



Volunteer Guidelines

Stable Hands is a not for profit tax exempt corporation that provides children and adults the opportunity to extend physical and/or psychological therapy, special education positive interpersonal skill development and rehabilitative therapy into the horsemanship experience. Stable Hands gently and safely challenges riders to perform a variety of physical exercises and games on horseback. It is a specialized service that brings together a qualified instructor, trained volunteers and gentle horses.

The benefits of equine therapy include: greater physical mobility, rehabilitative muscle development, toning and strengthening of the body, self-reliance, decision making experience, enhanced self-esteem/self-confidence, improved listening skills, increased attention span, and improved social skills. Additionally, horseback riding and activities are fun!

Organizational Structure

Stable Hands is governed by a Board of Directors responsible for ensuring that the programs purpose is upheld, setting organizational policies, and maintaining financial and legal standards.

General Volunteer Information

Levels of Volunteering

- **Entry level**- wears yellow safety vest first 6 classes
- **Junior Volunteers**- 8 to 13 years old; required to wear a yellow safety vest.
- **Side Walkers**- 14 years and older
- **Horse Leaders**-16 years and older
- **Senior Volunteers**- has volunteered 30+ hours and is able assist new volunteers.
- **Instructor Assistant**- assists the instructor with lesson.

- 1) Volunteers are not required to have previous experience with horses or people with special needs
- 2) A volunteer application form must be completed to provide us with basic information and insurance carrier.
- 3) Volunteer training classes for the different levels will be offered throughout the year. A well-trained volunteer is safe, effective, and enhances the quality of the therapeutic riding program.
- 4) Volunteers working with students and horses should be able to walk for 50 minutes and jog for short distances.
- 5) Volunteers are requested to act in a manner that will be of credit to Stable Hands. Any disorderly conduct will result in a warning to the volunteer. If negative behavior continues, or if any behavior is deemed dangerous, the volunteer will be dismissed from the program.
- 6) Volunteers should not wear open-toed shoes or sandals. It is suggested that volunteers wear shoes or boots that offer foot protection. Dangling or large jewelry is unsafe and should not be worn. Perfumes can attract bees and other biting insects. No low cut tops or short shorts.
- 7) Confidentiality is to be maintained regarding our student information, including names of students and their special needs.
- 8) A tetanus shot is advised for people working with horses.
- 9) For safety reasons we must request that young children are monitored closely and kept with parents/caretakers
- 10) Pets should not be brought along with you to the property.
- 11) Volunteers may not be on Stable Hands property without a supervising staff person, unless permission has been granted.
- 12) Any incident/injury must be reported to Stable Hands' staff immediately and an incident report filled out.
- 13) Use of alcohol, and non-prescription drugs or chemicals on Stable Hands property, or the use of any such substance which may affect volunteer performance will be cause for immediate dismissal from the program.
- 14) Smoking is not allowed in the buildings.

Valuable Traits of a Good Volunteer

Reliability

Riders look to their team for comfort and stability

Punctuality

Allows us to stay on schedule and avoid frustration for students, other volunteers and staff.

Relaxation and Enjoyment

This relays a confident, pleasant manner to student and horse. An anxious person can make a student and/or horse tense.

Alertness and Anticipation

Despite outward relaxation, always anticipate the unexpected. Being focused on the student and horse, with an ear tuned to the instructor is a must.

Great Listening Ability

A volunteer must be able to hear and accept directions from the instructor at all times.

Responsibility and Cooperation

As a volunteer, you are a member of a team that includes: student, horse, instructor, and your co-volunteers. Each member has specific responsibilities which, when followed through, result in outstanding achievement. The instructor teaches, the leader is responsible for the horse and focuses on the horse's moods and movements. Sidewalkers are responsible for the balance and assistance of the student.

Patience

Endless patience is required to adjust to the often painfully slow movements of some disabled students. Success takes many forms depending upon each student's individual capabilities.

Communication

It is essential that volunteers share questions, observations, concerns and suggestions. Together we can make this an increasingly better program and of even greater benefit to students!

Basic Safety Rules while Working with Horses

- Be alert every second!
- Speak in a normal voice. Do not shout. Never scream.
- Move casually. Walk and do not move quickly or unexpectedly, as the horse may be startled.
- Always let the horse know where you are by talking to it and touching it.
- When possible, walk in front of horses to get to the other side. If you must walk behind, move close to the horse's tail, touching the rump and talking softly.
- Enter and exit narrow doorways/gates slightly ahead of the horse.
- Helmets are required of all riders.
- Raise your hand for immediate assistance.

Horse Psychology and Handling

Horses are creatures of habit. They respond best to a daily routine and consistent treatment. Negative experiences become ingrained very quickly. A horse responds to praise, both verbal and tactile. Always be aware of a horse's mood. If something is agitating it, figure out what can be done to improve the situation. Sudden or jerky movements can be frightening to the horse. Horses have three visual planes: front, sides, and rear. Sudden movement near the head may cause the horse to startle and toss its head up. Move body and hands quietly and calmly with a soothing voice.

Lesson Organization and Content

While lessons will be similar to each other, adaptations will exist due to individual needs. Thus, slight differences in procedure and/or sequence may also occur.

During the Lesson

- 1) Follow the directions of the instructor.
- 2) Allow the student to do the maximum that his/her capabilities allow in following commands and signaling the horse.
- 3) Sidewalkers may assist a student to achieve a command, if necessary, such as helping a hand turn the horse or aiding in following through with a halt signal.
- 4) Enter the center of the arena for all adjustment. Try not to stop in line. Return to the center if assistance is needed from the instructor.
- 5) Encouragement is needed by the students. However, too much talking from volunteers can be distracting, so a balance is needed. Be honest and sincere with your comments.
- 6) Keep three horse lengths between each horse when walking/trotting around the arena or in the trail.

Weather Related Cancellations

The safety and good health of the students, volunteers, and horses are the most important concerns of Stable Hands. For this reason, class will not be held in the event of extreme weather conditions such as thunderstorms or tornado warnings. If weather conditions become questionable during a session, the instructor and staff will take appropriate measures to maintain the safety and well-being of our students, volunteers and guests.

In case of weather concerns, call Faith Gokey at 715-297-5502.