



Health, Hope, Healing – Changing Lives  
One Hoofbeat at a Time

## Volunteer Manual

Bluff & Ridge Equine Assisted Equine Therapies  
Monroe County

Updated January 2024

## WELCOME

**Mission:** The mission of Bluff & Ridge Equine-Assisted Therapies, Inc., (Bluff & Ridge) is to provide equine-assisted services and therapeutic horsemanship programs to children and adults with disabilities and special needs, while supporting the physical, mental, and emotional health of each individual.

**Welcome to the BLUFF & RIDGE Volunteer Program!** The riders, horses, and instructors are very grateful that you have decided to share some of your valuable time with us. Working together with other volunteers, YOU make it possible to provide therapeutic horseback riding for children and adults with disabilities from Monroe County and surrounding areas. A team approach is used to provide active recreational therapeutic riding and an enjoyable, challenging experience.

Bluff & Ridge is a member center of the **Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship, Int'l (PATH)**. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization funded through grants and contributions from individuals and the community, and through participant fees.



## INDEX

HISTORY OF THERAPEUTIC RIDING .....	4
BENEFITS OF HORSE-RELATED ACTIVITIES .....	4
ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS.....	5
PATH CERTIFICATION and MEMBERSHIP.....	5
VOLUNTEERING FOR BLUFF & RIDGE.....	6
TIME COMMITMENT.....	6
BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING.....	6
GENERAL INFORMATION.....	7
EXPECTATIONS OF Bluff & Ridge VOLUNTEERS.....	8
BLUFF & RIDGE HORSES.....	10
VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES.....	11
SIDEWALKER.....	11
HORSE LEADER.....	11
FACILITY MAINTENANCE AND SITE WORK ....	11
SPECIAL EVENTS AND FUND RAISING.....	12
SUPPORT SERVICES.....	12
VOLUNTEER ROUTINE.....	12
PROGRAM INFORMATION.....	13
CLOSING THOUGHTS .....	13
APPENDIX.....	14
Sidewalker Job description.....	14
Horse leader job description.....	16
Basic safety rules.....	17
Emergency Action Plans.....	18
Social Media Policy.....	19
Effective Leading and Sidewalking.....	20
Quick Release Knot.....	22

## **HISTORY OF THERAPEUTIC RIDING**

References to the physical and emotional benefits of horseback riding date back to writings in the 1600's. However, when Liz Hartel of Denmark won the silver medal for dressage at the 1952 Helsinki Olympic Games – despite having paralysis from polio – medical and equine professionals took active notice. It wasn't long before therapeutic riding was being used for rehabilitation in Europe and then in North America. The first centers for therapeutic riding in North America began in the 1960's. The summer of 2023 Baraboo River Equine-Assisted Therapies instructors started sessions in the Tomah area as a pilot program. In September of 2023, Bluff & Ridge Equine Assisted Therapies was incorporated to meet the needs of the Tomah and Monroe County area.

## **BENEFITS OF HORSE-RELATED ACTIVITIES**

Equine-assisted therapies provide a unique and motivating experience, contributing positively to the physical, social and communication skills of people with disabilities.

- **Physical Benefits:**
  - Experiencing the gentle 3-dimensional movement of the horse provides hip and back action that simulates our natural walking gait and cannot be duplicated in a clinical setting. This movement serves to strengthen core body muscles, improve posture and coordination, and increase overall balance and joint mobility.
  - Stimulates the cardiovascular system.
  - Improves gross and fine motor skills.
- **Social Skills:**
  - As the rider learns to control the horse there is a feeling of true accomplishment. This personal achievement translates into improved self-confidence and self-esteem.
  - Developing a meaningful and trusting relationship with the volunteers and horse, can carry over with the person's ability to relate better with other people.
  - Learning how to channel aggressive or hyperactive behavior into a constructive activity.
- **Communication Abilities:**

- The riding experience stimulates language and learning. The rider develops the ability to listen to instructions and communicate directions to the horse.
- Increases ability to follow directions and improves memory utilization.
- Develops sequencing abilities.

## **ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS**

Anyone over 4 years of age with a diagnosed developmental, physical, visual, cognitive, emotional, or social disability, whose condition or predisposition does not contraindicate equine-assisted services is eligible for Bluff & Ridge services.

## **PATH CERTIFICATION and MEMBERSHIP**

Bluff & Ridge is a member center of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship, International (PATH). PATH Intl. is a non-profit international organization whose mission, since its inception in 1969, has been to promote and support equine facilitated activities for individuals with disabilities. Headquartered in Denver, CO with membership all over the globe, PATH Intl. is a professional membership association for individuals in the field of equine assisted activities and therapies--who inspire and enrich the human spirit for individuals with special needs.

PATH Intl. changes and enriches lives by promoting excellence in equine assisted activities through certification of instructors and accreditation of member centers. The association is a global authority, resource and advocate for appreciating the power of the horse to change lives. Through a wide variety of educational resources, the association helps individuals start and maintain successful equine assisted activities and therapies programs for individuals with special needs. With nearly 4,800 certified instructors and equine specialists and 873 member centers around the globe, nearly 8,000 PATH Intl. members help almost 69,000 children and adults--including more than 6,700 veterans and active-duty military personnel. PATH establishes safety standards and teaching techniques for member operating centers and certifies therapeutic riding instructors.

Learn more at: [pathintl.org](http://pathintl.org)

All therapeutic riding instructors at Bluff & Ridge have gone through specialized instruction and certification. Instructor recognition involves testing the potential instructor on equine science and knowledge of different disabilities as the disabilities apply to equine-facilitated activities.

## **VOLUNTEERING FOR BLUFF & RIDGE**

The volunteer experience offered through Bluff & Ridge is as rewarding as it is unique. It is an opportunity to channel individual talents and skills into many volunteer activities. In doing so, you contribute to the process of giving children and adults with special needs one of life's most precious gifts – a feeling of self-worth, accomplishment, and self-esteem! By volunteering, you will learn about various disabilities, horsemanship, and make new friends. You'll gain tremendous satisfaction from watching the participants enjoy contact with horses physically, mentally, and emotionally. You will 'give back to the community' while having fun.

Volunteers come from a wide variety of backgrounds coming together to share their energy; skills; and compassion! Bluff & Ridge requires volunteers to be a minimum of fourteen (14) years old, and those working directly with students and horses must be able to walk a minimum of sixty (60) minutes and jog for brief intervals (usually 30 seconds or less). It is not necessary to have previous experience with horses or individuals with special needs. Children under 14 years of age may volunteer in our Barn Buddy program, with a adult/parent volunteer overseeing them.

## **TIME COMMITMENT**

Time commitments vary depending on the activity. We ask for a minimum of 2-hours per day of volunteering to assist in one complete lesson. Volunteers assigned to assist during a lesson period(s) are asked to commit to an entire 4-week session for the lessons assigned. This provides continuity for the participants.

## **BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING**

- A sense of accomplishment and enjoyment,
- Pleasure in giving of yourself,

- Affection and gratitude from students,
- New friends,
- New skills,
- Physical exercise, and
- An opportunity to make a difference and witness the result.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

A **positive image** of Bluff & Ridge is important in remaining the type of organization that attracts quality volunteers like you and helps us provide exceptional services. A **professional attitude** goes a long way in projecting the upstanding service we wish to be known for.

All volunteers are expected to **work safely** at all times. Experienced volunteers are asked to mentor new volunteers by helping them understand what is required while emphasizing safety.

When signing up for scheduled volunteer time, you are expected to attend at that same time for the entire 4 week session. If a class must be missed, please assist the instructor by arranging for a replacement volunteer. Missing a class without getting a replacement means that a student may not be able to ride. You are important!

Whenever possible, it is beneficial to work with the same participant each time. This saves time explaining what help is needed for that participant for each class and builds relationships. This continuity allows the rider to progress more rapidly. Please fill in any new team members working with you on what types of help the rider needs. This is best done before the participant's session begins. Parents and caregivers are often willing to share insights as well. Time before and after class can be spent getting to know the families.

Please be prompt. Arrive about 20-30 minutes before your volunteer session to sign in, meet with the instructor for any special updates; bring in, groom, and tack the horses; help with any pre-class set up; and help the riders with their helmets while they are waiting.

Clean up after the horses and yourself! Help keep the stables, family room, and restroom neat and clean.

Occasionally, classes may need to be cancelled due to bad weather. An announcement of such cancellations will be made through text message. When in doubt, call (608 343-7740)!

**DRESS CODE.** Clothing should be neat and suitable to working in the arena and stable, and free from holes, rips, and tears. Sturdy, fully enclosed shoes must be worn. No dangling jewelry, and no clothing that makes a distracting noise, should be worn. Keep in mind that horses shed hair, may slobber on you, and the barn is dusty. For safety reasons, pants that are excessively long will not be allowed. Many volunteers wear a sturdy pair of work gloves to protect their hands. Any valuables should be left in your car or at home

As a Bluff & Ridge volunteer you are respected in the community for your dedication and the value of your service. Be proud of your work and show it in your appearance. After you receive a t-shirt (provided after a new volunteer has completed 10 hours of volunteering) you are required to wear it each time you help with sessions.

**PARKING:** Volunteers should park in the gravel area beside the indoor arena (do not park on the grass please). Please drive slowly while on ranch property (**stay under 15 mph**). Watch for animals and children crossing the roadway.

### **EXPECTATIONS OF BLUFF & RIDGE VOLUNTEERS**

There are many ways you can help Bluff & Ridge carry out its mission. During therapeutic horseback riding lessons, the main jobs are horse leader and sidewalker. You will find detailed descriptions of these volunteer jobs on the following pages. But there are other critical tasks to perform. Volunteers can also clean and maintain tack, do ranch maintenance and groom horses. You don't need equine experience to volunteer for these activities — just a willingness to learn.

And, like any non-profit organization, Bluff & Ridge has many administrative, communications, fundraising, promotional and community-outreach tasks that need to be done. If you have special background or skills in any of these areas, we'd love to have your help!



**The riders and horses all count on Bluff & Ridge volunteers to make the program successful. We depend on you for the 3 C's:**

### **Commitment**

- We need you and count on you, so please show up at your appointed time and place, and please sign in.
- Know the number to call if you need to miss your volunteer assignment and call as early as possible.

### **Confidentiality**

- Rider information is confidential.
- We hope you tell others about what you do here, but never talk about riders in any way that they can be identified unless you have their permission and/or the permission of their parent.

### **Conduct**

- All people and horses will be treated with dignity and respect.
- Read and refer to this handbook.
- Many of our riders are legally vulnerable (someone who is unable to protect themselves from abuse, neglect or exploitation because of a mental or physical impairment). To help assure safety, we require volunteers 18 years and older to complete a background check.
- The vulnerability issue can work both ways; you, as a volunteer can also be vulnerable. Verbal, physical or emotional abuse will not be tolerated and should be reported to an instructor immediately,
- Understand and follow the requests of the instructor without interference.

### **Policy of Drug-Free Awareness**

Bluff & Ridge is committed to a drug-free program. Volunteering while under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol is prohibited and will lead to dismissal from the Volunteer Program. Any suspicions of illegal drug use or use of alcohol by a volunteer should be reported to an instructor. All Bluff & Ridge sites are smoke free and vaping is not allowed.

## **Volunteer Background Checks**

Bluff & Ridge is committed to creating a safe environment for children and adults with special needs. Criminal background checks are one strategy we use to ensure safety for our participants. Bluff & Ridge's policy is to conduct criminal background checks on all adult volunteers and to repeat criminal background checks every 3 years.

To ensure a safe environment while engaging in therapeutic interaction with horses the following expectations are required of all volunteers. Disregarding any one of these expectations will result in a warning, reprimand, or dismissal from the Bluff & Ridge Volunteer Program.

- Safety is to be the top priority, whether grooming, tacking the horses, sidewalking or handling the horses in or outside of sessions.
- Listen to and follow the instructor's directions.
- Follow the posted barn rules which include but are not limited to:
  - No Smoking on Bluff & Ridge /ranch property.
  - No running or yelling.
  - No "horse play."
  - No hand feeding horses.
- Follow Dress Code for personal safety and professionalism.
- Be courteous and work as a team member. This includes:
  - Speak positively about Bluff & Ridge personnel, volunteers, and participants.
  - Understand the role of Sidewalker vs. Horse Handler
  - Ask a question when you don't fully understand what is needed.
  - Arrive in a punctual manner – at least 30 minutes before the scheduled lesson. Contact an appropriate substitute when a conflict arises that would cause unavailability.
  - Clean up after the horse and yourself.
- Physical contact with participants should be kept to a minimum and used only to support an individual in their riding or horsemanship pursuits. (Hugging should NEVER be instigated by a volunteer or staff member).

## **BLUFF & RIDGE HORSES**

We sincerely hope you have a good volunteer experience. Volunteering is a reward unto itself as you are assisting in a larger mission of serving a very

special sector of our community. On occasion, you may be asked to exercise a horse. This could be grazing, walking, working in the round pen or riding. However, there is no guarantee that you will ride a Bluff & Ridge horse during your tenure as a volunteer.

You may see other volunteers riding; they have been selected for a variety of reasons.

Horses are Bluff & Ridge's key assets. Horses may not be visited in their corrals or stalls, brought out for grazing, grooming, riding demonstrations, or health checks, unless such activity is part of a lesson or under the supervision or permission of a Bluff & Ridge instructor, manager or staff member.

No horse shall be disciplined harshly or in an inhumane manner. When facing a behavioral issue (pushiness, nibbling, unwanted grazing), volunteers are to seek direction from a Bluff & Ridge staff member on the proper training techniques.

## **VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES**

**SIDEWALKER:** The primary responsibility of a sidewalker is to ensure the safety of the rider during lessons. It is also the volunteer role that is the most interactive with the rider. Bluff & Ridge tries to provide as independent an experience as possible for each rider. The sidewalker helps the student maintain balance and control by walking beside the rider and using specific holds to keep the rider safe on the horse. The sidewalker helps to interpret the directions given by the riding instructor. They assist with mounting and dismounting the horses. Training is provided (see appendix for more information).

**HORSE LEADER:** This person primarily works with the horses in lessons. The horse leader has developed an adequate degree of horse experience to be responsible for the horse's behavior while a student rides. Sometimes the horse leader leads the horse and at other times, remains within reach of a mounted student who is riding independently. This person also helps with grooming, tacking, mounting, and dismounting, depending on the level of abilities. Training is provided (see appendix for more information).

**FACILITY MAINTENANCE AND SITE WORK:** This includes assisting with painting, minor construction projects, minor repairs, lawn, and garden care, etc. These are great family opportunities. Workdays occur when needed and are announced frequently. If interested in helping in this area, specify on the volunteer application form and you will be contacted.

**SPECIAL EVENTS AND FUND RAISING:** Help is needed to schedule, plan, organize and execute our fund-raising activities. Good at writing or editing? Maybe grant-writing is for you! Love to socialize? Try a seat on our event planning committee (think golf outings, banquets and more!) Got connections? We need ask-people who will reach out for donations, sponsorships, products, and raffle and silent auction items! Is public speaking your thing? You can be a representative to community businesses, groups, and clubs. If you enjoy marketing, we need help with publicity, social media, video-marketing, and pictures. Are you an idea person? You can pursue new ventures like selling pizza coupons, service night at a local restaurant, or ride-a-thon events.

**SUPPORT SERVICES:** These services include word processing, filing, cataloging, data entry, public relations, newsletter preparation and assembly, historian, networking distributing information, and more.

## **VOLUNTEER ROUTINE**

When you first arrive at Bluff & Ridge for your volunteering shift there are some things you need to do:

1. Sign in!!! This is the way we keep track of your hours. Tracking volunteer hours is very important to nonprofits like Bluff & Ridge. Tracking hours helps Bluff & Ridge receive more funding from grants and donors. This enables us to make a bigger impact in our community.
2. Put on your name tag (you will find a name tag display in the office area).
3. Check Lesson Board for your session assignment or for any volunteer jobs.
4. Get started!!
5. End of class/End of day chores.
6. At the end of the day please log out and put your name tag back on the display.

**FIRST DAY:** You will have an orientation with a senior volunteer or Bluff & Ridge staff member. You will learning about the tack room, Lesson Board, grooming, mounting etc. You must be with another volunteer or staff member at all times until you have completed a group orientation session.

**2<sup>nd</sup> TIME – 25 HOURS:** You will be getting comfortable with haltering, leading, grooming, and tacking up and mounting horses in preparation for lessons. You will also take an active role as a “sidewalker”. If anything is unclear, please ask for more assistance! **25+ HOURS:** You may be eligible to lead a horse in lessons. This is based on receiving horse handling instruction and on your comfort/skill level when leading a horse outside of a lesson. It is also important that you act as a helper/model for new volunteers!

### **PROGRAM INFORMATION**

Tomah Program Site Address: 28464 Monarch Avenue, Kendall, WI 54638

Mailing Address: 28464 Monarch Avenue, Kendall, WI 54638

Phone: 608-3432-7740

Web Site: [www.bluffandridge.org](http://www.bluffandridge.org)

Email Address: [beckyd102@hotmail.com](mailto:beckyd102@hotmail.com)

Facebook: @bluffandridge.org

Should you have questions or concerns please call (608) 343-7740) and we will return your call.

### **CLOSING THOUGHTS**

Smiles say a thousand words — only louder.

Acknowledge efforts of the rider and encourage independence.

Promptness and reliability are key to a  
program's success.

Patience & Praise = Success & Results.

Respect everyone's right to confidentiality.

Remember: your dedication and sincerity  
make a world of difference.

**THANK YOU!**



## Appendix

### **POSITION TITLE: SIDEWALKER**

**OBJECTIVE/PURPOSE:** To work with people who have disabilities in a safe horseback riding program.

**SUPERVISOR:** Instructors

### **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- Arrive 15 minutes before the start of your assigned session.
- Check schedule board for changes and wait for assigned rider.
- Find rider, assist rider with helmet, and wait with rider.
- Relay instructions to the rider, if needed.
- At the end of the session, walk with rider back to their parent/guardian.
- Help with equipment before or after session.
- Wear proper clothing (i.e., supportive and protective footwear: closed toe/closed back shoes or boots; casual and appropriate dress code: no short shorts; no low cut or tank tops).
- For your safety, please tie back long hair and limit the wearing of jewelry.
- Follow directions from instructor and ask questions.
- Record volunteer hours and rider progress. Remember to ask the horse leader for input too.
- Convey feedback about another volunteer to the instructor only.
- Report any problems or concerns to the instructor.
- Stay with the rider at all times, their safety is your responsibility.
- After the rider has removed their helmet outside the arena, please ensure it is placed in the appropriate storage.
- Notify the lead instructor for absences, as early as possible. Or call the appropriate Bluff & Ridge phone number.

### **SIDEWALKER TIPS:**

- Use the hold directed by instructor.
- Listen to and follow the instructions from the instructor.
- One sidewalker at a time gives instruction to rider. The sidewalker toward the inside of the arena reinforces instructions from the instructor if required.
- Reinforce quality of movement in warm-up exercises.

- Teach to the specific abilities of each rider. Be positive and encouraging. Address the rider by name. No pet names (honey, sweetie, etc.) and no baby talk.
- Allow rider time to process directions.
- Allow rider to initiate movement as much as possible. You may need to help by doing hand over hand.
- Challenge rider to move toward independence.
- Allow rider time to say hello/good-bye and thank you to the horse and volunteers.
- Pet your horse on their shoulder, **but do not pet horse during lesson time.**
- If a horse steps on your foot, please just quietly push the horse off your foot, do not become alarmed or hit the horse. Inform the instructor.
- If there is an incident, please tell the instructor and fill out an incident report.

#### **QUALIFICATIONS:**

- Comfortable working around horses.
- Attend training. Read and follow Volunteer Training Manual.
- Be able to walk/jog intermittently for up to 30 minutes and/or on uneven ground. Be able to lift your arm shoulder height for up to 30 minutes.

#### **POSITION TITLE: HORSE LEADER**

**OBJECTIVE/PURPOSE:** To assist people with disabilities in a safe horseback riding program by leading the therapy horse.

**SUPERVISOR:** Instructors

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- Arrive 15 minutes before your session begins.
- Check assignment board for changes.
- Find assigned horse, groom with brushes assigned to this horse and put on necessary tack. If you are unfamiliar with a piece of tack, please ask the instructor for assistance/training. Warm up the horse in the arena or at least walk the horse in a safe area to connect with horse. Do some stops and starts.
- Remember the horse is depending on you to be the leader – they want to follow your directions.

- Wear proper clothing (i.e., supportive and protective footwear: closed toe/closed back shoes or boots; casual and appropriate dress code: no short shorts; no low cut or tank tops).
- For your safety, please tie back long hair and limit the wearing of jewelry.
- Follow directions from instructor and ask questions.
- Return equipment at the end of the night.
- Record volunteer hours.
- Convey feedback about another volunteer to the instructor only.
- Report any problems or concerns with horse or equipment to the instructor.
- Notify the lead instructor for absences, as early as possible. Or call the appropriate Bluff & Ridge phone number.

#### **WHEN LEADING A THERAPY HORSE:**

- Use 8-12" of lead rope; fold remainder in figure 8 (**do not wrap or loop around your hand**).
- Walk at a comfortable pace for horse. You should walk even with the horses' ears. That way you will have 3-way sensory inputs – Vision ahead/side; Ear to Sidewalker and Ear to Instructor.
- If a Time Out is called by the instructor, please stop your horse right where you are. If possible, remain stopped until instructed to move on.
- Stand in front of horse, facing the horse, when the horse is at the halt.
- Avoid loud, rough discipline of the horse. Riders may mimic you and try to punish the horse themselves. Tell the instructor about the behavior so it can be addressed properly.
- If the horse steps on your toe, count to five while pushing your weight into his shoulder, he should step off. Do not yell, hit or otherwise scare the rider or horse.
- Talk to the horse and limit your conversation to the rider. Do not turn around to talk to the rider/sidewalkers.
- Walk to the center of the arena and halt if a problem arises.
- ALWAYS stay with the horse and maintain control.
- Walk on the side of the horse that is toward the center of the arena. This helps you to hear the instructor and see the activity.
- Be alert to where sidewalkers are at all times (watch out for puddles, fences, other horses, etc.).



- Tie horse with the quick release knot at the place appropriate to each riding site (see appendix to learn how). Have the instructor check your knot. Do not add loops.
- Make sure horses have adequate space between them.
- If you are not comfortable with your assigned horse, please tell the instructor immediately.
- If there is an incident, please tell the instructor and fill out an incident report.

### **QUALIFICATIONS:**

- Attend training. Read and follow Volunteer Training Manual.
- Be experienced working with horses and with basic horse knowledge.
- Be able to walk/jog intermittently for up to 30 minutes and/or on uneven ground.

### **BASIC SAFETY RULES**

At Bluff & Ridge our top priority is to provide a safe environment for all of those involved. Working with horses is a risk activity and policies have been developed to minimize the risk. Safety at Bluff & Ridge is EVERYONE's responsibility and we take it very seriously.

- Wear supportive boots or enclosed shoes when working around a horse.
- For your safety, please tie back long hair and limit the wearing of jewelry.
- Attempt to know the horse, his temperament and reactions. Read the evaluation sheet on the horse and talk to the owner if possible.
- For the safety of the riders, only people with horse experience and who have been recommended by the instructor may lead a horse during a class.
- If you need to carry a cell phone, you must put it on **vibrate only** and **NO TEXTING** while you are doing your volunteer duties!
- Best to pet the horse on the neck or shoulder.
- When leading a horse, always walk along side of his head, not in front of him.
- Do not let your horse eat during the lesson or on trail rides.
- Do not tie horses unless instructors have approved your technique.
- Do not bring treats for the horses.
- All riders must wear helmets when mounted or near a horse.

- Gate to the arena must remain closed during lessons.
- No horses are to be tied inside the arena during the lesson.
- No pets allowed, except Service Animals.
- Always approach a horse from the front or side, never from the rear. Remember the horse cannot see directly behind and you may be kicked.
- Always speak to a horse when approaching or touching him. Remember, if you startle the horse, they may jump or kick.
- **Refer to Seizure Protocol sheet.** If a rider has a seizure while mounted, stop the horse. Many seizures are very mild and will not negatively affect the rider once it is over. If it is a tonic-clonic (grand mal) type (major shaking, losing consciousness) support the rider on the horse with an over the thigh hold until the instructor can dismount the rider or assist you in dismounting them. Place the rider on their side on the ground away from the horse or any obstacles. All other horses will remain stopped until given directions by the instructor.
- Talk to the instructor about any questions or concerns.

**To protect the safety of riders, families, volunteers, and horses – group riding lessons may be canceled for:**

- Severe Weather (Thunderstorms, Excessive Wind or Tornadoes)
- Temperature considerations will be at the discretion of the Instructor team.

**If lessons are cancelled due to weather condition extremes you will receive a text message. Please call or text 608-343-7740 if you are concerned about weather conditions and have not received a text..** The safety of our riders, families, volunteers, and horses is our most important concern.

**EMERGENCY ACTION PLANS**

**Specific site emergency action plans are located at each lesson site in a designated folder.**

**Fire**

R = RESCUE

A = ALERT

C = CONFINE the fire

E = EXTINGUISH the fire, if safe to do so

## **Tornado**

- In the case of unexpected severe weather pending, evacuation of the site is preferred, if time allows.
- If on site, move out of any structures and stay away from trees.
- Get down into a low place and cover your head.
- Assist staff with moving clients and visitors to a safe place.
- Bluff & Ridge owned horses remove lead ropes and turn horses loose in the paddocks. Non- Bluff & Ridge owned horses up to the owners to determine best action.

## **Client or Volunteer Injury**

- Do not move the person unless it is necessary to save their life.
- Clear other riders, volunteers and all horses from the area.
- Instructor will designate someone to call 911, if appropriate, and tell them who, what, where, when and the situation.
- If anyone is injured, find the emergency contact name and number from registration application form and call the person listed as their emergency contact.
- Fill out an accident/injury form with the assistance of the instructor.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

Facebook offers great opportunities to stay connected to the happenings at Bluff & Ridge. Please follow these guidelines for posting:

- Keep postings respectful and relevant.
- Avoid spam or topics that are unrelated to Bluff & Ridge.
- Share your stories, but remember that BREAHE strives to maintain privacy for our riders. Please do not tag people in photos.
- Please do not post solicitations.
- Bluff & Ridge reserves the right to remove inappropriate postings.

Appendix: Effective Leading and Sidewalking

## Follow the Leader

By: Susan F. Tucker, NARHA Accreditation Committee

As a volunteer, one of the most challenging duties you could be assigned is the position of leader. A leader's first responsibility is the horse but you must also constantly be aware of the rider, instructor, and any potential hazards in or around the arena. In addition, you must also consider the side-walkers, making sure there is enough room along the fence, and around obstacles for them to pass.

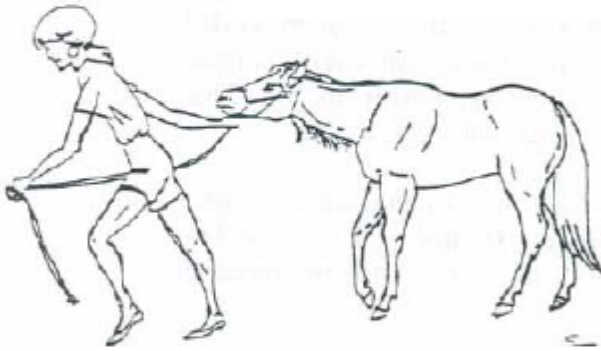


Figure A

An effective leader pays close attention to the rider's needs as well as to where the horse is going. This reinforces the rider's attempts to control the horse. However, you should not execute an instruction for the rider before he has time to process the information and make an effort to comply. Some times it may be appropriate to walk into the corner and stand until the student figures out what to do.

Avoid the temptation to talk to the rider and/or sidewalkers. A rider may get confused by too much input and not know who's in charge. (Instructors often make terrible leaders because they can't keep their mouth's shut!)

Figure A depicts a few faults common among leaders. Here is a leader grimly marching alone—head down, one hand on the lead snap, the other inside the coiled end of the rope—dragging a strung-out horse. In a battle with a horse, you lose. You must get the horse to cooperate. Walk alongside the horse, about even with his eye. This helps keep him in a proper frame, which is more beneficial for everyone.

Talk to the horse; most of them know "whoa", "walk", and "trot", or can learn the words. Watch where you're going and what's happening around you. Do not walk backward to look at the rider. It's dangerous for everyone and the horse isn't eager to follow someone who can't see where he is going.

Figure B shows the correct position for leaders. The lead shank is held with the right hand 6-12 inches from the snap, allowing free motion of the horse's head. This is more therapeutic to the rider and less irritating to

The horse can set himself against a steady pull, but tugs keep in awake. Move out, about 1,000 steps per 15 minutes, to provide the most therapeutic benefit.

When you halt for more than a few seconds, stand in front of the horse with your hands on the halter's cheek piece (if the horse permits) or loosely hold the lead or reins. Standing in front is a psychological barrier to the horse and he will stand more quietly than if he has an easy chance to move out. If you like your thumbs, don't put them through the snaffle or halter rings.

If the worst happens and there is an accident, stay with the horse. There are other people to care for a fallen rider. The situation could easily become more dangerous if there are loose horses running around the arena. Move your horse as far from the fallen student as possible and keep calm. Listen for the instructor's directions.

These suggestions can help you control your horse, be a good aide to the rider and be a valuable assistant to an instructor. You will provide real therapeutic input to your rider, as well as make it safe for them to have fun riding. In short, if you lead, we'll be happy to follow.

the horse.

The tail end of the lead should be looped in a figure-eight in the left hand to avoid tripping on it. Never coil the rope around your hand. That could end a close relationship with your fingers!

Use short tugs rather than a steady pull to keep the horse moving.

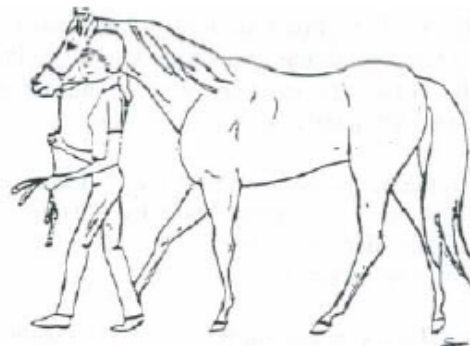


Figure B

## Effective Sidewalking

By: Susan Tucker and Molly Lingua, R.P.T.

Sidewalkers are the ones who normally get the most hands-on duties in therapeutic riding. They are directly responsible for the rider. As such, they have the capability to either enhance or detract from the lesson.

In the arena, the sidewalker should help the student focus his/her attention on the instructor. Try to avoid unnecessary talking with either the rider or other volunteers. Too much input from too many directions is very confusing to anyone, and to riders who already have perceptual problems, it can be overwhelming. If two sidewalkers are working with one student, one should be the "designated talker" to avoid this situation.

When the instructor gives a direction, allow your student plenty of time to process it. If the instructor says "Turn to the right toward me," and the student seems confused, gently tap the right hand and say, "Right," to reinforce the command. You will get to

know the riders and learn when they need help and when they're just not paying attention.

It is important to maintain a position by the rider's knee. Being too far forward or back will make it very difficult to assist with instructions or provide security if the horse should trip or shy.

There are two ways to hold onto the rider without interfering. The most commonly used is the "arm-over-the-thigh" hold. The sidewalker grips the front of the saddle (flap or pommel depending on the horse's size) with the hand closest to the rider. Then the fleshy part of the forearm rests gently on the rider's thigh. Be careful that the elbow doesn't accidentally dig into the rider's leg.

Sometimes, pressure on the thigh can increase and/or cause muscle spasticity, especially with the Cerebral Palsy population. In this case, the "therapeutic hold" may be used. Here, the leg is held at the joints, usually the knee and/or ankle, check with the instructor/therapist for the best way to

assist. In the (unlikely) event of an emergency, the arm-over thigh hold is the most secure.

Avoid wrapping an arm around the rider's waist. It is tempting, especially when walking beside a pony with a young or small rider, but it can offer too much and uneven support. At times, it can even pull the rider off balance and make riding more difficult. Encourage your students to use their own trunk muscles to the best of their abilities.

If the instructor chooses to use a safety belt on your rider, be very careful not to pull down or push up on it. As your arm tires it's hard to avoid these movements, so rather than gripping the handle firmly, just touch your thumb and finger together around it. This way you are in position to assist the rider if needed, but you will neither give unneeded support nor pull him off balance. When you are ready for relief for your arm, ask the leader to move into the center to stop and trade sides, one at a time, with the other sidewalker. (Instructors: if your rider has serious enough balance problems to warrant a safety belt, you should probably be using two sidewalkers).

During exercises, pay attention to your student. Sometimes volunteers forget that the riders are to do the exercises and the sidewalkers are to reinforce and assist. The same applies to games. Don't get so competitive that your rider doesn't get to use his skills because you do it for him in an all out effort to win.

The ultimate goal for therapeutic riding is to encourage the rider to stretch and grow to be as normal as he can possibly be. You are right at his side, so help the instructor to challenge him to the best of his ability.

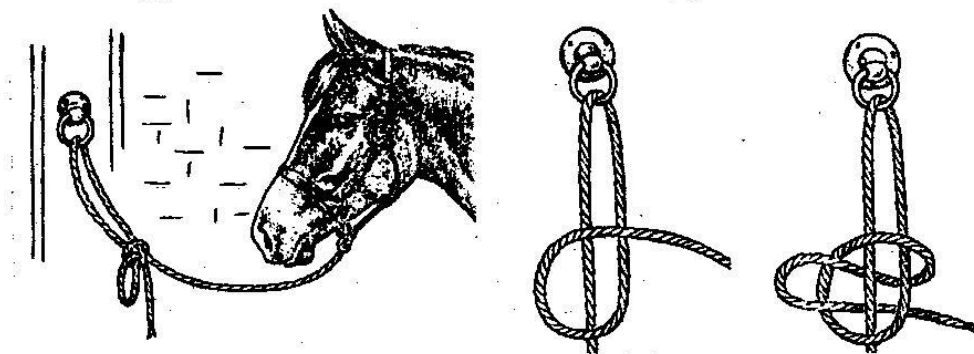
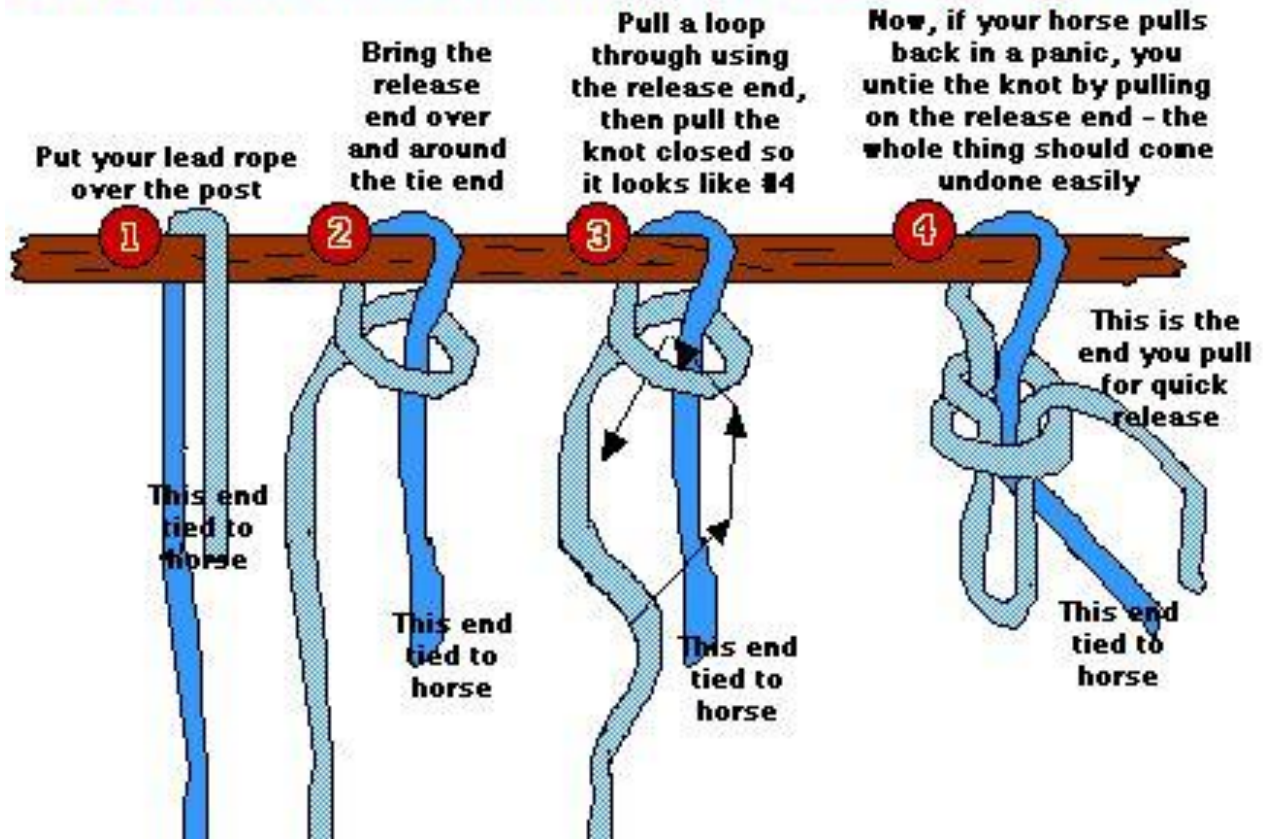
Without you, these programs couldn't exist. We thank you for all you give and challenge you to be the best you can be.





## Quick Release Knot

**Practice tying this knot without your horse until you can do it correctly and release it just by pulling on the free end. This is the ONLY knot you should use to tie horses.**



A quick release knot.