



Volunteer Handbook

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MISSION STATEMENT

To enhance lives by providing accredited therapeutic equine experiences in a safe, fun and compassionate environment.

VISION

An inclusive community where everyone is encouraged to reach their full potential.

VALUES

Every individual's unique abilities

The power of volunteers

A high standard of excellence

Community

The healing power of the horse

Staff and their contributions

Integrity and accountability

HISTORY

The Therapeutic Riding Institute (TRI) was founded in 1973 by Betty Lou Townley and Linden Moore to provide adults and children with various cognitive, physical and emotional challenges the opportunity to experience Equine Assisted Services (EAS). A completely volunteer driven organization in 1973, today TRI relies upon a pool of almost 200 highly qualified volunteers, professional staff, credentialed instructors and a herd of specially selected and trained horses.

ACCREDITATION

TRI is a Premier Accredited Center with PATH Int'l (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International). As a PAC, TRI adheres to strict guidelines that underlie all policies and procedures which emphasize safety and professionalism. PATH Int'l is a voice for the EAS industry. The professional membership organization advocates for EAS and provides standards for safe and ethical equine interaction through education, communication, standards and research. All TRI instructors are certified through PATH Int'l.

CONFIDENTIALITY

TRI students', staff and volunteers' personal information is highly confidential. No one is to disclose or distribute anyone else's information or documents including, but not limited to, its students, donors, supporters, volunteers or staff to anyone for whom the information is unauthorized or unnecessary. This includes non-custodial parents of minors. Collectively, this information is referred to as Confidential Information.

Confidential Information may not be discussed or disseminated without express written authorization by a person with the legal authority to grant such permission. As a volunteer, you will be provided only the information you need to safely and effectively assist your student. By attending an orientation and training session, you acknowledge an understanding of this policy.

PHOTO CONSENT & SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

All volunteers have the choice to consent to and authorize the use and reproduction by TRI of any and all photographs and any audio-visual materials taken of them for promotional material, educational activities, exhibitions and digital displays or for any other use for the benefit of the program. Should you choose to not consent to the photo release for any reason, you can indicate this in your volunteer application.

In the area of social media (print, broadcast, digital and online), the following guidelines apply in the use of social media for our volunteers:

1. Should you decide to create a personal blog or website, be sure to provide a clear disclaimer that the views expressed in the blog are the author's alone and do not represent the views of Therapeutic Riding Institute, Inc.
2. All information published on any volunteer blog should comply with TRI's confidentiality policy. This also applies to comments posted on other social networking sites, blogs and forums.
3. Your online presence can reflect on TRI. Be aware that your comments, posts or actions captured via digital or film images can affect the image of TRI.
4. Do not use any TRI logos or trademarks without written consent.

DIVERSITY

TRI acknowledges and honors the fundamental value and integrity of all individuals, therefore employees and volunteers will work diligently to maintain an environment that is welcoming and respectful.

BEHAVIOR

As a volunteer, you are a representative of our organization. All volunteers are expected to behave in a manner that is conducive to the caring and efficient operation of the program, and to set a good example for our students. Inappropriate language, disruptive behavior or behavior which threatens the safety of others is not acceptable, nor will it be tolerated. After a first attempt to correct the behavior, offenders will be asked to leave the premises by a staff member and withdrawal from the program will be immediate.

If you are subject to any type of inappropriate behavior by a student or volunteer, please do not approach that individual. Notify a staff member immediately. If you feel that a TRI staff member acts inappropriately, please notify TRI's Executive Director, at 937-317-4001.

ALCOHOL AND CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES

It is the policy of TRI not to tolerate the illegal possession, use, sale, dispensing or being under the influence of alcohol, drugs and narcotics on TRI premises or while representing TRI. TRI reserves the right to require a volunteer to leave the premises if they appear to be impaired.

SMOKING

Smoking on TRI premises or while representing TRI is not permitted.

WEAPONS

TRI prohibits the wearing, transporting, storage, possession, or use of dangerous weapons on TRI's property, regardless of whether or not the person is licensed to carry the weapon. This includes firearms, tasers, knives, crossbows, arrows, etc.

HOURS OF OPERATION

TRI's Hours of Operation vary throughout the year. If you have a reason to be at the farm outside of TRI's scheduled operational hours, please schedule the visit through TRI's Volunteer Coordinator. Please do not visit the farm without prior approval.

BACKGROUND CHECK

For the safety of our students and your fellow volunteers, we run background checks on all new volunteers entering the program. Any concerns that may arise from these checks will be addressed between the volunteer and TRI's Volunteer Coordinator. The final decision to accept any volunteer into the program rests with TRI's staff.

DRESS CODE

Appropriate footwear and clothing must be worn at all times. Open-toed or open-heeled shoes, Crocs, clogs and sandals are not permitted on the farm. Volunteers working in classes will be provided a discount to purchase a TRI T-shirt, which can be worn in lessons. It is strongly recommended that jewelry and perfume not be worn to the farm. Hats that impede peripheral vision are inappropriate. Clothing that makes noise (swishy pants, etc) should not be worn in lessons.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Emergency drills are conducted quarterly throughout the lesson season. In the event of an emergency, please follow the direction of the instructor or other staff member in charge. In general, in the event of a fire in the barn, all staff, volunteers, students and families should congregate in the area between both front entrance gates until released by the fire department. In the event of a tornado or violent storm, all staff, volunteers, students and families should congregate in the Welcome Area or if safely able to get to, the basement of the Administrative Buildings, until the weather has passed.

OFF-LIMITS AREAS

All areas of the farm that have been deemed 'Off Limits' to anyone other than authorized staff have been clearly marked with signage and include but are not limited to pastures, equipment garages, stables, equipment closets, and apartment yard and stairs. You may not enter these areas unless you have expressed permission to do so by a TRI staff member.

WORKING WITH PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Often a major barrier for people with special needs is not the disability itself, but the lack of awareness and knowledge of others. Please take time to get to know your student and his/her family. Above all, please treat everyone with respect, being considerate and sensitive to their needs.

When working with someone who uses a wheelchair, please recognize that the chair is an extension of his/her body space. Always ask if the individual would like assistance before you help him/her. Speak directly and be careful not to exclude the wheelchair user from conversation. If a conversation lasts more than a few minutes, sit or kneel to get on the same level as the person in the wheelchair.

When working with an individual with a visual impairment, please ask if help is needed. Keep in mind that each individual may have a specific way he/she prefers to be helped. Remember that they may only need verbal direction. If physical assistance is needed, allow the individual to hold your arm above the elbow as you walk one-half step ahead.

When working with an individual with hearing/language impairment, try to maintain good eye contact, looking at the individual as you talk. Speak clearly – avoid talking slowly or over-emphasizing words. Avoid long verbal instructions. Familiarize yourself with hand gestures the individual may be using to represent words or concepts.

DESCRIPTIONS & TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR VOLUNTEER ROLES

Side Helpers

A side helper's role in class is to walk alongside their student's horse and help physically, by providing assistance with their balance, or providing encouragement and aiding in the students focus on the instructions their instructor is giving. Students are also given goals each session that the side helpers help track their progress on.

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

To become a side helper, TRI requires you to attend a New Volunteer Orientation. These orientations are currently virtual due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For the New Volunteer Orientation, you will be asked to review our Training Videos, read the supporting materials and schedule a hands-on session with TRI's Volunteer Coordinator to practice the role of the side helper. After you have completed this one-time training, you will be eligible to sign up for lessons with our students. As a reminder, no horse experience is necessary to be a side helper. You are required to be 14 years or older to volunteer in our program and must be physically fit to walk and jog for periods of time in sand and uneven terrain for up to 45 minutes.

Horse Leaders

The horse leader's role in a class is to be in charge of their assigned horse. This means helping control the horse's pace, behavior and focus throughout the entire lesson while also helping our students gain as much independence as possible while riding their horses. Horse Leaders are responsible for tacking, warming up and untacking their horse while at the barn. Horse experience is necessary to be a horse leader.

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

To become a horse leader with TRI, additional training will be required outside of the New Volunteer Orientation. We first ask that all potential horse leaders volunteer in at least 8 weeks of lessons with TRI as a side helper before going through horse leader training. This will give you the best idea of how our lessons are carried out for our riders. After you've completed 8 weeks of side helping, you can contact TRI's Volunteer Coordinator to schedule a horse leader training. These trainings will be scheduled on an as needed basis and may be in a small group setting depending on the need. In this training, you will be required to show knowledge of catching a horse in their stall or field, grooming, tacking and basic handling skills at the walk and trot. This training is pass or fail at the discretion of the Equine Manager and/or Volunteer Coordinator, with the opportunity to work on your skills and knowledge to re-test. To become a horse leader, you must have a solid foundation of horse behavior and handling skills.

Exercise Riders

Exercise riders are used to help keep our horses physically and mentally engaged outside of the class environment. Whether this means arena work with patterns or a simple trail ride around the farm, this helps our horses receive a fun mental break from the stress that can sometimes come in the class setting. Exercise riders need to be proficient in riding skills through the canter and have a good understanding of how to support the horse into a frame to engage their body to their full potential. You are asked to commit to riding once a week during an available timeslot arranged and will be assigned a horse at the discretion of TRI's Equine Manager.

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

To become an exercise rider with TRI, we require you to be a working volunteer in our program as a horse leader or side helper for at least 8 weeks. If you are interested in becoming an exercise rider, we will ask you contact our Equine Manager to set up a time to perform a riding test. You must show the ability to safely walk, trot and canter a horse independently. These tests are pass or fail at the discretion of the Equine Manager.

Barn Chore & Facility Volunteers

TRI'S Barn Chore crew supports the TRI Barn Staff in the daily cleaning and caretaking of our equine partners. This includes but is not limited to cleaning stalls, scrubbing out feed tubs and water buckets, checking field troughs for water and cleaning if dirty, and other various chores to keep the TRI barn in tip top shape. Facility volunteers may assist with barn chores, in addition to helping with jobs such as mending fences, weed whacking, and any other maintenance type jobs the staff needs help with at the time. Barn chores and facility maintenance are completed in the morning hours while TRI staff is present.

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

If you are interested in becoming a barn chore or facility maintenance volunteer, you will not be required to do any pre-training. To get started, you will come out for a tour of our farm and complete the necessary paperwork. You will then be able to sign up on our schedule for barn chores or facility maintenance. On your first day out at the farm, you will get a quick tutorial of how to clean a stall and perform basic barn chores with our Volunteer Coordinator.

Office Volunteers

TRI's office volunteers help with a variety of administrative tasks, such as filing, data entry, creating lesson materials, putting together mailings, and helping prepare for special events. This is a mostly indoor job and is completed during the daytime during TRI office hours.

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

There is no training involved to be an office volunteer with TRI. To get started, you will come out for a tour of our farm and complete the necessary paperwork. You will then be able to sign up on our schedule for office hours. Duties for office volunteers vary from week to week.

If you would like to be trained for any role within the TRI organization you are qualified for, please contact TRI's Volunteer Coordinator at 937-317-4439.