



**MANE**  
MONTGOMERY AREA NON-TRADITIONAL EQUESTRIANS

“Where Horses Change Lives”

# Rider Handbook

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For updates and event information: [www.maneweb.org](http://www.maneweb.org)

Revised March 2015

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## **Welcome to MANE!**

Montgomery Area Nontraditional Equestrians (MANE) is a non-profit organization formed in 1994 by individuals who recognized the need for therapeutic horseback riding opportunities for area children and adults who have disabilities. MANE is operated by a Board of Directors under the guidelines of the Professional of Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.). MANE strives to provide a therapeutic horseback riding program that safely and effectively meets the therapeutic needs of individuals in the Tri-County area who have physical, cognitive, and/or developmental disabilities. MANE also provides a number of non-therapeutic riding lessons, summer and winter, integrated camps, and opportunities or university level educational and cooperative efforts.

At the present time, MANE is the only program of its kind in the Tri-County region, and one of only five PATH Intl. Premier Accredited Therapeutic Riding Centers in the entire state of Alabama.

Welcome to MANE, where horses change lives.

## **Volunteers**

Trained and dedicated volunteers are crucial to each positive step MANE students achieve. Volunteers must be at least 14 years old to work directly with riders and must undergo sufficient training to ensure the safety and privacy of all of MANE's students. Volunteers report directly to, and are supervised by, MANE staff and the Volunteer Coordinator. Volunteers must agree to follow MANE's guidelines and policies, meet the requirements for assigned/chosen task(s), and comply with and sign MANE's Confidentiality Agreement.

Therapeutic riding centers MANE's scope and magnitude require virtually hundreds of tasks to be completed daily to ensure the effectiveness and safety of riders, horses, staff, and volunteers. MANE's success is proportional to the direct, hands-on participation from MANE's volunteers. Their commitment also allows MANE to continue providing lessons at a reasonable cost to participants.

Each volunteer at MANE is pre-screened and thoroughly trained for the job(s) to which they choose to dedicate their time and enthusiasm. The only information shared with volunteers about MANE students is that which is pertinent to the students' progress during the riding lesson. To ensure students confidentiality, volunteers are required to sign an agreement not to discuss personal information about MANE's students.

If you would like to become a MANE volunteer, please schedule your orientation and training with MANE's Volunteer Coordinator. Remember to thank your volunteers for their hard work, support, and dedication to MANE!

MANE volunteers can assist in any way that enhances the quality of MANE's programs.

A few examples of volunteer opportunities include:

- Leading
- Sidewalking
- Sweeping the barn
- Cleaning stalls
- Washing blankets
- Cleaning tack room
- Cleaning office
- Cleaning bathrooms
- Videotaping classes
- Grooming horses
- Mending fences
- Painting
- Helping with the newsletter
- Organizing fund raisers
- Gardening
- Photography
- Filing
- Answering phones

## **Funding**

In spite of the valuable contribution from volunteers, the costs of MANE's program are substantial. Currently, MANE's operating expenses exceed \$200,000 per year. Some of the funding comes from tuition, but the majority of MANE's funding comes from grants, individuals, and corporate donations.

MANE posts a "Wish List" of items needed (such as tissue paper and hand soap) or desired (such as a digital camera to record client progress) in a quarterly newsletter and on site. Monetary donations and donations in the form of memorial contributions or honorariums also help support the program. Please keep in mind that professional services and in-kind services may be donated and are fully tax-deductible. All families of MANE riders are encouraged to contribute needed items. Please add friends and family to our newsletter mailing list so that they can be a part of the MANE experience.

Tax deductible gifts and donations may be sent to MANE's mailing address:

**MANE**  
**3699 Wallahatchie Road**  
**Pike Road, Alabama 36064**

## Program Requirements, Rules & Regulations

- Completed paperwork and payment must be submitted no later than one month prior to the beginning of the riding session. Scholarship Applications must also be completed no later than 2 months prior to the first lesson or scholarship funding will not be awarded. Questions about any forms should be directed to MANE Staff members. MANE's Board of Directors and/or Executive Director will determine scholarship eligibility and awards.
- Staff and Instructors will review all student applications, select all participants, and schedule based on class instructor, volunteer and equine availability. (See Participant Selection Policy.)
- On-going evaluations will determine if riding therapy continues to be beneficial and if MANE's horses, volunteers, and staff are able to safely and effectively accommodate the student.
- When riding or working directly with horses, properly fitted, ASTM/SEI approved helmets for horseback riding must be worn at all times. Participants are encouraged to purchase their own helmets; however, a limited number of helmets are available for use by participants. Please, consider helmet use when preparing participant's hairstyle.
- Appropriate insect allergy medications, must accompany rider on each visit to MANE's facility. Teammates must also be advised of rider's sensitivities and the location of the medication.
- Participants must be dressed in appropriate riding attire. (See Dress Code.)
- MANE reserves the right to cancel classes as outlined in MANE's Cancellation Policy. MANE must be notified as soon as possible if a rider must cancel a lesson. Please note: advance notice is very important to ensure proper care of the horses and proper utilization of MANE's volunteers. Make-ups lessons are NOT given for absences.
- Parents, siblings, and visitors must wait in the Volunteer/Viewing room or picnic area during classes to avoid creating distractions for participants and instructors.
- All children/siblings who are not participants of MANE's program **must** remain with and be directly supervised by their parents while on MANE property. Designated off-limits areas (including the pond, barn utility areas, and outbuildings) must be respected.
- Riders with Down syndrome are required to have annual medical clearance from a licensed physician that includes a neurological exam that specifically denies any symptoms consistent with atlantoaxial instability (AAI).
- Smoking is not allowed anywhere on MANE property.

## **Participant Selection Policy**

MANE staff has the duty to select students for the MANE program based on its professional knowledge and experience, horse suitability and availability (including weight carrying limits of the horses), availability of volunteers, access to therapists, and the age, weight, and disability of the rider. MANE is designed to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities; however, there are some precautions and contraindications, limitations, challenges, and scheduling constraints that may prevent MANE from successfully providing therapeutic riding activities to some individuals. To ensure the most potential benefits for each rider, MANE's registered instructors are given the right to limit the number of riders for each class based on the staff/volunteer ratio to the students, demands of the students, and/or availability of the horses.

As a method of ensuring a successful program, the staff, administrator(s), and instructors must carefully evaluate all factors involved in the implementation of the therapeutic riding services.

The Precautions and Contraindications to Therapeutic Riding Guide (provided by the PATH Intl.) are used in determining the individuals who may benefit from therapeutic riding and who may not. The following guidelines are examples of those which have guided the professionals of MANE in the process of evaluating the potentials of MANE's services for interested individuals:

- If the movement activity will cause a decrease in the client's function, an increase in pain, or generally aggravate the medical condition, therapeutic riding may not be the activity of choice.
- If the interaction is detrimental to the client or the horse, equine activities may be contraindicated.
- If the therapeutic riding program cannot accommodate the client's equipment needs, or the environment will aggravate his condition, riding may not be the activity of choice.
- The possibility of a fall should be given careful consideration and may lead to the informed decision that therapeutic riding is not the activity of choice.
- Working around horses (i.e.: grooming, leading, etc.) involves risk. Horses are large, move quickly, and can be dangerous to the client who is unable to respond appropriately.

At the end of each session, each rider/family will receive a survey. The survey is an opportunity to assess and report progress and to offer suggestions that could help MANE riders achieve greater success. Everyone at MANE appreciates your feedback.

## Scheduling

All classes are scheduled in one hour increments, but time in the saddle may be significantly shorter, depending on the rider's experience, strength, stamina, medical conditions, and many other factors. Unless special arrangements have been made, students and caregivers should expect to be at the MANE site for a minimum of one hour. Exceptions to this are as follows and participation limits are determined on a case to case basis:

- When students are under the age of six.
- When it has been mutually agreed upon by MANE staff and program participants that a shorter or longer lesson time is needed.
- Instructor sees that participants have reached their physical or emotional limit.
- When a student is enrolled in Hippotherapy classes under the supervision of a contracted therapist.

Classes are limited by number of participants based on working area and disability. Classes conducted in the large arena are limited to six riders; classes in the covered arena on the Sensory Integration Trail are limited to three riders. Six students may participate in classes conducted on the Sensory Integration Trail. Instructors have the right to limit class size by involvement of the disabilities addressed in each lesson. As always, classes are limited by the amount of volunteer man power.

Near the end of each session, participants wishing to participate in the next session are required to submit a new registration form. Submission of this form and timely receipt of tuition is necessary to ensure your continued participation.

## Curriculum

Lesson plans are developed according to client needs and the goals agreed upon by MANE staff, the participant, and (if applicable) the participant's caregiver(s). Effective communication between participants, MANE staff, and caregivers is essential for ensuring a safe and enjoyable riding experience. To this end, MANE encourages on-going input from participants and their caregivers. Participants and/or caregivers must fill out the Participant Goal sheet each session in order to allow the rider and parent to have input into their session lessons.

Further, MANE curriculum is usually structured to include a classroom component, a barn component, and a riding component. It should **not** be expected that students will ride during every lesson. In some situations, such as extremely muddy conditions, inability to use necessary equipment, a heat index in excess of 95 degrees, or the lack of available volunteers or horses, students will **not** have a riding component during their scheduled lesson.

## **Dress Code**

For safety reasons, all participants should adhere to the following dress code when participating in therapeutic riding lessons:

- All participants must wear ASTM/SEI approved helmets for horseback riding. Consider helmets when preparing hairstyles. Long hair should be tied back at the nape of the neck. Avoid large accessories or barrettes and hairstyles that might interfere with helmet fit. Refrain from wearing large and dangling jewelry that could catch on tack. When possible, participants are encouraged to provide their own helmets.
- Long pants, breeches/jodhpurs, or jeans must be worn to prevent chafing or pinching. During extremely hot weather, the student may be allowed to wear shorts, but only with the permission of the instructor.
- Shirts should be tucked in and jackets should be zipped so that the instructor can observe the participant's posture.
- Proper footwear is mandatory. Absolutely no open-toed shoes or sandals are permitted. Leather boots or sturdy leather shoes with a one-inch heel are suggested for all riders. Close-toed, hard-soled shoes are permitted for riders using saddles that are equipped with PATH INTL. approved safety stirrups and for riders who do not use stirrups.
- Dress should be weather appropriate. Jackets and gloves should be worn on cold days. Scarves, earmuffs, and toboggans may be worn under riding helmets only if fit allows.

## **Tardiness**

Please arrive 10 minutes prior to class start time. If a rider has not arrived or is not ready to begin the lesson 15 minutes past class start time, tack will be removed from their horse. Late comers will not be permitted to ride as this disrupts the lesson. Missed time due to tardiness will not be made up. Ground lessons will be conducted if volunteer man power allows.

## **Absences**

Participants must commit to lessons for the entire duration of the scheduled riding session. Those unable to attend a scheduled lesson should contact the center as soon as possible. Advance notice of an absence is very important to ensure proper care of the horses and proper use of MANE's volunteers. Termination of participation should be submitted in writing as soon as possible. Make-ups are NOT given for rider absences.



## Cancellation Policy

MANE reserves the right to cancel lessons based on the availability of instructors, volunteers, and/or horses. Further, any factor or situation considered by MANE staff to be a threat to the safety of students, volunteers, staff, or horses is reason for cancellation.

Cancellations due to weather will be made if MANE staff determines that the following conditions exist one hour prior to class:

- Winds exceeding 25 MPH.
- Tornado warnings, thunderstorms, or hail storms.
- Steady, heavy storms with lightening. (Classes will not be canceled in light rain.)
- Hazardous driving conditions.
- Temperatures above 97 degrees or wind chill/temperature below 40 degrees.
- Conditions, such as extreme muddiness, that would make it unsafe to hold classes

## Make Up Lessons

Program participants should bear in mind that MANE is a highly weather dependent activity, much like football, soccer, and baseball. MANE's official make-up policy is as follows:

Make-up lessons, canceled due to weather or instructor illness, will be offered the week after the session ends. Characteristically, **only one make-up opportunity for each student is offered, but two make-ups are allowed at the discretion of the staff** when four or more lessons have been canceled. Refunds cannot be given.

## Tuition and Fees

Tuition and fees charged to MANE clients only accounts for a very small fraction of MANE's operating expenses. In an effort to make MANE's services accessible to as many clients as possible, MANE tuition is currently set at \$30 per therapeutic riding lesson – this is much lower than the industry standard for therapeutic or able-bodied riding lessons with similarly qualified instructors. Session rates and due dates are as follows:

10 Week Fall Session	\$300
10 Week Winter Session	\$300
10 Week Spring Session	\$300
Summer Camp (3 1-week sessions)	\$250 per week

Although it is not required, it is suggested that participants or the families of participants provide “sweat equity” to help MANE continue to offer sessions at such a reasonable rate. If you will not be working with your own rider or another in the class each week, feel free check in at the office and choose from the long list of tasks that volunteers can help us with.

## **Scholarships**

MANE provides a limited number of scholarships to assist riders who demonstrate a financial need for the cost of tuition. As these scholarships are dependent upon donor sponsorships, the amount available for assistance varies each session. Applicants interested in applying for tuition assistance must request a scholarship application and return with all necessary paperwork according to the tuition schedule below. If accepted, participants will be notified in writing of the scholarship amount awarded. Provision of scholarship assistance for one term in no way guarantees continued financial subsidy.

As a method to meet the needs of potential clients with financial limitations, MANE’s Board of Directors will accept applications for scholarships to pay partial fees of the lesson cost for each scholarship recipient.

- Scholarship Applications must be completed one month prior to the first lesson or scholarship will not be awarded.
- Applications must be resubmitted *each* session. If you need a scholarship application, please see a member of the MANE staff.
- Upon receiving applications, the Board of Directors or Executive Director will select recipients based on their financial need.
- All scholarship recipients will be required to pay a portion of the lesson cost depending on the client’s financial status and the availability of MANE scholarship funds. This decision will be left upon the discretion of the Board of Directors.
- You will receive written notification concerning the status of your scholarship.
- Any balance owed to MANE will be due when session starts.
- Scholarships are dependent on an 80 percent attendance rate.

## Staff

Parents/guardians, as well as riders, may have information that could benefit a rider and improve MANE's impact. Please contact MANE staff with any questions or concerns by emailing or calling the MANE office 334-213-0909:

**Tiffany Atkinson- Program Director, Instructor [maneprogramdirector@gmail.com](mailto:maneprogramdirector@gmail.com)**

Tiffany is a lifelong equine enthusiast and resident of Central Alabama with over 15 years of marketing and management experience. She graduated from Alabama Christian Academy in 1996 and obtained her bachelor's degree in marketing from Auburn University of Montgomery in 2001 while helping to manage a premier Quarter Horse show barn and breeding facility. After graduating, Tiffany served as the Marketing Coordinator for Knology, creating local marketing and public relation campaigns that helped to grow and strengthen the company's community relations as well as their phone, cable, and internet sales in both the Montgomery and Prattville areas. After three years with Knology, Tiffany founded AA Advertising, where she created advertising campaigns for Ben Atkinson Motors, a Ford, Chrysler, Dodge, and Jeep dealership in Tallahassee, Alabama. She joined MANE's team in November 2015 and earned her PATH Int'l registered level instructor certification in 2016.

Although Tiffany has always lived within a twenty-mile radius of Pike Road, she has traveled all over the United States showing and competing in equestrian events. She has enjoyed a successful show career with many regional and world titles through the Arabian Horse Association, Palomino Horse Breeders Association, and American Quarter Horse Association. In 2005, she began competing in United States Team Roping Association events all over the Southeast and Texas. Tiffany and her husband Ben own and operate Cedar Ridge Farms, which specializes in quality rope and ranch bred horses and provides riding and roping lessons to children and adults.

**Abby Houchin – Volunteer Coordinator, Instructor [horsesandhope@gmail.com](mailto:horsesandhope@gmail.com)**

Abby graduated from Virginia Tech in May of 2014 with a bachelor's degree in human development and a minor in equine science. To supplement her education, Abby interned at a large therapeutic riding program – Healing Strides of Virginia – under the guidance of Carol Young. As an NCAA college athlete, Abby swam for Virginia Tech's swim team and rode on the IHSA Hunt Seat equestrian team. In 2014, Abby was crowned the Virginia Quarter Horse Congress Queen and competed against young ladies from other state associations for the All-American Quarter Horse Congress Queen title, for which she placed in the top ten. Her platform in this endeavor allowed her to share her passion for working with people and horses with her community as well as to increase awareness of the benefits of therapeutic riding.

Upon graduation from Virginia Tech, she obtained her PATH Int'l Registered level instructor certification. She joined MANE's team in February 2015, bringing her passion with her. As MANE's Volunteer Coordinator, Abby is in the perfect position to continue her love of working

with people and horses. Outside of work, she enjoys competing her Quarter Horse mare in three-day eventing and relaxing with her two Great Pyrenees.

**Kim Alford- Staff Instructor**

Kim Alford has grown up in and around the horse industry. Her mother Toni Flowers was a professional riding instructor who held a PATH Intl. certification and helped found MANE in 1994. Kim participated in the United States Pony Club, graduating at the B level, and competed nationally in eventing and show jumping. After graduating high school, Kim worked and competed for a professional show jumper in Florida. She returned home 14 years ago to start her own business as a riding instructor. Kim also has been the South region show jumping coach for Pony Club nationals for nine years. Kim specializes in dressage, eventing and show jumping. Kim received her certification for PATH Intl. in 2010.