

WELCOME TO FREEDOM REINS THERAPEUTIC RIDING CENTER

Thank you for choosing to volunteer in our program! Freedom Reins could not operate without the dedication and commitment of people like you in our community. Our riders could not ride without your support! We are looking forward to having you join our team. Any suggestions you have are always welcome as we strive to make our program the best it can be.

Therapeutic Riding is a horseback riding lesson for people with intellectual and/or physical disabilities. It can include mounted and unmounted activities that have the potential to build self-confidence, strength, endurance, balance and social skills. Please visit www.pathintl.org for more information on the benefits of therapeutic riding and other equine assisted activities and therapies (EAAT). Please visit our website at www.freedomreinscenter.org for more information on our beginnings and our staff. Our instructors are all trained and PATH certified.

OUR MISSION

Freedom Reins mission is to improve the bodies, minds, and spirit of children and adults with disabilities through the use of the horse in therapy. Freedom Reins is a 501(c) (3) Non-Profit Organization.

VOLUNTEER GENERAL GUIDELINES

Volunteers are the heart and soul of our program. Anyone who has the desire to help, love, and have a wonderful time is welcome. We have a variety of people who choose to help and many who have been with us for many years! No previous experience is necessary as our instructors will teach you everything you need to know. Please feel free to ask questions at any time. At your initial volunteer orientation/training, we will go over basic skills for equine handling and side walking to maintain the safety of our riders. You will learn a lot as you participate in the riding lesson, too. If you are not comfortable, we can provide a mentor that you can shadow until you feel ready to be on your own. In addition to directly working with horses and riders, Freedom Reins welcomes volunteers to assist in other areas associated with running the program. For example, grounds and stable management like mowing and fence repair, marketing, website

development, etc. There are many skills that volunteers have that would benefit the program, and ultimately, our riders and community!

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

It is the policy of Freedom Reins that any and all information pertaining to our riders; their families; and volunteers shall remain privileged and confidential. This information may include, but not limited to, any medical, social, referral, personal and/or financial information that may be disclosed as a result of participation in this program.

Volunteers will be given information concerning riders on a “need to know” basis and in keeping with the confidential nature of our clients’ records. Each rider shall be assured of record confidentiality and as such, only authorized staff will have access to a secured record location.

HOW MUCH WILL I BE VOLUNTEERING?

Freedom Reins asks that if assisting with the lesson, you commit yourself to at least one hour per week for the entire session. Our sessions are 6 weeks long with 2 weeks off between sessions. We operate March through November, three nights per week (Tues, Wed. and Thurs.). We offer two classes each night, each being one hour in length (6-7pm and 7:15-8:15pm). Whether you can offer us an hour or more per week, we do request that you try to remain consistent with the time and day you volunteer. We also ask that you arrive 15 minutes prior to the lesson. Volunteers are critical to the success of the program and we rely on their attendance to make classes go smoothly.

VOLUNTEER SCHEDULING

All scheduling is done through our **Volunteer Coordinator, Linda Klem**. She can be reached at **(812) 631-1725**. We ask that if you have a last minute emergency and cannot make your scheduled time, or are running late, please call the Volunteer Coordinator. We understand that scheduling conflicts will occur; however, cancellations can affect everyone involved in the class. If you are going to miss a class due to your schedule, please let us know as soon as possible so that we can find another volunteer to take your place.

VOLUNTEER ATTITRE

We will have our riding lessons indoors and outdoors, depending on the weather and instructor preference. Long pants are always recommended. Dust, horsehair and bugs can be bothersome. If you decide to wear shorts, please make sure they are appropriate length. Most volunteers wear a Freedom Reins T-shirt that can be purchased in order to maintain a professional look that distinguishes our volunteers from other people. Other shirts are acceptable; however, no spaghetti straps or bare midriff's please. Hats are acceptable as we may be outside. You may wear sunglasses; however, it is best if our riders can see your eyes to help keep a personal connection. In cold weather, please dress in layers and wear your jacket. Gloves are advisable as long as they have a firm grip. **CLOSED TOE SHOES ARE REQUIRED!** Tennis shoes, hiking boots and paddock boots are ideal, as we can be outside on rough or muddy terrain. Please wear limited jewelry as it is at risk of being pulled or grabbed and may get lost. Please limit fragrant perfumes or lotions as some of our riders are sensitive, and it can attract bees.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- No smoking, drugs or alcohol on premises. For the safety of our riders, please do not come to Freedom Reins while impaired from any substance that alters your ability and judgement.
- Classes held rain or shine.
- No running around horses. Approach horses from the side at their neck. They cannot see directly behind themselves.
- Instructors must be present when riders are mounting/dismounting the horse, unless you are trained by the instructor to do so.
- Please supervise riders at all times.
- Volunteers must complete the appropriate paperwork which provides Freedom Reins with emergency information and signed release forms prior to working as a volunteer.
- Freedom Reins reserves the right to dismiss a volunteer if they are negatively impacting the program or are in violation of the policies in this manual.

- Volunteers must not have been charged with or convicted of a crime committed upon children or animals. A background check may be requested.
- The suggested minimum age for working with our horses or riders is 14 years; however, may allow younger if someone has significant horsemanship experience and a legal guardian is present. If working as a side walker, they would need to have the physical ability and strength to assist the rider in event of an emergency.
- Volunteers do not ride the horses for safety reasons.
- No cell phone use during lessons. Please have them silenced.

INTERACTION GUIDELINES

- Be yourself. Use your normal tone of voice and give support.
- Speak directly to the person with the disability. Treat them like you would anyone else.
- Use simple and clear directions.
- Always ask before you touch them. For example, “Is it okay if I help you move your leg to adjust your stirrup?”
- Give the rider time to process information when doing an activity. After 5 seconds, give a verbal or tactile prompt. Please try to let them be as independent as possible. This is how they gain new skills and feel a sense of accomplishment.
- Horse leaders and Side walkers should limit their conversation unless it is directly involving the rider.
- Don’t be afraid to LAUGH WITH THE RIDER. Therapeutic Riding should be fun for everyone!
- If a rider is demonstrating inappropriate behavior, try to re-direct them by focusing them on something constructive or a different topic.
- Please use people first terminology. This places the focus on them and not their disability. For example, “I am working with a person with Down Syndrome.” Not “I am working with a Down’s kid”. The term “Mental Retardation” is no longer acceptable. The appropriate term is “People with Intellectual or Physical Disabilities”. The term “Special Needs” is also acceptable. “I work with people with Special Needs.”

HORSE LEADER RESPONSIBILITIES

You are directly responsible for the horse at all times until returned to pasture. The instructor and side walkers will ensure the safety of the riders. Horse leaders must be able to control the horse in an event of an emergency. Your job duties include:

- Grooming the horse
- Tacking up the horse
- Leading the horse safely up to mounting block
- Control the horse at a walk or trot during the lesson
- Listen for the rider's name during the lesson as the instructor is talking also talking to you
- Keep horse attention on you at all times and be aware of the horse's reaction to other horses, people and objects during the lesson
- Maintain at least 1-2 horse lengths in between horses throughout the lesson for safety

TIPS FOR LEADING HORSE SAFELY

- Lead at horse's neck or shoulder. Do not pull the horse or get in front of it. Use short tugs and your voice to encourage movement.
- Be aware of your side walker. Do not crowd them into props, on the rail (wall of arena) or while you are leading the horse.
- Make smooth transitions with the horse, no sharp turns as that could cause the rider to be off balance.
- Do not wrap lead rope around your hand. Hold it 6-12 inches from the buckle with one hand and hold the excess in the other hand.
- If at any time you need to pass another horse to maintain proper spacing, alert the rider you will be passing them to the inside. This is a great opportunity for your rider to communicate "Horse Passing" to their fellow rider in front of them.
- Give the rider a chance to respond to instructor's directions. Wait several seconds to allow them to turn, stop and start the horse.

SIDE WALKER RESPONSIBILITIES

You are directly responsible for the safety of the rider. The horse leader will be responsible for the horse's reactions and safety. If there are two side walkers, the person on the left will be the primary side walker. Your job duties will include:

- Greeting the rider upon their arrival.
- Getting their helmet or assisting them if they can do it. Helmets should be on the riders at ALL times around the horses.
- Helping the rider groom and tack up horse if they are willing and able.
- Helping the rider lead the horse around arena for warming up with the help of the horse leader.
- Assisting the instructor with mount/dismounting of rider. Assist the rider's leg over the horse's croup so it doesn't touch it.
- Listen to the instructor for lesson directions so that you may assist the rider in participating to their full potential. You are an extension of the instructor. Ask questions if you do not understand what to do.
- Alert instructor if equipment needs adjusting or rider needs their help.
- Once rider is dismounted, you will escort them out of the arena. They can help lead their horse out, groom and untack if willing to do so.

The instructor will let you know how much support to give the rider. There are different types of holds to assist with rider support.

- o Back support: The rider may have a harness or belt on you can hold onto to help them stay in the saddle. Be careful not to pull them off balance.
- o Arm over Thigh Hold: Place your forearm gently across the rider's thigh.
- o Ankle Hold: Hold onto ankle or even the pant leg, if instructed.
- o Floater: You will walk along side, but not physically need to hold onto the rider.

If you are doing an arm over thigh hold and your arm is tired, you can switch sides. First, you must let the instructor know so they can assist you. Go to the center of the arena for adjustments.

- Use the arm over thigh hold if unsure of how much assistance to give.
- If you are unfamiliar with the rider, remember to ask if you can touch them before putting your arm on their thigh.

IMPORTANT TIPS FOR SIDE WALKERS

- NEVER leave rider unattended. Ask for help if you need it.
- Maintain your position by the rider's knee.
- Try to limit conversation so that the rider can focus on instructor's directions and the activity.
- Reinforce instructor's directions if rider seems confused or did not hear them.
- Give rider plenty of time to process information and perform task. You may need to communicate with the horse leader to help rider accomplish the task correctly. For example, rider may be trying to steer to the left and the horse leader is turning them to the right. The goal is for the rider to see the cause and effect of his actions.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Emergency procedures have been developed to help ensure the safety of the rider and all individuals involved. There may be times that the instructor may want to practice emergency dismounts to help prepare riders and volunteers in the event of an emergency. Some examples of an emergency may be if the rider has a seizure, if a rider falls, a horse gets loose, or in the event of severe weather. Try to remain calm in all situations as this will help the horse, rider and everyone else involved.

SEIZURES

1. Alert instructor immediately if you see a seizure about to happen or happening.

2. The instructor will try to dismount rider before seizure occurs, or keep rider on horse during the seizure.
3. Leader stops horse and side walkers secure rider on horse. If you can get feet out of stirrups safely, try to do so.
4. Others in arena should stop and remain calm.

RIDER FALLS FROM HORSE

1. Horse leader should turn horse's head *toward* the rider to push the hind *away* from the rider, and lead the horse away. Head and hind of the horse go in opposite directions.
2. Side walker stays with rider until further direction from instructor.
3. All others in arena stop, maintain arm over thigh hold, until further direction from instructor.

LOOSE HORSE IN THE ARENA

1. All riders, leaders, and side walkers stop. Side walkers maintain an arm over thigh hold to secure the riders.
2. All volunteers stay with the rider; **DO NOT LEAVE RIDER TO CATCH THE HORSE.** Instructor and horse leader will get the horse.
3. Stay calm, speak softly if loose horse comes to you. You can try to grab reins of horse if able.

SEVERE WEATHER (This includes hail, thunder and lightning)

1. Leaders halt the horses.
2. Side walkers maintain arm over thigh hold.
3. Await specific directions from instructor. This may involve dismounting the riders and leaving the horses loose in the arena while everyone seeks shelter.

EMERGENCY DISMOUNTS

Make sure feet are out of the stirrups; if small rider, scoop off in your arms; if rider is larger, pull them off so that the rider lands on their feet first, if possible. If a side walker sees that a rider is falling off the horse, let the horse leader know to stop so they can assist the rider as needed.

RIDING TERMINOLOGY

- Inside-towards center of arena
- Outside-closest to the rail
- Rail-wall of arena
- Tracking left-rider is using left rein to inside of arena
- Tracking right-rider is using right rein to inside of the arena
- Reverse Direction-To change direction which can be done in a ½ circle reverse, or “on the diagonal” which is across arena in diagonal. Always turn to the inside of the arena when changing directions.
- Horse length-one horse length is about 8 feet
- Schooling figures-movements or patterns used to train the horse and rider. Examples being: Figure eight: two connecting circles
Or Serpentine: S-shaped figure, usually with three to six loops across the arena.

HIPPOTHERAPY

Hippotherapy is a physical, occupational or speech therapy treatment strategy that utilizes equine movement. The term “Hippos” means “horse” in Greek; therefore, Hippotherapy literally means “treatment with the help of a horse.” The three-dimensional movement of the horse affects the rider’s posture, balance, coordination, strength, and sensorimotor systems. It is different from Therapeutic Riding in that the movement of the horse influences the rider rather than the rider controlling the horse. The therapist selects horses that have the specific movement they want to translate over to their patient for the desired effects. They will then layer specific activities and use various positions to work on improving the sensory and neuromotor function that is needed to process information; the goal being to improve functional tasks like walking, self-care, and communication. A therapist may start using this treatment strategy for individuals with intellectual and/or physical disabilities as young as 2 years old.

Hippotherapy will be offered at Freedom Reins by a trained physical therapist starting in May 2016. If you are interested in volunteering for this, or would like more information, contact Carrie Smith, PT via phone (812) 216-7086 or email greatheightspt@gmail.com.