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## Welcome to HORSEPOWER!

We are so pleased that you want to become a volunteer at **HORSEPOWER**. Volunteers are the backbone of our therapeutic riding program for individuals with disabilities and the At-Risk population. Most of our students cannot ride without the physical, emotional, and psychological support of their volunteers. An instructor and a team of three volunteers may be needed for an individual with a disability to ride safely. The expense of two to three additional people, as well as the cost of the lesson itself, would put this activity out of reach for all but a very few. While the volunteer brings enthusiasm, free time, and dedication to the purpose of a therapeutic riding program, it is the volunteer's understanding, observations, and spirit of cooperation that assists in bringing the team together.

Dedicated people from all walks of life team up to give individuals with special needs an opportunity to experience a sport that can make a difference in their physical and mental well-being. Though some volunteers find their way to **HORSEPOWER** individually, many of our volunteers come from community organizations, area colleges, and high schools, as well as local corporations and businesses.

Our goal is to provide a volunteer team for each rider, so both the riders and volunteers can benefit from continuity and establish a lasting relationship of trust with one another. Moreover, volunteers will be able to share knowledge, guidance, patience, and caring with the rider. A professional, safety-conscious and encouraging manner brings feelings of boundless joy and accomplishment for all those involved.

**This handbook is designed as a reference for your orientation to our program.** Volunteer duties, tips on working with horses and the students, and specific information about **HORSEPOWER** are included. Whether you are attending a first orientation or joining us after the session has already begun, we hope this information will be of benefit to you and that you refer to it throughout your time volunteering with us. Your involvement is important in maintaining our commitment to excellence.

### OVERVIEW

**HORSEPOWER** is a non-profit organization serving the Piedmont Triad community since 1995. It was established in response to the community's dire need for a therapeutic equestrian program. We are a Premier Professional Association of Therapeutic Riding (PATH Intl) center. PATH Intl. supports therapeutic riding programs across the country with insurance, technical assistance, and training in safety and teaching techniques. There are over 700 operating centers worldwide.

**OUR MISSION** is to promote and enhance the welfare of individuals with disabilities by providing a program of therapeutic, educational and recreational value, and further, to empower individuals who are mentally, physically and/or emotionally challenged through the use of horses, while providing therapeutic benefits in a safe and controlled atmosphere.

**HORSEPOWER** serves children and adults with a variety of disabilities. We have between 95-145 riders in our program weekly from ages 3 and up. Instructors design and monitor lesson plans for each student to address his or her needs while learning the skills of horseback riding. Individual and class goals encourage each rider to be the best he or she can be, on and off the horse.

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD VOLUNTEER**

- Reliability - Regular attendance, adequate notice, or the provision of a reliable substitute.
- Punctuality - Late arrival is frustrating to a student who is looking forward to his or her weekly ride.
- Be Relaxed - An anxious volunteer contributes to a nervous rider and a tense mount.
- Alertness - Despite your outward relaxation, always anticipate an unexpected emergency.
- Empathy - Avoid false sentimentality. It is important to have empathy and genuine regard toward riders.
- Horse Knowledge - Knowledge of horses is helpful, but many excellent volunteers have little previous experience.
- Patience - Endless patience is necessary to adjust to the often painfully slow movements and reactions of individuals with severe disabilities.
- Sensible, Modest, & Comfortable Clothing - High-heeled shoes or sandals are not allowed. Boots, tennis shoes, and weatherproof boots are protection from mud or the deep footing of the arena.
- **COMMON SENSE – Always!**

### **VOLUNTEER GENERAL INFORMATION**

#### **WHAT TO WEAR**

For safety as well as comfort, volunteers should dress in close-fitting clothing. Loose, floppy clothing can get caught and tangled with equipment. Dress in layers that you can shed as you exercise, especially during cooler months. Bring a jacket, even if you don't need it -- it's cooler at the barn than you may think! During the summer, be sure you dress coolly and appropriately. Sunglasses are a big plus in the sunny months, and sunscreen is recommended. You will be doing a lot of walking and possibly some jogging on uneven terrain, so comfortable shoes are important. It hurts when a horse steps on your foot, so make sure your footwear is sturdy as well. We are a scent free facility. Last, but not least, avoid dangly earrings and bracelets that can hamper your movements, get pulled off by a rider, or distract the horse.

#### **INCLEMENT WEATHER**

If bad weather appears likely, **HORSEPOWER** staff will notify you of any cancellations, but if you have questions, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator or call the office at 336-931-1424 to confirm the status of your class. **Please never assume that class is cancelled!**

#### **SUBSTITUTES**

It is very important to the riders that you make your scheduled classes. If you absolutely must cancel please contact the Volunteer Coordinator or the office to let us know as **soon as possible**. While we realize that situations can occur unexpectedly, any advance notice of absence from your scheduled session would be appreciated so we can make arrangements for a substitute. If you would like to be on a substitute list, please sign up at the volunteer

orientation or through the Volunteer Coordinator. **Remember, volunteers are the lifeline of HORSEPOWER!**

### **MINIMUM AGE REQUIREMENT & INSURANCE, LIABILITY RELEASE**

No one under the age of 14 is allowed to work directly with our horses and riders due to insurance restrictions; however, youths aged 13 accompanied by a parent or family member are welcome to clean tack, clean the stable area, help at horse shows, etc. Additionally, working with horses can cause potentially dangerous situations, so we ask that all prospective volunteers sign the liability release on the volunteer form.

### **DO VOLUNTEERS RIDE HORSEPOWER HORSES?**

This is a question many volunteers ask! Because we focus on the needs of our challenged riders and providing a meaningful experience for them, offering lessons or riding time to volunteers would be a strain on the horses and staff.

### **SIGN-IN PROCEDURES & RECORDING HOURS**

Your volunteer time is important to us for funding purposes and recognizing outstanding volunteers. Please be sure to record your hours each time you come. The sign-in sheet is kept at the picnic shelter. Include your travel time and round off your hours to the nearest half hour. Volunteer mileage may be tax deductible-check with your tax preparer.

### **SAFETY RULES**

- Staff and volunteers should act in the best interest of the students in terms of safety, respect, and privacy.
- No smoking, vaping, or tobacco of any kind is allowed on property.
- All children under 14 should be supervised by an adult when on the premises.
- Dogs or pets are not allowed in or near the barn, if a service animal is needed, they must stay in the parking lot or concrete waiting area. All visiting service animals must be leashed or restrained properly.
- ALL program participants MUST always wear helmets when working with the horses and while mounted.
- Horses must be properly tacked with all safety equipment.
- Only authorized personnel (instructors, volunteers, and staff) are allowed in the stall area and teaching ring.
- Only instructors, trained volunteers, and staff are allowed in the pastures or adjacent areas.
- Observe and obey all safety signs posted.
- All gates should remain closed during classes.
- No illegal activities will be tolerated on the grounds or at any HORSEPOWER event, including but not limited to: smoking or drinking by minors, illegal drug use, sexual misconduct or harassment, assault, physical or verbal abuse, animal abuse, etc.
- Volunteers should report anything that seems unusual about riders, horses, the facility, the equipment, etc. to the instructor or any HORSEPOWER staff member.

### **GUIDELINES DURING THE RIDING LESSON**

#### **WHAT ACTUALLY TAKES PLACE DURING A RIDING LESSON?**

One or several volunteers and an instructor can work with a group of riders in an enclosed ring, open field, or stable area for any of several purposes. The rider may learn special riding skills, care of the horse, or how to saddle a horse. The rider may play games on horseback, learn dressage, or go for a trail ride. Each rider will have individual goals to work toward. As a volunteer, you will be involved in every aspect of the lesson from grooming and tacking, through the class itself, and cleanup afterwards.

## PREPARING FOR CLASS

It is important to arrive **30 minutes before class if you are a leader** and **15 minutes before class if you are a sidewalker** to receive your volunteer assignments and assist in grooming and tacking horses. Some of our riders come early to groom and tack their horses with your assistance. It is especially important that you are timely for these classes.

### DO NOT FORGET TO:

1. Record your hours on the sign-in sheet
2. If you are new to working around horses and are unsure about working with a horse on your own, please ask for assistance.
3. Do what you feel comfortable and competent doing - it's ok to ask for help. If you are uncomfortable, the horses will sense your tension.

## BEFORE CLASS BEGINS

**Sidewalkers** - Check to see that your rider is prepared to ride. All riders **must** wear a safety helmet. Helmets will be fitted to each rider the first day of class and the sizes will be recorded. Check to make sure that the rider's helmet fits properly and that the chin strap is fastened. Sidewalkers are to stay with their riders while the horses are led to the mounting area.

## MOUNTING PROCEDURES

During mounting, leaders hold the horses in the designated holding area, while sidewalkers stay with the riders and wait in the designated rider area to be called by the instructor. Mounting is conducted by the instructor, or someone trained in mounting techniques; volunteers may assist as directed.

There are two types of mounting:

- **RAMP MOUNT**
  - For riders using wheelchairs or otherwise not able to climb stairs.
- **BLOCK MOUNT**
  - For more independent riders or small riders to reach the stirrup level.

### When using the mounting ramp or block the SIDEWALKER(S) should:

1. Position yourself at the end of the ramp or block when called by the instructor.
2. Support the rider as directed by instructor.

## THE RIDING LESSON

1. Leaders and sidewalkers should work together.
2. Volunteers should aid the rider only if needed. Riders need to develop independence, but not at the expense of good safety.
3. Riders should walk around the FRONT of their horse and leader when going from one side to the other, **not behind the horse.**
4. Always stay with your horse and rider, unless otherwise instructed.
5. When stopping, if it is at all possible, your team should come to the center of the ring to stop so as not to create a traffic jam on the rail.
6. **ASK THE LEADER TO STOP THE HORSE IF:**
  - The rider is off balance and cannot regain it while the horse is moving.
  - The rider is fatigued, in pain, or needs to stop for other reasons.
  - The saddle pad has slipped, or the girth is loose.

- The rider's helmet needs adjustment.
- The stirrups need adjustment.
- You need to change sides or are having some difficulty and cannot carry out your job in comfort or efficiency. When changing sides, have one volunteer change at a time. Never leave the rider unsupported!

### **SPECIAL NOTES:**

- Falls off horses are rare, but they can happen. Do not panic! Leaders stop all horses, and each volunteer tends to their rider or horse. The instructor is responsible for the fallen student. Safety is important, and we need to take our jobs very seriously, but we are also here to have fun! Do not leave your horse and rider to help others. The instructor will ask for help as appropriate.
- Be patient with your riders. Give them time and a half to respond, to try, and to do the task. The rewards, no matter how small or large, make your volunteer work very worthwhile. Without volunteers, it would be impossible to make this program a reality. THANK YOU!

### **AFTER CLASS**

**Sidewalker Responsibilities:** After dismounting, take your rider back to the waiting area to put away their helmet and return them to their parents or responsible party. Complete side walker notes on forms provided by the instructor.

Being familiar with HORSEPOWER's Emergency Action Guide will help personnel be prepared in an emergency. Participation in periodic drills of emergency procedures will also enhance an individual's ability to handle a crisis.

### **HORSEPOWER Therapeutic Learning Center's EMERGENCY ACTION GUIDE**

HORSEPOWER is a non-profit organization serving the Piedmont Triad community since 1995.

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### **GENERAL INFORMATION:**

The keys to handling almost all emergencies are:

- 1) Remain calm at all times.
- 2) Be prepared for action ahead of time.
- 3) Work as a team.
- 4) Maintain communication.

HORSEPOWER's focus in providing services is to make sure everyone involved (students, volunteers, staff and horses) are afforded the safest conditions possible. Protection of the rider is always the priority. In the event of an incident occurring in the ring, it is left to the discretion of the instructor to decide whether to dismount riders. **If an emergency occurs which affects an individual rider and the sidewalker feels that he/she cannot wait for the instructor's call, he/she may execute an emergency dismount.**

When any emergency occurs in the ring (or during a class of mounted riders) the following procedure will be implemented:

1. All horses will be halted away from the incident
2. All leaders will position themselves in front of the horses
3. All sidewalkers will stabilize their riders
4. The instructor will appoint (if needed) someone to:
  - a. \*telephone the emergency number and give directions to the center
  - b. \*get the Emergency Medical Release Forms of the rider and give them to the instructor.
  - c. \*direct the emergency vehicle to the accident site, asking that **all lights and sirens be turned off to avoid frightening the horses.**
5. The instructor will supervise (if needed) the dismounting and evacuation of riders first, then horses from the ring area. The sidewalkers will escort the riders and their caregivers to the **CLASSROOM** and the leaders will be responsible for returning the horses to their stalls or other assigned area.
6. Initial response First Aid will be administered to the injured/ill rider by the instructor or other qualified personnel until more advanced medical care arrives if needed.

If an emergency occurs in another area (i.e. the stall area), the instructor or other trained personnel will direct the uninjured parties to the **CLASSROOM** and appropriate action (as indicated in “emergency in the ring section”) will be taken to assist the victim. If an emergency occurs in the classroom, the **HORSEPOWER** staff facilitating the activity will direct volunteers, students, caregivers, etc.

When an emergency occurs, **REMAIN CALM. SURVEY THE SCENE** to assess any other potential dangers. Call 911 whenever the situation is more than you can safely handle or if you are unsure about what to do.

Telephones are in the tack room and administrative office and with every instructor.

Emergency information is posted near each telephone, in the office, feed room, and at the entrance of the covered arena.

**The following are situations which 911 should be called before any other action is taken:**

- |                                                    |                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| - Cardiac arrest /chest pain/possible heart attack | - Paralysis                                           |
| - Respiratory arrest / breathing difficulty        | - Seizures of unknown origin or of a prolonged nature |
| - Unconsciousness                                  | - Critical burns                                      |
| - Drowning                                         | - Obvious fractures                                   |
| - Electrocutation                                  | - Multiple injuries                                   |
| - Head / Neck injury                               | - Poisonous snake bite                                |
| - Severe bleeding                                  |                                                       |
| - Choking                                          |                                                       |

**When 911 is called, be prepared to give the dispatcher the following information:**

- Location of the emergency-**4537 Walpole Rd. High Point,NC 27265.**
- The telephone number you are calling from (**office 336-931-1424**) and your name.
- The nature of the emergency (i.e. heart attack, possible spinal cord injury).
- The victim’s condition (i.e. conscious, breathing) and the First Aid measures which are being administered (i.e. CPR, pressure to control bleeding)

A staff member should locate a copy of the victim’s **Authorization for Emergency Treatment Form** online and any other pertinent health-related forms to accompany the victim to the emergency room/ hospital. The instructor will notify the parents/caretakers indicated on the forms or will designate another staff member or volunteer to do the notification.

## SITUATIONS THAT FRIGHTEN HORSES

If low flying planes, road traffic, insect bites or stings, or other events frighten horses while students are mounted, the instructor will have the leaders “hold hard” to the horses and speak reassuringly to them. Everyone should be prepared to dismount students if an emergency arises and the instructor does not have time to come and dismount the rider.

## FIRE PROCEDURES

- 1) Remove everyone quickly from the area and have them assemble in the emergency meeting place for a head count. The primary emergency meeting place is the **CLASSROOM**. If the classroom is the site of the fire, then the designated meeting place will be in the office.
- 2) Call 911 from a safe location.
- 3) Remove horses only if able to do so without risking injury to self or others. If possible, place halters and leads on the horses, cover their eyes and lead them out of the stalls. Assemble horses on the grass pasture at the back of the property. Be sure to shut and chain the gate after delivering horses to the pasture. If barn cats are in sight and reach, try to catch them and place them in office (do so only without risking injury to self and others.)

\* Fire extinguishers are in the tack room, in the classroom, in the office, and in the covered arena. Only attempt to extinguish a fire if it is small and you have a clear route of escape. Aim the extinguisher at the base of the flame and make a sweeping motion across the flame base.

\* If an individual should become engulfed by fire, try to extinguish the flame by using the “drop and roll” method. Do not run or let the victim run. If available, use water and/or blankets to aid in extinguishing the fire.

## TORNADOES, HIGH WIND, LIGHTNING, HAIL

If a tornado or bad storm is impending, all classes and activities will be cancelled. If a storm arises somewhat unexpectedly and there is time to travel to a safe shelter, all nonessential personnel should be directed to go home or to the closest designated shelter. Other personnel should meet in the classroom for further instructions from the head staff member. **If a storm occurs suddenly while students are riding or are in the ring, the instructor will direct the leaders to “hold hard” to their horses and speak reassuringly to them while the students are dismounted.** Everyone will seek appropriate shelter. People will be directed to the classroom, trying to minimize exposure in open high places and trees especially if lightning and high winds are involved. If it is necessary to use the covered area as shelter, stay in the center of the arena and away from the metal structure. Leaders will try to separate the students from the horses as well as possible when having to share the same shelter.

## VEHICLE / EQUIPMENT ACCIDENTS

If someone is struck by a vehicle, anyone approaching the scene should assess the scene for safety before proceeding (i.e. all vehicles in the area are in “park” with brakes set and engines off, front end loaders on tractors should be placed in lowered position, traffic in area should be stopped, etc). Victim should be assessed using standard First Aid/CPR procedures. Activate EMS if necessary.

## EARTHQUAKE

If an earthquake occurs, the instructor will stop the class. The leaders will “hold hard” to their horses and speak reassuringly to them while the students are dismounted. The students will be taken to the center of the arena to wait for further instructions from the instructor.

## **DISEASE PRECAUTIONS**

Universal precautions should be employed when contacting all blood and bodily fluids-see included procedures.

**Please be familiar with the following emergency procedures:**  
**Exposure Control Plan**

### **UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS**

There are some universal precautions that we suggest all individuals take. They apply to situations involving blood and blood components. Semen and vaginal secretions; Fluids: cerebrospinal (brain/spine), synovial (joint), peritoneal (body cavity), pericardial (heart), amniotic, body tissue, pleural (lung), saliva from a bite. Situations of less urgency include: feces, nasal secretions, sputum, sweat, tears, urine, vomitus. These assume that no visible blood is present. We would still advise taking general infection control precautions.

### **STANDARD UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS INCLUDE:**

- 1) Avoid direct contact with blood or other body fluids. Use latex gloves and/or other protective clothing as a protective barrier. Use latex gloves when cleaning up blood or other body fluids. Wash hands and skin surfaces immediately and thoroughly after potential exposure incidents. Remove and launder contaminated clothing.
- 2) Wash hands frequently, using soap, warm water, and a fresh paper towel to dry. Lather hands with soap for 10-15 seconds before rinsing. Wash hands before eating, after visiting the restroom, and before and after donning gloves.
- 3) Cover open cuts, sores, or abrasions with sterile dressing or bandage, or other protective barrier.
- 4) Clean up spills in a timely fashion, using an appropriate disinfectant solution, found in the classroom bathroom.
- 5) Decontaminate mops, brooms and towels used in cleaning up blood or body fluid spills by soaking in health code standard cleaning solution, towels should then be laundered.
- 6) Decontaminate bathroom facilities and other high-risk exposure areas with appropriate health code standard cleaning solution.
- 7) Maintain individual personal hygiene items, they should not be shared.
- 8) If it is necessary to perform CPR, it is advisable to use a mouthpiece or mask.

### **RESPONDING TO AN INCIDENT**

Incidents may arise during classes that may put us at risk of possible exposure to blood and body fluids. Instructors are expected to respond to any instances that may occur and provide First Aid assistance until a more qualified individual arrives. Because of this expectation, HORSEPOWER recommends that we stay prepared for such occasions. We have small blue waist packs that have in them: latex gloves and tissues. It is strongly recommended that each instructor have one of these packs readily available when teaching a lesson. There are First Aid kits in the covered arena, office, and tack room. These kits have more extensive first aid supplies - make sure you know the contents and report any usage.

### **Personnel Contact Numbers:**

HORSEPOWER office: 336-931-1424

Emily Mann: 336-509-8795

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