

## **PARENT AND RIDER INFORMATION GUIDE**



**Dear future Bluff and Ridge Equine Assisted Therapies Family,**

We look forward to working with you and your future participant. We are excited to meet and get to know your family, as you are now part of ours!

Please READ and keep this information for future reference. Many of the rules set forth are standards established by the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship, Int'l (PATH) which, as a member center, we are required to enforce.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Bluff and Ridge Equine-Assisted Therapies' (Bluff and Ridge) mission is to provide equine-assisted services to children and adults with disabilities and special needs, while supporting the physical, mental, and emotional health of each individual in their interactions with horses and staff. Participants can benefit tremendously by the interaction with our equines. In addition they will have fun. In order for our instructors, equine specialists and volunteers to deliver superior service, we need to have all visitors, parents, siblings and friends follow the guidelines set forth herein. These guidelines are meant to provide every opportunity to maximize the benefit of enrolling in one of our sessions.

### **CHECKING IN**

Please arrive on time but not significantly earlier than the lesson is scheduled for (5-10 minutes early is great!). We do not allow child drop-off. Parents

must remain with their child. Check in at the indoor arena's designated area. If no staff is on hand to greet you, please wait there until your scheduled time.

**IF YOU ARE LATE:** A text or phone call is helpful to let us know you are running late. Keep in mind that lessons are scheduled for a specific timeframe, with other lessons scheduled before and after. We cannot make up the time lost if you are late for a lesson.

Do not allow children to play on or near the mounting ramp, arena fencing, arena or barn doors at any time.

Parents and siblings utilizing the viewing room by the indoor arena must remain there for the duration of the lesson and not wander or play in the arena or areas around the buildings. Noise and commotion in and around the arena will disturb the horses and disrupt the lesson.

Parents and guests not involved in the lesson are asked to remain either in their vehicles, or in the viewing room. This is for safety reasons.

Unless arranged with the instructor in advance, we find it best for the riders if family members, parents and friends do not become part of the lesson and cause undue distractions. You are welcome to observe the rider.

Please keep in mind that Bluff and Ridge operates on property with a residency; be respectful of the property and the tenant's privacy.

### **POLICIES RELATED TO LESSONS**

No participant will be allowed to start a session until all fees are paid and all forms are completed and on file with Bluff and Ridge. Riders receiving outside aid must submit confirmation that lessons and fees have been approved by the provider agency. A Bluff and Ridge instructor will confirm class times with you in advance of each session.

Riders are expected to report for every lesson as scheduled. Occasionally, even with an indoor arena, conditions may be unsafe for mounted lessons. In these cases, Bluff and Ridge staff may utilize alternative methods including ground lessons. Please be aware that the lesson schedule does not provide for make-up slots. In cases where a rider must miss a lesson, it will not be possible for Bluff and Ridge to reschedule. Missed lessons are non-refundable. The need to miss a lesson should be reported to Bluff and Ridge as far in advance as possible.

**Extreme Weather Conditions:** At staff discretion, based on safety for participants, volunteers, and staff, lessons may be cancelled. Makeup lessons for weather related closures are not typically available.

**Missed lessons:** A lesson missed affects everyone; the participant's progress; volunteer scheduling; staff hours; and equine availability. We request notice 24 hours in advance if a participant is not going to attend a scheduled lesson. Missed lessons will be charged at the normal rate and there will be no refunds, credits, or makeup lessons for missed lessons.

## **ATTIRE**

**HELMET:** All riders must wear an ASTM-approved riding helmet when working on the ground with any horse including grooming, leading, and tacking; and when mounted. The helmet must be securely fastened.

**FOOTWEAR:** Close-toed shoes or boots, worn with socks, are required! (NO CLOGS, JELLIES, SANDALS, OR FLIP FLOPS!). All participants who expect to be around the horses, should wear substantial footwear (paddock boots or work boots are preferred.) Never come to the arena in open-toed shoes, sandals, clogs or flip-flops.

**CLOTHING:** Although it is tempting for participants to wear shorts in warmer weather, most often they will be more comfortable in a pair of light jeans, slacks or leggings. It is often much cooler in the indoor arena than it is outside in the sunshine so bring an appropriate jacket.

## **TRANSPORTATION TO AND FROM THE BARN**

Due to insurance concerns, Bluff and Ridge cannot provide transportation to or from the barn. Please do not request rides from any staff member or volunteer while they are fulfilling service hours at Bluff and Ridge.

## **RIDER PARTICIPATION**

Recognizing that equine related activities hold inherent risks, all new and returning participants will be evaluated by a PATH (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International) Certified Instructor to ensure a safe and beneficial experience. Returning participants will be re-evaluated each year or as necessary for changes in medical, physical, cognitive, and behavioral status. Additionally it is the responsibility of the adult participant, or of the participant's parent or guardian to keep Bluff and Ridge apprised of

any changes in the participant's medical, physical, mental, or behavioral status during the course of the lesson season.

Due to the nature of our programming, we adhere to a 160 to 180-lb weight limit for mounted instruction. Participants exceeding the weight limit are welcome to participate in unmounted horsemanship instruction. (see "Weight Considerations" below).

### **CONTRAINDICATIONS**

Horseback riding is contraindicated for some conditions/individuals. Bluff and Ridge follows the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International's (PATH) guidelines for precautions/contraindications for physical restrictions of riding. You can see the PATH guidelines on the PATH website ([www.pathintl.org](http://www.pathintl.org)).

*Riders at Bluff and Ridge must have some trunk control and must be able to sit up without assistance for extended periods of time.*

### **WEIGHT CONSIDERATIONS**

Our horses are our most critical asset! The health, age and carrying ability are factors we consider when matching horses and participants. The maximum weights are listed below, but decisions regarding participation will be based on the availability of a suitable horse relative to the height, weight, cognition, and balance of the participant. The results of a risk/benefit analysis will also be considered. Final decisions regarding participation will be made by the Bluff and Ridge Executive Director.

Rider weight is also a safety concern for several reasons. Our staff and volunteers are responsible for assisting riders with mounting, dismounting, and emergency dismounts. Bluff and Ridge does not provide a mechanized lift for mounting and dismounting, therefore riders must be able to stand briefly with assistance for mounting and dismounting.

Maximum upper weight limits for riders in the Bluff and Ridge program are:

- 180 lbs. For an independent rider, or a rider who needs a leader only, or a leader and spotter only
- 160 lbs. For a rider who needs a leader and 1-2 side walkers

Age restrictions for riders:

- Children must be at least 4 years of age

- Children under the age of 5 will require a leader and at least one side walker
- Children will not ride independently until they are at least 7 years

### **BLUFF AND RIDGE BARN RULES**

***ATTENTION!*** The following rules apply to all program participants, staff members, volunteers, and anyone who visits Bluff and Ridge. Riders, siblings, friends and parents are expected to follow barn safety rules. These rules are designed to insure safety, a primary concern here at Bluff and Ridge. Please help us to enforce these rules!

- No abusive, threatening, or violent behavior towards people or animals will be tolerated on Bluff and Ridge premises.
- Alcohol and illegal drug use is prohibited on the Bluff and Ridge grounds.
- Absolutely NO smoking or use of open flames is permitted in the barn, or anywhere in the Bluff and Ridge working areas.
- There will be no running, jumping, screaming, or yelling in the arena or around the horses.
- No one is permitted in the barn, or in the adjacent paddocks and pastures, unless a Bluff and Ridge staff member or approved volunteer is present on the premises.
- No one may enter a pasture containing horses unless accompanied by a staff member or approved volunteer.
- No one is allowed to handle program horses, feed, or pet horses, unless supervised by a staff member or approved volunteer.
- No one may ride a program horse unless supervised by a staff member or approved volunteer.
- No person will be permitted to participant in any ground or mounted lesson with a program horse until s/he has submitted to Bluff and Ridge a completely processed set of the required forms.
- All riders must wear an ASTM-approved helmet while mounted and when working with horses.
- All mounted participants will use safety stirrups while mounted, and wear securely fastened, close-toed, hard-soled shoes, preferably with a short block-style heel.
- No one may bring a non-program horse onto the Bluff and Ridge premises without prior permission from the Bluff and Ridge Executive Director.

- Children on the Bluff and Ridge premises must be supervised at all times.
- Dogs, other than official service dogs, are not permitted on the Bluff and Ridge premises. Official service dogs will not be permitted to accompany a rider while mounted, and must remain in control of a family member or confined to a vehicle.
- All participants are to wait at the Reception Area with a parent/guardian until a volunteer or instructor comes to escort them to the mounting area. No participant will be left unattended before or after their lesson. Parents/Guardians must accompany the participant or other young guests to the bathroom area.
- The only people who are to be in the mounting area are the instructors, volunteers and riders that are getting ready to ride in current lesson.
- If you need to talk to the Riding Instructor about medical or physical problems which may have a safety implication for the current lesson, please do so before the mounting phase of the lesson gets started.
- Parents/guardians should stay on the premises while the rider is riding. If you have to leave the premises during the lesson time you are required to leave a number where Bluff and Ridge can contact you in case of an emergency. Leave your name and phone number with the Instructor.

### **ADDITIONAL SAFETY-RELATED REQUIREMENTS**

Report all accidents, injuries, or hazardous conditions to a staff member immediately or as soon as possible.

### **DISCIPLINARY POLICY**

Bluff and Ridge's Riding Instructors have the right to discipline a rider, parent/guardian, and/or volunteer Bluff and Ridge's 3-step disciplinary policy has been developed to ensure a safe and conducive environment for all involved in our therapeutic riding program. However, when any offense is to such a degree that the health and/or safety of the rider, volunteer, instructor, or equine is endangered, immediate dismissal from the program may be warranted.

1. First offense a documented verbal warning. If this is a rider, he or she will be removed from the horse and will be returned to the oversight of their parent/guardian. They may observe the remainder of the lesson or leave the premises.

2. Second offense a written warning. If a rider, he or she will be dismissed from the riding lesson for that day.
3. Third offense is final action. The rider will be removed from horse and dropped from the Bluff and Ridge program.

Likewise, if the offender is a parent, guardian or volunteer, they will follow the same disciplinary policy and will be dropped from the program on the third offense. In the case of a parent or guardian this dismissal will include the rider.

Examples of reasons for disciplinary actions: disruption to class, behavior problems that are unacceptable or unsafe (ie; kicking, biting, spitting, pulling hair, hitting), disrespect to instructor and/or volunteers, failure to follow program stated policies, rules, instructions, etc.

### **DENIAL OF SERVICES**

Bluff and Ridge reserves the right to deny services to any individual based upon concerns for the applicant's safety and/or the safety of the horses, volunteers, staff, property owners, or for other reasons in accordance with PATH operating center guidelines. Clients of BLUFF AND RIDGE shall have no history of inappropriate behavior with fire, or any tendencies or history of abuse or violence directed toward other people or animals.

### **BLUFF AND RIDGE POLICY FOR THE DISCHARGE OF PARTICIPANTS**

Riders at Bluff and Ridge may be asked to leave the program for a number of reasons, including, but not limited to:

1. The development of a contraindicated condition or the deterioration of a condition to the point that therapeutic riding is no longer beneficial, or could be harmful to the rider, or where safety for the rider or others has become a concern.
2. Weight gain above the maximums stated. Bluff and Ridge reserves the right to weigh riders, onsite, in a discreet, private manner on a digital scale.
3. Failure to complete and sign all required forms for the current riding season.
4. A display of fire-starting, threatening behavior, animal abuse, the abuse of children or adults, verbal abuse of volunteers or others, alcohol or drug use on the Bluff and Ridge grounds, or behavior that is disruptive for the normal functioning of the program.
5. Frequent missed lessons without advance notification.

6. Mainstreaming of an advanced independent rider whose riding has progressed beyond the ability of our program horses.

### **OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP SUPPORT BLUFF AND RIDGE**

**FUND RAISING:** Interested individuals are welcome to form and/or chair a committee to help meet the financial needs of Bluff and Ridge. Our riders pay approximately \$35.00 a lesson but it costs Bluff and Ridge approximately \$75.00 in manpower and assets for each rider's lesson. We have to fundraise or find donors for the rest of these funds.

**SPONSOR A HORSE:** A monthly sponsorship of one Bluff and Ridge horse costs \$175/month and covers most of the cost of feed, supplements, and farrier services.

**CORPORATE CHALLENGE:** Identify and enlist corporations, businesses, and interested groups willing to participate in/support our fundraising events or other equine-related event.

**CORPORATE CAMPAIGN:** Identify and solicit corporations and small businesses for general contributions and assist in follow up and recognition of corporate donors.

**CLUBS & ORGANIZATIONS:** Identify and cultivate relationships with clubs and organizations in the community willing to offer financial assistance and/or volunteers.

**HORSE CLUBS:** Contact horse clubs for funding, tack donations, etc. Establish relationships with large horse clubs for club- sponsored special events benefiting Bluff and Ridge.

**FOUNDATIONS & GRANTS:** Help identify foundations or grants with a potential for donating to Bluff and Ridge.

**GIFTS IN KIND:** Contact vendors to donate needed items, thereby reducing Bluff and Ridge budgeted expenses. The Bluff and Ridge Again Tack Shop is always in need of quality new and used tack, riding apparel, and equine-themed décor.

**ORGANIZE SPECIAL SOCIALS:** Help raise money, coordinate food, organize volunteers, obtain equipment, make posters, and arrange publicity or entertainment for various occasions.



**LONG RANGE PLANNING:** Provide your insight and expertise to promote a financially successful program for the next decade. Help identify possible successful special events and ways of balancing activity levels more evenly. Identify new rider groups and evaluate marketing and communications.

**PUBLIC RELATIONS / MARKETNG:** Submit periodic press releases as needed. Obtain media coverage, striving for higher community visibility. Assist in writing proposals and other written materials. Assist in developing and delivering presentations to various clubs and civic organizations.

**PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT:** Solicit new clients, both individuals and organizations, to maximize the utilization of the program and to help create community awareness. Provide support to riders and parents to assist in the communication of our growing organization.

**RECRUIT AND MANAGE VOLUNTEERS:** Arrange and oversee volunteer support for the riding program, special events, and office needs. Coordinate ongoing training for current volunteers. Establish contacts with various groups interested in Bluff and Ridge.

**OFFICE HELP:** Join a group of volunteers at the Bluff and Ridge Reception Center to greet participants and their families, oversee volunteer sign-in and sign-out, and send out Birthday cards to volunteers and riders.

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** take pictures at lessons, all special events and social events.