

# Inspire Equine Therapy Program



## Volunteer Manual

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Welcome new volunteers, we are delighted to have you join us!

Volunteers drive the Inspire Equine Therapy Program, are indispensable at all levels of the organization and need not be equine oriented. Some do bring skills in horsemanship, others bring leadership skills, and others simply bring understanding and acceptance in helping others to seek fuller, more satisfying lives. Volunteers also bring many new ideas and insight to the program and frequently enlist their friends! Ask any Inspire volunteer and they will readily state that they gain as much, or more, than they give.

As a volunteer, you will learn and achieve, as well! The information in this manual is designed to assist you in understanding some of Inspire's policies and procedures. This handbook is not all-inclusive and does not include every policy or protocol relating to volunteers at Inspire. Please feel free to ask staff members or seasoned volunteers if you have further questions or concerns. Thank you for your interest in Inspire Equine Therapy Program!

### **Benefits of Equine Assisted Activities**

Intrinsically riding a horse is a beneficial activity for any person challenged with a physical, cognitive and/or emotional disability. The uniqueness of equine assisted activities lies in the gait of the therapy horse. The horse having gaits with a three dimensional swinging motion is a living therapy tool for the rider, enabling the rider to experience up/down, forward/backward, and side-to-side motion – all the while stimulating muscle, brain and social activity. Without doubt equestrian activities, in and out of a therapeutic setting, increase a rider's posture, balance, strength, focus and coordination while also positively enhancing flexibility, self-awareness, confidence and a sense of independence. Social and emotional growth is too gained from the natural bond created between horse and rider.

The physical benefits of therapeutic riding include: As the horse moves, the rider is constantly thrown off-balance. In an attempt to rebalance the rider's muscles are required to contract and relax.

- Improved posture control and balance
- Increased muscle tone and strength
- Greater range of motion
- Decreased spasticity
- Better hand-eye coordination
- Reduction of abnormal movement patterns

The cognitive benefits aide participants to excel in: The repetition of patterned movements required in controlling a horse quickens the reflexes and aids in motor planning.

- Development of learned skills
- Tactile awareness and sensory integration
- Improved application of direction
- Greater skill at sequencing, patterning and motor planning.

The overall experience contributes to emotional gains by the rider: Riding provides excitement and the sense of achievement of working independently as well as with a team.

- Independence

- Increased self-control and awareness
- Better emotional control
- Greater self-awareness and self-confidence

The social benefits reaped by riders: Being involved as a rider creates a shared interest and experience on which to build a social foundation.

- Friendship building
- Increased experiences
- Improving social skills and cooperation

### **Volunteering at Inspire Equine Therapy Program**

Inspire Equine Therapy Program could not operate without dedicated volunteers - they are the backbone of the program. Without the extra sets of hands to help riders sit tall, to groom and care for horses, or to help in the office, it would be difficult to operate the program. Inspire Equine Therapy Program takes considerable care and effort to find, train and keep excellent and motivated volunteers. Inspire Equine Therapy Program offers an ideal volunteer opportunity for adults and young people

- ❑ An outdoor activity
- ❑ A service that results in joy and growth for people with disabilities
- ❑ Light physical work and exercise
- ❑ Interaction with animals in a farm setting
- ❑ An expanded circle of friends
- ❑ Rewards in smiles, progress in skill and enthusiasm from everyone involved
- ❑ A chance to help others
- ❑ Community service hours from some schools
- ❑ Service hours for service learning students
- ❑ Activities for clubs and professional organizations

### **Team Approach**

At Inspire Equine Therapy Program, we practice a team approach. No matter what job you choose to volunteer for at Inspire Equine Therapy Program, you are an integral part of the team. For instance, different professionals from the areas of Therapeutic Horsemanship and Equine Assisted Therapy and/or Physical Therapy will work together with our volunteers during class to provide a team approach to services. A PATH certified professional will always be present to oversee the safety of equestrian interactions no matter what volunteer job you chose. If you choose to work in the barn, the office, whatever you are part of the Inspire Equine Therapy Program team and are greatly valued.

### **Volunteer Jobs Available at Inspire Equine Therapy Program**

At Inspire Equine Therapy Program there is a job for everyone. It may come as a surprise to you that not all volunteers are experienced equestrians. Certain tasks require horse experience, but that is not necessary in many other volunteer roles. Many of our volunteers begin with little or no experience, but through Inspire Equine Therapy Program 's hands-on educational opportunities, have gone on to become fine horse handlers.

Side walker: (must be 14 years old)

The side walker (either 1 or 2) walks to the side of the rider during class. The side walker's primary responsibility is for the safety of the student during class. Side walker tasks include:

- ❑ Greeting the student as he/she arrives
- ❑ Remaining with the student and get his/her helmet fitted
- ❑ Assisting the student in balancing on the horse, utilizing special holds
- ❑ Following directions of the instructor during class and assisting the student only when needed to promote independence
- ❑ Understanding the special needs of each student
- ❑ Mounting and dismounting assists
- ❑ Understanding safety and emergency procedures

Horse Leader (must be 14 years old)\*\*\*:

The primary job of the horse leader is to deal with the horse, not the student. Horse handler tasks include:

- ❑ Grooming and tacking the horse before class
- ❑ Maintaining control of the horse
- ❑ Tack cleaning
- ❑ Understanding horse body language and horse psychology

\*\*\*Horse Leader requires special testing. If you have extensive horse experience and want to be a horse leader, please contact the volunteer coordinator.

Other Jobs: Because Inspire Equine Therapy Program is primarily a volunteer program, if you have any special skills, talents, please let us know – you never know what help we might need. Some of these jobs include:

- ❑ Office help
- ❑ Accounting & Legal support
- ❑ Fundraising & Computer skills
- ❑ Facility repairs & maintenance; General Contractor
- ❑ Artistic work & Photography
- ❑ Serving on Advisory Boards or Committees
- ❑ Musical skills & Entertainment
- ❑ Public Relations, Grant writing
- ❑ Special Projects from individual staff members

## **General Volunteer and Inspire Equine Therapy Program Information**

### **Attendance**

**Volunteers must be willing to commit themselves to a regular day and time for a certain number of weeks so that our students are able to ride.** They must also commit to notifying the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible if illness or time conflicts prevent them from performing their assigned duties. This notification is necessary so that a substitute may be found in time.

Sometimes, “Murphy’s Law” applies: If one volunteer is unable to come at their appointed time and does not give ample notice or locate a substitute, several more will do the same for that particular lesson and cause a student to not be able to ride. Do your best to contact someone and not just leave a message on the machine. DO NOT send an email to cancel unless you are pre-arranging an absence. Understand that cancellations cause an enormous ripple effect.

We request that you notify the Volunteer Coordinator with as much notice as possible—at least 24 hours prior to your scheduled time if you have to cancel.

Contact Information:

Inspire Equine Therapy Program Telephone: 727-348-7104

Email: inspireequinetherapy@gmail.com (use only for prearranging an absence)

### **Attire**

Remember that you will be working in a professional setting. It is expected that volunteers will use good judgment in selecting appropriate clothing. When choosing your clothing – consider “Safety First” –inquisitive hands can pull off your jewelry, excessively baggy clothes can get caught on things, etc.

#### **What to Wear:**

- ❑ Inspire Equine Therapy Program Volunteer T-shirt or Polo
- ❑ Comfortable clothes-appropriate to the season-that you don't mind getting dirty
- ❑ Sneakers or boots
- ❑ Sunscreen, bug repellent, sunglasses, hat or visor
- ❑ Inspire Equine Therapy Program Name Tag
- ❑ Long hair needs to be tied back

#### **What NOT to Wear:**

- ❑ Jewelry (necklace, bracelet, hoop/dangling earrings) – stud earrings are ok
- ❑ Excessively tight or baggy clothing or short shorts (need to be mid thigh)
- ❑ Perfumes that can attract stinging insects
- ❑ Bare midriff or other revealing clothing
- ❑ Open toe shoes, sandals, clogs
- ❑ Clothing with inappropriate slogans, decals, etc.

### **Barn Rules**

**ATTENTION! The following rules apply to all program participants, staff members, volunteers, and anyone who visits Creek Under the Son Stables. These rules are designed to insure safety, a primary concern here at Creek Under the Son Stables. Please help us to enforce these rules!**

- No abusive, threatening, or violent behavior towards people or animals will be tolerated on Creek Under Son Stables premises.
- Alcohol, illegal drug use, and firearms are prohibited on the Creek Under the Son Stables grounds, or at any hosted events.
- Absolutely NO smoking is permitted in the barn, or anywhere on the Creek Under the Son Stables premises.
- There will be NO RUNNING OR SCREAMING in the barn or around the horses.
- No one is permitted at the stables, in the barn, or in the adjacent paddocks and pastures, unless a staff member is present on the premises.
- No one may enter a pasture containing horses unless accompanied by a staff member.
- No one is allowed to handle program horses, feed, or pet horses, unless supervised by a staff member.
- No one may ride a program horse unless supervised by a staff member.
- No person will be permitted to ride a program horse until s/he has submitted to Inspire Equine Therapy Program a completely processed set of the required forms **for the current year.**
- **All riders and Drivers must wear an ASTM-approved helmet** while mounted, and use safety stirrups or wear hard-soled shoes with heels.

- No one may bring a non-program horse onto the Creek Under the Son Stables premises without prior permission from the owner of Creek Under the Son Stables.
- Children on the Creek Under the Son Stables premises must be supervised at all times.
- Dogs MUST be on a leash and have prior approval
- Barn aisles must be kept clean and free of obstructions

### **Cell Phones**

Please turn off or mute all cell phones when in the barns or riding arenas, as they can startle the student or the horse.

### **Confidentiality**

We are a professional organization. Inspire Equine Therapy Program is bound by a policy to maintain confidentiality of information regarding our students, staff, and volunteers. Any personal information you may become privileged to through your work at Inspire Equine Therapy Program must not be shared with others.

### **Commitment of Volunteers**

At Inspire Equine Therapy Program we are committed to strengthening the relationships between the volunteers and the organization. We have found that taking the time and care in training and supervising volunteers results in “repeat” volunteers. We believe it is important to develop and maintain a relationship of mutual respect with our volunteers. Inspire Equine Therapy Program would not exist if we did not have our volunteers!

To each of you that agree to commit time, intelligence, energy, and talent to Inspire Equine Therapy Program we ask that:

- you keep your commitment and are on time for your commitment,
- you listen to us and understand that the Instructor is in charge in the class environment.
- You accept feedback from Instructors regarding your work and understand that their goal is to offer the best and most effective experience for each student,
- you stay alert, listen, and learn from the other volunteers and Instructors,
- you give us your best effort, maintaining enthusiasm and goodwill at all times and
- you let us know if we are not recognizing you for your efforts as a volunteer.

### **Contact Information & Email Communication**

Please keep all of your contact information current (email, phone number, address, etc.) The primary means of providing written information to all volunteers is email and Facebook. If you do not have email, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator frequently for updates.

### **Dismissal Policy of Volunteers and/or Guests**

Inspire Equine Therapy Program relies greatly on volunteers as important members of the team that provides services to and assists our clients. We also recognize the extreme importance of the safety and wellbeing of our clients, volunteers, staff, guests, and animals.

All volunteers and guests are expected to follow Inspire Equine Therapy Program 's rules and policies and may not engage in disruptive, unsafe or inappropriate behavior. In the event a volunteer or guest does not comply, **the following actions may be taken:**

#### **Level 1**

#### **Verbal warning**

Breaking of Inspire Equine Therapy Program 's rules and/or policies and

procedures may be followed by a verbal warning from the Executive Director and be documented in the incident report book.

**Level 2      Written warning**

Breaking of Inspire Equine Therapy Program 's rules and/or policies and procedures for a second time will be followed by a Personnel Committee meeting for discussion regarding the infraction. The purpose of the meeting is to determine the exact reason the infraction occurred for a second time and discuss with the volunteer/guest how to avoid the circumstance ever occurring again. This meeting will be documented and placed in the incident report book.

**Level 3      Dismissal from organization**

Immediate dismissal from the property and organization will occur for:

- Endangering the safety of others
- Inappropriate use of the facilities, mailing lists or monies
- Disruptive or abusive behavior to the animals or people at Inspire Equine Therapy Program
- Repeated disregard of the organization's rules, policies and procedures.
- Possession of a weapon
- Is under the influence of alcohol or drugs

**Dogs**

For the safety of the horses, riders, and other animals on property only preapproved dogs are allowed to be brought to the property. Service dogs are always welcomed.

**Emergencies**

An emergency is defined, for our purposes, as any unexpected occurrence or set of circumstances resulting in a real or potential safety hazard, demanding immediate attention.

Before there is an emergency, be sure you are familiar with general safety procedures. Also, know the locations of the following:

- Telephone for emergency use is located in the barn office and in the house.
- Human First Aid Kit is located in the barn office on the shelf near the couch.

- ❑ Equine First Aid Supplies are in the Tack Room
- ❑ Fire extinguishers are located in the barn, and house.

All these locations are shown during the Barn Tour at Volunteer Orientation Training.

Important- The Emergency Information card is posted near the emergency phone in the office. It is the policy of Inspire Equine Therapy Program to call an ambulance if there is any doubt as to the seriousness of an illness or injury without delay.

### Emergency During Class

- ❑ The word "STAFF!" is called out alerting everyone in the arena to HALT.
- ❑ The Instructor proceeds to the emergency situation and assesses the incident. If necessary, the Instructor designates a volunteer to call 911. If injury should involve a horse, the Instructor designates a volunteer to call the Vet.
- ❑ If the incident is not serious, the class resumes.
- ❑ If the incident is serious, the Instructor designates trained volunteers to dismount the remaining students with the assistance of parents, if needed, and stays at the incident site until Emergency Personnel arrive.
- ❑ REMEMBER: If an emergency occurs during class, the Horse handler is responsible for the horse and the Side walkers are responsible for the student.
- ❑ REMEMBER: **NO ONE** including PARENTS are allowed in the ring until the Instructor says so.

### Emergency Dismount

If you are side walking next to a horse that becomes involved in an emergency, shout "STAFF!" to alert your Instructor and horse handler of the situation. If an emergency dismount becomes necessary, the side walker the rider is falling away from needs to remove the stirrup and reins from the rider, while the side walker towards whom the rider is falling needs to remove the stirrup then hug the rider around the trunk and under the arms, pulling the rider off and away from the horse. If the side walker feels he cannot bear the full weight of the descending rider, a controlled fall can be initiated, taking care to protect the rider and side walker's heads and roll with the fall as much as possible. It is important that the side walkers break the rider's fall and does not fall on the rider.

### Universal Precautions

Universal precautions are used to minimize contact with blood and body fluids by taking steps that may prevent non-intact skin exposures of individuals to specific organisms such as Hepatitis B and Human Immune-Deficiency Virus (HIV/ AIDS). When you follow universal precautions, you assume that all persons are potentially infected with blood-born pathogens.

- ❑ Wear disposable latex or vinyl gloves when it is likely that hands will be in contact with bodily fluids. Always change gloves between clients.
- ❑ Protect clothing with an impervious material when it is likely that clothing will be soiled with bodily fluids.
- ❑ Wear masks and/or eye protection when it is likely that eye and/or mucus membranes will be splashed with bodily fluids.
- ❑ Wash hands often, before and after client care, paying particular attention to around and under fingernails and between the fingers, even if gloves are worn. If unanticipated contact with these body substances occurs, washing is done as soon as possible.

- ❑ Resuscitation masks should be used for CPR.

### **Feeding the Horses**

Hay and grain are only to be fed by the designated Inspire Equine Therapy Program staff or authorized volunteers. Horse treats are to only be fed by participants if the instructor has included it in the lesson plan. Treats are to be fed out of the horse treat buckets. Staff and authorized volunteers may be seen using treats in training; however, no one else is authorized to do so.

### **Gates**

All gates are to be kept closed and latched. If you see an open gate, please close it.

### **Helmets**

A safety-riding helmet is the single most important piece of equipment. It is important to understand that posture and balance of a rider will be directly affected by the fit of the helmet. An ill-fitting helmet will make proper balancing more difficult and will fail to protect the head during a fall. Overly large helmets are dangerous and uncomfortable. They may slip, obscure vision or fall off. A properly fitted helmet should be snug. The well-fitted helmet should stay on the head when harnessed without rocking or moving. A good way to check a helmet's fit is to have the rider bend down at the waist and shake his/her head. With the manufacturer's suggested adjustment, the helmet should feel secure to the rider.

All participants in classes are required to wear a helmet once they enter the mounting/tacking area. All personnel and volunteers are required to wear helmets when mounted or driving Inspire Equine Therapy Program horses.

### How to Help a Student with His or Her Helmet:

- ❑ Place the helmet on the head sliding it front to back. It should sit level on the head at above the eyebrow level. Allow it to rest so there are two fingers between the eyebrows and the edge of the helmet.
- ❑ Make sure the helmet is centered correctly and fasten the chinstrap. Just be sure it's tight enough so the helmet doesn't slip or fall.
- ❑ If there is a laced harness at the back, undo it before fitting the helmet and re-adjust it after the helmet is on. Place the harness below the small bump at the back of the rider's head.
- ❑ If the harness is U shaped, adjust the neck or chin strap firmly so the helmet doesn't rotate on the head when pushed up at the front or back edge.
- ❑ Practice fitting a helmet on a fellow volunteer first.
- ❑ Ask the rider how the helmet feels. For the rider whose head is a difficult size, try placing the foam spacers inside the helmet at the trouble spots.

### **Horse Leaders**

The horse leader's responsibility is the horse (not the rider). All handling of the horses outside of the therapeutic riding classes must be cleared through the Executive Director and Barn Manager.

### Prior to Class

- ❑ Arrive 30 minutes earlier than class time to locate your horse, groom, tack, and warm up for class.
- ❑ Read the "Horse Information" board for any information you need to know prior to

working with him or ask staff.

- ❑ All horses must be haltered with a lead rope attached when being led into and out of pastures, paddocks or stalls
- ❑ All horses are to be tied using a quick release knot to the tying line when available or use cross ties in the barn aisle, except for Epi he must be held by the lead rope.
- ❑ Use grooming tools only for the horse intended - no sharing please
- ❑ Tacking - Check class chart to see what tack is to be used for the class. Check the saddle fit chart for any notes about the tack to be used (lollipop pad or riser with certain saddles on certain horses). Place the saddle on the horse behind the shoulders. The seat of the saddle needs to be level. Always pull the saddle pad up into the gullet of the saddle. Put all Velcro and keepers on saddle pads through the billets and girths (when possible). If girth has one elastic side, it goes on the horse's left side. Girth should be a couple of hole higher on the right side. Girth should be only as tight as needed to keep the saddle from sliding.
- ❑ Girth will be tightened by **INSTRUCTOR** (for class) prior to rider mounting.
- ❑ **INSTRUCTORS or APPROVED VOLUNTEERS** (see name badge) are allowed to put on bridles. Once the bridle or reins are on: **DO NOT LEAVE THE HORSE UNATTENDED**. Halters stay on under bridles.

#### When leading a horse:

- ❑ Hold the lead rope about 6-8 inches from the snap with your right hand
- ❑ Fold the excess rope in a butterfly loop with your left hand. Never wrap the rope around your hands. Be sure the lead rope dangles between the reins.
- ❑ Maintain your own space
- ❑ Look up to where you're going, do not look at the horse
- ❑ Keep the horse at your side with their eye about even with your shoulder
- ❑ Do not allow the horse to get ahead of you
- ❑ Do not allow the horse to fall too far behind you
- ❑ Do not allow the horse to walk right behind you

#### During Class

- ❑ The Instructor always mounts and dismounts the rider. Pay attention to the Instructor. The Instructor will address the rider, but as the horse leader you need to know what the instructions are as well.
- ❑ Whenever your horse is stopped, stand at an angle in front of the horse's shoulder. Your body language will tell the horse to stay put. This is during mounting, dismounting, emergencies and or anytime the horse is stopped for extended periods.
- ❑ Maintain a steady, even pace. Avoid sharp turns or abrupt changes of gait. Follow the rail unless directed otherwise. Maintain two horse lengths between horses.
- ❑ Allow the horse's head freedom of movement! As they walk, all horses bob their heads up and down. This rhythmical movement starts at the head and moves all the way down the horse's spine. This movement is what makes horseback riding therapeutic.
- ❑ Reinforce the rider's attempts to control the horse. Keep an eye and ear on your rider's commands. Don't give a free ride!
- ❑ Don't drag the horse along. Encourage the horse to move out with the energy in your upper and lower body.
- ❑ Remember: with side walkers your horse is much wider. Be sure to leave enough room

- around barrels etc. for the side walker to pass without running into items in the arena.
- ❑ When the rider is controlling the horse, you may allow a little slack in the lead, do not influence the horse. (The horse may get confused if he feels tugs on both the reins and the lead). This may, at times be difficult if the horse tends to follow you. Allow the horse's head to point forward, not pulled towards you. Especially important at the trot.
  - ❑ Allow the rider time to process the information given by the Instructor and to make an effort to comply – be patient and listen to the instructor's directions as to what to do when.
  - ❑ Be aware of the rider's uncontrollable body movements, vocalizations, and behaviors.
  - ❑ Manage the horse to avoid problems. NEVER discipline a horse with a rider mounted.
  - ❑ Bring the horse to the center of the arena anytime the rider or side walkers need to make any adjustments. Avoid stopping on the rail.
  - ❑ At the end of class, wait for the Instructor to dismount the rider. After all of the students have left the arena, lead the horse to the tacking area.
  - ❑ If an emergency occurs with your rider or horse, such as: the rider having a seizure, the rider is falling off, the horse is frightened, or any other emergency requiring an emergency dismount: Stop your horse (turn him towards the wall, if necessary, as an aid for a quick stop) and stand at an angle in front of the horse to keep him stopped, then soothe him while the side walkers assist the rider. Do not leave the horse or let go of the lead rope for any reason. When the rider is off of the horse, pull the horse's head towards the student, which will cause the horse's hindquarters to move away from the student. When the horse is away from the rider, halt the horse and wait for instructions.

### After Class

- ❑ Un tack and groom horse; placing everything back in its proper location.
- ❑ If the horse came to class with a fly mask on, please make sure they go back home dressed with these items
- ❑ Bridles and saddles should be wiped down (not taken apart) after class/ride
- ❑ After grooming is complete, please return grooming kit to tack room
- ❑ Complete a "Horse Use and Behavior Log regarding the performance of your horse in class. This is also the place to note routine horse concerns. Leave the completed form in the designated section of the Master Horse Binder. Blank logs are located in the Master Horse Binder.
- ❑ For urgent horse concerns contact the instructor immediately

### **Logging Volunteer Hours**

- ❑ Please be sure to log all volunteer hours in the logbooks located in the Office. Please include your travel time and be aware that you can deduct your mileage on your tax return. Tracking volunteer hours is very important to our organization. The information assists us in applying for grants and recognizing your contribution to Inspire Equine Therapy Program .
- ❑ Before leaving the property please log your hours, return your nametag and read any announcements or notices on the bulletin board. All of these items are located in the barn.

### **Nametags**

Nametags should be worn on each visit to the barn, but are especially important during class

time! Volunteers need to have a nametag on at all times. Labels and markers are available in the main office for temporary nametags if you are not working in the arena.

### **Manual Contacts used with Riders**

To assist a mounted rider, a side walker often has to touch the rider. Always speak to the rider first, asking permission to touch him/her and giving the location you wish to touch. Most rider assistance can be given from the waist down. The following is a list and discussion of the manual contacts used in therapeutic riding.

- ❑ **Ankle Support:** Often riders only need stabilization at their ankles so that they can achieve a balanced riding position. The volunteer grasps just above the rider's ankle from behind using the arm closest to the horse, if that arm is not being used for the Thigh hold. When the Ankle hold is being used in conjunction with the Thigh hold, the volunteer can use the hand farthest from the horse to hold the rider's foot by placing her hand over the rider's arch.
- ❑ **Thigh Hold:** The volunteer uses her arm nearest to the rider and grips the front edge or flap of the saddle in a spot that allows her forearm to rest midway on the rider's thigh. You may even press down and inward when needing to provide greater security for the rider. Do not lean on the horse or rider.

### **Monthly Recognition for Riders & Volunteers**

Please take part in recognizing outstanding contributions of other volunteers by completing a "Volunteer of the Month" nomination form. Please help us recognize the hard work and dedication of our riders by completing a "Rider of the Month" nomination form.

### **Parking**

Parking for volunteers is located in the gravel parking lot located near the grass area near the garden or in the grass area in the front of the property. Do not park in the gravel parking lot area near the house or in the designated disabled parking areas. That is for rider parking and drop off.

### **Side walkers**

The side walker's responsibility is the rider (not the horse). Be prepared to give the rider your undivided attention. Get to know him/her! If you ever feel your rider is "not himself or herself" or are concerned about him or her, notify the Instructor privately. At every lesson, reinforce what has been learned. Ask the student to share what they remember.

### Prior to Class

- ❑ Arrive 15 minutes before class so that you can assist the instructor to prepare the arena and activities for the class.
- ❑ When the rider arrives, greet your rider, then the parents/guardians at the carport by the house. Review your rider's attire, check for appropriate and safe clothing, no dangling jewelry or objects, etc.
- ❑ Fit your rider with a properly sized helmet. See Helmet Fitting Guidelines in this manual for more information. When around a horse it is required that the rider always wear a helmet.
- ❑ Stay in the picnic area with your rider until they are called by the instructor.
- ❑ Volunteers can only escort a person to the restroom and can not be alone with a participant at any time or assist in toileting.

### During Class

- ❑ Only the Instructor or trained volunteer is allowed to mount the rider. Listen for directions from the Instructor for your rider to mount at the mounting ramp. Generally, the rider does not put his feet in the stirrups until he is fully away from the mounting ramp.
- ❑ Never leave your rider's side. If an object falls onto the ground, such as a glove, etc. leave it and tell the Instructor who will then pick it up.
- ❑ The side walker's position is always at the rider's knee. If possible, ask your rider what pressure is comfortable.
- ❑ If your rider has only one side walker, it is best for the side walker to be positioned on the rider's weaker side. If both sides are the same, you should walk on the opposite side of the horse leader.
- ❑ Avoid putting a hand on the rider's back (unless told to do so). Encourage the rider to use his trunk muscles.
- ❑ Reinforce the Instructor's directions. When two side walkers are with one rider, they can share the task of communication with the rider, but be careful not to confuse the rider with too much verbal stimulation. Have the rider carry out tasks, allowing time to react to the instructions. Encourage the rider to do the exercises, games and reinforce the use of new skills.
- ❑ The side walker should ask the rider and the leader to bring the horse into the center of the arena anytime a stop is needed. Some examples are: the rider is off balance and cannot regain balance, the saddle pad has slipped or the girth is loose, the stirrups need readjusting, the rider's helmet needs adjusting, the rider is fatigued, in pain or needs to stop for any other reason (be discreet when discussing a rider in his presence), or if you need to change sides because you are having some difficulty and cannot carry out your job in comfort and safety. When changing sides, one volunteer changes at a time. If there is only one side walker, ask the Instructor for assistance.
- ❑ At the end of class, wait for the Instructor to dismount your rider. Only Instructors or trained volunteers can do the dismount.

#### After Class

- ❑ Accompany your rider to the parents/guardians. You must stay with them at all times until they are returned to their parents/guardians.
- ❑ Wipe out or spray the helmet and return it helmet bin.

#### **Smoking**

For the safety, health, and pleasure of all who spend time at the barn, smoking is not allowed on the property.

#### **Spectators**

Family members and friends of riders and volunteers are always encouraged to visit and observe quietly. When lessons are in progress or horses are out, guests are required to remain in the appropriate spectator area and should always enter and exit through the designated area. Parents and guests are not allowed in the barn during lesson time. Please leave children home when you are volunteering

#### **Suggestions on How to Relate to Individuals with Disabilities**

- ❑ A person with a disability is an individual first and is entitled to the same dignity, respect and considerations expected by anyone.
- ❑ A disability need not be ignored or denied between friends. But, until your relationship is that, show a friendly interest in him/her as a person.

- ❑ Be yourself when you meet him/her.
- ❑ Talk about the same things as you would with anyone.
- ❑ Help him/her only when he/she requests it. If a disabled person falls down, he/she may wish to get up on their own.
- ❑ Be patient. Let the disabled person set their own pace in walking or talking.
- ❑ Don't be afraid to laugh with him/her.
- ❑ Don't stop and stare when you see a disabled person you do not know. He/she deserves the same courtesy any person should receive.
- ❑ Don't be over-protective, over-solicitous and don't shower the disabled person with kindness.
- ❑ Don't ask embarrassing questions. If the disabled person wants to tell you about his/her disability, he/she will bring up the subject themselves.
- ❑ Don't offer pity or charity. People with disabilities want to be treated as an equal. He/she wants the chance to prove him/herself.
- ❑ Don't separate the disabled person from his/her wheelchair, walker, crutches, etc. unless asked. They may want them within reach.
- ❑ Don't make up your mind ahead of time about a disabled person. You may be surprised at how wrong you are in judging his/her interests and abilities.
- ❑ Enjoy your friendship with the disabled person. His/her philosophy and good humor will give you an inspiration.
- ❑ When speaking to someone in a wheelchair, remember to get down to their eye level.
- ❑ Inappropriate behavior is the same for persons with or without a disability.

### **Therapeutic Riding Benefits for Various Disabilities**

At Inspire Equine Therapy Program we focus on ability not disability. This section has been included to assist volunteers with a basic knowledge of common disabilities, the challenges they pose for students, and what benefits therapeutic riding can provide. The list is not all-inclusive but is intended to aid the volunteers in providing the best experience they can for our clients. Student's needs vary greatly. Remember that each client is a unique individual and that we need to focus on meeting those individual needs.

Hearing loss: Loss of hearing might be profound, partial or intermittent. It may have been present at birth or acquired during life. Deafness may not be instantly recognized by others and therefore does not immediately arouse understanding. A lack of hearing means failure to understand what is going on in the world. Deaf students might be overactive, noisy and frustrated. They learn by imitation, but miss out on verbal instruction.

Hints for the side walker: Encourage the rider who is deaf to copy all he/she can. Let him/her watch others, but do not stop talking to him/her, as he/she may hear and understand some of what you are saying. Turn your head toward the rider. He/she may be able to lip read. He/she may be able to understand parts of words, resulting in confusion. Constant and clear repetition of words will help. Try to learn American Sign Language and reinforce with sign, pictures, and language.

Visual handicap: Blindness may be present at birth or result later from disease or accident. Loss of sight might be gradual or sudden with no time to readjust. Visual loss may be partial; it may be restricted by blurring, by being adequate for short distances only, by constant eye movement so the world is constantly moving, by loss of vision to the left or right, by tunnel vision when only objects on the periphery can be seen. Blind people might have difficulty moving about, they may rely on speech and non speech sounds for judging distances and find echoes and

traveling sounds to be of great value.

Hints for the side walker: Use your voice and speak even when moving. Describe where you are so that new sounds can be identified (for example, the sounds that the horse's hooves make on different surfaces or at different gaits.) Increased mobility and independence are the main area of achievement. Help the student count the horse's paces down one side of the arena so they can learn when a corner is near. Remember that a rider who is blind cannot learn by visual example. He/she must find out for him/herself with verbal guidance and touch. Remember also that he/she is not deaf and you do not have to shout at him/her in normal conversation.

Learning disability: This term describes problems in the areas of speech, language, spelling, writing or arithmetic, which occur in children with average or above average intelligence. These learning problems are not a result of visual, auditory, or motor handicaps, cognitive disability, emotional disturbances or environmental disadvantage.

Hints for the side walker: Children with a learning disability are easily distracted, sometimes hyperactive, impulsive, talkative, awkward, aggressive, socially immature and easily frustrated. They will need clear and simple explanations with practical demonstrations of the skills to be learned in the lesson.

Cognitive Disability: Cognitive disability means that intelligence is reduced because of an abnormality of, or damage to, the brain. There are often additional disadvantages such as epilepsy, cerebral palsy and speech disorders. Some riders with cognitive disabilities will have recognizable signs of a condition such as Down syndrome, but others will have no specific clinical conditions. Riders with cognitive disabilities will behave as if they were younger, have limited speech and understanding of speech, will learn slowly and require much repetition. They will have limited awareness of danger and will need careful supervision. They will enjoy the excitement and achievement that riding brings. Individuals with cognitive disabilities are frequently left out of competitive and sporting activities, and may go through life with a sense of failure and frustration. Riding can provide a chance to compete and succeed, and develop a relationship with a horse that does not depend on speech or verbal communication.

Hints for the side walker: A pleasant and understanding approach to the rider with a cognitive disability will be beneficial. Riding provides a social occasion and opportunities for practicing food names, learning to take turns, obeying instructions, and using speech and learning to share. This rider will need encouragement and discipline that he can understand.

Emotional Behavioral Disorder: Most of these students attend special schools and are taught by specially trained staff. The child with an emotional behavioral disorder may have normal, low or high intelligence. He/she may have a behavior disturbance, which means that he/she is at odds with his/her family, friends, the world and him/herself. Frequently he/she is frustrated, unhappy, and bad tempered. This is a term used to describe students whose behavior makes for difficulties during education. He/she may be rough with others. He/she might feel he/she is already a loser in society and therefore dislike competition and the feeling that he/she may lose yet again.

Hints for the side walker: The child with an emotional behavioral disorder usually responds well to the horse and the opportunity to care for him, showing his/her capacity to love and care. Friendships with his/her peers might be difficult, but he may crave the company of his/her helpers and his/her horse. Children with emotional behavioral disorders will respond to a challenge, provided they are given the confidence by support and friendship. Stable work will provide an opportunity to join the team at work, and the enjoyment of a task well done.

Cerebral palsy: This is a medical term denoting brain damage, so that messages for movement, from the brain to the limbs, are imperfect or misdirected, and therefore the limbs may be weak, stiff, clumsy, constantly moving, floppy or more than one of these abnormalities. Muscles involving speech, eye movement, swallowing, and so forth may also be involved. Intelligence may or may not be impaired, but whatever the intelligence, communication is likely to present difficulties. The rider who has cerebral palsy has to make a great effort to do even the simplest movements, so life is a struggle and the smallest skill is a great achievement.

Hints for the side walker: If a good position in the saddle can be maintained with the assistance of the helper, the rider's control of his head, arms, and back muscles may be easier. Foot position in the stirrup is important. In some cases, the helper may grasp the back of the ankle to help keep the heel down. The rider should be encouraged to look where he is going, as control of the head facilitates the use of the arms. Muscle control for people who have cerebral palsy is hard work, but worthwhile when the purpose is riding and when he/she has fun, he/she will cooperate and enjoy riding exercises.

Multiple Sclerosis: This is a disease, which generally affects adults. Nerve transmissions are interrupted on their way to muscles, which results in varying levels of disability. Chief among the many symptoms are difficulty in walking, weakness and clumsiness of the legs and arms and visual problems. Speech is often affected.

Hints for the side walker: It is important for the helper to understand the functional abilities of this rider. The instructor will be aware, on lesson by lesson basis, of what the rider is able to do and with what he will need help. Unlike the rider, who has multiple sclerosis will have good days and not so good days. You need to ask them how they are doing. All riders know their bodies better than we do. Make sure to ask them and do not assume.

Attention Deficit Disorder: Reprinted from NARHA Strides magazine, October 1997 (Vol. 3, No. 3). Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) is a developmental disability estimated to affect between 3-5% of all children (Barkley, 1990). The disorder is characterized by three predominant features: inattentiveness, impulsivity, and in many but not all cases, restlessness or hyperactivity. The disorder is most prevalent in children and is generally thought of as a childhood disorder. Recent studies, however, show that ADD can and does continue throughout the adult years. Estimates suggest that approximately 50-65% of the children with ADD will have symptoms of the disorder as adolescents and adults (Barkley, 1990)

Hints for the side walker: Children with ADD are easily distracted, sometimes hyperactive, impulsive, talkative, awkward, aggressive, socially immature and easily frustrated. They will need clear and simple explanations with practical demonstrations of the skills to be learned in the lesson.

Autism: Reprinted from NARHA Strides magazine, July 1996 Autism is a developmental disability that often appears during the first three years of life. Autism is associated with abnormalities in brain structure and neurological disorder of the brain's function. It is the most common developmental disabilities. It occurs in approximately 1 in 150 births. It is four times more common in boys than it is in girls.

Hints for the side walker: Children with Autism Spectrum disorder may display repetitive behaviors like hand flapping or screaming while on the horse. Remembering that students with Autism are visual learners is important because a person working with them needs to keep all commands short and to the point. The addition of visual cues is also important, especially for students who are non-verbal. A therapeutic riding lesson for a student with autism usually

involves breaking down learning tasks into small components, each one separately geared toward success. Also behavior modification in the form of positive reinforcement for correct behaviors is used with children with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

### **Suggestions for Volunteers**

As an Inspire Equine Therapy Program volunteer, your role is to be a helpful presence and support to the staff. Over time, you will develop friendships and personal relationships with Inspire Equine Therapy Program participants of all ages. This is a wonderful part of being an Inspire Equine Therapy Program volunteer, as it allows you to become part of the lives of a variety of people and lets you share your personal skills and talents. Since Inspire Equine Therapy Program works with many teens and young adults, you will get to know parents, grandparents and siblings of participants who may come along to observe a lesson or therapy session. You will get to participate in the rehabilitation of participants who may be recovering from injury, or share the progress and setbacks of participants who have particular life challenges.

Inspire Equine Therapy Program will provide all volunteers with training, where you will be introduced to specific guidelines and rules that we maintain to ensure that the extent of the relationship you have with our participants feels safe and appropriate for everyone. It is important to keep in mind that “boundaries” are an important part of establishing relationships as a volunteer. While you will become a friend to many of the participants, you should also try to maintain a professional relationship. Remaining professional protects both you and the participant. While you may be asked to physically support a rider on the horse, it is usually discouraged to show physical affection to participants through touch. This is especially true of children. There are many ways you can show that you care and that you are happy to see the participants without touching. However, boundaries go further than touch. You must prepare yourself for participants, who due to their disability or personality, may be difficult, possibly rude, or overly dependent and attached to you. Remaining professional will help you deal with those situations. The key to building supportive, safe, and appropriate volunteer relationships is to help where you can, but to keep in mind that you are a volunteer – not a psychologist, counselor, or therapist. Know your limits and role. If you have a question or concern, please feel free to discuss it with a staff member.

Further, for your own safety and the safety of our students, please let Inspire Equine Therapy Program know if you have any medical conditions that might prevent you from working at certain tasks, i.e.: high blood pressure, heart condition, allergies (i.e. bee stings), etc. Heat, deep footing on the trails, combined with these conditions, could create an emergency situation. The volunteers who come to Inspire Equine Therapy Program are a dedicated group. Their love, commitment, and enthusiasm are second to none. But when a volunteer signs up to help at Inspire Equine Therapy Program, there are all sorts of things to think about.

### **Tips for New Volunteers**

- ❑ Always be on time for your scheduled classes or other tasks.
- ❑ Call if you will miss a class. Otherwise, instructors and participants will be waiting for you.
- ❑ Be a cheerleader for staff, participants and the program.
- ❑ Leave the riding instruction to the instructor. You may want to yell “heels down, Suzanne”, “hold your head up, Billy”, but let the professional do his/her job. You are there to assist. What distinguishes effective class volunteers is that they develop a keen awareness of the instructor/therapist, the rider and the horse. They know when to interact and speak, but also know when to be quiet. Avoid constant chatting with the rider, do not have side conversations with other volunteers and keep focused on the goal of the class. It

is a real skill to be an active participant without becoming a distracting presence.

- ❑ Make sure you follow all Inspire Equine Therapy Program rules, such as not feeding the horses treats by hand. Encourage others to do likewise. Your example counts and you represent Inspire Equine Therapy Program .
- ❑ If you have a major concern about something (such as an Inspire Equine Therapy Program policy) or would like to have something explained to you, set up a meeting with the Volunteer Coordinator or Executive Director.
- ❑ Don't stew on things and do not participate in the "gossip mill" with other volunteers over something that bothers you.
- ❑ Know that all your support of Inspire Equine Therapy Program at classes, special events and other occasions is appreciated, even if you are not thanked on a regular basis.
- ❑ Food goes a long way - keep in mind that staff members, riders and other volunteers get hungry. Donations of delicious snacks and drinks are always appreciated.
- ❑ Make yourself useful by "finding" jobs, such as doing organizing the office, offering to fix fences, getting together a gardening group to do some landscaping around Inspire Equine Therapy Program , etc. Be creative, but always ask before you do something.
- ❑ Don't burn out. Volunteer enough of your time to get enjoyment, but not so much that you will feel overwhelmed and start to resent Inspire Equine Therapy Program . Be prepared that you may be asked to give more and more of your time if you turn out to be a talented volunteer.
- ❑ The Volunteer Coordinator may call you at short notice to sub for another volunteer or to participate in yet another weekend activity or special event. Learn to say "no" if you need a break or if you have other plans and don't feel guilty about doing so. It is the only way to keep your self fresh for years to come.
- ❑ Whether working in the barn or assisting with a class - it gets very hot being outdoors in Florida no matter what time of year. Make sure you drink plenty of fluids to keep hydrated.
- ❑ Again, due to the heat, if at any time during performance of your volunteer tasks, you feel you need a break to cool off - immediately advise a staff member, the instructor, etc. Do not continue if you feel ill.
- ❑ Always sign in upon arrival and sign out when leaving. This way Inspire Equine Therapy Program can keep an accurate record of your volunteer hours.

Inspire Equine Therapy Program believes that every volunteer contribution, whether large or small, is immeasurable in it's worth and value for our organization and, ultimately, our riders. Please accept our sincere thanks for your willingness to be a part of our organization! Please inform our Volunteer Coordinator of any questions or concerns you may have. We look forward to meeting and working with all of you!