



# Volunteer Handbook

Your guide to getting to know Rhythms of Grace  
and becoming a volunteer.



Welcome to Rhythms of Grace!

We are so pleased that you have chosen to become a volunteer at Rhythms of Grace. Volunteers are the backbone of our equine-based program for people with diverse needs and challenges. Most of our clients cannot participate without the support of volunteers. In addition, our volunteers are a constant source of encouragement that help our clients reach their potential.

As a volunteer, you will be part of a team, working alongside your fellow volunteers, the instructors, therapists and our clients. While creating an environment that is physically safe and emotionally encouraging for all involved, we also have a lot of fun. The sense of joy and accomplishment experienced by our clients due to you, all our wonderful volunteers, who dedicate a few hours each week to this program. Together, we DO make a difference.

This handbook has been created to serve as a training tool, as reinforcement for and supplement to the program orientation you attended or will attend. Information about volunteer responsibilities, tips on working with horses, brief descriptions of a few of the disabilities more commonly seen in our program, safety rules, and specific information about Rhythms of Grace are just some of the things you'll find in this book. We hope you will read through it thoroughly, and keep it handy for future reference. We also have a copy in the barn. We encourage you to grow your knowledge about horses and horsemanship, various disabilities, therapeutic riding, and more. We are happy to foster this growth in any way we can—just ask.

**Board of Directors**

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Dawn Carlson, CAE, CTRI  
President & CEO  
PATH Int'l Certified Therapeutic  
Riding Instructor

Thank you again for your interest. We sincerely hope you will become a part of the Rhythms of Grace family.

Dawn M. Carlson, CAE, CTRI  
Chief Executive Officer

PATH Int'l Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor

### **Rhythms of Grace Mission Statement**

At Rhythms of Grace, our mission is to enhance the quality of life for children and adults with diverse needs by partnering with horses to bring hope and healing through equine assisted activities and therapies.

### **Rhythms of Grace Vision Statement**

Be the model of excellence for worldwide therapeutic riding centers in Equine Assisted Activities and Therapies (EAAT), continuing education, and instructor certification and training. We strive to be distinguished in equine therapy through:

- ❖ Exceptional instruction and the safest delivery of superior programming
- ❖ Comprehensive and compassionate care of our horses
- ❖ High standards and professional leadership, coupled with staff and volunteer development
- ❖ Creating a positive and energizing work environment
- ❖ The development of innovative programs that blaze new trails in the international therapeutic horsemanship industry

IT IS THE VISION OF EXCELLENCE THAT WILL ULTIMATELY LEAD TO THE GROWTH, WELL-BEING AND ACHIVEMENTS OF OUR CLIENTS.

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## OVERVIEW

### The Benefits

The premise of therapeutic riding is that the act of riding on a horse provides a positive mental and physical experience that is especially beneficial to individuals with a disability. Quality of life, from the simplest of tasks to personal relationships, is improved, enhanced and enriched. The benefits of horseback riding are threefold:

- Physical - The three-dimensional motion of the horse provides the client with hip and back action that simulates natural walking. Riding relaxes and strengthens muscles while improving body tone, posture, balance, joint mobility, and coordination.
- Emotional - Contact with horses and horsemanship training provides a non-competitive setting for learning. New abilities, self-discipline, and improved concentration build self-confidence.
- Social - Horseback riding in a positive environment nurtures a positive self-image. Clients may, for the first time in their lives, experience some independence and a sense of being part of a team.

Rhythms of Grace serves children and adults with a variety of cognitive, physical, and/or emotional challenges. Based on input from doctors, therapists, teachers, and parents, the client's individual goals are designed to complement ongoing therapy and education. Instructors design and monitor individualized treatment plans for each client to address their specific needs while they learn and practice the skills involved in riding. Individual and class goals encourage each client to be the best they can be, on and off the horse.

### Our History

Rhythms of Grace is the realization of a long-time dream of Dawn Carlson, CEO and Program Director, to bring the healing value of horses to adults and children in a compassionate learning environment. After her corporate career, Dawn pursued and obtained credentials as a Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.) Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor (CTRI). With a startup herd of Dawn's own horses: Crystal, Pepsi and Diego, Rhythms of Grace launched in August 2020.

Rhythms of Grace operates out of River Heights Ranch in Dallas Center, Iowa. The facility has stall, paddock and pasture accommodations for horses, a heated tack room, restroom and observation/meeting room. There are both indoor and outdoor riding arenas.

#### **DID YOU KNOW?**

**Rhythms of Grace was started in 2020 with a mission of enhancing the quality of life for children and adults with diverse needs by partnering with horses to bring hope and healing through equine assisted services.**

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## **Governance and Support**

A Board of Directors oversees general operations, while the day-to-day operations and lesson program are managed by the CEO.

Our team of dedicated instructors and volunteers serve the needs of our clients.

The Rhythms of Grace Board of Directors assists Rhythms of Grace in all of its efforts, with particular emphasis on fundraising and educating the community about the program and its goals. Each participant in Rhythms of Grace is an important part of a special family.

## **Our Accreditation**

Rhythms of Grace is a Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International member center (<http://www.pathintl.org/>). PATH Intl.'s mission is to change and enrich lives by promoting excellence in equine-assisted activities and therapies. There are hundreds of PATH Intl. centers all over the world.

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### ***In summary....***

- Any individual can experience the benefits of riding a horse, or just being around a horse, but for someone with disabilities, it can be transformational.
- Rhythms of Grace has been serving Central Iowa since 2020 at River Heights Ranch, Dallas Center, IA.
- We are an accredited program, which helps us to maintain our high standards.



# **SAFETY at the Rhythms of Grace and River Heights Ranch**

## **Basic Guidelines**

Safety is paramount to Rhythms of Grace, both on and off the horse. In addition to knowing and understanding basic safety and emergency procedures, it is important for all volunteers to be aware of additional precautions needed when working with horses and clients.

All individuals, regardless of their purpose for being at Rhythms of Grace on any given day, must comply with the following:

- Rhythms of Grace is a non-smoking facility. Smoking is allowed in personal vehicles **ONLY**.
- All children must be supervised by an adult when on the premises.
- Volunteers should not bring unsupervised children to class.
- Only authorized personnel (instructors, volunteers and staff) are allowed in the stalls and teaching arenas.
- Unauthorized personnel are not allowed in the fields or paddocks.
- Observe and obey all safety signs posted.
- Follow instructions provided in the event of a fire or tornado alarm on the premises.
- No guest dogs are permitted on the property.

Mounted persons (program clients, volunteer riders, schoolers, and instructors/staff) must always wear a helmet.

Horses must be properly tacked with safe equipment. Any equipment or tack that is worn or stressed to the point of breaking should be brought to the attention of an instructor for repair or to be discarded, and an appropriate substitution made.

During your volunteer training, your groom-and-tack trainer will talk to you about safe horse-handling practices you should strive to make a part of your routine each and every time you are working with any of our Rhythms of Grace horses.

## **Medical Releases and First Aid**

Every volunteer and client is required to provide emergency medical contact information, a medical release authorizing treatment in the event of an emergency (or indicating No Treatment), and information about current conditions, precautions, allergies, treatment or medications which might be important for us to know. An example of such medications might be epinephrine for allergies, an inhaler for asthma, or prescription medicines carried by the individual. This information must be updated whenever changes occur or annually, at a minimum.

A first-aid kit is maintained in the commons. It contains items such as bandages for a variety of minor wounds, antiseptic spray/ointment, and ice packs are available in the freezer. It does NOT contain aspirin, ibuprofen, acetaminophen, or any other oral remedies commonly



used. It is our strict policy, required by insurance, that no staff or volunteer associated with Rhythms of Grace can offer or administer anything that must be taken orally, nasally, or via syringe. Only external treatment, such as disinfecting and covering a wound or application of an ice pack, can be offered.

#### IMPORTANT

*It is strongly advised that any volunteer or client who may require a medical device, such as (but not limited to) an inhaler or an epinephrine pen, should have that device with them or easily accessible while on the property, and make it known to the instructor where and how to retrieve said device if needed.*

### **In the Event of...A Fire or Other Evacuation Event**

A fire at any location has immense potential for danger, but especially so in a barn. It is vital to take notice and respond immediately when a fire is observed or a smoke detector is sounded. To assure staff, volunteers, clients, and guests are safe in the event of a fire, please follow this procedure:

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#### CALLING 9-1-1

*When calling 9-1-1 for medical or fire-related emergencies, please use the wording below:*

**"We are calling from 23625 River Heights Drive, Dallas Center, Iowa-**

**\_We have a medical/fire emergency."**

*This will allow for a faster response on the part of ambulances and fire trucks.*

*For non-EMS and non-fire emergencies (such as reporting a crime), we are located in the Dallas County Sheriff's jurisdiction.*

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- a. Upon ANY indication of a fire in progress, take immediate action to call 9-1-1. DO NOT investigate first! There are smoke alarms and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors in the tack room and bunk room.
  - b. If you see a fire in the beginning stage (first flames, or initial spark) and you feel capable of extinguishing the fire, retrieve the nearest fire extinguisher and proceed to put out the fire. The fire department should be notified that the initial fire has been put out, but request to come inspect the area to ensure it has been completely extinguished.

Call 911. (See **Calling 9-1-1** on previous page for instructions on getting the call routed properly.) The Rhythms of Grace telephone is located in the Bunk Room. You may also use a personal cell phone to call 9-1-1 but be sure to have address information.

#### USING THE PHONE SYSTEM

*When making an emergency call from the Rhythms of Grace telephone, simply dial 9-1-1.*

ALL individuals should proceed in an orderly fashion to the parking lot via the nearest exit. Clients shall be immediately assisted from the building, preferably after being dismounted by the instructor(s).

- c. Instructors are responsible for indicating the direction of the nearest exit and seeing that all clients and volunteers immediately exit the building and quickly proceed to the parking lot.
- d. If there is a class in progress in the outdoor arena, the clients will be dismounted and saddles will be immediately removed. The instructor will provide directions to safely attend to the horses.
- e. Each instructor shall perform a headcount of clients and volunteers upon arriving at the parking lot. Because of this, **no one can leave the property during a fire evacuation.**

A senior staff member shall take charge of the meeting area. Their responsibilities are:

- f. Determine from instructors and others any persons unaccounted for.
- g. Establish that the fire department has been contacted. If not, a designated person will be sent to the nearest safe phone.
- h. Arrange for First Aid or emergency medical needs of any person(s).
- i. Know the whereabouts of any staff members that have returned to the building or are on errands.

No one shall reenter the building unless given permission by the senior staff member. The only reason to reenter the building is to assist clients in evacuating the building. Persons who reenter to assist in evacuation should do so in pairs and should NOT enter an area where smoke impedes vision.

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At staff discretion, horses that can be removed while exiting, without endangering the evacuation of persons, may be taken to the outdoor arena or turned out and turned loose. Loose horses that can be safely captured shall be put in the outdoor arena or turned out.

Should circumstances make any of these procedures impractical (i.e., wind conditions, location of fire) the senior staff member shall make necessary modifications.

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Fire extinguishers are mounted within a maximum travel distance of 75 feet. Fire extinguishers shall be inspected annually and recharged when necessary. All staff shall be instructed in the use of fire extinguishers.

*RED fire extinguishers are filled with CO2 (carbondioxide) and should be used for trash, liquids, chemicals, electrical and structural fires.*

*Fire extinguishers are located:*

- 1) in the entry foyer of the barn*
- 2) at the west walk-in door of barn*

*To operate the fire extinguisher:*

*1) hold the extinguisher upright and pull the ringpin;*

*2) stand back 10 feet, aim at base of the fire, and squeeze lever, sweeping the extinguisher from side to side.*

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## **In the Event of... A Tornado or Other Severe Weather**

During a tornado or severe weather conditions, all persons should congregate in a designated safe location.

Instructors are responsible for supervising the dismount of clients, and directing clients, volunteers and others to the nearest safe spot. The safest place to congregate is in the tack room or the restroom (when there are only a few people present); for larger numbers, the next safest place is the Bunk Room.

As everyone gathers, cell phones and flashlights should be retrieved (if possible).

- Additional flashlights are in the Tack Room and Bunk Room.

As everyone gathers, instructors shall perform a headcount of clients and volunteers.

The senior staff member shall take charge of the safe room. The priorities are to:

- Determine any persons unaccounted for.
- Arrange for first aid or emergency needs of any person(s) to the extent possible.
- Know the whereabouts of any staff members not present.

***If time allows,*** these tasks may also be executed, at a staff member's discretion:

- Untack horses that were in class and leave in a secured arena.
- Or—in the case of severe weather—horses may be put into stalls.  
**\*\*\*Stay under cover until assured that all danger has passed\*\*\***

## **In the Event of...A Medical Emergency—Major Injury**

If there is an accident involving a major injury, such as a broken limb or head trauma, please follow this procedure:

The instructor (if the injury involves a client or volunteer in a class) will appoint someone to:

- a. Telephone the emergency number and assist in directing personnel to the barn. **IN CASE OF EMERGENCY River Heights Ranch** fact sheets are posted near the Rhythms of Grace phone.
- b. Retrieve the Emergency Medical Release Form of the client/volunteer out of the file and give it to the instructor or a staff member. Volunteer files are stored ALPHA by last name in the RoG office. Client files are stored ALPHA by last name RoG. Staff Medicals are stored in the RoG office.
- c. Remain at the barn area to direct emergency personnel and reassure others in the area.

The instructor will also appoint a volunteer to:

- d. Go to the intersection of Midland Trail and River Heights Drive and wait for the emergency vehicle to arrive.
- e. Stop the driver at the gate and have lights & sirens turned off so the horses will not be frightened.
- f. Direct the driver to where the injured person is resting.

The instructor will decide who will remain with the grounded client and who will take the class to the safest confined area away from the accident.

The class will continue in an orderly manner or return to the barn.

If the instructor is injured, the most experienced volunteer in the class will take temporary charge, following the procedures outlined above, until another instructor or staff member arrives.

If the injury occurs outside of class, a staff member or instructor should be brought to the scene immediately to assess the situation and take charge.

## **In the Event of...A Medical Emergency—Minor Injury**

Minor injuries or falls do occur occasionally. In such a situation, please follow this procedure:

An individual nearest the injured person at the time of the accident should calmly instruct the individual to stay down (if fallen) or assist them if in immediate danger of falling.

A staff member or instructor should be brought to the scene immediately to assess the situation and take charge.

If the injured person is a mounted client, the horse will be taken back to the barn and properly attended to.

If the injured person should not or cannot walk, someone will be delegated to bring a wheelchair or car.

Needs of the individual (i.e., band-aids, ice, taken in/out of the heat) will be addressed.

The rest of the class will continue in an orderly manner.

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### **INCIDENT REPORTING**

*All incidents, minor and major, must be officially reported. A staff member or instructor will fill out the appropriate form. If you are involved in or a witness to any incident or accident, please do not leave the premises until you have talked to the staff/instructor in charge and provided any information you know. Timely, first-person, thoughtful input is critical to having an accurate and thorough report.*

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## **In the Event Urgent Action is Required**

Urgent Action Procedures apply in cases of injury such as a tractor accident or malfunctioning equipment/structures, suspected criminal activity such as assault or theft, suspected child abuse, suspected improper behavior, or suspected animal abuse.

If activity occurs that results in visible injury and requires first aid or CPR, in addition to the procedures described below, follow Emergency Medical Procedures as outlined on pages 12-3.

Contact appropriate authorities immediately. Telephone numbers are posted by the Rhythms of Grace phone.

Make sure all clients, parents and visitors are in a supervised group away from the emergency. Tend to all human needs first, then address animal needs.

Contact the Program Director/CEO (Dawn Carlson).

If unable to contact the Program Director/CEO, contact the backup emergency contact listed near the RoG phone.

The contact information for these individuals is listed on the **IN CASE OF EMERGENCY** sheets posted near the Rhythms of Grace phone.

If unable to contact any, contact the Chair of the Board (Lynn Graves).

Do not volunteer information to spectators or strangers. Explain that an investigation is still in process.

Make note of and document as soon as possible all facts, details and telephone conversations. Obtain statements from witnesses as soon as possible.

Make sure Program Director has information about clients involved so parents or families may be informed quickly.

Dealing with reporters:

- c. Always refer media inquiries to the CEO.
- d. Do not volunteer opinions, speculate on causes for the emergency, or make policy statements.

If child abuse is suspected, take immediate action.

- e. Contact the CEO. In their absence, contact Board Chair, Lynn Graves, who will notify Child Protective Services.
- f. Separate the suspected abuser from all program participants.

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*Once any employee is notified of or becomes aware of any incident or situation that contradicts operating policy or has the potential to compromise the safety and welfare of program participants, that employee is obligated to report such information immediately to the CEO. From a legal perspective, employee knowledge is considered agency knowledge. Volunteers who are notified or become aware of any such incident or situation should notify a staff member immediately. (For additional information on Rhythms of Grace policy regarding official reporting of incidents, see Whistleblower Policy, in Appendix.)*

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***In summary....***

- Observe and obey all safety rules—around the property, with the horses, and in the event of an emergency.
- Let an instructor/staff member know if you may require attention for any chronic medical condition, and the best way to make it available. Be sure your medical and information release is up-to-date in the office.
- Remain calm in case of emergency, and look to an instructor/staff member to tell you what to do next.
- Familiarize yourself with emergency procedures so that you can be a part of the solution, not exacerbate the problem.
- Conduct yourself in a manner that is helpful, respectful, and courteous at all times.



## GENERAL VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

All Rhythms of Grace volunteers must complete all necessary paperwork before each session begins. Make sure your updated paperwork is turned into the Director of Volunteer Services as soon as possible for each session. This is an accreditation requirement.

### Minimum Age Requirement

It is a general Rhythms of Grace guideline that the minimum age for volunteering to work with the horses and clients is **14 years old**. Because working with horses can be potentially hazardous, the volunteer application includes a liability release which our accreditation requires to be signed by all prospective volunteers (or parents in the case of minors).

### What to Wear

Volunteers should dress appropriately for horse related activities around children.

- You will be doing a lot of walking and jogging on uneven terrain, so supportive, comfortable, closed-toe, closed-heel shoes are important. It hurts when a horse steps on your foot, so make sure your footwear is sturdy as well.
- A refrigerator is available while you volunteer. Please label with your name and remove all your items at the end of your shift as the refrigerator is emptied regularly.
- Please dress **modestly** in close-fitting clothing that is weather appropriate. Loose, floppy clothing can get caught and tangled with equipment.
- Dress in layers that you can shed as you exercise, especially during cooler months. Bring a jacket, even if you don't need it in town—it's cooler at the barn than you may think! Long pants are recommended, but shorts of reasonable length (Bermuda style) are allowed. During the summer, be sure you dress coolly and wear a hat that will not fly off. Sleeveless shirts are acceptable but no tank tops please.
  - Avoid dangly earrings and bracelets that can hamper your movements, get pulled off by a client, or distract the horse.
  - Sunglasses are a big plus and bug repellent & sunscreen are recommended.
  - Avoid scented perfumes and lotions, as these can attract insects and distract the horse or client.
- Please leave your cell phone in your car. Even on vibrate, the phone can be a distraction to you, the client or the horse. If this is a problem, see your instructor.

### Available at the barn for your use:

- ✓ Telephone
- ✓ Water dispenser
- ✓ Refrigerator/Freezer
- ✓ Microwave



## Sign-in Procedures and Recording Volunteer Hours

Your volunteer time is important to us for fundraising purposes and recognizing outstanding volunteers. Please be sure to record your hours on the sign-in sheet each time you come. Include your drive time and round up your hours to the nearest quarter hour.

### When You Can't Be There...

It is **your responsibility to find a substitute in the event you must miss a class**. A sub list is published each year and is made available to all volunteers. You can send out a group email or text to individuals on the sub list, or call them to find someone who will sub for you. If it is close to class time or you have really tried to find a sub and can't, please call or text the Rhythms of Grace telephone 515-305-7361 and let them know as soon as possible.

If you would like to be on the sub list, you can sign up at volunteer orientation, mark it on your registration form, or let the Director of Volunteer Services know. Offer to sub only if you really want people to contact you and you would be able to help at least occasionally.

If you are running late due to traffic conditions, weather, car problems, or other situations, please notify the Program Director with your ETA. If we know you're on the way, someone can stand in for you until you arrive.

### Inclement Weather

Because Rhythms of Grace is fortunate to have our covered arena, classes are rarely cancelled due to weather conditions; however, if driving conditions become unsafe, be sure to call the Rhythms of Grace number 515-305-7361) no sooner than two hours prior to your scheduled class time. If the class is cancelled, Rhythms of Grace personnel will send a text to your cell phone and there will be a message on the 515-305-7361 voicemail letting you know. If class is cancelled at the last minute due to weather, the staff will do all they can to contact you as soon as the decision is made.

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### Attributes of a Good Volunteer

Reliability	Regular attendance or the provision of a reliable substitute
Punctuality	Late arrival can be very frustrating to a client who has looked forward to their weekly lesson.
Physical fitness	Within reason!
Be relaxed	An anxious volunteer contributes to a nervous client and a tense mount.
Alertness	Despite your outward relaxation, always anticipate an emergency.
Empathy	Avoid false sentimentality. It is important to have empathy and genuine regard toward the clients.

Horse knowledge	Knowledge of horses is helpful; however, many excellent volunteers have little previous experience but are willing to learn.
Patience	Help others learn and progress at their own pace.
Professional	Sensible, <b>modest</b> comfortable clothing; pants that stay up, no underwear worn as outerwear, appropriate footwear- paddock boots, cross trainers, light hiking boots, sneakers or boots.
COMMON SENSE	Always!

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### **Dismissal of Volunteers and Guests from Center Activities**

Rhythms of Grace relies greatly on volunteers as key members of the team that provides services to and assists our clients. Rhythms of Grace also welcomes guests to visit at any time classes are in session or when there is a staff member present on the property to greet and assist them.

While recognizing the extreme importance of the safety and well-being of our clients, volunteers, staff, guests, and horses, there may be occasions when a volunteer or guest must be dismissed and/or told to leave the premises. When this occurs, the following guidelines apply, as appropriate.

A volunteer or guest may be told to leave the premises immediately if, for example, he/she:

- Threatens the safety of others;
- Is disruptive or abusive;
- Is not in compliance with Rhythms of Grace policies;
- Fails to properly follow established safety procedures;
- Is in possession of a weapon
- Is under the influence of or in possession of alcohol or drugs;
- Is under age and is using or in possession of tobacco or related materials;
- Is of age and using tobacco products in a non-designated location;
- Mistreats any animal or person at Rhythms of Grace;
- Acts or speaks inappropriately or dangerously.

A volunteer or guest who commits any of the above actions, or whose actions may result in a situation of a potentially serious nature, will be told to leave by (preferably) the most senior staff member available at the time (when it is a guest) or by the Program Director (when it is a volunteer). It is preferable that two staff members be involved in any decision that may result in expulsion from the premises and that two staff members participate in confronting the offending volunteer or guest. In situations where circumstances are not as clear as possible, the CEO should be contacted to either resolve the situation personally or to provide guidance to and/or authorize others to do so.

At any time, if any staff member or volunteer feels threatened, law enforcement officials will be contacted for assistance and security as appropriate.

In addition, if a volunteer is in violation of any Rhythms of Grace policies or procedures, fails to follow or ignores instructions from a staff member, or is not adequately performing their responsibilities as a volunteer, the Program Director will be notified. The Program Director will investigate, interviewing all individuals who can help establish the facts, and then document the findings and review them. If warranted, the Program Director will counsel the volunteer in a private meeting. Documentation of the investigation and counseling notes from the counseling session (which should be written immediately following the session) will be kept in the volunteer's file.

If the Program Director believes that, because of the investigation and counseling session, the volunteer will be able to improve and go on to effectively serve the clients and the program, then they may be permitted to continue serving as a volunteer. However, if the results of the investigation and counseling session indicate that there are or will likely be no improvements on the part of the volunteer, or that the volunteer's continued presence at the facility is in any way detrimental to the program, Rhythms of Grace reserves the right to terminate the volunteer's services and direct them to leave. A volunteer will be dismissed only after consultation with the appropriate staff affected by the volunteer's actions and the CEO or the CEO's proxy. The Program Director has discretion to invite the volunteer to return after an appropriate probationary period has been served and all other conditions as set by the Program Director have been met.

In dealing with these types of situations involving either guests or volunteers, all individuals involved will maintain the utmost tact and decorum. All discussions and any confrontations will be conducted in private, out of sound and sight from clients, families, other staff and volunteers not involved in the situation.

### ***In summary....***

- Minimum age for volunteers working with clients and horses is 14 years old.
- Dress appropriately, for your own comfort, in consideration of the horses, and as a role model for our clients.
- Please conduct yourself in a mature and responsible manner always while at the barn. This includes regular participation in class, communication with staff when you must be absent, using appropriate language and exhibiting appropriate behaviors always.



# THE RIDING LESSON

## Description of a Lesson

One or more volunteers and an instructor can work with individual clients or a group of clients in an enclosed ring, open field, or stable area for any of several purposes. The client may learn special riding skills, care and handling of the horse, or how to saddle a horse. The client may play games on horseback, perform gymnastic movements on the back of a horse, learn dressage, hunt seat or western riding, negotiate obstacles, or go for a trail ride. A physical, occupational or speech therapist may be consulting and offering “hands-on” assistance in positioning and recommending activities for clients. Each client will be working toward individual goals. As a volunteer, you will be involved in every aspect of the lesson from grooming and tacking, through the class itself, and cleanup afterwards.

If you are new to working around horses, or are unsure about working with a horse on your own, please ask for assistance or clarification from a staff member, your volunteer captain, or “buddy up” with another volunteer. Do what you feel comfortable doing—it’s okay to ask for help!

## Riding Lesson Timeline

1 hour before class	Sign in on the attendance sheet in the tack room. Prepare the horse for the lesson.
10-15 minutes before class	Meet at the tack room area with the class instructor for your class assignment.
5-10 minutes before class	If you are leading, take your horse to the designated warm-up area and wait for the instructor to call for you and your horse. If you are sidewalking or have another class assignment, wait behind with the clients to assist in mounting if necessary. At the instructor’s discretion, you may aid the clients in finding and putting on their helmets.
Class	Usually lasts about an hour.
After class	If you are <u>leading</u> a horse, take him back to his stall. Remove his tack, pick his feet and provide any cool-down tasks as directed by your instructor. Return tack to its appropriate location in the tack room UNLESS the horse is being used in the following class. The client may assist you in putting away the tack, to learn new skills and take on more responsibility.

After class

If you are sidewalking, accompany the client to his or her family, or back to the barn as necessary. If the client is capable of putting away the tack, monitor or assist to ensure safety and correct placement. If the client does not stay, assist the leader with untacking the horse.

## Preparing for Class

It is important to arrive 45 minutes - 1 hour before class time for grooming/tacking horses and volunteer assignments. Some of our clients come early to groom and tack their horses with your assistance. It is especially important that you are timely for these classes.

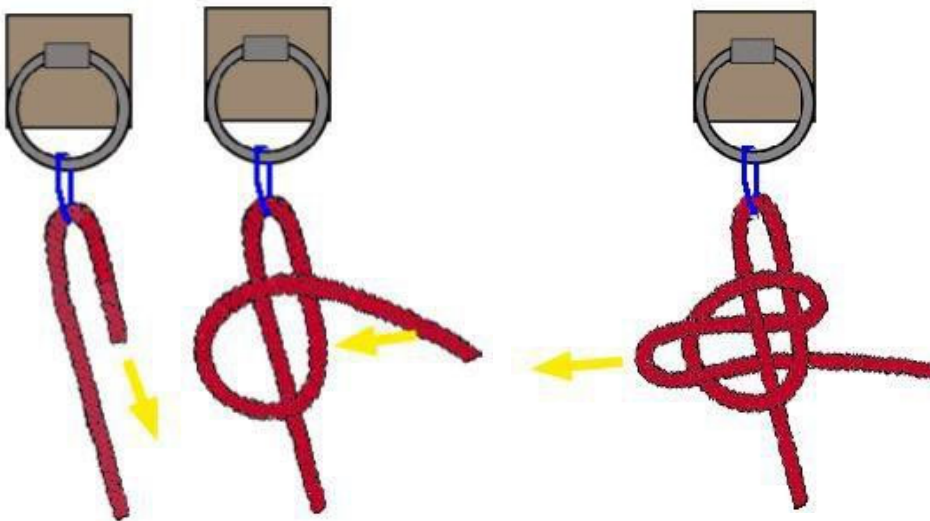
1. Be wearing or pick up your name tag and record your hours on the sign in sheet.
2. Check Class assignment sheet for horses and tack to be used.
3. Check your horse's stall door or check-in paperwork for any special messages. For example: some horses are only groomed in cross-ties, or may require an instructor to pick their hooves.
4. Each horse has its own grooming tools. Look for your horse's name on the grooming buckets in the tack room.
5. Tie the horse in the stall using a quick release knot. The horse should be tied on the side of the stall with his head on the same side as the stall door if possible, so that his head is closest to you as you enter.
6. When you are in the stall, leave the stall door open wide enough to comfortably walk through yourself, but not wide enough for the horse to walk through. Some of our horses are talented enough to untie themselves! If you need to leave your horse during the grooming and tacking process, close and lock the stall door while he is tied up.

## Safety Rules in the Stall

- Be calm and quiet. Sudden moves can cause a horse to shy (jump sideways) or kick out.
- When grooming, and tacking, tie your horse up. A loose horse in a barn can cause havoc. And never leave a tied horse unattended; if you must leave the stall or cross ties, check regularly and often on him.
- When tying, use a quick release knot so that if your horse gets scared and pulls he can be freed quickly. The feeling of being constrained can make a scared horse panic to the point of hurting himself or you.
- Never stand directly behind a horse. If you are grooming its tail, stand to one side and pull the tail gently over. When going around a horse, stay close to his tail and keep your hand on his rump.
- Do **NOT** kneel around a horse. It's hard to get out of the way quickly. Bend from the knees and waist instead.

- Do **NOT** duck under the neck of a tied horse because he may be startled. Safety first—go around.
- The safest place to stand is beside your horse’s shoulder where you can see each other, or at least 10 feet away.
- When going through a doorway (in or out), be sure that YOU are the leader and move into the space first, leading the horse, rather than allowing the horse to be the leader.
- Also, when going through a doorway, make sure the door is wide open and the horse is turned so that he goes straight through the opening, allowing him to maneuver and turn once through it. Approaching at an angle and/or through too narrow an opening, may cause the horse to run into the door or wall, startling him or causing an injury.
- When approaching the indoor arena from outside the barn, with or without a horse, call out “DOOR!” from several yards away so no horse in the indoor arena is startled. Pause before entering to be sure it is safe to enter.

### Tying a Quick Release Knot



### Grooming the Horse

Grooming keeps the horse’s coat clean and healthy, and eliminates dirt, dried sweat and loose hair that can irritate the horse under the tack. Grooming helps distribute natural skin oils that make the coat shine. Grooming also stimulates nerve endings of the skin and helps to relax and warm up the muscles.

1. Use the hoof pick to thoroughly remove dirt and debris from all four hooves. If you feel uncomfortable doing this, or find it difficult, ask for assistance. It is vital to not skip this task.
2. Use the rubber curry comb in the large muscle group areas (neck, shoulder, back, chest, gently around the barrel, and hindquarters) to loosen the deepest layer of dirt, mud and

dead skin from the horse's hide. Use a firm, massaging touch in a circular pattern, working from the horse's head to the rear. Be sure to smooth your hand across the horse's chest (between the front legs) to check for cuts, scrapes, or mud that you can't see.

3. Use the dandy or body brush (stiffer bristles) to lay the hairs down on the skin. Brush in the direction of hair growth, starting at the horse's head and working towards his tail. Use the dandy or body brush (stiffer bristles) on large muscle group areas only.
4. Use the polishing brush (soft bristles) to do a final sweep of dust from the hair. Again, brush in the direction of hair growth, starting at the horse's head and working towards his tail. You can use this brush all over the body – all the way down the horse's legs (where it is skin on bone) and on the face, gently working around the eyes and nostrils and not brushing dirt into the eyes.
5. Use the hair brush or comb provided in the bucket on the mane and tail to remove twigs, bits of hay, shavings, burrs, etc. Start at the bottom and work your way to the top. Remember, if you are grooming a tail, stand to one side and pull the tail gently over.
6. Please return any equipment that you use back to its original spot. This allows for efficiency and ease for everyone at the facility.

## At Class Time

- Leaders Check to make sure your horse is properly tacked and tighten the girth a bit, if necessary, before leaving the stall. Lead the horse with the lead rope attached to the sidepull or bridle. **Rhythms of Grace horses should never be tied to their stall with the lead rope attached to a bridle. An instructor, staff member or certified volunteer will bridle as needed for you just prior to departure.** Proceed to the mounting area designated by the instructor. The instructor will do the final girth/cinch tightening and tack check at mounting.
- Sidewalkers Check to see that your client is prepared to ride. **All clients must wear a safety helmet.** Helmets will be fitted to each client the first day of class and sizes recorded. Check to make sure that the client's helmet fits properly and that the chin strap is fastened. If your client wears a gait belt or safety belt, make sure it fits properly on the outside of jackets. Sidewalkers are to stay with their clients while the horses are led to the mounting area.

## Mounting Procedures

During mounting, leaders hold horses in the designated holding area, while sidewalkers stay with the clients. Make sure your client's helmet fits correctly, then wait (in the designated client area) to be called by the instructor. Mounting is conducted by the instructor; volunteers assist as directed.

There are three types of mounting:

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Ramp Mount  | Used for clients using wheelchairs or otherwise not able to climb stairs. |
| Block Mount | Used for clients to get the client to stirrup level.                      |

Use of a mounting block is preferable to mounting from the ground as it is easier on the horse's back. The leader holds the horse. As directed by the instructor, sidewalkers may assist the rider and stabilize the saddle during mounting.

**Ground Mount**      Used when no mounting block is available and the client is tall enough and capable of reaching the stirrup from the ground. The leader holds the horse quietly while the sidewalker assists as directed.

When using the mounting ramp, or block the leader should:

1. Approach ramp or block in the direction indicated by the instructor, turning to face the horse just upon entering.
2. Position the horse close to the spot where the client will be positioned for mounting. The offside person will help with this task.
  - Do not put pressure on the lead rope; this may cause the horse to back up. If the horse should back up, do not pull. Simply release pressure on the lead and go with him - he will stop.
  - Allow the horse to relax, holding him quietly and not restricting his head.
3. Once the client is mounted and the cue is given by the instructor and client to "Walk on", guide the horse out slowly and quietly while still facing him. Once the horse is clear of the ramp or block, then turn to face forward and walk into the arena and stop in the center with the horse's tail towards the stalls. Sidewalkers join the client so that support can be given while the instructor adjusts the stirrups.
4. Once stirrups and girth are adjusted and the client has said or otherwise indicated "Walk on", lead the horse slowly and quietly to the rail and continue around the arena.

When using the mounting ramp, or block the sidewalker(s) should:

1. Position yourself at the end of the ramp or block when called by the instructor.
2. Support client as directed by instructor.
3. If you are acting as offside during mounting at the block, position yourself close enough to the block so that the horse must stay close to the block.
4. When instructed to by the client, pull down the stirrup into riding position. As the client mounts, put weight into the offside stirrup or pull down on the stirrup leather to balance the weight being added by the client on the near side. You may also need to help the client's right leg clear the horse's back. Help the foot into the stirrup.
5. If you are acting as offside during a ramp mount, follow your instructor's directions. You will be positioned on the horse's right side. Your main job will be to support the client's back and help them bring the right leg into position.

## Learning to Lead a Horse

- Hold the lead rope 6-12 inches from the snap to allow for the natural motion of the horse's head. Hold the extra rope in your inside hand, doubling the excess back and forth across your palm. **Never** wrap it around your hand or allow excess lead rope to dangle down or drag on the ground.

**The leader's responsibility is the horse always. The leader helps to maintain the horse's pace, calmness and focus, while allowing the client to do as much as they are able.**



- The inside of the horse refers to the side of the horse closest to the center of the ring. Always lead on the inside of the horse (unless specifically directed otherwise due to special circumstances, such as horse shows and competitions or horse idiosyncrasy), just behind the horse's head, holding the lead line. Make sure the lead rope is between the reins, not over them.
- Keep a minimum of 2 horses' length distance between your horse and the horse in front of you.
- Make turns gradually; sharp turns can throw the client off-balance. Allow space for sidewalkers when next to a fence, rail or obstacle. Make a big circle or cut across the arena to avoid getting too close. Let the sidewalkers and client know when you are about to turn, circle or cut across the arena.
- When the horse is stopped, the leader stands at a 45-degree angle in front of the horse, toes pointed at his chest, to keep the horse stationary. Allow the horse to move his head and stretch, but keep him quiet and calm by petting him or softly speaking to him.
- To halt, say "whoa", or "ho". If the horse does not stop, tug slightly backward on the lead, then release. If the horse does not respond immediately, repeat with several small tugs.
- Clients are urged to gently control their horses to the best of their abilities. A horse leader must never take the place of the client, but should be there to assist as directed to keep the horse in control. Check with your instructor before the lesson regarding your client's level of ability in controlling their mount.
- When the client is controlling the horse, allow a little more slack in the lead (12 inches or as directed by instructor) so that you will not inadvertently influence the horse. The horse may become confused if he feels a tug both on the lead line and the reins, and may not attend to the reins as he should.
- When changing pace, have the horse follow your pace rather than you following the horse's. Transition the horse from a walk to a fast walk into a trot by increasing your own walking pace and lengthening your stride, rather than jogging. Conversely, make a downward transition from the trot by slowing down to a fast walk, then to a walk. This will make for a smoother transition and will not throw the client off balance.
- Whenever possible, try to avoid making gait transitions on the turn (in the corners of the arena).
- **Be sure to hold the horse's head straight, especially at the trot.** Keep the horse's head level as well. If his head is too high, the horse will hollow his back and unbalance the client. If his head is too low, the horse will pull the client forward.

*Horses perform best when they are given a command and allowed time to process it. To help keep the rider and horse balanced, use smooth transitions, clear commands, large circles instead of small ones, and gradual starts and stops.*

- Pulling the horse will distort his gait and make him move crookedly; the client will become unevenly seated and lose the rhythm of the gait. Even steps of the horse are crucial to maintain the client's balance. Short tugs work better than a steady pull on a poky horse.
- If a horse steps on your foot, mentally count "101, 102" (this keeps you focused on something other than the pain) while leaning against his shoulder to unbalance him. The horse probably doesn't know he is on your foot. Your objective is to calmly free your foot without frightening the horse or client with a loud "OUCH".
- Always keep the horse away from any possibly dangerous obstacles such as mud holes, broken fences, trash, wire, glass, metal, other debris, etc.
- If you must stop during the lesson for any reason other than making a halt at the instructor's direction, come gradually to the center of the ring to stop so as not to create a traffic jam on the rail.
- If the horse should shy or suddenly pull, release the lead in the inside hand, but maintain contact with your outside hand on the other end of the lead to control the horse. **When a client is mounted on the horse in this situation, make every effort to maintain control via the lead rope without pulling or yanking.**
- When the horse is frightened by an object, let him stop, face the object, look at it, and sniff it (don't let the horse spin and try to flee). Give the horse time to overcome his fear. Reassure him and help to calm him in a slow, soft voice.
- Keep conversation to a minimum so that the client can listen to the instructor.
- When the lesson is finished and the client dismounts, assist the client with running the stirrups up. Be sure they walk in front of the horse to get to the other side.

## **Learning to Be a Sidewalker**

The sidewalker's role is to help the client with balance and reinforce instructions in the lesson. If there are two sidewalkers, the inside sidewalker (the one closest to the center of the ring) will clarify instructions. Too many people talking to the client can be confusing.

Different methods of physical support may be designated by the instructor, depending on the client's needs. For example:

Thigh Hold: Place your arm closest to the client across the client's thigh and grasp the front edge of the saddle.

Ankle Hold: Hold the client's boot/shoe near the ankle.

Heel Hold: Grasp the heel and back part of their boot from behind and support it in place. Be careful not to inadvertently pull the leg or foot out of position with your movement.

Belt Hold: Hold the client's safety belt or gait belt to assist with balance. This is done while supporting the legs.

Spotting: Walk beside the client's leg to assist when needed (i.e., at the trot) or to reinforce directions.

**If you are not clear on what you should be doing, ask your instructor.**

- Observe the client with your front or side vision always. Never become so relaxed that you are not totally aware of the client, horse, leader, instructor, and activities around you.

**The  
sidewalker's  
responsibility is  
the client:  
interpreting  
instructions;  
providing  
physical  
support;  
offering  
encouragement;  
and supervising  
the client while  
in vicinity of the  
horse.**

- Be sure not to lean on the horse or client since this pressure may unbalance the client or irritate the horse.
- When the client is using body and leg aids and does not need to be supported, do not touch the horse, saddle, or pad, since this may interfere with the aid applied by the client.
- You may need to reinforce the instructor's directions, assist the client in carrying out instructions, or direct the client's attention to the task.
- Listen to the instructor's directions so you can be ready to reinforce, when necessary, BUT allow the client plenty of time to process the information before you begin to assist. For example, if the instructor says, "Pull on the right rein towards me," and the client seems confused, gently tap the right hand and say, "right."

- Talking to the client while having a lesson is not recommended since it interferes with the communication between the client and instructor. Many clients with a disability have difficulty focusing on instruction, so all unrelated talking should be kept to a minimum.
- Refrain from talking to the other sidewalker or leader during the lesson unless it has to do with the client's position, balance, or horse. Be sure that you do not talk with other teams as they pass you. Any unnecessary talking distracts the client, shows disrespect for the riding lesson, and diverts the attention of the team.
- Clients who need moderate support, especially support to the back, will need more attention. Be sure you understand and are comfortable with the method of support, both mentally and physically, before moving into the riding area.
- If you become tired during the lesson and would benefit by switching sides, let the instructor and leader know. The leader will bring the horse to the center of the arena, and the instructor can provide support to the client while you walk to the other side of the horse.
- Be careful to not inadvertently pull the client towards you when you are physically supporting them.
- When your client is dismounted, make sure he or she always walks in FRONT of the horse when going from one side to the other.
- Always stay with your horse and client, unless otherwise instructed.
- **ALWAYS:** If you tire enough that you are unable to support the client with the specified hold, let the instructor know. There are often other volunteers available to take your position while you rest; or you may be able to trade places with a sidewalker that is working with a client that does not require as much support.

## ADJUSTING IN CLASS

*It is always appropriate to ask the leader to stop the horse if...*

- ✓ *The client is off balance and cannot regain it while the horse is moving.*
- ✓ *The saddle pad has slipped or the girth is loose.*
- ✓ *The stirrups need adjusting.*
- ✓ *The client's helmet needs to be adjusted.*
- ✓ *The client is fatigued, in pain, or needs to stop for other reasons.*
- ✓ *You need to change sides, or if you are having some difficulty carrying out your job in comfort or efficiently. When changing sides, have one volunteer change at a time. NEVER leave the client unsupported.*

### Special Notes

Falls off a horse are rare, but they can happen. Don't panic! Leaders stop all horses, and each volunteer tends to their client or horse. The instructor is responsible for the fallen client.

Be patient with your clients; give them time-and-a-half to respond, to try, to do the task. The rewards, no matter how small or large, make your volunteer work very worthwhile. Without volunteers, we would have a tough time making this program a reality.

## After the Lesson

The leader or the client and leader may lead the horse back to his stall. If the client leads the horse, the leader should walk on the right side of the horse to assist if needed. The client should hold the lead rope with two hands, and the leader generally holds the reins on the opposite side.

### Leaders:

1. Return the horse to his stall. Detach the lead rope from the sidepull noseband, remove the sidepull and put on the halter, with the lead rope attached. Tie the horse in his stall using a quick release knot. **NEVER tie a horse with the lead rope attached to a sidepull or bridle, or by the reins.**
2. If the horse is not to be used again, remove the saddle. Brush the saddle and girth area. Pick out his hooves. If your horse is sweaty (in hot weather), check with your instructor about sponging the sweaty areas, or running the hose over him in the shower stall.
3. Untie the lead rope and remove the halter. Close and secure the stall door.
4. Put away all tack in its proper place.

### Sidewalkers:

1. After dismounting, take your client back to the helmet area to put away the helmet, and safety belt, if necessary.
2. Return your client to parents or responsible party.
3. Assist in untacking horses.
4. Your client may be capable of helping with untacking. If so, assist or monitor the client as needed with the tack, ensuring it is returned to its proper location in the tack room.
  - Your client may wish to give the horse a treat after the lesson. ALWAYS check with staff if the horse is permitted to have treats and **ALWAYS** have the client give treats by using a carrot cup or treat dish.

## Hand Grazing Policy

- Volunteers who have been trained and approved by a staff member in proper hand grazing technique will be permitted to hand graze horses under staff supervision once trained and approved.
- Please inform the Volunteer Director that you have been trained and cleared to hand graze horses and which staff member cleared you. This will allow Rhythms of Grace to ensure those doing so have been properly trained, and will help keep everyone safe while promoting good ground manners for our herd.
- Volunteers must always confirm with their currently supervising staff member that they can take a horse to hand graze and should inform the staff member of their proposed location and, once completed, that the horse has been returned to their stall. This allows the staff member to make sure all stay safe and supervised as required by the policy.

- When hand grazing, please refrain at all times from cell phone use, texting, e-mail, scanning, etc. unless it is a true emergency. Your full attention will encourage the horse to maintain good ground manners. If you have an issue that cannot wait, please return your horse to a stall until you are able to give them your complete focus.
- When initiating a session of hand grazing, please pause of at least 30 seconds, making the horse wait until you allow them to graze at your blessing, rather than just tugging down on you from the get go. This will help reconfirm good ground manners and help establish you as the Alpha in the grazing session. No horse should be permitted to drag and pull you around or dive down. They should take their cues from you and cooperate with you. If you are having a behavior issue from the horse, please communicate with your supervising staff member. This is not “tattling.” It is for safety and potential further training.

### ***In summary....***

- Your commitment to one class will be about two hours in length (not including travel time to/from the barn): arriving 45 minutes-1 hour before the stated class time to groom and tack the horse, 45-60 minutes in class, and 5-15 minutes returning the horse to the stall, untacking, and a final grooming.
- Leaders and sidewalkers each have very specific responsibilities. Learning to be an effective leader and/or a sidewalker requires time, teamwork, and attention to detail.
- Although leaders and sidewalkers are vital to our clients, the client is here for a LESSON. To the extent possible, keeping safety in mind, allow the client to be in control of the horse and decisions made in the lesson.
- Please make sure to return any equipment that was used back to its original spot after you are done using it so that others do not have a problem finding it if needed.
- Only certain individuals are allowed to hand graze Rhythms of Grace horses. Do not hand graze Rhythms of Grace horses without a Rhythms of Grace staff member’s explicit permission.



## **GETTING TO KNOW THE RHYTHMS OF GRACE CLIENT**

### **General Approach and Interaction**

It is important to remember that every person, child or adult, is an individual and wants to be treated with that understanding, regardless of having a disability or not. Each has their own learning rate, style of learning, unique personality, and temperament. One must always look beyond the disability into the person, aiming to provide them with a warm and favorable environment in which to learn and grow. All people, with and without a disability, want to feel that they are not different from the rest of their fellow men.

### **Relating to Individuals with a Disability or Learning Difference**

Being around someone with a disability, especially if it is more profound, may be a new experience for you. You may be overwhelmed at first with things you have never seen or do not understand. This is natural for most people. Allow yourself time to get used to being with a person who has a disability. Do not give up on being a part of the program without a fair try, for your experience can be very rewarding. At first you may want to do jobs which are not in direct contact with the clients. Feel free to talk to a staff member about this. This is not an uncommon request. If working directly with our clients is a hardship for you, consider helping Rhythms of Grace in some other way.

Each of us must learn how to relate to others, especially if it requires new skills and understanding. Here are a few suggestions to create a positive relationship with a client:

- Be yourself.
- Relax. Let the client put you at ease if you do not know what to say.
- Explore mutual interests in a friendly way. For starters, talk about the horse and whether the person has ridden before.
- When conversing with the client or the parent/caregiver near the client, speak directly to the client or include them in the conversation. They may not be able to speak, or even appear to be listening, but they appreciate the consideration.
- Use conversation and social behavior that you might use in any new situation. Clients enjoy discussing things such as TV shows, school, movies, sports, foods, and other things we are all interested in.
- Offer assistance when asked or when the situation obviously requires it. Do not overwhelm the person with help or insist upon helping when they are managing alone. When a person is trying to increase their physical ability, effort is necessary.
- Allow the client to expand their skills and independence, even when their movements may appear awkward to you. Stepping in to help them too quickly may hinder their efforts.

- Respect the person's right to independence and their requests for the kind of assistance they require.
- Be guided by the wishes of the person with the disability. Talk about the disability if it comes up naturally, but respect their privacy as well.
- Appreciate what the client can do. Remember that the difficulties the person may be facing could stem from society's attitudes and barriers rather than from the disability itself. People with disabilities generally do not view themselves to be as handicapped as society perceives them to be.
- Be considerate of the extra time it might take someone to accomplish or respond to something. Be patient.
- Let the person set the pace in walking and talking.
- It is okay to say to either a child or an adult, "I'm sorry, I cannot understand you. Please say it again."
- Be sensitive to separating a client from a wheelchair, crutches, or braces unless asked.
- Communicate with your heart and see each person from their heart.
- Acknowledge that we all have the opportunity for vast potential in our lives. Share the feeling that our potential is found in the present moment.
- Please respect the privacy and confidentiality of our clients and their families.

### Choosing Words with Dignity

Without realizing it, you may have adopted some common reference words or phrases about individuals and groups of people with disabilities in ways that undermine them as functioning, viable persons with their own unique abilities, interests, and skills. Almost everyone can contribute via their personal circle of family, friends, co-workers and others they come in contact with. Even when active participation or communication is not possible for an individual, they can feel and express happiness, joy, pride, and a sense of accomplishment if encouraged. We are all people first, and when you refer to others in that manner, you exhibit and model that attitude.

Many times it may not even be relevant to mention a person's disability, but when it is make it a habit to mention the person first and the disability second. The disability should never be used as an adjective to

describe the individual (i.e. autistic child, Downs child), instead it should be used as a noun (i.e. child with autism, child with Down syndrome). Avoid speaking with labels such as "he's crazy" or "she's autistic", or using words that have a negative connotation, such as "she suffers from a birth defect", "he's confined to a wheelchair". Instead, phrase it as "she is an individual with autism" or "she has a congenital disability" or "he uses a wheelchair".

*Say...*

*She is a person with a challenge/special need/disability.  
Instead of...She is handicapped or disabled.*



***In summary....***

- Look beyond the disability into the person, and encourage them to do their best.
- If necessary, allow yourself time to get used to being around individuals who have disabilities; have confidence in your own ability to relate to all individuals.
- Examine your words, and make sure you put the person first.
- Use patience and understanding when helping individuals who may do things differently than you do, or learn differently, or have different physical abilities.



## APPENDICES

The following pages offer additional information to help you learn more about Rhythms of Grace and being a volunteer. There are many opportunities to expand your horse knowledge, to add to your experience working for a non-profit organization, and to increase your responsibilities as a volunteer. We encourage you to utilize your skills and interests while volunteering at Rhythms of Grace.



NAME	EMAIL
Carlson, Dawn	dawn@rhythmsofgraceequine.org

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**Administrative Staff:**

- Chief Executive Officer: Dawn Carlson
- Business and HR Manager
- Director of Program Quality and Development
- Operations Coordinator
- Director of Volunteer Services
- Director of Development
- Communications Manager
- Development Coordinator
- Contract Media/PR Consultant
- Contract Grant Writer

**Facilities Staff:**

- Equine and Facilities Manager
- Part Time Weekend Stable Manager, Groom and Tack Trainer Coordinator
- Stable Hand
- Part Time Stable Aid

**Instructors:**

- Certified Instructor (CTRI): Dawn Carlson
- Advanced Instructor
- Registered Instructor
- Instructor
- Coordinator: Specialty Programs/Outreach

**Therapists:**

- Contract Physical Therapist
- Contract Occupational Therapist

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: *Where do the horses come from?***

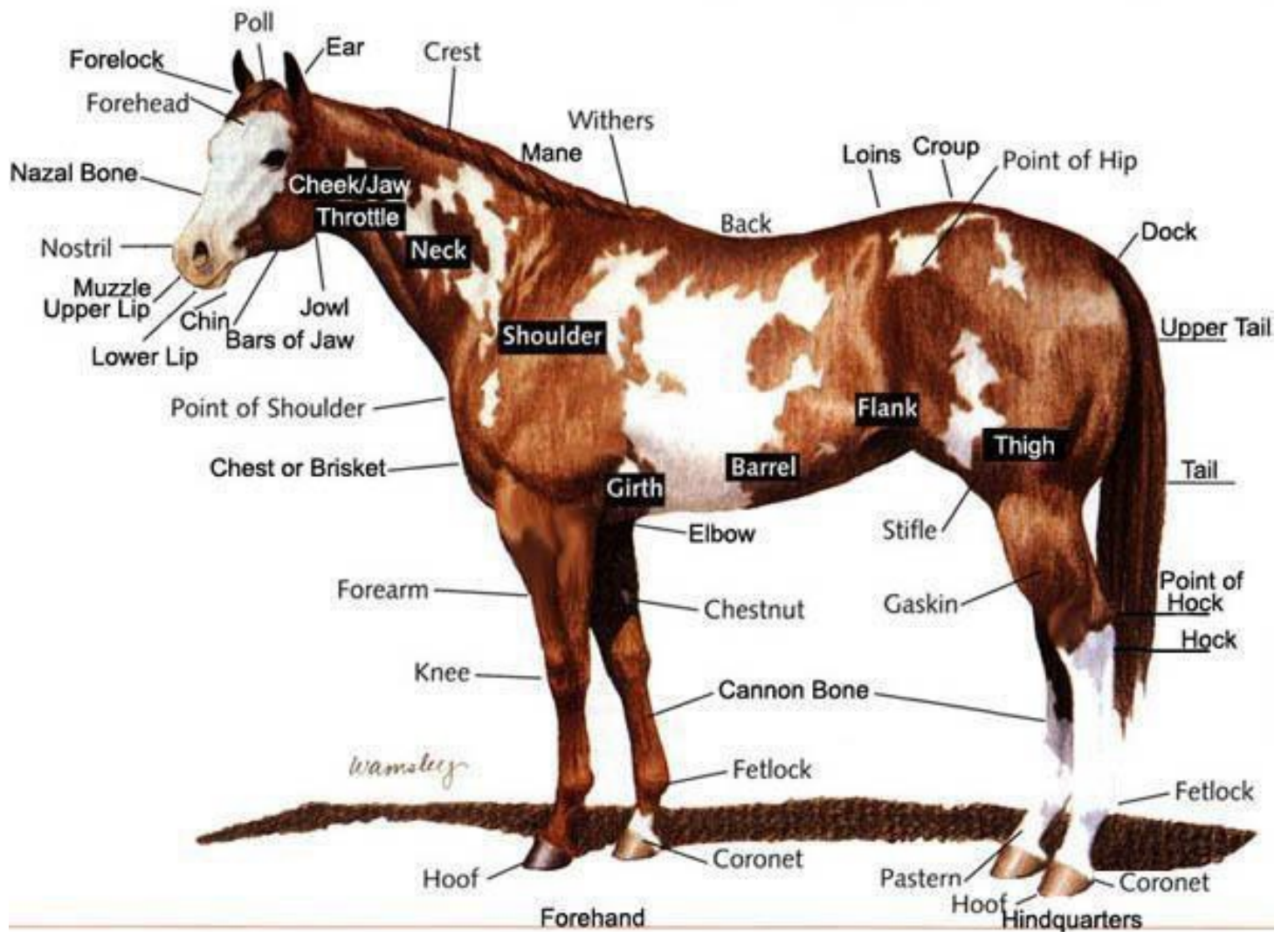
**A:** Our horses are leased from River Heights Ranch or donated to Rhythms of Grace, from a variety of sources. Sometimes a horse is purchased or leased. When a horse is offered to Rhythms of Grace, it will be brought into the barn on a trial basis and carefully tested and examined for therapeutic value, temperament, ability, soundness, and willingness. This trial period may last several weeks. Not every horse is suited for doing therapy work. In the event it is not a good match, the horse either returns to the original owner or a new home is identified.

**Q: *Who do I contact about...***

A: Becoming a schooler .....Dawn Carlson  
Donating a horse or offering a horse for lease.....Dawn Carlson  
Finding out more about client scholarships .....Dawn Carlson  
Client admission process .....Dawn Carlson  
Corporate fundraising.....Dawn Carlson  
Making a donation .....Dawn Carlson  
Hosting/coordinating a fundraising event.....Dawn Carlson  
Chairing or serving on an event committee.....Dawn Carlson  
Volunteering.....Dawn Carlson  
Helping in the barn/around the grounds .....Dawn Carlson  
Purchasing Rhythms of Grace Wear and goods.....Dawn Carlson  
Website Issue.....Dawn Carlson  
In-kind donations such as building adaptive equipment, painting, etc. ....Dawn Carlson

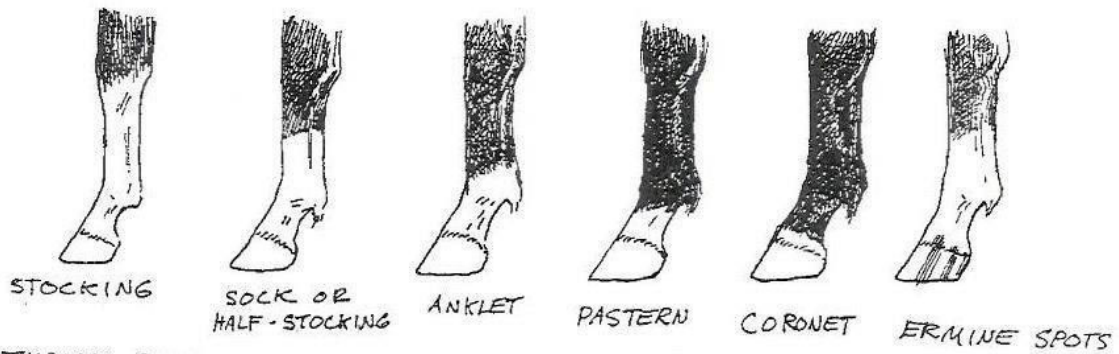
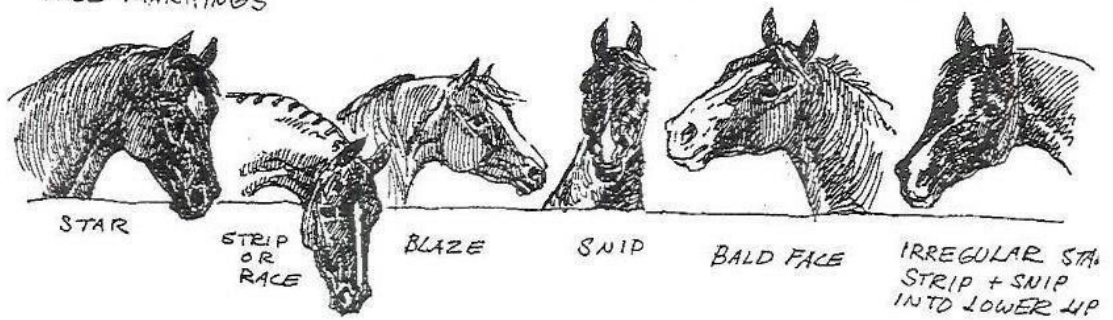
## Horse and Tack References:

### *Parts of the Horse*



# Horse Markings and Patterns

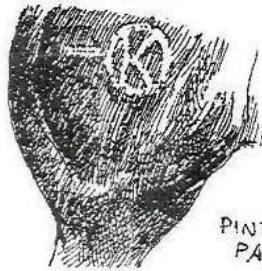
## FACE MARKINGS



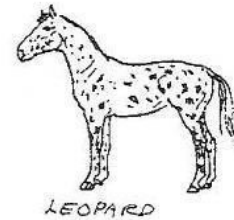
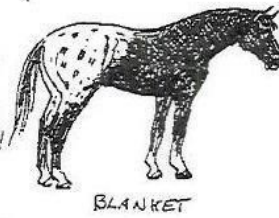
## TYPICAL PINTO MARKINGS



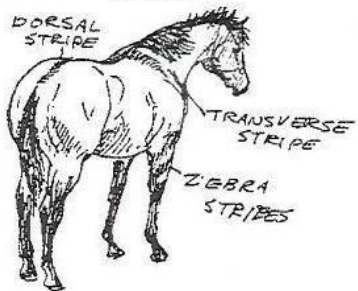
## BRAND



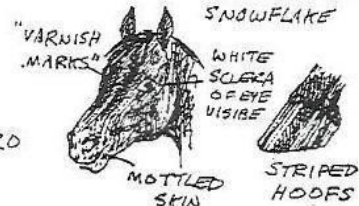
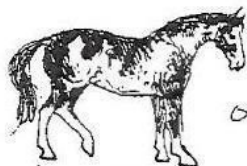
## APPALOOSA COLOR PATTERNS



## DUN MARKINGS

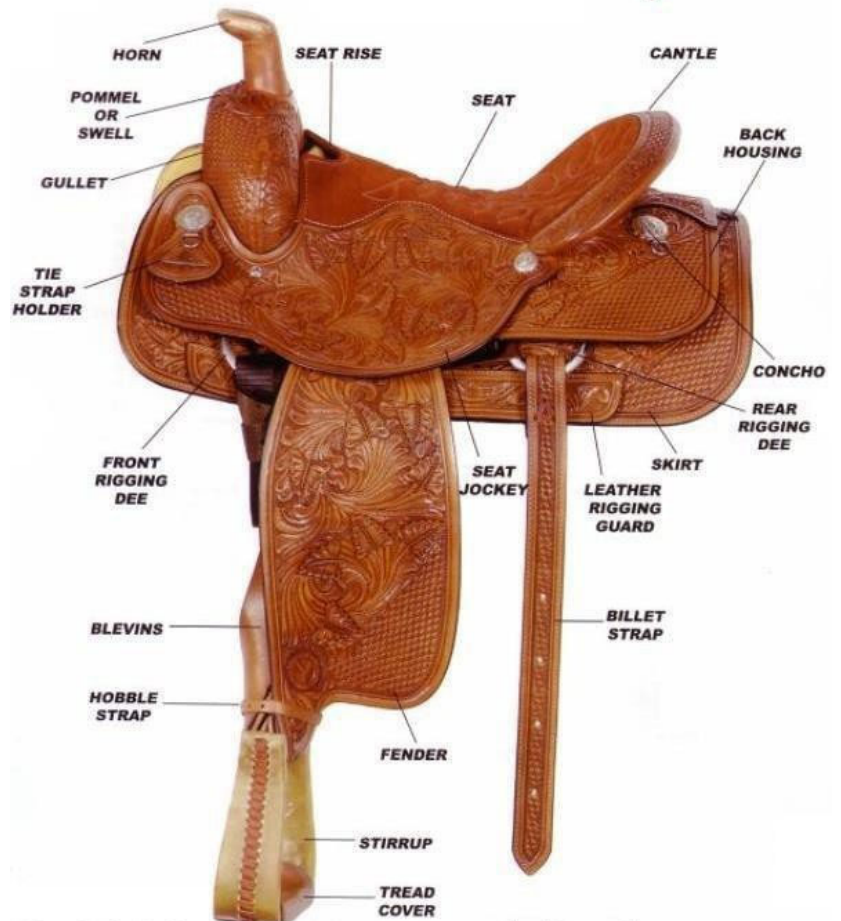
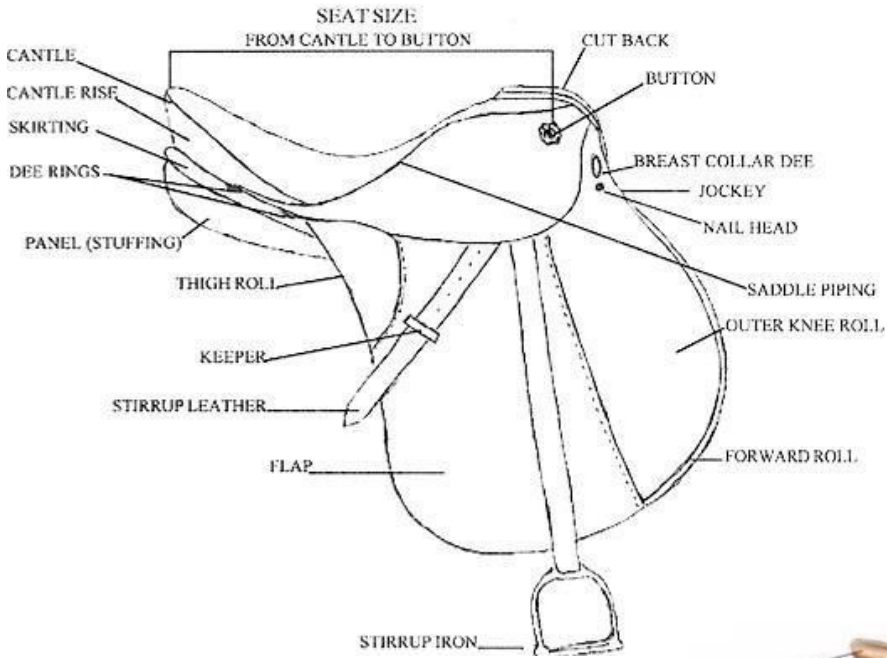


## PINTO COLOR PATTERNS



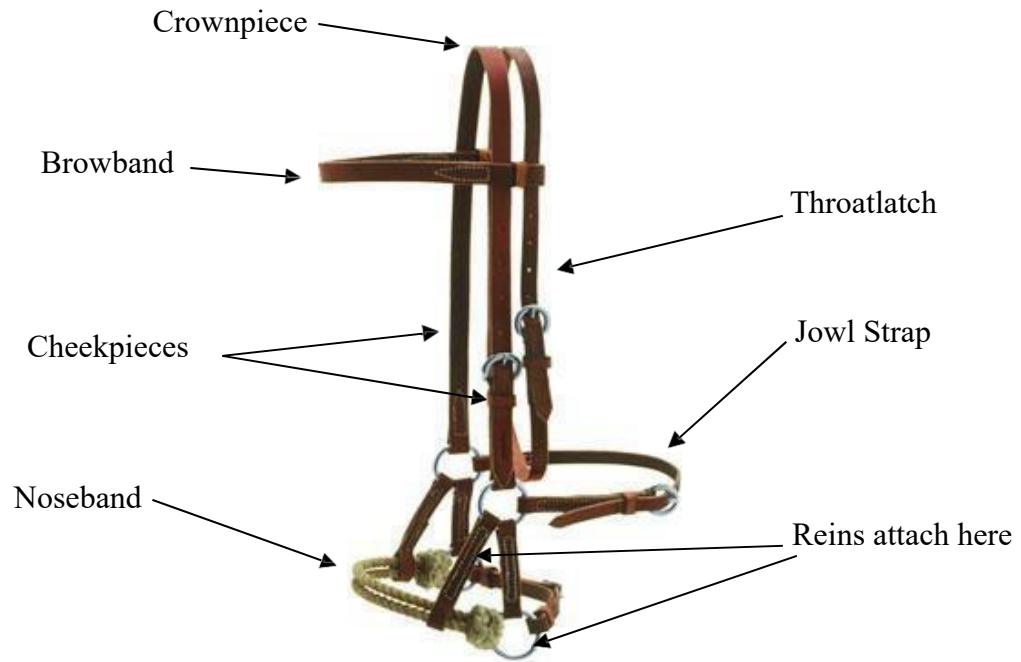
## Parts of the Saddle - English and Western

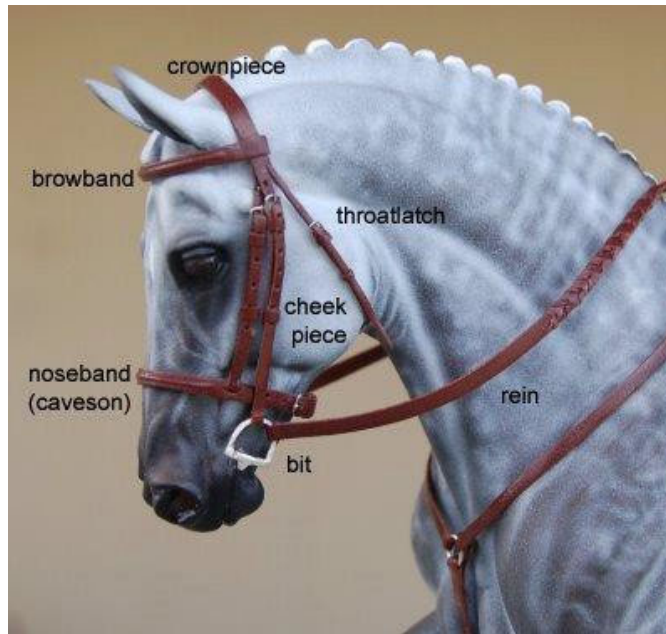
### ENGLISH SADDLE





### ***Parts of the Sidepull and Bridle***





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## Special Equipment

Your horse may require one or more pieces of special equipment. Here are some that are commonly used at Rhythms of Grace, and are frequently referenced on the tack sheet.



**Bareback pads** – Often used in hippotherapy. Provide the client with greater ease of movement on the horse's back than is allowed in a saddle. They also allow the horse's movement to translate freely to the client for the most benefit.



**Devonshire boots** – These modified, covered stirrups allow a person added security when the heel of the foot cannot be pushed down. The client’s foot is prevented from running through the stirrup.



**Gait belt/Safety belt** – A medical device/product designed to provide stability for the user during ambulation or transfer to a chair/bed. We use them to give sidewalkers a hand hold for some clients.



**Non-slip pads** – Thin rubber pad that is usually placed between the horse’s back and the saddle pad. Keeps the saddle pad or bareback pad from slipping as the client moves on the horse’s back.



**Peacock Stirrups** – Safety stirrups used for most of our clients. The rubber band faces toward the front of the horse when saddling and to the outside when the client is mounted. When pressure is applied to the elastic, it releases, making it impossible to get the foot caught in the event of an accident.



**Rainbow Reins** – Rainbow reins are colored at intervals for appropriate cueing and holding with relation to the horse’s face and client’s arm length. Clients can easily understand “Hold green to walk” or “Hold blue to trot.”



**S Stirrups** – Another type of safety stirrup. The bended side faces toward the front of the horse when saddling and to the outside when the client is mounted. In the event of an accident, the bend makes it easier for the foot to slip out of the stirrup.



**Safety helmet** – All riders must wear a well-fitting helmet at all times while mounted. This includes clients, schoolers, volunteer riders and instructors.



**Seat Savers (or Fleece Saddle Covers)** – Provides extra cushioning and comfort for the client



**Non-slip or riser pads** – Thicker rubber pad that is usually placed between the saddle pad and saddle. Used to create more cushion between horse and saddle and keep the saddle from slipping. Riser pads are used to adjust saddle balance to horse's conformation.



**Surcingle** – Used in the equine world primarily for vaulting patterns. Vaulting is a series of gymnastic movements performed on/with the horse at varied gaits and usually the client is standing, kneeling, circling the barrel or any combination of the above. In hippotherapy, surcingles provide one or two handles with which to assist a client's balance. The surcingle is placed on the bareback pad and attached using a dressage girth over the bareback pad cinch.



**Thinline pads or half-pads** – Creates a better cushion than a saddle pad alone, allowing for more comfort and shock absorption. Often used on our older horses.

# Understanding and Working with Horses

## Reading His Ears

### READING HIS 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. Following are some tips to his emotions.



**Ears forward but relaxed**  
interested in what's  
in front of him.



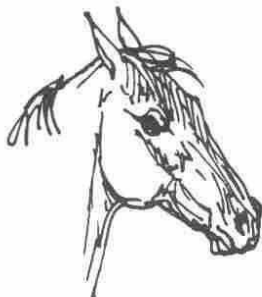
**Ears turned back but relaxed**  
listening to his rider  
or what's behind him.



**Ears pointed stiffly forward**  
alarmed or nervous about what's  
ahead. Looking for danger.



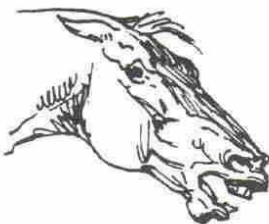
**Ears pointed left and right**  
relaxed, paying attention  
to the scenery on both sides.



**Ears stiffly back**  
annoyed or worried about what's  
behind him; might kick if annoyed.



**Droopy ears**  
calm and resting.  
horse may be dozing.



**Ears flattened against neck**  
violently angry, in a fighting mood.  
May fight, bite or kick.

#### OTHER SIGNS YOU SHOULD NOTICE ARE:

- **Tucking the tail down tightly.**  
Danger to the rear.  
Horse may bolt, buck or kick.  
Watch out if ears are flattened, too!
- **Switching the tail.**  
Annoyance and irritation:  
at biting flies, stinging insects or  
tickling bothersome actions of a rider or another horse.
- **Droopy ears and resting one hind leg on toe.**  
Calm and resting, horse may be dozing.  
Don't wake him up by startling him!
- **Wrinkling up the face and swinging the head.**  
Threatening gesture of an angry or bossy horse.  
Watch out for biting or kicking.

## Pointers for Handling the Horse

- If you have had a busy day and are a little nervous, try to relax, breathe deeply and evenly and speak to the horse. Keep your movements slow and deliberate. As you relax, so will the horse.
- Running around the horse can make him nervous. Minimize extreme joy or excited vocalization. Noises can make a horse anxious.
- When possible, approach the horse calmly from its side.
- If you must approach the horse from the rear, always speak to him, since he may not see you, even if you think he knows you are there.
- The horse can learn to understand the sounds of different words.
- Pat the horse gently on the shoulder or neck, not on the head. Rub his head instead; he will enjoy being caressed.
- Do not abuse a horse. Horses are not naturally vicious. Control your temper. "Never deal with the horse when you are in passion." (Xenophon, 380 BC)
- Soft, rhythmic music, like Western or classical music, calms a horse.
- Be firm, consistent, kind and gentle.

## The Nature of a Horse

- The horse will try to please you if he understands what you want.
- The horse will move away from pressure or resist force.
- Horses are herd animals and need the companionship of other horses, animals, or people. They copy other horses' actions.
- Horses are gentle animals who will accept you as their leader.

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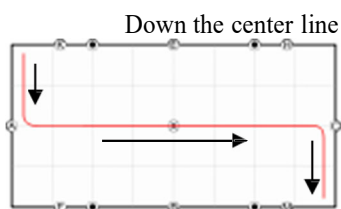
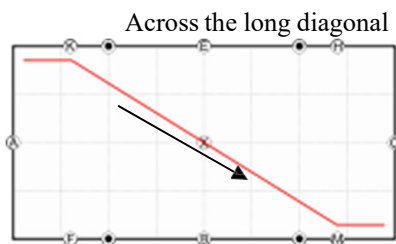
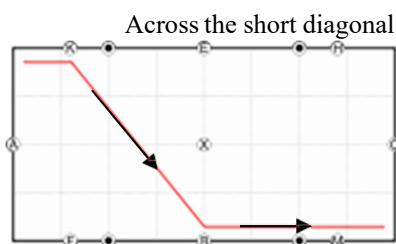
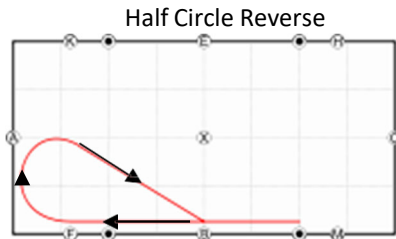
*Be kind to your horse and he will do as you desire.*

*(Xenophon, 380 BC)*

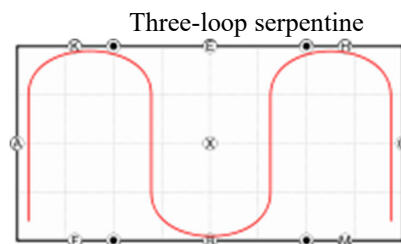
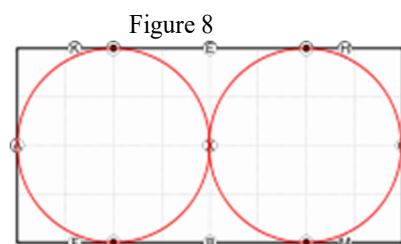
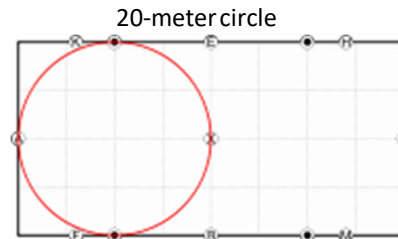
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# Common Schooling Maneuvers

## Changing directions:



## Other:



## Program Descriptions

### Therapeutic Sports Riding

Rhythms of Grace's Therapeutic Horsemanship program focuses on teaching riding skills to participants as young as four (4) years of age with physical, cognitive and/or emotional disabilities. Our PATH Intl.-certified therapeutic riding instructors work with the clients to participate in a recognized sport and to develop independent skills that carry over to their everyday lives. Once they are mounted, many of our clients experience a freedom of motion and ability that they do not or cannot enjoy in other aspects of their lives.

Sports riding classes are conducted as group, semi-private or private classes. Clients are encouraged to set individual goals and progress is made at each individual's pace. These goals may range from holding the reins for one full circuit of the arena to qualifying for and competing in the international arena. Our instructors are dedicated to helping our clients grow and achieve their independent potential.

**Physically**, the horse in motion moves a client with disabilities rhythmically and naturally through space in a way that simulates the human walking gait. This type of motion develops core muscle strength, balance and posture. Horseback riding also develops gross and fine motor control and promotes coordination.

**Cognitively**, horseback riding increases concentration improves sequential thought processing and develops spatial awareness.

**Socially**, horseback riding nurtures a positive self-image and self-confidence as riding skills are learned. Clients often experience independence for the first-time in their lives at Rhythms of Grace. Being part of a class at Rhythms of Grace offers opportunities to make friends and become part of a group activity.

**Emotionally**, horseback riding provides an opportunity for clients to bond with the horse, their instructor and the volunteers. This helps develop trust and reinforces appropriate behaviors.

All new clients will visit Rhythms of Grace for an initial evaluation and orientation. During this visit, we will talk about issues and goals, and begin to develop a plan of treatment to allow us to best serve that person's needs.



## Therapy

Rhythms of Grace Therapy Services provides outpatient physical and occupational therapy to children and adults with movement dysfunction. Disabilities that benefit from therapy include (but are not limited to) cerebral palsy, stroke, traumatic brain injury and multiple sclerosis.

Hippotherapy – using equine movement as a treatment strategy – has been successfully used to achieve functional outcomes in therapy throughout the United States since the late 1970's.

In Hippotherapy, the client receives treatment while mounted on the horse. The horse provides a consistent and rhythmic movement pattern that helps improve trunk mobility and strength, postural strength and endurance, proprioception, weight bearing and motor planning. Hippotherapy is used primarily to achieve physical goals but may also affect psychological, cognitive, behavioral and communication outcomes. At Rhythms of Grace, our therapists have strong treatment backgrounds in posture and movement, and neuromotor function. They are all state-licensed therapists and are specially trained in the use of Hippotherapy as a treatment strategy.

The therapy team consists of the therapist, a PATH Intl.-certified riding instructor, three volunteers, the horse and the client – each member of the team plays a unique role to ensure the client receives the best and most effective treatment. New clients receive an initial evaluation, during which functional goals are established and a plan of treatment is outlined based on the Neurodevelopment Treatment Approach (NDT). The client participates in a 50-minute individual therapy session that is generally divided into three parts: preparation before mounting; balance; and strength work on the horse; and then functional activity after dismounting.

The minimum age to participate in Hippotherapy is two years old. A physician's prescription and an initial evaluation with our staff are required for treatment.

**Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy:** a unique form of emotional health therapy utilizing the horse as a therapeutic partner. Clients with emotional health disorders such as Post Traumatic Stress (PTS), depression, and anger management can benefit from equine facilitated psychotherapy.

Clients will work with a licensed mental health professional, a professional equine specialist, and a horse to accomplish personal goals such as trust, socialization, and communication through equine assisted activities.

Services are individually tailored to benefit each client, providing life tools that will extend beyond the arena and into their daily lives. Equine-assisted activities designed to optimize client wellness.

**Goals include:**

- Improved relationships
- Greater self-confidence
- Emotional regulation

- Enhanced self-awareness
- Fellowship/Comradery
- Reduce anxiety
- Teamwork

Staff working with equine facilitated psychotherapy will be given an introduction/training into the program goals, and what can be expected while participating in this program.

## Disabilities Frequently Encountered

This list provides a brief, non-medical description of some of the disabilities and conditions of Rhythms of Grace clients. It is not intended as a comprehensive explanation of a specific disability but rather as a general overview, along with an explanation of how therapeutic riding is a beneficial treatment aid.

Autism - a neural development disorder, characterized by impaired social interaction and communication and by restricted and repetitive behavior. Asperger Syndrome is another disorder within the autism spectrum that lacks the cognitive development and language delays that characterizes autism.

Benefits: Working with horses can improve the client's communication and social skills, teach them to focus on one task at a time, improve motor skills and respond to verbal cues.

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

1. *Spastic*: Occurs in approximately 70% of all cases. It may affect motor function in one or more limbs. The muscles stay flexed and tense, and the facial muscle movement may affect speech. Balance is poor.
2. *Athetoid*: Occurs in approximately 20% of all cases. There is constant movement in a disorganized, uncontrolled manner. Often worm-like movement. The use of arms and hands for support, grasp, and holding on are inadequate. It appears more obvious during periods of emotional tension. Speech functions are usually involved.
3. *Ataxic*: Occurs in approximately 10% of all cases. Weakness, poor coordination, and difficulty with quick and fine motor movements result in loose, "rag-doll" appearance.

Benefits: Riding may improve balance, posture, and the ability to relax. It also strengthens weakened muscles.

Down Syndrome (also called Trisomy 21 or Trisomy G) - It is one of the more easily and widely identified hereditary disabilities. Individuals with Down syndrome have an average IQ of about 50, and are physically and cognitively developmentally delayed.

Benefits: Riding improves expressive and receptive language skills, gross and fine motor skills, balance, posture, coordination, and muscle tone.

Emotional Disabilities ("ED") - A congenital or acquired syndrome often compounded by learning and/or physical disabilities incorporating numerous other pathologies. In general, emotionally disturbed individuals have trouble coping with everyday life situations and interpersonal relationships. Behaviors such as short attention span, avoidance, aggression, autism, paranoia, or schizophrenia may be exhibited.

Benefits: Riding can provide structure to a disorganized thought pattern, increase feelings of self-confidence and self-awareness, and provide appropriate social therapy.

Fragile X - a genetic syndrome which results in a spectrum of physical and intellectual limitations and emotional and behavioral features which range from severe to mild in manifestation. Individuals with Fragile X may exhibit delays in speech, language and motor skills, as well as cognitive impairment.

Benefits: Riding can increase motor skills and coordination and provide practice in social skills and communication.

Hearing Impairment - May vary from mild to severe and may be congenital or acquired. True deafness is defined as hearing loss in both ears severe enough to prevent communication through the ear even with amplification. Communication with the deaf may involve lip reading, finger spelling (the manual alphabet), or sign language.

Benefits: Riding helps increase self-confidence, balance, posture and coordination. It also provides appropriate social outlets and interactions.

Intellectual Disability ("ID") - A genetic defect where the individual develops below normal rate in terms of intelligence. It may also involve delayed physical and emotional development.

Benefits: Riding helps increase group activity skills, balance, coordination, posture, gross and fine motor skills, and eye-hand coordination.

Learning Disabilities ("LD") - "Learning disabled" is a catch-all phrase for individuals who have problems processing, sequencing and problem-solving, but who appear to have otherwise normal intellectual skills. New learning generally takes time to be integrated and may need to be reviewed frequently to ensure retention.

Benefits: Riding may increase attention span, group activity skills, cooperation, receptive and expressive language skills, posture, and coordination.

Multiple Sclerosis ("MS") - A slowly progressive central nervous system disease usually occurring in adults between 20-40 years of age and more frequently in women than in men. Symptoms and manifestations include weakness in one or more limbs, visual impairment, minor gait disturbances, weakness on one or both sides of the body, emotional highs and lows, and inattention. MS runs a course of progression with periods of remission. There is no known cure for MS.

Benefits: Riding maintains and strengthens weak muscles and provides highly recommended opportunities for emotional therapy.

Muscular Dystrophy ("MD") - A hereditary disorder usually appearing in infancy or early childhood. It is characterized by progressive skeletal and muscle deterioration. There is no known cure for this disease, which often severely shortens life. People with MD are easily fatigued, especially when it is hot or cold.

Benefits: Riding may slow muscle tone degeneration and maintain muscle function. Riding provides appropriate opportunities for social interactions and elevating emotional depressions.

Spina Bifida - A congenital defect where, at birth, there is incomplete closure of the spinal column. There are usually varying degrees of paralysis of the lower limbs; however, life expectancies are not necessarily shortened.

Benefits: Riding improves balance, posture, and muscle strength.

Traumatic Brain Injury ("TBI") - Head injuries cause more disabilities in people under the age of 50 than any other neurologic cause. Injuries may be closed head (CHI), where intracranial bleeding causes pressure, or open penetration where profuse bleeding and open wounds lead to permanent damage. Deficits may include gross and fine motor skills, cognitive disabilities such as long- and short-term memory functions, visual limitations, speech, balance, and psychological alterations.

Benefits: Riding improves balance, posture, gross and fine motor skills, and cognitive deficits such as sequencing and processing.

Visual Impairment - Visual deficits may range from severely limited to total, and may be caused by a congenital defect, traumatic illness, or injury. If onset is from birth to five years, the person affected has no visual memory. Impairments occurring after five years are accompanied by memories of people, places, and things. A person is blind only if they have total loss of vision. If some vision is present, then the person is visually impaired.

Benefits: Riding helps orient the body in space and improves balance, posture, coordination, and self-awareness. The voice of the instructor is a point of orientation in space for the rider; therefore, unnecessary sounds should be avoided, as they are a distraction.

## **Volunteer Roles**

### **Volunteer Captain**

Veteran volunteers who are recognized as ready to move to a new level may be asked to serve as a Volunteer Captain. The minimal requirements to serve as a Captain are:

1. At least two sessions of experience with Rhythms of Grace.
2. A good working knowledge of grooming and tacking.
3. A good working knowledge of how Rhythms of Grace operates.
4. A desire to become more involved with the program.

The role of a Captain may vary from class to class, and even from instructor to instructor. Generally, a Captain should be ready to step up their visibility in a class by:

- Effectively monitoring the progress of all horses in the class towards being groomed and tacked up on time.
- Being able to assist volunteers in the stall by demonstrating proper techniques and answering questions.
- Keeping an eye on and working with new/inexperienced volunteers so as to provide them with a positive learning experience.
- Acting as a liaison with the instructor for tack changes, instructions regarding the class or special requests.
- Reviewing tack on the horse for basic correctness – cleanliness and tack placement – before it leaves the stall, and correcting with positive encouragement.
- Checking that all horses are safely returned to the stall and properly undressed after class.

Some instructors may utilize their Captain during the mounting process by having them check girths, adjust stirrups to the proper length, and apply bands and laces as appropriate to the rider.

### **Schooler**

The Schooling Program at Rhythms of Grace contributes to the horses' well-being by riding and schooling them in a manner that keeps the horses fit, agile, balanced, supple, relaxed and able to perform their job to the best of their ability. Research has proven when therapy horses are schooled on a regular basis they stay sounder and are more comfortable in therapy settings than horses that are not.

If you are interested in the Rhythms of Grace Schooler Program, contact Dawn Carlson for more information. Eligible candidates are required to take and pass a test to be considered.

The general requirements are:

1. Must be at least 16 years of age;
2. Must be able to ride with a secure seat, correct alignment, balanced weight distribution and strong and effective aids;

3. Can communicate with the horses in a beneficial manner both mounted and unmounted;
4. Must possess a thorough understanding of equine psychology and behavior;
5. Riding skills required include: riding the horse on the bit; working knowledge of diagonals and leads; ability to bend and supple the horse; lateral movements such as leg yielding; side passing; turn on the forehand and haunches; simple lead changes; warm-up and cool-down procedures; and the ability to identify unsoundness, stiffness, gait and behavioral problems.

### **Groom-and-Tack Trainer**

Groom-and-Tack trainers help teach new volunteers the basics of grooming and tacking during volunteer training. They should have a good understanding of horse management and be capable of answering any question concerning tack and grooming. Eligible candidates are required to take and pass a test to receive further training from the instructor staff.

#### **Requirements:**

- Minimum 18 years of age
- Recommendation by a minimum of two members of the instructor staff
- Participate as an active volunteer (Spring, Fall and/or Summer within one year) as either a volunteer captain or schooler.

#### **Study References:**

- U.S. Pony Club Manuals Vol. 1,2,3 - may be purchased from most book retailers
- Horse Watching, by Desmond Morris

### **“Horsepitality”**

Volunteers who have prior horse experience and/or Rhythms of Grace experience under their belt frequently want to spend more time with the horses. We like to keep our horses looking well-groomed, and exhibiting the show standards established by AQHA, the Arabian Horse Association, dressage/hunter groups, and other applicable standards relevant to the breeds in our barn. To offer the opportunity to learn more advanced grooming, our instructors and experienced mentors will train interested volunteers in clipping the ears, fetlocks and some body clipping, mane pulling/braiding, bathing, and show preparation. Volunteers who are a part of “Horsepitality” are also responsible for prepping horses participating in any shows or exhibitions Rhythms of Grace attends. The minimum age to participate is 16 years old Some experience working with the horses is preferred. Very new volunteers who have never been around horses need to attain a comfort level of being very close to the animals, recognizing signs of discomfort and/or skittishness with the tasks being done, and helping the horse through it.

## Other Volunteer Opportunities

### *Fundraising*

If you have a talent for talking with people and want to share what Rhythms of Grace means to you, working one of our fundraisers might be just what you're looking for. Whenever we partner with a group to support Rhythms of Grace, we need volunteers. Or we might put on a **pledge drive**, or **plan an event** for our supporters. Talk with Dawn Carlson, or our Director of Development, if this is something you enjoy doing, or have a suggestion.

### *Office*

If you have spare time on your hands, and are willing to help with filing, copying, answering the phones, or general sprucing up, you're welcome to come **help us in the office**. There's always something that needs to be done. Computer skills are not a requirement; we're not super high-tech!

### *Special Events*

**Fundraisers, demonstrations, client and volunteer recognition banquets, manning a booth/table** at an exhibition on behalf of Rhythms of Grace...these are just a few of the varied ways you can become involved. Committee service includes subcommittees working on prizes & auctions, communications, raising awareness, obtaining underwriters, and other activities. Special events are all about organization and pulling all the details together; it might seem a bit unusual that we need volunteers to help put on the Client & Volunteer Recognition Banquet, but we always get lots of help and that's one of the reasons we love you all!

### *Facilities*

**Gardening, landscaping, trail clearing, tack cleaning and repair, carpentry (e.g., building jumps or putting up a shed), painting, electrical or plumbing services, poster design, and taking pictures of new horses** are just a few of the things our volunteers help us tackle. Whether it's one individual offering their skills and experience, or a work group coming from a corporation or business, church, service organization, or school, we can use you! For groups, workdays can be scheduled, generally prior to a special event or between sessions. Contact Dawn Carlson, , to find out more about the priority projects, or what you can do.

### *Internships*

If you're **pursuing a degree or training related to equine activities, equine science/animal care, physical or occupational therapy, medicine, nursing, education or special education, non-profit, or public administration, or another field where you feel you could benefit from time with us**, you can get experience that will benefit your future career by doing an internship at Rhythms of Grace. We can work with you whether your program has a formal requirement or you simply want to learn more independently of an academic setting. Please contact Dawn Carlson for more information.

### *"Barn Buddies Club"*

For those of you who just like a little physical activity and enjoy being around the horses,



there's always barn work. **Help is welcome any morning**, and especially needed on Saturdays and Sundays with feeding the horses, turning them out, mucking stalls, and cleaning the barn. The work starts early (7:30 a.m.) and finishes around 5:00 p.m. You don't have to stay the entire time. Up-to-date volunteer paperwork is required, even for your family member/friend who comes to help, and horse contact may be limited if someone is not a regular trained program volunteer, but there's much to be done and all hands are appreciated.

## Whistleblower Policy

This policy is intended to encourage Board members, staff and others to report suspected or actual occurrence(s) of illegal, unethical or inappropriate events (behaviors and practices) without retribution. In the event of such action:

1. The Whistleblower should promptly report the suspected or actual event to his/her supervisor.
2. If the Whistleblower would be uncomfortable or otherwise reluctant to report to his/her supervisor, then the Whistleblower may report the event to the next level of management, or the RoG Board of Directors Chair. In the event that the Whistleblower is a Board member, they may report to the CEO.
3. The Whistleblower can report the event with his/her identity or anonymously.
4. The Whistleblower shall receive no retaliation or retribution for a report that was provided in good faith – that was not done primarily with malice to damage another or the organization.
5. A Whistleblower who makes a report that is not done in good faith is subject to discipline, including termination of the Board or employee relationship, or other legal means to protect the reputation of the organization and members of its Board and staff.
6. Anyone who retaliates against the Whistleblower (who reported an event in good faith) will be subject to discipline, including termination of Board or employee status.
7. Crimes against person or property, such as assault, rape, burglary, etc. should immediately be reported to local law enforcement personnel.
8. Supervisors, managers, and/or Board members who receive a report must promptly act to investigate and/or resolve the issue. The CEO or Board Chair should be consulted immediately after a report is received to ensure that proper procedures are followed.
9. The Whistleblower shall receive a report within fifteen (15) business days of the initial report, regardless of the investigation, disposition or resolution of the item.
10. If the investigation of a report, that was done in good faith and investigated by internal personnel, is not to the Whistleblower's satisfaction, then he/she has the right to report the event to the appropriate legal or investigative agency.
11. **In order to be protected by this policy, the Whistleblower must follow the internal reporting steps above before they file a report to any external source.**
12. The identity of the Whistleblower, if known, shall remain confidential to those persons directly involved in applying this policy, unless the issue requires investigation by law enforcement, in which case members of the organization are subject to subpoena.