

# Welcome to Ready Set Ride!

## About Ready Set Ride

Since 2001, Ready Set Ride Therapeutic Recreation Facility has been assisting special needs and terminally ill children by providing horseback riding services. Students as young as three years of age come from all over the Chicagoland area. It is the goal of Ready Set Ride to assist these children in achieving the highest quality of life possible through the use of horses and individualized activities focused on the needs of the student. Parents are always welcome and encouraged to participate in therapy sessions. Volunteers are also an integral part of the therapy sessions at Ready Set Ride.



Following the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH) guidelines, Ready Set Ride bases its program on developmental techniques utilizing the horses as a means of mobility for the children. Certified riding instructors guide the students and closely monitor individual needs to encourage consistent improvement. Therapy is conducted in the form of games on horseback with incorporated physical, speech, occupational, developmental and recreational therapy.

Ready Set Ride is a 501(C)(3) non-profit charitable organization that operates mostly on donations, and is governed by an all volunteer board of directors.

## About PATH

The Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH), originally known as the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA), was founded in 1969 with the purpose of promoting “safe and effective therapeutic riding throughout the United States and Canada” ([www.pathintl.org](http://www.pathintl.org)). PATH has developed guidelines for use in Equine Assisted Activities and Therapies (EAAT), and offers accreditation, instruction certification, and networking. Ready Set Ride follows the guidelines set by PATH.

## **Benefits of Therapeutic Horseback Riding**

Ready Set Ride works with children with a variety of special needs. Some examples of special needs that benefit from riding include:

- Autism
- Cerebral palsy
- Attention deficit disorder
- Post traumatic brain injury
- Neuromuscular disorders
- Cognitive limitations
- Emotional disabilities

The horse's movement aids in providing physical conditioning such as:

- Strengthening muscles
- Improving muscle coordination and motor skills
- Improving balance and posture
- Increasing endurance

Socially and emotionally, therapeutic riding improves:

- Self-esteem
- Self-confidence
- Communication and social skills
- Relationship building
- Overcoming fear and anxiety

Cognitively, riding a horse is a strong motivator for riders to work on:

- Following multi-step directions
- Staying on task
- Counting, colors, letters, etc.

# Volunteering at Ready Set Ride

Ready Set Ride would not survive without the dedication of our volunteers. Volunteers are an integral part of lessons, horse care, and barn maintenance. Your time and support are greatly appreciated!

## Volunteer Requirements

1. **Due to insurance regulations, all volunteers working with the horses must be at least 14 years of age.** Volunteers under the age of 14 may be allowed to help with barn chores at the discretion of the Barn Manager and Volunteer Coordinator.
2. A volunteer form and waiver can be printed from our website. ([www.readysetride.org/volunteer](http://www.readysetride.org/volunteer)) **These forms must be completed and turned in before anyone is allowed to participate.**
3. Volunteers must be able to commit to a weekly shift of at least 3 hours for an entire 7-week session.
4. Training classes will be provided throughout the year for new and old volunteers to attend.
5. Volunteering will involve moderate physical activity including walking in sand for up to 2 hours, jogging occasionally, keeping your arm lifted for up to an hour at a time, lifting up to 50 pounds, bending, and reaching. Volunteers must be physically fit enough to handle these demands.
6. Volunteers must be able to work outside in varying weather conditions.
7. Volunteers must be able to work independently with minimal supervision.
8. Volunteers must have a positive attitude and be able to adapt to change.
9. Ready Set Ride reserves the right to make the final determination as to the appropriateness of volunteers in certain roles.

## Qualities of a RSR Volunteer

- Consistent
- Reliable
- Flexible
- Empathetic
- Punctual
- Patient
- Common sense
- Alert
- Physically fit
- Positive Attitude

## Volunteer Opportunities and Job Descriptions

**Session Volunteers:** Volunteers assist by leading horses or walking beside riders (sidewalking) during lessons. Session Volunteers must be able to walk for an hour on uneven surfaces, jog short distances, be able to hold their arm above shoulder height and support a modest amount of weight. Volunteers can also assist with other barn chores and jobs that help the sessions run smoothly.

- **Sidewalkers** walk beside the horse in lessons and provide physical and/or emotional support to the rider. They help the rider to successfully reach their lesson goals, as well as ensure rider safety before, during and after the lesson.
- **Horse Leaders** ensure that each horse is groomed, tacked and warmed up prior to the start of each lesson. They help ensure the safety of horse and rider before, during, and after the lesson. Leaders also help with un-tacking and grooming horses after the lesson. In order to become a Horse Leader, a volunteer must **FIRST** go through sidewalking training and be a sidewalker for a number of sessions. Horse Leaders must possess a basic understanding of horse behavior and demonstrate horse handling skills and the ability to assess and address horse behavior. **Prior to leading horses in client sessions, volunteers with this prerequisite knowledge must attend and pass mandatory horse leader training.** These training sessions are available throughout the year.

**Barn Volunteers:** Volunteers work directly with barn staff to assist with horse care, grooming, feeding, cleaning stalls and paddocks, etc. These volunteers are essential for the care and safety of our very important horses. Prior to handling horses, volunteers must attend one of the training sessions. These training sessions are available throughout the year. This role is recommended for those with no experience to help gain comfort around the horses and facility.

**Facility Volunteers:** Volunteers help with gardening, general maintenance, repairs, and improvements to the facility.

**Special Events Volunteers:** Volunteers serve on event committees and assist with various fundraising events held throughout the year at RSR.

**Special Skills Volunteers:** Many volunteers come with special skills and talents such as photography, newsletter writing, computer knowledge, grant writing, etc. and we encourage you to share those skills with us.

# General Volunteer Procedures

## Volunteer Training

All volunteers must attend training before volunteering. This training may be “on the job”, led by the Barn Manager or an experienced volunteer designated by the Barn Manager or a formal training session. It is highly recommended that all new volunteers attend a formal training class when available.

Before the beginning of the spring session, several training classes will be held for Session Volunteers. All new Session Volunteers can attend the sidewalker training. All returning volunteers will be able to attend a refresher training. Any returning volunteers who have not worked as a leader, must attend a leader training if they would like to lead. Additional training classes will be held throughout the year, as needed for new volunteers.

## Communication and Questions

If at any time, you are unclear regarding your role or responsibilities as a volunteer, please direct questions to the Volunteer Coordinator, Barn Manager, or an Instructor. During lessons, the Instructor is responsible for each rider, horse and volunteer in the lesson. All directions from the Instructor should be followed including the assignment of riders, horses and volunteers, mounts/dismounts and lesson structure. For the safety of all, it is crucial to adhere to the Instructor’s directions. Most of these activities will be self-directed, volunteers are expected to take initiative. Always ask if you are unsure of anything or do not feel comfortable completing a task.

## Physical Considerations

Some volunteer roles such as leading, side walking and assisting in the barn can be physically demanding. It is important that you inform an Instructor, Volunteer Coordinator, or Barn Manager if you have a condition that may prevent you from lifting or working a full hour in the arena at a walk or jog. Other volunteer roles are needed if you feel that being a session or barn volunteer may be too physically demanding.

## Confidentiality Policy

Any information in regards to the participants of Ready Set Ride including riders and volunteers shall remain confidential. This information may include but is not limited to any medical, social, referral, personal, and/or financial information. Information concerning riders will be shared with volunteers on a need to know basis. Disclosure of any confidential information shall not be released to anyone not associated with Ready Set Ride. Volunteers must seek staff permission prior to taking any pictures or videos.

## Conduct and Behavior

Volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a cooperative and professional manner at all times. Examples of inappropriate behavior include: any form of harassment, aggressive or abusive behavior toward self, others, and horses. Please notify staff immediately if you are subject to any inappropriate behavior. Individuals exhibiting inappropriate behavior will be requested to leave the property immediately; additional assistance may be called if deemed needed. **Inappropriate behavior may result in dismissal from the program.** The horse’s behavior is also crucial to optimal function of RSR. Please notify staff immediately of any concerns regarding the behavior of horses. This can include biting, kicking, etc. We want a high level of professionalism upheld at all times. We work hard, therefore when time is appropriate we can play hard.

## Volunteer Commitment and Attendance

All volunteers are expected to commit to a regular volunteer time. While lessons are in session (April through October), Session Volunteers are asked to make a 3-hour commitment (same day, same time) per week for a 7-week session. There are 3 sessions, spring, summer, and fall. At the end of each 7-week session, volunteers may change their time.

Proper care of the horses is essential to our program. Barn volunteers are needed to clean stalls, and feed and turn out the horses two times each day. To assure the horses receive proper care, Barn Volunteers are needed throughout the year to help with stall cleaning in the morning, and lunch feedings.

## Reporting Absences

The riders and/or the horses are counting on you to be at the barn for your shift. All volunteers are expected to report any absences directly to the Volunteer Coordinator, Barn Manager, or Instructor. Reporting absences as soon as possible helps us to arrange for coverage of your shift. When possible, please provide at least 2 days notice of your absence in person by calling the Barn Phone number and leaving a message or sending a text through the Remind App. For last minute absences, you must speak with either the Volunteer Coordinator or Instructor.

Any absence that is not properly reported will be considered unexcused. After the first unexcused absence, the Volunteer Coordinator will remind the volunteer on the absence procedure. **A second unexcused absence will result in the volunteer's removal from our volunteer program.**

## Contact Information

**RSR Barn Phone Number: (815) 439-3659**

**Remind: @rsrvol (E-mail [volunteer@readysetrideride.org](mailto:volunteer@readysetrideride.org) for further instructions on signing up)**

## What to Wear and Bring

Volunteers should dress appropriately for cleaning, walking, and jogging, working with horses, and being around children.

- **Comfortable, sturdy-walking shoes, and closed toe with a back. Boots are recommended. Flip-flops, sandals, mules, or clogs are NOT ALLOWED.**
- Clothing with inappropriate or offensive language or pictures are not allowed.
- Dress appropriately. Dressing in layers is recommended during the cold season.
- Bring a jacket, even if you think it will be warm when you arrive. The weather can change quickly.
- Clothing should be close fitting. Baggy clothes can get caught or tangled with equipment.
- Long pants are recommended, but shorts of a reasonable length are allowed.
- T-shirts, sweatshirts, thermal shirts, etc. are recommended. Avoid tube tops or cropped shirts.
- Avoid dangly earrings, bracelets, or necklaces that can hamper movement, get pulled off by a rider, or distract the horses.
- Avoid perfume or scented lotions that may attract bugs or bother sensitive riders

### ***Other items you may want with you at the barn:***

- Something to drink. Generally, there is water at the barn, but it's a good idea to bring your own just in case.
- A small snack. If you are working a longer shift, you may bring a snack. You are asked to avoid eating in front of riders. You may step outside the barn to eat or if you are not scheduled to lead or sidewalk during a lesson.
- Sunglasses can be worn and sunscreen is recommended on sunny days.

**Turn your cell phone on silent, leave it at home or in your car. Even on vibrate, it can distract you, the rider, or the horse.**

## **Tracking Volunteer Hours**

Each volunteer has a file with a time sheet. Record your hours each time you work at the barn or help with a special event. By keeping your hours up to date, it will be easy for the Volunteer Coordinator to sign off on hours for school, church, work, etc.

## **Reassignment and Dismissal of Volunteers**

Due to the extreme importance of the safety and well-being of our riders, volunteers, guests, and horses, there may be occasions when a volunteer must be dismissed from the volunteer program.

Examples of situations where a volunteer may be dismissed include:

- Threatening the safety of others
- Disruptive or abusive behavior toward people, horses, or other barn animals
- Non-compliance with RSR policies, including unexcused absences
- Failure to properly follow established safety procedures
- Possession of a weapon
- Being under the influence of or possession of alcohol or drugs
- Use of tobacco products on RSR property
- Acting or speaking inappropriately or dangerously

Safety and respect for riders, participants, volunteers and horses are of utmost importance in order to provide and maintain a high-quality program, and are the primary reasons for the strict adherence to these policies and procedures. Volunteers who are not able to perform their volunteer role, or maintain a reasonable level of commitment, or fail to observe the policies and procedures of the program will be given an opportunity to discuss the situation that is perceived to be in violation of the RSR policies and may be provided with job re-assignment. Because of the nature of the service provided, RSR reserves the right to make the final determination as to the appropriateness of volunteers for our organization and may determine that it is in the best interest of the program to terminate a volunteer's involvement with the program.

# Understanding and Working with Special Needs Riders

## General Approach and Interaction

Please remember that every person, child or adult, with special needs or not, is an individual and wants to be treated as such. Each has his own learning rate, style of learning, unique personality, and temperament. See the person beyond the disability, aiming to provide a warm and favorable environment in which to learn and grow. With or without special needs, most people want to feel they are not different from their peers or others around them.

## Relating to Individuals with Special Needs

Being around someone with special needs may be a new experience for some volunteers. It may take some time to become comfortable working with people with special needs. Please take the time to get to know your rider. 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. Most importantly, please treat each person with respect, being considerate and sensitive to their needs.

Here are some suggestions to create a positive relationship with a rider:

- Be yourself and relax
- Explore mutual interests in a friendly way. For starters, talk about the horse, the barn, whether the rider had ridden before, if so which horse(s).
- Talk about topics you would discuss with any new acquaintance such as school, movies, TV shows, sports, foods, the weather and other things most people are interested in.
- When talking to the rider or the parent/caregiver near the rider, speak directly to the rider or include him or her in the conversation. The rider may not be able to speak or appear to be listening, but he or she will appreciate the consideration.
- Offer assistance when asked or when the situation obviously requires it. Avoid helping when the person is managing alone. To increase physical ability, effort is necessary.
- Be considerate of the extra time it might take someone to accomplish or respond to something. Be patient.
- When speaking about a rider, it may not even be relevant to mention his or her disability, but when it is make it a habit to mention the person first and the disability second. For example, rather than saying “she’s an autistic child” say “she is a person with autism”.
- Please respect the privacy and confidentiality of our clients and their families

## 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.

## 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 participants are non-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).

## GLOSSARY OF PHYSICAL AND COGNITIVE DISABILITIES

The following are brief, non-medical descriptions of some disabilities and conditions of participants one might encounter in a therapeutic riding setting. This is not intended as a comprehensive explanation of a specific disability. Rather it is a general overview with an explanation of how therapeutic riding can be beneficial.

**Arthritis:** Inflammatory disease of the joints. Types: Osteo, rheumatoid and juvenile rheumatoid. Characteristics: Pain; lack of mobility; loss of strength. Benefits of therapeutic riding: Gentle rhythmic movements to promote joint mobility and to relieve pain; increase strength.

**Autism & Pervasive Development Disorder (PDD):** A broad spectrum of disorders ranging from mild to severe, which affects thought, perceptions and attention. Characteristics: Impairments in social interaction and communication; restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior, interests and activities; impairments in the use of nonverbal behaviors such as eye to eye gaze and facial expressions; lack of social or emotional reciprocity; delays in, or lack of the development of spoken language; impairments in ability to initiate or sustain conversations with others; abnormal responses to senses such as sight, hearing, touch, balance, smell, taste, reaction to pain; deficits in gross and fine motor skills. Benefits: Provides sensory input and promotes sensory integration. Promotes communication skills (expressive and receptive). Develops strength, coordination, muscle tone and gross and fine motor skills. Promotes socialization.

**Cerebral Palsy:** Brain damage occurring before, at or shortly after birth. It is a non-progressive motor disorder. Types and characteristics: Spastic: increased muscle tone, muscle imbalances and equilibrium. Increased startle reflex and other pathological reflexes. Athetoid: Extensor muscle tension, involuntary movements, difficulty maintaining upright posture. Ataxic: weakened muscles, poor balance, difficulty with quick, fine movements. Benefits: Normalization of muscle tone, muscle strengthening, development of posture, balance and motor coordination, opportunity for promoting expressive skills, socialization and confidence.

**Cerebral Vascular Accident (CVA) – Stroke:** Brain hemorrhage or brain emboli, which causes varying degrees of functional impairment. Characteristics: Flaccid or spastic paralysis of arm and leg on same side of the body. May impair thought, speech, sight, balance, coordination and strength. Benefits: Promotes symmetry, stimulates balance, posture, motor planning, speech, socialization and confidence.

**Developmental Disabilities (DD):** A diverse group of physical, cognitive, psychological, sensory and speech impairments that begin anytime during development up to 18 years of age. Characteristics: Varied, but can include processing delays, and delays in physical, motor and social development. Benefits: Increase confidence and self-esteem, stimulates processing, speech and body awareness, provides opportunity for sport and recreation, promotes socialization.

**Down Syndrome:** A genetic disorder in which a person is born with an extra chromosome (chromosome 21). Characteristics: Mild to severe learning disabilities, low muscle tone, speech impairments. Benefits: Promotes expressive and receptive language skills. Increases gross and fine motor skills, balance, coordination, posture and muscle tone. Promotes social skills. Increases confidence and self-esteem.

**Emotional Disabilities:** Social, emotional or behavioral functioning which is not age appropriate and affects a child's academics, social relationships and self-care. Characteristics: Difficulty coping with everyday life situations and interpersonal relations, inappropriate affect or behavior responses, depression, anxiety, physical symptoms, difficulty learning, withdrawal, and aggressiveness. Benefits: Increase confidence and self-esteem, provide opportunities for accomplishments, promotes positive socialization.

**Hearing Impairment:** Congenital or acquired hearing loss varying from mild to profound. Characteristics: Difficulties in communication or communication through sign language, lip reading or finger spelling. Benefits: Increases confidence,

self-esteem and sense of accomplishment. Provides recreational activity with opportunity for socialization. Stimulates balance, posture and coordination.

**Learning Disabilities:** Neurological disorders that interfere with a person's ability to store, process, or produce information. Characteristics: Difficulties with reading, writing, speech, computing math. May affect development and social skills. Benefits: Promotes processing, language skills and attending skills, increases confidence and self-esteem, provides opportunity for success, increases balance, coordination and posture, provides opportunity for socialization.

**Mental Impairment or Mental Retardation (MR):** A disorder in which a person's overall intellectual functioning is below average with an IQ of 70 or less. Impaired ability to cope with common life demands and daily living skills. Characteristics: Impairments in learning, communication, social interaction, self-care. Benefits: Increases balance, coordination, strength and posture, improves gross and fine motor skills, promotes socialization, increases confidence, reinforces life and vocational skills.

**Multiple Sclerosis (MS):** Progressive neurological disease with degeneration of spinal column tracts, resulting in scar formation. Characteristics: Most commonly occurs in the 20 to 40 year old range. It is progressive with periods of exacerbation and remissions. Symptoms include weakness, visual impairment, fatigue, loss of coordination and emotional sensitivity. Benefits: Maintains and strengthens weak muscles, maintains balance, increases confidence and self-esteem.

**Muscular Dystrophy (MD):** Deficiency in muscle nutrition with degeneration of skeletal muscle. Hereditary disease that mainly affects males. Characteristics: Progressive muscular weakness, fatigues easily, sensitive to temperature extremes. Benefits: Provides opportunity for recreational, physical, and social activity. May help slow progressive loss of strength, stimulates postural and trunk alignment, allows for movement free of assistive devices.

**Scoliosis:** Lateral curve of the spine with a C or S shape with rotary component. Characteristics: Shoulder, trunk and waistline asymmetry. May have back pain and postural fatigue. Benefits: Stimulates postural symmetry, strengthens trunk muscles.

**Spina Bifida:** Congenital failure of vertebral arch closure which results in spinal cord damage. Characteristics: Varying degrees of paralysis of the lower limbs coupled with sensory loss. May also be associated with hydrocephalus, lordosis, scoliosis and hip dislocations. Benefits: Stimulates posture and balance, increases strength, balance and coordination, promotes confidence and self-esteem.

**Spinal Cord Injury (SCI):** Trauma to the spinal cord resulting in a loss of neurological function. Characteristic: Paralysis of muscles below the level of injury – can be flaccid or spastic. Fatigue, sensory loss and pressure sores. Benefits: Stimulates posture and balance, strengthens trunk muscles, provides opportunity for recreational and social activity.

**Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI):** Accidental injury to the head resulting in impairment of cognitive, emotional and/or physical functioning. Characteristics: May include deficits in gross and fine motor skills, balance, coordination and strength. May have deficits in language, communication, processing, memory and perceptual skills. Benefits: Stimulates balance, posture, coordination, and gross and fine motor skills. Stimulates speech and perceptual skills. Increases confidence.

**Visual Impairment -Moderate to Total Loss of Sight.** Characteristics: May include insecure posture, lack of visual memory, anterior center of gravity and fearfulness. Benefits: Stimulates spatial awareness, proprioception, posture, balance and coordination. Provides opportunity for socialization, structured risk-taking and freedom of movement.

# Understanding and Working with Horses

## RSR's Horses

We would not have a program if it were not for our amazing horses. The horse is perhaps the most important part of our therapeutic riding program. The horses at RSR come from a variety of backgrounds. Some of their careers have been as dressage horses, trail horses, and western pleasure horses. Each has his or her own unique personality and needs.

When selecting, and training the horses used in our program, many factors are considered. Horses must meet basic criteria including – possessing an exceptional level of tolerance, be gentle and well mannered, in good general health, and offer sound rhythmic movement, as this is a key benefit of therapeutic riding.

Horses that meet the criteria are accepted on a trial basis, placed on a training program to introduce them to their role in the program and the activities they will be exposed to. Mock sessions are conducted prior to having “real” riders on the horses.

RSR horses receive the very best of care. Each horse is on a schedule to assure good overall health including -- veterinarian care, hoof care, tooth care and a de-worming program.

Volunteers play a critical role in preparing horses for sessions and assisting with their daily care, so it is important for them to understand equine behavior, senses, and body language.

## Equine Behaviors

In order to understand horses and learn to communicate with them, you must understand they are herd and prey animals. Most of their behaviors stem from these two facts.

As herd animals, they need the companionship of other horses, animals, or people. They tend to copy other horse's actions. There is a hierarchy among horses and they use body language to establish their place in the herd. They can be easily dominated by a human, if the human uses the correct body language. With the wrong body language, a horse may try to dominate a human.

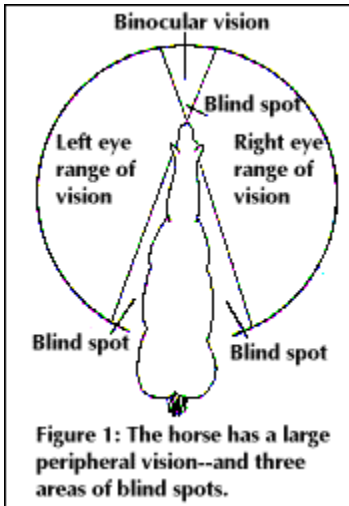
As prey animals, their first instinct is to flee a new or uncertain situation. Horses stay aware of their environment at all times to avoid prey. They are sensitive to new things, sudden movements, flashes of lights, or loud or unusual noises. In fact, their senses and reactions are much keener than humans.

## Equine Senses

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.

**HEARING:** The horse's sense of hearing is 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 fight/flight response.** When working with horses, note the position of the horse's ears. Forward ears communicate attentiveness and interest. Drooping ears indicate relaxation, inattentiveness (easily startled), exhaustion or illness. Flattened ears indicate anger, threat or fear. Ears flicking back and forth indicate attentiveness or interest. If your horse is acting nervous, talk to him in a quiet, calm and reassuring voice. Watch your horse's ears for increased communication.

**SIGHT:** Horses' eyes are geared to finding danger. They don't have very accurate vision close up, but they can detect tiny movement at a distance. The horse's eyes are set on either side of the head; there is a good peripheral (lateral) vision, but poorer frontal vision. The lens of the horse's eye doesn't change shape as humans do. Instead, a horse focuses on objects by changing their head position and raising and lowering its head. The horse's visual memory is very accurate. Horses are thought to see quite well in the dark, due to the large size of their eyes. There is still controversy as to whether or not horses see in color. The horse may notice if something in the arena or out on a trail 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 rein, 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, talking to the horse as you approach.** It may startle him if you approach from behind or directly in front. The horse may be unable to see around the mouth area, which is a safety consideration when hand feeding.



Having widely-spaced eyes means that the horse's field of peripheral vision is very large (Fig. 1), but it also limits his field of binocular vision (i.e., where he sees with both eyes at once) to a small area directly in front of him. Binocular vision is essential to accurately judge distance and depth. Therefore, most of the things a horse sees are only one-dimensional - and it is difficult for him to know exactly where they are. In terms of the horse's survival, it really doesn't matter - all he has to do is run the other way. But it does mean that horses will often "overreact" to little things behind and beside them.

**TOUCH:** The horse's sense of touch is very sensitive. They can detect very light touch or pressure. Each horse has sensitive areas, and it is important to be familiar with them (i.e. flank and belly areas). Touch is used as a communication between horses and between horses and people. Horses may also use touch to examine strange objects. They will look, sniff and feel an object with their muzzle. The tongue, lips, and bars of the mouth are especially sensitive places, and we need to use caution when a horse has a bit in his mouth. Horses are trained by applying and removing pressure and may be sensitive to soft or rough touch with a person's hands or legs. Handlers should treat the horses gently but firmly. Riders may need assistance to reduce squeezing a horse with their legs. Ask the instructor/therapist what is the best handling technique.

**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. 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.

**TASTE:** Taste is closely linked with the sense of smell and helps the horse to distinguish palatable foods and other objects. A horse may lick or nibble while becoming familiar with objects and people. Be careful, as this could lead to possible biting.

**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

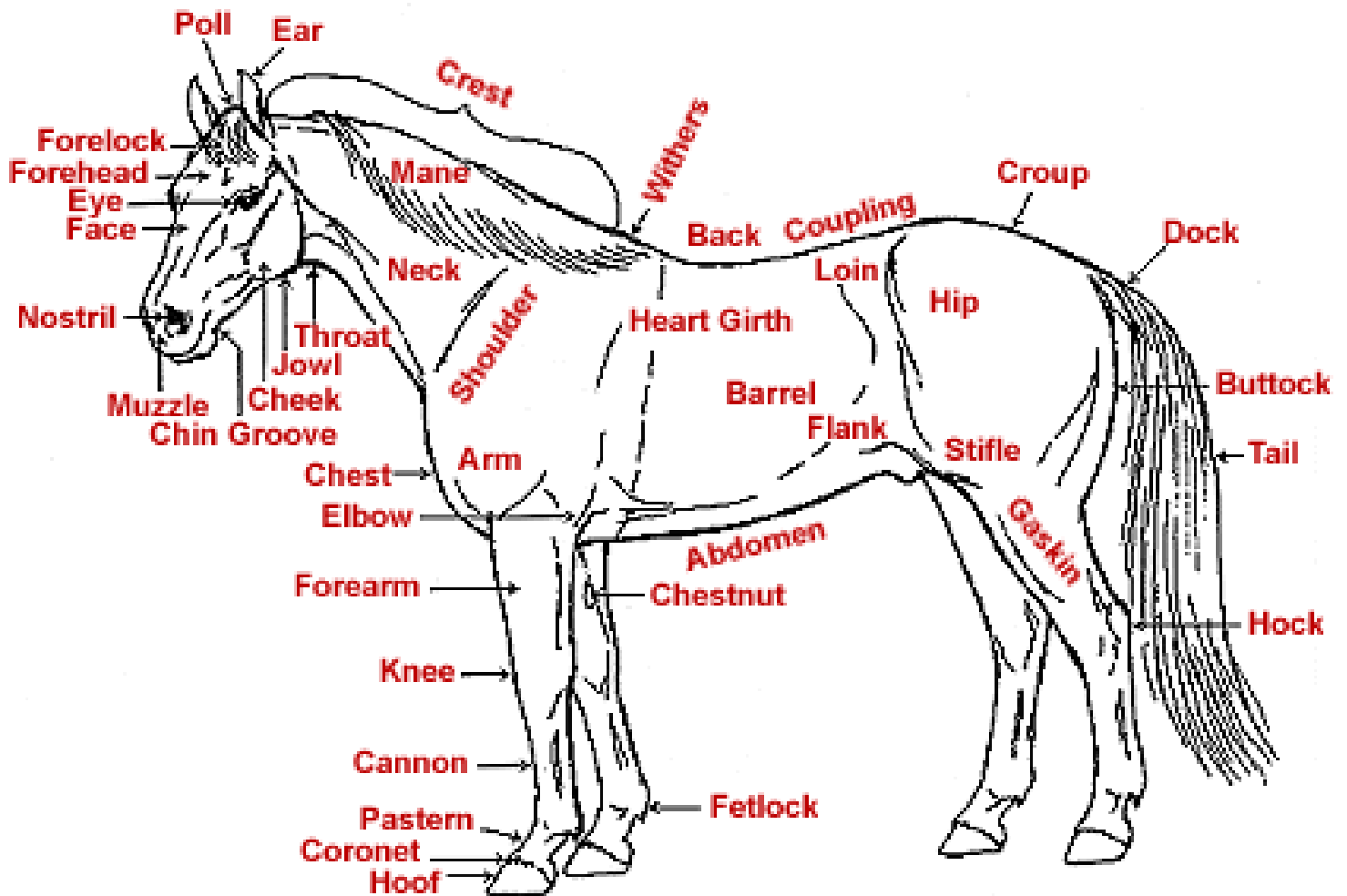
response to the rider. At times, there may exist a personality conflict between handlers and horses. It is important to let the instructor/therapist know if you're having a difficult time relating to, or getting along with a particular horse.

**FLIGHT AS NATURAL INSTINCT:** Most horses chosen to work in a therapeutic riding setting have less of an instinct to flee. However, if frightened, horses would rather turn and run away from danger than face and fight it. 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. 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. **If a horse appears to be frightened or fearful (note the position of the horse's ears in pictures following article), alert program staff.**

**HERD ANIMAL:** Horses like to stay together in a herd or a group with one or two horse's dominants, with a pecking order amongst the rest. Some horses 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 a Horse

When working with horses, it is helpful to know words and terms that refer to parts of their body. See below for some of these parts:



# Grooming Horses

Grooming is very important for the well being of the horses. Not only does it remove dirt, debris, dried sweat, and loose hairs that can irritate the horse under tack, it also stimulates the nerve endings of the skin and helps the horse to relax and warm up the muscles. In addition, it is also the time to check over the horse's body thoroughly, looking for any injuries or soreness. All horses should be groomed before being ridden. Grooming should take 20 – 30 minutes.

## Order of Grooming

1. Curry comb – Use the curry comb in a circular motion to loosen hair and dirt. Start at the front of the horse and work back. The curry comb should not be used on the face or below the knees. Keep one hand on the horse while you groom. Watch for any signs of discomfort (ears pinned).
2. Dandy or Hard brush – Use the hard brush next, brushing in the same direction as the hair to remove loose hair and dirt. The hard brush can be used on the legs, but not on the face.
3. Soft or body brush – Use the soft brush on the face and body. This brush is good for the face and helps the hair to look shiny.
4. Pick hooves – It is very important to pick the hooves before the horse is ridden. Mud, manure, grass, rocks, and other debris can get stuck in the hooves, which can cause the horse's gait to be uneven. If you do not feel comfortable picking hooves, please ask for help. It is important you do not skip this step.
  - Starting with the left front hoof, facing the back of the horse, carefully lift the hoof. Most horses will lift their hoof if you slide your hand down the back of the leg and put gentle pressure just above the fetlock.
  - Hold the hoof with one hand, use the hoof pick with the other hand.
  - Use the pick to remove mud and other debris from the hoof, including around the frog. Pick from heel to toe. If you have a hoof brush, you can also brush additional debris away from the bottom and sides of each hoof.
  - Before you allow the horse to put the hoof down, stretch the leg by gently rocking back and forth.
  - Move to the next hoof, working in a circle (left rear, right rear, then right front)
5. *OPTIONAL: Stretching – When you have finished grooming, spend a few minutes to stretch the horse's neck (the legs should have been stretched above). Stand next the horse facing the head with your hand on the middle of the back. Use a carrot or other treat to encourage the horse to reach his or her head back toward you. Repeat on the other side. You can also have the horse reach between his or her front legs by leading the head using a carrot down then between the front legs.*

# Tacking Horses

## Tack Room Rules

Saddles, halters, reins, pads, and other horse related equipment, collectively known as tack, are stored in a separate room off the barn aisle. Knowing your way around the tack room and keeping it in order is vital to keep running lessons at RSR smooth.

- All saddles must be stored and covered on the appropriate rack. Each horse has a closet to help volunteers identify the proper equipment.
- Saddle pads are stored on the blanket rack, and should be returned after use. If wet from sweat, hang upside down.
- Girth straps are organized by size and should be hung in the appropriate area. Please do not leave them attached to the saddle.
- Each horse has a “working” colored halter and an “everyday” halter. Working halters belong in the tack room on the rack on the hook labeled with the horse’s name. (Everyday halters should stay with the horse, hung in front of whichever stall he or she is in.)
- Lead ropes should be neatly stored (you will learn to do this in training). Each working halter has a coordinating lead rope and should be hung in the tack room. Other lead ropes can be hung in front of stalls.

## How to Tack

1. Groom horse first
2. Check the chart in the tack room
3. Bring necessary tack and equipment to the stall
  - Halter
  - Lead rope
  - Reins
  - Saddle pad
  - Mattis pad (if needed)
  - Saddle
  - Girth strap
  - Wraps (if needed)
4. Horses are generally tacked in their stalls. If needed, one can be placed in crossties in the aisle.
5. Tacking is generally done from the left side of the horse.
6. Put the halter on, in case you need to correct any behavior, to tie up the horse, or to place the horse in crossties.
7. Start with the saddle pad. Place saddle pad over the horse’s withers.
8. If needed, place mattis pad on next.
9. Lift saddle up and place just behind the withers.
10. Fasten the girth strap to the billets on the right side first. Make sure to put the non-stretchy side on the right.
11. Pull the girth strap underneath the horse on the left and fasten to the billets. Keep the girth strap fairly loose at first to allow the horse time to adjust. It will be tightened in the arena before rider’s mount.
12. If needed, put on boots or polo wraps.
13. Attach the reins and lead rope just before taking the horse out to arena. If you will be leaving the horse in the stall, do not attach the reins and remove the lead rope.



# Barn Procedures

## General Barn Rules

- Volunteers should always follow the direction of the supervising Instructor, Barn Manager, Volunteer Coordinator, or senior volunteer
- Excessive noise or commotion in or around the stable or riding arena is not permitted
- All children must be kept under the supervision of an adult at all times
- All riders, volunteers, & guests must sign a release of liability
- Appropriate footwear should be worn around the horses and farm. Sandals/open toed shoes are not permitted.
- The barn and grounds should be kept neat & orderly at all times. Unused equipment must be kept in its proper place. Aisle-ways should be kept clear of wheelbarrows, pitchforks, etc.
- Manure should be removed from aisle way or around the stable immediately
- Visitors/ riders/ parents should not enter the barn unless they have the express permission of an Instructor – they should be supervised at ALL times.
- Cell phones and car alarms must be turned off as they disrupt lessons and startle horses
- The consumption of alcohol or illegal substances prior to and/or while at RSR is prohibited.
- Smoking is not allowed on RSR property
- Please refrain from offering food or other gifts to participants without permission as they may have a medical condition such as food allergies, diabetes, etc.
- **Please do not perform a volunteer role you have not yet been trained for**

## Volunteer, Lesson, and Turn-out Boards

A dry erase board is posted outside the tack room door for volunteer communication. Each volunteer should check this board at the beginning of each shift. Notes from earlier shifts and important information are written on this board and it changes often. At the end of each shift, notes should be written on the Volunteer Board with any important information.

The lesson board toward the front of the barn is used during lessons, but important notes may also be posted. Please check this board, as well.

On the back of the tack room door, the turnout board is used to ensure that all horses get an adequate amount of time out. Please mark the horses turned out at the end of your shift.

## Feeding

Grain – The horses are fed grain twice a day, morning and evening. Morning grain is prepared by the evening volunteers and evening grain is prepared by the morning volunteers. Each horse has his/her own grain container. Grain should be prepared with any medications or supplements according to the chart in the Hay Room. When the morning or evening volunteers arrive, they should use the grain that has already been prepared, and then prepare grain for the next shift.

Hay – Hay should be given three times a day, morning, mid-day, and evening, after grain in the morning and evening. Generally, horses are given two flakes of hay per feeding, but there are exceptions, so please check the volunteer board for special notes or stall plaques.

## **Water**

Horses should be given two full buckets of water on each shift, morning, mid-day, and evening. Most of the stalls have a hose outside the stall; otherwise, water will need to be carried in buckets to the stalls. The average horse drinks twenty gallons of water per day. Water buckets should be cleaned at least once a week, or as needed.

Water should be available to all turned out horses. Check the troughs in the arena, mud lot, and pastures before leaving any horses turned out. Make sure there is a water bucket available in the paddock.

## **Cleaning Stalls**

Morning Cleaning – In the morning, the stalls should be thoroughly cleaned. Depending on weather, some or all of the horses should be turned out during cleaning. If only some are, use empty stalls to move horses around. Tools used will be a muck bucket, pitch fork, a shovel, and a broom. Wet bedding should be removed with a shovel and placed in a muck bucket. Dry bedding should be pulled to the center of the stall, then picked through with a pitch fork to remove manure. If all bedding is wet, the stall should be stripped using a shovel, removing all bedding. Sprinkle some PDZ powder on very wet spots to help absorb the moisture. Sweep along the edges of each stall into the center. Add additional bedding as needed.

Evening Cleaning – In the evening, the stalls should be picked through with a pitchfork and cleaned as needed. Add extra bedding if needed.

## **Cleaning Paddock and Arena**

The paddock and arena should be picked daily through using a pitchfork. This “house keeping” is done before every lesson. Make sure to shake all sand loose before putting manure and hay in muck buckets.

## **Horse Turnout**

- Follow recommendations from the Barn Manager on which horses can be turned out together.
- Depending on the condition of the ground, horses can be turned out in four areas, the paddock, the arena, the north pasture, and the south pasture. Do not use the mud lot or pastures when the ground is wet.
- Overnight, horses should only be turned out in the arena, to provide shelter in case of inclement weather during the night.
- If the temperature is below 32 degrees, each horse turned out should wear a horse blanket. Remember when putting on a horse blanket, start at the front and work back. When taking off, start at the back and work forward. Should the temperatures drop below –10, and horses are outside for longer than six hours, double coats are to be used.
- Mark any horses turned out on the Turnout board.

## **Cats & Ducks**

When working a shift in the barn, please make sure to check the food and water for the other animals, too. The cats should have a full bowl of dry food and plenty of water. Ducks should have clean water, food and the cage should be cleaned as needed.

# Lessons

## When to arrive

Several volunteers are needed an hour or more before each set of lessons to clean and prepare the arena, and to feed and prepare the horses. Session Volunteers must arrive an hour before the start of the lesson they will be working to allow time to prepare the horses.

## Preparing the barn and arena for lessons

Before lessons begin, the following must be completed:

1. Stalls should be touched up using a pitchfork to remove any manure.
2. Horses are brought in if they were turned out.
3. Grain is fed.
4. The arena and paddock is picked to remove manure and excess hay.
5. Muck buckets should be dumped in the dumpster.
6. All tools should be put away and the aisle should be clear.
7. The arena should be set up per the direction of the Instructor.

## Structure of lessons

1. Greeting – All riders and their families should be greeted as they arrive at the barn and fitted for a helmet.
2. Mounting – Each rider is escorted to the mounting block when told to do so by the Instructor.
3. Warm-up – The Instructor will lead the riders through a series of warm-up exercises.
4. Activities – During each lesson, the riders will work on basic skills and will participate in a variety of activities and games. The Instructor also prepares different activities geared towards each riders physical and cognitive development.
5. Dismounting – At the end of the lesson, the riders will line up facing the creek to dismount as a group.

## Importance of teamwork

For each lesson, you will be assigned to work with a team consisting of the:

- Horse
- Rider
- Leader
- Side-walkers
- Instructor

Teams need to work harmoniously and smoothly for the benefit of the rider. Communication is key. If you feel uncomfortable for any reason with your team, please discuss this with your Instructor.

There may be many opportunities to talk socially with your rider and side-walkers are encouraged to do so. However, please do not disrupt the lesson. Many students' have trouble concentrating so please take care not to interrupt the direct line of focus between rider and Instructor. There may be times when your rider cannot focus on anyone far away and you might have to relay information from the Instructor. Team members need to communicate with each other. Let your team know if you need to halt, change direction, cut across the arena or proceed to the center of the arena.

## Team Member Responsibilities

### SIDE-WALKER

The side-walker is responsible for greeting the rider. Introduce yourself to rider and parent or care giver. Ask the rider if he is excited or glad to be here today. Engage in some conversation that will allow the parent to speak up if there is a problem such as short nap, no sleep, bad day at school, hungry, or great day. Are the shoe laces tied, is the rider over dressed for working in the arena, is the rider chewing gum (Not Allowed)? Your job is to ensure the lesson gets off to a great start for the rider. This is important information for the instructor later in the lesson.

Before lesson: You can help to tack your “team” horse or set up arena. When your rider arrives, you help fit the helmet and STAY with your rider. You can say hi to horses, watch their little fingers! Parents get busy talking with other parents or siblings, you are to watch your rider at all times.

**Mounting:** It is your duty to hold the riders hand and stay in the paddock area waiting to be called into the riding arena. No rough play. Try to engage in conversation. When you are called in, your team will stay as close to the fence as possible and come up the stairs to the mounting block. One side walker will go to the mounting block with the rider, while the other stays on the ground to the “Off” side of the horse. You will help the rider put his right foot into the stirrup and “throw” left leg over and behind the saddle and sit on the horse. We will hold GREEN reins and ask the horse to “Walk ON”. This may take the rider a few weeks to catch on to the sequence. Few words but consistency will be key. ***You will maintain a secure thigh hold unless otherwise told from this point on until the end of the 45-minute lesson.***

**During lessons:** The side walker’s job is to focus on the rider, you must trust the leader is leading the horse with enough space to allow you to focus your eyes on the rider. You will listen to the instructor and help the rider follow through with the task. Be sure to ask the rider to complete the task, if not done, you can touch their hand and repeat the command. If still not completed, you can take their hand in a hand over hand manner and complete the task. We call this **ASK, TOUCH, DO**. It is difficult to engage the rider with as little talking as possible, but remember, we want them focusing on the instructor. And too many people talking to them is over stimulation. Both side walkers talking and the instructor asking them is actually over whelming and will cause frustration such as throwing the reins or screaming. But when turning it is important to say “Right and Left”. Do not repeat the instruction over and over; give the rider time to process the instruction. This may take as long as thirty seconds.

If you notice your rider needs assistance in stirrups, shifting weight, of holding reins, or you need the instructor’s assistance for ANY reason, ask the leader to go to the middle. This will catch the instructor’s attention that you need assistance. If there is an emergency, you will have to say loudly “Leader STOP”.

Some riders use sign language, you will be responsible for learning, walk on, trot on, whoa, and simple colors for that rider. Some use a talk box or PIXS, we will deal with these “extras” the best we can.

Some riders are non-verbal and may pull hair, scream, bite, or hit. We do not accept this kind of behavior, however, if they are afraid or angry and can’t tell you so, we have to evaluate the situation. We do not yell “NO”. We instead say inside voice, be nice, that hurts the horse, etc. Behavioral problems will be discussed with the parent. We do not want you getting hurt, however, special needs behavior may be unpredictable. If you are uncomfortable working with a rider, please let the instructor know.

We end the sessions with “Red Light / Green Light”. It is fun to get the rider excited about the race, however know that not each special needs rider does well with competition. We try to make most games end in ties. Do not get carried away with excitement yourself and loose contact with the rider. The end of the game may see the parents clapping. Beware that the rider and/or horse may find this scary.

Sometimes you will be asked to be a **Spotter**. This is for a rider who does not need hand contact on them, but does need closer supervision. You will stay about three feet to the side of the rider, *do not fall back at the horse's flank area*.

Side walkers must be able to perform an emergency dismount. You will be taught how to dismount for an emergency at training.

We end lessons "facing the creek". The side walker will assist and "catch" the rider sliding down the dismount, left side of the horse. You are to hold the rider's hand, assist them with thanking their horse, walk them in front of all the horses and exit the arena. Hold their hand until you turn them over to the parent or caregiver. **DO NOT** let them go on their own. Most will RUN for water or will RUN behind horses! Take their helmet back to the helmet box, spray with Lysol. Be sure to say good-bye to your rider. Let the parents know what went great during the lesson. If you notice anything of note (pulling hair, throwing toys, trying harder than normal) all of these can be noted on the lesson plan for the day and brought to the instructor. There may be some tweaks made to either build on great moves, or take away bothersome material from that rider. Remember the instructor has four or more riders in the arena, you are like a teaching assistant, together the team can help the rider get the most from the lesson.

### **LEADER**

The leader is responsible for maintaining control of the horse; they need to be alert and aware of the horse's movement and behavior at all times, as well as staying tuned in to the rest of the team. Pay attention to safety at all times.

**Before lessons:** The leader should arrive at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the lesson. The leader is responsible for preparing the horse.

1. Groom the horse
2. Tack horse according to the lesson board
3. Lead the horse into the arena 5-10 minutes before the start of lessons
4. Walk the horse around the arena at least twice.
5. Tighten the girth strap

**Mounting:** The leader is responsible for bringing the horse to the mounting block and controlling the horse while the rider is mounting. The leader should lead the horse toward the mounting block. Once the steps are reached, the leader should turn around and walk backward, pulling the horse's head over the mounting block just before straightening the horse along the mounting block. The horse should be close enough for the rider to easily mount the horse. As the rider is mounting, keep the horse in place, watching for signs the horse may or move.

**During lessons:** The leader's primary jobs are to focus on the horse, avoid any potential hazards in the arena, allow the sidewalkers enough room along the rail and around obstacles, listen to the instructor for directions, and allow the rider to respond to directions (the rider won't make improvements if you do everything for him or her).

- Always lead from the left side of the horse, just behind the horse's head, holding the lead rope. Make sure the lead rope is between the reins, not over them.
- Hold the lead rope 6-12 inches from the halter to allow for the natural motion of the horse's head (allow 12 inches when the rider is controlling the horse). Hold the excess in your other hand. Never wrap it around your hand or wrist and walk forward.
- Maintain a minimum of 2 horse lengths between your horse and the horse in front of you.
- Make turns gradually; sharp turns can throw the rider off balance. Allow space for sidewalkers when next to a fence, barrel, or obstacle. Make a big circle or cut across the arena to avoid getting too close to other horses. Let the sidewalkers and rider know when you are about to turn, circle, or cut across the arena.
- A reverse is always toward the middle of the arena.

- To halt, the sidewalkers should encourage the rider to say “whoa”. If the rider cannot or will not, you should say “whoa”. If the horse does not stop, tug and release on the lead rope. If the horse does not respond immediately, repeat with several small tugs.
- When the horse is stopped for more than a few seconds, stand in front of the horse. Standing in front is a psychological barrier to the horse so he will stand more quietly.
- For a horse that is moving slowly, use short tugs on the lead rope. Pulling the lead rope will distort his gait, which can throw the rider off balance.
- Riders are encouraged to control their horse to the maximum of their abilities. The leader is there to assist as directed to keep the horse in control. Check with your instructor before the lesson regarding your rider’s level of ability in controlling their horse.
- If the horse steps on your foot, take a deep breath, then lean against his shoulder to unbalance him. He probably doesn’t know he’s on your foot. Yelling “ouch” will just startle the horse and/or the rider.
- If you must stop for any reason other than making a halt at the instructor’s request, come to the center of the arena to stop to avoid creating a traffic jam.
- When the horse is frightened by an object, let him stop, face the object, look at it, and sniff it (do not let him spin and try to flee). Give the horse time to overcome his fear. Reassure him and help to calm him in a slow, soft voice.
- If the horse should shy or suddenly pull, stay with the horse and rider, take a deep breath, and stop when possible.
- Throughout the lesson, it helps the rider if you get excited about games and activities, but make sure the rider is full participating in the exercise.
- Keep conversation to a minimum so you, the rider, and the sidewalkers can hear the directions from the instructor.

**Dismounting:** Horses are led to the middle of the arena, facing the creek to dismount. Stand in front of the horse. The sidewalkers will help the rider with the dismount. Your job is to control the horse. Once the rider is dismounted, stay with the horse. A side walker will help the rider exit the arena.

**After the lesson:**

Put horse away and untack, make sure there is water, put tack in proper closet.

# Safety Procedures and Policies

## Basic Safety Guidelines (*RSR is a non-smoking facility*)

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

Riders, their families, and other visitors should only be in the barn when volunteers or Instructors are present. Volunteers should supervise any visitors to assure their safety while at RSR. Due to the inherent risks of working around horses, every volunteer and rider is required to provide emergency medical contact information and sign-off on the Equine Activity Liability Act found on their initial forms.

In the event of an emergency, it is important for volunteers to remain calm, reassure riders, and take direction from an instructor. A human's life must always come first, before the horses or other barn animals.

## Safety of Riders

To ensure the riders are safe at all times, volunteers must adhere to the following procedures:

- Children should be supervised at all times when on RSR premises
- Only RSR Instructors and volunteers are permitted in stalls with horses or in the pastures
- All riders are required to wear a helmet and should be properly fitted with one before entering the arena
- Riders should be escorted by a volunteer to the mounting block by a volunteer
- A volunteer should also escort the rider back to the parent after dismounting at the end of the lesson
- Volunteers must be focused on the safety of the rider at all times. Be aware of your surroundings and potential dangers to the rider.
- Volunteers are expected to know and follow all duties assigned to their role. (leader, barn volunteer...etc.)
- Follow all directions given by the Instructor
- Communicate safety concerns about the riders, volunteers, horses, or the environment with the Instructor.

## Safety Around Horses

It is essential for volunteers to follow basic guidelines when working around horses.

- Be calm and quiet. Sudden moves can cause a horse to shy (move sideways) or kick out.
- **Avoid approaching a horse from the rear or in front of the nose. These are two blind spots. Instead, approach at an angle and use a confident voice to say hello to the horse.**
- Whenever you are working with a horse, keep your attention focused on the horse, watching ears, tail, and other body language for clues as to the horse's mood.
- Avoid going above the horse's head, such as climbing a ladder. This causes many horses to spook.
- When using a lead rope, walk to the left of the horse, hold the lead rope in the right hand and hold the excess in the left hand. Never wrap the lead rope around your arm or other body part. Do not allow the end of the lead rope or reins to fall to the ground. The horse could step on it, and if startled, could break his own neck.
- Walk beside the horse, not ahead or behind.
- If a horse should pull back from you when you are leading him, step with him rather than pull against him. You do not weigh enough to stop him. A quick snap on the lead rope and a firm "Whoa" should get the horse under control
- Be aware of your surroundings at all times for things that may spook a horse such as anything that is not normally in the barn or sudden movements caused by people or nature (wind or lightning).

- When grooming, and tacking, keep the horse in the stall or in cross ties. A loose horse in the barn can cause havoc and threaten the safety of the other people and horses in the barn. A horse in cross ties should be supervised at all times.
- Never stand directly behind a horse. If you are grooming his tail, stand to one side and pull the tail gently over. When going around a horse to the rear, stay close and keep a hand on his rump.
- Do not kneel around a horse. This makes it difficult to get out of the way, if needed. Bend from the knees and waist instead.
- When going through a doorway or into a stall (in and out), be sure YOU are the leader and move into the space first, leading the horse, rather than allowing the horse to be the leader.
- Also when going through a doorway, make sure the door is open wide enough and the horse approaches with his body straight. Going through a door that's too narrow or at an angle could cause the horse to bump into the door or wall, startling him or causing an injury.
- If you do not feel comfortable working with a horse, tell an Instructor or Volunteer Coordinator.

Ready Set Ride is protected by The Equine Activity Liability Act, which states “each participant who engages in an equine activity expressly assumes the risk of and legal responsibility for injury, loss, or damage to the participant or the participant’s property”. This includes grooming, leading, and otherwise working with horses mounted or un-mounted.

### Location of the First Aid Kits

There is a first aid kit for humans and animals in one of the cabinets marked by the front counter.

### Calling 911

In the event of an emergency, a volunteer may be asked to call 911. If possible, please use the RSR phone located on the counter, to the right of the sink and relay the following information:

1. Tell them you are calling from Ready Set Ride
2. Give them our address: 13056 Essington Rd, Plainfield IL
3. Describe the nature of the emergency (type of injury, fire, etc.)
4. Tell the operator the emergency vehicles will need to turn off the lights and sirens. **A volunteer will need to meet the responding personnel at the end of the drive way to instruct them to turn off their lights and sirens to avoid spooking the horses any more than they already may be.**
5. Stay on the phone until help arrives

### Fire Procedure

In the event of a fire, the following procedure will take place:

1. If the fire is at the beginning stages and you feel capable of extinguishing it, retrieve the nearest fire extinguisher and put it out. The fire department should still be notified to inspect and ensure the fire is completely out.
2. Call 911 immediately if the fire does not extinguish.
3. All persons will evacuate the area outside and the front of the barn.
4. If there is a lesson in progress, riders will be dismounted and remain with their parents or caregiver and go to designated area out of harm’s way
5. Instructors will direct volunteers to remove equipment/ untack horses and turn out in field away from danger. Equipment may remain where it is.
6. All persons will congregate outside and in front of the barn.
7. The Volunteer Coordinator, Barn Manager and/or Instructor will assist with a volunteer head count.
8. All persons will remain in front of the barn until the authorities have given the instruction to do so.



## Tornado or Severe Thunderstorm

If a severe weather advisory has been announced or there is an imminent threat, all lessons will be cancelled and volunteers will be advised NOT to come to the barn if there is sufficient time to do so. If volunteers and riders are already at the barn, the following procedure will take place:

1. If it is safe to travel, any person who arrives at the barn or is already present will be asked to leave.
2. The Instructor will be responsible for supervising the dismount of riders, and will direct riders, volunteers, and others to a safe area.
3. Once riders are dismounted, they will remain with their parent or caregiver in a designated safe area.
4. The Instructor will designate a volunteer to do a head count.
5. The Instructor will direct volunteers to untack horses and return them to a safe place, usually their stall, making sure to leave them with plenty of water and hay, unless a tornado is imminent.
6. Stall doors will be closed and no one should enter stalls.
7. If a tornado is imminent and time allows, the horses should be moved to the back pasture. If time is of the essence, open the stall doors and/or arena gates to allow the horses to leave on their own.
8. Lights and electrical equipment should be turned off and unplugged. A flashlight should be retrieved from right drawer of counter.
9. The large barn doors can be closed.
10. Humans should seek safety in buildings and possibly in doorways until the threat has passed.
11. Riding helmets can be worn if needed.

## Fallen Rider or Medical Emergency

Falls in class are rare, but can and do happen. Should a rider fall from the horse or have a seizure, or a rider or volunteer is injured or has another medical emergency during a lesson:

1. **All activity should stop. Volunteers must remain calm.**
2. The leader of the horse with the fallen or injured rider should move the horse away from the downed rider. This is especially important if the child is having a seizure.
3. If a horse is loose or spooked, all everyone should remain with their rider and horse along the rail until the horse is under control.
4. Emergency dismount: Horse leaders stop the horse immediately, then turn to face their horse. Sidewalkers will calmly help the rider dismount, first making sure the rider has removed his or her feet from the stirrups, then the left-hand side walker will place her arms around the riders waist and gently guide the rider off and safely away from the horse. Leaders must keep the horses a safe distance from any riders. Sidewalkers will return the riders to their parent s or guardians. Horses should be returned to their stalls and untacked.
5. In the event of a fall, the side walker opposite the falling rider should move away quickly, allowing the horse an escape. The side walker on the side of the fall may be able to assist the rider to the ground and remain with the rider.
6. The instructor will assign volunteers to:
  - Call 911
  - Retrieve the Emergency Medical Release Form for the injured rider or volunteer
  - Meet emergency vehicle at the end of the driveway and tell them to turn off lights and sirens
  - Lead the emergency personnel to the injured person
7. If the Instructor is injured, the most experienced volunteer in the class will take temporary charge, following the procedures outlined above, until another instructor, the Barn Manager, or the Volunteer Coordinator arrives.
8. If the injury or medical emergency occurs outside of class, the Instructor should be brought to the scene immediately to assess the situation and take charge.

## **Spooked Horse**

Should a horse become frightened or overly nervous, sidewalkers are to apply “thigh hold” support to the rider. The horse leader should attempt to halt the horse and turn to face the horse. 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 direction from Instructor.

## **Horse Injuries**

If you discover an injury or see a horse get injured, you should let the Barn Manager know. For a minor injury such as a shallow cut or scrape, you can leave a note on the volunteer board. For something more severe such as a deep cut, signs of colic (pawing, blowing, rolling), lameness, a downed horse that will not get up, or any other injury or illness that seems serious or that you are unsure about, call the Barn Manager immediately.

## **Accidents and Occurrences**

All accidents must be reported immediately to the Barn Manager and all involved must complete an occurrence form. Please request an occurrence form from the Instructor, Barn Manager and/or Volunteer Coordinator.