



MYHEROES, LLC.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES, ONE HOOF AT A TIME

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Updated 2021

www.myheroestherapy.com

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Welcome to the My Heroes Volunteer Program!

We are so glad to have you join us! We realize that the volunteer orientation program covers a lot of information in a short period of time, so we have provided you with this volunteer handbook for any questions you may have. In this manual you will find all of the information covered during orientation and training, as well as other useful information designed to help you feel more confident in any role you choose to serve during your time as a volunteer with My Heroes.

REMEMBER: Working with horses is a risky activity, and attention to safety is of highest importance for all individuals involved.



Table of Contents

First Things First.....	3
Barn Conducts and Safety Rules.....	3
My Heroes at CSU Staff Contact.....	3-4
Sign In.....	4
Name Tags.....	4
Attire.....	4
Cancellations.....	4-5
Promptness and Reliability.....	5
Volunteer Positions.....	5
• Horse Leader.....	5-6
• Side Walker.....	6
• Barn Team.....	6
Emergency Situations.....	7
• Emergency dismount.....	7-8
• Loose horse with rider.....	8
• Loose horse without rider.....	8
• Rider falls from the horse.....	8-9
• The instructor/therapist may assign a volunteer to.....	9
• Occurrence report procedures.....	9-10
• In case of a fire.....	10
• In case of severe weather.....	10-11
• Seizures.....	11
Tacking and Grooming.....	11
Helpful Tips.....	11-12
Barn Maintenance.....	12
Days of Service.....	12
Horse Sense.....	12-13
Flight as a Natural Instinct.....	13
Ground Manners.....	13
A Final Note.....	13-14

First Things First:

- There is absolutely no smoking or solicitation at any Colorado State University or My Heroes facility. Smoking is prohibited in all of our buildings and paddock areas.
- All volunteers must have their completed liability and release forms signed and turned in to the Volunteer Coordinator PRIOR to beginning any volunteer activity at the center.
- Volunteers must sign-in the orange volunteer log book when volunteering.
- For program safety and consistency, we ask that all volunteers attend at least one volunteer orientation during their time here at the center.

Barn Conduct and Safety Rules:

- For the safety and well being of all individuals and program animals at My Heroes, we ask that you abide by the following set of guidelines when in our barn.
 - If you take it out, put it away.
 - If your horse makes a mess, clean it up.
 - All riders must wear a helmet when riding My Heroes horses.
 - No running, yelling, jumping or screaming in the barn or observation areas. “Horsing around” can harm riders in the arena.
 - Know the horse “danger zones” and avoid them (directly behind, in front of and under the necks of horses).
 - Close-toed shoes must be worn when working with the horses (NO sandals or clogs). No bare feet inside the barn at any time.
 - Always use a lead rope when moving a horse.
 - Never lead a horse under another horse’s occupied crossties. Have someone unhook the horse before leading your own horse through.
 - You must be at least 15 years old and have permission from the instructor/therapist on duty to bring horses out or in from the paddocks.
 - If you don’t know, ask questions! The My Heroes staff wants everyone to feel safe and comfortable in their volunteer roles.

My Heroes at CSU Staff Contact:

Brent Applegate: Owner/Physical Therapist	678-984-7774 brentapplegate@myheroestherapy.com
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Sign in:

A volunteer sign-in binder will be kept on the table in the tack room. As a new volunteer, you will fill out a new time log (blank copies at the back of the binder) with your first and last name, then file your log under your last name.

Name Tags:

Your volunteer coordinator will make you a name tag, which is kept in the box labeled “My Heroes Name Tags”. This box can also be found in the tack room. Please wear your name tag at all times while volunteering at our facility. Remember to return your name tag at the end of your session!

Attire:

Please wear appropriate clothing and shoes while volunteering at our facility. You will be working around horses, walking in an arena, and assisting clients. Appropriate attire includes the following:

- Jeans or leggings
- T-shirts (not low cut)
- Sweatshirts/jackets
- Boots or closed-toe shoes
- Tank tops and athletic shorts are ok in the summer, as long as they are not revealing
- Dangling or noisy jewelry may be a distraction to both horse and rider
- Anyone wearing sandals or open-toe shoes will not be allowed to volunteer in the barn area

Cancellations:

The saying holds true, they can't ride without you!

If there are any days and times that you know ahead of time that you will be gone, please contact your volunteer coordinator and let them know as far in advance as possible. Anything under a 24 hour notice makes it very difficult to find a replacement, which oftentimes results in having to cancel the client.

We of course understand that life happens, whether you end up sick, have a family emergency, or when your transportation is unavailable. Just let us know as soon as you are able to.

Promptness and Reliability:

Showing up on time or even early to your volunteering shift, makes a world of difference to your team. Our general guideline is as follows:

Horse leaders: 30 minutes prior to the start of the session

Side walkers: 15 minutes prior to the start of the session

If you are running late, please notify your volunteer coordinator as soon as possible.

Consistency is key. Having consistent volunteers not only allows our clients to form relationships with their team, but it also allows the volunteers to maximize their experience in this unique setting.

Volunteer Positions:

Horse Leader:

- Reports to: Volunteer Coordinator
- Position Summary: Take responsibility for the equine before, during and after a class. Horse Leaders will prepare the equine for class, lead the equine during class, put the equine away after class and return tack and equipment appropriately.
- Job Duties:
 - Groom and tack equine as directed by instructor
 - Aid in mounting by leading the equine to the appropriate mounting site
 - Lead the equine for the rider as specified by the therapist or instructor
 - Maintain safety in the arena by keeping equine at a safe distance from other equines, people, fences and other objects
 - Focus attention on the equine, not the rider unless stated otherwise by the therapist or instructor
 - Return the equine back to the appropriate stall or pasture
 - Follow all therapist/instructor and staff directions
 - Ensures compliance with all My Heroes policies
 - Work as a team with staff, volunteers, and equines
- Qualifications:
 - Volunteers must be at least 16 years of age
 - All volunteers must have attended a volunteer orientation and training and have a passing skills checklist prior to volunteering as a Horse Leader

- Able to frequently sit, stand, walk, bend and lift up to 50 pounds
- Able to walk and/or jog on uneven surfaces
- Able to physically react quickly and precisely to maximize rider safety

Side Walker:

- Reports to: Volunteer Coordinator
- Position Summary: Aid Therapists, Instructors, and Horse Leaders in creating and maintaining a safe learning environment for riders by supporting riders from arrival to the facility until departure.
- Job Duties:
 - Greet riders and assist with helmet fitting
 - Assist Horse Leader in grooming/tacking the horse
 - Aid therapist or instructor and horse leader during mounting, riding, and dismounting
 - Maintain safety in the arena
 - Walk beside the rider to provide stability assistance and verbal prompts as needed
 - When appropriate, support therapist or instructor by relaying directions to the rider
 - Follow all therapist/instructor and staff directions
 - Ensures compliance with all My Heroes policies
 - Work as a team with staff, volunteers and equines
- Qualifications:
 - Must be at least 16 years of age
 - All volunteers must have attended volunteer orientation and training prior to volunteering
 - Able to frequently sit, stand, walk, bend, and lift up to 50 pounds
 - Able to walk and/or jog on uneven surfaces
 - Able to physically react quickly and precisely to maximize rider safety

Barn Team:

- Reports to: Volunteer Coordinator
- Job Duties:
 - Sweeps barn area
 - Mucks horse pens
 - Picks up manure in the arena
 - Sanitizes toys and tack between sessions
 - Helps to keep our facility clean and organized

The above statements are intended to describe the general nature and level of work being performed and are not intended to be an exhaustive list of all responsibilities, duties and/or skills that may be required. My Heroes holds the right to terminate volunteers if not meeting requirements and responsibilities set forth in this job description, or if a volunteer violates the volunteer policies.

Emergency Situations:

- In brief:
 - The horse leader takes control of the horse, and removes the horse from the situation and/or client.
 - One side walker stays with the rider at all times. At the therapist/instructor's request, the other side walker may call 911 from an available cell phone or front office phone, if the need arises.
 - In the case of a "rider down" situation, all horses in the arena must halt. The instructor is the only individual responsible for assisting the fallen rider.
 - All instructors and therapists at My Heroes are trained and certified in CPR and First Aid, and should be the only individuals assisting a rider down.
- **EMERGENCY DISMOUNT:**
 - Instructors/therapists will always advise when an emergency dismount is necessary. In the event that a rider needs to dismount from the horse, please do the following:
 - Instructors will indicate the need for emergency dismount.
 - Leader – halt if possible, or stay with the moving horse.
 - Right Side Walker – remove rider's foot from stirrup and remove reins from rider's hands (if they have any). Rest reins halfway up the horse's neck, and assist the leg of rider over horse; go around to assist other Side Walker after the left Side Walker has a hold on the rider.
 - Left Side Walker – pull the rider from the horse with his back on your chest, drag away from the horse, and wait for further instructions.
 - To dismount a rider, use either a croup or crest dismount as described below:
 - Croup dismount: Have the rider lean forward on the horse's neck, placing their head to the right side of the horse's neck and bring their right leg over and around the horse's croup onto the left side of the horse. Gently let the rider down to their feet.

- Crest dismount: Have the rider lean back (they may need back support) and bring their right leg over the neck around to the front of the horse. Roll the rider onto their stomach and gently let the rider down to their feet.
 - The Horse Leader should move the horse away from the rider by turning the horse's head toward the rider and pushing the hind end away from the rider. Then the Horse Leader should lead the horse to a neutral corner of the arena or remove the horse from the arena at the discretion of the instructor/therapist.
 - Side Walkers and/or the instructor/therapist should stay with the rider. They should support the rider emotionally and physically if necessary. Try to keep the rider calm.
 - When the instructor/therapist advises, remove all riders and horses from the arena.
- **LOOSE HORSE WITH RIDER:**
 - Immediately stop the class.
 - Give simple quick instructions to the rider such as "Sit up!" or "Pull up!"
 - The volunteer team should quickly and calmly approach the horse and regain control of the horse.
 - Do not step in front of the horse because the horse may swerve and potentially dislodge the rider.
- **LOOSE HORSE WITHOUT RIDER:**
 - Immediately stop the class.
 - All leaders and Side Walkers should stay with their riders. Leaders should assume leader halted positions and Side Walkers should do thigh holds.
 - The instructor/therapist or designated volunteer will catch the loose horse.
- **RIDER FALLS FROM THE HORSE:**
 - DO NOT PANIC if there is a fall and listen to the instructor/therapist for instructions.
 - In case of a fall, the instructor/therapist should immediately go to the rider and talk to them, the leader should keep the horse under control, and the Side Walkers should help keep the rider calm and follow instructor/therapist instructions. This will allow the instructor/therapist to assess the situation and give directions efficiently. The instructor/therapist and the rider's Side Walkers should remain with the rider at all times.
 - The fallen rider should remain lying down and still for at least ten minutes or until they can be checked for signs of injury. An individual onsite with the most advanced medical training will be summoned to examine the fallen rider.
 - 911 will be called if the injury is serious.

- Signs of serious injury include:
 - Unconsciousness (even for a moment)
 - Bleeding or fluid draining from the mouth, nose, or ears
 - Serious bleeding (apply direct pressure)
 - Limb at unnatural angle or pain on pressure with pain on movement (do not move)
 - Pupils contract unevenly
 - Signs of shock (paleness, mottled color, sweating, nausea, fainting)
 - Consider the possibility of head injury and/or spinal injury in ANY fall. If it is suspected, keep the rider absolutely still.
- **THE INSTRUCTOR/THERAPIST MAY ASSIGN A VOLUNTEER TO:**
 - Retrieve the First Aid kit located in the barn or main hallway near the front desk.
 - Call 911 - the caller should follow the operator's instructions and stay on the telephone until the operator tells you to hang up. Give directions to the Temple Grandin Equine Center; directions are posted on a script above all fire extinguishers and with first aid equipment.
 - Take the rider's parent, guardian, caregiver, or any other person who brought the rider to the rider in the arena or on the trail. Make sure to involve the parent, guardian or caregiver because they know the rider best. If necessary, contact the fallen rider's parents, guardian, caretaker, or emergency contact.
 - If the instructor/therapist thinks the rider is injured and needs medical attention but 911 is not required, then strongly encourage the rider to be taken to the doctor, urgent care facility or the hospital (depending on the level of medical attention needed). If the rider does not have visible injuries, suggest that the rider be taken to a doctor for evaluation as a precaution.
 - If the instructor/therapist thinks the rider is uninjured, then they should walk the rider to the waiting area. The rider should be reassured and the instructor/therapist will discuss with the rider what caused the fall. When the situation is under control, reassure the rest of the class and explain to them what caused the fall.
 - For ANY injury an instructor/therapist is required to fill out an Occurrence Report with the entire volunteer team, rider and parent, guardian or caregiver.
- **OCCURRENCE REPORT PROCEDURES:**
 - All parties must sign the form, and then the form should be given to the Program Manager. This includes Volunteers!

- The instructor/therapist should follow up with the rider's parent, guardian or caregiver within six hours of the incident, and again within 24 hours of the incident. All encounters should be documented and given to the Program Manager to be put with the Occurrence Report.
 - The instructor/therapist should make the Program Manager aware of any injury at the facility immediately in order to discuss if further actions need to be taken.

- **IN CASE OF FIRE:**
 - Evacuate the riders and volunteers calmly and quickly out of the barn or arena through the nearest exit. Keep everyone quiet and under control.
 - Call the fire department (911). Give the operator your name, the farm name, and the location. All this information is located above the telephone in the office next to the lockers in the Temple Grandin Equine Center. Stay on the telephone until the operator tells you to hang up.
 - With the instructor/therapist's permission, evacuate horses if possible. Get a halter and lead rope for the horses and lead them to the arena.
 - Do not let the horses loose outside of the barn since they may try to return to the barn. If the horse will not lead, blindfold the horse with a towel, a sack, or coat. If possible, wet the blindfold in the horse's water before putting it on the horse's head.
 - Make sure the driveway is clear for fire equipment.
 - Save equipment from the barn or tack room only after horses are out and if your safety will not be compromised.
 - Use fire extinguishers located in the tack room, the office, or the arena if your safety will not be compromised.
 - Once help arrives, immediately check the horses for injuries. Call the vet if horses are burned or have inhaled a lot of smoke.

- **IN CASE OF SEVERE WEATHER:** (i.e. high winds, thunderstorms, or tornadoes)
 - Lead riders and volunteers as quickly and quietly as possible to the designated safe area.
 - Instruct everyone to sit down, put their heads between their legs, and cover their heads. Leave helmets on the rider's head for protection.
 - If there is not enough time to put horses in stalls, leave them in the arena with the gate closed. Remove reins!
 - Remain in the designated safe area until the storm is over and the "All Clear" signal is given by the instructor/therapist.

- Put horses back in their stalls when the severe weather threat is over if they are still in the arena.
- When the severe weather threat is over, inspect the premises for downed power lines before permitting riders and volunteers to leave.
- **SEIZURES:**
 - Sometimes you or the rider can tell if a seizure is going to happen, other times you cannot.
 - The main thing to remember is to not restrain a person when they have a seizure. Simply keep the rider safe until the seizure is over.
 - If a volunteer or a rider knows that a seizure is going to happen, the instructor/therapist should be notified and the rider should be dismounted as quickly as possible. The rider should sit or lie down in a comfortable and safe place.
 - If a seizure happens when a rider is on the horse, a volunteer should notify the instructor/therapist immediately. Have the rider lean forward on the horse's neck with his or her head off to the side of the horse's neck.
 - The instructor/therapist will evaluate the rider after the seizure is over. The rider will either be dismounted or will continue with the lesson.

Tacking and Grooming:

- Individuals who are unable to help or walk in the arena during a class are able to help groom and tack the horses as well as participate in the daily cleaning and maintenance of the barn.
- If wanting to help with grooming and tacking, the individual will be trained on tools and equipment used in a safe and proper manner.

Helpful Tips:

- Do not use quick, jerking, or excessive movements around horses.
- Be mindful of a horse's sensitive areas including but not limited to: face, flanks, girth area, tummy, mane and tail. Think about how you would like to be groomed or touched and apply this to the horse.
- Remember, horses can feel even a tiny insect landing anywhere on their bodies, for such large animals, they are very sensitive creatures.
- DO NOT go underneath a horse's belly, neck, or chest. A horse's first instinct is to go forward when startled, and it will not care if you are in the way of that.
- Do not stand directly in front of a horse in the crossties or let the horses rub you with their heads. Many horses love to use people as their personal scratching post, but a nudge from a 1200lb animal is enough to knock you down or cause injury. Though this might seem "cute and cuddly," if allowed to have that habit,

the horse will not discriminate between an adult and a child or a person with a disability.

- Please put away all tack and grooming equipment after you are finished with it. If you do not know where something goes, please ask!

Barn Maintenance:

- Because it is a home to our therapy animals as well as a university teaching facility, we strive to keep the facility's property clean and well maintained at all times. There is always an area that needs tidying up or a floor to be swept. The farm is a large area with many different areas to be maintained. Instructor/therapists and the instructor on duty are in charge of making sure all barn duties are completed at the end of each night of lessons. Please check with them if you are looking for something to do.

Days of Service:

- Many times throughout the year, we are fortunate to have different groups from the community participate in a Day of Service for our organization. If you have a group that would like to do a one-time service project please contact our Volunteer Coordinator.

Horse Sense:

- Benjamin Franklin said, "The outside of a horse is good for the inside of a man." Many people who work with the horses during their time here at My Heroes say that the bonds made with these special animals are both unique and therapeutic even if they are only brushing and grooming them for class.
- Horses do have a "sixth sense" when evaluating the disposition of those around them. They can be hypersensitive in detecting the moods of their handlers and riders. A good therapy horse is chosen for their gentle and sensitive response to a rider. At times there may exist a personality conflict between horses and handlers. It is important to tell the instructor or instructor/therapist if you are having a difficult time handling a particular horse.
- Additionally, do not be embarrassed to tell an instructor that a horse that acts "strong" might intimidate you. It is better to work with a horse that you are compatible with than risk an accident by putting yourself in a situation that is uncomfortable.
- My Heroes Center will also schedule one on one training for help on groundwork with a horse if you so desire.
- In addition to understanding the horse's "sixth sense", we need to appreciate and increase our awareness of the horse's lifestyle and the way they use body

language to communicate. This will assist us in responding appropriately to his reactions to situations and his behavior.

Flight as a Natural Instinct:

- Horses would rather run away from perceived danger than turn and face it. A horse's sense of hearing is thought to be so acute that "hearing and not seeing" is often the cause of his fright/flight response.
- What this means:
 - A sudden movement or noise may cause the horse to "spook" or try to flee. They might try to bolt sideways, or run forwards.
 - Remain calm and in control. Speak to the horse in a reassuring manner.
 - A horse may get frightened in the crossties or by being held or tied too tightly and he will try to "escape" by pulling back or pushing forward. Often until something gives—usually his halter or the cross ties. The best way to handle this is to relax your hold on him or untie him quickly and calmly and he will relax.
 - Horses are herd animals. If a horse gets loose, oftentimes they will run back to the herd for safety. In an arena setting this could be you (if there are no other horses in the arena) or the other horses in the arena.
- Most horses in the therapeutic riding setting have less of an instinct to flee and are chosen for this reason. 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.

Ground Manners:

- Ground-work is a term used to describe working with a horse on the ground, not riding. My Heroes Center horses are chosen, in part, for their proper manners on the ground. This translates into being safe for most people to handle, given the proper instruction. Consistency of handling is the most important part of creating good ground manners in horses. The nature of the program at My Heroes means that horses are handled by many different individuals daily. We ask that if you have trouble with a horse on the ground that you please approach a staff member for the correct way to handle a difficult animal.
- We try to schedule a Ground Manners Clinic at least once a year that is open to all volunteers. At this clinic we learn in a hands-on method how to work with horses in situations where accidents are most likely to occur or behavior problems can be addressed in a safe and effective manner.

A Final Note:

Did you know that many My Heroes clients, especially in the beginning stages of their riding, simply could not participate without the assistance of volunteers? Some need as

many as three volunteers working together at one time just to ride for a few minutes around the arena. My Heroes volunteers collectively donate many many hours per month to help the program run. This translates into everything from helping in the arena for class to sweeping the aisle ways and scooping manure.

You are the lifeblood of this program. Without you there would be no My Heroes! Our students would not receive the therapy they need if it were not for your generosity of spirit in the giving of your time and energy.

Thank you again!

The Staff at My Heroes at CSU.