



Volunteer Manual

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MISSION:

Manna Hana Riding Center, Inc. (MHRC) is founded through love to provide recreational riding for persons with special needs using our horses in equine-assisted activities.

VISION:

Our vision at Manna's HANA is "Helping Achieve Needed Agility" for individuals with special needs...where the Holy Spirit mingled with the spirit of the horse restores the human spirit back to the Living God. Services are provided without discrimination; however, the program reserves the right to refuse services when the situation is deemed imprudent for medical, safety or other reasons.

HISTORY:

Inspired by a friend's son and how his life was impacted by riding a pony for the first time, Bobbie Abell was stirred to stop talking and do something to help these special children. As she shared this dream with friends, they wanted to be a part of it and excitement grew. Manna's Hana Riding Center became a 501c3 non-profit in October, 2010. Bobbie wanted her place to become a place where the child will come to meet, learn to groom and experience a time of freedom on a horse!

LOCATION:

1285 Brotherton Drive
Cookeville, TN 38506

Volunteer Coordinator's Cell (call or text): (810) 338-6333

Director's Cell (call or text): (931) 349-8106

Fax: (931) 754-1132

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Center's Email: mannahana@gmail.com

Center's Web: www.mannahana.com

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**VOLUNTEERS**

You are key members of the Manna's Hana Team. We both need and appreciate you! And we guarantee your efforts will make a difference in the life of a rider facing physical, emotional or mental challenges. When you become part of our team, you are making a session-long commitment to one particular rider and to the horses we call "therapists in horseshoes." We understand that's not always easy, but we are eternally grateful for the skills, interest and time you bring to our program. The rewards are priceless. Thank You!

Each person at Manna's Hana Riding Center is a unique and valuable human being who deserves respect, courtesy, compassion and an opportunity to grow. Your actions as a volunteer bring those values to life for yourself, our riders and even our horses. The policies and procedures that govern our programs are designed to protect each member of the team and to promote an enhanced experience for all.

EXPECTATIONS

As a volunteer, you are both the face and the heart of Manna's Hana Riding Center. What you do, how you do it, what you say, and how you say it defines Manna's Hana Riding Center. Here are our expectations of you:

- Be at the barn on time and for the total time of your shift
- Commit to a regular day and time for the entire session in order to provide consistency to an individual rider unless you volunteer as a floater/substitute
- Arrive physically and mentally ready to perform your assigned duties – someone's life and future is in your hands
- Always defer to the authority of the Instructor during sessions to insure the safety of all the riders. After a session, your feedback and suggestions are welcome to improve the quality of the program
- Take a professional approach to training so that you are aware of and prepared for the responsibilities given to you and the performance expected
- Ask for help if you do not understand something
- Dress appropriately for your assignment (See section on Dress)
- Complete all required release forms prior to the start of sessions (i.e. Commitment, Emergency Medical, Background Check, Liability, Photo and Confidentiality)

- Maintain confidentiality and respect the privacy of all other volunteers, staff and riders. Understand that your Instructor is not able to tell you your rider's diagnosis, but they can share what is pertinent to your responsibility and the goals of your rider.
- Be courteous and patient. You should never be in a position to discipline either horses or riders. Bring problems to the immediate attention of an Instructor or staff member.
- Understand that you are irreplaceable to a rider who has come to trust you. If something prevents you from attending a session, e-mail or text your volunteer coordinator as far in advance as possible so that a replacement can be found. Written notice is key...not just a mention.

CELL PHONES

No Phone Zone

Cell phones are an important part of life today but can be a distraction at best and a safety hazard at worst in an equine program. Manna's Hana is a "no phone zone."

- Place your phone and keys in a pocket provided in the Volunteer Area.
- OR leave your cell phone in your car when you report for your shift at Manna's Hana
- You MUST turn the phone OFF (not just to vibrate) once riders and horses are present.
- If your cell phone rings during a session, it is grounds for dismissal-with-cause from the program and no credit for hours worked will be awarded.

ICE

Because cell phones can be valuable devices in emergencies, Manna's Hana urges you to create an ICE (In Case of Emergency) contact(s) in your cell phone's directory to supplement the information we keep on file for you and to serve you should an accident occur when you are not involved in our program.

PROHIBITED PERSONAL BEHAVIOR

Profanity

- Because the majority of our riders are children or youth and because modeling verbal skills is part of the job description of our volunteers, use of profanity is strictly prohibited at Manna's Hana

Tobacco Use

- Because of the dire consequences of fire related to hay, horses, wooden structures and pastures, smoking is strictly prohibited at Manna's Hana.
- Volunteers are asked to refrain from the use of smokeless tobacco products in the presence of riders

Substance Abuse

- A volunteer attempting to operate under the influence of alcohol or other illegal substances poses a danger to our riders, our horses and other volunteers. Use of controlled substances before or during sessions is strictly prohibited

PROCEDURE FOR REMOVAL OF A VOLUNTEER FROM THE PROGRAM

Manna's Hana is so grateful for the time and talents our volunteers share with the program that we would like to keep them with us forever. However, there are several reasons that a volunteer would be asked to leave the program.

They include:

- Violation of one of the policies included:
 - Violation of the confidentiality of rider records
 - Disrespecting a rider or attempting to discipline a rider or one of our horses
 - Violation of safety procedures
 - Absence from a shift without procuring a replacement or notification.
 - Presence at Manna's Hana under the influence of alcohol or an illegal substance.
- Conviction of a crime or being charged with sexual abuse
- Causing a conflict or arguing with an Instructor during a session
- Unauthorized use of Manna's Hana tack or horses

Should a volunteer be accused of one of the above offenses or face removal from the program for another reason, the volunteer shall receive written or verbal notice of termination. The volunteer may request a review hearing by a 3-person review committee from the Board of Directors. Otherwise, any professional Staff member, Instructor or the Herd Manager may remove a volunteer from the program pending a board committee review if requested.

PARKING

There is only one entrance to our property. When you enter the drive, park on the right side of the driveway in the grass.

PROGRAM GOALS

Manna's Hana offers developmental and age-appropriate horsemanship and equine assisted activities and therapies that also promote:

- physical
- social
- language
- emotional growth

Volunteers are encouraged to interact with the riders as a part of the program (as long as those conversations don't distract from directions from the Instructor.) However, it is important to remember that some riders have physical or emotional problems that require special handling. The Instructor will inform you of any special "do's and don'ts" regarding your rider prior to each session. For instance, the recent separation of parents or the death of a family member can have a profound effect on a young person with limited verbal skills. Knowledge of such a major life disruption becomes a proactive safety measure when 1200 pound horses are involved.

PERSONAL SPACE AND BEHAVIOR

It is critical that all volunteers respect the personal space and behavior of each rider. All volunteers who interact with riders are required to undergo criminal background checks mandated by federal statute for agencies who deal with vulnerable riders.

In addition, Manna's Hana has policies designed to protect both the riders and volunteers:

- At least two volunteers must be with any one rider at any given time---NO one-on-one time away from the group.
- All personal needs or situations such as toileting or clothes changes must be conducted by a parent/guardian or teaching assistant --NEVER a volunteer.
- Volunteers are NEVER allowed to discipline a rider. Only the Instructor may offer "guidance" to a rider whose behavior is becoming a safety issue.

Examples:

- The Instructor might tell the leader to bring a particular horse to the center of the arena to remove the potential disruption from the other horses.
- The Instructor might dismount the rider to allow the individual a moment to regain calm.
- Volunteers should proactively direct the Instructor's attention to potentially disruptive situations, but
- ONLY the Instructor should make decisions and take actions to guide a rider's behavior.

Safety

Horseback riding has an inherent quality of risk which Manna's Hana Riding Center addresses by:

- Selecting and training gentle horses handled only by our trained volunteer horse team.
- Prohibiting hand-feeding, giving treats or running anywhere on our facilities as well as running or shouting near sessions in progress
- Using quality, well-maintained tack that is inspected for any damage prior to and after every session, requiring ASTM/SEI equestrian helmets be worn by any participant, volunteer or staff on a horse and ALWAYS using safety stirrups on saddles.
- No dogs allowed unless they are a service dog to remain inside a vehicle...NEVER on the property -- even on leash.
- Providing an observation area for friends and family that is OUTSIDE the arena and requiring all children to be supervised while at Manna's Hana Riding Center.
- Banning smoking, and the use of alcohol or other controlled substances on our facilities.
- Encouraging feedback, questions and suggestions from riders and volunteers to address concerns before they become issues. Dress Code Appropriate dress is an important safety issue. Footwear and clothing will be exposed to mud, manure and other substances which will stain. Layers are recommended as the weather changes quickly and Manna's Hana does not have extra gloves, jackets, socks or boots.
- Closed toe footwear is required. Horses may accidentally step on your feet (No flip flops or ballet shoes allowed).
- No low cut shirts
- No short shorts

- Loose jewelry and perfume are also discouraged. Please do not forget that though our riders are dealing with physical, emotional and cognitive issues, most of our riders are of the age where they are learning to control physical changes taking place such as hormones. We, as staff and volunteers, need to commit to not adding to this challenge.

CLASSES / SESSIONS

Conducting the Session:

The Instructor

All sessions run under the control of the Instructor who is usually stationed in the center of the arena. Sessions are usually limited to four riders with up to three volunteers each. The Instructor's duties and responsibilities include:

- Preparing the Lesson Plan
- Making decisions regarding equipment and how to conduct the class
- Briefing volunteers prior to the session
- Giving all instructions to both volunteers and riders during the session.
- Matching the rider with the horse and tack and checking tack at least 3 times
- Mounting and dismounting all riders
- Assigning volunteers to horses and riders
- Taking charge of all emergency situations Granting the Instructor absolute authority during sessions insures the safety of everyone involved in the program.

Assisting in the Session:

The Volunteer

There are six distinct parts of a session from the volunteer perspective:

1. Grooming and Tacking/Arena Set Up
2. Opening Procedures
3. Leading
4. Sidewalking
5. Un-tacking
6. Closing Procedures

Note: This section of the manual deals with volunteer roles surrounding riding sessions. Medical attention for horses, exercising horses or feeding horses are covered separately.

Those jobs fall under the Program Coordinator, Barn Manager and Executive Director. If you are interested in volunteering in those areas, give your name to a staff member or Instructor.

If you have extensive experience with horses, you may have learned different methods of working with horses than Manna's Hana requires. We recognize the value of many other methods; however consistency in technique and procedures are very important both for our horses and the array of volunteers who serve their needs. We ask all volunteers to follow our "Manna's Hana Way" exactly when helping with our horses.

Opening Procedures

- Arrive 30 minutes before sessions.
- Sign in and put on nametag.
- Report to Instructor for briefing and assignments,
- Set up cones, barrels, ground poles or other equipment in the arena at the direction of the Instructor
- Turn on music if requested by the Instructor and help set up sound system
- Place games required for session in the arena.

Sidewalkers:

- Set up cones, barrels, ground poles or other equipment in the arena at the direction of the Instructor
- Turn on music if requested by the Instructor and help set up sound system
- Place games required for session in the arena.
- Assist Horse Leader in grooming horse

Horse Leader:

- Assist Instructors in bringing up horses
- Groom horse – checking for any injuries or sensitivities
- Inspect tack, Tack-up horse and safety tie to assigned area. Ready for session.
- Inform Instructor of any unusual behavior, mood changes or injuries to horse.

Note: In some cases, riders will be assigned to participate in the grooming and tacking process in order to address fine-motor skills and hand-eye coordination. In those cases, the Leader and generally one sidewalker will provide supervision to keep the rider safe while participating in grooming and tacking. Always stay between rider and rear of horse.

SIDE WALKING

The sidewalker is responsible for the safety of the rider, both on and off the horse. Horse skills are not required to perform this duty. BUT sidewalkers are in close contact with the horse at all times. If you are nervous about horses but would like to volunteer in this capacity, please talk with a staff member and they will show you the safest places to walk beside a horse.

The side walkers are to be ever present for their riders, but “invisible” to the horse. Our horses have a lot of input during a class, so as sidewalkers, you need to be aware of your effect on the horse and try to minimize it.

- Do not pet the horse while it is working
- Do not lean on the horse
- Do not pull on tack
- DO NOT nudge, poke, slap or touch the horse in any way to help cue it to trot or walk on. THIS IS A SAFETY ISSUE. The Instructor will give you assistance if necessary.

There may be two side walkers for each rider:

- **The Interactive Sidewalker**
 - Responsible in supporting the Instructor by reinforcing what is being taught by giving prompts & instructions AFTER the Instructor.
 - Responsible for pulling the rider off in an emergency dismount if requested by the Instructor
- **The Supportive Sidewalker**
 - Responsible for added physical support/presence
 - Responsible for rebounding and handling activity props during games
- NEVER release your hold on the rider unless instructed to do so by the Instructor!

You will develop relationships with your rider and fellow volunteers. We LOVE that! But please make sure that social time is before and after class so that your rider receives the full effect of the lesson.

Three things to avoid:

- Rider is not engaged and is ignored because conversation is happening between volunteers and not focused on their responsibilities - and rider!
- Rider does not hear instruction of what to be doing in class (as well as volunteers).
- Conversation/Chatter gets too loud for the Instructor to be heard throughout the arena, diminishing effectiveness of the class for the other riders.

General Duties - Prior To Mounting

- Arrive 30 minutes before class, check sign-in sheet, get name tag and check for assigned rider and duties. Help with arena set up if asked.
- Greet rider upon arrival. Take care of any concerns or questions prior to riding.
- Encourage family or caregivers to watch classes from porch or outside arena area.

Interactive Sidewalker – Mounting

- Responsible for rider safety on ground while in arena. Hold rider’s hand if appropriate and always stand between rider and rear of horse.
- Take rider up to Instructor for mounting the rider on the horse. You should walk on the open side of the ramp nearest the horse. If a wheelchair or other mobility aid is used take directions from the Instructor regarding your role.
- Once the rider is securely mounted, you move into position for a walk-on.

Supportive Sidewalker -- Mounting

- Stand on the off-side block to create an alley for the horse to enter for mounting.
- Assist from the block with the rider mount – face the horse's side, feet astride, hands raised in readiness to receive rider. Method and amount of assistance needed will vary with the rider.
- When rider is securely mounted, Instructor approves, both sidewalkers are in position and leader is ready, rider will give the "walk-on" command.
- Stay with your rider in the required hold as you go down the steps.

Interactive and Supportive Sidewalkers – Supporting Mounted Rider

- **Emergency Dismount**
 - Interactive sidewalker will do an emergency dismount of the rider in an emergency situation.
 - Hold safety belt or grab rider around chest or waist, attempting to protect the head as you pull the rider off and slightly backward.
 - A small child may be held, but a larger child or adult should be lowered to the ground.
 - Instructor will give further directions related to the situation
- **General Riding**
 - Keep the rider centered on the horse!
 - If shifting occurs, ask the rider to shift their weight. If they don't or are unable to do so, MAKE SURE THE INSTRUCTOR KNOWS and is able to guide in the procedure. Some riders are more fragile than others, so you do not want to cause harm. After instruction, the Instructor will tell you if you are allowed to help the rider adjust on your own.
 - Always use flat hands, no grabbing. Do not touch in the swimsuit areas.
 - Major corrections of rider position are done by the Instructor and may require a halt in the center of the arena, unless continued movement will cause the rider to come off the horse. Then you may stop on the rail to wait for the Instructor.
 - Cue to leader to whoa, if necessary to shift the rider.
 - Repositioning is most easily done using the hips or shoulders as control points.
 - The Instructor will provide guidance, as needed, in positioning riders.
- **Changing Sides**
 - This is to be done ONLY at a halt!
 - If either sidewalker needs to make a change, first alert the Instructor, then go to the center of the arena.
 - The sidewalker who calls for the change releases hold on the rider, walks in front of the horse then replaces the other sidewalker.
 - Once the changing sidewalker has a hold on the rider, the other sidewalker walks in front of the horse to the other side and takes hold.
 - Make sure a conversation is taking place so that the rider is securely held by at least one sidewalker at all times during the switch.
- **Games**
 - Sidewalkers should participate in games as directed by the Instructor.
 - If you have not been instructed to participate, it is imperative that you remain with your rider using the support hold required. Be creative and interact with the rider.
 - DO NOT reach for stray balls, beanbags or other objects unless the Instructor tells you to or they are about to injure your rider and you are in a position where you can continue to support your rider while deflecting the object.

Support Holds

Take cues from the Instructor for the required hold from the following list:

- **Spotter** - No physical touch required for rider.
 - Stay no further than 12-18 inches away from your rider's leg.
 - Do not fall behind or walk in front of your rider's leg because you will not be in position if sudden movement occurs.
 - It is imperative that you stay in position with your rider.
- **Ankle Hold** - used if the rider has better balance.
 - With "near" hand, cup the back of the rider's inside ankle/heel with no grip
 - Instructor may request "human stirrup" which requires the sidewalker to use the "far" hand under the forefoot to prevent foot drop.

- **Thigh Hold** – used to keep riders centered or on the horse
 - Place the “near” arm over rider’s thigh applying light pressure.
 - Hold surcingle handle or swell of saddle.
 - Do not hang on saddle or rider.
 - Do not dig elbow into rider or horse

There are many other “touch” points on the body to align posture or create a rider’s awareness of their position. The Instructor will apply these techniques or demonstrate their use on an as needed basis, but one of the most important jobs of the sidewalker is to keep the rider centered on the horse and to cue to leader, if necessary, to whoa, to shift the rider.

LEADING

Experience with horses is mandatory for volunteers selected as horse leaders. Training is required before a volunteer is assigned to perform this duty in a session to ensure consistency for the horses and riders.

Leading the Horse – General Principles

- Keep both hands on the lead rope. Position the “near hand” 12 to 24 inches from the snap while the “far” hand carries the folded rope. NEVER coil the lead rope around your hand! Never “walk” backwards when leading. You may face your horse at a halt.
- Walk beside the horse’s head, watching eye and ears for expressions of disposition
- Use voice, body language and pressure, in that order, to cue the horse;
- Do not let the horse crowd you with his feet, face or body or pass your shoulder;
- Inform the Instructor promptly if there is an issue with a horse.
- Follow any decision by the Instructor regarding how to proceed.

NEVER hit or jerk the lead rope of a Manna’s Hana horse to discipline them!!!!

Leading in a Class Setting – In the Arena

- Always handle the horse in a manner that creates a safe environment for your team of rider and sidewalkers.
- Never release the horse unless instructed to do so.
- Follow the direction of the Instructor regarding patterns, games, mounts and dismounts
- Leave a minimum of one elephant space between you and the horses in front of and behind you when walking.
- To create space between you and another horse, there are three options:
 1. **Circle** – make a large circle to the inside of the arena ending in an area that has enough space in front of and behind the horse you are leading.
 2. **Pass on the Inside** – if the horse in front of you is going at a slower pace, pass on the inside (leaving one horse width between the sidewalkers) and saying “passing on the inside” as you do so. Pass the slower horse until you have one horse length between you and then fall back into the pattern.
 3. **Halt** – perform a short halt to create additional space between you and the horse in front of you. This should only be performed if there is more than ample space behind you and won’t create a short space situation for a horse that’s following you.
- At halt, turn to face your horse, maintaining position by his head. Maintain 6 to 12 inches slack in the lead.
- ALWAYS WAIT for the rider to indicate they are ready to “walk on” - not all will verbalize it, but all can cue in their own way.
- If it is necessary to relax the horse, speak calmly, breathe deep and show the energy you want your horse to reflect. No touching is necessary.
- Stand on the side of the horse nearest games when they are being played so you can screen the horse from the action as needed.
- Halt to walk – Rider cues with “walk on”, then and only then begin walking.
- Walk to halt – Rider cues with “whoa!” and leader gradually slows walking speed to a halt.

Leading into Mounting Area

Note: The Instructor is responsible for checking that the rider is appropriately wearing an ASTM- SEI approved helmet and that other riding apparel is appropriate to the individual’s safety and particular health or structural issues.

- Instructor will check girth and stirrups before assisting rider to mount the horse
- Rider should be on the mounting ramp with the Instructor or a sidewalker.
- Leader will bring horse to mount area but halt approximately 10 feet from it.
- Leader waits until Instructor asks for the horse.
- Leader then SLOWLY leads the horse close to the ramp listening to Instructor positioning cues.

- Leader will then make sure the horse is square, facing the horse at the halt, but *not standing directly* in front of the horse's face. This is a safety issue for the leader and the horse cannot see the leader.
- Instructor will then assist rider on the horse.
- Leader will remain in position until Instructor will ask rider to give "walk on" and leader will move horse from mounting area.

During a session, if there is a need for a tack adjustment or the Instructor must focus on a particular rider, the Instructor will ask the rider, horse and volunteer team to come to the center of the arena. At this time, the leader will lead the rider to the center of the arena and have a halt. This will get the team out of the way of the other riders.

Possible Instructions from the Instructor:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| ● Walk On | ● Halt or Whoa | ● Half Halt |
| ● Change of Direction | ● Circle | ● Weave Cones/Poles |
| ● Come to Center | ● Back | ● Trot |
| ● Unclip Lead Rope | ● Emergency Halt | ● Emergency Dismount |

EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

Rider Falling

- If the rider is falling and cannot be supported, tell the leader "Rider Falling" and pull the rider off toward the back of the horse while attempting to protect the rider's head.
- EMERGENCY HALT! and move into halt position.
- All sidewalkers stay with your riders.
- DO NOT MOVE THE STUDENT.
- The Instructor will assess the situation before proceeding.

Rider Seizure

- You will be informed by the Instructor if your rider has a history of seizures.
- In the unlikely event of a rider having a Grand Mal seizure, call to the Instructor and pull the rider from the horse in the same manner as above. Horse Leader will remove the horse a safe distance away.
- Not all seizures look the same. Most seizures will not require being removed from the horse.
- Do NOT attempt to intervene during the seizure.
- EMERGENCY HALT!! All sidewalkers stay with your riders.
- The Instructor will assess the situation before proceeding.

Horse Spooks

- If a horse is startled but does nothing more than move its feet a bit, the sidewalkers need to tighten their hold on the rider and stay with the horse – attempting to keep the rider mounted unless the situation escalates.
- The leader will lead the horse in the direction of the spook, attempting to regain control of the animal by talking calmly and touching the horse's neck gently.
- DO NOT turn the horse's back to the object that caused the spook as it could stimulate the flight response and cause the horse to run.

Fire or Tornado Emergency

- Evacuate the arena and follow the Instructor to the MAIN HOUSE for a head count.
- Dismount riders first. Sidewalkers escort them out. Instructor decides about horses.
- Instructor will decide whether to remain in shelter or board cars to leave site.

Medical Emergency or Occurrence with Injury

- Alert the Instructor, give details and follow Instructor's direction
- If requested, Instructor will use their cell phone and call 911 – reading the directions on the arena on the wall.. Stay on the line with 911.

ACCIDENT/OCCURRENCE REPORT FORMS

Rider Incidents

In the case of an incident involving the fall of a rider from a horse or any mishap with a rider involving a bruise or cut, an Occurrence Report Form must be completed by the Instructor of the session involving that rider whether the session has ended or has not yet begun. Volunteers may be asked to provide additional information to aid in the completion of the form, but responsibility for completing the form lies with the Instructor.

Staff/Volunteer Incidents

In the case of an incident involving a volunteer or staff member, whether due to a horse-related event or a fall or accident, an Occurrence Report Form must be signed by the individual who was hurt. Another volunteer or an available Instructor may complete the form, but a completed form with the signature of the hurt individual is required unless that person is left unconscious or taken by ambulance from the property. Occurrence report forms are available in the office.

CLOSING PROCEDURES

Sidewalkers:

- Clear arena of games, cones and ground poles.
- Return all equipment to storage area neatly.
- Note any damaged equipment on the dry erase board on the tack room door.
- View the arena...Is equipment stowed away?

Horse Leaders:

- Remove and put away tack & grooming kits. Fork horse apples (manure) from arena.
- Groom horse – noting any injuries that might have occurred in the session
- Tell the horse what a great therapist he or she is!
- Check with the Instructor regarding where the horse needs to go:
 - If there is a session later that day, put the horse in its assigned stall.
 - If there is a session immediately following, clip the horse to the rail.
 - Scoop poop and sweep the tacking area of the barn
 - If yours is the last session of the day, put the horse in the stall to be fed.
- If yours is the last session of the day, turn off lights.
- Close all gates and make sure locks are fastened.

All Volunteers: Log hours in book before leaving and hang up your nametag.

Finally, THANK YOU!

Volunteers!!

Because of you, Manna's Hana Riding Center can offer individuals with physical, mental and emotional challenges life changing lessons that give them skills to use in the arena and out in the world.

We thank you for sharing your time and talents!

DESCRIPTION OF DISABILITIES: *(for your information)*

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

Autism/PDD (Pervasive Developmental Disorder) – A disorder of unknown origin in which the individual has difficulties with speech, social interaction and handling various sensory inputs.

Benefits: Riding may help by offering calm, positive social interaction, stimulation of speech and language skills.

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

1. **SPASTIC:** Occurs in approximately 70 percent of all cases. It may impact motor function in one or more of the limbs. The muscles stay flexed and tense, and the facial muscle involvement may affect speech.

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

2. **ATHETOID:** Occurs in approximately 20 percent of all cases. It manifests itself in slow, jerky, involuntary movements of the arms and/or legs. It appears more obvious during period of emotional tension. Speech functions are usually involved.

Benefits: Riding may improve balance, relaxation of muscles and posture.

3. **ATAXIC**: Occurs in approximately 10 percent of all cases. Weakness, poor coordination and difficulty with quick and fine motor movements result in loose, “rag-doll” appearance.

Benefits: Riding may help strengthen and tighten loose muscles, while improving balance, posture and fine motor skills.

Developmental or Cognitive Delays (DD) – A genetic defect where the individual develops at a below-normal rate in terms of intelligence. It may also involve physical and emotional development.

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

Down’s Syndrome – Also known as Trisomy 21, Trisomy G. It is one of the most widely identified hereditary disabilities. Individuals with Down’s Syndrome have a mean IQ of approximately 50, and are physically, mentally and developmentally delayed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Muscular Dystrophy (MD) – A hereditary disorder usually appearing in infancy or early childhood. It is characterized by progressive skeletal and muscle deterioration. There is no known cure for MD, which often reduces life expectancy.

Benefits: Riding may slow muscle tone degeneration and maintain muscle function. Riding provides appropriate opportunities for social interaction and alleviating emotional depression.

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) – A slowly progressive central nervous system disease usually occurring in adults between 20-40 years of age, and more frequently in women than men. Symptoms and manifestations include weakness in one or more limbs, visual impairment, minor gait disturbance, course of progression with periods of remission. There is no known cure for MS.

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

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

Benefits: Riding improves balance, posture, and muscle strength in the affected limbs.

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

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

Visually Impaired – Visual deficits may range from severely limited to total, and may be caused by congenital defect, traumatic illness or injury. If the onset of impairment is from birth to five years of age, the person affected has no visual memory. Impairments occurring after five years of age are accompanied by memories of people, places and things.

Benefits: Riding helps orient the body in space and improves balance, posture, coordination and self-awareness