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| Volunteer Manual and Procedures |
| Shady Hollow Assisted Riding |
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| **Updated: 2013** |

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| A Nonprofit 501 (C)3 Organization |

Dear Volunteer:

Welcome! Shady Hollow Assisted Riding is a nonprofit organization which provides horseback riding to individuals with special needs. We are a volunteer based program with few paid employees. Our volunteers are the backbone of our program, without you, we would not be able to offer recreational therapy to people with special needs. With your help, the program hopes to provide an environment in which the relationship between horse and rider can progress in physical, mental and emotional ways, build self-esteem, and inspire the rider to greater achievements.

Many individuals with special needs have never experienced the thrill, satisfaction, and challenge of being on horseback. Riding is not only a means of improving balance, coordination, endurance and strength, but also the horse can be an equalizer in an otherwise unequal world.

Individuals can become mobile, learn a degree of control over a responsive animal and grow in self-esteem. They can also feed, pet and learn to care for a horse, thereby creating a special bond between them and their mount.

With your assistance and commitment, this remarkable transformation can become a reality. You are a very special part of the organization. You can make these hopes and promises come true.

Thank you again for volunteering. We hope that your time with us is rewarding and fulfilling.

Sincerely,

The Staff of Shady Hollow Assisted Riding

**Volunteer Policies**

Volunteers must complete a SHAR Registration form. The information you provide helps the Volunteer Mentor assign you the most appropriate position.

Volunteers must review the volunteer procedure manual prior to assisting lessons. New volunteers must attend a training class regardless of horsemanship experience.

Volunteers must be at least 14 years of age.

The job of all volunteers is to facilitate a riding experience for the rider with special needs. Our program at Shady Hollow is more than just horseback riding, it’s an opportunity for social, emotional and physical outreach to individuals with special needs. Volunteers who fail to prioritize the rider at SHAR will be excused from the program at the discretion of the volunteer coordinator and/or staff.

Cell phones are to be left in the car or in the observation room during lessons. They are only to be used in case of emergency. At no time, should anyone be in the barn or participating in a lesson with a cell phone! Absolutely, no exceptions!

**Volunteer Responsibilities**

Who is a volunteer? Volunteers are the lifeblood of this organization. They assist in every phase of the program, from recruitment, fundraising, publicity, and of course assisting individuals in horseback riding. Volunteers assure the wellbeing and safety of the student rider. A volunteer’s knowledge, skills and experience are essential to a viable organization. Prepared, caring and responsible volunteers form an invincible team! Below you will find some suggestions for excellent volunteering:

1. Become a team member, adhere to organizational policies, and keep an open mind.
2. Be on time, come early and help. Barn maintenance is always appreciated.
3. Stay focused on our mission; to help the rider.
4. Be sensitive and understanding.
5. Attend Pre-/Post- lesson meetings.
6. Maintain safety; know emergency numbers, locate first aid kits, and exits.
7. Seek knowledge of disabilities.
8. Be a good example.
9. Be responsive and caring to the horses at all times.

**SHAR’S Commitment to You**

All volunteers will be provided with an onsite volunteer training program. Your safety is extremely important to us. Please ask questions and offer comments or suggestions. We will listen to you. If time is not available during a lesson, please contact the volunteer coordinator or the volunteer mentor. The coordinator or mentor will communicate any questions or concerns you might have. We do not take you for granted. We respect the confidentiality of your medical/health information as we do our clients.

**Your Commitment to SHAR**

Please keep your commitment to lessons for which you have been scheduled. We need each and every scheduled volunteer to maintain safety for our riders. When a volunteer does not show up for their assigned lesson, it puts a strain on everyone! Listen to the instructor and your mentor. Accept feedback from the instructor/mentor regarding your work, realizing that the goal is to offer the best riding experience possible to each client. Give us your best effort! Enthusiasm in what you do is a must put a smile on your face and good will in your heart. Enjoy your time on the farm and have fun!

**Confidentiality**

Please remember, all information that you hear is private. The information that is shared during lessons should stay within the team you are working with. This is a legal matter. There are penalties for unauthorized disclosure of medical and/or sensitive information.

**Dress Code**

1. Clothing should be professional and modest. There is no heat in the winter or air conditioning in the summer. Dress accordingly.
2. Shorts are permitted. However, they must be an appropriate length. No cut offs please or short shorts.
3. No low rise jeans or bare midriffs. No behinds or belly buttons in the barn please!
4. Volunteers dressed inappropriately will be sent home.
5. **SHOES**: flat bottom boots or shoes. No open toe shoes such as sandals or flip flops are allowed in the barn or arena area.

**Cancellation Policy:**

If lessons are cancelled for any reason, we will make every effort to notify you. We do not want to inconvenience you in any way. Our website is a great source of information. Check our online calendar regularly. www.hugahorse.com

If you know in advance that you are not able to attend your scheduled lesson, please notify the volunteer coordinator of your intended absence. A replacement volunteer will then be scheduled. If, however, a last minute conflict or emergency arises, please notify the barn within 24 hours (if possible) by calling the main SHAR number, 610-582-4050. They will notify the staff of your absence.

**Major Areas of Responsibility for our Volunteers:**

At times, one person may be asked to do more than one job within a lesson. We expect that you will be eager to learn to do many different jobs. We schedule volunteers to meet particular needs and we do count heavily on their services. If you are instructed by the Volunteer Mentor to do something that you are uncomfortable with or not sure how to do correctly, tell the Mentor so the task can be reassigned or another volunteer can be assigned to perform the task with you for training purposes. Responsibilities of volunteers working with therapeutic lessons fall into three general areas.

1. **Preparing the Horse and Putting the Horse Away**

The relationship with your horse starts with your initial contact in the barn. Firm and gentle treatment is the best way to gain your horses’ respect. Once you arrive at SHAR, your first responsibility is to find out what horses are needed and tack them up with the appropriate equipment. The schedule that lists the time and the horses that are needed is posted on the Tack Room Door. Getting the horses ready includes entering the horse’s stall, taking the horse out of the stall, grooming the horse and tacking up the horse.

A few horses will be used for more than one shift. Others may need to be readied for a following lesson upon direction of the instructor. Some of the horses will need to be taken back to their stalls at the end of a lesson.

When returning the horses to their stalls, be sure to remove all the tack and follow up with grooming. Once this is complete, please take direction from the Volunteer Mentor.

2. **Side Walkers**

A Side Walker walks alongside the horse to offer the rider support as needed but does not hold them on. Being a Side Walker is extremely important. This means that the instructor does not have to act as the Side Walker and can walk around the horse to work on the rider’s position.

The Side Walkers are present to assist the riders with support while riding, NOT to hold them on the horse. Depending upon the disability, the instructor will tell you which “hands on” method to use. When a very severely handicapped rider needs considerable support, the Side Walkers may need to change sides during the lesson. Many riders do not require “hands on” at the walk but may need assistance at the trot.

Your first reaction to the unexpected is to keep the rider on the horse. Conversation should be kept to a minimum and always for the benefit of the rider. You can encourage them to follow directions, but avoid aimless conversation with the other volunteers, the rider, or instructor during the lesson.

When the instructor gives a direction, allow your student plenty of time to process it. If the command is “turn right, toward me,” and the student is 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 are just not paying attention.

It’s Important to maintain a position by the rider’s knee. By going too far forward or back will make it very difficult to assist with instructions or provide security if the horse should trip or shy.

There are two ways to hold onto the rider without interfering. The most commonly used is the Arm-over-the-Thigh hold. Avoid wrapping an arm around the rider’s waist. If the instructor chooses to use a transfer belt on your rider, be very careful not to pull down or push-up on it.

3. **Leader**





Figure B is correct, Figure A is wrong!

You will lead the horse with a lead rope or “Y” lead that is attached to both sides of the bit in front of the reins. Always lead the horse standing from his left side, your right, with your hand under the horse’s chin. The left hand holds the excess lead. NEVER WRAP THE LEAD ROPE AROUND YOUR HAND.

Also it is important to keep the horses well apart, lined up facing the Observation Room when waiting for the rider to arrive. While waiting, the leader should stand slightly in front of the horse at a “stand still” facing the horse. The leader walks forward beside the horse’s head without pulling. Always maintain a distance of one horse length between your horse and other horses in the arena. Do not look back if he stops because most horses refuse to move if you stare at them. The leader is responsible for controlling the horses pace to the instructor’s direction.

If your horse does not easily adjust his pace to the one in front, the leader can slow down, circle or pass a horse accordingly. Sometimes the instructor will have the rider steer and control the horse, as much as he/she is able. When this happens, it is very important to follow the directions of the instructor and wait patiently for the rider to try each activity.

When outdoors, be ready for the horse to attempt to eat grass. To handle this, just keep his head up with the lead. Remember that the surroundings outside are very different from inside so be prepared for the horse to be more energetic and frisky.

If the worst happens, and there is an accident, stay with the horse. There are other people to care for the rider. The situation could easily become more dangerous if there are loose horses around the arena. Move your horse as far from the fallen student as possible and keep calm. Listen to the instructor.

If you are not confident or it you do not feel it is safe, DO NOT DO IT!

**The Stall:**

1. Entering a Stall:

We are visitors in the horse’s space. Be respectful when entering their home. Always approach the horses from the front where they can see you. As you approach the horse speak to them in a quiet voice. Never surprise the horse by running or shouting loudly. If you have to approach the horse from behind, talk to the horse and pat the horse lightly so that he knows you are coming. To enter & exist the stall be sure that the door is open all the way and to swing wide so the horses’ hips do not hit the door frame.

2. Taking a Horse Out of the Stall

When taking a horse out of the stall always use a halter and a lead rope. Keep a horse length between your horse and the horse in front of you. Crowding a horse may cause them to kick or bite. A Volunteer Mentor will be in the barn if there are any questions or if assistance is needed. Be sure to look up and down the aisle before exiting a stall.

3. Putting a Horse in the Stall

When putting a horse back into the stall, always use a halter and lead rope. When entering the stall make sure to walk ahead of the horse, turn the horse’s head to the stall door and remove the halter before leaving the stall. Again, a Volunteer Mentor will be present if assistance is needed.

4. Placing a Horse in Crossties

All horses are placed in the crossties facing the middle of the barn (the middle being the shower stall) at all times for grooming and tacking up. When attaching the crossties to the horse, always make sure to attach the snaps to the Halter not the Combo. When placing the Combo on the horse, slide the Halter from the horse’s head and place it on the horse’s neck. Leave the crossties attached to the Halter during this transition. Only remove the crossties once the Combo is completely secured.

5.Retrieving or Returning Horse to Paddock

Preferably, the Volunteer Mentor should retrieve or return a horse to the paddock. New volunteers should be accompanied by a returning volunteer or Mentor. Horses should be led with halter and lead rope. When returning the horse, proceed to the middle of the paddock and turn horse to face you. Remove halter when horse is standing at attention. Close all doors and gates and hook up electric fence before leaving paddock. Please return halters and lead rope to horses’ stall door. If you are uncomfortable performing this task, ask for help!

**Grooming**

Each horse shall be groomed before and after each lesson. The grooming items needed are located in the large wooden cabinet by the tack room. First use a curry comb in a circular motion to loosen the excess dirt. Then use a hard brush to clean and loosen dirt away by brushing in the direction of the hair.

Use a soft brush to give a shine to the coat removing all the dirt. Pay attention to your horse as you are grooming. Some horses are sensitive to hard brushing. When the horse’s body is clean use a hoof pick to clean the dirt out of the hooves. Set the hoof gently back to the ground when finished picking. Do not just drop the hoof. Please remember to watch for cuts, scrapes, or other sores and tell the Volunteer Mentor on duty if you see an injury. Remember to sweep the floor at the conclusion of grooming. If at any time you do not feel comfortable, please ask for help.

**Tools of Grooming**

 **Rubber Curry:** Usually shaped like an oval or circle, has soft rubber "teeth".

 **Dandy (Hard) Brush:** Stiff bristled brush.

 **Body (Soft) Brush:** Soft bristled brush usually made of horse hair.

 **Hoof Pick/Brush:** The hoof pick/brush combo can be found a most tack stores.

 **Mane Comb:** Plastic brush or wide tooth comb.



**1.** Start with the Rubber Curry. The rubber curry should be used in a circular motion to loosen dirt that has settled under the horse's hair. NOTE: be very careful and gentle around bony areas of your horse's body (such as his back or shoulders). Don't use a Rubber Curry on your horse's legs unless you can be extremely gentle with it. Never use a Curry or any stiff brush on your horse's face. It's too easy for your horse to injure his eye on the rubber curry or stiff bristled brush, and eye injuries are usually serious, needing immediate veterinarian attention.

**2.** Next, use the Hard Brush. The motion for this brush is like the same motion you would use when sweeping a floor. You 'flick' the brush away and up from the coat so that the dirt comes off of his coat. Unless your horse is already extremely clean, you should see a slight cloud of dust with each stroke. If you don't, you need more "flicking" action with this brush. If you don't use this "flicking" motion, the dirt will just get pushed back under the hair, potentially causing irritation to the horse.

**3.** Then, you use the Soft Brush. The soft brush is meant to smooth down the hair and to get rid of any traces of left-over dirt after you have thoroughly used the Hard Brush. With the Soft Brush, you do not use a 'flicking' motion; instead, you smooth it flat over the horse's coat to flatten the hair. This brush often gives the horse a shiny, clean appearance (but only when the brushes are used in this order!)

**4.** Next, use the Mane Comb to gently comb the horse's mane.

**5.** Now, on to the feet! You should first have the Volunteer Mentor or Instructor show you how to pick up a horse's feet. Usually, this can be done by running your hand down your horse's leg, then gently squeezing his fetlock (ankle). Be sure not to pick up the horse's foot too high, or he might lose balance. When you use the hoof pick, always scrape away from you, just as you would if you were using a carrot peeler. You don't want to accidently injure yourself or your horse if he suddenly moves or pulls his foot away. It is important to thoroughly clean out the hollow areas on both sides of the frog, and around the sole of the foot.

6. Clean all grooming tools before returning to box. Remove any hair or dirt from brushes and combs.

**SHAR STANDARD PROCEDURES**

In the event of an emergency, the Most Senior Staff Member is responsible for all directions. During a lesson, all leaders must stop horses. Leaders assume halt position in front of the horse, and side-walkers assume positions on the rider.

**Things to keep in mind**

It is most important for NECESSARY COMMUNICATION with all people who are working in the emergency situation.

Stay calm and eliminate unnecessary talking.

If a horse suddenly pulls backwards, DO NOT pull against him, instead, slowly and calmly follow the movement of the horse until he stops.

In an EMERGENCY, the instructor must stay with the rider.

**The instructor with injured rider should stay at the scene until help arrives. The volunteer will go for help.**

Always be prepared.

If a rider becomes unbalanced, the leader stops the horse; side-walkers try to keep rider in the saddle by stabilizing the rider with arm-locks over the rider’s thighs.

**If a rider must be removed from the horse.**

The instructor will notify the rider, leader, and side-walkers that an Emergency dismount will take place.

Leader shall attempt to stop the horse, side-walkers shall remove the rider’s feet out of stirrups and an instructor will dismount the rider to the ground quickly and quietly. The instructor shall tell the offside (right side) side-walker “Let go, I have the rider.”

If the horse will not stand quietly, the instructor shall hug the rider around the waist from side and slide the rider off and away from the horse.

Leader shall remove horse from area of rider.

**If a rider falls from the horse**

The side-walker on the side closest to where the rider is falling shall try to soften the rider’s fall. Leader shall halt the horse and very carefully move the horse away from the fallen rider.

**Trail Rides**

All instructors when going on a trail ride are required to have a leader or side walker present. All instructors are required to take a communication devise, such as a cell phone and an extra halter with lead rope.

**Fire Policy**

All lessons shall stop. Riders dismount and exit the Indoor Arena with their horses through the main gate. All riders on property shall dismount and meet in the Outdoor Arena. The Most Senior Staff Member is responsible for all directions in the Outdoor Arena. All riders, parents, volunteers, and guests shall exit the barn and meet at the Outdoor Arena

The Most Senior Staff member is responsible for all directions in the barn. Volunteer Mentors will begin evacuating horses when all participants are out of the barn. Lead horses through the nearest door beginning with horses closest to the fire to the nearest paddock or field. Frightened horses may not want to leave their stalls. Talk to them in a reassuring tone of voice, it may be necessary to cover their eyes with a towel. If a horse is unmanageable or refuses to leave its stall, leave the door open and move to the next horse. Be prepared that a horse may try to run back to the barn once outside.

**Severe Thunderstorm or Loss of Electricity**

All lessons in Indoor Arena shall stop; riders dismount, and return horses to their stalls. All riders outside on property shall dismount and return horses to their stalls. If time does not permit, un-tack horses and turn out in the Indoor Arena. The Most Senior Staff Member is responsible for all directions. All office personnel, instructors, riders, parents, volunteers, and guests, shall proceed to the Observation Room or Office. The Most Senior Staff member is responsible for all directions in the barn, if the horses are outside, leave horses in pasture.

**EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

**A) Person sent by instructor to call for help:**

1. Call 911, phone in Observation Room, in barn by back door, or grab a cell phone!

2. Stay calm

3. Tell the Operator

a. Your name

b. The location and directions:

**Shady Hollow Assisted Riding**

**959 E Main St.**

**Birdsboro, PA 19508**

**(Rt. 724 across from Birdsboro Cemetery)**

c. Phone Number: **610-582-4050**

d. State what happened.

e. State the injured person(s) condition

 f. Describe help being given.

4. Inform Michele Cooper, Rosemary and Tony Giangiacomo

**B) Person(s) sent by instructor to wait for EMS:**

1. Open all gates to location of injured person(s) if necessary

2. Go to the top of the driveway to wait

 4. Explain to EMS the exact location of injured person(s)

 5. Ask the EMS to shut off lights and sirens so as not to frighten horse.

**C) Person(s) sent by instructor to obtain necessary supplies:**

1. Obtain the First Aid Kit from the white cabinet in the Observation Room.

2. Locate the parent/guardian of injured person(s).

3. Follow additional instructions by instructor only.

**Some Tips, Suggestions and Thoughts**

Horses are friendly and inquisitive animals.

Horses are like humans, they have good days and bad days.

Treat them with confidence, firmness and friendship.

Be calm and quiet around horses.

Approach a horse calmly, talking quietly, especially if you must approach from the rear.

When frightened they may try to pull away and run

When moving from one side of the horse to the other, walk around the front whenever possible.

Insist that riders always walk In front of horse.

If you must walk around the back, keep hand on horse’s rump and talk to him. If you are in doubt of his temperament, walk well out of kicking range.

Horses are creatures of habit.

They are suspicious of anything new, unusual, and different.

If he shies, he is alarmed at something. Try to calm him by talking to him and stroking him. Hold

onto the lead rope.

Horses are herding animals.

A loose horse tends to run into a group.

Keep tight hold of your mount, if a loose horse is present.

To catch a loose horse; wait until he is standing still, approach him slowly, openly, with hands outstretched, talking soothingly. Do not chase him. Slowly put lead rope around his neck.

Never tie a horse by his bridle or reins. He may injure his mouth or break the bridle. Put halter over bridle, tie horse with a lead rope with a quick-release or safety knot.

When leading a horse, keep his head just ahead of you, so you can observe his expression.

Hold the lead rope 6 inches from the bit, with the end folded in your other hand. For your own safety, never wrap the lead around your hand or body.

When leading through doorways, give them more lead or rein. Stop horse at doorway, then you go through first, let him follow you.