



*Quarter Moon Acres is a Christ-centered facility that connects people with horses in a therapeutic environment empowering individuals to turn disabilities into abilities.*

# Volunteer Handbook

**Notice:** A person who is engaged for compensation in the rental of equines or equine equipment or tack or in the instruction of a person in the riding or driving of an equine or in being a passenger upon an equine is not liable for the injury or death of a person involved in equine activities resulting from the inherent risks of equine activities, as defined in section 895.481(l)(e) of the Wisconsin Statutes

**Big Thank You to Clear Choice , Amery for printing our materials!**

For becoming a volunteer at Quarter Moon Acres, Inc. Equine Therapy (QMA). You are a needed and essential part of this program's success; after all, there would be no program without our talented volunteers!

Quarter Moon Acres is a Christian therapeutic riding center enriching the lives of children and adults with special needs. We train volunteers to assist in the program and to engage in other equine activities that improve the quality of life for the disabled. Our students benefit not only from the lessons that Quarter Moon Acres provides, but also from the relationship they develop with the horse, the instructional staff and the trained volunteers.

Quarter Moon Acres (QMA) is registered in Wisconsin as a nonprofit organization and is a tax exempt, volunteer run therapy program welcoming riders from western Wisconsin. QMA is an operating member center of the Professional Association for Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH, Intl.) and follows all standards and guidelines set forth by Path Intl. All riders and volunteers are insured as recommended by PATH, Intl.

## Who and How We Help

Quarter Moon Acres provides therapeutic horseback riding lessons to children and adults with physical, mental and emotional barriers. We offer Equine Assisted Activities and Therapies (EAAT), including horseback riding lessons and ground work with horses to all disabled individuals without regard to race, color, creed or financial need. Our students benefit not only from the weekly lessons that Quarter Moon Acres provides, but also from the relationship they develop with the horse, the instructional staff and volunteers.

**Riders Benefit:** Because of the three dimensional movement of a horse simulates human walking, riding serves to strengthen core body muscles and improve posture and coordination, while increasing overall balance and joint mobility. As the rider learns to control the horse there is a feeling of accomplishment. This personal achievement translates into improved self-confidence and self esteem. The riding experience also stimulates language and learning. The rider develops the ability to listen to instructions and communicate directions to the horse, improving concentration and memory while enjoying recreational riding.

**Volunteers Benefit:** The satisfaction of knowing you have assisted a person with special needs to participate in a therapeutic horseback riding program and to watch their smile when riding the horse, is the greatest reward in itself. But you also have an opportunity to meet new people who enjoy working with horses, in addition to gaining a 'hands on' experience in a therapeutic recreational setting working with people who have special needs.

*Volunteering can be a great way to develop skills, learn more about career options, make friends, garner new professional contacts, get exercise, spending time outdoors with animals and kids or even just shaking up your routine.*

## Quarter Moon Acres is a smoke free site.

No running

No profanity or bad language

Close ALL gates behind you

Remember the Golden Rule - **Do to others as you would have them do to you!**

Return things to where you found them

If something is broken, notify someone so it can be replaced

Be respectful of everyone and remember our purpose

Wear closed toe shoes (boots are preferred but not mandatory)

Dress neatly, and avoid loose clothing and jewelry

No cell phones - they can be distracted to client and/or horse

Keep busy (if you have a long break, clean tack room, assist with other chores, groom a horse for next lesson). Please ask us for something to do.

# Disabilities

When you meet a person with disabilities:

Remember that a person with disabilities is just like everyone else, except for the limitations of his or her disability.

A disability need not be ignored or denied, but until your relationship is one of friendship, show interest in the person only as you would any other person you have just met.

Be yourself.

Talk about the same things you would with anyone else.

Help him or her only when they request it. If a person falls down, he/she may wish to get up on his/her own. Ask for permission to give help.

Be patient. Let the person set their own pace walking or talking.

Don't be afraid to laugh with them.

Remember a person with disabilities deserves the same courtesy that any other person would receive.

Be supportive and encouraging. If a person wants to talk about their disability, he/she will bring it up.

Showing pity or charity does not help. The person wants to be treated as an equal. He/she wants the chance to prove himself/herself.

The rider may feel insecure when his/her aids (crutches, wheelchair, etc.) are too far away.

Be sensitive to this and remove aids only when asked.

Keep an open mind.

Enjoy yourself and your friendship with the rider. His/her philosophy and good humor can be as inspiring to you as yours is to the rider.

## ALWAYS ask first before touching a horse in or out of a stall.

- Respect the horse, he's a big animal.
- Introduce yourself by letting him sniff your hand and petting him gently on the neck once you have permission to do so.
- Always approach a horse where they can see you, a horse cannot see directly behind it, or under its nose.
- Don't run near or around horses, sudden movements can scare them, especially around young/inexperienced horses.
- You can be hurt by a horse even if they don't mean to hurt you.
- Pet the horse by stroking him on the shoulder or neck, not 'patting' him.
- Don't duck under the horse's neck or lead rope.
- Don't walk directly behind the horse or stand directly in front of them.
- When leading a horse, walk beside them on their left side.
- Remember you go through doors/gates before the horse.
- Keep lead ropes and reins off the ground.
- Don't wrap a lead rope around your hand/arm/body.

## Horses Reactions: Ears

### Communication: Ears to You!

If you ever spend time hanging out on the pasturage, just watching a herd graze, you will witness a wide range of equine communication – but you'll hear only a small part of the conversation. A lashed tail, a raised foot, a sudden swing of the head – all can be signals to other members of the herd: "You are getting too close!"

Horses rely on vision more than any other sense to detect trouble in their environment, and they have a complex system of visual cues – body language – that keeps them in constant touch with herdmates' varying moods.

*Pricked ears* – held still and pointed forward, indicate that the horse has turned his full attention to something.

*Erect ears* angled backward, indicate that the horse is focusing his attention on his rider.

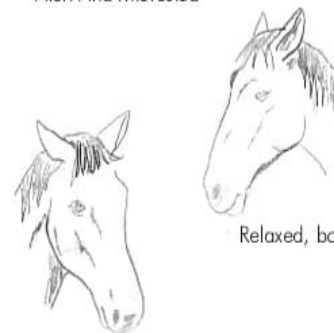
*Neutral ears or drooping ears* – held downward or straight out to the side, can express boredom and/or relaxation and contentment.

*Pinned ears* – turned flat back against the neck – a sign of aggression.

### The Language of the Ears



Alert And interested



Relaxed, bored or unwell



Sleepy, Unwell, or Submissive



Angry and Aggressive

Drawn By:  
Amber Mills

There are many ways you can help Quarter Moon Acres carry out our desire to perform equine assisted activities and therapies. At the equine riding sessions, the main jobs are horse leader and side walker—you'll find detailed descriptions of these volunteer jobs on the following pages. But there are other critical tasks to perform: at the therapy sessions, we also need volunteers to clean and maintain tack, groom horses and work at activity stations during the sessions. You don't need equine experience to volunteer at these sessions—just a willingness to learn.

And, like any non-profit organization, Quarter Moon Acres has a lot of administrative, communications, fundraising, promotional and community outreach tasks that need doing. If you have special background or skills in any of these areas, we'd love to have your help!

Our riders and horses all count on us volunteers to make our program successful, so if you are going to volunteer, we **MUST** be able to count on you!

## **We MUST be able to count on you for the three C's:**

### **Commitment**

We need you and count on you, so please show up at your appointed time and place, and please sign in.

Know the number to call if you need to miss your volunteer assignment and call as early as possible.

### **Confidentiality**

We maintain rider information as confidential.

We hope you tell others about what you do here, but never talk about a rider in any way that they can be identified unless you have their permission and/or the permission of the parent.

### **Conduct**

All people and horses will be treated with dignity and respect.

Read and refer to this handbook.

Many of our riders are legally vulnerable.

The vulnerability issue can work both ways; you, as a volunteer can also be vulnerable.

Any suspected verbal, physical or emotional abuse should be reported to an instructor immediately and will not be tolerated.

Understand and follow the requests of the instructor without interference.

### **Policy of Drug-Free Awareness**

Quarter Moon Acres, Inc. Equine Therapy Services is committed to a drug-free program.

Volunteering while under the influence of illegal drugs OR alcohol is prohibited and will lead to dismissal. Any suspicions of illegal drug use or use of alcohol by a volunteer should be reported to an instructor.

Quarter Moon Acres prides itself in providing a safe environment for all of those involved. Working with horses is a risk activity and policies have been developed to minimize the risk. Safety is everyone's responsibility and should be taken seriously.

- Wear supportive boots or enclosed shoes when working around a horse.
- Wear long pants and/or bug spray to repel mosquitoes and wood ticks.
- Attempt to know the horse, his temperament and reactions. Read the evaluation sheet on the horse and talk to the owner if possible.
- For the safety of the riders, only people with horse experience and who have been evaluated by the instructor may lead a horse during a class.
- If you need to carry a cell phone, you must put it on silent or vibrate. NO TEXTING while you are doing your volunteer duties!
- Best to pet the horse on the neck or shoulder.
- When leading a horse, always walk along side of his head or shoulder not in front of him.
- Do not let your horse eat during the lesson or on trail rides.
- All riders must wear helmets when mounted or near a horse.
- Gate to the arena must remain closed during lessons.
- No horses are to be tied inside the arena during the lesson.
- No pets allowed, except Service Animals.
- Always approach a horse from the front or side, never from the rear. Remember the horse cannot see directly behind and you may be kicked.
- Always speak to a horse when approaching or touching him. Remember, if you startle the horse, they may jump or kick.
- If a rider has a seizure while mounted, stop the horse. Many seizures are very mild and will not negatively affect the rider once it is over. If it is a grand mal type (major shaking, etc.) support the rider on the horse with an over the thigh hold until the instructor can dismount the rider or assist you in dismounting them. Place the rider on their side on the ground away from the horse or any obstacles. All other horses will remain stopped until given directions by the instructor.
- Any questions or concerns – ask the instructor.
- Familiarize yourself with the location of the nearest telephone, first aid kit, bathroom and fire extinguisher.
- Before the student is mounted, recheck the girth, helmet and stirrup lengths
- Understand what to do in an emergency situation. You are responsible for your horse and rider, depending on your duty. If another rider has a problem or a fall, DO NOT rush to assist. Stay with YOUR rider. They are your first responsibility.
- Students are mounted and dismounted under the direction of the instructor.
- If you are not comfortable with a situation for any reason, tell the instructor immediately. You may be aware of a problem the instructor needs to know about.
- If a rider needs to stop during the class lessons, come off the rail to the center of the arena unless the instructor directs otherwise.
- Treat your horses GENTLY. If a horse misbehaves, tell the instructor. Retraining and reprimands are done during schooling, not during lessons.

**Please Don't Chat With Other Volunteers During Lessons**

**Objective:** To work with people who have special needs in a safe horseback riding program.

**Supervisor:** Instructor

**Responsibilities:**

- Arrive at least 15 minutes before the start of your assigned session.
- Check schedule board for changes and wait for assigned rider.
- Find rider, assist rider with helmet, and wait with rider.
- Relay instructions to the rider.
- At the end of the sessions, walk with rider back to their parent/guardian.
- Help with equipment storage after last session.
- Wear proper clothing (i.e. supportive, closed toe shoes)
- For your safety, it is suggested that you tie back long hair and limit the wearing of jewelry.
- Follow directions from instructor and ask questions.
- Record volunteer hours and rider progress, remember to ask the horse leader for input too.
- Convey feedback about another volunteer to the instructor only.
- Report any problems or concerns to the instructor.
- Stay with the rider at all times, their safety is your responsibility.

**Side walker Tips:**

- Use the hold directed by instructor.
- Listen to the instructions from the instructor.
- One side walker at a time gives instructions to rider. The side walker toward the inside of the arena reinforces instructions from the instructor if required.
- Reinforce quality of movement in warm-up exercises.
- Teach to the specific abilities of each rider. Please no baby talk. Be positive and encouraging.
- Allow rider time to process directions.
- Allow rider to initiate movement as much as possible. You may need to help by doing hand over hand.
- Challenge rider to move toward independence.
- Allow rider time to say hello/good-bye to the horse. Pet the horse on the shoulder.
- If a horse steps on your foot, QUIETLY push the horse off your foot, do not become alarmed or hit the horse. Inform the instructor.
- If there is an incident, please tell the instructor and fill out an incident report.

**Qualifications:**

- Comfortable working with horses.
- Attend training, and read and follow the training manual, be able to walk intermittently for up to 30 minutes and/or on uneven ground. Be able to lift your arm shoulder height for up to 40 minutes.

# Job Description: Horse Leader

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**Objective:** To assist riders with special needs in a safe horseback riding program by leading the therapy horse.

**Supervisor:** Instructor

**Responsibilities:**

- Arrive at least 15 minutes before your session begins.
- Check assignment board for changes.
- Find assigned horse, groom with brushed assigned to this horse and put on necessary tack, if you are unfamiliar with a piece of tack, please ask the instructor for assistance/training.
- Remember the horse is depending on you to be the leader—they want to follow your directions.
- Wear proper clothing (supportive, closed toe shoe)
- Follow directions from instructor and ask questions.
- Return equipment at the end of the night.
- Record volunteer hours.
- Convey feedback about another volunteer to the instructor only.
- Report any problems or concerns with horse or equipment to the instructor.
- Please notify the instructor for absences as early as possible.

**When Leading a Therapy Horse:**

- Use 8-12" of lead rope; fold remainder in a figure 8 - do not wrap around hand.
- Walk at comfortable pace for horse. You should walk even with the horse's ears. That way you will have 3-way sensory inputs—vision ahead/side; Ear to side walker and ear to instructor.
- If a time out is called by the instructor, please stop your horse right where you are. If possible, remain stopped until instructed to move on.
- Stand in front of horse, facing the horse, when the horse is at the halt.
- Avoid loud, rough discipline of the horse. Riders may mimic you and try to punish the horse themselves. Tell the instructor about the behavior.
- If the horse steps on your toe, count to five while pushing your weight into his shoulder, he should step off. Do not yell, hit or otherwise scare the horse or rider.
- Talk to the horse and limit your conversation to the rider. Do not turn around to talk to the rider/side walkers.
- Walk to the center of the arena and halt if a problem arises.
- ALWAYS stay with the horse and maintain control.
- Walk on the side of the horse that is toward the center of the arena. This helps you to hear the instructor and see the activity.
- Be alert to where side walkers are at all times (puddles, fence, etc.)
- Tie horse with a quick release knot to fence post, have instructor check. Do not add loops.
- If you are not comfortable with your assigned horse, please tell the instructor immediately.

**Qualifications:**

- Attend trainings and read and follow Volunteer Handbook.
- Must be experienced working with horses and with basic horse knowledge.
- Must be able to walk intermittently for up to 30 minutes and/or on uneven ground.