

Circle A Home for Horses, Inc. is a Virginia non-profit corporation



Circle A Home for Horses, Inc.

4345 Charity Neck Road
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www.circleahome4horses.org



VOLUNTEER WELCOME PACKET

VOLUNTEER OVERVIEW

WHY ARE VOLUNTEERS SO IMPORTANT?

Our volunteers help with all aspects of running the non-profit. From barn work (grooming, feeding, cleaning) to handling horses (groundwork, tacking, grooming) to fundraising, to helping with our Children's program, Circle A volunteers are instrumental to the health and emotional and physical welfare of the horses at Circle A Home for Horses and overall success of the non-profit.

WHAT ARE THE EXPECTATIONS OF OUR VOLUNTEERS?

The horses depend on us to give them what they need. When volunteers commit to helping with a certain activity or event, it is important that they follow through and show up for their assignment. If an emergency arises and you can't come out to complete your assignment, you are expected to contact a Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible so that we can try to find a replacement. Volunteers must keep safety in mind at all times, since horses can be unpredictable.

WHAT DO THE DIFFERENT VOLUNTEER CIRCLES REPRESENT?

Red Circle-Beginner: At first, you will be escorted by another person at all times and will assist in whatever area you have chosen. Once you are more comfortable and have learned "the ropes", you will be given more responsibility.

Silver Circle-Intermediate (Advisor Level): You have learned about the workings of the farm and are able to answer questions and assist other people. You can now work on your own with direction from one of the staff or a more experienced volunteer.

Gold Circle-Advanced (Mentor Level): You are considered accomplished and have learned about all aspects of the farm. You are now in a position to mentor new volunteers.

ANGEL PROGRAM

WHAT ARE HORSE ANGELS?

Horse Angels are volunteers who are paired with a specific horse that needs love and attention until they find their forever home. If you would like to become a horse angel, the Angel Coordinator will help match you with a horse when you have completed a minimum of 60 hours as a new volunteer.

WHAT ARE THE EXPECTATIONS OF HORSE ANGELS?

Horse Angels are expected to spend time with “their” horse at least once or twice per week. You should groom your horse, pick their hooves, refresh their stall, check the water bucket, and make sure they have adequate hay. Look closely for wounds or other issues that need to be addressed. Any issues should be brought to the attention of a staff member. Angels can walk their horse around in the riding ring, give treats (always follow safety rules) and spoil them with much needed attention. Please keep in mind if your horse goes more than 1 week without grooming and attention, a co-angel will step in. If your horse goes 2 weeks without grooming and attention, your horse may be reassigned to someone else, unless you have notified the Horse Angel Coordinator beforehand. Horses often come to Circle A from abusive and/or neglectful situations and not only need grooming and specific health care, but need calm and consistency so they can heal both physically and emotionally. Given time, the bond you create with “your” horse is a treasure for both of you!

CAN I RIDE OR LUNGE MY ANGEL HORSE?

The horses brought to Circle A require careful evaluation and training in the riding arena. This specialized portion of the horses’ recovery is managed by staff and professional trainers only, as a general rule. Individuals interested in assisting with training measures, may be considered on a case-by-case basis by our Executive Director. Considerations will be based on level of previous riding/training experience, time in the volunteer program, achievement of “Gold Circle-Advanced” level in the volunteer program, etc.

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BARN RULES

Anyone under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

- No smoking on any of the grounds.
- Sign in upon arrival and departure.
- Report to staff for assignment.
- No entering stalls without permission.
- No giving treats to horses on specific diets (ask first).
- No headphones (safety issue).
- Carry a cell phone but keep personal calls to a bare minimum.
- Do not allow feed and sand to go down drains (sweep it).
- Keep Barn 1 gate closed and rear door closed so as to keep horses out. Keep all stable doors closed/locked.
- Label drinks and foods that you bring in for yourself. If sharing, horse or human treats, please leave a note.
- Replace bathroom consumables when necessary.
- If grooming a horse in the wash stall, clean up after yourself before leaving.
- Double-check and make sure all barn doors, Tack Rooms, Hay Stall (where we keep the hay) and field gates are closed.
- Keep all hoses rolled up on racks when not in use. Turn off water.
- If uncomfortable with a particular horse, ask staff for help.
- If going out to fields, let someone know.
- Do not wear sandals or flip-flops.
- Greet all visitors with a friendly hello and smile!
- **Note:** For privacy and the non-profit rules, **personal photography is NOT permitted** on the property. Photography is handled by organizational and volunteer leadership.

HORSE TALK

- Bedding: materials made of wood shavings or compressed pellets (or straw, etc.) used to provide comfort and insulation for horses, as well as absorb urine and droppings. We use mainly pellets at Circle A.
- Beet Pulp: Special feed for horses, which is rich in energy and protein. Must ALWAYS be soaked before feeding.
- Bell Boots: Circular rubber boots placed over the feet (hooves) and typically fastened around the pastern with Velcro or a buckle. Bell Boots protect the heel and lower pastern.
- Bit: Mouthpiece of a bridle.
- Blanket: A horse coat made out of various materials used for keeping horse warm or as protection from bad weather.
- Bridle: Headgear with buckles, straps, reins and a bit (usually) used to control the horse when riding.
- Cribbing: When a horse grinds its incisor teeth on a solid object, most often the top edge of a stable door or fence.
- Flake: “Slice” of hay from a bale.
- Fly Mask: A lightweight, mesh visor which covers horses’ eyes and ears to protect from biting insects and sunburn.
- Fork: Used to pick up and sift out droppings and leave as much clean bedding as possible.
- Grain: Staple of a horse’s diet (oats, etc.)
- Halter: Headstall placed around the horse’s head and used with a lead rope for leading or tethering purposes.
- Hay Net: Nets made of synthetics and used to hold hay up off the floor.
- Hoof Pick: A vital grooming tool used to clean horses feet.
- Lunging: Exercising your horse in a circle by way of lunge line.
- Muck Bucket: Large, round bucket used for holding manure.
- Mucking: The art of cleaning out a stall.
- OTTB: Off-the-Track Thoroughbred.
- Road Apples: Another name for manure☺.
- Salt Lick: A salt block or cube that horses can lick at their leisure and therefore provide essential minerals.
- Spreader: Tractor with machine attached that carries manure to pasture.
- Tack Room: A room or building which houses equipment and accessories such as saddles, bridles, halters, reins, etc. Saddling up a horse is considering “tacking up.”

HORSE SAFETY

- Do not walk directly behind a horse.
- Carry a lead rope at all times.
- Always look for “signs.” If a horse isn’t eating, is choking or acting odd, report immediately to staff.
- Never approach a horse from behind without speaking first. Stay a safe distance from the hindquarters.
- When horses are turned in and out, stay a safe distance away. They often gallop down the lane and trot into the barn. If you are in the way, they will always win. Best to twirl your lead rope end (not clip end) if they come too close to you.
- Never feed horses whole apples or whole carrots as it is a choking hazard. Best to cut wedges and pieces.
- When leading horse out to fields, or out of stalls, always halter them and stand by their left front shoulder holding the lead an arm’s length away. Never walk in front of them. Be aware of objects (bags, etc.) that may spook them. Awareness around horses and learning to read their body language is a critical and a learned process (and also fascinating!).
- Do not offer food openly as several horses may charge you or one another.
- Be especially careful when approaching congregating horses. During feeding times horses get very anxious so stay a safe distance away. Some horses will fight for the food. DON’T get caught in the crossfire.
- Don’t approach a horse head-on as they have a blind spot and can’t see you. Speak quietly and approach with slow movements while extending a closed hand for the horse to smell. Allow him/her to reach out to you first.
- If making up feed bags, follow instructions exactly as some are on supplements and medicines.
- When feeding Beet Pulp or Cubes, make sure it has about 12 hours to soak before feeding. It should be very wet or it can become a choking hazard.
- Mix grain with hot water to make a soupy mush.
- Get in the habit of looking over the horses for cuts, scrapes, punctures, kicks, bites, etc. Report to staff.
- Always get authorization before adding any new supplements.
- When in doubt about anything, just ask ☺

EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

- **If a person at the farm is experiencing a life-threatening emergency. Call 911 FIRST.**
- **NEVER** put yourself or another human in harm's way in an attempt to help an animal.
- In the event of an emergency on the farm, we ask that Circle A Executive Director, Alicia Mahar, be contacted immediately by phone at 757-286-5282, and you notify the staff member on shift. Please stay with the person/animal involved in the emergency (if safe to do so) until Alicia or staff arrive. You will receive further direction at that time to clear the area or assist if needed (and you feel comfortable doing so). Often these instances are extremely stressful for all involved, so please understand if you are asked to leave the area. Leadership must make swift and difficult decisions and the animal/person involved may become overwhelmed if a large group of people surround them. We appreciate your understanding.
- Absolutely **NO** photography by volunteers is permitted during emergency situations.
- Fire extinguishers are located in the tack room of both barns.
- Avoid any electrical wire (power line or electric fencing) that is down, especially in/near water.
- If someone is badly injured, **ONLY** move them if they are in harm's way, otherwise wait for EMS to arrive.
- Please note, we have many safety precautions in place to keep you, the staff and our rescue animals safe. You will never stop learning on the farm. If you ever find yourself in a situation where you do not feel comfortable or you feel a task is above your training level, please stop and find help right away. We are a team!

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CIRCLE A ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

Board of Directors

Ann-Louise Hittle, Co-President
Kate Flowers, Co-President
Alicia Mahar, Vice President
Gay Robbins, Secretary
Dan Flowers, Treasurer
Valerie Amster, Member
Ellen Weisman, Member

Executive Director

Alicia Mahar

Volunteer Committee

Carol Simpson, Coordinator
Nancy Ruszas, Assistant Coordinator
Megan Latchaw, Assistant Coordinator

Angel Program Coordinator

Madison Fevrier

Fundraising Coordinator

April Partida

Adoption and Aftercare Coordinator

Vickie Pickwood

Training Coordinator

Eryn McCabe

Newsletter Editor

Kathy Hessmer

Director of Technology

Dan Flowers

Volunteer FAQs

What is the name of the program? Circle A Volunteer Orientation.

What can I expect from my Volunteer Orientation? Your orientation will start at the meeting point at the main gate (see Where do I go when I get there?). You will proceed to the main barn where you will have introductions, review of safety protocols, signing of liability waiver and participation in a general tour of the farm. You will be accompanied by an orientation coordinator throughout your visit. You are not permitted to separate from your group until your orientation is complete and you have been signed-off to do so by your orientation coordinator.

How often are orientation sessions conducted? Orientations are conducted periodically and are weather dependent. We typically schedule an orientation every 4-6 weeks depending on the number of volunteer sign-ups we receive in between orientations.

How long is the orientation session? You can plan to spend between 1.5 to 2 hours on the farm for your initial volunteer orientation.

What should I wear? Please dress according to the weather. It may be a good idea to throw an extra change of clothes in the car as well! Jeans/heavy duty pants are highly recommended. Warm jackets in the winter, and don't forget sunscreen in the summer. Avoid perfumes-the scent may attract bugs. Boots: rain boots/work boots/riding boots, any sturdy footwear that covers the entire foot and you don't mind them getting muddy. Just keep in mind, having some form of waterproofing for your feet will be very useful. **At this time, masks are required due to Covid-19 guidelines.**

What should I bring/consider bringing? A few items to consider bringing: bottled water, snack, an extra change of clothes & socks (okay to leave in your car), sunscreen, hat. Please note all food/drink brought to the farm must be labeled and stored in the tack room/fridge so the horses cannot gain access to human food.

Where should I park? Upon arriving to the farm, visitors are to park on the left side of the driveway in the designated gravel parking area. There is additional parking at Barn 2. This will be shown/discussed during orientation.

Where do I go once I get there? The orientation group will meet at the head of the driveway at the main gate. This farm serves as a private residence as well. Please do not knock/ring the bell at the house. An orientation coordinator will be at the main gate/driveway to greet you.

Who do I ask for when I arrive? Please ask for Carol Simpson or Nancy Ruzsas.

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Are there any age restrictions to volunteer? Anyone over the age of 14 is welcome to volunteer with Circle A. Volunteers between ages 14 and 17 will need to be accompanied by a parent/guardian for orientation and depending on previous horse experience, staff will discuss the release waiver with the parent/guardian that would allow the minor to volunteer autonomously without the parent/guardian present.

How often can I volunteer at the rescue? As often as you'd like! Horses thrive on routine and so do we! Volunteers who are able to commit to a set schedule will be the most successful at aiding our mission, providing consistent care for the rescue horses and gaining the most experience. The more time you spend with the horses, the quicker your confidence and understanding of these magnificent animals will grow. We do require volunteers in the "Red Circle – Novice" to be accompanied by a more seasoned volunteer/staff member while on-site.

Is there a minimum number of hours required to volunteer? We kindly ask for a commitment of at least 8 or more hours per month. Our volunteer leaders can guide you on an individual basis regarding what hours/schedule might best match your availability to the needs of the rescue. A minimum of 60 volunteer hours are required before consideration for our Angel Program.

What are the operating hours for the Volunteer Program? Volunteers can report to the rescue anytime between 8am and 12pm to assist with morning shift activities and/or 2pm-6pm to assist with evening shift activities, 7 days a week. "Red Circle-Novice" volunteers need to ensure they will have a mentor on-site with them when reporting for their shift (a volunteer coordinator will assist with this).

As a volunteer, will I be able to ride the horse? The horses brought to Circle A require careful evaluation and training in the riding arena. This specialized portion of the horses' recovery is managed by staff and professional trainers only, as a general rule. Individuals interested in assisting with training measures, may be considered on a case-by-case basis by our Executive Director. Considerations will be based on level of previous riding/training experience, time in the volunteer program, achievement of "Gold Circle-Advanced" level in the volunteer program, etc.

Do I need to have experience working with horses to volunteer? No, we are happy to welcome all levels of experience to our volunteer program, from brand new to seasoned expert! We will train, assess and work with you throughout your volunteer program to ensure you are gaining the experience needed, as well as, fostering your areas of interest.

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Circle A Home for Horses Volunteer Information Form



Applicant Information:

Name: _____ DOB: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Allergies/Medical Conditions (not req'd): _____

Briefly describe your horse related experience: _____

Please indicate which area of operation you would like to help:

__ Barn Work (Grooming, Feeding, Cleaning) __ Training (Lunging, Riding, Tacking, Grooming)

__ Fundraising activities __ Children's program (Background Check Req'd)

Areas of expertise:

Let us know your availability:

Monday: __ Morning __ Day __ Evening **Tuesday:** __ Morning __ Day __ Evening

Wednesday: __ Morning __ Day __ Evening **Thursday:** __ Morning __ Day __ Evening

Friday: __ Morning __ Day __ Evening **Saturday:** __ Morning __ Day __ Evening

Sunday: __ Morning __ Day __ Evening

Emergency Contact:

Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____