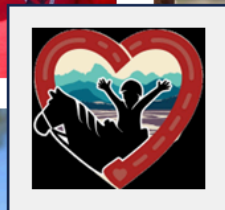




Champ's Heart

Bridling the Healing Power of Horses

Volunteer Training Manual



Volunteer



"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

-Mahatma Gandhi

CONTACT INFORMATION

Physical Location: 988 S. 45th E., Idaho Falls, ID 83401

Mailing Address: 284 Channing Way, # 252, Idaho Falls, ID 83404

Website: Champsheart.org

Facebook: Champs Heart and Emily's Angels at Champ's Heart

OUR BEGINNINGS

On December 22, 2016, Reverend Larry Cudmore was diagnosed with an aggressive, life-threatening cancer. Little did he know, as he listened to the dire news and the even more dire prognosis, that this journey into darkness would lead him to one of the most fulfilling endeavors of his life. Nor would he have envisioned a young woman named Emily, who would plant the seed for bringing hope and healing to so many.

The day after Christmas, Larry, his wife, Wendy, and his son, Tim, drove to Salt Lake City, where he took the first steps toward healing. But even as he was fighting for his own life, Larry was called on to visit Emily, a seventeen-year-old patient who had been diagnosed with a rare and aggressive form of cancer. Larry remembers that as he entered the pediatric unit, he was taken aback; "There were all these children in wheelchairs and children with bald heads and tubes coming out of their bodies." He was struck by the gravity of the young lives so deeply affected by illness, and by the fact that their existence seemed to hold no respite from the struggle to survive. Where, he wondered, did they find laughter? Where did they find joy?



As he walked through the halls of the Children's Hospital, the images kept replaying in his head, and as he entered Emily's room, he was filled with the sadness that these images had created. But then he saw Emily, a beautiful, friendly girl who, on this day, was doing fairly well. She and Larry struck up a conversation about their experiences, and Larry helped her talk about her cancer.

Larry felt a certain kinship with Emily and was able to visit with her a few times after that day. But each time they met, Larry could see that Emily's condition was worsening. At their last meeting, he wanted to give her something to focus on besides her illness, so he told her stories about his horse, Champ. Larry promised to bring Champ to see Emily when she got better. Unfortunately, Emily lost her battle, and Larry didn't get the chance

to see her again before she died, but he was told that she had kept the picture of Champ at her bedside. Champ, unfortunately, also died six months later. It was Larry's relationship with Emily that drove his desire to create a place of solace for children like her: a place to escape the day-to-day, moment-to-moment struggle of living with disabling conditions.

At the age of 68, Larry set aside his pastoral robes to create a healing space for children with special needs. By simply offering them the chance to spend time with his horses, he hoped to bring a moment of joy into their lives, in which they could take respite from the burden of their emotional and physical challenges.

Now, Larry and a team of volunteers (and some pretty special horses), are bringing smiles to children and veterans several times a week.



OUR MISSION

Champ's Heart is an equine-based non-profit organization that offers children and veterans with special needs/limited abilities an opportunity to experience well-being and happiness in a safe, reliable, and welcoming environment where they can embrace their unique strengths and abilities.

OUR VISION

To create a sanctuary of empowerment and joy where individuals with special needs experience the profound healing benefits of horses, fostering physical, emotional, and social well-being. Increase community relationships and engagement in an effort to expand the scope of supporters. Build a financially stable and responsible organization that can continue to serve the community for years to come.

OUR VALUES

We value the opportunity to provide equine encounters that improve the quality of life of every participant and veteran with limited abilities.

We value connecting these individuals to the innate healing power of horses, wherein they can experience a sense of freedom, independence, and happiness.

We value creating a safe environment that welcomes participants into a community where they can develop friendships, improve social skills, and develop a sense of belonging.

We value positive, reliable, and well-trained volunteers who are dedicated to providing a fun-loving environment that invites the creation of joyful moments.

We value the community of friends and supporters who, through charitable giving, make it possible to offer these services at no cost to participants.

OUR EXPECTATIONS

Safety is a priority at our facility. We strive to keep our participants, our volunteers, and our horses safe at all times. All riders, regardless of age or experience, are required to wear a safety belt and helmet. Helmets must also be worn while riding in buggies or wagons, or participating in any horse-related activities.

Our trained team of volunteers will provide program oversight, as well as friendship and encouragement in a welcoming, non-judgmental environment. Quite simply, we want everyone who enters our arena to find a reason to leave with a smile.

OUR SUPPORT

We offer our services at no charge to our participants. Our organization succeeds by the support from our community, fundraisers, grants, and the generosity of our donors.

WHAT WE DO

Champ's Heart is a non-profit organization created to provide an opportunity for participants with special needs to enjoy the healing power that comes from spending time with a horse. We do not offer equine therapy, but rather an opportunity to interact with horses and experience the benefits of their natural healing nature. Interacting with a large animal can provide a significant boost to self-confidence and a sense of accomplishment. It has been proven effective in helping individuals with emotional and behavioral challenges, including anxiety, depression, PTSD, and autism spectrum disorders. Horses are honest and accepting and form strong bonds to humans in a partnership that helps the rider feel safe.

Encounters with a horse are not only good for the mind; it is good for the body. Riding can improve balance, posture, core strength, and motor coordination. The horse's movement constantly challenges the rider's balance, requiring muscles to contract and relax to stay upright. This strengthens core muscles and enhances coordination.

“There is something about the outside of a horse that is good for the inside of a man.”
~ Winston Churchill



Our horse encounters may include:

- Riding a horse led by a volunteer. A Side-Walker will be provided as needed.
- Riding in a horse-pulled buggy or sleigh (as weather permits). Trained volunteers will be driving the buggy or sleigh.
- Socializing with, grooming, or walking a horse. These activities will be supervised by a volunteer.
- Playing games while on horseback encourages core strength, balance, and social skills.
- Paint a horse (animal-safe paint provided), bathe a horse (weather permitting).

Encounters may take place either in the indoor arena or outside in the sensory field, depending on the weather.

VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Volunteers are the heart of what we do for our riders. The time and effort donated by volunteers truly make a difference in the lives of our participants and horses. Without their dedication, we simply could not offer the program. Volunteers attend an initial volunteer orientation, but training is a process that happens continually during the program. Leaders and Coaches will guide volunteers as needed. Volunteers should never feel intimidated to ask a question, get clarification, or ask for assistance.

Much of your time volunteering will be spent with our participants. When working with our participants, just be yourself. Show friendly interest, but do not focus on the special needs. Talk about the same things as you would with anyone else. Assist only when requested, and always ask for permission before touching a participant. All volunteers must adhere to our confidentiality policy, which forbids the discussion of any client, his/her health condition, or family situation outside the boundaries of Champs Heart.

Requirements:

- Minimum of 16 years of age. Younger volunteers may be accepted, provided they have a parent present in the arena while performing volunteer duties.
- A completed volunteer application (available at ChampsHeart.org).
- Complete the volunteer training and read the volunteer manual.
- A completed Criminal Record Check for those 18 years and older.
- Dedication and a willingness to learn, and eagerness to help.
- The ability to walk briskly for 45 minutes is preferred, but not required.

Responsibilities:

- No offensive or profane language will be tolerated. This is a family program. Due to the sensitivity of our participants, please avoid loud noises or yelling.
- Sign in and out on the volunteer attendance sheet. Volunteer hours are tracked for recognition and to obtain grants.
- Cell phones shall not be used while there are participants in the arena. Your focus should be on our participants and their needs and safety.
- Assist in keeping the arena and outside areas looking neat and organized. Discard trash, clean up after yourself, and sweep the arena as needed. Clean up after the horses as needed, store tack in a neat and tidy manner, and perform any other duties as requested by a Leader.
- Participate in other special events and activities when possible.
- Do not perform any task that you are uncomfortable with or unable to do.
- When in doubt, please ask a Program Leader.
- Have fun and enjoy yourself. Always remember that kindness and a smile go a long way!

**Sometimes you need to look at the world a little differently,
to see how special children with special needs are.**



GENERAL HORSE INFORMATION

Horse sense is the basis of horsemanship. This is the ability of a person to understand horses and to think like a horse. The better your understanding of horses, the more you will safely enjoy your role as a volunteer. Horses are large and powerful animals, but most are gentle and obedient when they are handled properly. Because horses are prey animals, they are often timid and easily frightened. If you hurt or frighten a horse, his choices are to run away, kick or bite, and you might get hurt in the process. That is why it's a good idea to get to know the horses you are working with. Please ask permission and assistance from a Program Leader before working with an unfamiliar horse.

The following rules will help you learn how to act safely around horses. These rules are based on the knowledge of how horses think and react.

HORSE SENSE RULES AND REASONS

RULE 1: Praise often, punish seldom. (Volunteers will NOT hit a horse in the face to correct bad behavior). Tug on the lead rope to get the horse's attention and to let the horse know the behavior is not accepted. Harsh and cruel treatment will make a horse fear you.

Reason: Firm, gentle treatment will gain your horse's respect.

RULE 2: Stop, look, and listen. Use caution when working around horses.

Reason: Horses are prey animals and are frightened by loud noises and sudden movements.

RULE 3: When you approach a horse, ensure they are aware of your presence.

Reason: Horses do not see well directly in front of or behind them. Approach at their shoulder. Speak to the horse and keep your hand on their rear when walking behind them. This will avoid frightening them and having them kick out.

RULE 4: Only trained volunteers are authorized to feed the horses. Participants shall not give treats to any horse. This can cause nipping behavior.

Reason: Some horses are on special diets and medications. Fingers may be mistaken for treats and could be bitten. Frequent treats can tend to make horses nippy.

RULE 5: Always use a halter and lead rope. Never lead or tie a horse with the reins. When a horse is not being used, they will be secured with a tie-up rope that is attached to the wall.

Reason: Injury might occur if tied by the bridle.

RULE 6: Never wrap or tie a lead rope attached to your horse around your body in any way.

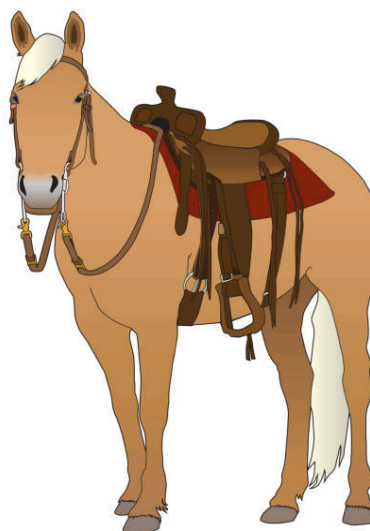
Reason: Securing a lead to your body or wrapping the lead around a hand, neck, or waist may result in your being dragged by your horse or other serious injury.

RULE 7: Keep at least two horse lengths between your horse and the horse in front of you.

Reason: Crowding a horse may cause him to kick or bite. Always be watching a horse's behavior. Their ears and body language will let you know when they are uncomfortable.

RULE 8: Check all equipment for proper fit. Ensure blankets are free of debris, the cinch is not twisted, and no straps are under the saddle. Ensure the blanket and saddle are placed properly over the withers. Leaders are the only ones authorized to bridle a horse. A Leader and the Block Coach will check the tightness of the cinch before the rider mounts the horse..

Reason: Improperly fitted equipment may cause an accident or injury to the horse and rider. Injury or tenderness to the mouth can occur if bridles are forced against the teeth. This can also make the horse shy away when bridling.



RULE 9: Treat equipment with care and always put it away properly. Each horse is assigned a saddle tree, which contains tack that is fitted to that horse. All tack should be stored on the correct saddle tree. Ensure stirrups are hanging at the side of the saddle and not hooked on the saddle horn.

Reason: Properly cared for and fitted equipment will ensure comfort to the horse.

RULE 10: Listen and learn. Training is a continual process within the arena. Always listen for instructions from a Leader or Coach and act promptly.

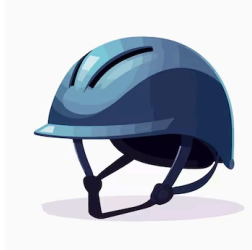
Reason: Leaders and coaches oversee the program and will help to protect you from danger and ensure that you enjoy your time with your horse and rider.

RULE 11: All riders will mount and dismount from the loading block.

Reason: The block coach will assist all riders mounting and dismounting the horse to prevent accidents or participants from dismounting on their own.

RULE 12: Dress appropriately for your protection; when riding or working with horses, you should wear long pants, shoes, or boots with a heel. A helmet and safety belt are required for all riders, regardless of age or experience.

Reason: Long pants will prevent rash or sores on your legs. Shoes with a heel or boots will prevent your foot from sliding through the stirrup. Helmets and belts will protect from most head injuries or injury to a participant's arm.



Champ's Heart Program Days

HOW TO HALTER AND TIE A HORSE

The day begins with the horses being brought into the indoor arena to be groomed and saddled. A Leader will let volunteers know which horses are needed. Volunteers will halter the chosen horse(s) and lead them from the pasture with a lead rope attached to the halter; lead ropes are attached to the halter with a clip or snap to a ring on the halter. The horses will be brought into the arena and clipped (using the halter ring) to their wall mounted tie rope at their assigned spot; then the lead rope can be removed and hung on the wall.

Avoid approaching directly from the front or rear, as this can startle the horse. Ideally, approach from the horse's left shoulder. Let the horse know you're approaching by speaking in a gentle, reassuring tone. Pay attention to the horse's body language. If they seem agitated or nervous, take a moment to assess the situation and proceed cautiously. To place the halter on the horse, you will need to **stand at the left side of the horse**. Most halters fasten on the left side.

- Stand between the horse's shoulder and head.
- Slide the halter up over his muzzle onto the horse's head.
- Position the noseband so it sits about halfway between their nostrils and their eyes. It should be snug but not too tight. You should be able to fit about two fingers comfortably between the noseband and the horse's nose.
- The long strap (crown piece) should come across the horse's head right behind the ears, toward you. It should now be easy to fasten.
- Ensure the halter fits correctly each time you use it. Horses can change weight, and halters can stretch or loosen over time

Champ's Heart uses both nylon and rope halters. Rope halters **must be tied correctly** to prevent injury to the horse. If you are unsure how to tie a rope halter, ask a Program Leader for assistance.

Nylon halter





Rope halter



When you need to tie your horse, you will need to **use a quick-release knot** or a **safety tie ring**. Always tie at a height level with the horse's back or higher. It is important not to tie the lead rope too long. If the horse decides to put his head down, he could step over the rope!

HOW TO LEAD YOUR HORSE (Horse Leaders)

Horse Leaders are responsible for the control of the horse or pony from the time the animal leaves their assigned spot or stall, throughout the riding session, and upon return of the animal. Leaders must have the ability to control a large animal (horse, pony, draft or miniature) and must have a calm and gentle nature with animals. Proper leading tips:

1. **Stand at the horse's shoulder:** Position yourself beside the horse's shoulder, not in front or behind. In Example 1, the horse leader is looking back, twisting her core (belly button) toward the horse's face and dragging the horse along with the lead rope. When a horse leader pulls on the lead rope, they are acting like a predator, and the horse doesn't see them as a leader of their herd. In this scenario, there is no chance for the horse leader to gain respect and trust. To compound the situation, the leader is also directing all her core energy right at the horse's face. As prey animals, horses instinctively know that predators concentrate on their faces, and this will further restrict their forward movement
- 
- Ex. 1
2. **Right hand on the lead rope:** Hold the lead rope with your right hand about 12-18 inches from the halter snap. The rope should be held firmly but with some slack, not taut, so the horse's head moves freely. In Example 2, the horse leader is at the head of the horse, looking ahead, stepping, and keeping her core out of the horse's face.
- 
- Ex. 2
3. **Left hand for control:** Use your left hand to hold the excess lead rope, coiled or folded neatly, ensuring it doesn't drag on the ground where the horse could step on it. Never wrap the lead rope around your hand, neck, or waist.
 4. **Never hold on to the halter or the reins.** The halter does not give you control of your horse if he pulls away.
 5. **Walk with purpose:** Lead with confidence. Walk confidently and at a steady pace. Horses respond well to assertive leadership.
 6. **Maintain eye contact (but not direct stare):** Look where you're going, but be aware of the horse's position and surroundings.
 7. **Encourage forward movement:** If the horse hesitates, give a gentle tug on the lead rope and use a verbal cue like "walk on."
 8. **Keep your distance:** Maintain a safe distance from the horse's head and body to avoid being stepped on or kicked. Keep at least 6 feet from the horse in front of you.

TURNING AND STOPPING YOUR HORSE:

Turn away from you: When turning the horse, turn them away from you to prevent them from stepping on your feet. Turn their head by moving your hand under his chin to the right. Use your body and the lead rope to guide the horse in the desired direction. If you must turn the horse towards you, place your hand on his neck as you turn him to keep him at arm's length away from you.

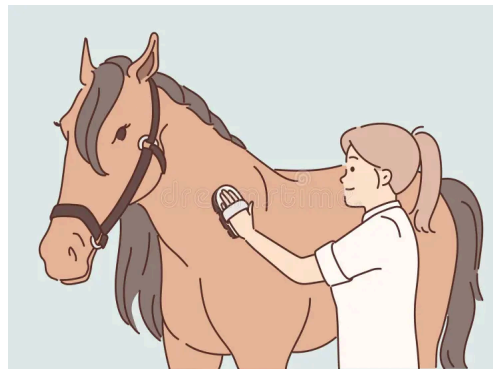
Signal your intentions: Before stopping, give a verbal cue like "whoa" and gradually decrease your pace.

Stand beside the horse: Once stopped, stand beside the horse's shoulder, maintaining control of the lead rope.

Always prioritize safety when leading a horse. Be aware of your surroundings, anticipate potential problems, and take appropriate precautions.

GROOMING YOUR HORSE

Grooming is a very important part of your horse's health. A good work over with a curry comb and brush will remove unsightly dandruff and dirt, which causes saddle sores. Grooming also gives your horse's coat a shine and makes your horse feel good.



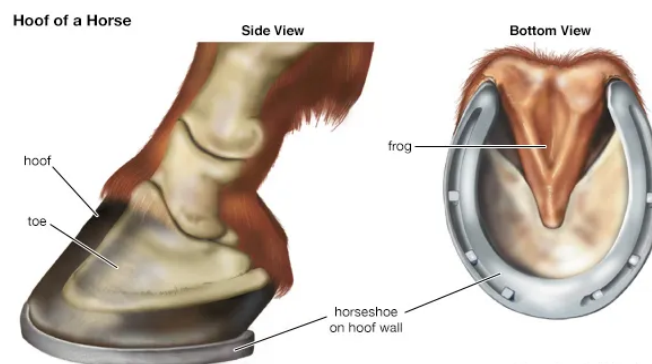
Curry Comb: Used on a horse's body in a circular motion to bring the dirt to the surface. The curry comb should not be used on the face, legs, or any bony area on the horse.

Hard Brush or Dandy Brush: Used in the direction of hair growth to remove dirt. Brush in firm strokes to remove dirt deep down. Be careful on the face with this brush.

Soft Brush: Used on the face and body to remove surface dirt and put a shine on the horse's coat.

Mane and Tail Comb: Used on the mane and tail to remove tangles. Start at the bottom and work towards the top, removing tangles as you go.

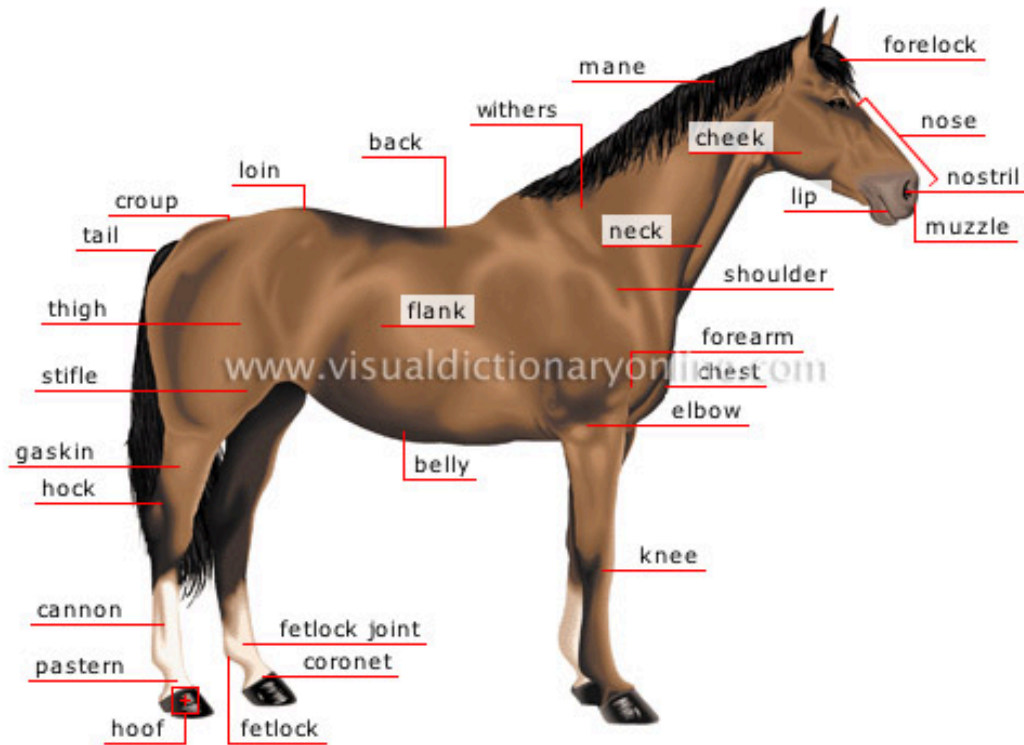
Hoof pick: Used to remove dirt, rocks, and manure from the horse's hooves. The hoof pick is held in the palm with the point away from your body. Always clean the hoof working away from yourself. Be careful not to damage the frog, the triangular, rubbery structure on the underside of the hoof.



PARTS OF THE HORSE AND TACK

PARTS OF THE HORSE

When working around horses, there are some special words and terms that you will need to know. Some parts of the horse are shown below:



PARTS OF THE TACK

Each horse at Champ's Heart has an assigned saddle tree. All tack will be stored on the appropriate tree. When putting tack away after the program, the cinch should be tied up so it does not drag in the dirt. Please do not store saddles with the stirrup up over the horn. Wipe down saddles as needed. Saddles should be oiled once a month to maintain the leather suppleness.

Western Saddle and Blanket

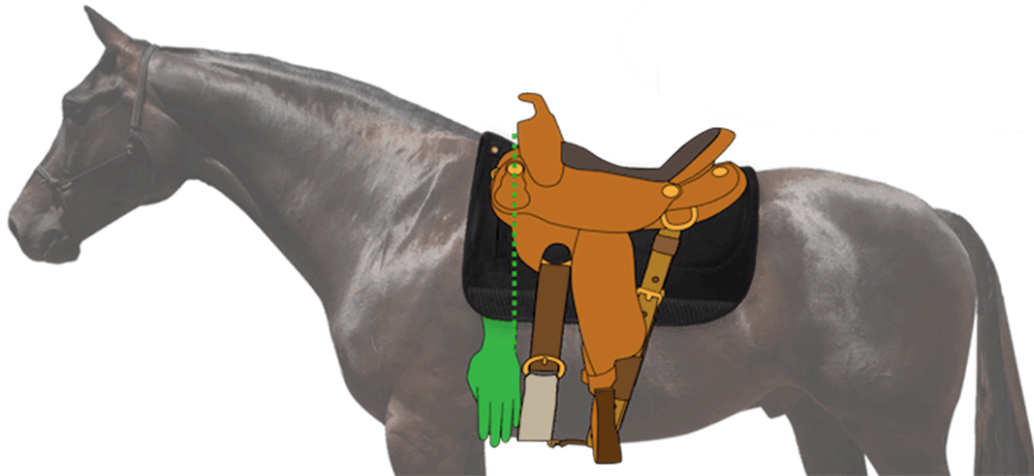


SADDLING YOUR HORSE:

Saddling a horse is a fundamental skill. It's important to do it correctly to ensure the comfort and safety of both the participant and the horse.

- Place the pad or blanket high on the withers, then slide it backward onto the withers and back. Ensure the blanket is free of any dirt or debris.
- Pick up the saddle and bring the right stirrup and cinch over the seat.
 - Holding the gullet in your left hand and the cantle in your right hand, gently place the saddle on the horse's back.
- The front edge of the pad should be in line with the center of the shoulder. The saddle should be centered and placed about three inches behind the front edge of the pad.
 - Place your hand under the blanket, pulling the blanket into the gullet of the saddle so it does not wear on the withers and back.
- Go to the right (*offside*) of the horse and gently lift the stirrup and cinch down. Check the saddle and pad to be sure the pad is smooth, and the cinch is not twisted. Ensure no straps are under the blanket or saddle.
- Then, from the left (*near side*), hook the stirrup over the horn and pull the cinch under the horse. You do not need to tighten the cinch until the horse is needed. If the stirrup is over the horn, that indicates the cinch needs to be checked and tightened. Before mounting, check the cinch several times and retighten, if necessary.

CORRECT SADDLE PLACEMENT



Proper cinch placement

- The ideal length of a horse's cinch, or girth, depends on the horse's conformation and the type of saddle used. Generally, you want the cinch to sit in the center of the horse's belly, with about 8 inches of leather between the D-ring and the buckle on both sides. Feel the cinch near the buckle and at your horse's sternum. When unmounted, you should be able to fit at least two fingers between your horse and the cinch. When mounted, the cinch will appear looser as the horse's abdominal muscles engage.

Why cinch tightness matters

- A cinch that's too tight can be painful for your horse. A cinch that's too loose can allow the saddle to move around, which is unsafe. A cinch that's not tight enough can cause the saddle to slip under the horse's belly, which can be dangerous. Make sure no skin is pinched under the girth/cinch.

Our Special Equipment



Inky Dinky Saddle

This saddle safely supports and stabilizes your child. The Inky Dinky saddle is adjustable; your child will fit snugly, so they relax and learn to move with the horse. A great tool for younger riders and for those who lack confidence or have issues with balance.



Independence Saddle

The Independence Saddle is a revolutionary adaptive saddle that makes it possible for riders with severe disabilities to safely participate in equestrian activities.



Disabled Veterans Saddle

A saddle for special needs, paralyzed adults, or handicapped riders. This saddle is a dream come true to our partially paralyzed veterans and other guests who thought they would otherwise never be able to ride a horse.



Small pony cart

For our participants who may be a bit intimidated to ride a horse. They can enjoy a ride in a buggy pulled by one of our mini ponies. This activity allows a parent to ride with the child and provide encouragement and support.

Ready, Set, Ride!!

As the participants enter the arena, they will be met by the Greeting Coach, who will help them get fitted with the proper safety belt and helmet. It's important that the helmet fits snugly and the belt is worn on the outside of a jacket or shirt. The Greeting Coach will ensure the rider is also wearing closed-toed shoes for their safety. To ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for everyone, **only participants who have completed the following will be allowed to ride:**

- Completed a one-time Application Release form
- Submitted a participant application
- Been accepted into the program by the Program Manager

Other family members or guests are welcome to watch, but they will not be allowed to ride unless they complete the same authorization process.

The Program Manager schedules all participants who ride in the children's program and will provide a daily riding schedule, which can be viewed in the volunteer area or with the Greeting Coach. The schedule contains the name of each rider, the number of riders coming each hour, and specifies if a child has requested a specific horse. It will also indicate if a rider has a safety concern. Please review the schedule (sample below) to see if any participant has a feeding tube that requires caution when placing a belt, seizures, sensitivity to touch, poor balance, etc.

Date: January 1, 2025

Time	Participant	Participant	Participant	Participant	Amount
9:00	Johnny Smith (1) wants a mini horse	Donald Jones (1) needs a sidewalker	Suzie Morgan (1)	Charlie Brown (2)	5
10:00	Woody Pride (1) Bullseye	Petunia Taylor (2)	John and Jane Doe (2)	Cheyenne Cook (1)	6
11:00	Minnie Moser (1) New - first time	Jim Hill (2)	Annie Bowen (1) screams when scared	Kelly Sue Brown (1) has poor balance	5

MOUNTING & DISMOUNTING PROCEDURES

At the Loading Block

Now that the horses are groomed and saddled, it is time for our participants to ride. Put on a smile and let's have fun!

Block Coach: The Block Coach will assist the participants in getting on and off the horse. Participants should not mount or dismount until a Coach is on the block and ready to assist. As the Horse Leader and the horse approach the block, the participant will be directed to the mounting block by a Coach or Leader. Once on the block, the Block Coach should introduce themselves to the participant and instruct them on how to get in the saddle. Many of our participants have sensitivity issues and should be asked if it is okay to touch them. While the Block Coach holds the safety belt, the participant will be asked to put their left foot in the stirrup and use their hands for support while swinging upwards with their right leg, over the horse's back, while avoiding kicking the horse's hindquarters. Communicate with the individual about the riding process and involve them in decision-making as much as possible. Be mindful of sensory sensitivities such as loud noises, bright lights, or certain textures that might impact their ability to focus and communicate.



Horse Leaders: Volunteers will wait until the Block Coach asks you to bring the horse into the mounting area. Horses are chosen by a Coach or Leader according to the participant's size, wants, needs, and ability. Volunteers should introduce themselves to the participant to make them as comfortable as possible. Always treat all our participants with respect, patience, and kindness.

- Before bringing the horse into the block, the Horse Leader will stop and see if the horse needs a drink of water. Approach the block and wait for the Coach to check the equipment and tighten the girth – step back from the horse for this.
- After the equipment is checked, remain in the halt position, and walk carefully backwards, slowly guiding the horse between the loading block and the rail.
- Keep an eye on your horse's shoulders and the stirrups to make sure nothing gets caught on the block.
- Keep the horse as quiet as possible. Stand directly in front of the horse and be alert at all times; **do not allow anyone to distract you from the horse during this time.**
- Do not hold the horse by the halter! This could cause the horse to pull back or throw his head. Make the horse responsible for standing politely in the block. If need be, put gentle pressure on a lead to remind them of their job.
- Block Coach will assist the rider onto the horse by using the safety belt. Prevent using the participants' arms to lift them onto the horse. Ensure the rider is safely on the saddle and sitting both the rider and saddle are sitting straight. Smaller buddy stirrups are available for smaller riders. The Block Coach will provide the appropriate length of stirrup.
- Wait for the rider and the Coach to approve moving forward in the arena. Be alert as some horses leave the loading block very quickly.
- Once you leave the block, you can then stop in a safe place and allow a Leader or Coach to adjust stirrups. It is recommended that you do another tack check after the rider is on the horse.
- Never swing a lead rope while performing tasks as a horse leader. The rope can startle the horse and cause it to react.

Side-Walkers: Volunteers should be near the block and ready to be a Side-Walker if needed. A Leader or Coach will let volunteers know when a Side-Walker is required. The Side-Walker is directly responsible for the safety of the rider and should position themselves at the rider's knee. The Side-Walkers also provide an opportunity for increased social interaction with the participants. Participating in riding programs provides opportunities for interaction with instructors, volunteers, and other riders, fostering social skills and friendships.

- Ensure that the rider has a helmet and a safety belt on.
- If the rider is stepping into the stirrup on the offside, the side-walker may need to help bring the rider's left leg over the horse so that the rider doesn't bump the horse.

- As the rider settles into the saddle, check to make sure that the rider's foot is placed correctly in the stirrup.
- Some children will need to use buddy stirrups. Assist in placing them over the horn of the saddle and adjust the length to fit the child.
- The Side-Walker should be on the right side of the horse, opposite side of the Horse Leader.
- Side-Walkers should keep a close watch on the rider, saddle, and other equipment. If you need to make an adjustment to any equipment, move the horse to a safe place and ask a Leader for assistance. When possible, check the position of the saddle on the horse in front of you. Alert the horse leader or Side-Walker if the saddle or rider needs repositioned.
- You should walk at the knee of your rider and always stay within an arm's reach. Always keep your hands and arms free. Do not walk with your hands in your pockets or arms crossed. Cell phones are a distraction and are not to be used in the arena.
- Do not leave your rider at any time unless instructed by the coach. If you become tired, or if you must stop, ask the Leader to get a replacement.
- Encourage your rider to participate in various games that help improve balance and coordination. Learning and progress may take time. Be patient, offer consistent support, and celebrate small achievements.
- You have the right to let the rider know when he/she is being inappropriate (e.g., pulling hair, kicking, using inappropriate language, etc.). Use the word "NO" and ask him/her not to repeat the inappropriate action. Let the Coach know immediately.

If you have any questions or need assistance at any time, please ask a Leader.

DISMOUNTING

The Arena Coach or Block Coach will announce when it is time to come to the block to dismount. The horse and rider are brought back to the mounting block one at a time. If the loading block is full, please continue to walk your horse until you can enter.

Traditional Dismount

- The Horse Leader takes the horse to the mounting block and stands in the halt position in front of the horse.
- If capable, the rider puts pressure on the left foot and takes the right foot out of the stirrup. The Block Coach uses the left hand to hold onto the safety belt and stabilize the rider's body, using the right hand to help guide the leg over the horse's back. Be careful not to drag the right foot on the horse's rump. The offside volunteer may also help guide the rider's leg over the horse's back.
- If capable, the rider leans forward over the horse's neck, turning his or her head to the right, swinging the right leg over the horse's back
- The Block Coach keeps the left hand on the rider's safety belt and helps guide the rider to the floor of the loading block.
- If capable, the rider stands and takes a step back from the horse. The Block Coach shall assist the participant down the steps of the loading block.

Note: for riders who are physically unable to get themselves in and out of the saddle, a hoist is available for use. Volunteers who assist with the hoist must have received training on operation procedures before assisting.

Arena Leaders and Coaches

Arena Coach: The arena coach observes all arena activities and is specifically focused on identifying, mitigating, and preventing potential safety concerns. Specifically, the Arena Coach will watch the position of saddles, spacing between horses, balance of children, horse behavior, as well as watch for potential hazards and risks within the environment, equipment, and activities. The Arena Coach is to sit in the arena area where they are able to view all activities.

Tack Coach:

- Check that blankets are on over the withers and the under-blanket is not folded
- Check that saddles are fitted properly over the withers
- Check that cinches are fitting properly (not too long for the horse)
- Adjust equipment as necessary
- Don't change out equipment without checking or being asked by a Leader.

Leaders: Champs Heart Leaders are identified by blue shirts with the word "Leader" on the back. The Leaders oversee the program and are the go-to for any instructions, questions, or concerns.

- Offer clear and consistent instructions, expectations, and support to all team members/volunteers.
- Actively observe all activities to ensure that safety protocols for horses and participants are being followed correctly and consistently. Promote a culture where safety is a top priority and everyone is responsible for maintaining a safe environment.
- Ensure the cleanliness, safety, and organization of the arena, stalls, and riding equipment (tack).
- Be involved in investigating the root cause of any incidents and ensure an incident report is completed. Evaluate the likelihood and severity of identified hazards to prioritize and implement appropriate control measures.
- Encourage teamwork and create an environment where individuals can work together effectively.
- Recognize contributions and achievements of team members.
- Immediately address and correct any concerns that arise and provide effective solutions.
- Offer specific and actionable feedback to help individuals improve.
- Demonstrate the values, behaviors, and work ethic you expect from others and uphold the highest standards of ethical conduct in all interactions.

Program Manager: The Program Manager (PR) actively supports and promotes Champs Heart's mission and values. They function as the liaison between Champs Heart and the special needs participants and their parents. They process program applications and maintain a database related to participant demographics and special needs, as well as maintain a wait list database. They create, coordinate, and maintain weekly participant riding schedules. The PR provides the monthly new volunteer training and mentors new volunteers. The PR leads and oversees the children's program and continuously seeks ways to optimize program success and enhance organizational performance.

A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way."

John C. Maxwell

IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY

In the event of an emergency, avoid wrapping an arm around the rider's waist or grabbing an arm. When you grab an arm or wrap around a waist, you're creating an uneven point of support. If the rider loses balance, their weight will suddenly shift to that one point, potentially pulling you off balance as well, and exacerbating their fall. It can also torque their spine or shoulder.

1, Loose horse

- a. If a horse gets loose, **DO NOT CHASE THE HORSE**. A chased horse may run faster. They are prey animals, and they use flight as a defense.
- b. All other Horse Leaders need to stop their horses and remain still. When horses are scared, they will seek comfort and may go to another horse.
- c. If you are leading a horse, stop your horse and keep your rider calm.
- d. Do not leave the horse you're leading to catch a loose horse.
- e. Call out for assistance from available Leaders and Coaches or volunteers.

2. Seizures

- a. If you are leading a horse and you notice a participant having a seizure, stop your horse and call out for a Leader to come assist.
- b. Leaders will evaluate and request available volunteers to assist if needed. A Leader or volunteer will gently guide the rider to the ground if possible and cushion their head with something soft, like a jacket or blanket.
- c. Do not restrain the rider. Let the seizures run their course. Trying to hold them down can cause injuries.
- d. Other Horse Leaders shall move their horse away from the affected rider and protect their own rider..
- e. All Horse Leaders will focus on their horse and use all the techniques in this manual and the training to keep the horse calm and relaxed.

3. In the event a rider falls off a horse

- a. Falls do happen. If a rider falls off a horse, the Horse Leader's only concern is the horse they are leading. Available Leaders or Coaches will take care of the participant.
- b. When a fall occurs, **STOP IMMEDIATELY** and stand beside your horse. Never let go of your horse if possible.
- c. Do not panic if there is a fall. Your job is to stop and hold your horse. If the rider falls close to the horse and the horse stops, walk the horse a safe distance away from the rider to allow someone to attend to the rider.
- d. In the event of any incident, an Incident Report shall be completed. Ensure the report is reviewed by a Leader. The completed report shall be given to the Program Manager for tracking and entry into the incident database. The Program Manager will do a follow-up call with the parent of the involved participant.

AFTER THE RIDE

- After the rider has dismounted, the Horse Leader will check again to see if the horse needs water. The Horse Leader will then take the horse back to their tie-up spot.
- Loosen the girth strap and place the stirrup up over the saddle horn. This indicates to other volunteers that the girth strap must be tightened prior to going to the loading block.
- If the horse is finished for the day, untack the horse and return all equipment to the appropriate saddle tree. Brush the horse before turning out. Each horse is assigned a particular pasture or dry stall. Ensure the horse is turned out in the proper area.



TIPS ON HORSE BEHAVIOR

While people rely heavily on spoken language to communicate, horses use energy and body language to communicate. Lack of respect or understanding of a horse's language can lead to frustrations for both human and horse. Humans naturally want to pull horses along and dominate over them as if they were dogs. While that works with dogs, it erodes respect and trust with horses. The horse is a prey animal; they communicate with each other using body language and energy.

READING THE HORSE'S EARS

The horse's ears and actions are the key to his emotions. He can tell you what he is paying attention to and how he feels by the way he uses his ears and the way he acts. The following are some tips to his emotions:



OTHER SIGNS TO PAY ATTENTION TO:

Horses are highly social, intelligent animals with complex behaviors influenced by instinct, memory, and judgment. They are herd animals, meaning they thrive in groups and communicate through various signals, including body language and vocalizations. Understanding equine behavior is crucial for effective handling, training, and ensuring their well-being

Eyes

- Soft eyes: A sign of affection
- Eye fluttering: A sign of stress
- Wide open, sclera (white part) showing: Fearful or startled.
- The white part of your horse's eye is called the sclera. Be careful if you see the sclera of your horses' eyes showing. It means he is afraid, startled, or very nervous.

Tail

- Swishing tail: A sign of annoyance or agitation
- Tucked tail: A sign of fear or submission
- Raised tail: A sign of excitement or alertness
- Clamped-down tail: A sign of fear or aggression

Body Posture

- Relaxed stance: Weight evenly distributed, muscles loose.
- Tense stance: Weight shifted back, ready to flee or fight.
- Pawing: Frustration, impatience, or seeking attention.
- Stomping: Irritation or warning.

Other movements

- Pacing: A sign of stress
- Pawing: A sign of stress
- Sweating: A sign of stress
- Trembling: A sign of fear
- Head lowered: A sign of affection
- Nibbling: A form of communication, affection, or exploration

Vocalizations

- Whinny: The vocalization of a whinny is a horse's social call. It is a high-pitched neigh. In the wild, the whinny is how horses find one another. Each horse has a unique whinny that you (and other horses) can tell apart.
- Nicker: The soft, low purring whinny your horse makes implies "Come to me." It can also mean "Look at me" when a stallion is showing off to a mare.
- Snort: A horse's snort is an alarm. It is an explosive sound, forcing air through the nose. If a horse does it and holds his head high, he has detected a threat.
- Squeal: A high-pitched cry or noise. Most often heard from mares, but any horse may squeal. When horses squeal, it is usually a warning of horse-on-horse violence. Move away immediately.



Fun horse facts: Horses can sleep while standing. They have a remarkable anatomical feature called the stay apparatus. This is a system of tendons and ligaments in their legs that allows them to "lock" their major joints. This locking mechanism enables them to stand and doze without collapsing.

They have incredible memories. A horse can learn human words and remember you even if you've been away from each other for a long time, especially if you treated them well. Their memory is comparable to that of elephants. Studies have shown that horses can also distinguish between happy and angry human facial expressions.

Horses can't burp, at least not the way humans do. They can't vomit or breathe through their mouths like humans do.

The average horse's heart weighs approximately 9 or 10 pounds, whereas a human heart weighs only 10-12 ounces (0.28-0.34 kg) on average.

A horse's teeth can take up almost as much room in their head as their brain!

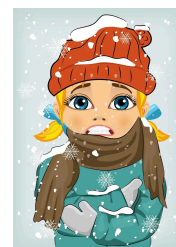
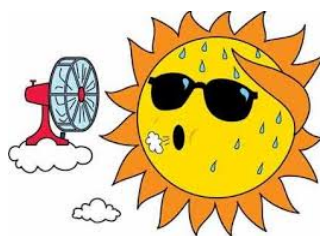
Weather Policy/Safety Concerns

Champs Heart makes every attempt to provide services, even in inclement weather. Riding will be cancelled if Leaders decide safety issues exist, such as icy roads, large amounts of snow, extreme heat, bitter cold temperatures, conflicting activities, etc.

Ground games, while leading horses, will be offered at the discretion of the Leader when we do not have enough volunteers to pair with each rider. Participants will be able to lead horses through an obstacle course in the arena, groom horses, bond with horses, etc. The safety of our participants is always our priority.

Riding will also be cancelled if the temperature + humidity is over 115°F. Leaders may choose to tie horses to a highline outside and invite participants to bathe horses, paint horses (with animal-friendly paint), or do horse-related arts and craft activities.

Keep in mind, cancellations may be at the last minute, and you may already be at the arena or on your way – you will be notified as soon as decisions are made. Emily's Angels Facebook page, which is for active volunteers only, will post all notifications as soon as possible.



Horseman's Talk

If you want to talk with horse people, you should know the words they use to describe horses and horse terms. Here are some of the most common terms:

- Foal: A young horse of either sex, usually under one year old.
- Filly: A female horse under the age of four.
- Colt: A male horse under the age of four.
- Mare: A mature female horse, typically four years or older.
- Stallion: A mature, uncastrated male horse.
- Gelding: A castrated male horse.
- Equine: Relating to horses or other members of the horse family (e.g., donkeys, zebras).
- Pony: A small horse, typically under 14.2 hands high.
- Hand: A unit of measurement for horse height, equal to 4 inches.

Anatomy Terms:

- Withers: The ridge between a horse's shoulder blades.
- Croup: The topline of a horse's hindquarters.
- Hocks: The joint on the hind leg, similar to a human ankle.
- Fetlock: The joint above the pastern, similar to a human ankle.
- Pastern: The area between the fetlock and the hoof.
- Hoof: The hard, horny covering of the horse's foot.
- Mane: The long hair growing on the neck of a horse.
- Tail: The hair growing from the rear of the horse.

Gaits:

- Walk: A four-beat gait.
- Trot: A two-beat gait.
- Canter: A three-beat gait.
- Gallop: A fast, four-beat gait.

Other Important Terms:

- Tack: Equipment used for riding or handling horses (e.g., saddle, halter).
- Saddle: A seat for the rider, placed on the horse's back.
- Grooming: The process of cleaning and caring for a horse.
- Farrier: A professional hoof care specialist who does hoof trimming and who also uses blacksmithing skills to do horseshoeing.
- Groundwork: To exercise or work a horse without a rider, controlling it from the ground.
- Lungeing: To work or train a horse at the end of a long rope or flat line, teaching it to obey voice commands and exhibit good ground manners.
- Colic: Any number of painful digestive disorders, usually characterized by intestinal displacement or blockage. A leading cause of death among domesticated horses.
- Cushings: Cushings is a hormonal disorder affecting horses. It's caused by the pituitary gland at the base of the brain producing too many hormones. This condition primarily affects older horses, often those 15 years and older.

For a child who struggles to find their voice, the quiet understanding of a horse can be the most powerful communication." - Author Unknown

Parent's Testimonials

Lauren was born with a congenital heart defect. She has had 2 open surgeries, a condition where her liver and intestines were outside of her body, and a hole in her diaphragm. She has faced more in her short life than some people in their whole life. Lauren is a lover of animals. She has aspirations to become a vet. The best part of her week is when she can come and be with the horses and the amazing volunteers at Champs Heart! - Mom, Emily

Two years ago, our daughter Brooklyn started riding at Champs Heart. We had moved from another state and had started horse therapy prior to moving and were looking for someone else that did something similar. Champ's heart does not do horse therapy; however, they provided a great environment for her to continue interacting with horses (whom she loves!) and some amazing people that have been so patient, so thoughtful, and so engaging that she just loves being there. As a result of regularly riding, she has gained upper body strength, complete ease of being on a horse or around a horse, and usually big smiles when she is done. Champ's heart has been a wonderful environment for her to learn and grow with her permanent disability and be completely accepted for the wonderful little girl she is. - Dad, Shanta

When Spencer started at Champs, he was scared of all the people and horses. His confidence has grown so much he now calls himself a cowboy! The day he figured out how to properly get off a horse was a very exciting day for him! One thing I, as a parent, appreciate is that there have been times when Spencer has been sick or in the hospital, and I don't have to worry about him losing his spot. The support the riders get and also the parents is amazing! - Mom, Sarah

Champs has been so amazing with Braxtyn! Sometimes when we get there, he doesn't really want to ride a horse, but you guys always find something for him to do, like brushing the horses. He always leaves with a smile, even if he's had a hard day before we get there. We're so grateful for you and all that you do! - Mom, Katelynn

My daughter, Violet, is autistic. Part of her symptoms include irrational fears of things like animals, bugs, and new things—these fears can be paralyzing for her. Her first time at Champ's Heart, she had to be lifted onto the horse after 30 minutes of coaxing, and even then, she would only ride with a friend. Now, Violet rides a horse completely independently. She is even so adventurous that she requests not to be led and to ride bareback. I can't tell you how much her confidence has risen since we were introduced to this amazing program. Even now, I can't help crying when I think of how much she's grown because of the love, patience, and dedication of Champ's Heart and its precious volunteers. - Mom, Serena

Ryatt had been going to counseling for several months, and I, his mom, did not see any change or improvement in his grades, attitude, or behavior. Someone at counseling asked if I had heard of Champs Heart. I had not, but decided to check it out. Ryatt applied and was accepted into the program. Ever since he's been coming out to Champs, his attitude has been amazing, and his grades have gone up from D and F's to A's and B's. - Mom, Gina

My daughter's journey with Champ Hearts has been nothing short of miraculous. When we first stepped into the stables in September 2023, I could feel her fear and uncertainty. As a non-verbal child with autism, the world can be overwhelming, and animals were a source of immense anxiety for her. But Larry and the Champ Hearts team approached her with kindness, patience, and understanding. Two years of gentle interactions, soft whispers, and loving care have led to a moment that will forever be etched in my heart: Today, Aashvi kissed a horse. It's more than just a gesture; it's a testament to the power of

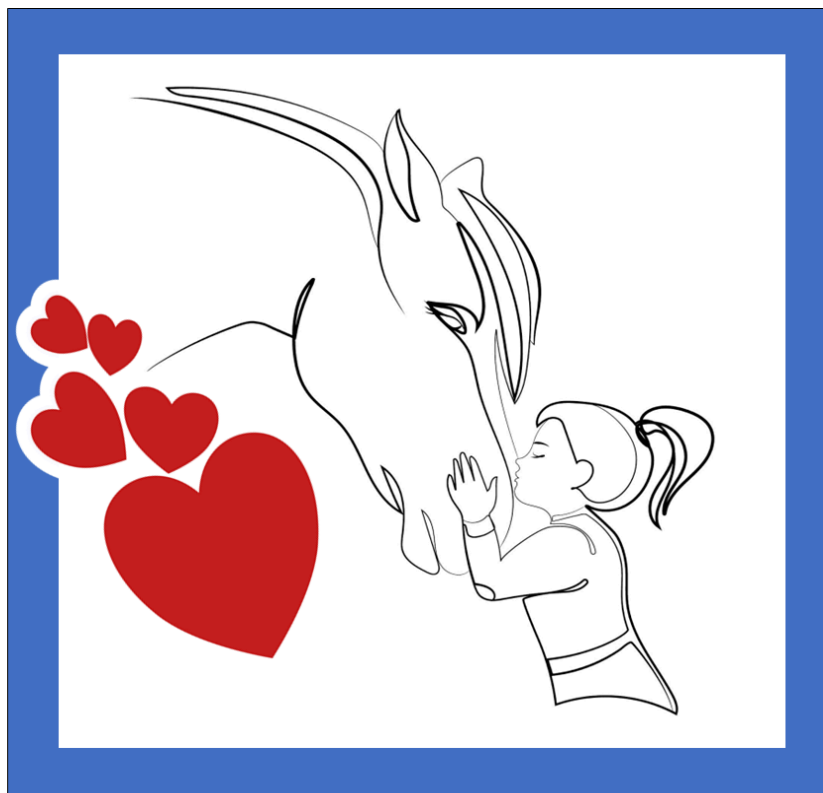
compassion, dedication, and the unwavering support of the Champ Hearts team. To see my daughter grow more confident around animals is a dream come true. I'm forever grateful to Champ Hearts for being a safe haven where Aashvi can thrive. Thank you for giving my child the gift of connection and joy. - Mom, Saroop

Elina had been a part of Champs Heart for a whole year and it had changed her life in many wonderful ways. Just two years ago she found out that she had ADHD which sometimes made it hard for her to focus or feel calm. But Champ's Heart was like a shining light that helped her find her way. - Mom, Michelle

Rory has been coming to Champs Heart for about 9 months now. He is an energetic boy with autism and ADHD. Before Champs Heart, Rory had only ever seen horses at the fair and he thought they were a little intimidating at first. Rory loves animals and has deeply enjoyed being around the horses and learning how to be calm and match their energy. Champs Heart is something Rory looks forward to and is often his favorite part of the week. We are so grateful for the volunteers and everything they do!! -mom, Robyn

Champs' Heart has been a true blessing for my son. Since joining in 2019, it's given him not only something to look forward to each week, but also the confidence to grow in ways I never imagined. He absolutely loves it there — the horses, the peaceful environment, and especially the kind and friendly staff. He's gone from city boy to cowboy. Over time, his balance has improved so much that he now rides with no hands and even with his eyes closed. Champs Heart is a wonderful organization that creates a safe, uplifting space for kids. I'm so grateful for the positive impact it's had on my son's life, -father, Rod

**“All kids need a little help, a little hope, and someone who believes in them.” -
Magic Johnson**



Our Goal is to Put a Smile on Every Face

