caretaker is advised of the sting so that the person can be monitored. An incident report is completed.

Copperheads, Rattlesnakes, and Cottonmouth Information: Copperheads are a copper or orange colored snake with a triangular head and a patterned skin. Rattlesnakes are gray/brown and black and typically have a triangular head with a diamond pattern on their skin. Cottonmouths are a brown colored snake usually found around water. Most snakes are usually found under rocks or in heavy foliage. They are typically found on trails in the woods or near ponds. They can be under hay or hiding in a stall under shavings.

Poisonous Snake Mitigation: Care is taken to ensure that grasses and underbrush do not get too tall around the arenas, barn, and trails as this would attract more snakes. Also, since a high rodent population would attract snakes, GFREC has barn cats that help to control the rodent issue, thus attracting fewer snakes. If anyone comes into contact and is bitten by a snake they would be immediately taken to the hospital to treat the bite. If a horse is bitten the veterinarian should be called immediately.

Disasters

Inclement Weather: Severe winds, hurricanes, ice/snow storms, tornado and thunderstorms

- If a storm is approaching and there are high winds and/or thunder and lightning, or it is sleeting/snowing/freezing rain and there is a possibility of slick roads, dismount all participants immediately and return horses to the pastures.
- Personnel will untack all horses in case of hurricane, high winds or thunderstorm and turn them out in the pastures. Participants, volunteers, and staff are not to be in barn aisle or stalls during a thunderstorm.
- If severe weather includes high winds and possibility of tornado, everyone should go into the GFREC's Lounge, staying away from windows and sitting Indian style on the floor. If they cannot get into the lounge they should go to a neighboring house for shelter.
- In the case of ice/snow, lessons should be canceled and rescheduled.

Fire:

- Remove all riders, volunteers, and staff from danger. Report the Fire! Release the horses if they are in the barn.
- If a class is in session, the instructor will be responsible for dismounting the riders and directing everyone to a safe area.
- Designate someone to call the fire department at 911. Stay on the line and give directions as outlined on the list above the phone on the wall. If you delay this step, the fire may consume the whole stable before the fire department arrives.
- If a horse does not want to leave its paddock, talk quietly to reassure the horse. It may be necessary to cover the horse's eyes with a shirt/cloth/jacket. If possible, release the horse into the adjacent paddock through the paddock gate rather than opening the gate to freedom.

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- If the horse is unmanageable and you are unable to get the horse out of the paddock, leave the pasture gate open and move to the next horse.
- Be aware that once the horse is outside of the paddock, he may want to run back in for security. Shut gates to the barn paddock once horses are out if safely possible.
- Loose horses can pose a safety hazard for arriving emergency equipment so try to contain them if possible.
- If by chance we are involved with a forest fire the safest place to put the horses is into a dirt paddock or arena as there will be nothing for the fire to burn there. The arena would likely be the best place. Or consider writing our contact on them and turning them loose. Markers are with the Equine first aid kit.

Aid the Fire Department's Arrival

- Clear roads for easy access
- Make sure parked cars are not in the way of the fire trucks.

Control the Fire

- Use fire extinguisher located in the lounge or isle of the barn. Water buckets can also be used.

Simple guidelines for the use of fire extinguishers:

1. Pull the ring pin to free the release handle
 2. Stand at least 5 feet from the fire
 3. Squeeze the release handle, aiming the discharge at the base of the flame
 4. If the burning material splatters, back away from the fire and sweep the stream of the extinguisher from side to side
- Wet blankets and sand can be used to try to smother a fire.
 - DO NOT use water on an electrical fire!!

Expect where the Fire Department will come:

- Have someone meet the fire department at the end of the road, and driveway, and direct them to the fire.
- **Remember: NO ONE should endanger themselves in order to attempt to put out the fire or to remove horses from a burning barn.

Equipment:

- Power equipment (such as the tractor, lawn mower, Dingo, four-wheeler, etc.) must only be used by trained personnel. Volunteers, participants, and staff may not climb, play, ride, or engage in the use of these items.

Injuries to participants, volunteers, visitors

- If anyone is injured while on the premises of GFREC, appropriate medical action will be carried out (see emergency info section concerned with rider falls). Incident reports are filled out for any injury or near injury.

Dangerous Items:

Potentially dangerous items include medicine, poisons, needles and syringes, cleaners, gas, etc. Only authorized personnel have access to most of these items. In order to insure safety, all of these items are kept in the following areas.

- Medicines and syringes are kept in the first aid kits, in the cabinet in the bathroom.
- Poisons, paints, gas, cleaners, etc. are kept in the trailer storage area behind the barn or in the barn out of reach of most participants.
- All areas of the hay storage, barn loft, tractor storage and office are off-limits to the participants of the Strides of Strength programs unless otherwise determined by staff.

Man-made Hazards

Barn Loft, Hay Storage, Tractor Storage, Farm Equipment

The Barn Loft, Hay Storage, Tractor Storage, Farm Equipment are all areas that contain either hazardous materials, or hazardous equipment. Children playing in the hay area, or tractor storage areas could be injured by falling or moving objects or by falling from objects. The tractor storage area also contains supplies such as gas, paint, cleaners, etc. which are considered poisonous and dangerous.

Teachers, parents, volunteers, and staff are all made aware of these locations and are asked to make sure participants are not allowed in these areas. These areas are not secured so close attention should be paid to participants near those areas. The tractor shed area is far away from riding lessons and most other center activities. Participants of the program should not be left unattended in the barn area.

Conduct of Personnel and Participants

Strides of Strength Therapeutic Riding, Inc.
2717 Gaston Farm Rd, Chester, SC 29706
StridesofStrength.org
Email: Beth.Gaston@StridesofStrength.org
803-374-6255

We strive to provide a comprehensive therapeutic equine program utilizing horses to facilitate growth, learning, and healing. Our population includes children and adults with mental, physical, emotional, and functional disabilities.



- Each individual involved with Strides of Strength is expected to show respect for the rights and person of all participants both human and equine. If you witness an act of abuse either physically or verbally, please report the incident and the circumstances to the Instructor/Director.
- The possession or use of drugs or unauthorized alcohol on the premises of Gaston Farm Road Equestrian Center is strictly prohibited. Anyone found on the premises in possession of or using any illegal substance will be asked to leave the premises immediately and may be barred from center activities pending a hearing with the Board of Directors. (Alcohol may be served during fundraisers or events, per staff approval.)
- All personnel and participants are expected to follow Strides of Strength safety procedures. Failure to do so can result in the loss of riding privileges for participants. Any volunteer or paid personnel not in compliance with safety procedures will meet with the Board of Directors before being allowed to continue with the program. If you observe an instance of unsafe practice, please inform the Director.
- All volunteers will sign a confidentiality agreement concerning divulging any information pertaining to a participant. Personnel shall keep participant information contained and confidential and will only provide relevant information to the volunteers.

Strides of Strength staff retain the right to dismiss any individual or group from center activities and/or the premises at any time due to distracting behavior or behavior that could result in unsafe conditions for participants, staff, guests, or volunteers.

Confidentiality Policy

All medical and personal information concerning participants and personnel is confidential and kept in a locked area. It is expected that all persons affiliated with Strides of Strength will respect the confidentiality rights of participants and personnel. All volunteers will sign a confidentiality statement.

Volunteers are made aware of confidentiality issues in the following manner:

- Confidentiality issues are reviewed with volunteers during volunteer training.
- The volunteer training manual states: "Respect the rights, dignity, and privacy of the participant."
- All Volunteers are required to sign a confidentiality statement. The requirement of signing a confidentiality statement illustrates the seriousness of the issue to the volunteers.
- Volunteers do not have access to participants files and only pertinent information is shared with volunteers (information that is necessary for volunteers to perform their duties effectively.)
- Participants and guardians are made aware that information about their disability may be provided to volunteers.

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