

Ivey Ranch Park

Volunteer Handbook

Table of Contents

Volunteer Letter	Page 1
Introduction to PATH International	Page 2
Map of Ivey Ranch Park	Page 3
History / Benefits of Therapeutic Riding	Page 4
Glossary of Physical & Cognitive Disabilities....	Page 5 – 7
Volunteering at Ivey Ranch Park	Page 8 -9
When you meet a person with a special need..	Page 10
Volunteer Positions	Pages 11 – 12
Safety Training Procedures.....	Page 13
Emergency Procedures.....	Page 14
General Safety Regulations.....	Page 15
Confidentiality Policy	Pages 16 – 17
Understanding Horse Behavior and Equine Senses	Page 18 – 20
Parts of the Horse.....	Page 18
Horse and Rider Hints	Page 19
Volunteer Job Checklist	Pages 20-21

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 special needs."

Therapeutic horsemanship is an equine-assisted service for the purpose of contributing positively to the cognitive, physical, emotional and social well being of people with special needs. 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 that enables people with and without disabilities to achieve a better quality of life through care, education, and equine assisted services. Since 1981 we have served children and adults with special needs but will not exclude the able-bodied, since integration, inclusion and interaction are important components of our program. Serving over 350 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 session 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 sessions please bring the completed packet with you unless you have submitted your paperwork through our website, on-line. If you have any questions please contact our office at (760) 722-4839 or e-mail us at iveyranch@yahoo.com and 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 Intl.), a federally-registered 501(c3) nonprofit, was formed in 1969 as the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA) to promote [equine-assisted activities and therapies](#) (EAAT) for individuals with special needs. With more than 4,800 certified instructors and equine specialists and 881 member centers, more than 8,000 PATH Intl. members around the globe help more than 66,000 children and adults--including more than 6,200 veterans and active-duty military personnel--with physical, cognitive and emotional challenges find strength and independence through the power of the horse each year. In addition to [therapeutic riding](#), PATH centers offer a number of therapeutic equine-related activities, including [hippotherapy](#), [equine-facilitated mental health](#), [driving](#), [interactive vaulting](#), competition, ground work and stable management. More recently, programs offer services in human growth and development to serve wide-ranging audiences for such educational purposes as leadership training, team building and other human capacity enhancement skills for the workplace and for daily use.

PATH Intl. is the credentialing organization for accrediting centers and certifying instructors and equine specialists. Through the certification and accreditation programs, plus a wide variety of educational resources that includes an annual international conference that can attract close to 1,000 attendees, the association helps members start and maintain successful EAAT programs. There are more than 62,000 volunteers, 5,011 credential professionals, 7,800 equines and thousands of contributors from all over the world at PATH Intl. Member Centers inspiring and enriching the human spirit.

The PATH Intl. mission is to promote safety and optimal outcomes in equine-assisted activities and therapies for individuals with special needs.

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.

Ivey Ranch Riders

The minimum age for riders is 4 years. Prior to riding all participants are required to complete paperwork including a signed Physician's Referral and then are assessed by staff to determine that riding is a safe, appropriate activity, one they will benefit from. An individual riding plan is developed by their therapeutic riding instructor, which includes each rider's goals and the objectives (activities) to meet those goals. Riders participate in at least one lesson per week for the length of the session. Sessions include activities such as learning horse care, riding skills, exercise, games, obstacle courses, and trail rides. Progress is documented after 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 800 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 so many other sights and sounds one encounters in the riding program 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 special needs.

GLOSSARY OF PHYSICAL AND COGNITIVE DISABILITIES

The following are brief, non-medical descriptions of some special needs 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, taste, 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, 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 or 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: Increased 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

Characteristics: Most commonly occurs in the 20 to 40 year old range. 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 confidences.

Scoliosis

Lateral curve of the spine with a C or S shape with rotatory component

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, structured risk-taking, and freedom of movement.

VOLUNTEERING AT IVEY RANCH PARK ASSOCIATION

Volunteer Training: A volunteer must be at least 9 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, helps with fund raising, and provides an accurate record for those who need verification of hours. **REMEMBER** – sign in **EVERY TIME** you volunteer. Once you have attended a Volunteer Orientation you will be set up in the computer so you can log in and out, digitally, on site. In the case of power/computer/or program issues, blank log sheets are located in a Sign-In binder for you to note your day of attendance and hours completed.

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 send monthly e-newsletters with relevant trainings, information, important dates, and required updates. Please make sure your e-mail address is entered clearly and kept current.

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 – 4PM for the entire session). We realize that emergencies can occur. It is your responsibility to call the Volunteer Coordinator at (760) 722-4839. Remember, the riders depend on YOU.

Cancellations: At times it maybe 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) 722-4839 x417.

Rest Rooms: Rest rooms are located behind the pasture and on the west side of the Multi-Purpose Room.

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 on vibrate when carried with you and only responded to when you are not attending a client and/or horse AND outside of the program area.

Dogs: No dogs are allowed inside the program area. Visiting dogs must be on a leash, with an adult, and always 10-15 feet away from program fencing. Vocal dogs must be removed from the area immediately.

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 above 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. Please speak with the staff member working with you during your volunteer time. If there wasn't an appropriate time to communicate your feedback please call the Main Office at (760) 722-4839 or e-mail us at iveyranch@yahoo.com.

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 Special Need...

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

Remember that a person with a special need 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 special need, 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 program participants 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, sidewalkers, off-siders, and spotters. 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 – but at Ivey Ranch we lead from the horse's left side. 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 left eye 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. Avoid sharp or quick turns that may compromise the rider's balance.

It is the leader's responsibility to position the horse during mounting. Mounting occurs at the mounting ramp or with a mounting 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 at a diagonal, facing the horse's left eye during the mount; do not stand directly in front of him. Use your energy and focus so that the horse maintains halt with no pressure from the lead rope, but be ready to use the lead rope to stop the horse if necessary. 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 lead 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.

Remember that there may be a sidewalker 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 offside sidewalker. 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. If needed, you may be taught to use a whip appropriately. 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.

Sidewalker

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 extension 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, 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 horses 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, keeping the right position on the horse, and without losing his/her balance. If the rider starts to slip to one side, alert the horse leader, and stop to readjust.

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 special needs (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 movement 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 and will receive training from the instructor to do so.

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.

Unmounted Instruction

Volunteers may assist the students groom and tack their horses. These volunteers are tackers or groomers. The groomer helps the student clean the horse. The tacker helps the student put the saddle, pads, bridle, or reins 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.