



THERAPEUTIC RIDING INSTITUTE

Volunteer Handbook

Updated January 2024

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 over 200 highly qualified volunteers, professional staff, credentialed instructors, and a herd of specially selected and trained horses.

ACCREDITATION

TRI is a Premier Accredited Center (PAC) with the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Int'l). As a PAC, TRI adheres to strict guidelines that underlie all policies and procedures emphasizing 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 and signing off on the training you receive, you acknowledge your comprehension 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 set a good example for our students. Inappropriate language, disruptive behavior, or behavior which threatens the safety of others is not acceptable, and will not 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 TRI programming 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 by phone at 937-317-4001.

ALCOHOL AND CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES

TRI will not tolerate the illegal possession, use, sale, dispensing or being under the influence of alcohol, drugs and narcotics while on TRI premises, or while representing TRI. TRI reserves the right to remove a volunteer from their duty and the premises if impairment is suspected.

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 Manager. 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 Manager. 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. It is 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. If it's safe to do so, get to the basement of the Administrative Building 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 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 the student's body space. Always ask if the individual would like assistance before you help. 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 and preferred way 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 and avoid talking slowly, over emphasizing words, and providing long verbalized 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 if necessary, by providing assistance to the student with their balance. Other methods of assistance include providing encouragement and aiding in the students' focus on the instructions given during the lesson. Students are also given goals each session that the side helpers help track their progress on.

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

To become a side helper, you must complete an application, complete a 90 minute on site training, and participate in some online learning in order to lay the groundwork for necessary information to proceed with the volunteering process. 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, you must complete an application, complete a 90 minute on site training, and participate in some online learning in order to lay the groundwork for the necessary information to proceed with the volunteering process. 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. In your training, you will be required to show knowledge of retrieving and leading your horse from their stall to the grooming area. There you will be demonstrating your knowledge about grooming, tacking and basic handling skills. Arena work will also be accessed with special attention to horsemanship at the walk and trot. This training is pass or fail at the discretion of the Equine Manager and/or Volunteer Manager. If additional training is necessary for a successful horse leader role, there will be opportunities to do so at the discretion of the Volunteer Manager. 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 time slot arranged and will be assigned a horse at the discretion of TRI's Equine Manager.

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

If you are interested in becoming an exercise rider, we will ask you to 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 scored by a 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 can come out for a tour of our farm and complete the necessary paperwork, or it can be completed online. 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 a member of the Barn Manager or Designee. **Additional training is needed for Horse Turnout.**

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 between 9-4.

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 Manager at 937-619-7577 or email sslepicka@triohio.org