

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Equine Assisted Services

Therapeutic Riding

Equine Assisted Learning Programs

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A Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Volunteer,

Welcome to RideAbility Therapeutic Riding Center in Clover! We are excited to have you be a part of our program. We know this experience will be as rewarding for you as it will be for our participants. At RideAbility, *volunteers are the backbone of our program*. We are extremely grateful for your time, commitment and dedication.

Please take a moment to look through this handbook for more information about your role as a volunteer. The Volunteer Handbook was designed to give you a better understanding of our needs and expectations. Clear communication ensures a safe, fun and exciting environment for everyone involved. If at any time you have questions, please contact the office at (803-222-6008) or via email at RideAbilitySC@gmail.com.

Kindly,

Wendy

Wendy Schonfeld
Founder/Executive Director

Orientation for Volunteer Program

Thank you for your interest in RideAbility and our Volunteer Program! Volunteers are the key to the success for all our Programs. RideAbility will provide the necessary training, continuing education and guidance to make your volunteer experience safe and enjoyable. This manual will serve as a guide to volunteer expectations and opportunities. Please contact our office if you have any questions during your time here with our program.

Once you have completed your Orientation you will be scheduled to Shadow an experienced Volunteer. This will allow you to see the programs in action and learn more about the different Volunteer roles that are available.

RideAbility offers Volunteer enrichment programs and continuing education opportunities throughout the year to help broaden your horsemanship skills, knowledge, and learn more about working with individuals with Special Needs.

RideAbility's Mission

RideAbility is a Therapeutic Riding Program, Equine Assisted Services and Learning Program. Our mission is to offer a wide range of equine-related programs to children, adults and families with special needs to promote the physical, psychological, emotional, social, and spiritual well being of its participants.

RideAbility as a PATH Member Center

PATH was founded in 1969 as the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship to promote safe and effective therapeutic horseback riding throughout the United States and Canada. PATH's mission is to change and enrich lives by promoting excellence in equine-assisted activities and therapies. Today, PATH has nearly 800 member centers and over 6,300 individual members in countries all over the world, who help and support more than 42,000 men, women and children with special needs each year through a variety of equine-assisted activity and therapy programs.

PATH has a membership category for all professionals, organizations and individuals interested in demonstrating safe and competent practices in equine assisted activities and therapies. To learn more about becoming a PATH member visit them on the web at www.pathintl.org or call 800-369-7433.

Benefits of RideAbility Equine Programs

According to research, students can gain various kinds of physical, emotional, and mental rewards from horseback riding. A person with physical disability may experience improvement in flexibility, balance, and muscle strength through gentle and rhythmic movements of the horse. Individuals with mental or emotional disabilities may also form a unique relationship with their horse, which may lead to improved self-esteem, confidence, and spirituality. People with learning or developmental disabilities are motivated to increase their concentration, patience, and discipline. Equine Assisted Learning focuses on academic achievement skills. Our goals are to increased self-esteem and confidence and for our participants to show off their amazing ABILITIES.

Our Motto is: *“Let Horses Bring Out the Best in You”*

About our Programs

Therapeutic Adaptive Horseback Riding/Equine Assisted Services-

Therapeutic Horseback Riding lessons are created to meet the needs of each individual rider. The certified Therapeutic Riding instructor teaches the skills of horseback riding and personalizes lesson plans to meet each student's therapeutic goals. Adaptations are applied when necessary. This program is not a medical treatment. In a private, semi-private lesson or group lessons, the student is taught a strong foundation of the basic riding skills. Building strength, balance, focus, executive function skills and socialization skills. The students are learning how to ride the horse, including controlling the horse's movements. In addition to the lessons, the riders have a chance to participate in an Annual Horse Show's RideAbility aims to make horseback riding a success for every rider. The Therapeutic Riding team may include a Leader or Spotter, and up to 2 Sidewalkers for each student.

Equine Assisted Learning- Equine Assisted Services utilizes the horse as a tool to guide individuals to learn more about themselves, the dynamics of relationships, and the development of interpersonal communication skills. This program is offered to individuals, groups, schools/institutions, and other organizations. It may also be appropriate for clients that are unable to participate in mounted activities.

About our Riders

Working with individuals with Special Needs may be a new experience for some of our Volunteers. Our staff here at RideAbility is available to answer questions you may have. Below are brief descriptions of some disabilities and conditions that you may encounter at RideAbility.

Autism (PDD/NOS) is an impaired ability to relate to others. Characteristics may include impaired speech, poor social and communication skills.

Brain Injuries/Traumatic Brain Injuries, are the result of a severe injury that occurred to the head that caused the death of brain cells. These individuals' motor skills, memory, or speech may have been affected.

Cerebral Palsy is commonly known as CP. This condition is caused by brain damage that has occurred before, at or after birth. A lack of coordination and postural balance can result from this damage. Can have high or low tone.

Developmental Disabilities is the broad term applied to children that are functioning two or more years below their actual grade level. These children can have slow physical, mental, or social processes.

Down 's Syndrome is a chromosomal disorder often recognized by the physical features (small head, flat back, upward slanting eyes) and low muscle tone. The individual's development and learning capacity may vary widely.

Emotional Disabilities is any disturbance of emotional equilibrium as manifested in inadaptability and impaired functioning, caused by genetic, physical, chemical, biological, psychological, or social and cultural factors. These individuals may display inappropriate behaviors, have difficulty with learning, coping, or have vast and dramatic mood changes.

Hearing Impairment, this may be anywhere to a partial loss of hearing or complete inability to hear, also called Deaf. Individuals with a hearing impairment may communicate with sign language, lip reading, or communication device.

Learning Disabilities is a term used to describe individuals with difficulty processing information and problem solving skills. May not appear to have a disability.

Intellectual Disability (formally known as Mental Retardation) is an impairment of intellectual functioning, social skills, communication, and skills in daily living, and personal care.

Multiple Sclerosis (also known as **MS**) is the chronic destruction of the myelin sheath throughout the brain or spinal cord or both. This interferes with the nerve pathways, causing muscular weakness, loss of coordination, and fatigue.

Muscular Dystrophy is a condition causing the person's muscles to progressively weaken. As a result their muscles tend to become fatigued easily.

Paralysis is the loss or impairment of the sensation of a body part, usually as a result of damage to its nerve supply. As a result, the person will lose the ability to move or function the affected area of the body.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is a common anxiety disorder that develops after exposure to a traumatic situation in which grave physical, mental or emotional harm occurred or was threatened. Family members of victims also can develop the disorder. PTSD can occur in people of any age, including children or adolescents. More than twice as many women as men experience PTSD following exposure to trauma. Depression, alcohol or other substance abuse or other anxiety disorder frequently co-exist with PTSD.

Sensory Integration is the integration and interpretation of sensory stimulation from the environment by the brain. This disorder occurs when sensory input is not integrated or organized appropriately in the brain. As a result problems in development, information processing, and behavior may occur.

Visual Impairment is characterized by a moderate or total loss of sight, also called Blind. These individuals may have poor balance due to their lack of sight and an increased level of fearfulness may occur.

Working with the Specials Needs Population

Wheelchair Etiquette

- Always ask if they would like assistance before you help.
- Do not hang or lean on their wheelchair.
- When speaking to someone in a wheelchair be aware of their personal space; if the conversation lasts more than a few minutes sit or kneel so that you are speaking to them at the level of the chair.
- When assisting Instructor/Therapist with a transfer of an individual from the chair keep an open communication between all parties to assure that everyone included is moving cohesively to avoid any incident or injury.

Visual Impairment Etiquette

- When escorting individuals with visual impairments ask if they need assistance before you help.
- If physical assistance is needed allow the individual to hold your arm or elbow and walk one step ahead or ask if there is a specific way they prefer to be assisted.
- Be aware to communicate potential hazards, terrain changes, and movements.
- Be sure to verbalize/repeat information/instructions or that are posted/written.
- If you are unclear of what to do, ask the Instructor/Therapist for further instructions.

Hearing/Language Impairment Etiquette

- Try to maintain good eye contact. While you are speaking to them be sure to look at the individual.
- Speak clearly; avoid talking too slow/too quick or over emphasize words. Keep directions/conversation concise.
- Become familiar with hand gestures/body positions that the rider may be using to represent words and concepts.
- Ask the Instructor/Therapist for instructions/communication aides specific to the participant.

Non-Verbal or Limited Verbal Etiquette

- Become familiar with communication aides specific to the participant.
- Ask the Instructor/Therapist for instruction/reinforcement needs (physical/verbal prompts).
- Become familiar with hand gestures/ body positions that the rider may be using to represent words and concepts.
- Keep directions/instructions clear and direct; less conversation utilizing uncomplicated wording is always best.

Volunteer Opportunities at RideAbility

Horse-Related Volunteer Roles:

Groomer: Well versed in horsemanship and horse care to ensure the proper hygiene according to RideAbility standards. Groomer opportunities are before and lessons/sessions, which may include weather related care of horses. Must be approved and is supervised by the Equine Director.

Tacker: Well versed in horsemanship and equine related activities including full knowledge of equipment and tack. Volunteers in this role must be comfortable working independently with all of RideAbility's horses. Must be approved and is supervised by the Equine Director.

Horse Handler: Assists handling the horse during the lesson/session. The leader's sole responsibility and focus is the safety and well-being of the horse they are working with.

Sidewalker: Assists with the safety of the rider. Volunteers walk alongside the rider to assist with positioning, skills, taking directions from the riding Instructor/Therapist and relaying information to the rider.

Team Leader: Assists the Instructor or Therapist to ensure all volunteers, both current and new, are performing their assigned tasks/roles and that the team is a cohesive unit. They need to oversee the team to ensure preparation and timeliness is in order for each lesson/session.

Feeders: Trained volunteers that ensure the proper feeding of our horses. Feeders must be knowledgeable in horsemanship and general horse care. Feeders must commit to specific scheduled feed days, work in all weather conditions, work independently, and coordinate with the Equine Director. For more information on becoming a Feeder, please contact the Volunteer Director.

Barn Coordinator: is responsible to oversee the Groomers and Tackers to ensure proper grooming and tacking of the horses, and the timeliness of the preparation for lessons/sessions. Collaborates with and supervised by the Equine Director. For more information on becoming a Barn Coordinator, please contact the Volunteer Director.

Volunteer Coordinator: is responsible to oversee and direct all volunteers. They assist Team Leaders to ensure safety, productivity, and effectiveness of all lessons/therapists. Coordinates with and is supervised by the Equine Director and Volunteer Director. For more information on becoming a Volunteer Coordinator, please contact the Volunteer Director.

Non Horse-Related Volunteer Roles:

Fundraising: Assists with all tasks relating to fundraising activities and events including mailings, phone calls, securing raffles and sponsorships, preparing for, and working at events. For more information on becoming a Fundraising Volunteer, please contact the Volunteer Director.

Community Outreach: Attend events at schools, local venues and fairs to provide information about the services RideAbility offers to the Special Need community and to Volunteers as well as researching outreach opportunities and potential community relationships. For more information on becoming a Community Outreach Volunteer, please contact the Volunteer Director.

Volunteer Policies and Guidelines

● **Respect:** Volunteers are to treat all RideAbility's staff (including directors, instructors, therapists, and volunteer/barn coordinators), peer volunteers, riders/campers, and horses with respect. It is important for Volunteers to adhere to directions given by the staff, while avoiding questioning and undermining authority to keep program activities running safe and efficiently. Volunteers should remember to avoid losing temper and/or self control. When working with students/campers allow the Instructor/Therapist to manage any behavioral situations.

● **Fairness:** Be aware of individual needs and how to respond to individual differences. RideAbility is a place where everyone is welcome and treated with the utmost respect and courtesy including students, campers, horses, peers, instructors, therapists, and staff. A person with special needs is entitled to the same dignity and respect that every person deserves.

● **Behavior:** Volunteers are expected to lead by example and conduct themselves in a positive, cooperative, and appropriate manner while at the barn. Foul language, inappropriate, unproductive or destructive behavior is unacceptable. Examples of inappropriate behavior include- any form of harassment, aggressive or abusive behavior, gossiping/slander, or hazardous/dangerous actions. Remember~ Volunteers are a reflection of RideAbility.

● **Physical Fitness:** Volunteers should be aware of their own physical fitness levels. If you feel unable to safely participate in a lesson/session inform the Instructor/Therapist, Team Leader, or Volunteer Coordinator. If you feel that participation as a volunteer in the ring or barn is too physically demanding there are other volunteer opportunities available at RideAbility.

● **Communication:** Volunteers are expected to be honest about their knowledge of horses and working with the Special Needs population. Volunteers are expected to complete tasks assigned to them to the best of their abilities. Be open and sympathetic to others' suggestions. If you do not understand or feel uncomfortable with something asked to do, inform the Instructor/Therapist, Team Leader, or Volunteer Coordinator or Volunteer Director.

● **Scheduling & Commitment:** At the beginning of each series, volunteers must fill out the Commitment of Hours form. Volunteers are to adhere to the assigned times as agreed upon on the COH form for the entire length of the series (unless other arrangements are made with the Volunteer Director/Coordinator(s)). Two weeks prior to the start of a series, the Volunteer Director/Coordinator will contact volunteers via email (or phone applicable) to confirm volunteer hours and assignments based on the COH forms, capabilities, and RideAbility's schedule. Volunteers are assigned to specific roles and Volunteer teams for the series.

● **Sign-in & Name Tags:** Volunteers are expected to sign in on the Volunteer Sign-in Sheet and put on nametags when first arriving on the property. When volunteer hours are completed for the day nametags should be returned to bins and volunteers sign out.

● **Attendance & Cancellations:** RideAbility operates year-round. Volunteers will be contacted in the case of RideAbility cancellations due to weather, observation of a holiday, instructor absence or any other facility cancellation. Volunteers are responsible to contact the office a minimum of one week in advance if they are unable to attend for a scheduled day in order to find a replacement. In the case of illness/emergency we require 24 hours notice to make accommodations for coverage.

● **Personal Items:** Personal items of volunteers are not the responsibility of RideAbility. Cell phones, iPods, cameras, and any other technical devices should not be used during volunteer hours. Cell phones should always be turned off when in the ring during a lesson. All items should be kept in the Volunteer Trailer or in your car during your volunteering time.

● **Sexual Harassment:** No volunteer should experience unsolicited or unwelcome sexual overtures from any employee, student, family member/care taker of students or other volunteers. If you feel violated in any way, communicate that the actions are not welcome and report any incidents of this nature in a timely manner to the director of Human Resources or the Executive Director for investigation.

● **Confidentiality:** All information (written and verbal) regarding participants of the RideAbility program is confidential and is not to be shared with anyone without the expressed written consent of the parent/guardian of the participant. The use of rider information/photographic materials for the personal use especially on public forums (i.e. blogs, webpages, Myspace, Facebook, etc.) is not acceptable. All publicized materials or information must come from RideAbility or have the approval from RideAbility and affiliated parties. If it is reported to RideAbility that information about our organization, staff, clients, horses or other volunteers are being exploited via social media network you will be asked to remove it or it will be reported.

● **Attire:** RideAbility Volunteers must wear their Volunteer Tee Shirt while working at the farm. Sneakers and closed toe shoes are allowed. Boots are recommended for additional protection and are often a better choice on muddy days. Hanging jewelry and open toed/backed shoes are prohibited. Dress appropriately according to the current season. Revealing or explicit clothing is prohibited from the barn. Avoid strong perfumes that could attract insects and/or distract some of our riders sensitive to smell.

● **Entrance & Parking:** The speed limit on RideAbility property is always five miles per hour. Please be aware of horses on the driveway/out on trail. If a horse is approaching you as you are driving, stop and allow them the right of way or allow them to move out of the way and wave you on.

● **Referencing RideAbility:** RideAbility is happy to provide information as a reference for any future job, college applications, volunteer position or any other referral personal or professional. We ask that you notify RideAbility in a timely manner and to offer any additional information that you would like stated in the reference process in order for us to provide an appropriate recommendation.

● **Reassignment & Dismissal:** Individuals who cannot adhere to guidelines and policies may be reassigned or reassessed as a Volunteer for our programs. Our policies have been established to serve the best interest of the RideAbility community. Individuals who are not able to perform their volunteer role, cannot maintain volunteer commitment, or fail to abide by the rules and guidelines at RideAbility will be given the opportunity to discuss any situation that is a violation and be provided with potential solution or reassignment. RideAbility reserves the right to terminate Volunteers at the discretion of the organization.

Code of Ethics:

Given its mission, RideAbility has adopted a code of ethics to guide its board members, committee members, volunteers and staff in their conduct when acting on behalf of RideAbility. The Code contains broad principles reflecting the types of behavior RideAbility expects towards constituents, donors, employees, peers and the public.

This policy is not intended as a stand-alone policy. It does not embody the totality of the RideAbility ethical standards, nor does it answer every ethical question or issue that might arise. Rather, it is one element of a broader effort to create and maintain a quality organization that gives ethical conduct the highest priority. This Code will be reviewed periodically.

Board members, committee members, volunteers and staff shall:

1. Listen to our stakeholders and make all reasonable efforts to satisfy their needs and concerns within the scope of our mission, and to strive for excellence and innovation and demonstrate professional respect and responsiveness to constituents, donors and others.
2. Make an effort to understand, respect and support our constituents from other cultures, exemplified by the contributions of our staff and executive leadership, and to contribute to an organizational culture that respects the diverse, individual contributions of staff and leadership.
3. Respect the confidentiality of sensitive information about the RideAbility its members, constituents, donors, board and employees and volunteers.
4. Comply with applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations and fiduciary responsibilities in an effort to create transparency in all of our operations.
5. For the board of directors, provide credible and effective oversight to the organization's work without personal bias.
6. Not accept commissions, gifts, payments, loans, and promises of future benefits or other items of value from anyone who has or may seek some benefit from RideAbility in return, other than occasional gifts of nominal value that are in keeping with good business ethics.
7. Abide by the governing documents and policies of RideAbility.
8. Be accountable for adhering to this Code of Ethics.
9. Implement and follow a Conflict of Interest Policy.
10. Implement and follow a Whistleblower Policy.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

SECTION 1. PURPOSE:

RideAbility is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization. Maintenance of its tax-exempt status is important both for its continued financial stability and for public support. Therefore, the IRS as well as state regulatory and tax officials view the operations of RideAbility as a public trust, which is subject to scrutiny by and accountable to such governmental authorities as well as to members of the public. Consequently, there exists between RideAbility and its board, officers, and management employees and the public a fiduciary duty, which carries with it a broad and unbending duty of loyalty and fidelity. The board, officers, and management employees have the responsibility of administering the affairs of RideAbility honestly and prudently, and of exercising their best care, skill, and judgment for the sole benefit of RideAbility. Those persons shall exercise the utmost good faith in all transactions involved in their duties, and they shall not use their positions with RideAbility or knowledge gained therefrom for their personal benefit. The interests of the organization must be the first priority in all decisions and actions.

SECTION 2. PERSONS CONCERNED:

This statement is directed not only to directors and officers, but to all employees who can influence the actions of RideAbility. For example, this would include all who make purchasing decisions, all persons who might be described as "management personnel," and anyone who has proprietary information concerning RideAbility

SECTION 3. AREAS IN WHICH CONFLICT MAY ARISE:

Conflicts of interest may arise in the relations of directors, officers, and management employees with any of the following third parties:

1. Persons and firms supplying goods and services to RideAbility
2. Persons and firms from whom RideAbility leases property and equipment.
3. Persons and firms with whom RideAbility is dealing or planning to deal in connection with the gift, purchase or sale of real estate, securities, or other property.
4. Competing or affinity organizations.
5. Donors and others supporting RideAbility
6. Agencies, organizations and associations which affect the operations of RideAbility
7. Family members, friends, and other employees.

Non-Discrimination Policy:

RideAbility volunteers should not practice, condone, facilitate, or collaborate with any form of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental or physical disability.

Whistleblower Policy:

A volunteer who believes that inappropriate behavior, including but not limited to unethical practices, violation of state laws or regulations, violation of RideAbility policies, mismanagement, abuse of authority, or danger to clients, volunteers, and/or employees, is occurring should bring the issue to the attention of his/her supervisor. The False Claims Act protects employees from retaliation which states that no employee shall be penalized, disciplined, discharged, demoted, suspended, threatened, harassed, or discriminated against in any matter for participating in actions to report and investigate such claims.

Expense Reimbursement Policy:

Purpose

RideAbility Therapeutic Riding Center, Board of Directors recognizes that RideAbility Therapeutic Riding Center, Inc. staff and volunteers may incur expenses on behalf of RideAbility Therapeutic Riding Center, Inc. It is RideAbility Therapeutic Riding Center, Inc.'s policy to reimburse reasonable and necessary expenses actually incurred by staff. This document outlines cost controls and appropriate expenditures and provides a consistent procedure for timely reimbursement.

When incurring business expenses, RideAbility Therapeutic Riding Center, Inc. volunteers should:

- Exercise discretion and good business judgment.
- Be cost conscious and spend money carefully. Remember that you are spending money that others have voluntarily donated.
- Report expenses with documentation.

Expense Report

Expenses will be reimbursed based on a written Expense Report submitted within four weeks. It should include:

- The individual's name
- The date, origin, and purpose of each expense. If travel-related, destination and purpose of the trip, including a description of each organization-related activity during the trip.
- The name and affiliation of all people for whom expenses are claimed (i.e., people on whom money is spent in order to conduct RideAbility Therapeutic Riding Center, Inc. business).
- An itemized list of all expenses for which reimbursement is requested. This should include the following: : date/place of expense, description, name/title of those entertained (if applicable), purpose of expense, and vendor receipts.

Receipts

Receipts are required for all expenditures billed directly to RideAbility Therapeutic Riding Center, Inc. such as airfare and vendor charges. No expense in excess of \$25 will be reimbursed to the staff unless the individual requesting reimbursement submits with the Expense Report written receipts from each vendor (not a credit card receipt or statement) showing the vendor's name, a description of the services provided (if not otherwise obvious), the date, and the total expenses, including tips (if applicable).

General Travel Requirements

Necessity of Travel. The person authorizing the travel should consider the costs and benefits of every trip. Less expensive alternatives, such as participation by telephone or video/web conferencing, or the availability of local programs or training opportunities, should also be considered.

Personal and Spousal Travel Expenses. Individuals traveling on behalf of RideAbility Therapeutic Riding Center, Inc. may incorporate personal travel or business with company-related trips. These arrangements must be pre-approved by the President and comply with RideAbility's Vacation Policy. The staff should not arrange such trips based solely on personal travel plans. Additional expenses incurred as a result of personal travel, including but not limited to extra nights, additional stopovers, meals, and transportation, are the sole responsibility of the individual and will not be reimbursed by RideAbility. Expenses for a staff member's family or friends will not be reimbursed by RideAbility.

Lodging

Personnel traveling on behalf of RideAbility Therapeutic Riding Center, Inc. may be reimbursed at the single room rate for the reasonable cost of hotel accommodations. Convenience, the cost of staying in the city in which the hotel is located, safety, and proximity to other venues on the individual's itinerary shall be considered in determining reasonableness. Personnel shall make use of available corporate and discount rates for hotels. When lodging accommodations have been arranged by RideAbility Therapeutic Riding Center, Inc. and the individual elects to stay elsewhere, reimbursement is made at the amount no higher than the rate negotiated by RideAbility. Reimbursement shall not be made for transportation between the alternate lodging and the meeting site.

Out-Of-Town Meals

Personnel traveling on behalf of RideAbility Therapeutic Riding Center, Inc. are reimbursed for the reasonable and actual costs of meals (including tips).

Ground Transportation

Employees are expected to use ground transportation that is safe and cost-effective, such as:

Courtesy Vehicles. When available staff should take advantage of this free service offered by hotels. Another alternative may be a shuttle or bus.

Taxis. When courtesy vehicles are not available, a taxi is often the next most economical and convenient form of transportation.

Rental Cars. Car rentals are usually expensive, so other forms of transportation should be considered when practical and cost-effective. Employees will usually be allowed to rent a car while out of town provided that the cost is less than alternative methods of transportation.

Parking/Tolls/Mileage

Parking and toll expenses, including charges for hotel parking, incurred by staff traveling on organization business will be reimbursed. On-airport parking is permitted for short business trips. For extended trips, staff should use off-airport facilities. Mileage reimbursement must be approved in advance by the RideAbility Therapeutic Riding Center, Inc. President. Odometer readings from point of origin to destination should be recorded to calculate total mileage and submitted to RideAbility. Reimbursement will be given at the current Internal Revenue Service per mile rate as indicated on their website (www.irs.gov).

Other Expenses

Reasonable business-related telephone and fax charges due to absence of staff from the individual's place of business are reimbursable. However, staff are encouraged to use personal cell phone in lieu of the hotel room phone as a means of curtailing travel expenses. In addition, reasonable and necessary gratuities that are not covered under meals may be reimbursed.

RideAbility Therapeutic Riding Center, Inc. maintains a strict policy that expenses in any category that could be perceived as lavish or excessive will not be reimbursed, as such expenses are inappropriate for reimbursement by a nonprofit organization. In effect, the president reserves the right to decline any such inappropriate expense.

Additional RideAbility Rules

- No running or shouting in and around the barn and riding areas
- RideAbility is a non-smoking facility. The consumption of alcohol prior to and/or while at RideAbility is strictly prohibited. The use of illegal substances prior to and/or while at RideAbility is strictly prohibited.
- No chewing gum while volunteering in the barn or ring. There is no eating or drinking while riding, horse handling and/or sidewalking. Eating/drinking should be done in designated areas (i.e. side of arena, picnic tables, volunteer lounge).
- Visitors should be approved to be on property by the office. If you have a friend/family member that is interested in Volunteering or participating in some capacity at RideAbility please refrain from bringing them to the farm without arranging a scheduled time with the office and following proper protocol for new participants.
- Off-limit areas in RideAbility Barns/Areas are posted, Authorized staff only.
- No littering. The barn areas should always be kept clear of obstacles and potential hazards; equipment should always be put away after use. Please do not leave equipment on the ground outside stalls (including blankets, brushes/groom boxes, saddles, etc.).
- Dogs and pets are not allowed in the barn area/riding areas as they can cause distraction to volunteers, students and horses. Service dogs welcomed.

Horse Procedures

- **Approaching a Horse:** Horses cannot see directly in front or behind them and may be easily spooked. Always approach a horse in the front, and speak to the horse before approaching or touching him/her. If approaching the horse from the rear is necessary, such as when the horse is turned around in the stall, volunteers should let the horse know they are there. Sneaking up on the horse may cause the horse to kick or spook. When walking behind a horse, keep a hand on the body, or walk at least six feet behind the horse.
- **Handling:** When handling a horse outside of their stall it is important to always have a hand on the horse, i.e. holding the lead rope, holding the reins, or having the horse connected to crossties. A horse should never be left unattended while they are being handled outside of their stall. It is important when holding the lead rope to hold with both hands, being mindful of the slack which should never be wrapped around your hand. The reins and lead ropes should be removed from the halter/bridle when the horse is placed back into their stall.
- **Noise:** Use calm, low voices around the horses and refrain from making loud noises. Loud noises such as yelling, music from the radio, abrasive ring tones on cell phone and car alarms have the potential to scare the horses.
- **Working around Horses:** Be aware of the environment while working with horses, anticipate the unexpected. If a horse is on crossties or being worked with in the stall avoid moving quickly, carrying large items around the horse or making sudden/abrupt movements.
- **Petting a Horse:** Petting/Patting is a great reward for our horses. A great place to pet a horse is on the neck or shoulder. Be aware of the horse's reactions; if they are indicating that they would prefer not to be pet at that time, be respectful of their space. When patting a horse use a gentle touch/pat. If you are petting their face stand to one side of the horse and avoid their mouth.
- **Crops:** Volunteers are to refrain from using crops unless given permission. The use of a crop during a lesson/session by the rider or instructor/therapist is at the discretion of staff. Staff is familiar with appropriate use of a crop for each individual horse. If a horse is unwilling to move forward during a lesson/session allow the instructor/therapist to instruct you as to how to encourage the horse to move on; please do not tap under the horse's belly (unless otherwise instructed).
- **Feeding Horses:** Hand feeding horses is prohibited. Treats may be placed in feed buckets. Please refrain from giving treats to horses while they are at work. Our horses are fed specific amounts of hay and grain on a schedule by our Feeders.
- **Horse Stalls:** Volunteers are to refrain from entering horse stalls without specific permission. If entering a stall and a horse is not facing front, wait until the horse turns around to enter. Volunteers should always be sure to fully open stall door and say, "Heads up," before leading the horse out of the stall.
- **Reprimanding Horses:** Reprimanding horses at any time by Volunteers is strictly prohibited. If a horse is disregarding their leader, appropriate corrections should be applied. Behavioral corrections should never be made while a rider is mounted on the horse.
- **Unusual/Unsafe Behavior:** Volunteers are expected to report all unsafe/unusual behavior seen in horses to the Equine Director. If uncomfortable with the way a horse is acting/behaving, if someone else is mistreating a horse or if a horse is inappropriately interacting with others, there may be a concern and the Equine Director can evaluate the situation.

Emergency Policies

In Case of an Incident or Fall:

1. Check the scene and ensure that the injured individual is not in any immediate danger, if it is not necessary to move the individual- do not move them. In the case of a rider fall, do not remove their helmet or boots (in case of swelling). Instructor/Therapist will clear the ring of all activity (i.e. all horses to middle, dismount other clients).

2. If medical attention is required, the onsite PATH Certified Instructor or Director for the day will Call 911.

3. Stay calm- allow PATH Certified Instructor or Director of Staff to take charge of the situation. Assist in any tasks asked by the PATH Certified Instructor or Director of Staff. Unless otherwise instructed, keep clear of area where the incident has taken place.

4. If there is an open wound, blood or other bodily fluids present do not touch it, the PATH Certified Instructor or Director Staff must wear gloves to tend to it if the participant cannot.

5. For incidents including bee stings, horse bites, or injuries incurred at the barn (horse related or non-horse related) immediately contact the Volunteer Coordinator, Barn Coordinator, Instructor/Therapist or Director Staff for proper care procedures and further instruction.

Weather Related Emergencies:

● **Lightning/Thunder:** At the first sign of thunder and/or lightning, volunteers are to assist instructors in dismounting riders off the horse and bring horses back to their stalls in a safe/orderly fashion. Lessons/Sessions can continue after 20 minutes from the last experience of thunder/lightning.

● **Extreme Wind Conditions:** In the case of extreme/gusts of wind keep a good handle on the horse and rider. Communicate to the instructor/therapist if you feel the horse is sensitive to the wind.

● **Extreme Heat Conditions:** In the case of extreme heat/humidity be sure to keep yourself hydrated. If you see horses, riders and/or Volunteers showing signs of overheating, communicate to instructor/therapist or Ride-Ability Staff. For humans ~ red or pale face, moist skin, profuse sweating, muscles cramps/pain, headache/dizziness or fainting, and/or nausea. For horses ~ may become overly sweaty, become lethargic, have rapid, shallow breathing and/or attempt to roll.

● **Extreme Cold Conditions:** In the case of extreme cold temperatures be aware of hazards to humans if unprepared for the weather. Proper attire including hats, gloves, jackets, layers or clothing etc. should be worn. Horses should be wearing appropriate layers/coolers/quarter sheets as indicated by their stall/tack signs.

In Case of a Loose Horse:

1. Inform staff immediately.
2. Volunteers are to assist the Instructor/Therapist to gather riders and volunteers together and have them stand still in a safe place, away from the pathway that the horse may run. Horses have a fight or flight nature; they will run if someone runs after them.
3. Instructors in the ring should stop all horses and have them line up with the loose horse in their vision. Riders may be dismounted.
4. Ride-Ability staff not in the ring will take responsibility for catching the horse.
5. Close all gates to assist in keeping the horse on the farm property.
- 6. Grab a bucket of grain; many times the sound will get the horse's attention and make them more attentive. Volunteers will assist to acquire a lead rope and/or halter; the horse to be used to bring the loose horse back once caught.**

In Case of a Fire:

1. If there is a fire all riders should be dismounted and evacuate to the opposite end of the farm from the fire location.
2. If the fire is in the barn area all horses should be removed from their stalls and evacuated to the opposite end of the farm from the fire.
3. The onsite PATH Certified Instructor or Director for the day will **CALL 911/Fire Department.**
4. Fire extinguishers are in the feed room; red can is to be used for any fire type chemical or wood and the silver can is to only be used for wood fires, not chemical.
5. Stay calm- allow PATH Certified Instructor or Director of Staff to take charge of the situation. Assist in any tasks asked of by PATH Certified Instructor or Director. Unless otherwise instructed, keep clear of the area where the fire has taken place.

Steps to Groom a Horse

1. Start grooming the horse on the left side top of the neck with the **curry comb**. Currying in a circular motion loosens the dirt, dander, and loose hair. Avoid using this brush on the sensitive parts of the horse, such as the legs, face, or the spine. Curry from the neck to hind quarters then repeat on the right side.

2. After the Curry comb, take the **dandy/hard brush** and brush over the horses' body concentrating on any areas on the horse that may be muddy, dirty, or manure stained. Starting on the left side of the horse's neck, brush in the direction of the horse's hair. Brush from neck to hind quarters then repeat on right side.

3. To smooth and shine the horse's coat, finish grooming the horse's body with the **soft brush**. Starting on the left side of the horse's neck, brush in the direction of the horse's coat, going over the horse's entire body. Brush from the neck to hind quarters then repeat on right side.

4. Start brushing the horse's main with the **main and tail comb**. Starting at the top of the horse's neck, brush a few strands of the mane at a time, working down the neck. After brushing the main, begin to brush the tail. Always stand next to the horse, avoid being directly behind, horses cannot see directly behind themselves. If startled a horse may side step forward and /or backward and/or kick. When brushing the tail, always start brushing at the bottom of the tail, working up. Picking shavings out of the horse's tail might be easier than using a brush. Try to avoid pulling out the hairs when brushing the tail.

5. With the **hoof pick** in hand, start cleaning out the horse's hooves by standing next to the horse's left leg facing the tail. Softly lean your shoulder into the horse's shoulder, and run the hand closest to the horse's body down the horse's leg to the hoof area. When reaching the hoof area, keep your light shoulder contact with the horse and lift the front of the hoof.

Please note **Figure 2**. With the hoof pick, start working downward from the horse's heel to toe; try to remove all of the visible dirt, mud, rocks, shavings, and any other debris. Avoid the frog of the hoof. The frog, which is the triangle in the middle of the foot, is a soft and more sensitive part of the hoof. When using the hoof pick be aware of the pressure around the surrounding area of the hoof as well. While the hoof pick may be used around the frog, avoid attempting to pick directly on the frog. Repeat these steps on the remaining three hooves. Avoid kneeling, squatting, and sitting down while picking the horse's feet; it is very important to remain on two feet to be able to react, or move quickly. Please report to the Equine Director if a horse is missing a shoe, has a loose shoe, or has anything that looks out of the ordinary.

Figure 2.

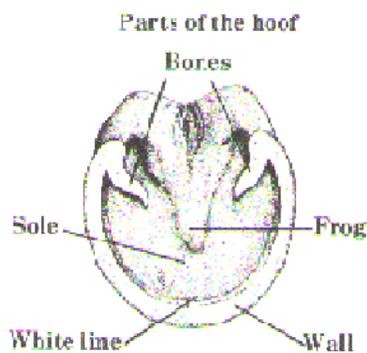
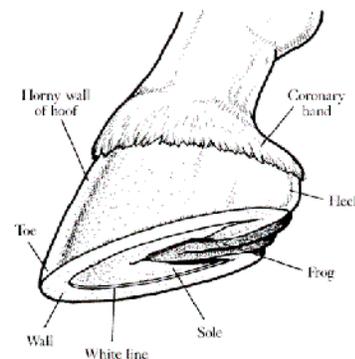


Figure 3.



Tacker

A Tacker gets the horse ready to ride by putting on the horse's riding equipment/tack. The Tacker is responsible to loosen tack on the horse between lessons; removes tack from the horse and puts the tack away when the horse is finished with lessons for the day or otherwise told to do so.

****Tacking correctly takes a lot of patience and practice. Please do not hesitate to ask for help! Tacking the horse incorrectly can affect the horse's gait and/or behavior, and it can also compromise the safety of the lesson.****

Qualifications for Tacker:

- A Tacker feels confident and at ease with a horse and is able to anticipate unsafe situations and act appropriately keeping themselves, participants and horse safe.
- A Tacker is a volunteer who is fully capable of fulfilling the role of a groomer.

Guidelines for being a Tacker:

- The Tacker ensures that crossties are only attached to a halter which can be placed over a bridle, never attach a horse to crossties with just a bridle.
- The Tacker checks with the Equine Director/Barn Coordinator to see if the horse is done and needs to be untacked. Horses that are going within the following hour will remain tacked in their stall to minimize the amount of times they will need to be tacked/untacked.
- When a horse is in the stall between lessons, the Tacker makes sure that the stirrups are rolled up so as not to get caught on anything.
- When a horse is in the stall between lessons, the Tacker loosens the horse's girth so that it is not too tight, but also so that it is not loose enough that the saddle will move.
- When a horse is in the stall between lessons, the Tacker always detaches the lead rope and reins from the bridle.
- When the horse is finished being ridden for the day, the Tacker removes the horse's saddle and bridle, also known as untacking. On most occasions, the horse should be untacked in the stall. When bringing the horse in the stall, the leader turns the horse around to face the door of the stall. The Tacker begins untacking by removing the horse's saddle followed by removing the horse's bridle.

Steps to Tacking a Horse

The **saddle**, shown in *Figure 4*.

- The **saddle pad** fits over the horse's back underneath the saddle to add extra cushioning and protection.
- The **bounce pad** or **wither pad** is an extra cushioned pad that goes between the saddle pad and saddle.
- The **girth** goes under the horse's belly, secures the saddle to the horse's back.

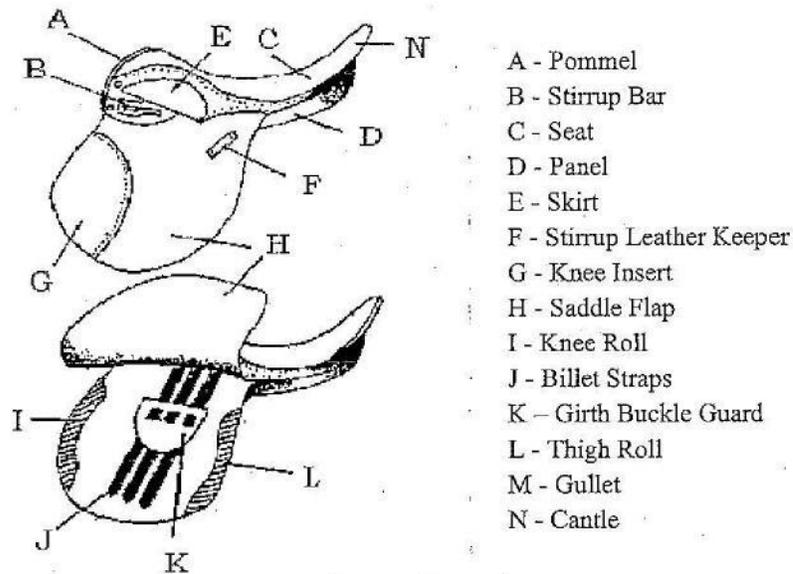
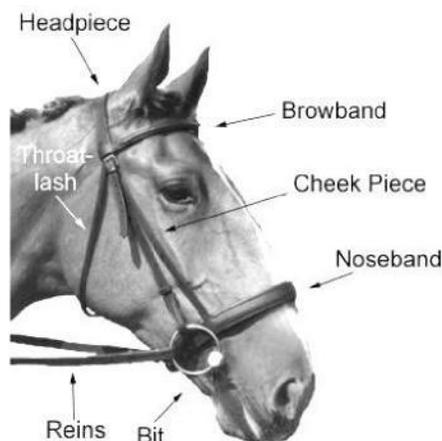


Figure 4.

Steps to Saddling a Horse

1. Stand on the left side of the horse with the **saddle pad** in hand. Place the saddle pad on the horse's back close up by the **withers**, (raised bone a few inches below the start of the mane). The side of the pad with the billet straps/girth straps should be facing upward, toward the front of the horse.
2. Place the **bounce** or **wither pad** directly over the saddle pad. If tacking with a bounce pad, make sure that the larger, round part of the pad is towards the horse's back. If tacking with a wither pad, make sure that the cut out piece is over the horse's withers.
3. Gently place the **saddle** over the saddle pad and bounce or wither pad. Make sure that the saddle is put on with the **pommel** in the left hand and **cantle** in the right hand. When the saddle is on the horse, the pommel is near the front of the horse and the cantle is near the hind end.
4. Go around to the right side of the horse to make sure that the saddle is flat and even. Also check that the **girth** is flat and not twisted. For girths that are not double elastic, the nonelastic side should be attached to the right side of the saddle.
5. Return to the left side of the horse, reach under the horse's belly to grab the girth and pull it up to the **billet straps**. The left side of the girth should be attached to the left billet strap, and the right side of the girth should be attached to the right billet strap. The middle billet strap remains unattached to anything. Make sure to put the billet strap through the **TOP** of the metal buckle.
6. Tighten the girth enough to snugly fit a flat hand between the girth and the horse. **ALWAYS** check the girth tightness from under the horse's belly, not from the side. The girth should be even on both sides of the billet straps. For example, if the girth is tightened to the third hole on the left billet strap, it must be tightened to the third hole on the right billet strap as well. In the event that the girth does not reach the billet straps on the left side, go back to the right side and lower the girth at least two holes.
7. Make sure that if the horse is staying in the stall that the girth is loosened. The instructor will check that the girth is tight enough before they mount the student. If for any reason the instructor does not check the girth before mounting, kindly remind them to do so.

The **bridle**, shown in *Figure 5*, is a harness, consisting of a headstall, bit, and reins, fitted about the horse's head and used to restrain or guide the horse.



****Please note that the correct way to hold the bridle is by the head piece and reins.****

Steps to Bridling a Horse

1. Hold the headpiece in the left hand and the reins in the right hand. Check that the bridle and reins are straight and not twisted.
2. Move to the **LEFT** side of the horse.
3. Hook the left arm through the headpiece, and hold the reins so the right side of the reins is in the right hand, and the left side of the reins is in the left hand. This will ensure that the reins are not twisted when they are placed over the horse's head. Gently put the reins over the horse's head, so that the buckle of the reins (middle of the reins) rests on your horse's withers.
4. (*Figure 6*) Place the right hand over the horse's nose by reaching under the horse's head. With the right hand in place, hold the bridle just below the brow band against the horse's nose. Make sure that the right hand stays in place. This way, if the horse goes to move his or her head away from the bridle, he or she will not be able to due to the support of the Tacker's hand.
5. Cup the left hand underneath the bit, and guide it toward the horse's mouth. Once the bit is in place, pull the bridle up and over the horse's ears making sure that the brow band is behind the horse's ears and the head piece is in front of the horse's ears.
6. Fasten the nose band by tightening the leather straps so that only one finger can fit between the horse and the noseband.
7. Fasten the throat latch by tightening the leather straps so a width if four fingers can fit between the horse and the throatlatch. Please do not attempt to adjust the cheek piece; it is already at a pre-set position.
8. Once the bridle is on the horse, make sure that the reins stay over the horse's head.



Figure 6.

Steps to Removing the Saddle

1. Standing on the left side of the horse, make sure that the stirrups are securely rolled up.
2. Unlatch both billets on the left side of the girth. Make sure that the girth comes off completely. If the horse wears a martingale, make sure to slip it off the girth prior to removing the saddle from the horse's back.
3. Leave the girth attached to the right side.
4. Slide the saddle pads off of the horse.
5. If placing the saddle on the ground outside the stall, place it pommel down, cantle up, facing the wall. If placing the saddle in the tack room, place it securely on the rack with the cantle, name plate facing out.

Steps to Removing the Bridle

1. Make sure that the reins are over the horse's head. Unlatch the noseband and throatband.
2. Grab the reins and headpiece, and gently pull them forward over the horse's ears. Allow the horse to drop the bit.
3. To put the bridle away correctly, hang it up on the hook with headpiece with the browband facing out. The lead rope and reins are to be unclipped and hung up on designated hooks.
4. After completing these steps, the horse should be completely untacked. When exiting the stall, lock it securely.

Sidewalker

The responsibility of the Sidewalker is the rider. The sidewalker helps to ensure the safety of the rider by positioning along the rider's leg, taking all directions from the riding instructor and passing them along to the rider.

Qualifications for being a Sidewalker:

- A Sidewalker is a volunteer who has completed the mandatory volunteer orientation and has completed shadowing an experienced RideAbility Sidewalker.
- The Sidewalker is confident and comfortable working around horses and the Special Needs population.

Guidelines for being a Sidewalker:

- The Sidewalker assists in balancing the rider on the horse by being positioned along the rider's leg. There are three common ways to support the rider:
 - **Ankle Hold** ~ The Sidewalker holds the rider's ankle with the inside hand with a firm grasp while walking next to the horse while avoiding pushing the rider's leg forward/backward or into the horse's side.
 - **Hand over Thigh** ~ Hand over the rider's thigh above the knee holding the pommel or leg flap on saddle.
 - **Walking Support** ~ The Sidewalker walks closely beside the rider and horse without holding on; in the event that support is needed, the Sidewalker steps in.
- **If ever unsure of which type of support is needed, ask the instructor. Asking is always better than assuming which is needed.**
- The Sidewalker always walks next to the student's side, facing the front unless otherwise instructed.
 - The Sidewalker takes all directions from the Instructor and passes them along to the rider.
 - The Sidewalker helps keep the rider's attention focused on the Instructor.
 - The Sidewalker may assist with the adjustment of stirrups if requested by the Instructor.
 - In an emergency, the Sidewalker is responsible for the rider. The Sidewalker stays with the rider, not letting go. If the rider falls off the horse, the Sidewalker remains with the rider without moving him or her, keeping the rider calm until assistance comes.

Horse Handler

A Leader ensures the safety of the rider by controlling the horse when the rider is unable to do so. Always listens to and follows direction from the Instructor/Therapist.

Qualifications for the Horse Handler:

- The Horse Handler must be a volunteer who is fully capable of fulfilling the role of a Sidewalker.
- The Horse Handler is able to anticipate unsafe situations and act in such a way as to avoid them.

Guidelines for being a Horse Handler:

- The Horse Handler controls the horse in guiding, steering, stopping and starting when the rider is unable to do so or instructed by the Therapist/Instructor.
- Unless instructed otherwise, the Horse Handler always leads from the left side of the horse, holding the top of the lead rope with the right hand and holding the remaining part of the rope with the left hand at all times. Avoid wrapping the lead rope around your hand or wrist. Always avoid letting the leadline drag on the ground. During lessons leader understands changing sides.
- The Horse Handler maintains constant communication with the Instructor and listens to the Instructor for cues from the lesson. For example, if the Instructor asks the student to “walk”, the Leader should wait for the student to say, “Walk, please,” or for the Instructor to directly tell the Leader to walk the horse.
- The Horse Handler maintains a safe distance between the other horses in the ring.
- The Horse Handler is aware of the Sidewalker’s position and tries not to push the Sidewalker into the fence.
- The Horse Handler avoids hanging on the bit and/or holding the bit too tightly to ensure the horse does not toss the head or move around in discomfort.
- The Horse Handler walks or jobs just behind the horse’s head but in front of shoulder, looking straight ahead.
- When bringing the horse into the stall, the Horse Handler turns the horse to face the door.
- When exiting the stall, the Horse Handler securely closes the stall door.
- In an emergency, the Horse Handler maintains control of the horse; when the rider is clear from the horse, the Horse Handler walks the horse away from the incident. If the emergency occurs in the ring to a rider on a different horse, the Leader brings the horse he or she is leading to the middle of the ring and awaits assistance with dismounting or other instructions from the instructor staff.
- The Leader stays with the horse at all times.
 - The Horse Handler understands the concept of Pressure and Release and is not nagging the horse, pulling the horse punishing the horse
 - The leader understands the use of the pointing finger to guide the horse where to go if drifting. The Horse Handler constantly praises the horse and constantly talks to the horse during the lesson. Rubbing, patting GOOD BOY.

Team Leader

Assists the Instructor/Therapist to ensure all Volunteers, both current and new, are performing their assigned tasks/roles and that the team is a cohesive unit. They need to oversee the Team to ensure preparation and timeliness are in order for each lesson/session.

Qualifications for Team Leader:

- The Team Leader must be a volunteer who is capable of fulfilling the roles of Tacker, Groomer, Leader and Sidewalker.
- The Team Leader needs to be able to communicate well in a clear, kind, assertive and fair manner with both people and horses.
- The Team Leader must be comfortable supervising and directing Volunteers of all ages on their team.

Guidelines for being a Team Leader:

- There will be a Team Leader assigned to each Instructor/Therapist everyday. The Team Leader may or may not be a permanent position. Team Leaders will be asked to fulfill the needed role based on each series/daily schedule.
- The Team Leader guides new volunteers explaining how to complete assigned tasks as well as communicating the purpose and importance of the tasks.
- The Team Leader ensures that the horses are properly tacked on time for each lesson/session.
- The Team Leader ensures that the volunteers know their assigned roles for each lesson/session.
- The Team Leader ensures that the horses arrive on time to the ring for each lesson/session.
- The Team Leader must be willing and able to fulfill any necessary role as part of their team in the case of absences, scheduling changes or any extenuating circumstances to keep within the scheduled lesson/sessions safely.

Acknowledgement of Receipt of Volunteer Handbook

Volunteer File

This volunteer handbook has been prepared for your information and understanding of the policies, procedures, practices and benefits of RideAbility. Please read through the entire handbook thoroughly and upon completion, sign the statement below and return it to your volunteer director/coordinator by the specified date.

I, _____, have received and read a copy of the RideAbility volunteer handbook, which outlines the goals, policies, procedures, benefits and expectations, as well as my responsibilities as a volunteer.

I have familiarized myself with the contents of this handbook. I understand that this handbook is simply a general guideline to the policies, procedures and practices of RideAbility and is not intended to cover every situation that may arise.

I also understand that:

I must wear Name Tag whenever I am on the property.

Volunteer shirts may be purchased for a donation of \$15.00. We would like everyone to have one. If you need us to cover the \$15 please let us know.

I understand that the employee handbook does not serve as a contract of employment and should not be deemed as such. By my signature below, I acknowledge, understand, accept and agree to comply with the information contained in the volunteer handbook provided to me.

Parent/Guardian (if under 18): _____

Date:

RideAbility reserves the right to change, modify, or abolish any or all of the policies, benefits, rules, and regulations contained in this handbook as it deems necessary, at any point in time, with or without notice.

Volunteers will be made aware of changes and will be expected to adhere to any modifications to the handbook. Violation of any RideAbility policies may result in a request not to return.