



Pony Pals Therapeutic Riding Association
Where Riders are UNLimited!

Volunteer Guidelines

First and foremost: Thank you for choosing to take time out of your life to help enrich the lives of others!

Without volunteers such as yourself, such worthwhile programs wouldn't be possible. The children who ride here anticipate their sessions all week long- it's a real highlight! For many children, this is one of the few therapies which is considered fun! There are so many ways that you can contribute as a volunteer and help change the life of one of our amazing riders!

- Help out in the arena – sidewalking, leading, maintenance and coach assisting are various ways you can help. We also need people to help set up the arena each day.
- Care of the ponies and Horses- grooming, tacking up, cleaning their stalls and paddocks. This is a daily task – we require help whether there are riders here or not!
- Facility maintenance is endless – we always appreciate help with repairs, barn tidying, lounge upkeep and gardening

There are many benefits to therapeutic riding, listed here are some of the main ones:

Psychological Benefits:

- General sense of well-being
- Improved self-confidence
- Emotional control and self-discipline

Social Benefits:

- Friendship with the horse and volunteers
- Development of respect and love for the animals
- Increased experiences

Physical Benefits:

- Improved balance
- Strengthened muscles & improved tone
- Improved coordination, faster reflexes, and better motor planning
- Sensory integration

Educational Benefits:

- Sequencing, patterning and motor planning
- Improved eye-hand coordination and visual spatial perception

Volunteer Requirements

- Please be on time. It is important that the horse be ready so the class can start on time. We start to groom & tack up the horses ½ hour before the lessons start, so that the horse can “warm up” at the walk in the arena before the rider mounts.
- The objective of the riding program is to provide a safe, therapeutic and recreational riding lesson for the rider. Volunteers are an important component to ensure that the rider's needs are met. Therefore, if you know you will not be able to come to volunteer for a class, please phone the office at 604-590-0097 or email info@ponypals.org as soon as possible. This way, the office will be able to find another volunteer to come in for that class. If you have questions or concerns regarding your volunteer service, please speak to the Volunteer Coordinator. We value your input and wish to make your volunteer experience fun and rewarding.

When You Arrive

- If you have not already done so, you will be asked to complete a Volunteer Application form, a Waiver, and sign a confidentiality Form and submit it to the volunteer coordinator.
- Sign in when you come & put on your name tag & grab a dry erase pen.

Clothing

- Due to the nature of riding activities, please wear comfortable clothes which you do not mind getting dirty.
- Avoid wearing loose scarves or anything that dangles and could get caught.
- Keep jewelry to a minimum (e.g., no dangling earrings, rings, bracelets, or necklaces).
- Do not wear perfume as it attracts stinging insects, also, some riders may be allergic to the scent.
- **Wear hard shoes or boots to protect your toes (no sandals or open-toed shoes).**
- Gloves are recommended, especially in winter (wear gloves rather than mitts because they allow for a better grip). If you are leading a horse, gloves are mandatory for personal safety.
- Lock all valuables in your car.

General Safety and Barn Rules

- Absolutely no smoking on site.
- No running or shouting in the stable area, be calm and quiet around the horses.
- No photographs are permitted without permission from the instructor. Some riders do not have photo releases, and some horses may be frightened of cameras.
- No pets allowed on site please leave your dogs at home.
Never approach a horse directly from behind, always approach from the side where the horse can see you.
- WE NEVER GO BEHIND THE HORSES AT PONY PALS!
- Always keep a hand on the horse's body when you work around him, so he knows you are there.
- When there are horses in the aisle-way, riders should wear helmets.

Volunteer Description

- If you are unfamiliar with catching a horse, please ask for help from your instructor or a more experienced volunteer. They will be happy to help you with the proper procedure.
- If the horse's hind quarters are facing you when you walk to him either in his stall or in the field, get his attention by speaking to him before approaching him. Wait for him to turn to face you.
- Let him know you are there; he may get startled if he does not see you coming.
- When putting on the halter, stand on the left side facing the same direction as the horse.
- Make sure the halter is not fastened too tight or too loose- it should be just below the "cheek bones" of his face.
- Always use a lead rope when leading a horse anywhere. Never coil the lead rope around your hand. Never lead by the halter alone.
- When leading the horse out of the stall, make sure the stall door is open completely, and the bolt is drawn back so not to jab the horse.

The Stable Area

- Use ties provided in stalls for grooming and tacking
- If you are in doubt, please ask a PPTRA staff member.

Grooming the Horse

- At the start of your volunteer shift, please grab a clean grooming kit – rubber curry comb, dandy brush, body brush, hoof pick.

Hoof Pick

- Pick up each foot in turn as demonstrated by the instructor.
- Start with the near fore (left front), and then to the near hind (left hind), working your way around.
- Use the point of the pick to remove any material which may be lodged in it, working downwards from the heel towards the toe, working this way there is no risk of the pick penetrating the soft parts of the frog.
- If you feel unsure or uncomfortable about cleaning the feet, please ask for clarification or ask then instructor or another volunteer to do it for you.

Rubber Curry Comb

- Used on neck & body only to loosen caked mud, manure etc., and to bring dirt and dust up to the surface of the coat.
- Can also be used to dislodge dirt from other brushes by rubbing the two together.
- Start behind the ears (the poll) on the near side (left) and work to the tail using small circular motions with the lie on the hair.

Dandy Brush

- Used after the curry comb to remove any dirt and mud that was loosened after currying.
- Begin at the poll on the near side and work towards the tail.
- Use short strokes, with a flicking motion to dislodge the dirt.
- Used only on the neck and body of the horse, not on the legs, face, mane, or tail.

Body Brush

- The short, close set hairs of the brush reach right through the coat of the skin.
- Start at the poll, using firm smooth strokes with the lie of the hair to give the coat a final polish, and remove any remaining dust.
- May be used on the entire body; including legs, face, and mane, ensuring that the hocks, heels, and elbows are free of caked dirt.

A few considerations when grooming:

- Grooming should be done in a quiet manner; aggressiveness at this point may upset the horse for the lesson.
- Never make sudden movements around the horse, especially his head. When walking around the horse, never step over the rope that he is tied with.
- If there is enough time to give the horse a thorough grooming using the above procedure, please do so. However, if time is limited, at least make sure the following areas are given attention:
 1. clean the saddle and girth area, and the horses neck and face.
 2. pick out the feet, removing stones are other foreign matter
 3. please do not brush the tail – excessive brushing may cause the hairs to split and fall out

Tacking (Saddling up the Horse)

- First to go on the horse's back is the saddle blanket.
- Make sure all the hairs are smoothed down under the blanket by placing the blanket further up the neck than necessary, then sliding it back into the proper position.
- The blanket is in the proper position when it almost full covers the horse's withers. Make sure the blanket is lying evenly on both sides of the horse.
- Next, when necessary, place a gel pad or bump pad over the saddle blanket. Stand on the near (left) side of the horse and place the saddle down lightly on the horse's back.
- The saddle is in the proper position when almost covering the withers.
- Do not leave the saddle unattended without the girth being attached. If the horse moves, the saddle may fall off and break.
- After the saddle is set properly on the back, check that all is lying flat and smooth underneath the flaps on both sides.
- To attach the girth. There are straps (billets) which the girth is buckled to. Please be gentle and smooth with this. The instructor will tighten the girth before the rider mounts.
- Please knot the end of the reins (called the bight) onto the neckstrap so they don't dangle.

Bridling

- Your instructor or volunteer coordinator will teach you how to bridle correctly for each individual horse.
- If you are not comfortable with bridling, please always ask for help.

In The Class

Leader:

- The sole responsibility of the leader is to maintain proper control of the horse. The leader must help in guiding the horse without making the rider feel that he or she is simply a passenger. Also, the leader must anticipate problems and act in such a way as to avoid them. Listening closely to the coach will alleviate most problems.
- The leader should lead the horse from the near (left) side at a point between the horse's head and the point of the shoulder. If you have side-walkers, remember to give them room between the horse and the wall.
- Hold your lead rope over the tape markings. Remember; never wrap the lead rope around your hand, as it may be difficult to free your hand in the case of an emergency.
- Remember not to drag the horse around the arena. Encourage the horse with your voice and encourage the rider to use his or her voice and legs. Never poke a horse in the rib. Most horses walk as fast as their leader is going, so try to keep an even pace so that the rider gets the full benefit of the horse's movement.
- The instructor will tell the rider what to do with the horse. The leader's job is to assist the rider carrying out these instructions safely and while giving the rider every opportunity to do as much as possible. It is important to allow riders to do as much as they can for themselves, even if it takes a bit longer.
- When you must halt, stop movement & apply light pressure on the lead shank back towards the horse's chest until the horse halts, then stand in front of the horse to discourage him from walking around.
- Avoid sharp turns and sudden starts and stops as it may unseat the rider.

In the Mounting Block

- After the horse is tacked, enter the arena and lead the horse around. The instructor will call you when the rider is ready to mount. If you are leading the horse while another rider is mounting, please stay away from the mounting area.
- If you are leading the horse, it is your responsibility to lead the horse through the mounting block and hold him while the rider mounts. This is a crucial time, and it is important that all safety procedures and instructions from the instructor are followed.
- Lead the horse into the mounting block using a wide turn, so the horse does not bump himself, as you enter, turn to face the horse and lead him slowly.
- Hold the horse as still as possible; One hand on each rein, body facing the horse's chest but slightly off-center to him.
- After the rider is mounted, you can move out of the mounting block area and halt the horse. At this point, the instructor will do the final tack check.

Sidewalker

- The sidewalker's job is as important as the horse's handler. Sidewalkers walk beside the horse and rider, ready to steady the rider if necessary. However since the duties of the sidewalker vary greatly with each student, the instructor will inform the sidewalker of a particular student's requirements.
- At the start of the class, keep the rider interested and occupied until all riders are mounted and the class is ready to begin.
- If you are the only side walker for that rider, you should walk on the horse's right side so that both sides of the horse are covered.
- Walk next to the rider's hip facing forward. Depending on the amount of support the rider needs, you may grasp the knee roll and provide support if needed to the rider's lower leg. Some riders are assisted in keeping their heels down by gently holding the back of the heel. The instructor will let you know which hold is needed.
- Remind the rider to pay attention to the instructor. You may repeat or reinforce the instructor's directions and help your rider carry them out, but try not to encourage chatting. Also, allow the rider to do as much as possible by him or herself rather than the sidewalker doing all the reaching out other activities.
- Most riders will wear a safety belt; however, this belt should not be used for the sidewalker to hold on to, as it may pull the rider off balance.
- Do not rest your elbow on the horse's back, this is where the horse's kidneys are located and they are sensitive in this area.

In the Arena – Some Guidelines to Follow:

- Stay at least one horse's length behind the horse in front of you. If you find yourself getting too close, alert the rider, and either turn across the arena, or walk a large circle. If you need to pass another horse, do so on the inside and call "passing" in a loud voice.
- Avoid small circles and sharp turns.
- ALWAYS walk in front of the horse
- If you need to stop while other riders continue, bring the horse to the middle of the arena.
- We encourage volunteers to get to know their riders; it serves as social interaction for both riders and volunteers. However, please keep conversation limited to before and after the actual lesson. During the lesson, the rider needs to focus on the instructor and the activities of the class.
- If you see another rider who may be slipping off the saddle or having difficulties, alert the leader of that horse and the instructor immediately.
- During all exercises, it is important to allow the rider to control the horse as much as possible. The rider should be doing the steering as well as trying to encourage the horse move on.
- Falls from horses can happen. If a rider has fallen off, halt immediately and follow the instructor's commands.
- If asked to turn a horse loose, or unclip them, the leader must stay with the horse, ready to take control of the horse if necessary.
- At the end of class, all horses should line up to await dismounting by the instructor. The rider should not dismount without being supervised by the instructor. Make sure there is plenty of space between you and the next horse.
- When the rider is preparing to dismount, make sure his foot is free of the stirrups on both sides. Stirrups should be run up (often with the help of the rider) after the rider dismounts. Make sure that the rider walks in front of the horse when running up the stirrups on both sides.
- Once your rider has been dismounted, please wait for the instructor to tell you when you may exit the arena. Exit the arena through the front gate.

After the lesson

- Back in the barn, your rider may help you un-tack and groom the horse
- To un-tack the horse remove bridle first and re halter.
- All tack should be put back on the hanger.
 - Any treats that the volunteers or riders bring are greatly appreciated & go in the horses bucket.

In an Emergency**If there is an emergency while a lesson is in session:**

- All horses will be halted
- All leaders will position themselves in front of the horses
- All sidewalkers will stabilize their riders
- The instructor will supervise dismounting procedures verbally or personally.
- If circumstances call for the arena to be evacuated, the riders will be escorted out first by their volunteers (if used) and the horses will be removed by their leaders to an appropriate place, after the riders are out of danger.
- The instructor will determine if medical personnel are required and will request assistance in contacting specific personal.

Please note that this plan may need to be modified due to the individual circumstances of each situation.

In Case of Fire:

- Place lead rope around horse's neck and lead them to the nearest doorway, away from the fire
- Horses reluctant to lead should have their heads covered with jackets, towels, etc.

In Case of Fire While Riders are in the Arena:

- Ask them to halt, face the center and dismount riders.
- Remain calm.
- Lead horses through arena door.
- Take riders out through the arena door to the outside
- Carry riders who are unable to walk

Additional Emergency Information:

- Emergency numbers and emergency fire plans are posted in the barn, make sure you are aware of where they are and familiar with them.
- Know the location of the emergency first aid kits and fire extinguishers.

Points to Remember

- you are a very valuable member of Pony Pals team. The instructors greatly appreciate your input and feedback on the riders, horses, safety, program procedures and content. With your support, our program gets better each session and meets the needs of our riders more effectively.
- Volunteers are encouraged to seek information or assistance whenever they are unsure of the procedure. Remember, there are no stupid or silly questions, and it's better to be safe than sorry.
- If you want more information on therapeutic riding and you have internet access, check out the following sites:

Again we thank you for choosing to volunteer with us. We hope you will enjoy working with the riders and the horses and that it will be a worthwhile and valuable experience for you.

