

MOUNTED ANGELS



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Because it's about more than just riding a horse!

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Our thanks to you!! A successful riding program requires a team effort and a great deal of hard work from all involved. Your input is valuable. Please feel free to share any suggestions or comments that may make your volunteer experience during sessions more enjoyable.

WELCOME!

We are delighted you are joining us to learn more about our volunteering program at Mounted Angels, a certified SpiritHorse Therapeutic Riding program. We depend greatly on our volunteers. You are the lifeblood of our program. As a non-profit organization, we could not possibly pay the amount of staff needed to work with our children. As a volunteer, your support and dedication enable us to reach a diverse population of riders. Your compassion and gift of time add an important dimension to their lives. When you volunteer at Mounted Angels, please know how very much all our other volunteers and instructors appreciate your efforts. We could not do what we do without you!

Learning to be an effective Mounted Angels volunteer is an ongoing process. Whether you have horse experience or not, some questions will come up. Please do not hesitate to ask if you are unsure about something. Safety is our number one priority.

Most volunteer opportunities at Mounted Angels do not require special skills. We provide the necessary training and guidance to make your volunteer experience safe and enjoyable. This handbook is designed to acquaint you with Mounted Angels and serve as a guide and resource regarding the various aspects of the program and your volunteer service. We welcome you as a member of the growing family of individuals whose lives have been enriched by their efforts to help others. Your service of volunteerism is a valuable asset and you will always be appreciated. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding your volunteer role, please feel free to speak with the Mounted Angels instructors.

MISSION STATEMENT

Mounted Angels has a mission to serve children with disabilities and to improve quality of life through equine-assisted activities and therapies. We are committed to changing lives, one ride at a time.

PROGRAM OPERATIONS

Mounted Angels operates June-August, Thursday evenings. In the event that Mounted Angels must cancel a session due to inclement weather or other circumstances, we will make every attempt to notify volunteers two hours prior to the class. If you are unsure that a cancellation may occur, please contact Mounted Angels.

WHY VOLUNTEER?

Volunteering at Mounted Angels is much more than a regular donation of time and service. Volunteers give something of themselves and receive back another person's hopes and dreams. They give of their time, talents and energy to help support Mounted Angels and the people it serves.

Volunteers are vital to the program and without them we do not ride! We need volunteers to walk beside disabled riders with poor balance or lead horses. No previous experience with horses or disabilities is necessary – you will be taught everything you need to know.

Why Volunteer at Mounted Angels?

1. To help children and adults in need.
2. To help make a difference.
3. To enjoy the companionship of others.
4. To meet others who share similar interests.
5. To enhance your skills and build your resume.
6. To be a leader in your community working to improve the quality of life for those with disabilities
7. Because you have free time.
8. Because you have knowledge and talents to share

What we need from you:

- Commitment and reliability
- Willingness to learn and put forth good effort
- Effective communication
- Adherence to policies and procedures
- Be kind and respectful of others

Requirements

- There is no age requirement to be a volunteer. However, only high school age and older volunteers are allowed in the arena. All younger volunteers will be aiding with activities outside of the arena.
- Volunteers must be physically fit to walk approximately 1-2 hours and jog occasionally.

Thank you for volunteering. We welcome you to the Mounted Angels family!

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Assistance is needed in all areas of the program including:

Riding Program Volunteers

- a. *Outside Arena Volunteers* are responsible for all activities outside the arena during sessions. They will be assigned specific jobs and tasks to keep waiting riders occupied until their session begins. This could include getting helmets, talking with riders, helping with games and activities, etc.
- b. *Horse Leaders* are responsible for horses before, during and after therapy sessions. They receive training on how to prepare horses (groom & tack), how to safely & effectively lead horses during lessons, and the process for removing tack and turning out horses following lessons.
- c. *Sidewalkers* are responsible for their riders during lessons and receive training on safely and effectively providing support to their riders. Sidewalkers should arrive 15 minutes prior to the start of the session. The sidewalker's primary role is to walk alongside the rider and provide support as indicated by the instructor. It may be direct physical support, verbal support to reinforce the instructor's directions, or acting as spotters during sessions.
- d. *Instructors/Certified Therapists* are trained and certified professionals by SpiritHorse that are responsible for each rider, horse and volunteer and for all directions and instructions during sessions. Instructors/therapists should arrive 15-20 minutes prior to the start of the session to ensure that all plans are set and ready to go. The primary role for the instructors/therapists is to provide a safe and beneficial session specific for each rider.

Special Events & Fundraiser Volunteers: Assist with the coordination and production of various fundraisers and special events. Special Events Volunteers may assist with special events hosted by Mounted Angels throughout the year such as volunteer gatherings, horse shows, fundraisers, etc. Volunteer duties may include assisting with coordinating an event, serving on a special committee, and/or assisting the actual day of the event.

Special Skills Volunteers: You are encouraged to share technical or professional skills that may be of benefit to the program such as – graphic design, grant writing, public relations, photography, therapy knowledge etc.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM - POLICIES & GUIDELINES

The following policies & guidelines should assist you in having a positive volunteer experience.

Accidents & Occurrences: All accidents must be reported immediately to Mounted Angels instructor and an occurrence form must be completed by all involved. Please request an occurrence form from an instructor.

Arrival/Departure Procedure: For the first lesson of the day, volunteers need to arrive 15

minutes prior to that lesson in order to have enough time to prep with the instructor for the lesson. Once the activities are complete for the day, everyone is expected to leave the premises unless otherwise advised to stay by instructors.

Clothing & Accessories: Participants, volunteers, and instructors should dress suitably to the weather and season in clothing appropriate for equestrian activities. Volunteers must wear comfortable, sensible clothes – no short shorts, crop tops, spaghetti straps, T-shirts with inappropriate messages on them or dangling jewelry. Mounted Angels has our own T-shirts for each volunteer and, if possible, we appreciate volunteers wearing our program shirt as this gives a professional and unified impression. Appropriate clothing additions: sunglasses, hats, sweatshirts, and sunscreen.

Commitment, Availability & Attendance: Mounted Angels requests that volunteers must be willing to commit to a minimum of one (1) hour each week (same day and time). Volunteers are critical to the success of the program. It is **very** important to the program to have consistent volunteers. When you commit to your volunteer role, your support is truly needed to serve our participants and care for our equine friends. Please reserve canceling your scheduled day and time for emergencies. **If you must cancel, we ask that you call Mounted Angels as soon as possible** so we can prepare for the session accordingly.

Communication & Questions: If at any time, you are unclear regarding your volunteer role or responsibilities, please direct questions to the Director, or an instructor.

During lessons, the instructor is responsible for each rider, horse and volunteer. All directions from the instructor should be followed including the assignment of riders, horses and volunteers, mounts/dismounts and lesson structure. To ensure everyone's safety, it is important to adhere to the instructor's decisions. Volunteers are encouraged to ask questions and learn more about therapeutic riding and our students. Please wait until after the lesson is over to ask the instructor any questions that do not immediately deal with the lesson at hand.

Conduct & Behavior: Individuals involved with the program are expected to conduct themselves in a cooperative and appropriate manner at all times. Examples of inappropriate behavior would include any form of harassment, foul language (cussing or swearing) aggressive or abusive behavior to self, or others including horses. If you are subjected to or the recipient of any type of inappropriate behavior, please do not approach or otherwise confront the individual. Notify the Director or an instructor immediately. Individuals exhibiting inappropriate behavior will be dealt with and may be requested to leave immediately and if determined, additional assistance may be called for (911). Inappropriate behavior may result in dismissal from the program. Please notify someone immediately of any concerns regarding the behavior of program horses such as biting, kicking, etc.

Confidentiality Policy: At Mounted Angels, we place great importance on protecting the confidential information of our clients, our instructors and our volunteers. "Confidential Information" includes, but is not limited to, personally identifiable information such as surnames, telephone numbers, addresses, emails, etc., as well as the non-public business records of Mounted Angels. In particular, medical information about clients, and information about their disabilities or special needs, must be protected as Confidential Information. Volunteers shall never disclose confidential information to anyone other than Mounted Angels staff. Volunteers must seek staff permission before taking any pictures or videos.

Soliciting and Behavioral Conduct Policy: At no time will volunteers solicit participants or families for any goods or services while at lessons. Nor shall any volunteer conduct themselves in a manner that reflects badly on Mounted Angels as a volunteer or representative. If there are any questions regarding this policy, please refer them either to the Director or other instructor.

Discrimination Disclosure: It is the policy of Mounted Angels to provide equal opportunity for all persons and to prohibit unlawful discrimination because of age, disability, creed, religion, gender, national origin, or veteran status. This policy applies to all participants, potential participants, and volunteers.

Drinks/snacks: If you plan on being here for more than an hour, feel free to bring drinks or snacks. Hydrating liquids such as water, Gatorade, fluids with electrolyte replacements, etc. are best. Mounted Angels will also try to provide water during sessions.

Facility: Please respect posted off-limit areas. Unless approved by instructors, all volunteers should leave the facility at the end of the session each night.

Footwear: Comfortable closed-toe shoes such as athletic shoes, hiking boots, or riding boots. ABSOLUTELY no open-toed shoes or sandals.

Helmets: Use of protective headgear is mandatory for all riders. Mounted Angels provides headgear for approved riders.

Liability Release Form: You must have completed your liability packet and have signed the Volunteer Handbook Acknowledgment Form before volunteering.

Orientation: You must complete the orientation process before working with the horses.

Physical Considerations: Some volunteer roles such as leading and sidewalking can be physically demanding at times. It is important for you to inform Mounted Angels instructors if you have a condition that may prevent you from lifting or working a full hour in the arena at a walk or a jog. If you feel being a riding program volunteer is too physically demanding, volunteers are needed in other areas at Mounted Angels.

Reassignment & Termination Policy: Mounted Angels policies have been developed to serve the best interests of the entire Mounted Angels community. Safety, confidentiality, respect for each other – human and equine – and the preservation of an optimal environment for beneficial therapeutic riding are the primary reasons for strict adherence to these rules.

Individuals who are not able to perform their volunteer role, or maintain a reasonable level of commitment, or fail to observe the rules and procedures of the program will be given an opportunity to discuss any situation that is perceived to be a violation of Mounted Angels policies and may be provided with job re-assignment. However, Mounted Angels reserves the right to determine at its discretion, that it may be in the best interest of the program to terminate a volunteer's involvement with the program.

Additional Mounted Angels Policies

- Cell phones must be put away and on silent as they disrupt class and startle horses.
- Keys of vehicles must be out of the vehicles and vehicles must be locked.

- The consumption of alcohol while volunteering or prior to and/or while at Mounted Angels is prohibited.
- The use of illegal substances prior to and/or while at Mounted Angels is strictly prohibited.
- Please use a quiet voice while in the barn and working around the horses.
- Please refrain from offering food to participants without permission as they may have a medical condition such as food allergies, diabetes, etc.
- Please ask Mounted Angels horse leaders or handlers for permission to feed treats or food to horses.
- **No dogs or other pets** are allowed on Mounted Angels property. Please leave your pets at home where they will be safe and comfortable while you perform your volunteer role.
- Please do not perform a volunteer role you have not yet been trained for.

VOLUNTEER DETAILED JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Due to the inherent risks associated with volunteering at a therapeutic horseback riding program, and for the safety of our riders and volunteers, we offer the following guidelines to prospective volunteers in order to acquaint you with the variety of tasks associated with the weekly mounted lessons.

Horse Leader Job Description and Role

1. Responsible for the control of the horse or pony from the time the animal is lead through the gate into the arena and throughout the lesson session, and upon return of the animal to the place of tie.
 - a. Must be high school age or older
 - b. Ability to control a horse
 - c. Must be alert and aware of the horse's movement and behavior at all times
 - d. Calm and gentle nature with animals
 - e. Knowledge of the proper leading position
 - f. Ability to walk and/or jog for a thirty minute session
2. Horse Leader volunteers arrive 20 minutes prior to the start of a scheduled session. You will need to be aware of the horses you will be preparing and the equipment to be used. It is your responsibility to ensure that the horse is well groomed and the tack is put on and adjusted properly. If at any time, you are unsure of your assignment or the resources needed, please seek advice from the Director.
3. During a session, please handle the horse according to the instructor's direction.
 - a. Horse Leaders use a lead line. This will be attached to the halter. The tail end of the lead line should be looped in a figure eight in the left hand to avoid tripping on it. NEVER coil the rope around your hand. A sudden pull could crush or amputate your fingers.
 - b. The Horse Leader leads from the horse's left side unless the instructor directs otherwise. When leading, keep slightly behind the horse's head, but in front of the shoulder. **Horse Leaders should position themselves in front of the horse, facing the horse's head, for all mounts, dismounts and extended halts. ("Heading-off")**

4. All therapy riders mount from the mounting ramp. This helps save our horses' backs. Instructors will advise regarding dismounts. Dismounts may or may not be done in the arena.
 - a. The Horse Leader's primary role during mounts and dismounts is to prevent the horse from moving. **IN AN EMERGENCY, THE HORSE LEADER STAYS WITH THE HORSE.**
 - b. When using the mounting ramp to mount, you will bring the horse alongside the structure to be used by taking your position in front of and facing the horse and backing in, and stop where the instructor has indicated. Your primary responsibility for the duration of the mounting procedure is to keep the horse quiet and still. Your instructor will always be aware of the horse's reaction with you along with assisting the rider and will quite often assist you with advice as to how to handle the horse. (i.e. hold the cheek pieces with your elbows out to avoid being nipped) When in doubt – ASK.
 - c. Immediately after the rider is mounted, before adjusting the stirrups, you should walk the horse forward a few steps away from the mounting area.
 - d. After all of the adjustments have been made you may take your place at the head of the horse and proceed to a position designated by the instructor, or begin walking.
5. Leading at the Walk:
 - a. Many leaders forget that the riders may have sidewalkers. Be aware not to get too close to the side of the arena, cones, barrels or any other obstacles. This means when approaching an obstacle lead your horse far enough away so that the sidewalkers will have enough room to pass the obstacle too.
 - b. Walk at the horse's shoulder (or slightly before, if there is a sidewalker behind you). Avoid sharp turns or stops, and wait for the student to give the commands to the horse or for you to receive direction from the instructor. **ALWAYS** let the student do as much as they can independently.
6. Leading at the Trot:

Often during a therapy session, trotting/jogging will be used as a reward to the student. As trotting is faster than walking the leader will need to be more alert. Check to be sure the student is ready before trotting. They should be holding the handhold with both hands, have both feet in the stirrups and should be in the center of the saddle. For horses that are reluctant to trot it may be necessary for you, as the leader, to help the student by beginning to jog and telling the horse to trot. It is very important to remember to stay between the horse's head and shoulder when trotting. Falling too far back may make the horse feel as if it is being chased and they may subsequently go faster than is ideal. **KEEP THE TROT SLOW AND CONSISTENT.**
7. When a horse has finished a session, please bring the horse back to his/her tie place and untack if it is not being used in the next lesson
8. Return all tack to its proper place.

Sidewalker Job Description

In therapeutic riding it is the Sidewalkers who normally get the most hands-on responsibilities. He or she is, along with the instructor is directly responsible for the rider, and in that role, he or she has the capacity to either enhance or detract from the lesson.

Sidewalkers please arrive 15 minutes prior to the start of your session.

Sidewalkers: Responsible for the rider during the lesson session. Sidewalkers are positioned at each side of the rider in order to assist with balance issues.

Sidewalkers:

1. Must be of high school age or older
2. Must have the ability to walk with arms raised and in a supporting position for a minimum of thirty minutes. (Volunteers are allowed and ENCOURAGED to change sides throughout the lesson sessions with proper safety guidelines followed)
3. Must have the ability to walk/jog for a minimum of thirty minutes as a spotter for children.
4. Ability to relate to children in an encouraging and humorous manner.
5. Ability to reassure frightened/nervous riders.
6. Responsible for the safety of the rider while mounted.
7. Ability to assist instructor with the proper mounting and/or dismounting of a rider if needed.
8. Ability to assist and coach rider to follow and try to complete instructor's requests.

The Role of a Sidewalker

The job of the sidewalker is to provide whatever assistance is required to help the rider achieve balance on the horse. The sidewalker walks next to the horse and rider so that the rider can be assisted and observed at all times. Remember that the rider's safety comes first.

A sidewalker's main responsibility is the rider. Sidewalkers are very important as they need to be constantly aware of the student at all times and what they are being instructed to do. The first goal is the **safety of the rider**, which depends on you, the sidewalker. And the second goal is to help the rider have a fun learning experience.

- Help the rider to pay attention to the instructor. Avoid unnecessary talking with the rider and/or other volunteers. Too much input can be confusing for the rider.
- Sidewalkers should learn from experience how to anticipate difficulties from the horse or rider, which might create accidents. **Be as prepared as possible for the unexpected.** Use your judgment as necessary. The horse does not always act in predictable way or "according to procedure". Always be alert to your surroundings.
- It is important to maintain position at the rider's knee. Being too far back or too far forward will make it difficult to assist the rider.
- The sidewalker should position themselves next to rider's leg about 6 inches away from the horse. They should stay between the horse's shoulder and rider's leg at all times. They may also be required to assist in cueing the horse to move forward by applying pressure next to the rider's leg. Usually they do not keep a hand on their rider constantly.
- If there is an emergency or the rider falls off **STAY WITH THE RIDER!!!**
- Avoid wrapping your arm around the rider's waist. It can offer too much and uneven support. At times it can even pull the rider off balance and make riding difficult. *Encourage your students to use their own trunk muscles to the best of their abilities.*
- Since the student with less muscle tone requires the sidewalker to exert enormous physical energies, you may need to change sides throughout the lessons. To do so, notify the instructor that you need to "switch" and follow the instructor's direction on when and

how to do so. The rider must never totally be left alone during a changeover since falling may occur. Remember, the rider's safety comes first at all times.

- Do not grab at a student if he/she starts to slip, gently guide them back into the correct position.
- Maintain enough distance between the horse leader and yourself so that you do not trip over each other, especially when the horse is trotting and you must jog to keep pace. The sidewalker should be listening to the instructor's direction so he/she can reinforce the directions when necessary, BUT allow the rider plenty of time to process the information before he/she begins to assist. Never give a rider more assistance than is necessary. It is important that the rider develops balance and strength, and gains the feeling of being centered or off-balance. From these sensations, a balanced seat will develop and the rider will gain proper posture and function. *Independence is an important goal in therapeutic riding.*
- During the lesson the **sidewalker/s** is always close to the rider, you will find that the rider may want to talk to you a great deal. Do not ignore direct questions but do try and get your rider to direct his/her attention to the instructor. If your rider is not paying attention or does not hear the instructor, you can help reinforce the directions with "prompting".
- When the instructor gives a direction, allow your rider plenty of time to process it. If the instructor says, "Turn to the right toward me", and the student seems confused, gently tap the right hand and say, "Right", to reinforce the command. You will get to know the riders and learn when they need help and when they're just not paying attention.
- One of the greatest distractions in the arena is excessive talking by parents, riders and volunteers. Do not have conversations with your fellow volunteers and rider while in the lesson. However, communicating to the instructor anything that has to do with the rider's position, balance or horse is your job. Any unnecessary talking distracts the rider, shows disrespect for the riding lesson, and diverts the attention of the team

Passive Side Walking:

Sidewalkers doing passive side walking are responsible for keeping an eye on the body position of their riders. They may also be responsible in assisting to communicate commands to the rider from the instructor either by tactile or verbal commands. Sidewalkers can offer verbal support and encouragement. In an emergency situation side walkers are responsible for keeping hold of the rider.

Active Side Walking:

Sidewalkers doing active side walking are responsible for physically keeping a rider centered or balanced on the horse, for the entire lesson, using a variety of holds. The active side walker's position relative to the student and horse is the same as the passive sidewalker. Sidewalkers are not allowed to remove their hold for any reason unless the instructor tells them to do so. If an active sidewalker becomes tired or fatigued they must speak up and ask for a rest or to switch sides.

Support Holds:

The instructor will direct you on the type of holds depending on the rider. The two holds that are most frequently used are the "arm over thigh" and "ankle" holds.

1. **Arm over Thigh** This position provides support for the rider without interfering with the rider's trunk control, allowing the rider to build up strong trunk support. The sidewalker grips the front of the saddle with the hand closest to the rider. Then the forearm rests

gently on the rider's thigh. Be careful that the elbow doesn't accidentally dig into the rider's thigh or the horse. See the photo on page 24.

- **Ankle Support** This is the least restrictive form of support, allowing the rider to use all muscles to provide his or her own support. If a rider slips, a light "tug" will bring the rider back into alignment with the saddle. DO NOT yank on the ankle, and DO NOT keep constant pressure.

The ultimate goal for therapeutic riding is to encourage the rider to stretch and grow to be as normal as he/she can possibly be. You are right at his/her side, so help the instructor to challenge him/her to the best of his/her ability.

Without you, these programs could not exist. We thank you for all you give and challenge you to be the best that you can be.

MOUNTED ANGELS PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Mounted Angels's therapeutic riding program serves individuals of all ages. An assessment and screening process will be conducted by staff. The assessment process provides an opportunity to determine if the program activities would be safe and appropriate for the individual and what resources would be needed such as – horse, riding equipment, volunteer and staffing needs.

Next, individual goals are established for the participant and progress is documented each week. Most participate in one 30 minute session each week. Lesson activities may include developing basic riding skills, exercises or playing games on horseback.

In therapeutic riding, the horse is used as a tool to improve the mental and physical well-being of the disabled person. Therapeutic riding is recognized by the American Occupational Therapy Association and the American Physical Therapy Association. The benefits are available to individuals with just about any disability, including but not limited to:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| • Muscular Dystrophy | • Emotional Disability | • Autism |
| • Visual/Hearing Impairments | • Spinal Cord Injuries | • Spinal Bifida |
| • Mental Retardation | • Stroke | • Brain Injuries |
| • Multiple Sclerosis | • Cerebral Palsy | • Amputations |
| | • Down Syndrome | • Learning Disabilities |

Benefits of Therapeutic Riding

Physically, it is the horse's movement which has a dynamic effect on the rider's body. The horse stimulates the rider's pelvis and trunk in a manner that closely resembles the normal gait of a human. This movement can be used to produce specific physical changes in the rider including normalization of muscle tone and improvements in posture, balance, coordination, and increased endurance.

Sensorially, the horse and the riding environment offer a wide variety of input to participants. Movement exploration on the horse combined with so many other sights and sounds one encounters in the riding program contribute to the overall sensory experience.

Emotionally, the success of overcoming fear and anxiety and the ability to achieve riding and other related skills help individuals realize self-worth and increase self-esteem. For those

involved with the various activities of a therapeutic riding program, the companion animal bonding and development of new skills are critical components to the success of the experience offered. Relationships develop between participants, volunteers, horses, and staff and are an integral part of a positive, emotional experience provided by a therapeutic riding program.

Cognitively, the horse provides a strong motivator for participants. Riding lessons incorporate activities and games on horseback designed to help achieve specific goals such as following multistep directions, staying on task, color and number recognition, and reinforcing existing skills as well as learning new ones.

Socially, therapeutic riding programs and their associated activities provide an excellent opportunity for participants to interact with their peers, program volunteers and staff in a positive and enjoyable environment.

The horses, participants, instructors and volunteers make up a unique team providing an opportunity for physical, emotional, social, recreational, and educational gains.

Working with a Special Needs Population

Working with people who have special needs may be a new experience for some volunteers. Please take time to know your participant and direct questions to the instructors. Physical or mental impairments may be present at birth, or may be due to injury, disease, or aging. Often, a major barrier for people with special needs is not the disability itself, but the lack of awareness and knowledge by others. Above all, please treat individuals with respect, being considerate and sensitive to their needs.

Wheelchair Etiquette

Many people are unsure how to act when meeting someone in a wheelchair. Please try to keep the following in mind. Always ask the wheelchair user if they would like assistance before you help; be respectful - people's wheelchairs are an extension of their body space. Don't hang or lean on them unless you have permission; and speak directly - be careful not to exclude the wheelchair user from conversations. If the conversation lasts more than a few minutes, sit or kneel to get yourself on the same level as the wheelchair.

Escorting an Individual with a Visual Impairment

If an individual with a visual impairment looks like they need assistance, please ask first if help is needed. Remember that they may only need verbal direction/cues. If physical assistance is needed, allow the individual to hold onto your arm above the elbow and walk one-half step ahead. The individual may also have a specific way that they prefer to have assistance. Repeat/verbalize information that may be written/posted. If you're uncertain of what to do, ask your instructor how you can be of further assistance.

General Guidelines for Working with Individuals with Hearing/Language Impairment

Try to maintain good eye contact, looking at the individual when speaking to him/her. Speak clearly, avoid talking slowly or over-emphasizing words and avoid long verbal instructions/conversation. Become familiar with hand gestures/body positions that the participant may be using to represent words and concepts. See your instructor with questions. Provide assistance with communication when needed (i.e., visual cues, gestures, etc). Alert the instructor if the participant is having difficulty with hearing aid (i.e., ringing).

Non-Verbal or Limited Verbal Expression

Many of our riders are pre-verbal or limited in their verbal expression. To enhance communication with these individuals, instructors and volunteers may reinforce requests and directions with basic American Sign Language (ASL).

SEE PAGE 18 for a sheet of some common signs used in therapeutic riding.

When you meet a Mounted Angels Therapy Participant

- First, remember that the person with a disability is a person. They are like everyone else, except for the special limitations of his or her disability. They are NOT a disabled person, but a person with a disability... they are a PERSON FIRST.
- A disability need not be ignored or denied between friends, but until your relationship is one of friendship, show interest in them as a person only.
- Be yourself when you meet a person with a disabling condition.
- Talk about the same things as you would with anyone else.
- Help the person ONLY when they request it. When a person with a disability falls, they may wish to get up by themselves, just as some people with visual impairments prefer to get along without assistance.
- Be patient, let the person set his or her own pace walking or talking.
- Don't be afraid to LAUGH WITH THE RIDER.
- Don't stop and stare when you see a person with a disability. They deserve the same respect any person should receive.
- Don't ask embarrassing questions. If the person wants to tell you about their disability, they will bring up the subject themselves.
- Don't show pity. The person with a disability wants to be treated as an equal in all things. Everyone wants the chance to prove themselves.
- Don't separate the person with a disability from his wheelchair or crutches unless they ask you to remove them. They may want them close by.
- Don't make up your mind about a person with a disability ahead of time. You may be surprised at how wrong you are in judging their interest or ability.
- ENJOY yourself and your friendship with the person. Their philosophy and good humor may give you inspiration.

HORSES AND SAFETY

Working with and around horses carries with it inherent risks! Both horses and humans can be injured or die from these risks.

Think of a horse as having a 6-foot “danger zone” surrounding it. In this “zone” a horse can kick, buck, bite, or rear. No rider should ever be near this “zone” without supervision from an approved volunteer or instructor.

Volunteers must be approved before working anywhere in the vicinity of the horses!

Parents and/or aides are not automatically “an approved supervisor”; therefore such participants also need supervision from an approved volunteer or instructor.

Safety Precautions for Working with Horses

1. Never approach a horse directly from its blind spot. (See above horse vision chart to learn where their blind spots are.) Always try to approach from the front shoulder.
2. Approach your horse from the side, talking to it in a low voice. Keep your hand on your horse when walking around it.
3. Always speak to a horse before approaching or touching him. Most horses are likely to jump and may kick when startled. Horses doze while standing up, so always talk in a clear, projecting voice.
4. Do NOT hand-feed the horses. They might mistake your fingers for a treat.
5. Do NOT let horses sniff each other
6. If the horse hangs back on the end of the rope, lead him a few steps forward before touching him with your hand.
7. Walk beside the horse when leading, not ahead or behind him. Position yourself beside the head.
8. Use a long lead rope and both hands when leading. If the horse rears up, release the hand closest to the halter so you can stay on the ground. Do not be distracted. Watch where you are going and watch the student as well.
9. You weigh a lot less than any horse. You cannot out-pull him. If a horse pulls back, step back with it rather than pull against it. A quick snap on the lead rope will generally get it going.
10. **Never wrap a lead rope around your hand, wrist, or body.** Keep your head in the clear when bridling the horse. He may throw his head to avoid the bridle.
11. Lead your horse from the left side, one hand (six inches) from the halter and the other hand holding the end of the lead rope (not wrapped around your hand).
12. If the horse steps on your toe, count to five while pushing your weight into his shoulder. It should step off. **Do not try to pull your foot out.** They do not step on toes purposely so there is no need to yell, hit or otherwise scare the rider or horse.
13. Always walk around your horse, never under the rope or by skipping over it. Remind students of this too.
14. Do not let lead rope or reins drag on the ground. The horse may trip, break the equipment or get startled.

UNDERSTANDING HORSE BEHAVIOR

The horse is perhaps the most important part of all of our programs. The horses at Mounted Angels come from a variety of backgrounds. Each has his or her own unique personality and needs.

When developing relationships and working with horses, communication is key. It is critical to provide a safe environment in a therapeutic riding setting. Beginning a process of understanding the horse senses, instincts and implications is a step in predicting behaviors, managing risks and increasing positive relationships.

Volunteers play a critical role in preparing horses for sessions and assisting with their success in the sessions and we encourage volunteers to gain additional knowledge of our equine friends through a variety of opportunities.

EQUINE SENSES

SMELL: The horse's sense of smell is thought to be very acute and it allows him to recognize other horses and people. Smell also enables the horse to evaluate situations. Always approach a horse with your hand out, palm down so he can smell you. It will help him to remember who you are.

Implications:

- Allow horses the opportunity to become familiar with new objects and their environment by smelling.
 - It is recommended that treats are not carried in your pocket since horses may desire to go after them.
 - Volunteers are not permitted to eat or have food in the arena.

HEARING: The horse's sense of hearing is also thought to be very acute. The horse may also combine their sense of hearing and sight to become more familiar with new or alerting sounds. "Hearing and not seeing" is often the cause of the fright/flight response. Note the position of the horse's ears.

Implications:

- Horses are wary when they hear something but do not see it. If your horse is acting nervous, talk to him in a quiet and calm voice for reassurance.
- Avoid shouting or using a loud voice. This can be frightening to a horse.
- Watch your horse's ears for increased communication.

SEE PAGE 19 FOR SAMPLE OF EAR POSITION

SIGHT: The horse's eyes are set on either side of the head; there is a good peripheral (lateral) vision, but poorer frontal vision. A horse focuses on objects by raising and lowering its head. The horse's visual memory is very accurate. Horses can see quite well in the dark, due to the large size of their eyes. There is still controversy as to which colors horses are able to distinguish.

Implications:

- The horse may notice if something in the arena or pasture is different. Allow the horse an opportunity to look at new objects. Introduce new props that the horse may be unfamiliar with.
- The horse has better peripheral vision; consider a slightly looser lead line, enabling him to move his head when taking a look at objects.

- Although the horse has good peripheral vision, consider two blind spots: directly in front and directly behind. The best way to approach a horse is to his shoulder. It may startle him if you approach from behind to directly in front. The horse may be unable to see around the mouth area, which is a safety consideration when hand feeding. **SEE PAGE 17 FOR IMAGE OF HORSES' BLIND SPOTS**

TOUCH: Touch is used as a communication between horses and between horses and people. Horses are sensitive to soft or rough touch with a person's hands or legs.

Implications:

- Handlers should treat the horses gently but firmly.
- Each horse has sensitive areas, and it is important to be familiar with them (i.e. flank and belly areas).
- Watch rider's leg position. Riders may need appropriate assistance to reduce a "clothes pin" effect with their legs. Ask the instructor/therapist what is best handling technique.
- Horses will often touch or paw at unfamiliar objects. For example, a horse may paw at a bridge or ground pole before crossing it.

TASTE: Taste is closely linked with the sense of smell and helps the horse to distinguish palatable foods and other objects.

Implications:

- Taste is closely linked with smell or touch; therefore, a horse may lick or nibble while becoming familiar with objects and people. Avoid this contact with the horse.

SIXTH SENSE: Horses do have a "sixth sense" when evaluating the disposition of those around him. Horses can be hypersensitive in detecting the moods of their handlers and riders. A good therapy horse is chosen for their sensitive response to the rider. At times there may exist a personality conflict between handlers and horses. It is important to let the instructor or executive director know if you're having a difficult time relating or getting along with a particular horse.

FLIGHT AS NATURAL INSTINCT: Horse's would rather turn and run away from danger than face and fight it.

Implications:

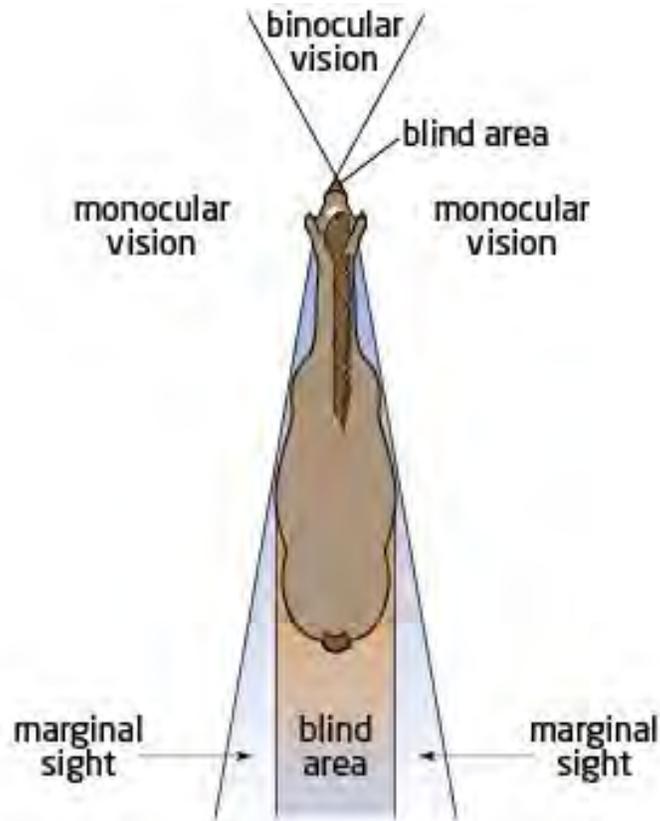
- At a sudden movement or noise, the horse might try to flee. Speak to the horse calmly.
- A frightened horse being held tightly might try to escape by pulling back. Relax your hold or untie him quickly and usually he will relax. Be sure not to stand directly behind the horse.
- If flight is not possible, the horse could either turn to kick out or face the problem and rear, especially in a tight area like a stall. Use a halter with a lead rope to maintain control while working around the horse in a stall.
- If a horse appears to be frightened or fearful (note the position of the horse's ears), alert program staff.
- Most horses chosen to work in a therapeutic riding setting have less of an instinct to flee. The horse may look to you for reassurance. It is helpful if the volunteer remains calm and talks to the horse in a soothing voice.

HERD ANIMAL: Horses like to stay together in a herd or a group with one or two horses dominant, with a pecking order amongst the rest.

Implications:

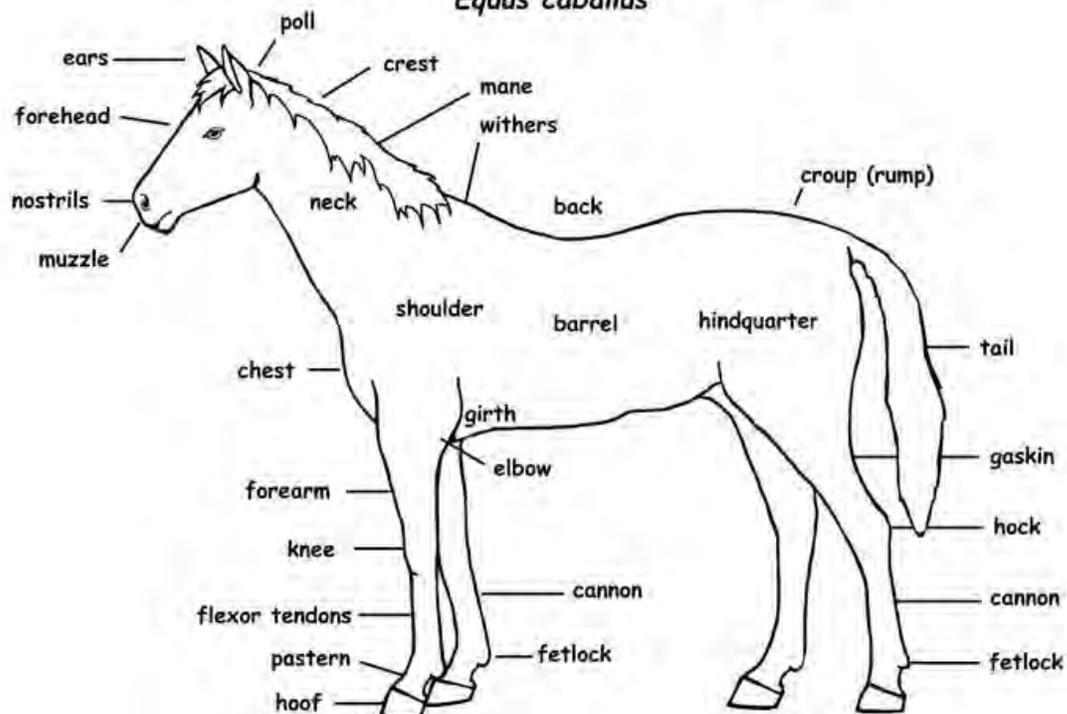
- Be aware that a horse may not like being alone. This is a consideration when horses are leaving the arena or a horse loses sight of the others while on a trail ride.

- Be aware that if the horse in front of a line is trotting or cantering, the horse that is following may also attempt to trot or canter.
- If one horse spooks at something, the surrounding horses may also be affected.
- For safety, it is recommended to keep at least one horse's length between horses when riding within a group to respect the horse's space and pecking order.

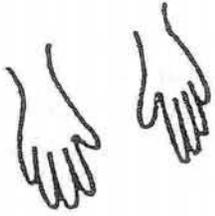


Parts of the Horse

Equus caballus

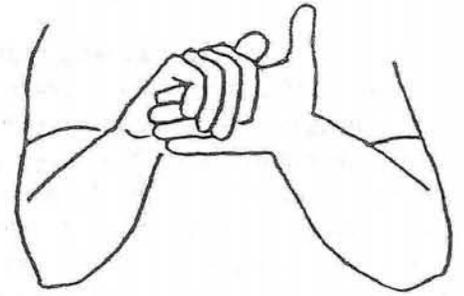


SIGN LANGUAGE



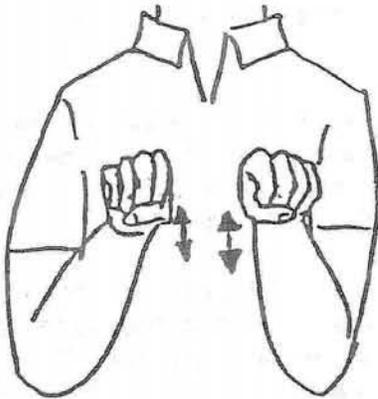
Walk-on

Hands are palm down, wrists go up & down



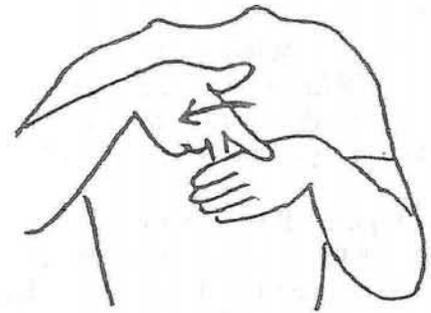
Saddle

Fingers of right hand hook over flat, palm-in left



Trot

Close fists with thumbs across fingers, motion up and down from wrists



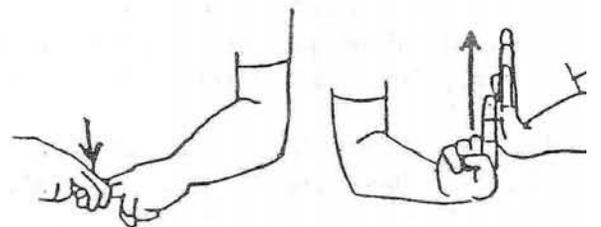
Ride

Straddle palm-in left hand with first two fingers of hand, slide



Halt/Stop

Side of right flat hand strikes left flat palm

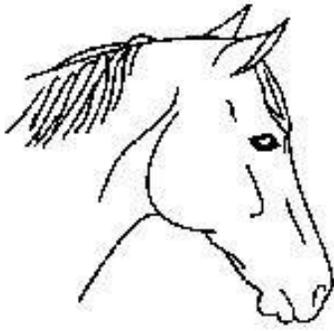


Sit Tall

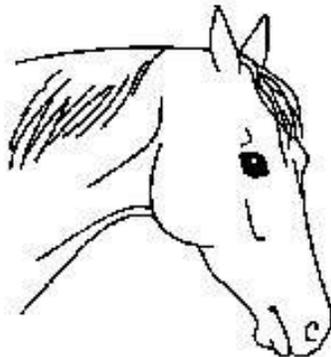
Sign "Sit" and "Tall"

Reading a Horse's Ears

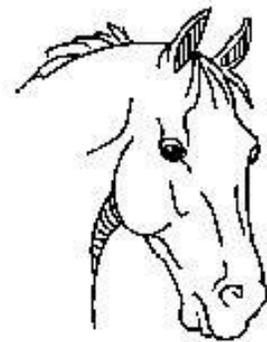
The horse's ears and actions are the key to his emotions. He can tell you what he is paying attention to and how he feels by the way he uses his ears and the way he acts. Following are some tips to his emotions.



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



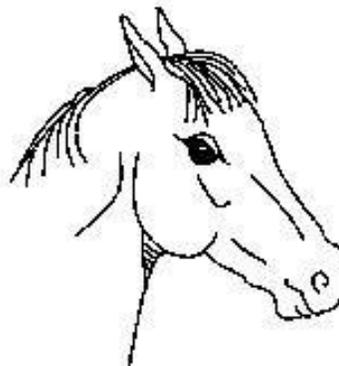
Ears turned back but relaxed
listening to his rider
or what's behind him



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



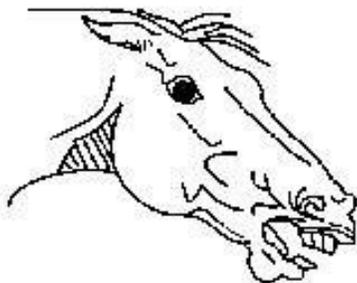
Ears pointed left and right
relaxed, paying attention
to the scenery on both sides.



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



Droopy ears
calm and resting,
horse may be dozing.

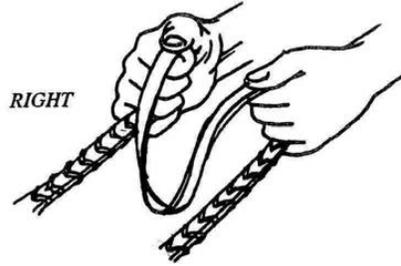


Ears flattened against neck
violently angry, in a fighting mood.
May fight, bite or kick.

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.

SINGLE REINS



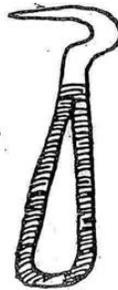
RIGHT



SOFT BRUSH

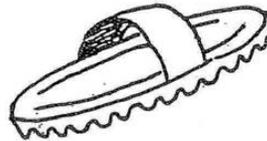


MANE AND TAIL COMB



HOOFPICK

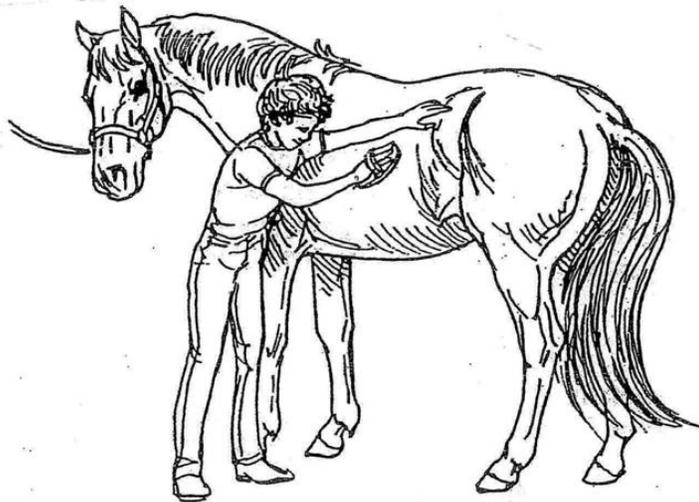
GROOMING TOOLS



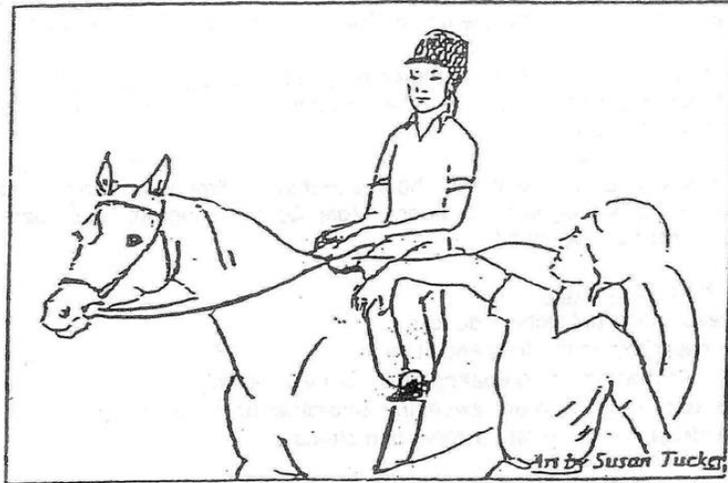
CURRY COMB



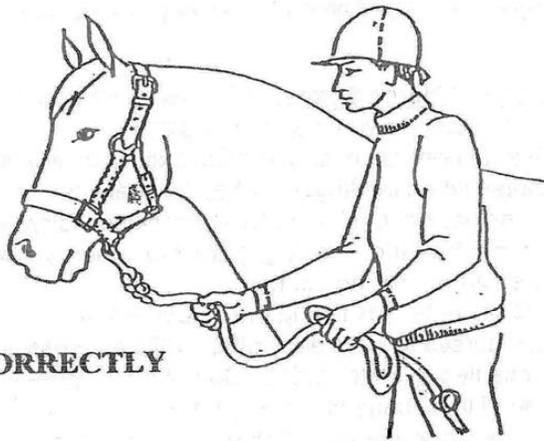
HARD OR DANDY BRUSH



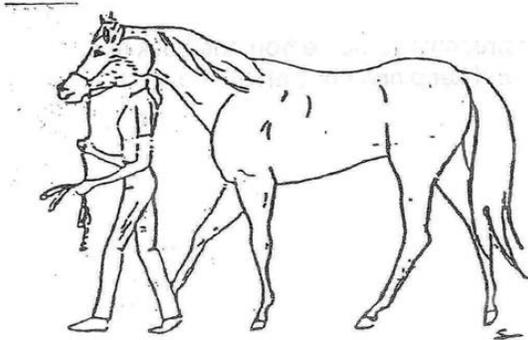
GROOMING • KEEP ONE HAND ON THE HORSE WHILE YOU WORK



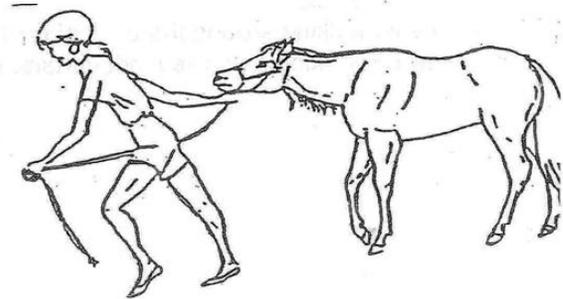
SIDEWALKING TECHNIQUE – “ARM OVER THIGH”



HOLDING LEADLINE CORRECTLY



CORRECT LEADING



INCORRECT LEADING

GENERAL INFORMATION & EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

RISK MANAGEMENT

Volunteers are responsible for knowing and following all safety rules, emergency policies and procedures as indicated, supporting all efforts to promote safe working conditions, making full use of safety equipment, reporting immediately any unsafe working conditions or behaviors, and knowing the location of first aid kits, fire extinguishers, emergency exits and emergency plans.

Emergency Policies & Procedures

Mounted Angels's intention is to provide a safe environment for all individuals involved with the program. Being prepared in the event of an emergency is part of providing a safe atmosphere. Please review the following policies and procedures on how to handle specific emergencies. It is important to remember in any emergency situation to remain calm, reassure riders, and take direction from Mounted Angels instructors. Instructors are responsible for managing the emergency and applying any first aid required. Volunteers may be called upon to assist.

Medical Emergencies

Mounted Angels instructors must be notified of any injury or medical emergency and are responsible for managing the emergency including evaluating the scene, determining if additional medical assistance is required, and providing any first aid required. An occurrence report must be completed by an instructor and involved individuals for every incident.

Calling for Emergency Medical Assistance

In the event of an emergency, volunteers may be asked to call for emergency medical assistance. When talking to the 911 dispatcher, be sure to specifically identify that we are at PIKE COUNTY ILLINOIS Fairgrounds. Since we are close to Missouri, you may get a Missouri emergency dispatcher. Also, instruct the dispatcher to tell the EMS to **turn off the sirens** when approaching the fairgrounds, as the loud noise can spook a horse or scare a child.

Location of First Aid Kits

A primary human and equine first-aid kit is located in the Mounted Angels's trailer.

Severe Weather

In the event of severe thunder storms, high heat or threat of tornado – program activities will be discontinued. Please take direction from the instructor regarding escorting participants to a designated safe meeting place and safe placement of horses.

“Emergency” Dismount

During riding sessions, the instructor performs rider mounts and dismounts. However, in certain situations, the instructor may ask volunteers to perform an emergency dismount as follows:

When an instructor calls for an emergency dismount, **horse leaders** halt and head off their horse. Horse leaders must keep the horse a safe distance from rider after dismount. **Sidewalker(s)** inform rider of emergency dismount, make sure the rider has removed their feet from the stirrups, place your arms around the riders waist and gently guide rider off and safely away from the horse. Please await further direction from the instructor.

Spooked Horse

Should a horse become frightened or overly nervous, sidewalkers are to apply “arm over thigh” support to the rider. The horse leader should attempt to halt the horse and head it off. The horse leader must always stay with the horse and be aware that the horse may move quickly forward or

side step in either direction. As the horse moves, sidewalkers need to continue their support to the rider, staying close to the horse's side as it moves. Follow directions from instructor.

Loose Horse

Owners of the horse will be primarily responsible for collecting a loose horse. However, in the event you are called upon to help, some basic information is necessary. To retrieve a loose horse - whether in the arena, stable or on the facility grounds – one person should approach horse from the side and using a quiet voice, place a lead rope around neck, then the halter.

Do not chase the horse. If needed, a small amount of feed in a bucket can be used to encourage the horse to come to you.

Should a horse become loose in the arena while a session is in progress, all activity immediately stops. Horse leaders are to halt and head off their horses, sidewalkers should apply “arm over thigh” support, and await further direction from instructor.

Fallen Rider or Medical Emergency

Should a rider fall from a horse, become injured or have a medical emergency during a session, all activity will stop. *One of the most important things to remember in this situation is to REMAIN CALM!* The instructor is responsible for managing the incident including applying any first aid needed. Designated volunteers may be asked to assist by retrieving a first aid kit, calling for emergency medical assistance (911), and locating the rider's emergency medical form.

Horse Leaders: In the event of fall, your primary concern is to handle the horse you are leading; the instructor will handle the fallen rider. In the event of a fallen rider, the horse leader will move the rider's horse away from the rider, then halt and head off the horse.

Sidewalkers of the fallen rider remain with the rider until directed otherwise. No one, including riders' parents should enter or leave the arena without direction from the instructor.

Incidents Occurring in the Arena

This may include anything from being stepped on, to being bitten, to being kicked. In all cases the incident should be reported to the instructor.

VOLUNTEER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT PAGE

PLEASE SIGN AND DATE AND RETURN THIS PAGE
TO MOUNTED ANGELS

WARNING

UNDER ILLINOIS LAW, AN EQUINE ACTIVITY SPONSOR,
OR EQUINE PROFESSIONAL, IS NOT LIABLE FOR AN INJURY TO, OR THE DEATH
OF, A PARTICIPANT IN EQUINE ACTIVITIES RESULTING FROM THE INHERENT
RISKS OF EQUINE ACTIVITIES.

RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT

In consideration of the acceptance of my participation and/or the participation of my child or ward, in the renting of a horse from or related activities offered by the Mounted Angels, and with the understanding that a horse may be startled by sudden movement, noise or other factors, and may shy suddenly, rear, stop short, bite, buck, kick or run with its rider, especially when the ride is conducted through an unnatural setting, as this activity will be, I AGREE TO ASSUME THE RISKS incidental to such participation including, but not limited to, those risks set out above, and, on my own behalf, on behalf of my child or ward, and on behalf of my child's or ward's heirs, executors and administrators, RELEASE and forever discharge the released parties defined below, of and from all liabilities, claims, actions, damages, costs or expenses of any nature, arising out of or in any way connected with my participation and/or the participation of my child or ward in such horseback riding or related activities and further agree to indemnify and hold each of the released parties harmless against any and all such liabilities, claims, actions, damages, costs or expenses, including, but not limited to, attorney's fees and disbursements. The released parties are the Mounted Angels, their parent, related, affiliated and subsidiary companies, and the officers, directors, employees, agents, representatives, successors and assigns of each. I understand that this release and indemnity agreement includes any claims based on the negligence, actions or inaction of any of the above released parties and covers bodily injury and property damage, whether suffered by me, my child or ward before, during, or after such participation. I further authorize medical treatment for said child or ward, at my cost, if the need arises.

Volunteer Agreement - I have read and understand the Volunteer Manual. I also understand and agree to fill out a Volunteer Form with basic information and that a background check will be completed. I agree to the terms set before me. I understand that failure to follow these rules and terms may result in loss of volunteer privileges.

Printed Name of Volunteer

Volunteer Signature or Parent or Legal Guardian

Date

Staff Signature

Date



**Mounted Angels Therapeutic
Horsemanship**
10362 465th St. Pearl, IL 62361
217-829-4409-home
217-257-5702 cell
www.mountedangels.org

*A Spirit Horse
Member Program*

Volunteer Information Form

General Information

Full Name: _____ **Date of Birth:** _____
Last First M.I.

Address: _____
Street Address Apartment/Unit #

City State Zip Code

Phone: _____ **Email:** _____

Employer/School: _____

Parent/Legal Guardian: _____

How did you hear about our program? _____

Check which areas you are interested in:

- Horse Handling Photography/Video Fundraising
- Side Walking Grant Writing Future Planning
- Instructor/Therapist Public Relations Volunteer Recruitment

I understand that the information provided above is accurate to the best of my knowledge. I know of no reason why I should not participate in this center's program.

Signature (*Parent/Legal Guardian*): _____ **Date:** _____

Photo Release (*please initial*) I Do Do Not

Consent to and authorize the use and reproduction by Mounted Angels of any and all photographs and any other audio/visual materials taken of me for promotional material, educational activities, exhibitions or for any other use for the benefit of the program.

Signature (*Parent/Legal Guardian*): _____ **Date:** _____

Person to Notify in Case of Emergency

Name: _____

Cell/Home Phone: _____ **Work Phone:** _____

Background Information

Have you ever been charged with or convicted of a crime? **Yes** **No**

If yes, explain: _____

Current Driver's License **Y** **N** **License Number:** _____ **State:** _____

I, _____ (volunteer/staff) authorize Mounted Angels to receive information from any law enforcement agency, including police departments and sheriff's departments, of this state or any other state or federal government, to the extent permitted by state and federal law, pertaining to any convictions I may have had for violations of state or federal criminal laws, including but not limited to convictions for crimes committed upon children or animals.

I understand that such access is for the purpose of considering my application as a volunteer, and that I expressly DO NOT authorize this Spirit Horse center, its directors, officers, or other volunteers to disseminate this information in any way to any other individual, group, agency, organization or corporation.

Signature (Parent/Legal Guardian): _____ **Date:** _____

Confidentiality Agreement

I understand that all information (written and verbal) about participants at this Spirit Horse center is confidential and will not be shared with anyone without the expressed written consent of the participant and their parent/guardian in the case of a minor.

Signature (Parent/Legal Guardian): _____ **Date:** _____

Release of Liability

The undersigned, for and in consideration of volunteering with Mounted Angels Therapeutic Horsemanship Program does/do hereby forever release, acquit, discharge and hold harmless the Mounted Angels Therapeutic Horsemanship Program, its officers, trustees, agents, employees, representatives, volunteers, successors and assigns, for all manner of claims, demands and damages of every kind and nature whatsoever, which the undersigned or said minor may now, or in the future, have against the Mounted Angels Therapeutic Horsemanship Program, its officers, trustees, agents, employees, representatives, volunteers, successors or assigns on account of any personal injuries, physical or mental condition, known or unknown, to the person of said minor and the treatment therefore as a result of, or in any way growing out of, the acts of the Mounted Angels Therapeutic Horsemanship Program, its officers, trustees, agents, employees, representatives, volunteers, successors or assigns, including, but not limited to their negligence or gross negligence, in rendering the services above described or in any way incidental thereto.

Signature (Parent/Legal Guardian): _____ **Date:** _____