



# Volunteer Handbook

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*Dear Volunteer,*

*Thank you for your interest in volunteering with Ivey Ranch Park Therapeutic Horsemanship Program. Volunteers are a vital part of our program! As said by many, "Volunteers help bring the magic of horses to persons with disabilities."*

*Therapeutic horsemanship uses equine-oriented activities for the purpose of contributing positively to the cognitive, physical, emotional and social well being of people with disabilities. The benefits range from improving coordination to bettering self-esteem and confidence. By volunteering, YOU can help our riders gain such benefits!*

*For those of you not familiar with Ivey Ranch Park, it is a place dedicated to encouraging the interaction of disabled and able-bodied individuals of all ages, by providing educational and recreational activities. Since 1981 we have served children and adults with disabilities but will not exclude the able bodied, since integration, inclusion and interaction are important components of our program. Serving over 200 individuals a month, our essential goals are:*

*Community integration and participation  
Personal choice  
Self – respect and respect for others  
Competence and self-reliance*

*Please complete the forms included with this letter. It is necessary to attend a training sessions prior to volunteering at Ivey Ranch Park. The training takes an hour and a half. You only need to attend a single orientation but your volunteer education will be ongoing, as will be the opportunities for additional training. When you attend the volunteer training session please bring the completed packet with you.*

*If you have any questions, please contact our office at (760) 722-4839 or email us at [iveyranch@yahoo.com](mailto:iveyranch@yahoo.com). And please, feel free to stop by the barn to visit our program.*

*Sincerely,*

*Ivey Ranch Park*

## **Introduction to PATH International**

Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH International) is a non-profit organization headquartered in Denver, Colorado, that exists to promote equine activities for individuals with disabilities.

Formed in 1960, PATH International members are individuals and centers that participate in therapeutic riding programs. Individual members are volunteers, riding instructors, disabled riders and their families, physicians, therapists, teachers, researchers and concerned individuals. The PATH International centers are the heart of the riding for the disabled community as they bring together all the necessary individuals, horses, equipment, and program knowledge. PATH International centers range from small, one-person programs serving half a dozen riders to large operations with several instructors serving up to 200 riders each week.

PATH International promotes therapeutic riding primarily through public awareness campaigns and educational events. Above all, PATH International is concerned with safety and service to members and riders. Consequently, PATH International has developed several programs that are designed to benefit everyone concerned with therapeutic riding.

### **Accreditation**

This program assures that the PATH International center is running a safe and medically appropriate program and that it is following the PATH International Standards. All PATH International centers are expected to complete the accreditation process within the time frame prescribed. PATH International centers must renew their accreditation periodically.

### **Instructor Certification**

This program provides criteria for competency and a process to recognize levels of capability for PATH International instructors to achieve professional certification. Three levels of certification are available: Registered, Advanced, and Master Instructor.

**For more information on becoming a PATH International member, please visit the PATH International website [www.pathintl.org](http://www.pathintl.org) or request a membership form through fax-on-demand, (303) 457-8496.**

## **Ivey Ranch Riders**

The minimum age for therapy program riders is four years. Prior to riding, all participants are required to complete paperwork including a signed physician's referral. They are then assessed by staff to determine that riding is a safe, appropriate activity, one from which they will benefit. An individual riding plan is developed by their therapeutic riding instructor, which includes each rider's goal and the objectives (activities) to meet their goals. Riders participate in at least one lesson per week for the length of the six-week session. Sessions include activities such as learning horse care, riding skills, exercise, games, obstacle courses, and trail rides. Progress is documented at the conclusion of each session.

## **A Brief History of Therapeutic Riding**

References to the physical and emotional benefits of therapeutic horseback riding date back to writings in the 1600's. However, when Liz Hartel of Denmark won the silver medal for dressage at the 1952 Helsinki Olympic Games, despite having paralysis from polio, medical and equine professionals took active notice. It wasn't long before therapeutic riding was being used for rehabilitation in England and then in North America. The first centers for therapeutic riding in North America began operation in the 1960's. Today, there are more than 500 PATH International affiliated centers worldwide.

## **Benefits of Therapeutic Riding**

Physically, it is the horse's movement which has dynamic affect on the rider's body. The horse stimulates the rider's pelvis and trunk in a manner that closely resembles the normal gait of a human. This movement can be used to produce specific physical changes in the rider including normalization of muscle tone and improvement in posture, balance, coordination, and increased endurance.

Sensorially, the horse and the riding environment offer a wide variety of input to participants. Movement exploration on the horse combines with other sights and sounds which one encounters in the riding program to contribute to the overall sensory experience.

Emotionally, the success of overcoming fear and anxiety and the ability to achieve riding skills help a rider to realize self-worth and increase self-esteem. For those involved with the various activities of a therapeutic riding program, the companion animal bonding and development of new skills are critical components to the success of the experience offered. Relationships develop between riders, volunteers, horses, and staff and are all an integral part of a positive, emotional experience provided by a therapeutic riding program.

Cognitively, the horse provides a strong motivator for riders. Riding sessions incorporate activities and games on horseback designed to help each rider achieve goals such as following directions, staying on task, color and number recognition, and reinforcing existing skills as well as learning new ones.

Socially, therapeutic riding programs and their associated activities provide an excellent opportunity for participants to interact with their peers, program volunteers, and staff in a positive and enjoyable environment.

The horse, rider, instructor, and volunteers make up a unique treatment team providing an opportunity for physical, emotional, social, recreational, and educational gains for participants with disabilities.

## GLOSSARY OF PHYSICAL AND COGNITIVE DISABILITIES

The following are brief, non-medical descriptions of some disabilities and conditions of participants one might encounter in a therapeutic riding setting. This is not intended as a comprehensive explanation of a specific disability. Rather it is a general overview with an explanation of how therapeutic riding can be beneficial.

### **Arthritis**

Inflammatory disease of the joints

Types: Osteo, rheumatoid, and juvenile rheumatoid

**Characteristics:** Pain, lack of mobility; loss of strength

**Benefits of therapeutic riding:** Gentle rhythmic movements to promote joint mobility and to relieve pain; increase strength

### **Autism**

A broad spectrum of disorders from mild to severe, which affects thought, perceptions and attention

**Characteristics:** Impairments in social interactions and communications; restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior, interests and activities; impairments in the use of nonverbal behaviors such as eye-to-eye gaze and facial expressions; lack of social or emotional reciprocity; delays in, or lack of the development of spoken language; impairments in ability to initiate or sustain conversations with others; abnormal responses to senses such as sight, hearing, touch, balance, smell, or taste; abnormal reactions to pain; deficits in gross and fine motor skills.

**Benefits:** Provides sensory input and promotes sensory integration. Promotes communication skills (expressive and receptive). Develops strength, coordination, muscle tone, and gross and fine motor skills. Promotes socialization.

### **Cerebral Palsy**

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

**Types and characteristics:**

**Spastic:** increased muscle tone, muscle imbalances and equilibrium. Increased startle reflex and other pathological reflexes.

**Athetoid:** extensor muscle tension, involuntary movements, difficulty maintaining upright posture.

**Ataxic:** weakened muscles, poor balance, difficulty with quick, fine movements.

**Benefits:** Normalization of muscle tone and muscle strength. Development of posture, balance and motor coordination. Promotes socialization and confidence.

### **Cerebral Vascular Accident (CVA) – Stroke**

Hemorrhage in brain, which causes varying degrees of functional impairment.

**Characteristics:** Flaccid or spastic paralysis of arm and leg on same side of the body. May impair thought, speech, sight, balance, coordination, and strength.

**Benefits:** Promotes symmetry. Stimulates balance, posture, motor planning, speech, socialization, and confidence.

### **Developmental Disabilities (DD):**

A diverse group of physical cognitive, psychological, sensory and speech impairments that begin anytime during development up to 18 years of age.

**Characteristics:** Varied, but can include processing delays in physical, motor and social development.

**Benefits:** Increased confidence and self-esteem. Stimulates processing, speech and body awareness. Provides opportunity for sport and recreation. Promotes socialization.

### **Down Syndrome**

A genetic disorder in which a person is born with an extra chromosome (chromosome 21)

**Characteristics:** Mild to severe learning disabilities, low muscle tone, speech impairments.

**Benefits:** Promotes expressive and receptive language skills. Increases gross and fine motor skills, balance, coordination, posture and muscle tone. Promotes social skills. Increase confidence and esteem.

### **Emotional Disabilities**

Social, emotional or behavioral functioning which is not age appropriate and affects a child's academics, social relationships and self-care.

**Characteristics:** Difficulty coping with everyday life situations and interpersonal relations; inappropriate affect or behavior responses; depression; anxiety; physical symptoms; difficulty learning; withdrawal, and aggressiveness.

**Benefits:** Increase confidence, self-esteem. Provide opportunities for accomplishments. Promotes positive socialization.

### **Hearing Impairment**

Congenital or acquired hearing loss varying from mild to profound.

**Characteristics:** Difficulties in communication; communication through sign language, lip reading or finger spelling.

**Benefits:** Increases confidence, self-esteem, and sense of accomplishment. Provides recreational activity with opportunity for socialization. Stimulates balance, posture, and coordination.

### **Learning Disabilities**

Neurological disorders that interfere with a person's ability to store, process or produce information.

**Characteristics:** Difficulties with reading, writing, speech, computing math. May affect development and social skills.

**Benefits:** Promotes processing, language skills and attending skills. Increases confidence and self-esteem. Provides opportunity for success, increases balance, coordination and posture. Provides opportunity for socialization.

### **Mental Impairment or Mental Retardation (MR)**

A disorder in which a person's overall intellectual functioning is below average with an IQ of 70 or less. Impaired ability to cope with common life demands and daily living skills.

**Characteristics:** Impairments in learning, communication, social interaction, self-care.

**Benefits:** Increase balance, coordination, strength and posture. Improves gross and fine motor skills. Promotes socialization. Increases confidence. Reinforce life and vocational skills.

### **Multiple Sclerosis (MS)**

Progressive neurological disease with degeneration of spinal column tracts, resulting in scar formation

**Characteristics:** Most commonly occurs in the range of 20 to 40 years old. It is progressive with periods of exacerbation and remissions. Fatigues easily. Symptoms include weakness, visual impairment, fatigue, loss of coordination and emotional sensitivity.

**Benefits:** Maintains and strengthens weak muscles. Maintains balance. Increases confidence and self-esteem.

### **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 extremes.

**Benefits:** Provides opportunity for recreational, physical and social activity. May help slow progressive loss of strength. Stimulates postural and trunk alignment. Allows for movement free of assistive devices.

### **Polio (post)**

Infectious virus disease

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

**Benefits:** Strengthens non-paralyzed muscles. Stimulates posture. Increases confidence.

### **Scoliosis**

Lateral curve of the spine with a C or S shape.

**Characteristics:** Shoulder, trunk and waistline asymmetry. May have back pain and postural fatigue. (Curvature over 30 degrees is a contraindication)

**Benefits:** Stimulates postural symmetry. Strengthens trunk muscles.

### **Spina Bifida**

Congenital failure of vertebral arch closure which results in spinal cord damage.

**Characteristics:** Varying degrees of paralysis of the lower limbs coupled with sensory loss. May also be associated with hydrocephalus, lordosis, scoliosis, and hip dislocations.

**Benefits:** Stimulates posture and balance. Increases strength, balance and coordination. Promotes confidence and self-esteem.

### **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. Provides opportunity for recreational and social activity.



### **Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)**

Accidental injury to the head resulting in impairments of cognitive, emotional and/or physical functioning.

**Characteristics:** May include deficits in gross and fine motor skills, balance, coordination and strength. May have deficits in language, communication, processing, memory and perceptual skills.

**Benefits:** Stimulates balance, posture, coordination, and gross and fine motor skills. Stimulates speech and perceptual skills. Increases confidence.

### **Visual Impairment**

Moderate to total loss of sight

**Characteristics:** May include insecure posture, lack of visual memory, anterior center of gravity and fearfulness.

**Benefits:** Stimulates spatial awareness, proprioception, posture, balance and coordination. Provides opportunity for socialization, structural risk-taking and freedom of movement.

## VOLUNTEERING AT IVEY RANCH PARK ASSOCIATION

**Volunteer Training:** A volunteer must be at least nine years old to volunteer with the horses. All volunteers who work with the riders as leaders and side walkers must be physically fit to walk approximately one to two hours and jog occasionally. Volunteers are required to attend a training session. Training sessions are held at the beginning of each session.

**Volunteer Paperwork:** Volunteer paperwork must be completed prior to volunteering at Ivey Ranch Park Association.

**Volunteer Sign-In:** It is important for you to sign in when you come to Ivey Ranch Park Association. Maintaining records of volunteer hours is a requirement of accreditation; it helps with fund raising; and it provides an accurate record for those who need verification of hours. REMEMBER – sign in EVERY TIME you volunteer. Sign-in sheets are located in an alphabetized three-ring binder in the instructor's office.

**Arrival and Departure Times:** Please plan to arrive 15 minutes prior to scheduled lesson time. Plan to stay 15 minutes after the conclusion of the lesson.

**Volunteer Information:** We want to keep you informed of everything that happens at Ivey Ranch Park Association. To do so, we post all announcements on a white board outside the instructor's office.

**Absences:** In order for the program to be consistent and successful, volunteers are expected to commit for a specific time period (such as Tuesday from 2 – 4 for the entire session). We realize that emergencies can occur. It is your responsibility to find another trained volunteer to replace you and/or call the program coordinator at 722-4839. Remember, the riders depend on YOU.

**Cancellations:** At times it may be necessary to cancel a lesson due to inclement weather such as high winds or heavy rains. If you have any questions as to whether a lesson may be canceled, please call the lesson cancellation number at the barn (760) 439-2340.

**Rest Rooms:** Rest rooms are located behind the pasture.

**Parking:** Volunteer parking is located by the south arena.

**Water:** Drinking water is available in the instructor's office or at the water fountains at the restroom or on the north side of the multipurpose room.

**Cell Phones:** All cell phones should be left in your vehicle when volunteering. The only exception would be an emergency in which case you may carry your phone on vibrate.

**Dogs:** No dogs are allowed at Ivey Ranch Park Association while lessons are in session.

**In Case of an Emergency:** Please inform us of any accident, no matter how minor it may seem to you. First aid supplies are located in the instructor's office. If you are asked to call for assistance, dial 911 from the phone located in the instructor's office. The directions and emergency procedures are posted next to the phone.

**Feedback:** As an Ivey Ranch Park Association volunteer, your feedback is a valuable resource. Your ideas, comments and suggestions help us to constantly improve the program. There is time set aside immediately following riding lesson for your input and questions.

**When You Can No Longer Volunteer:** Please let us know as far in advance as possible of your plans to leave your volunteer position at Ivey Ranch Park Association. If possible, find a replacement that is as dependable, enthusiastic, and dedicated as yourself!

### **When you meet a Person with a Disability...**

Have fun! Talk about the same things you would with any person. A disability does not limit or dampen a person's sense of humor.

Remember that a person with a disability is a person like everyone else.

Be yourself! Don't be overly sweet. Don't offer pity or charity. Be honest and genuine at all times.

Don't make up your mind about the person ahead of time. You maybe surprised at how wrong you are at prejudging the person.

Avoid asking embarrassing questions. If a rider wants to tell you about his disability, s/he will bring up the subject themselves.

HELP only if requested by the rider. When in doubt ask, "May I help you?"

Don't separate the rider from his wheelchair or crutches unless the rider asks you to remove them.

Be patient, let the rider set his own pace in walking or talking.

Self satisfaction is important for the rider. Use help sparingly because it is important that the individual experience the satisfaction of accomplishing a task himself.

Respect the confidentiality rights, dignity and privacy of the rider.

Be optimistic about life in general and the rider's outlook in particular, however, don't encourage unrealistic goals or attitudes.

Be supportive and encouraging.

Please use proper terminology when you are on the premises.

## **Volunteer Positions**

Many students need assistance to ride a horse. There may be as many as three volunteers with each student. During mounted instruction there are several volunteer positions: horse leaders, side-walkers, spotters and off-siders. Each has a specific role.

### **The Leader**

A leader's main concern is the proper control of the horse. This control is not a mastering of the horse but a feat of patient and positive persuasion. Leading can be done from either side – the inside is toward the center of the arena and the outside is toward the fence. Usually the leader is on the inside but the outside can be better sometimes, i.e. the day your horse is bothered or hurried or keeps trying to turn into the center. Please read enclosed article "Follow the leader".

It is the leader who must help in guiding, stopping and starting without making the rider feel that he is simply a passenger. The rider must be allowed to do as much as possible with the leader helping only when necessary.

The leader must walk beside the horse at the point between the horse's head and the point of his shoulder – holding the lead rope about 6" – 8" from the horse's head. DO NOT walk ahead of the horse dragging him behind you, or be so far back that you're in the way of the sidewalker or be back at the rider's knee. Either of these positions reduces your ability to control the horse. No sharp or quick turns that may compromise the rider's balance.

It is the leader's responsibility to position the horse during mounting. Mounting may occur in the arena, at the mounting ramp, or at the block. When mounting occurs at a mounting block or ramp, the leader must place the horse as close as possible to the side of the ramp or block. The leader must keep the horse as quiet as possible. Stand directly in front of the horse with your hands on either side of the horse's halter. Do not hold too tightly as it will cause the horse to throw his head. After mounting and before the stirrups are adjusted, the leader will move the horse from the ramp or block under the direction of the instructor. Make sure that the horse is led straight so that the person on the ramp does not have to make an aerial leap. The stirrups may be adjusted after mounting or once inside the ring.

If the rider is mounted in the ring, the student will go to the assigned horse. The horse should be lined up facing the gate so he can see the student coming. Stand directly in front of and facing the horse's head in order to act as a barrier and to be able to see both sides of the horse. Monitor the student's position until the instructor comes to mount the rider.

Remember that there may be a side-walker on the off-side of the horse. It is sometimes easy to forget and lead the horse too close to the rail. Please allow enough room for your off-side side-walker. The leader must maintain safe spacing.

Riders are often asked to trot during a lesson. The instructor will give directions concerning trotting. Remember trotting should not be a race, keep the horse at a slow, steady pace. Consistent input is important to the rider. If the horse is reluctant to trot, do not get in front of the horse and pull on the lead. Maintain your position and use short tugs. The instructor will give direction for horses that may be reluctant to trot. When the command is given to walk or stop, do so in a straight line so the rider will not be unseated.

### **Side-walker**

A sidewalker's job is just as important as the leader's job, but for different reasons. Some riders have very poor balance, some are very nervous, some have very little or no muscle power in their legs, some simply require the mental support of having someone close by "in case", or as an extensions of the instructor's requests. Sidewalkers walk beside the horse and rider, ready to steady the rider if necessary. They position themselves just behind the body line of the rider, taking care to avoid putting pressure on any of the major muscles, but they do exert a gentle pressure pushing the rider firmly against the saddle or surcingle. You can rest your hand on the saddle in front of the rider, but take care that you do not allow yourself to be dragged along by the horse. Keep an active pace beside the horse. If you are the only sidewalker for the rider, it is easier for you to walk on the opposite side to the leader, especially at the trot. However, if there are two sidewalkers, you will have to work as a well co-coordinated team to avoid stepping on one another's heels. Take care not to rest your arm or hand on the horse's back behind the saddle; this can be very aggravating to the horse.

Some riders require an ankle hold, which requires steadying the ankle joint in the correct position on the horse.

Sidewalkers give support, both physical and mental. They are there to help the rider carry out the instructions to the best of his/her ability, and keep the right position on the horse, without losing his/her balance. If the rider starts to slip to one side, alert the leader, and take the horse in toward the center of the arena for adjustments.

Sidewalkers may be requested to help the student with right and left orientation, basic control or spatial awareness. Sidewalkers should give praise and encouragement when appropriate. Give students time to process the directions. Help the rider focus attention to the instructor. If the student does not hear or was not paying attention to the instructor, the sidewalker can reinforce the directions.

### **Spotter**

A student may progress to a point when s/he is almost ready to ride independently. They may need a spotter to walk along for moral support or "just in case". Riders with certain disabilities (such as seizure disorders) may be able to ride independently, but need a spotter as a precaution. The spotter is a leader and sidewalker rolled into one. Because the spotter does not have a hold of the horse, he must be careful not to make a sudden movements towards the horse that could cause the horse to jump away and possibly unseat the rider. Remember, never run towards a horse. The spotter must be able to read the horse and interpret behavior before it happens.

### **Off-Sider**

An off-sider assists the instructor with mounting and dismounting. The off-sider may be directed to hold the offside stirrup while the student mounts. If the rider is mounting from the ramp, the off-sider is on the opposite side standing on the offside block. The off-sider may be trained to assist in mounting and dismounting riders.

### **Un-mounted Instruction**

Volunteers may assist the students in grooming and in tacking their horses. These volunteers are tackers or groomers. The groomer helps the student clean the horse. The tacker helps the student put the saddle and bridle on the horse. (Groomers and tackers may also prepare the horses before the lesson). This is an excellent time for student and volunteer interaction. Groomers and tackers must be consistent in technique in order to facilitate skill acquisition.

## **Volunteer Job Checklists**

The volunteer job checklists help the volunteers determine mastery of all the elements of a particular volunteer job.

NOTE: If any volunteer is interested in receiving additional training for some of the more specialized volunteer jobs, please let the instructor know so that a training session can be arranged.

### **Side-walker:**

1. Demonstrate how to pay attention to the student.
2. Demonstrate how to stay close to the student in order to assist if needed. Never has hands in pockets.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of amount of physical assistance the rider needs to maintain balance.
4. Demonstrate how to let rider be as independent as possible.
5. Direct riders attention to the instructor
6. Does not carry on disruptive conversation during the lesson.

### **Leader:**

1. Demonstrate side-walker duties.
2. Demonstrate proper distance from the rail.
3. Demonstrate how to maintain horse speed appropriate to the disability
4. Demonstrate what to do if a horse tries to bite.
5. Demonstrate what to do if a rider steers the horse too close to another horse.
6. Demonstrate how to allow the rider to control the horse – knows when to help and when to back off.
7. Demonstrate how to reinforce the rider when the rider attempts to control the horse and the horse doesn't respond.
8. Demonstrate how to properly hold the lead rope.
9. Demonstrate proper safety procedures for leading a horse.

### **Spotter:**

1. Demonstrate leader and side-walker duties.
2. Demonstrate how to help a rider that is riding independently but still needs a person nearby.
3. Know why the rider needs a spotter (medical, psychological, etc.)
4. Demonstrate proper body position and movement around a horse that is not secured by a lead rope.

### **Off-sider:**

1. Demonstrate leader, side-walker and spotter duties.
2. Demonstrate proper way to assist on off side of horse at the ramp, mounting block, or on the ground including:
  - Safety
  - Hand position
  - Holding of stirrup as necessary
3. Know the way the student mounts or dismounts

**Groomer:**

1. Know where to locate information to determine which horse needs to be brushed
2. Know names of grooming equipment
3. Indicates which grooming equipment is used.
4. Demonstrate proper grooming technique
5. Demonstrate how to assist student with grooming including:
  - Groomer body position in relation to student
  - How to help keep student on task
  - Safety considerations

**Tacker:**

1. Know where to locate information needed to determine which horse will be used and what equipment will be required.
2. Know names of equipment used
3. Know where the tack is located
4. Demonstrate proper tacking techniques including:
  - How to put the saddle on
  - Proper position of saddle on horse
  - Elastic end of girth on left side
  - Correct technique for bridling
5. Demonstrate how to assist student with tacking including:
  - Tacker body position in relation to student
  - How to keep student on task
  - Safety considerations



## UNDERSTANDING HORSE BEHAVIOR AND EQUINE SENSES

When developing relationships and working with horses, communication is key. It is critical to provide a safe environment in a therapeutic riding setting. Beginning a process of understanding the horse senses and instincts is a step in predicting behaviors, managing risks and increasing positive relationships.

**SMELL:** The horse's sense of smell is thought to be very acute and it allows him to recognize other horses and people. Smell also enables the horse to evaluate situations.

### **Implications:**

- Allow horses the opportunity to become familiar with new objects and their environment by smelling.
- It is recommended that treats are not carried in your pocket since horses may desire to go after them.
- Volunteers should be discouraged from eating or having food where horses are present.

**HEARING:** The horse's sense of hearing is also thought to be very acute. The horse may also combine their sense of hearing and sight to become more familiar with new or startling sounds. "Hearing and not seeing" is often the cause of the fright/flight response. Note the position of the horse's ears. Forward ears communicate attentiveness and interest. Ears that are laid back often communicates that they are very upset and/or showing aggression towards another horse or person.

### **Implications:**

- Horses are wary when they hear something but do not see it. If your horse is acting nervous, talk to him in a quiet and calm voice for reassurance.
- Avoid shouting or using a loud voice. This can be frightening to a horse.
- Watch your horse's ears for increased communication. Stiffly pricked ears indicate interest. Drooping ears indicate relaxation, inattentiveness (easily startled), exhaustion or illness. Flattened ears indicate anger, threat or fear. Ears flicking back and forth indicate attentiveness or interest.

**SIGHT:** The horse's eyes are set on either side of the head; there is a good peripheral (lateral) vision, but poorer frontal vision. A horse focuses on objects by raising and lowering its head. The horse's visual memory is very accurate. Horses are thought to see quite well in the dark, due to the large size of their eyes. There is still controversy as to whether or not horses see in color.

### **Implications:**

- The horse may notice if something in the arena or out on the trail is different. Allow the horse an opportunity to look at new objects. Introduce new props that the horse may be unfamiliar with.
- The horse has better peripheral vision; consider a slightly looser rein, enabling him to move his head when taking a look at objects.
- Although the horse has good peripheral vision, consider two blind spots: directly in front and directly behind. The best way to approach a horse is at his shoulder. It may startle him if you approach from behind or directly in front. The horse may be unable to see around the mouth area, which is a safety consideration when hand feeding.

**TOUCH:** Touch is used as a communication between horses and people. Horses are sensitive to soft or rough touch with a person's hands or legs.

**Implications:**

- Handlers should treat the horses gently but firmly.
- Each horse has sensitive areas, and it is important to be familiar with them (i.e. flank and belly areas).
- Watch rider's leg position. Riders may need appropriate assistance to reduce a "clothes pin" effect with their legs. Ask the instructor what is the best handling technique.
- Horses will often touch or paw at unfamiliar objects. For example, a horse may paw at a bridge or ground pole before crossing it.

**TASTE:** Taste is closely linked with the sense of smell and helps the horse to distinguish palatable foods and other objects.

**Implications:**

- Taste is closely linked with smell or touch; therefore, a horse may lick or nibble while becoming familiar with objects and people. Be careful, as this could lead to possible biting.

**SIXTH SENSE:** Horses do have a "sixth sense" when evaluating the disposition of those around him. Horses can be hypersensitive in detecting the moods of the handlers and riders. A good therapy horse is chosen for their sensitive response to the rider. At times there may exist a personality conflict between a handler and a horse. It is important to let the instructor know if you're having a difficult time relating, or getting along, with a particular horse.

**THE HORSE'S LIFESTYLE:** In addition to understanding the horse's sixth sense, we need to appreciate and increase our awareness of the horse's lifestyle. This will assist us in responding appropriately to his reactions to situations.

**FLIGHT AS NATURAL INSTINCT:** Horse's would rather turn and run away from danger than face and fight it.

**Implications:**

- At a sudden movement or noise, the horse might try to flee. Speak to the horse calmly.
- A frightened horse being held tightly might try to escape by pulling back. Relax your hold or untie him quickly and usually he will relax. Be sure not to stand directly behind the horse.
- If flight is not possible, the horse could either turn to kick out or face the problem and rear, especially in a tight area like a stall. Use a halter with a lead rope to maintain control while working around the horse in a stall.
- If a horse appears to be frightened or fearful (note the position of the horse's ears), alert the program staff.
- Most horses chosen to work in a therapeutic riding setting have less of an instinct to flee. The horse may look to you for reassurance. It is helpful if the volunteer remains calm and talks to the horse in a soothing voice.

**HERD ANIMAL:** Horses like to stay together in a herd or a group with one or two horses dominant, with a pecking order amongst the rest.

**Implications:**

- Be aware that a horse may not like being alone. This is a consideration when horses are leaving the arena or a horse loses sight of the others while on a trail ride.
- Be aware that if the horse in front of a line is trotting or cantering, the horse that is following may also attempt to trot or canter.
- If one horse spooks at something, the surrounding horses may also be affected
- For safety, it is recommended to keep at least two horse's lengths between horses when riding within a group to respect the horse's space and pecking order.

## Horse and Rider Hints

No smoking on Ivey Ranch property.

Please make sure all stalls and gates are securely latched. Take care that the stall doors are fully open when bringing horses in or out.

Horses may be tied only as directed by the instructor. Never tie the horse by his bridle or to a fence board. Remember that a horse cannot see directly behind him, so talk to him when you approach from behind so he knows you are there.

When walking around a tied or held horse, do not walk under or over the lead rope.

Do not kneel or squat around a horse.

When patting a horse, pat his neck firmly. Do not pat or poke at the end of the horse's nose.

Do not let the horses sniff noses; they are apt to squeal and misbehave.

Helmets are ALWAYS worn (with harness snapped) by the students when they are riding a horse. Some students are instructed to wear their helmets while working on the ground with a horse.

About attire: Wear safe and comfortable shoes (NO SANDALS). Dangling, jingling jewelry or keys can upset a horse or be pulled on by the rider. Perfume can attract insects and some students may be allergic to certain types of perfumes. No cell phones when you are volunteering please. Please NO tank tops or spaghetti strap shirts, shorts, provocative/political/religious/ or "statement" shirts, strapless shirts, or tummies showing.

It is important to remember that the horse is led, not pulled. The rider is taught to ride; he is not just taken for a ride. If at all possible, the rider grooms and completes the various tasks associated with the horse. The rider learns a skill and begins to participate in a sport. These benefits are great.

When working with a student, make sure directions and explanations are clear and broken down into several steps. Use demonstrations when possible. Be consistent. Directions may need to be repeated several times and possibly in several different ways. Be positive and praise success.

Do not feed the horses treats by hand. All treats must be put in the feed buckets in the stalls or in a bucket set aside for treats for the horse. Horses learn much too quickly to bite if they are given treats by hand.

## **Risk Management Planning**

1. Hazards specific to use of equines?
  - Mounted Emergencies / falls
  - Loose Horses
  - Horse health emergencies
  
2. Natural Hazards to the site?
  - Stinging Insects
  
3. Disasters such as fire, flood, hurricane, earthquake?
  - Inclement weather: severe winds, fire, earthquakes, thunderstorms
  
4. Operation of Facilities and/or equipment?
  - Power outage
  - Equipment: blower, lawn mower
  - Injuries to participants, volunteers, visitors
  - Dangerous items such as medicines, poisons, needles, and syringes
  
5. Conduct of personnel and participants?
  - Physical or verbal abuse of humans and equines
  - Drug or alcohol possession on property
  - Compliance with safety rules
  - Confidentiality

## **Conduct of Personnel and Participants**

- Each individual involved with Ivey Ranch Park programs is expected to show respect for the rights and person of all participants both human and equine. If you witness an act of abuse, either physically or verbal, please report the incident and the circumstances to the instructor or the Executive Director.
- The possession or use of drugs, alcohol, or nicotine products on the premises of the Ivey Ranch Park Association is strictly prohibited. Anyone found on the premises in possession of, or using any substances, will be asked to leave the premises immediately and may be barred from further participation in the program.
- All personnel and participants are expected to follow the Ivey Ranch Park Association established safety procedures. Failure to do so can result in the loss of riding privileges for participants. Any volunteer or paid personnel not in compliance with safety procedures will meet with the Executive Director before being allowed to continue with the program. If you observe an instance of unsafe practice, please inform the instructor or Executive Director.
- All volunteers will sign a confidentiality agreement concerning divulging any information contained in the participant's file. Personnel shall keep participants information confidential and will provide only relevant information to the volunteers.

## **Confidentiality Policy**

All medical and personal information concerning students and personnel is confidential. It is expected that all persons affiliated with Ivey Ranch Park Association programs will respect the confidentiality rights of students and personnel. All volunteers will sign a confidentiality statement.

Volunteers are made aware of confidentiality issues in the following manner:

- Confidentiality issues are reviewed with volunteers during volunteer training.
- The volunteer training manual states: "Respect the confidentiality rights, dignity, and privacy of the rider".
- All volunteers are required to sign a confidentiality statement. The requirement of signing a confidentiality statement illustrates the seriousness of the issue with the volunteers.
- Volunteers do not have access to student files and only pertinent information is shared with volunteers – (information that is necessary for volunteers to perform their duties effectively).

Students and guardians are made aware that information about their disability may be provided to volunteers - (information that is necessary for volunteers to perform their duties effectively). Students and guardians are also informed about the confidentiality policy that is in place for volunteers and personnel alike.