



**HEARTS**  
**THERAPEUTIC**  
Where Horses Help People

# Volunteer Handbook

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# About Hearts

## Hearts Mission Statement

Hearts employs the power of the horse to enhance the capabilities of children and adults with special needs

## Credentials

Hearts is recognized by the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA) as a "premier center" -- the highest possible level of accreditation, demonstrating a superior level of adherence to national industry standards.

All instructors are certified through NARHA.

## History

Hearts was established in 1985 with two lesson horses and a handful of students. During the past 20+ years, we have provided approximately 40,000 lesson hours to over 2,200 members of our community. Today we have twelve horses and serve 80 riders per week.

## Who we serve

Approximately 125 clients per year ride at Hearts, ranging in age from 3-93, with disabilities including autism, cerebral palsy, cancer, brain injuries, spinal cord injuries, multiple sclerosis, learning disabilities, Down syndrome, developmental delay, stroke, and fibromyalgia.

## Referrals

Students are referred by private physicians and therapists, Alpha Resource Center, California Children's Services, Hillside House, Cornerstone House, and word of mouth.

## Budget

Our annual budget is \$400,000. Less than one third of our income comes from lesson fees; the rest is raised through private donations, grants, and fundraising.

# About Therapeutic Riding

## **Psycho-Social Benefits:**

- Increased self-confidence, self-esteem and self-control
- Mastery of a difficult task
- Improved positive, social interactions and teamwork
- Increased ability to appropriately solicit help and act independently
- Increased desire to take risks
- Increased empathy and sense of empowerment
- Interaction with positive role models
- Experience of success in a supportive environment

## **Physical Benefits:**

- Improved coordination and normalized muscle tone
- Relaxation of tense muscles and working muscles that are weak or lose
- Improved posture, sitting and standing balance
- Improved gross and fine motor skills
- Increased functional range of motion and muscular strength
- Improved perceptual motor and sensory motor integration
- Improved cardiovascular function and stamina

## **Cognitive Benefits:**

- Increased vocabulary-application and recall
- Improved attention and concentration
- Improved sequencing and planning skills
- Improved judgment and critical thinking skills
- Improved flexibility in thinking
- Increased verbal integration and participation
- Increased visual and auditory discrimination

## **How It Works:**

As the horse moves, the rider is constantly thrown off-balance, requiring that the rider's muscles contract and relax in an attempt to rebalance the body. This exercise reaches deep muscles not accessible in conventional physical therapy. The three-dimensional rhythmical movement of the horse is similar to the motion of walking, teaching rhythmical patterns to the muscles of the legs and trunk. Stopping and starting the horse, changing speed, and changing direction add to the workout.

Even though riding is exercise, it is perceived as enjoyment, and therefore the rider has increased tolerance and motivation to lengthen the period and frequency of exercise.

Repetition of patterned movements required in controlling a horse quickens the reflexes and aids in motor planning.

Riding a horse requires stretching multiple muscle groups. Spasticity is reduced by the rhythmic motion of the horse. Sitting astride a horse helps to reduce extensor spasms of the lower limbs. Riding stimulates the tactile senses through touch and environmental stimuli. The vestibular system is also stimulated by the movement of the horse, and by changes in direction and speed.

Exercise in the fresh air, away from hospitals, doctors' offices, therapy rooms, or home helps to promote a sense of well-being. The ability to control an animal much larger and stronger than oneself is a great confidence builder.

*Excerpted from  
Flying Changes for Therapeutic Riding ([www.flyingchanges.org](http://www.flyingchanges.org))  
and Strides Therapeutic Riding ([www.strides.org](http://www.strides.org))*

# Important Information for ALL Volunteers

## Qualifications of a GREAT Hearts volunteer

- ♥ Dependable: Time commitment will vary depending on specific volunteer job or project
- ♥ Flexible: Willing to lend a hand in a variety of projects and tasks
- ♥ Safety: Hearts follows *all* NARHA standards and safety regulations. Volunteers are to be aware of the rules and policies and help to enforce them.
- ♥ Attitude: Ready to have a lot of fun and work hard with many types of personalities
- ♥ Pro-Active: Volunteers are encouraged to ask questions about therapeutic riding and our mission, and take initiative within their job description

## Requirements to Volunteer

- ♥ ALL volunteers must adhere to rules, policies, and procedures. Procedure taken when rules or policies are broken (NARHA Standard P17):
  - 1<sup>st</sup> offense: verbal discussion with supervisor and written documentation in volunteer's file
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> offense: verbal discussion with supervisor and written documentation in volunteer's file stating this is the last warning. If minor, parents or guardians will be notified
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> offense: termination and asked to leave property and program
- ♥ Minimum age for program volunteers (working with riders and horses) is 14; volunteers under 14 years of age may participate in specific activities not involving horses or riders, accompanied by a parent or guardian.
- ♥ Ability to multi-task
- ♥ Work independently with little/no supervision

## Dismissal of Volunteers from Program or Property

Hearts reserves the right to deny or dismiss volunteers (NARHA Standard P17)

There will be an immediate dismissal of any volunteer or guest that is engaging in any illegal inappropriate or unsafe activities on Hearts property.

*Immediate dismissal from program and property is as follows:*

- ♥ Inappropriate or abusive behavior towards others
- ♥ Failure to follow established safety rules, policies, or procedures as listed in this handbook and future additions posted
- ♥ Usage or suspected usage or influence of drugs or alcohol influence while at Hearts or any Hearts event
- ♥ Allegation of mistreatment or abuse of equines and other animals on site
- ♥ Dogs off-leash
- ♥ Smoking

## Commitment

Commitment will vary depending on the job. Lesson volunteers are asked to commit to 8 consecutive weeks. Facility and administrative volunteer commitments will be discussed on an individual basis with the supervisor (facility manager, executive director, program director, or director of volunteers). If a volunteer's schedule suddenly changes, it is their responsibility to inform their supervisor.

\* \*\*Hearts depends on ALL volunteers to complete their commitment. If a volunteer "backs-out" or is a "no-show" to their job, the entire program is affected (e.g. short on lesson volunteers so lessons are affected)

## Confidentiality at Hearts

Accredited NARHA centers are required to have a confidentiality policy for its staff and volunteers in order to maintain the privacy of its clients (NARHA Standard A18). Staff and volunteers may come into contact with riders' medical, social, personal or financial information. Please respect the privacy of our riders and their families. Both Hearts' staff and volunteers are required to sign a confidentiality agreement. Hearts staff may *not* tell volunteers about a rider's diagnosis unless it is a potential safety hazard. A volunteer may ask the rider, if the rider is over 18 and independent (does not require the assistance of a parent, aide, or caregiver). Otherwise, volunteers should direct any questions to the parent, aide, or caregiver.

## Working with Hearts Riders

Treat riders with *respect*. Speak to riders appropriately for their *age* and do not yell. *Be patient* and allow 30 seconds to pass before repeating a statement or question, as some riders may need extra processing time. Some riders may have lowered inhibitions both in personal space and verbal expression. Please be aware of this and act appropriately (avoid hugs, pay extra attention to your language and conversation, etc.)

For more information on disabilities, please look at the "disabilities you may see" section of this handbook.

## Volunteers are Role Models

Volunteers become role models for riders and other volunteers. No profane language will be tolerated at Hearts. Please keep conversations appropriate and clean. Lead by example: a rider may imitate a volunteer's behavior...both good and bad.

## Volunteer Attire

*All volunteers on Hearts' property must wear closed shoes* (e.g. sneakers, boots). Volunteers may wear jeans, pants or shorts (short length – to finger tips when arms are at sides), but not low cut shirts or shirts that expose the stomach or showing of personal undergarments (bra straps or "sagging"). Please do not wear baggy clothes or dangling jewelry (e.g. hoop earrings, necklaces, bracelets) that can be pulled or caught. (NARHA Standard P19)

## Cell Phones and Personal Items

While at Hearts, keep personal cell phone conversation to a minimum and the ringer on silent. Hearts Therapeutic Equestrian Center is *not* responsible for any personal items. Please keep any valuables at home or locked in the car. Hearts can place keys in a less exposed location upon request, however keys will *not be placed in a locked location*.

## Taking Pictures and Videos

Pictures of riders, staff, and other volunteers may be taken only if the rider, volunteer, or staff has signed a consent form. Additionally, a volunteer should ask the rider or parent/guardian/care-giver for permission and explain to them why the picture is being taken (personal, for Hearts publication, school projects, etc.) Volunteers have the right to NOT have their picture taken (there is a consent form in the volunteer application packet; NARHA Standard A12).

## Visitors

Any person who visits Hearts to shadow a lesson volunteer must to be *pre-approved* by a Hearts staff member. Be aware that visitors may be required to fill out paperwork.

## General Policies and Rules

All volunteers are expected to *adhere to and help enforce* ALL of Hearts' policies and rules. Each volunteer job has a different set of policies, for which the volunteer will be responsible to reading in later sections of this handbook. The following rules are for everyone at Hearts (volunteers, visitors, staff, and riders):

- ♥ Smoking is not allowed anywhere on the property, including in cars
- ♥ Park in designated areas only
- ♥ Speed limit is 5 MPH (un-licensed drivers are responsible for informing their driver)
- ♥ No weapons or firearms are permitted
- ♥ No running
- ♥ All volunteers must wear closed shoes
- ♥ No un-authorized use of program horses (grazing, grooming, riding, etc.) or program property
- ♥ No climbing through, on, or over corrals
- ♥ Dogs must be on-leash and kept 100 feet away from lesson location (cross-ties, arena, trails, etc.)
- ♥ Horse treats are to be placed in the buckets on the stalls, and not hand fed
- ♥ Only authorized personnel (feeders/cleaners/staff/approved volunteers) are permitted in the hay barn
- ♥ Volunteers and visitors should not talk to a rider who is in the arena having a lesson

## Center Safety

Phones: 5 phones → 1 in the learning center, 4 in administration building. Next to each phone is a phone list of emergency contacts as well as Hearts PHYSICAL address.

Fire Extinguishers: 3 → 1 in learning center, 1 in administration building, 1 in hay barn

First Aid Kits: 3 → 1 large in learning center, 1 small in administration building, 1 small in hay barn

CPR masks: in large first aid kit in learning center (NARHA Standard A8)

# Hearts Volunteers Beyond the Barn

Hearts runs with a staff less than 10. There are many, many ways to contribute to the well being of Hearts that does not involve getting covered in horse hair....

## **Board of Directors**

Description: The Board of Directors assumes the ultimate responsibility for the overall success of the organization.

Qualifications: New board members are selected by a vote of the current Board.

Duties / responsibilities:

The Board of Directors meets monthly to review the financial status and progress of the organization. The Board selects and supervises the Executive Director.

## **Auxiliary Board**

Description: The Auxiliary Board promotes the awareness and support of Hearts in and around the community of Santa Barbara.

Supervisor: Executive Director

Qualifications: The Auxiliary Board is open to anyone who chooses to become a member.

Duties / responsibilities:

The Auxiliary Board meets monthly. Members enjoy socializing, learning about the "State of the Barn" at Hearts and planning and implementing supporting activities that support or promote Hearts. Attend Hearts events as desired.

## **Advisory Board**

Description: Advisory Board members provide professional consultation to Hearts on an as-needed basis.

Supervisor: Executive Director

Qualifications: Professional expertise and community contacts that could be beneficial.

Training: No training is necessary

Duties / responsibilities:

Consult with the Executive Director and Program Director as requested, if available. Attend an Advisory Board party once per year to learn about the current programs and future plans for Hearts. Attend Hearts events as desired.

## **Development Team**

Description: The Development Team learns and implements the Benevon Fundraising Model to build long-term, sustainable funding for Hearts.

Supervisor: Executive Director

Qualifications: Experience with fundraising is desirable but not necessary.

Training: Training in the Benevon fundraising model will be provided.

Duties / responsibilities:

The Development Team meets monthly to plan and implement bi-monthly Open House events, the annual Pegasus Luncheon, and various donor cultivation activities.

## **Veterans Committee**

Description: The Veterans Committee promotes *Horses for Heroes* to US Veterans, potential supporters, and the Santa Barbara community.

Supervisor: Program Director

Qualifications: Experience with marketing, public relations, or fundraising is desirable but not necessary.

Training: No training is necessary

Duties / responsibilities:

The Veterans Committee meets monthly to plan promotional activities. Members volunteer to complete tasks between meetings, as desired.

## **Grant Writer**

Description: Volunteer to write grant proposals

Supervisor: Executive Director

Qualifications: Experience as grant writer is necessary

Training: Additional training will be provided through strategic planning for proposal requests and feedback on proposals written

Duties / responsibilities:

The grant writer will research and write selected grant proposals. Work can be done at home on a flexible schedule.

## **Photographer / Videographer**

Description: Volunteer to take photographs and/or videos to promote Hearts in publications such as newsletters, the annual report, the Hearts website, and Facebook, etc.

Supervisor: Executive Director

Qualifications: Experience as a photographer / videographer is desirable

Training: No training is necessary

Duties / responsibilities:

The photographer or videographer will come to Hearts at appointed times to photograph the horses, staff, volunteers, and riders. Photos will be provided to Hearts in digital format and on disk and will become the property of Hearts. All photos will be reviewed by a Hearts staff member before being published to ensure that subjects have given written consent to be photographed. Photographer or videographer will receive appropriate credit for published work if desired.

## **Journalist**

Description: Volunteer to write articles to promote Hearts in publications such as newspapers, newsletters, the annual report, the Hearts website, etc.

Supervisor: Executive Director

Qualifications: Experience as a writer is desirable

Training: Feedback and editing of articles will be provided

Duties / responsibilities:

The Journalist will write brief articles, as needed, on topics determined by the Hearts staff members.

### **Website Assistant**

Description: Volunteer to update the Hearts website on a bi-monthly basis, if needed.

Supervisor: Executive Director

Qualifications: Experience with website design is desirable but not necessary

Training: Will receive training as needed

Duties / responsibilities:

The website assistant will update the Hearts website with current information and photos, as requested by Hearts Staff members. Work can be done at Hearts or at home.

### **Administrative Assistant**

Description: Volunteer to do administrative work in the Hearts office

Supervisor: Executive Director

Qualifications: Experience in office work is desirable

Training: Training will be provided as needed

Duties / responsibilities:

Administrative Assistant will work in the Hearts office on a regularly scheduled basis and will do a variety of tasks including database entries, copying and filing of papers, letter writing, etc.

# LESSON VOLUNTEERS

Lesson volunteers work directly with our NARHA certified instructors by assisting in all aspects of daily lessons: grooming, tacking and un-tacking, leading, spotting, and side-walking. Lesson volunteers comprise more than half of all types of volunteers at Hearts. Hearts could not operate without them. Tremendous thanks go out to all lesson volunteers in advance!!!!

## General Lesson Volunteer Information

*Commitment:* Volunteers are asked to give 8 consecutive weeks on a specific day and time (e.g., Wednesday 1:00-3:00, or Saturday 9:00-12:00). Hearts ask for at least a 24 hour notice if you are unable to make the lessons.

*Training:* ALL lesson volunteers are required to attend an orientation and complete all stages of training and tests for each stage, regardless of horse experience.

- ♥ Orientation
- ♥ Shadow day
- ♥ Stage 1: Haltering & Grooming
- ♥ Stage 2: Tacking
- ♥ Stage 3: Side-walking
- ♥ Stage 4: Leading & Spotting

*Weather:* Hearts will cancel lessons due to rain, extreme wind or heat, or if the property is still too wet or muddy to conduct lessons safely. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to call Hearts, 964-1519, to confirm.

*Arrival and Departure Procedures:* Please be sure to arrive on-time. Upon arrival, sign in, put on a name-tag and check in with the volunteer coordinator. When leaving, sign out and put the name-tag back in the file. Volunteers should stay for the entire scheduled time.

*Community Service Hours:* Hearts will keep track of community service hours, provide volunteers are signing in properly.

*Cell phones:* Cell phones are to be kept in the learning center or your car. The use of cell phones is not allowed when working in the cross-ties or in lessons.

*Food and drink:* Volunteers are permitted to bring drinks and snacks to their volunteer shift. However, chewing gum, eating, and drinking are not allowed in the arena or while handling a horse. This is for the safety of both the volunteers, riders and horses.

## Lesson Volunteer Job Descriptions:

### *Groomer:*

Definition and responsibilities: A volunteer who brings a lesson horse to the cross-ties and prepares it for being tacked up by thoroughly cleaning the coat and hooves.

Supervisor: Director of volunteers

Qualifications: Is able to work independently with little or no supervision.

Training: Shadow an experienced, assigned Hearts volunteer and pass required tests.

### *Tacker:*

Definition and responsibilities: A volunteer who, after a horse is properly groomed, tacks up a lesson horse based on the specification of the daily lesson roster. This person is responsible for having the lesson horses ready for each lesson 5 minutes prior to the scheduled lesson, with the correct tack.

Supervisor: Director of volunteers

Qualifications: Is able to work independently with little or no supervision, and lift up to 25 lbs.

Training: Shadow an experienced, assigned Hearts volunteer and pass required tests.

### *Side-walker:*

Definition and responsibilities: A side-walker works directly with riders in the lessons giving a variety of support (physical, emotional, etc.). A side-walker is responsible for the rider only.

Supervisor: Director of volunteers, a NARHA certified instructor

Qualifications: Able to work independently with little or no supervision, lift up to 35 lbs, walk and jog alongside a rider on un-even ground for up to 45 minutes, able to react in a timely manner to any unexpected movements from the horse

Training: Watch a lesson, shadow an experienced volunteer in a pre-approved lesson, work in a lesson while being directly supervised with an experienced volunteer or director of volunteers, and pass required tests.

### *Leader:*

Definition and responsibilities: a leader works in a lesson and is responsible for the control of the horse.

Supervisor: Director of volunteers, a NARHA certified Instructor

Qualifications: able to work independently with little or no supervision, walk and jog for 30 minutes to an hour on un-even ground, able to react in a timely manner to any unexpected horse behavior or movements.

Training: Watch a lesson, shadow an experienced volunteer in a pre-approved lesson, work in a lesson while being directly supervised with an experienced volunteer or director of volunteers, and pass required tests.

### *Spotter:*

Definition and responsibilities: A spotter is a leader who “unhooks” (takes the lead line off the halter during the lesson). A spotter remains in the leading position and take control of the horse when necessary or as directed by the instructor.

Supervisor: Director of volunteers, a NARHA certified Instructor

Qualifications: able to work independently with little or no supervision, walk/jog for 30 minutes to an hour on un-even ground, able to react in a timely manner to any unexpected horse behavior and movements

Training: Watch a lesson; shadow an experienced volunteer in a pre-approved lesson, work in a lesson while being directly supervised by an experienced volunteer or director of volunteers, and pass required tests.

## GETTING READY FOR A LESSON

### *GROOMING:*

**What:** All lesson horses require grooming before and after a lesson. This includes picking their feet, brushing their coat (especially the saddle and girth area), combing their mane and tail, applying fly spray, sponging if necessary and occasionally tending to minor cuts or wounds.

**Why:** Brushing the area where the saddle or pad will be placed is important because dirt, mud, shedding hair will rub and cause discomfort to the horse. Other than helping to keep the horses clean, grooming gives volunteers the chance to look over their body for any cuts, swelling, etc. If there are cuts or swelling inform the instructor, director of volunteers or program director. If a horse is spooking or pulling back while hooked in the cross-ties area, reach to the top of the post where the nylon tie is attached, pull down firmly on the flat metal portion of the nylon tie to release the horse, and allow the horse to get out on their own terms. NEVER chase after a horse. Inform a staff member immediately.

### **How:**

1. Always bring the horse through the back of the cross-ties. Do not turn them around in that small space.
2. Bring out the grooming box from the tack room. Each horse has its own grooming box. This is to help prevent skin irritations from being spread. Be sure to set the grooming box on top of the cross-tie railing so people and horses won't trip over it. A grooming box should contain one of the following: hoof pick, rubber and/or metal curry, hard body brush and soft face brush, clean cloth and mane and tail comb or brush
3. Picking Hooves: Starting with left fore, face the horse's tail, run hand down leg while leaning into horse slightly to get them to shift their weight. Pick up foot supporting it at top of hoof. Clean out all clefts in hoof, make sure no rocks, packed in dirt, or mud remains.
4. Curry with metal curry if there is dried mud, otherwise use rubber curry comb in circular motions beginning behind horse's ear and working towards tail. Curry combs are used only on the body, not on legs or the face.
5. Using the hard body brush, brush in the direction of hair growth, starting behind the ear and working towards the tail on both sides, paying special attention to where the saddle and saddle and girth are placed. A hard body brush is to be used only on body, not on legs or face.
6. Use the soft face brush on legs and face, paying extra attention to where the bridle is placed.
7. If eyes, nose, or ears are dirty or runny, clean with clean cloth.
8. Spray fly spray on legs and belly of horse and if needed. Spray fly repellent on a cloth and wipe around eyes, nostrils and ears. Approach the horse's face slowly and be aware some horses may not be ok with having their face wiped with anything.
9. Comb out mane and tail with the comb. If the tail is extremely tangled, use a detangling spray.



## TACKING:

**What:** The daily lesson roster informs the volunteers of what horse and tack are to be used and at what time. *Read every column and pay close attention* to see if there are special notes about the tack (ex: add a seat saver, reins on halter, or the stirrups need to be changed).

**Why:** Each horse, for each lesson may have different tack assigned to it. This is because each rider has different equipment needs.

### How:

1. After the horse is groomed, check the lesson roster for tack assignments: saddle number, stirrups, reins, add-ons (seat saver, rubber-bands, etc.)
2. Retrieve ALL pieces from the tack room: saddle, girth, correct pads, reins, different stirrup leathers or irons if needed, any adaptive equipment and place them on the railings of the cross-ties. Do not place equipment on the ground.
3. English Saddles:
  - Pads:

English saddles require 2 pads (white fleece and square patterned/colored pad). Place the square English pad on first, followed by the white fleece English pad. After the saddle is on, pull up on saddle pads at the whither to give space between saddle pad and the horse's whither.
  - Girths:

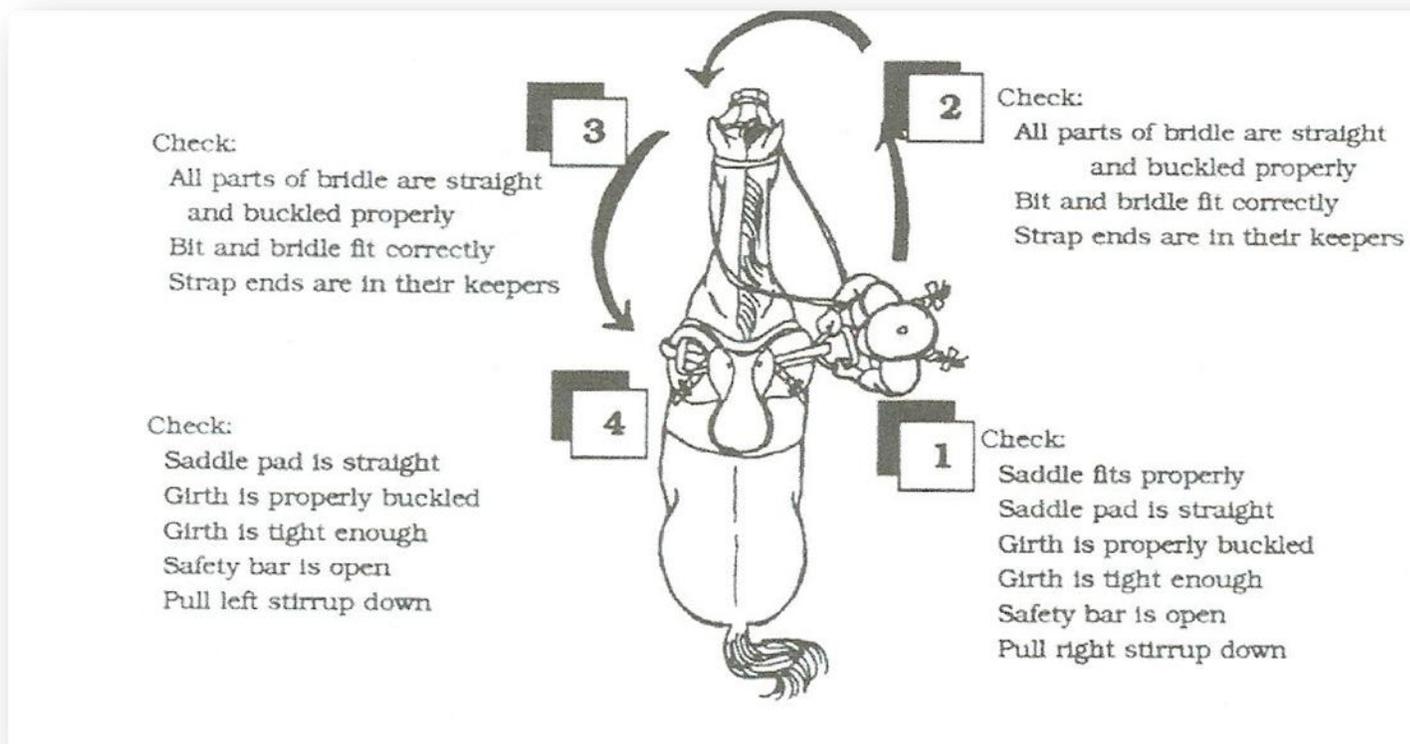
Sizing girths: on the RIGHT side of the saddle, attach the elastic side of the girth and let it hang. The bottom of the girth should reach the horse's ankle.  
DO NOT tighten girth completely. Leave it loose enough to be able to slide your hand under the girth and be able to pull it out about 1/2".
4. Western Saddles:
  - Pads:

Western pads are rectangular and thicker than the English square pads. Place the western pad on the horse's back. The front of the pad should be far enough forward to "cut" the horse's shoulder in half. Gently place the western saddle on the horse's back.
  - Girths or chinchies:

Sizing girths: the middle ring of the girth should be off center 2" to the right.  
DO NOT tighten girth completely. Leave it loose enough to slide a hand under the girth and be able to pull the girth out about 1/2".
5. Bridle: Before bridling, ALWAYS unhook the horse from the cross-ties nylons and do not hook the cross-ties to the bit. Leave the reins OFF while the horse is in the cross-ties.
  - Bridle:

Leave the halter on and put the bridle on OVER the halter (if a rider pulls too hard on the reins, the reins can switch them from the bit to the halter)

6. Safety check: The instructor will always do a safety check before and after the rider gets on. It is the of the volunteer responsibility to make sure the correct tack is on, but it is ultimately up to the instructor to insure the safety of any equipment used.



## UN-TACKING

**What:** After the lesson, all pieces of tack should be put back to their proper places. Groom or sponge down the horse and pick the hoofs to make sure there are no rocks. If a rider would like to help un-tack or groom their horse, ask the instructor if it is ok.

**Why:** It is important to groom or sponge the horse after lessons to keep them clean and to make sure no skin irritations develop. Picking the hoofs after *each* lesson will eliminate rocks that may have been picked up and lodged in the hooves during the lessons or trail ride.

### How:

1. Always bring the horse through the back of the cross-ties. Do not turn them around in that small space.
2. Take-off the bridle before you hook the horse up to the cross-ties
3. Remove saddle and saddle pad from left side by lifting off the horse's back. Do not **pull** off as this can hurt the horse's back.
4. If horse is sweaty, sponge off sweaty areas and give a quick brush with the hard Body brush. Check hooves for stones.
5. Bring the horse back to its stall. Hang the halter with buckle facing out and buckled with the rope attached over top rail of the stall with several slip knots.
6. Be sure to close *and* latch the gate

## IN THE LESSON

### *SIDE-WALKING*

**What:** In a lesson, the side-walker is responsible for the rider only. A side-walker may be asked to give a support hold or interact with the rider. As a reminder, you are an *extension* of the instructor. Please respect that boundary and understand that the instructors have specialized certifications, and will always communicate to the side-walker of the specifics of each rider prior to the lesson.

**Why:** A side-walker can enhance the benefits of the lesson with their interaction with the riders. Side-walkers are also very important for the safety of a rider who may need some physical support.

**How:**

*Passive side-walking:* Side-walkers doing passive side-walking are responsible for keeping an eye on the body position of the rider. They may also be responsible for assisting to communicate commands to the rider from the instructor either by tactile or verbal commands \*Side-walkers should position themselves next to rider's leg about 6 inches away from the horse. They should stay between the horse's shoulder and rider's leg at all times. They may also be required to assist in cueing the horse to move forward by applying pressure next to the rider's leg. *Usually they do not* keep a hand on their rider constantly. In an emergency situation they are responsible for the safety of the rider.

*Active side-walking:* Side-walkers doing active side-walking are responsible for physically keeping a rider centered or balanced on the horse, for the entire lesson, using a variety of holds. The active side-walker's position is the same as the passive side-walker's. The instructor directs the volunteer on the type of holds to use for each rider. If an active side-walker becomes tired they must speak up and ask for a rest or to switch sides. They are not allowed to remove their hold for any reason unless the instructor tells them to do so. In an emergency situation the side-walkers are responsible for the safety of the rider. The side-walker on the left may be required to do an emergency dismount if the instructor cannot reach the student in time.

*Communication to the:*

- Riders: allow time for the rider to process the instruction; give minimal assistance such as repeating the instruction, tapping the hand that they need to use to turn, or explain the instructions in a different way. Be sure not to communicate to the rider over the instructor. Too much communication may confuse or frustrate the rider
- Leaders: if the side-walker needs to stop the horse to re-adjust the rider, or make a personal adjustment, inform the leader that they need to halt the horse. The side-walkers should let the leader know if they are being "squished" into a fence, barrel, bushes, etc
- Instructor: if a volunteer is ever unsure about their position or the amount of "hands on" side-walking that should be done, ALWAYS ask the instructor; it is the responsibility of the instructor to let the volunteers know what their specific job is at the beginning of each lesson
- Other side-walkers: with a rider that uses 2 side-walkers, be sure that one side-walker is designated as the "talking" side-walker

**Support Holds:** The instructor will always inform you of what type and when to give a support hold.

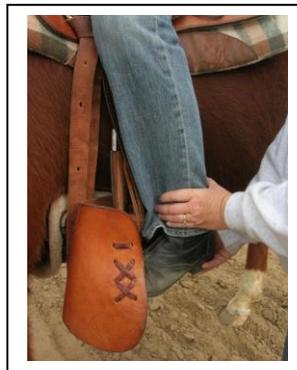
1. Arm over thigh: This position provides support for the rider without interfering with the rider's trunk control, allowing the rider to build up strong trunk support. The side-walker grips the front of the saddle with the hand closest to the rider and, then rests the forearm gently on the rider's thigh, being careful that the elbow doesn't dig into the riders' thigh or the horse's back.
2. Ankle support: This is the least restrictive form of support, allowing the rider to use all muscles to provide his or her own support. If a rider slips, a light tug will bring the rider back into alignment with the saddle. DO NOT yank on the ankle, and DO NOT keep constant pressure.

### Correct holds

Arm over thigh



Ankle hold



### Incorrect holds



**What:** One of the most challenging duties is the position of leader. A leader's FIRST responsibility is the horse but the leader must also always be aware of the rider, the instructor's directions, and any potential hazards in or around the arena. The role of the Leader is to lead the horse while allowing the rider to make every attempt to control their horse whenever possible. The leader should be aware of the horse's actions and reactions at all times.

**Why:** The rider should be listening to the directions of the instructor. For this reason, volunteers should not to speak unnecessarily to each other or to the riders during the lesson.

**How:**

1. Correct Position: The correct body position for the leader is the area between the horse's throat lash and shoulder, looking ahead, confident and definite in their steps, stops, and direction. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to be a partner with the horse, walking along in a relaxed but attentive manner beside the horse's neck with the volunteer's shoulders square, eyes up and walking or halting with purpose.
2. Leader's body language: Leaders communicate with the horse by using their body language, for effective leading. Horses are herd animals and want a leader. The body language of a leader tells the horse that the leader is in charge of the situation. This requires the leader's head to be up, looking where they are going with a sense of leadership. This leadership we give the horses encourages them to feel safe.
3. Holding the lead rope: The lead rope is held in the right hand between 4 -12" from the halter snap. There should be no tension in the lead rope so the horse's head moves naturally. The leader's left hand holds the remaining part of the lead rope, being careful not to coil the lead rope around the hand. Holding the lead rope in this way provides better control of the horse. A horse needs the freedom to move its head in order to maintain its balance. Having space from the halter snap, without tension in the lead rope, allows the horse's head to move naturally. Coiling a lead rope around the hand is dangerous, if a horse pulls back a serious injury could occur.
4. Horse's Position: Picture an imaginary rectangle around the entire body of your horse. All communication from the Leader to the horse happens in this rectangle. The horse must always stay in its rectangle beside the leader while working. The horse looks for direction and guidance from the Leader while in this position. Consistency and repeating the directions teaches the horse the correct position through positive reinforcement. Therefore if the leader changes the speed or direction they are going, the horse remains in the rectangle beside the leader regardless of what the leader does – just like a dog heeling in an obedience class.

If the horse comes out of the rectangle you must reinforce the position of the horse in the rectangle beside you by reacting appropriately to the horse's action. If the horse pushes through the expected position beside the leader, the leader should bring their arm or dressage whip to the front of the horse's chest to reinforce the front of the rectangle barrier. If the horse lags behind and drags behind the rectangle, then the leader uses the dressage whip or tail end of the lead rope to encourage the horse to move up beside the leader. At all times the leader is subtly reinforcing and clarifying the expected position of the horse beside the leader. This reinforcement keeps the horse's attention and desired behavior.

5. Maintaining a correct pace: The half-halt is an additional communication method used in riding as well as in ground schooling. The leader will subtly squeeze and release the lead rope to give the horse a warning that a change is about to happen. This is repeated in combination with the reinforcement of the barrier until the horse responds. For the half-halt to be effective, the leader must walk with their head up and shoulders straight, being aware of their own body language on the horse.
  - Examples of situations that may require a half-halt are: 1) to prepare for upward or downward transitions; 2) to maintain a desired gait or speed; 3) a correction for inappropriate behavior; 4) a gentle reminder to pay attention. This is all done in conjunction with the enforcement of the position of the horse in the rectangle. The half-halt is an effective tool for the Leader in order to better control the horse. Leaders must remember the half-halt is NOT a tug of war, but a pressure and release technique that requires practice.
6. Voice Commands: Choose voice commands that are consistent with the vocabulary expected for the riders. Using the correct voice commands maintains consistency for the horses: “whoa” for halt; “easy” to slow pace; “trot” to trot; “walk on” to walk forward
7. Safe spacing: Safe horse spacing is the distance between horses maintained by the Leader throughout the entire lesson. Safe spacing is approximately 2-3 horse lengths from the horse in front or behind you. When lining up or walking side by side, horses should be no closer than 1 horse length apart. Horses can get fussy when put too close together and could kick out which is very dangerous to the side-walkers. Also keeping a safe horse distance allows riders to be able to make circles or change direction without bumping into each other or making turns that are too tight, which will unbalance the horse and the rider.
8. Turning: In order to correctly take a horse through a turn the leader must keep the horse on its intended track while maintaining the horse’s speed. Extend your arm in order to keep the horse in its track. The horse should always be pushed away from the volunteer in a turn to go the other direction. If a horse is pulled towards the volunteer, in the turn, they risk being stepped on accidentally by the horse. Using body language and half-halts as needed so as to keep the horse moving at the speed dictated through the turn. It is the job of the leader to keep the horse at the dictated pace throughout the entire lesson. A Leader must realize that a horse should not be turned abruptly. Always allow the horse to take at least 3-4 steps forward before attempting to make a turn. Look and walk with intention, extend arm to keep the horses on track.

Tips for leading:

- Do not walk backwards
- Do not talk to rider or side-walkers
- If a rider falls, halt and stay with the horse
- Be aware of the side-walkers and the obstacles in the arena

## MOUNTS/DISMOUNTS

**What:** Riders can get on and off the horses in a variety of ways: crest, croup, ramp, block or ground. During mounts and dismounts, there is a lot possibility for injury. It is VERY important to follow the instructor's direction. If at any time, a volunteer is not comfortable helping the riders, they should inform the volunteer coordinator or instructor.

**Why:** Based on the riders' needs, mounts and dismounts can be different.

**How:**

### Mount:

- Leaders:
  - The instructor will always check the tack before the rider gets on
  - The instructor will call you to the ramp. Never enter the ramp area without the instructor asking you to do so.
  - When leading the horse to the ramp, you will turn around to walk backwards at the beginning of the stairs. Gently bring the horse's head over the ramp to get the horse close. The instructor will inform you when to stop.
  - Keep the horse still and calm for the entire mount
  - Wait for the instructor to cue you to exit the ramp. Walk straight out towards the arena until the instructor cues you to stop.
  - The instructor will then perform an additional safety check and adjust the stirrups.
- Side-walkers:
  - Wait on off-side mounting block for horse to enter the ramp
  - Your job is to spot the rider at the mount. The instructor will tell you if you need to do anything specific for the rider
  - Once the rider is on, walk alongside the horse (going up and down steps) until ramp is cleared
  - The instructor may have you switch sides while stirrups are adjusted

### Dismount:

- Leaders:
  - The instructor will inform you where to halt the horse. Some riders get off at the ramp, others to the ground.
  - Stay in your leading position and keep the horse still and calm
  - After the rider thanks the volunteer and horse, the horse may be lead back to the cross-ties.
- Side-walkers:
  - Assist the rider remove their feet from the stirrups
  - The instructor will inform you as to how the rider will be dismounting (croup or crest) and your responsibility.

## **EMERGENCIES INVOLVING STUDENTS**

**If the incident involves an injured rider, the Instructor will halt the class, designate volunteers to call 911 for assistance (if by cell phone, ask dispatcher for Santa Barbara County Sheriff), notify the parent/guardian in the parking lot, proceed to the entrance gate to guide emergency equipment to the incident and retrieve the first aid kit located in the Learning Center. The injured rider will be treated for life-threatening conditions (breathing/bleeding), made comfortable, but not moved. Insure people entering the arena to not run, if possible. The Instructor may request students and horses exit the arena with their Side-walkers/Leaders. The Instructor will complete an Incident Report.**

### **IF A STUDENT FALLS OFF**

The Instructor will halt all class participants where they are, if safe to do so without crowding the horse/fallen rider. If there is any horse close to the fallen rider, the Leader will immediately hook up and will quietly lead the horse 4 horse lengths away. Volunteers will remain calm and stay with designated assignments. The Instructor will ask for assistance and/or designate actions, including dismounting other riders.

The Instructor will help the fallen student and assign jobs for volunteers.

If the student appears injured, the Instructor will designate volunteers to call 911 for assistance, notify parent/guardian in the parking lot, retrieve the first aid kit, and act as guide at the driveway entrance.

The Instructor will administer first aid and keep the rider still and as comfortable as possible. If the rider is uninjured, the Instructor will allow time for the rider to regain composure and watch for any delayed reactions.

If the class is a group lesson, sometimes the other riders will be frightened and the Instructor can explain the incident to the other students.

If any horse becomes restless or hard to handle, it will be removed from the arena.

### **IF A STUDENT "BAILS OFF"**

With this type of student, efforts are made to keep the student engaged in the activity to prevent "bailing." Volunteers will alert the Instructor if they feel a student might voluntarily dismount. If "bailing" is imminent, the Instructor will dismount the student in the proper way.

If the student "bails off" before the Instructor can properly dismount the student and the student is uninjured after dismounting, the Instructor will halt the group. The Side-walker will remain with the dismounted student and the Leader with the horse. The Instructor may remount the student.

If the student appears injured, the Instructor will designate volunteers to call 911 for assistance, notify parent/guardian in the parking lot, retrieve the first aid kit, and act as guide at the driveway entrance.

The Instructor will administer first aid and keep the rider still and as comfortable as possible.

If the rider is uninjured, the Instructor will allow time for the rider to regain composure and watch for any delayed reactions.

If the class is a group lesson, sometimes the other riders will be frightened and the Instructor can explain the incident to the other students.

If any horse becomes restless or hard to handle, it will be removed from the arena,

## IF THE STUDENT BECOMES ILL OR INJURED

Side-walker will alert the Instructor and Leader if a student becomes ill and the horse needs to be halted. The student will be dismounted and the Leader will move the horse away from the rider.

If the student is able, he or she will exit the arena with his or her Side-walker and be released to the parent or guardian.

If the student is unable to exit the arena, he or she will be made comfortable and proper care will be given and emergency help summoned if necessary. The Instructor will designate volunteers to notify the parent/guardian, call 911, retrieve first aid kit, and act as guide at the driveway entrance.

The Instructor will administer first aid and keep the rider as still and as comfortable as possible.

## IF A VOLUNTEER BECOMES ILL OR INJURED

Volunteers are expected to inform the Instructor of any medical conditions prior to volunteering. The volunteer will alert the Instructor and the class will be halted. The Instructor will assign another volunteer to take over. If a volunteer trips and falls, the Instructor will halt the class.

If the volunteer is able, he or she can resume activities. If unable to do so, he/she will exit the arena and to an area where he or she can rest and recover.

If the illness or injury is severe, the Instructor will designate volunteers to call 911, retrieve the first aid kit, and act as guide at the driveway entrance. Staff member will notify the "in case of emergency" contact for the volunteer.

The Instructor will administer first aid and keep the volunteer as still and comfortable as possible.

## ENCOUNTERS WITH A LOOSE HORSE

If there is a loose horse in the program arena, the Instructor will halt the class and decide whether to dismount the students.

If dismounted, Side-walkers will remain with their designated students and Leaders will move the horses away from the students.

If there is extra help available, someone will be sent to secure the horse.

When the horse is caught and under control, the Instructor will decide whether it should be removed from the arena and whether or not to remount the students.

If anyone in the group notices a loose horse while riding on the trail, he or she will notify the others and the Instructor will halt the class.

The Instructor will assess the situation. Spotters will immediately hook up to horses. The Instructor should attempt to keep students mounted at the halt until the loose horse is caught and under control or goes away. The instructor will call on an extra volunteer to secure the horse.

If anyone notices one or more lesson horse(s) returning to the facility from a trail ride, who ever notices it will yell, "Loose horse! Everyone stay where you are!" Everyone will wait until the horse stops and one person will retrieve it and put it in the crossties.

If the Instructor riding on the trail has fallen but is not injured, he/she will call the Center to report what happened and what assistance is needed.

If the Instructor riding on the trail has fallen and is injured, one of the riders or volunteers on the ride will call the Center to report what happened and what assistance is needed.

If the horses come back and no call from the Instructor has been received, a staff member, with one other person, will get the first aid kit and supplies and drive the trail until they locate the riders. One staff member will be left in charge at the Center. A second pair will follow by car for

additional assistance, after they have checked to see all –first aid supplies have been taken; if not they will take them.

If medical assistance is needed, call 911.

One or more people will be sent to the gate and other locations along the route to the downed rider(s) to guide emergency responders.

## ARENA RULES:

- The gate is to be closed and locked anytime a horse and rider are inside
- NEVER lead a horse past another horse. Instead, make a circle and be sure to look around first so horses don't run into each other.
- All horses should be going the same direction, unless specified by the instructor
- Always keep at least 2 horse lengths between horses.
- Never hit, scold, or "school" a horse. If a horse is misbehaving, inform the instructor.
- Do not yell in or around the lesson area
- Turn off or silence cell phones
- No food or horse treats in the arena

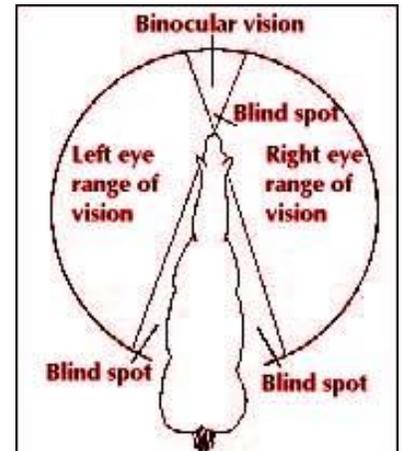
## ARENA TALK:

Outside leg or hand	The leg or hand that is closest to the fence
Inside leg or hand	The leg or hand that is on the opposite side of the fence
Offside mounter	The person standing on the right side of horse (looking from the back) helping to get the rider on the horse
Half circle	Turning the horse to the inside to change directions
Trot	A "jog" for the horse. It is a 2 beat movement
Canter	A "run" for the horse. It is a 3 beat movement
Un-hook	Un-hooking the lead line from the horse's bridle to allow the students to ride independently.
"whoa"	A verbal cue to the horse to slow down or halt
"walk on"	A verbal cue to the horse to walk forward
Spook	When a horse gets startled

# Horse Sense

When working with horses, it is always a good idea to understand their behavior. There is ALWAYS more to learn, but the following information is a good start to your horse education.

*Vision:* Horses have a large peripheral vision and three blind spots to be aware of. They are on the forehead, directly below the nose and directly behind them. It is important to be aware of the blind spots because it may startle a horse if you approach it from one of those areas.



*Smell:* A horse's sense of smell is very sensitive and allows it to distinguish other horses and people. It also allows a horse to assess various situations. When introducing a horse to a new object/toy in the arena, it is ok to let the horse smell it. It is NEVER ok to let a horse smell another horse at anytime.

*Hearing:* Horses have great hearing. They can get nervous if they hear something and cannot see it. To verbally calm a tense horse, talk to them in calm and quiet voice for reassurance. Remember, screaming or yelling can be un-nerving to a horse.

*Touch:* Horses can be sensitive to soft or rough touch with a person's hand or leg. When handling a horse, use a firm but gentle approach. Be aware of the sensitive areas on a horse's body (ears, flanks, and stomach) when working with them. As a side-walker, pay close attention to where the rider's leg is to avoid accidentally rubbing or hitting those areas.

*Taste:* Taste is closely related to smell. This helps a horse to distinguish between edible foods and other objects. Do not ever play with a horse's mouth or hand feed. This can cause a horse to get "mouthy" and potentially develop a nipping problem.

*Fight or Flight?* A horse would rather run away from danger than stay to fight. Be aware that a "spooked" horse will react quickly and move away from the danger. Leaders and side-walkers need to stay calm and IN POSITION as best they can to avoid injury and increase the spook.

*Herd Mentality:* Horses are a herd animal; they do not enjoy being alone and tend to react together. If one horse spooks, it may cause the others to react in a similar manner.

# Disabilities You May See

**Arthritis:** Inflammatory disease of the joints

Types: Osteo, rheumatoid and juvenile rheumatoid

Characteristics: Pain, lack of mobility, deformity, loss of strength

Benefits of therapeutic riding: Gentle rhythmic movement to promote joint mobility and relieve pain

**Autism:** A complex development disorder that appears in the first 3 years of life, although it is sometimes diagnosed much later. It affects the brain's normal development of social and communication skills. Symptoms may vary from moderate to severe. Two related, milder conditions are Asperger syndrome and "pervasive development disorder not otherwise specified," (PDD-NOS)

Characteristics: Common features of autism include impaired social interactions, impaired verbal and nonverbal communication, problems processing information from the senses, and restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior.

Benefits of therapeutic riding: Interactions in a group setting stimulates interest away from self and towards others and the horses. Postural and verbal stimulation.

**Cerebral Palsy:** Brain damage occurring before, at, or shortly after birth. It is a non-progressive motor disorder.

Types and Characteristics:

- Spastic- hyper-tonicity with hyperactive stretch reflexes, muscle imbalances. Increased startle reflex and other pathological reflexes.
- Athetoid- extensor muscle tension, worm-like movements, abnormal posturing and slow and deliberate speech.
- Ataxic- poor balance, difficulty with quick, fine movements and are often described as having a "rag doll" appearance.

Benefits of therapeutic riding: Normalization of tone, stimulation of postural and balance mechanisms, muscle strengthening and perceptual motor coordination.

Associated Problems: Seizures; hearing defects; visual defects; general sensory impairment; perceptual problems; communication problems; mental retardation; emotional disturbance; learning disabilities

**Cerebral Vascular Accident (CVA or STROKE):** Hemorrhage in the brain, which causes varying degrees of functional impairment.

Characteristics: Flaccid or spastic paralysis of arm and leg on same side of body. May cause mental impairment; impair speech, sight, balance, coordination and strength.

Benefits: Promotes symmetry, stimulates balance, posture, motor planning, speech and socialization

**Developmental Disabilities (DD):** A general term applied to children functioning two or more years below grade level.

Characteristics: Varied, but can include slow physical, motor and social development.

Benefits: Provides and arena for success, opportunity for sport and recreation, stimulates body awareness.

**Down Syndrome:** Condition in which a person is born with an extra chromosome, resulting in mental retardation and developmental delay.

**Characteristics:** Broad flat face, slanted eyes, neck and hand are often broad and short. Usually Hypotonic, have hyper mobile joints and tend to be short and slightly overweight. Prone to respiratory infections.

**Benefits:** Riding improves expressive and receptive language skills, gross and fine motor skills, balance, muscle tone and coordination.

**Emotional Disabilities:** A congenital or acquired syndrome often compounded by learning and/or physical disabilities incorporating numerous other pathologies.

**Characteristics:** Trouble coping with everyday life situation and interpersonal relations. Behaviors such as short attention span, avoidance, aggression, autism, paranoia, and schizophrenia may be exhibited.

**Benefits:** Increase feelings of self-confidence and self-awareness, and provides appropriate social outlet.

**Epilepsy:** Abnormal electrical activity of the brain marked by seizures with altered consciousness.

**Types and Characteristics:**

- **Petit Mal:** Brief loss of consciousness with loss of postural tone. May have jerky movements, blank expression.
- **Grand Mal:** Loss of consciousness and postural control. Usually preceded by an aura.

**Hearing Impairment:** Congenital or acquired hearing loss varying from mild to profound.

**Characteristics:** Communication difficulties; may use lip reading, finger spelling or sign language. Often phase out and have attention deficits.

**Benefits:** Stimulates self-confidence, balance, posture and coordination. It also provides appropriate social outlet interactions.

**Mental Retardation (MR):** Lack of ability to learn and perform at normal and acceptable levels. Degree of retardation is referred to as educable, trainable, sever or profoundly retarded.

**Characteristics:** Developmentally delayed in all areas and short attention span.

**Benefits:** Stimulates group activity skills, coordination, balance, posture, gross and fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination. Provides a structured learning environment.

**Multiple Sclerosis (MS):** Progressive neurological disease with degeneration of spinal column tracts, resulting in scar formation.

**Characteristics:** Most commonly occurs in the 20-40 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 and provides opportunities for emotional therapy.

**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.

**Benefits:** Provides opportunity for group activity, may slow progressive loss of strength, stimulates postural and trunk alignment, and allows movement free of assistive devices.

**Polio:** Infectious viral disease

**Characteristics:** Flaccid paralysis, atrophy of skeletal muscle, often with deformity.

**Benefits:** Strengthens non-paralyzed muscles, stimulates posture.

**Spina Bifida:** Congenital failure of vertebral arch closure with resultant damage to spinal cord.

Characteristics: Varying degrees of paralysis of the lower limbs coupled with sensory loss.

Benefit: Stimulates posture and balance, improves muscle strength and self-image.

**Spinal Cord Injury (SCI):** Trauma to the spinal cord resulting in a loss of neurological function.

Characteristics: 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, is an option for sport participation and recreation.

**Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI):** Accidental injury to the head resulting in intracranial bleeding with death of brain cells.

Characteristics: Gross and fine motor skills deficits. Often have impaired memory, speech and or vision. May have psychological effects.

Benefits: Stimulates balance, posture, gross and fine motor skills, speech and perceptual skills.

**Visual Impairment:** Moderate to total loss of sight.

Characteristics: Insecure posture, lack of visual memory, anterior center of gravity, fearfulness and development delay.

Benefits: Stimulates spatial awareness, proprioception, posture and coordination. Provides social outlet, structures risk taking and freedom of movement.