

2011
VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



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WELCOME

Volunteers are the heart and muscle of PPTRC. We hope you are as glad to be here as we are to have you. This guide is meant to help answer questions about our program, its purpose, policies and basic procedures. Nothing takes the place of hands-on experience, but this publication can serve as a helpful reference.

PPTRC MISSION

The Pikes Peak Therapeutic Riding Center strives to enhance the quality of life for people with disabilities or special needs through equine assisted activities and therapies.

PPTRC NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY

Pikes Peak Therapeutic Riding Center, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, does not and will not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, marital status, political affiliation, age, and gender expression. This non-discrimination policy includes, but is not limited to, employment, retention, salary and benefits, participation on the board of directors, acceptance of Volunteers, acceptance of riders desiring to utilize our services, and scholarships for those riders.

(Originally adopted by the Board of Directors February 16, 1999; reviewed and revised May 20, 2008)

VOLUNTEER QUESTIONS

What does my role as a Volunteer entail?

The two types of Volunteers utilized in classes are SIDEWALKERS and HORSE LEADERS.

You will also be asked to help with barn work, getting horses ready for class and other duties around the ranch. We all are expected to pitch in with ANY work that needs to be done!

If you sign up to Volunteer in a class, PLAN TO COMMIT TO THE ENTIRE 8 WEEK SESSION. The riders and instructors depend on you being there. You may also get a call from our Volunteer Coordinator asking you if you can fill in for another Volunteer who needs to miss their class. Please let us know if there are other days you might be able to fill in!

We also need help in the office, with such projects as fundraising, organizing special events. You may be asked to join us at a special event such as a parade or fund raiser!

One of the greatest gifts you have to offer is to be a positive, **role model**. It does not matter if you are an expert horse person, trained therapist or novice Volunteer. If you are open and willing to learn new things, and if you conduct yourself with respect for people and horses, you will make a significant contribution to PPTRC. Not to mention, you will take away skills that are priceless!

When should I arrive for class?

Plan to arrive 45 minutes early on the first day of the new session or your first day here at the center. If you arrive and a class is underway, look for the Team Leader for direction. They will need time to meet you and give everyone appropriate assignments. For the rest of the session, arrive 30 minutes before class begins in order to have the horses and facility ready for the class. The Volunteer Coordinator will tell you what your time commitment is when you sign up. For a one-hour class, you should plan to spend two hours at PPTRC per week (1/2 hour before class, plus the time it takes to put the horse away and consult with the instructor).

What should I bring to class?

Bring a water bottle every time you come and drink plenty of water to prevent dehydration. If you are new, you will need to complete and sign a Volunteer Registration and Release Form. Bring your medical and insurance information. If you are a minor, you will need your parents or guardians to sign the release. Volunteers must be at least 14 years of age to qualify for leading or sidewalking. If you are under 14, a parent or guardian must be working with you at all times.

What should I wear?

Here are a few tips for you to prepare for your Volunteer duties at PPTRC.

- Dress in comfortable, layered clothing that can get dirty.
- Wear sturdy athletic shoes or boots, as you will be doing a lot of walking. Plain canvas shoes, sandals, or other non-sturdy footwear are not permitted. Also, remember that you will be walking in sand and it gets in tennis shoes and can be really irritating!
- It is always windier and cooler at the Center, so dress in layers and bring a jacket. Make sure all jackets, sweatshirts, shirts, etc. are buttoned, zippered or snapped to keep from flapping in the wind, which may spook the horses.
- Wear gloves during cooler weather.
- Wear a warm hat in the winter and a sun hat or baseball cap in the summer.
- Wear sunscreen.
- Long pants are mandatory.
- Tank tops are not permitted.
- Do not wear hanging jewelry, as it may dangle, get caught or tempt little rider hands.
- Hair should be tied back, out of the way.
- No perfumes and/or colognes, or lotions as they can attract stinging insects and sometimes irritate the horses.

What if I am unable to make it to class?

Please call 719-495-3908 or email (spicer@pptrc.org) as far in advance as possible. We prefer you inform us at least 72 hours in advance, so that we can find a substitute. If something comes up at the last minute, please call so we know you remain committed and we can count on you for future classes. If you are able to substitute, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator.

Commitment and consistency are vital to the therapy process. We require you to commit to an entire session unless you have made advance plans with our Volunteer Coordinator. Missing one week out of a session is acceptable. If you know you will be unable to attend most of your classes, please talk with the Volunteer Coordinator about other options. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of your consistent attendance as a Volunteer at PPTRC. We cannot conduct a class without Volunteers. As a PPTRC Volunteer, you will reap the rewards of truly making a difference in people's lives.

What if the weather is bad? How will I know if my class is canceled? Will there be a make-up class?

As soon as we decide to cancel a class, we put a message on the answering machine greeting (719-495-3908). If you hear the "standard" message, your class is still on. We attempt to cancel class at least two hours before it is scheduled. Whatever the weather is at your home, it may be different at PPTRC, so call when the weather is questionable. The Team Leader or Volunteer Coordinator will also try calling you. We do our best to contact all riders and Volunteers when we cancel classes. But we have many calls to make, and sometimes we fail to inform everyone before they leave home. We apologize, in advance, if this ever happens to you. It's always a good idea to always call if there is any weather in the area.

How does therapeutic riding benefit riders?

Our basic *Therapeutic Riding* classes emphasize independence. They teach individuals basic riding skills (such as mounting/dismounting, riding positions, maneuvering the horse, and various gaits), which promote physical, emotional, and psychological developments. The specific objectives of the lessons vary with each rider's needs. For some, goals include increased balance and coordination, along with gains in stamina or muscle tone. For others, the focus is on self-esteem, trust building, and the increased ability to listen, follow instructions and learn. All riders improve skills such as working in groups, building positive relationships with adults, accepting responsibility and tolerating constructive criticism. Therapeutic horseback riding offers a *newfound freedom to many children and adults with disabilities*.

Hippotherapy is a unique program that only Pikes Peak Therapeutic Riding Center offers in all of southern Colorado. Physical, occupational and speech therapists evaluate individuals needing this specialized therapy and lead the classes. The classes challenge the riders' balance, improve their posture, strengthen their muscles and reduce their spasticity.

Both programs reach beyond the tangible benefits. Riders benefit emotionally in areas such as self-confidence, sense of accomplishment and motivation. Trust, communication, teamwork, responsibility, respect and caring are learned directly through horsemanship. Through mastery of consistent techniques, riders discover how to effectively control 1,000-pound animals, even though they lack control in many other areas of their lives.

Other activities include participation in our Special Rodeo and riding demonstrations at our Miracles in Motion fundraising event. We also offer special educational opportunities for instructors and therapists around the country – amplifying our impact for those with disabilities throughout the United States.

What else do I need to know about PPTRC Policies and Procedures?

We focus on safety, courtesy, respect and kindness. Here are the rules that help us maintain our standards:

- When you begin Volunteering at PPTRC, the Team Leader will consult with you to decide where your abilities will best serve the program initially. Instructors and Team Leaders will give individual assignments during classes. The Team Leaders and Instructors reserve the right to place, re-assign, or dismiss Volunteers based on his/her assessment of qualifications. The Volunteer Coordinator, Team Leaders, Staff and Instructors do not discriminate based on race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, political affiliation, nation origin, age or disability.
- Please DO NOT feed the horses. Riders are permitted to give a snack after their ride with the Instructors permission..
- Smoking is not allowed anywhere on the property, including your vehicle. Second-hand smoke can affect some of our riders with compromised respiration.
- No littering. Cigarette butts can easily start a brush fire. Garbage becomes airborne.
- Speed limit on grounds is 10 MPH EVERYWHERE ON THE PROPERTY. You may be ticketed on this property if seen speeding.
- Park in designated areas only.
- Pets are not allowed.
- No profane language is to be spoken at PPTRC. Remember that we are role models.
- No cell phone or IPOD usage is allowed while in the arena or on the trail. You WILL be dismissed if you are seen using, texting, or listening to either device during class.
- Guests or children of Volunteers are permitted by prior arrangement only. They are expected to follow all safety and courtesy rules. Children must be directly supervised at all times. PPTRC is not responsible for their safety and does not provide childcare service. PPTRC Staff and Team Leaders and Instructors reserve the right to dismiss any guest or visitor for inappropriate behavior. PPTRC does not discriminate based on race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, political affiliation, nation origin, age or disability.

- *Always* sign in and out on the Volunteer attendance sheet located in the Volunteer Room. This information is imperative to our continuing grant support. We also review these records at the end of the year to determine the recipients of awards. We can provide you with written documentation of the hours you have Volunteered at PPTRC at your request; please allow two weeks notice.
- If you would like to come at a time in addition to your regularly scheduled time, please notify the Volunteer Coordinator in advance.
- Hugs and other displays of affection should be left to our clients to initiate. Please refrain from asking our riders for hugs, and never give them without asking permission.
- Do not handle horses without permission/instruction from your instructor.
- Special grooming procedures (especially those that involve scissors or clippers) are not to be done without permission of a Team Leaders or the Instructor.
- Please notify the Center of address, email and phone changes as soon as they are in effect. If you decide to discontinue your participation in the PPTRC Volunteer program, please notify the Volunteer Coordinator and request to be placed on the inactive Volunteer list. You may receive a brief exit interview from the Volunteer Coordinator.
- No weapons or explosives of any kind are permitted on the property.
- Use of the PPTRC logo without permission from the Executive Director is prohibited.
- An accusation against you for sexual discrimination and/or harassment is grounds for immediate dismissal and/or suspension of duties.
- Conflicts with other Volunteers and/or staff should be brought to the attention of the Volunteer Coordinator. The Volunteer Coordinator will mediate between the concerned parties and will make every attempt to resolve issues in a timely and fair manner.
- Treat every person and horse with respect. Help each other. We are *all* part of the team.

Confidentiality

We have a policy of confidentiality. Names, specific conditions or other personal details are to be held in strict confidence. By all means, share the stories, the successes and the warmth – but please leave out the personal details. This includes detailed information of riders, other Volunteers, donors, staff and instructors. All riders, Volunteers and instructors must sign a PHOTO RELEASE so that photographs can be used for publications and on our website.

Emergencies

All Instructors are CPR and First Aid certified. Please follow the Instructor's directions in the event of an emergency. Phones and emergency procedures are located in the PPTRC office. First Aid kits are located in the restroom within the Volunteer Room and the PPTRC office.

Occurrences

Volunteers are required to report any occurrences to Staff and Instructors whether it results in an injury or not. Examples include fires, natural disasters, crises arising out of misconduct or other situations posing serious threat to the safety of others. This also includes serious injury from “near-misses” and other emergencies that may not result in immediately apparent injuries but are potentially harmful to personnel or participants. Examples may include an equine stepping on a human foot, difficulties encountered during transfers (mounting a rider), equine bite, etc.

Volunteer Comments and Feedback

Please share your ideas, questions and concerns to help us be the best therapeutic riding program possible. We really do take your input seriously. There is a suggestion box in the Volunteer room, if you wish to remain anonymous.

DESCRIPTION OF DISABILITIES

The following is a brief, non-medical description of some of the disabilities and conditions of riders. This is not intended as a comprehensive explanation of a specific disability, but rather as a general overview, along with an explanation of how therapeutic riding is beneficial.

Autism/PDD (pervasive developmental disorder) – A disorder of unknown origin in which the individual has difficulties with speech, social interaction and handling various sensory input. *Benefits:* Calming, social interaction, stimulation of speech and language skills.

Cerebral Palsy (CP) – A non-progressive disorder thought to be due in part to loss of oxygen to brain at or before birth. Speech, hearing, vision, learning and/or memory deficits may be present; however, normal intelligence is generally not affected unless further brain damage has occurred. There are three main types of cerebral palsy:

1. **SPASTIC:** Occurs in approximately 70 percent of all cases. It may impact motor function in one or more of the limbs. The muscles stay flexed and tense, and the facial muscle involvement may affect speech. *Benefits:* Riding may improve balance, posture, and the ability to relax. It also strengthens weakened muscles.
2. **ATHETOID:** Occurs in approximately 20 percent of all cases. It manifests itself in slow, jerky, involuntary movements of the arms and/or legs. It appears more obvious during period of emotional tension. Speech functions are usually involved. *Benefits:* Riding may improve balance, relaxation of muscles and posture.
3. **ATAXIC:** Occurs in approximately 10 percent of all cases. Weakness, poor coordination and difficulty with quick and fine motor movements result in loose, “rag-doll” appearance. *Benefits:* Riding may help strengthen and tighten loose muscles, while improving balance, posture and fine motor skills.

Developmentally or Cognitive Delays (DD) – A genetic defect where the individual develops at a below normal rate in terms of intelligence. It may also involve physical and emotional development. *Benefits:* Riding helps increase group activity skills, coordination, balance, posture, gross and fine motor skills, and eye-hand coordination.

Down’s Syndrome – Also known as Trisomy 21, Trisomy G. It is one of the most widely identified hereditary disabilities. Individuals with Down’s Syndrome have a mean IQ of approximately 50, and are physically, mentally and developmentally delayed. *Benefits:* Riding improves expressive and receptive language skills, gross and fine motor skills, balance, posture and coordination.

Emotional Disabilities (ED) – A congenital and acquired syndrome often compounded by learning and/or physical disabilities incorporating numerous other pathologies. In general, emotionally disturbed individuals have trouble coping with everyday life situations and interpersonal relationships. Behaviors such as short attention span, avoidance, aggression, autism, paranoia and schizophrenia may be exhibited. *Benefits:* Riding can provide structure to a disorganized thought pattern, increase feelings of self-confidence and self-awareness, and provide appropriate social therapy.

Hearing Impaired – It may vary from mild to severe, and may be congenital or acquired. True deafness is defined as hearing loss in both ears severe enough to prevent communication through the ear, even with amplification. Communication with the deaf may involve lip reading, finger spelling (the manual alphabet) or sign language. *Benefits:* Riding helps increase self-confidence, balance, posture and coordination. It also provides appropriate social outlets and interactions.

Learning Disability (LD) – Learning disabled is a “catch-all” phrase for individuals who have problems processing, sequencing and problem solving, but who appear to have otherwise normal intelligence skills. New learning generally takes time to be integrated and may need to be reviewed frequently to ensure retention. *Benefits:* Riding may increase attention span, group activity skills, cooperation, receptive and expressive language skills, posture and coordination.

Muscular Dystrophy (MD) – A hereditary disorder usually appearing in infancy or early childhood. It is characterized by progressive skeletal and muscle deterioration. There is no known cure for MD, which often reduces life expectancy. *Benefits:* Riding may slow muscle tone degeneration and maintain muscle function. Riding provides appropriate opportunities for social interaction and alleviating emotional depression.

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) – A slowly progressive central nervous system disease usually occurring in adults between 20-40 years of age, and more frequently in women than men. Symptoms and manifestations include weakness in one or more limbs, visual impairment, minor gait disturbance, course of progression with periods of remission. There is no known cure for MS. *Benefits:* Riding maintains and strengthens weak muscles and provides highly recommended opportunities for emotional therapy and social output.

Spina Bifida – A congenital defect where there is incomplete closure of the spinal column at birth. There are usually varying degrees of paralysis of the lower limbs; life expectancy is not necessarily shortened. *Benefits:* Riding improves balance, posture and muscle strength in the affected limbs.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) – Head injuries cause more disabilities in people under the age of 50 than any other neurological cause. Injuries may be closed head (intracranial bleeding causes pressure) or open penetration (profuse bleeding and open wounds ensure permanent damage). Deficits may include gross and fine motor skills, cognitive disabilities, speech, balance and psychological alterations. Social skills may be affected and appear inappropriate. *Benefits:* Riding improves balance, posture, gross and fine motor skills, and cognitive deficits, such as sequencing and processing.

Visually Impaired – Visual deficits may range from severely limited to total, and may be caused by congenital defect, traumatic illness or injury. If the onset of impairment is from birth to five years of age, the person affected has no visual memory. Impairments occurring after five years of age are accompanied by memories of people, places and things. *Benefits:* Riding helps orient the body in space and improves balance, posture, coordination and self-awareness.

FROM THE RIDER'S PERSPECTIVE

Be sensitive to:

1. Separating us from our wheelchairs, crutches or braces. Do so only when asked. Do not sit or play with our wheelchairs or crutches without permission from us.
2. Helping us only when we request it. When we fall down or have difficulty outside the class period, allow us to solve the problem before asking if we need help.
3. Appropriate touching. Be aware of our level of tolerance. Volunteer and staff interaction with us should be conducted with our dignity in mind. Give warning of where your hands will be holding us whenever possible.
4. The commitment you have made: **WITHOUT YOU, WE CANNOT RIDE**

A HISTORY OF PPTRC

Pikes Peak Therapeutic Riding Center (PPTRC) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation committed to delivering the highest quality of therapeutic riding to people with disabilities. We are a professional, dedicated and responsive team working in partnership with the community.

PPTRC is the oldest, largest and the only “premier accredited” therapeutic riding center in southern Colorado. Originally called Acts 19:11 because of the “miracles” of therapeutic riding, PPTRC began in 1981 after several families and health professionals discovered the benefits of horseback riding for people with disabilities. Since becoming incorporated in 1982, we have provided equine-assisted therapy to riders facing physical, cognitive, emotional, behavioral and learning challenges. Some of these challenges often are the result of cerebral palsy, developmental delays, autism, head injuries, Down syndrome, multiple sclerosis, and muscular dystrophy.

PPTRC Volunteer Handbook [2010]

In 1999, it was apparent that we were outgrowing our five acres on the edge of Colorado Springs. After investigating numerous options ranging from partnerships with other agencies to limiting our offerings, we accepted the Pikes Peak Range Rider Foundation's invitation to use approximately 40 acres of their Latigo Heritage Center in northeast El Paso County. With the help of numerous Volunteers and generous donors, renovations were made and we moved into our new facility March 2004. Our primary focus is assisting people with disabilities in the greater Colorado Springs area.

VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

SIDE WALKERS are responsible for the safety of riders. You help get horses ready for class, and assist your rider with helmeting and mounting. You guide your rider safely as he or she gets to know and care for the horse. During the class itself, your job is to prevent the rider from falling off. Your instructor will give you directions on what type of hold to use with each rider.

- If a rider needs two side walkers, one will speak to the rider, reinforcing Instructor's directions and offering encouragement. The other side walker will remain silent to avoid confusion.
- Be sure not to lean on the horse or rider, as it may disturb the rider or the horse.
- Observe the rider with your front or side vision at all times. Never become so relaxed that you are not aware of the rider, horse, leader, instructor and the activities around you.

HORSE LEADERS are responsible for the horse's safety and control at all times. The horse, not the rider, is your responsibility. You reinforce rider's signals to the horse and maintain proper distance from other horses in the class while walking, changing directions, and passing. You don't interact directly with the rider; that is the side walker's job. This role takes extensive horse experience, and if you are new to horses you will be assigned to sidewalk first. But do not hesitate to let us know if you want to learn to lead as well, and we can train you as you go.

- Keep a minimum of two horse lengths between your horse and the horse in front of you.
- Always lead the horse, just behind the horse's head, holding the lead line. Make sure the lead rope is between the reins, not over them.
- Make turns slowly. Allow space for the side walkers when next to a fence or obstacle.

TEAM LEADERS AND INSTRUCTORS DEPEND ON ALL VOLUNTEERS FOR ONGOING OBSERVATIONS. ALL DECISIONS AND STRATEGIES WILL BE DETERMINED BY THE INSTRUCTOR. THE INSTRUCTOR IS THE FINAL AUTHORITY.