



# *Volunteer Handbook*

P.O. Box 1250, Niles, Michigan 49120  
Located at Stockbridge Equestrian Center, 615 N. M-140, Watervliet, Michigan 49098

*Dear Volunteer,*

*The Therapeutic Equestrian Center would like to thank you for donating your time, energy, and the gifts of your personal skills to our facility. Without the help of generous volunteers like you, our programs would not be possible.*

*In the following pages, we have provided informative guidelines to help answer your questions. We would like to gratefully acknowledge the Proud Equestrian Handbook and the Colorado Riding Center for the research and expertise which we resourced for many of our procedures and practices. If you find that you have a question that this handbook does not address, feel free to ask your Instructor or any member of our Therapeutic Equestrian Center Staff.*

*Again, we would like extend our heartfelt thanks and our sincere welcome to Therapeutic Equestrian Center!*

*Sincerely,*

*The Therapeutic Equestrian Center Staff*

All information contained in this handbook may be amended at the discretion of the Therapeutic Equestrian Center without advance notice.  
Last update: March 2012

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# Contact Information for the Therapeutic Equestrian Center

## ***Mailing Address:***

Therapeutic Equestrian Center  
P.O. Box 1250  
Niles, MI 49120

***Website address:*** <http://www.tecfarm.org>

***Email address:*** [info@tecfarm.org](mailto:info@tecfarm.org)

***General Contact:*** (269) 429-0671

## ***Facility Location***

Stockbridge Equestrian Center  
615 N. M-140  
Watervliet, Michigan 49098

## ***Barn Hours of Operation***

8:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m. Summer

8:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. Winter

# **Therapeutic Equestrian Center Mission Statement**

*Our mission is to enhance the lives of people with special needs through horse related activities.*

## **Therapeutic Equestrian Center Vision Statement**

To make a positive difference in the quality of life of our riders and those who serve them.

To promote community awareness, involvement, and support.

To accomplish TEC's Core Values, by:

- \*Providing a healing environment for individuals with special needs
- \*Supporting a humane partnership with our equine counterparts
- \*Achieving the highest standard in safety for our students, volunteers, staff and horses
- \*Encouraging development of independence in our participants
- \*Providing goal-oriented equine-assisted activities to include educational, physical, recreational, and mental health goals
- \*Promoting opportunities for continuing education and development of staff, volunteers and students
- \*Providing accessible, affordable lessons
- \*Operating a fiscally sound non-profit organization

### **Core Values**

Integrity and Accountability

Excellence

Innovation

Teamwork and Collaboration

Respect

# **Therapeutic Equestrian Center Code of Conduct**

## **Therapeutic Equestrian Center Staff Agree To:**

- Provide the volunteer with appropriate policies and procedures.
- Provide orientation about volunteer roles and the organization.
- Offer basic and extended volunteer training.
- Provide job descriptions.
- Provide assistance, program support and encouragement.
- Track and give recognition for time and energy devoted to Therapeutic Equestrian Center.
- Provide a positive and rewarding environment.
- Follow TEC's Core Values.

## **Volunteers Agree to:**

- Meet TEC requirements, complete all paperwork, and enroll as a volunteer
- Support the Therapeutic Equestrian Center vision and mission.
- Follow the policies, philosophy and procedures defined by TEC staff and the appropriate committees.
- Commit to and keep all appointments, contacting the office with any schedule conflict as soon as possible
- Arrive on time (15 minutes prior to scheduled lesson) and stay until my assignment is complete.
- Conduct myself in a professional manner at all times and refrain from using offensive language and conduct.
- Abide by the posted Barn Rules.
- Volunteer their time for a complete session, up to 10 weeks.
- Maintain strict confidentiality, particularly regarding any and all medical, social, referral, personal and financial information, written and/or verbal about participants and other volunteers at Therapeutic Equestrian Center.
- Participate in designated training sessions to help in my volunteer assignment.
- Perform all assigned tasks to the best of my ability and not under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.
- Be courteous and respectful to the public, volunteers, and employees and treat with courtesy each individual with whom I come in contact regardless of race, color, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation or national ancestry.
- Fulfill outlined job requirements without expectation of monetary compensation.

- Be supportive of the Therapeutic Equestrian Center program and its activities at all levels.
- Abide by the Therapeutic Equestrian Center Volunteer Code of Conduct.
- Supply the Therapeutic Equestrian Center with any changes in the volunteer's status as they occur.
- Affirm that the Therapeutic Equestrian Center program actively seeks members from every race, ethnic religious and socioeconomic group.

## **Therapeutic Equestrian Center Barn Rules**

*Please observe the following Barn Rules, which are designed to ensure a safe and pleasant experience for everyone while at Therapeutic Equestrian Center at Stockbridge. Instructors, employees, personnel and volunteers have the authority to take any and all appropriate action to enforce the Barn Rules.*

*~Thank you for your cooperation.*

No Smoking on the Stockbridge property. Chewing gum and hard candy are prohibited in the arena.

Children under the age of 14 must be supervised and accompanied by an adult at all times. All participant siblings must remain with their parent at all times.

All visitors, participants' families & friends will remain within the appropriated observation area and will remain within the North barn property.

Park in designated parking areas only at the North Barn. Please DO NOT park on the grass.

No one is allowed to enter any pasture or stall when horses are present without the permission or under the supervision of TEC personnel.

No one is allowed to enter the tack storage area without the permission or under the supervision of TEC personnel.

No one is allowed in or around the machinery or equipment and in or around the trailers unless accompanied by TEC personnel.

Dispose of trash and garbage in trash receptacles.

Only participants, instructors, volunteers, and TEC personnel are permitted in the stall area during tacking and grooming of horses, and in the arena during riding sessions. However, a participant's family member or friend may assist the participant with the approval of the instructor.

During riding sessions visitors must remain quiet. Cell phones must be silenced and set to vibrate.

All participants must wear certified and approved helmets upon arrival and until they leave the premises.

Any person mounted on a horse must wear a certified and approved helmet while riding horses.

Volunteers are responsible for removing manure from the arena, aisle, and stall after any riding session.

After use, tools and equipment must be returned to the proper storage area.

Pets are not allowed on TEC premises.

# **Therapeutic Equestrian Center**

## ***General Volunteer Information***

### **Volunteer Rider Assistant Job Descriptions:**

- Ability to walk 45+ minutes in a sand arena and jog for short distances
- May possibly be asked to assist riders weighing up to 200 pounds
- Be willing to be outdoors in many weather extremes
- Be able to follow direction from a direct supervisor in a fast paced setting
- Commit to a full riding session or make timely arrangements otherwise.
- Complete volunteer training and read volunteer handbook and barn rules
- Be 14 years or older
- Fully complete application with all required forms and provide references

### **Responsibilities and Duties:**

- Program Volunteers work under the direct supervision of a NARHA certified Instructor
- Arrive *at least 15 minutes prior to class start time*
- Prepare, groom and tack horses for scheduled lesson
- Dress safely and appropriately
- Inform TEC in a timely manner of absences or schedule changes
- Follow all agency policies and procedures
- Communicate questions, grievances, feedback, or concerns to the Instructor
- Follow safety rules and regulations
- Read handbook

### **Program Volunteer (general)**

- Bring horse to the stall, groom and tack horse for lesson
- Promote Rider independence and success
- Alert the Instructor of any safety concerns
- Assist Instructor in maintaining a safe environment and assist in emergency
- Become familiar with the safety precautions to be observed in the program
- Notify the Director of Volunteer Services if you are unable to keep your appointment.
- Help keep the barn area clean

### **Sidewalker A**

- Assist Instructor during mounting and dismounting as requested
- Communicate with Rider when appropriate, including verbal/non-verbal prompts
- Provide physical assistance and stabilization to the Rider when directed or necessary
- Remain focused on assisting the Rider

### **Sidewalker B**

- Provide physical assistance and stabilization to the rider when directed or necessary
- Remain focused on assisting the rider
- Give quiet support to the rider and Sidewalker A

### **Horse Leader**

- Responsible for leading horse, walking alongside horse without a lead, or may be stationed in the arena for spotting
- Focus remains on working with the horse
- Communicate with instructor regarding any horse related questions or concerns

### **Ring Assistant**

- Gives support to the Instructor

### **Instructor in Training**

- Apprentice to the Instructor
- May be student teaching under the guidance of an Instructor

### **Horse Exercise Rider**

- Meet requirements listed in the Volunteer Horse Exerciser Section

### **Training Provided:**

- Volunteer orientation
- Horse leader training
- On the job training
- Continuing education classes
- Written description of responsibilities

### **When You Arrive At TEC**

- Use the North drive of Stockbridge Equestrian Center
- Park in the area in front of the North Barn
- Arrive at least 15 minutes early – you may be asked to bring horses to the grooming area.
- Sign in so we can track your hours
- Make sure to put on your name tag and check announcement board
- If you are a sidewalker, find your student and make sure they have their helmet.
- Once ready, you and your student may to and get their tack and enter the stable area to groom and tack the assigned horse.

### **Class Attendance**

If for some reason you are unable to attend a class and you know in advance you will not be there, please inform class receptionist or the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible.

If you are unable to attend a class due to personal reasons, we ask that you inform the TEC at least 24 hours before your scheduled class.

If a class must be cancelled, you will be contacted as soon as possible. In most cases, inclement weather will not cancel a class. We ride rain or shine unless severe weather Threatens. In the summer if the heat index reaches 92 above classes will be cancelled. In the winter if the temperature reaches 20 degrees classes will be cancelled. Under these circumstances, a credit will be offered to riders for the next session. Again, you will be contacted if classes are cancelled.

## **Proper Attire – Professional & Safe**

We believe that our volunteer dress attire is a factor in the establishment of a safe and welcoming atmosphere and that clothing should be appropriate for all equine related activities performed by TEC volunteers. Standards of dress which clearly deal with the health and safety of volunteers and riders will be upheld.

Forms of volunteer dress are acceptable as long as they are neat, clean, and not considered distracting from the lesson. The instructor does have the right to remove a volunteer from a lesson if they deem their dress in unsafe or not appropriate.

Within this framework, the following specific guidelines for volunteer dress have been developed:

- Wear sturdy shoes- no sandals, open toe or open back shoes.
- Dress in layers appropriate for each season- no shorts, spaghetti straps, tube tops, bare midriffs and/or bellies. Shoulders must be covered with at least a 2-inch width strap. Neckline shall not permit overexposure.
- Riders are required to wear long pants at all time, so to show support, volunteers are to do the same. This is also a safety issue during warm weather. Volunteers should be concentrating on and watching their rider, not be distracting by biting flies around the horses legs.
- No exposed undergarments- no baggy pants that might fall down while rider is trotting.
- Profanity, vulgar suggestion, alcohol, tobacco, or illegal substance logos printed on clothing is prohibited.
- Long hair must be worn away from the face, preferably in a pony tail or braid. Wear no loose jewelry- this includes spiked necklaces, studded or spiked bracelets and hanging chains.
- We always like to see TEC T-Shirts, so please wear yours!

### **Specific Areas of Concern:**

**No Show Volunteers:** Occasionally, we have Volunteers who don't realize the seriousness and responsibility of this commitment and who don't appear at the prearranged lesson time. If you must miss a lesson, please contact TEC or the Volunteer Coordinator before the fact. We know that life happens and with appropriate notice, we can help you arrange for a sub. Your unexpected absence doesn't simply mean that we're shorthanded; it could mean that a rider doesn't get to ride.

**Punctuality:** Leaders and sidewalkers are required to be here **15 minutes before class time** in order to help prepare for lessons. Our group lessons are 1 hour and 15 minutes. Semi-private lessons are 45 minutes. If, for instance, the Volunteer arrives 15 minutes after lesson time, in essence, he is actually a half an hour late. The Volunteer commitment involves preparation time as well as arena time. A late arrival affects the amount of time a Rider may actually ride. With both of these issues, TEC can help to arrange for a substitute or make adjustments if the Volunteer makes prior arrangements.

## **Respect for the Facility Owners**

Because our facility owners live on the premises, we request that you respect their property and that you show consideration to the privacy of their home and do not trespass. Please honor this right to privacy and personal space by recognizing boundaries, staying within close proximity of the North Barn where TEC is housed.

**Respect the Instructors:** Our Instructors have had extensive training and have privately evaluated the capabilities of the Riders. Volunteers, we ask that you defer to their judgment and do not contradict their directives, particularly in front of the Rider. Their authority must not be undermined. **Your feedback, questions and concerns are welcome, but should be addressed privately after lessons.** If you feel that the Instructor is not attentive to your concerns, please contact a member of our Board of Directors. We have a grievance procedure in place which is outlined in this handbook.

**Substitute Instructors:** Occasionally, we need to use substitute Instructors. Please work with each sub as you would your usual Instructor. Each one is trained using NARHA guidelines, but each may have their own individual approach. So, be prepared – watch and listen for any changes or differences as carefully as you did during your first experience in the arena.

**Periodically review your assigned position:** We are aware and appreciate that many of our Volunteers continue to work hard to improve knowledge and skills with Horses and Riders.

However, **each team member must follow the protocol for their assigned position as outlined in the handbook.**

**Casual conversation has no place in the arena.** Sidewalker A is the only Volunteer who should be using verbal communication with the Rider, Ring Assistant and Instructor during lessons. The Leader communicates with Ring Assistant and Instructor only (not the Rider) and Sidewalker B gives non-verbal support.

**Cell phone use:** Volunteers are requested to turn their cell phone off or to vibrate, as the arena is not an acceptable place to answer calls.

**Before, during and after lessons, please be aware of what you say and how you say it.** Even an offhand remark can undermine months of work. For instance, a Volunteer said, “I hope my horse doesn’t try to bite me.” It took another 4 lessons before the rider was unafraid to get back on the horse. Of course the comment was not intended to do any damage, but it did. Use common sense. **Please think carefully before you speak!**

**Volunteer probation:** Volunteer commitment plays an integral role in all operations of Therapeutic Equestrian Center and must be taken very seriously and given careful consideration. **All new volunteers will be considered probationary for six months.** During this time, they will be monitored by an instructor or training team member to ensure safety and will not be alone with riders for any period of time. If the candidate exhibits any physical limitations or behavior traits which may be of concern, or any disregard for

TEC's code of ethics, program, horses, staff, or riders, the candidate will not participate as a lesson volunteer.

The candidate will be given warning and notified immediately of this decision.

This document describes the general requirements to successfully volunteer at TEC. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list of responsibilities, duties and skills. TEC retains the right to add, modify or remove responsibilities of this position at any time. Your application forms must be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

**Carefully consider these very important issues before you commit to any program sessions.** While we deeply appreciate our volunteers, if you are not sure that you are able to honor your commitment, it would be preferable to us that you wait to volunteer until you can.

With your continued cooperation our riders, volunteers and TEC will continue to flourish.

# **Therapeutic Equestrian Center**

## ***Volunteer Sidewalker Information***

Many riders in the Therapeutic Equestrian Center program need help to maintain their balance while sitting on the horse as they are learning to ride. The sidewalker's job is to give the rider as much help in maintaining his or her balance on the horse as is needed.

They also relay the instructor's directions using verbal or physical assistance. One or two people may be asked to act as sidewalkers for a rider, depending on how much difficulty he or she is having with balance.

### **How to Sidewalk With a Rider**

In order to be in the best position to assist a rider in maintaining his or her balance, the sidewalker should walk next to the mounted rider, staying even with the center of the saddle.

The sidewalker maintains a position next to the mounted rider, remains even with the center of the saddle in order to increase the rider's confidence and to ensure his or her safety. If the rider should become unbalanced, the sidewalker would be there to help him or her to regain balance and stay in the saddle. The instructor may also ask the sidewalker to assist the rider in developing a good riding position by supporting a foot, stabilizing an ankle, or assisting in other ways.

The sidewalker places the fingers of the hand on the arm closest to the rider under the knee roll of the saddle and allows the forearm to rest lightly on the rider's thigh.



*Correct sidewalker position*

**SAFETY RULE #1: Do not walk behind the saddle next to the horse's hindquarters!**



*Incorrect sidewalker position*

**SAFETY RULE #2: Do not lean on the rider or the horse!**

**SAFETY RULE #3: The sidewalker must remain alert to the needs of the rider!**

*Note: If the rider needs special assistance, the instructor will provide specific directions on how to provide the necessary support.*

## **Sidewalking During the Riding Lesson**

### **At the Mounting Ramp**

If you are assisting a rider who mounts from the ramp, the instructor will give you specific directions on how to help with the mounting of that particular rider.

### **Mounting from the Ground**

If you are assisting a rider who mounts from the ground or mounting block, the instructor may ask you to counterweight the saddle on the off-side as the rider mounts, in order to keep it from slipping when the rider places his or her weight in the stirrup to mount. It is the instructor's responsibility to assist the rider with mounting. Do not allow the rider to try to mount without the supervision from the instructor unless specifically directed to do so. Once the rider is mounted, the instructor will tell you what kind of assistance he or she will most probably need (for example, constant support, occasional support or reinforced directions.)

## **How Much to Help**

The amount of help the rider will need will depend upon his or her experience with riding and the characteristics of the disability he or she has. Each rider should be permitted to be as independent as possible as long as his or her safety is not in jeopardy.

The rider's attention should be focused on the instructor's directions and the task at hand. The sidewalker may need to reinforce the directions when the rider does not hear or understand them. Do not engage in casual conversation with the rider during the lesson. It distracts his or her attention and makes it difficult to hear the instructor.

Riders often have various physical limitations. Therefore, the sidewalker should not handle the rider (as attempting to change the position of his or her hand, arm, leg or other parts of the body) unless specifically asked to do so by the instructor.

## **At the Halt**

Remain in position next to the rider and listen for directions from the instructor. Be especially alert for balance changes as the mount stops and starts.

## **At the Walk**

Remain in position next to the rider and listen for directions from the instructor. If the rider needs special attention (such as repositioning in the saddle or having his or her foot replaced in the stirrup), alert the instructor and the leader working with the horse.

It is usually best to go to the center of the ring to make any necessary adjustment in order to avoid interrupting the rest of the class.

## **At the Trot**

The rider should ask the horse to trot only when told to do so by the instructor and only after the rider is fully prepared (holding the handhold, seat deep in the saddle and so forth.) The instructor may take the sidewalker's place for a short time when asking the rider to trot in order to work with him or her on a one on one basis to develop the skill.

When assisting a rider at a trot, be especially alert for changes in balance caused by both the upward and downward transition.

## **During Exercises**

Remain next to the rider and be ready to reinforce the instructor's directions as necessary. Enthusiasm is catching, so encourage the rider to participate independently as is safely possible.

## **Dismounting**

The instructor is responsible for dismounting all riders. Remain next to the rider until the instructor is ready to help him or her dismount. Do not dismount the rider without the instructor.

## **Working With a Leader**

Riders who require the assistance of one or more sidewalkers most often need a leader to assist them with guiding and controlling the horse or pony. The leader is responsible for the horse and the sidewalker for the rider. By working together they allow the rider to learn riding skills in safety. Riders often progress from needing three helpers to not needing any. Sidewalkers need to keep the leader informed of any special needs the rider may have. However, casual conversation between leaders and sidewalkers only serves to distract everyone's attention from the lesson and should not take place in the ring.

## **Terms You Should Know**

- Thigh Hold – sidewalker forearm placed over the thigh between knee and the hip of the rider for the duration of the lesson.
- Thigh Hold at the Trot – rider has advanced and needs this assistance only at the trot.
- Heel Hold – place hand on back of rider footwear, encouraging the rider to stretch heel down and discourage the rider from squeezing the horse's sides.
- Hand over Hand – sidewalker A and/or sidewalker B holds their hand over hand of rider to assist in the control of steering and stopping the horse.
- Verbal Assist – sidewalker A communicates the instructor's directions to the riders.
- Leader at the Trot – Leader needed at trot only. Rider is independent at walk.
- Floater – Rider is on lead at exercises, then taken off lead but leader stays with rider for support and assistance.
- Spotter – Rider is on lead during exercises, then taken off lead. Leader goes to designated area and is standing by in case assistance is needed.

## **In Case of Emergency:**

Occasionally a rider will fall off the horse or have a problem that requires special attention. If such an emergency occurs, the leader will stop the horse immediately and the instructor will take care of the rider involved. All other riders in the class will halt and sidewalkers must remain calm and keep their riders from becoming overly excited while waiting for directions from the instructor.

# Therapeutic Equestrian Center

## *Volunteer Leader Information*

Many riders at the Therapeutic Equestrian Center need help with controlling and guiding their mounts as they learn to ride. The leader's job is to give the rider as much help with the horse as he or she requires riding safely.

### **How to Lead**

In order to be in the best position to control the horse, walk on the left side of the mount about halfway between its head and shoulder.



*Correct leader position*



*Incorrect leader position*

### **SAFETY RULE #1: Do not walk directly in front of the horse or pony!**

Be sure that the lead line is hanging between the reins so that it does not cause increased pressure on the bit by hanging across the top of the rein(s). Place your right hand on the lead line 10 to 12 inches from the ring, snap or buckle that attaches to the noseband or halter. Keep the extra lead line off the ground by folding it into a figure 8 and holding it in your left hand.



**SAFETY RULE #2: Never wrap the extra length of lead line around your hand!**



*Correct method of holding lead line*

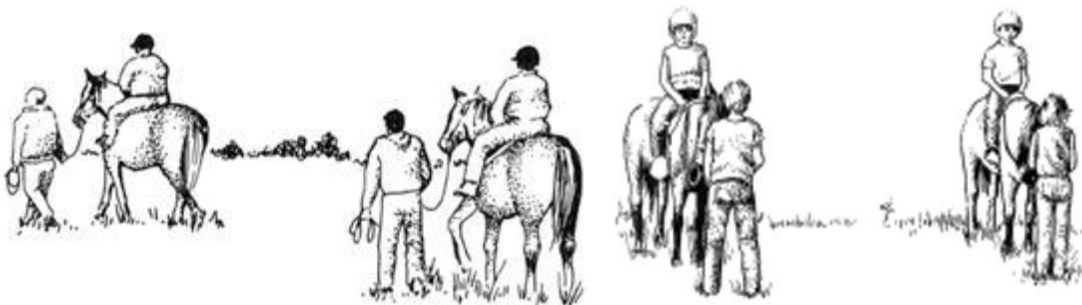


*Incorrect method of holding the lead line*

The mounts vary in size and temperament, therefore, some walk faster than others. Adjust your pace to the horse's natural gait. It should not be necessary to constantly pull forward or backward on the lead line. In order to keep the rider well-balanced, the horse or pony should:

- A. Be encouraged to carry its head at a comfortable level rather than too high or too low.
- B. Start, stop, and turn as smoothly as possible.

Always maintain a safe distance between mounts (a minimum of one horse length is recommended). This is just as important when lining up next to other horses as it is when following behind another horse. Many horses have a tendency to kick when crowded.



*Correct distances between mounts*

## **SAFETY RULE # 3: Never get too close to the horse in front of or next to you!**



*Incorrect distance between mounts*

### **Leading during the Riding Lesson**

#### **At the Mounting Ramp**

If you are assisting a rider who mounts from the ramp, the instructor will tell you where to position the horse or pony at the ramp. It is the leader's responsibility to keep the mount from moving forward or backward and as quiet as possible while the rider mounts.

Approach the ramp from the platform end and position the mount as directed and as close as possible to the side of the ramp from which the rider will be mounting. Stand directly in front of the horse or pony with your hands on the reins as well as the lead line. When the rider is ready, the instructor may ask you to move the mount a few steps forward so that the stirrups can be adjusted.

Do so, without changing your position, by taking several steps backward, allowing the mount to move forward slowly until asked to stop. When the necessary adjustments have been made, the instructor will ask you to assume the proper leading position and assist the rider in guiding the horse to the riding area.

#### **Mounting from the Ground or Mounting Block**

If you are assisting a rider who mounts from the ground or mounting block, the instructor will tell you where to position the horse. In some cases, the rider will be asked to lead the mount to the proper position with your assistance. As at the mounting ramp, it is the leader's responsibility to keep the mount from moving and as quiet as possible during mounting. Stand directly in front of the horse or pony with your hands on the reins, as well as the lead line. It is the instructor's responsibility to assist the rider with mounting. The rider must wait for the instructor to help him or her mount or supervise independent mounting. The leader should not allow or assist the

rider to mount without the instructor's directions. Riders who are waiting with their mounts must not be allowed to go behind them. They should stand quietly with the leader or sidewalker until the instructor can help them mount. Once the rider has mounted, the instructor will give him or her directions by name. The leader should know the name of the rider he or she is assisting in order to be sure that the directions are followed.

### **How Much to Help**

The amount and kind of assistance that the rider may need will depend upon his or her experience with riding, the characteristics of his or her disability, and the temperament of the mount. The instructor will give the leader directions whenever possible, but the leader must also be alert for possibly dangerous situations (such as being too close to the horse in front of or next to you, sudden stops or sharp turns) and help the rider avoid them. The rider's attention must be focused on the instructor's directions and the task at hand. Casual conversation with the rider is a distraction and should be avoided.

### **At the Halt**

Be sure that there is adequate space between mounts as you prepare to halt. When halted, step directly in front of the horse or pony and keep it from moving forward or backward until the rider is directed to proceed. Encourage the mount to remain calm and relaxed, stroking it on the neck if necessary. Do not rub the horse's head or allow it to rub its' head on you.

### **At the Walk**

Working from the correct leading position, help the rider guide and control the horse as directed by the instructor. When there are one or two sidewalkers present to help the rider maintain his or her balance, be sure to allow enough space for them to work without bumping into the sides of the arena or obstacles being used for the lesson. Avoid sudden stops and sharp turns and maintain adequate space between mounts if the rider fails to do so.

### **At the Trot**

The rider should ask the horse to trot only when directed to do so by the instructor.

Once the rider is prepared to trot and gives the "trot" command to the mount, the leader should increase the pace slightly and encourage the mount to move by repeating the "trot" command. Do not run or jog in front of the mount or attempt to pull it forward with the lead line. As at the walk,

the leader needs to help the rider avoid sudden stops and sharp turns, and maintain adequate space between mounts.

### **During Exercises and Games**

When exercises are done at the halt, the leader should stand in front of the mount's head as described under "At the Halt." When exercises are done at the walk or trot, the leader should control the horse or pony and maintain a steady pace. Games are included in the lessons so the riders can have fun while using the skills they have learned. Leaders as well as riders need to listen to the rules given by the instructor. Enthusiasm is catching, so encourage the rider to play well and allow him or her to participate as independently as possible within the limits of safe riding.

### **Dismounting**

The instructor is responsible for dismounting all riders and will give directions for the positioning of the mounts before dismounting riders. The leader is responsible for positioning the horse and then standing in front of it just as during mounting to keep it from moving and as quiet as possible. Do not allow or assist the rider to dismount without directions from the instructor.

### **Working with Sidewalkers**

Some riders need the help of one or two persons walking next to the horse to help them maintain their balance while learning to ride. The leader is responsible for the horses or pony and the sidewalker(s) for the rider. Working together, they allow the rider to learn riding skills in safety. Riders often progress from needing three helpers to not needing any. Sidewalkers will keep the leader informed of any special needs the rider may have. However, casual conversation between leaders and sidewalkers only serves to distract everyone's attention from the lesson and should not take place in the ring.

### **Terms You Should Know:**

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- Thigh Hold at the Trot – rider has advanced and needs this assistance only at the trot.
- Heel Hold – place hand on back of rider footwear, encouraging the rider to stretch heel down and discourage the rider from squeezing the horse's sides.

- Hand over Hand – sidewalker A and/or sidewalker B holds their hand over hand of rider to assist in the control of steering and stopping the horse.
- Verbal Assist – sidewalker A communicates the instructor's directions to the riders.
- Leader at the Trot – Leader needed at trot only. Rider is independent at walk.
- Floater – Rider is on lead at exercises, then taken off lead but leader stays with rider for support and assistance.
- Spotter – Rider is on lead during exercises, then taken off lead. Leader goes to designated area and is standing by in case assistance is needed.

### **In Case of Emergency**

Occasionally a rider will fall from a horse or have a problem that requires special attention. If such an emergency occurs, step immediately in front of the mount you are leading and hold it at the halt. Remain calm and keep the mount as quiet as possible.

Do not let go of the lead line! The instructor will attend to the rider involved. While doing so, he or she needs to be able to rely on the leaders to keep the mounts under control in order to prevent further confusion.

# **Therapeutic Equestrian Center**

## ***Volunteer Horse Exerciser Information***

**Revised March, 2011**

1. Interested individuals must have current and accurate information on file in the TEC office with no contraindications noted to riding horses.
2. Suitable horses must be available for individuals to ride- individuals must not exceed the posted weight limits of horses to be schooled; there must be suitable tack for both horse and rider.
3. Exercise riders should be 16 or older. Younger than 16 will be decided on a case by case basis; not everyone may be selected. Factors to consider:
  - a. Ability of the rider. They are to be a very high level 1 or level 2
  - b. Parent with horse experience must be present if they are the only ones there riding. If another exercise rider is there with a high level 1-2 a parent still must be present but does not need to be an experienced horse person.
  - c. A parent with horse experience will be determined by the evaluator. It is not someone who can hold a horse to be groomed. Must be knowledgeable on safety and have the ability to make safe decisions.
4. All exercisers will wear approved headgear when riding, and observe appropriate safety guidelines at all times. They will wear long pants and safe shoes and will use safety stirrups.
5. No one may exercise a horse without another person being present.
6. We encourage all exercise riders to have CPR/First Aid training.
7. Instructional staff will develop guidelines and goals for the horses that will deal with conditioning, behavior, and other training considerations. Exercisers will be responsible for following these, and for providing input on the progress and other needs they feel are important.
8. All potential exercisers will be evaluated considering the following elements:
  - a. The test will be a pattern of the evaluator's choice consisting of but not limited to figure eights at the sitting and/or posting trot and canter, serpentines at the trot and canter, leg yields. The rider must

demonstrate balanced seat, gentle hands, and quality decision-making. Higher-level exercisers will also demonstrate ability to identify and use correct diagonals, and leads and will be able to apply some training techniques.

- b. The rider must also demonstrate good horse handling and grooming, including but not limited to tying safety knots, dealing with horse behaviors on the ground.
  - c. The rider will be able to answer some basic questions about tack fit, horse health, and knowledge of goal setting with horses.
  - d. Exercise riders will be evaluated by an instructor or someone approved by the instructors. This person should be a level 2 rider. They will demonstrate the ability to ride or lunge the TEC horses if they do not meet the size requirements to ride. For example an adult on a smaller pony. Evaluators will not evaluate a relative or friend.
9. Riders will be separated into two categories:
- a. Level One- Will be able to do basic exercise and conditioning under the guidance of instructional staff or level 2 exercisers.
  - b. Level Two- will be helping problem solve with instructional staff about horse needs and behaviors, will be able to exercise without instructors being present and will be able to take responsibility for activities of level 1 exercisers
10. All exercisers will take responsibility to fill out horse exercise forms every session, and will also report accidents and other occurrences as needs arise.

# **Therapeutic Equestrian Center**

## ***Volunteer Ring Assistant Information***

### **POSITION SUMMARY:**

An instructor assistant will provide the instructor with necessary support and assistance during all aspects of the riding classes. This position is essential to ensuring successful and safe riding lessons by collaborating with the instructor to monitor volunteers, horses, and students.

### **POSITION REQUIREMENTS:**

- Support the mission, vision and core values of TEC.
- Pass required background check
- Complete a minimum of one lesson session as a volunteer
- Pass TEC Leader Competency evaluation
- Have valid CPR/First Aid certification
- Pass TEC Bridling Competency Evaluation

### **ESSENTIAL JOB FUNCTIONS:**

- Supervise grooming and tacking of horses before, between and after classes
- Make sure horses are accurately equipped for each rider with proper safety and special equipment (if so identified)
- Provide assistance during mounting/dismounting
- Assist instructor with equipment checks during lessons
- Observe behavior of volunteers, riders and horses during lesson and report anomalies to instructor
- Supervise volunteers
- Assist in training volunteers
- Assist in screening and training horses
- Assist with preparations prior to riding lessons and with cleanup after lessons
- Assist instructor in recording rider progress
- Perform other duties that may be assigned

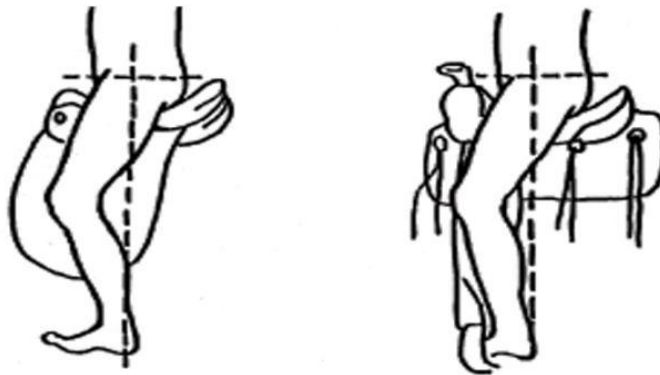
# Saddle Balance and Foot Position

## Saddle Balance

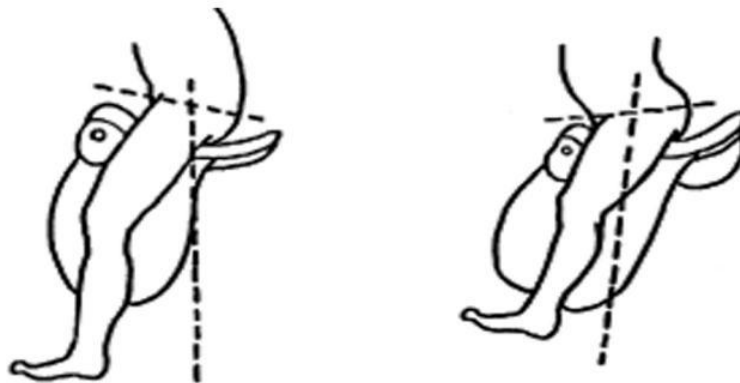
**Properly balanced saddle.** *A properly balanced saddle will have the deepest part of the seat in the center of the saddle.*



**Properly balanced saddle with rider sitting in correct pelvic alignment.** *A properly balanced saddle allows the rider to sit in it with level and neutral pelvic alignment.*



**Improperly balanced saddle with rider sitting in incorrect pelvic alignment.** *An improperly balanced saddle shifts the position of the rider's pelvis forward or backward.*



Saddle too low in back and high in front.  
(posterior pelvic tilt – rounded back)

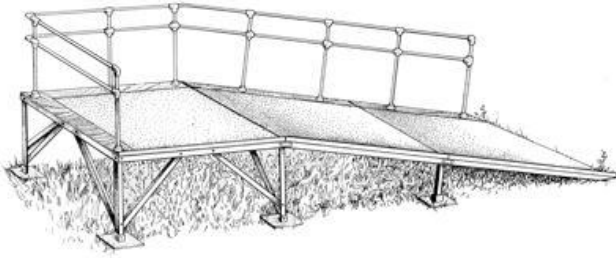
Saddle too low in front and high in back  
(anterior pelvic tilt – hollow back)

*Note: the fit of the saddle on the horse is as important as the balanced construction of the saddle. A properly fitted saddle will be level on the horse's back, evenly distribute the rider's weight and allow freedom of movement of the shoulder at all gaits.*

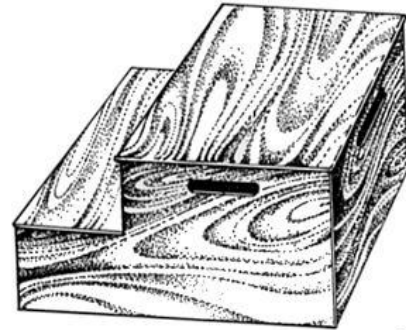
## ***Therapeutic Rules for Working Around Horses***

- Always speak to a horse or pony when approaching it and before touching it. Never approach a horse or pony directly from the rear.
- Pet a horse with your hand on its shoulder or neck. Do not pet its face, nose or mouth.
- To avoid being accidentally bitten, place all treats in a pan when offering it to a horse.
- Never be loud or rowdy around horses. They are apt to become frightened by loud noises and unexpected movements.
- Never lose your temper with a horse or pony or mistreat it. An animal will respond best when you are kind and gently but firm with it.
- Always tie a horse at wither height or higher when grooming or saddling it. Use a halter and lead rope when tying. Do not tie with the reins.
- Use a quick release knot when tying a horse. Leave a short length of rope between the knot and halter.
- Always tie the horse to a solid object such as a post or tree. Do not tie the animal to a wire fence or to the planks of a board fence.
- Always walk around a horse or pony that is tied. When going from one side to the other, do not walk under or step over the tie rope.
- Wear sturdy shoes or boots when working with a horse. Keep your feet in the stirrups. To avoid being stepped on, watch what the horse is doing.
- When you are leading, walk next to rather than in front of or behind the horse or pony on its left side. Make all the turns to the right, turning the horse away from you.
- Never wrap the lead line around your hand or body.
- Keep at least one horse length between animals at all time.
- When leading a horse or pony into a box stall or paddock to release it, be sure to close the door or gate leaving enough space for you, but not enough for the horse to get out. Turn the horse so that it faces the door or gate before releasing it.

# Equipment



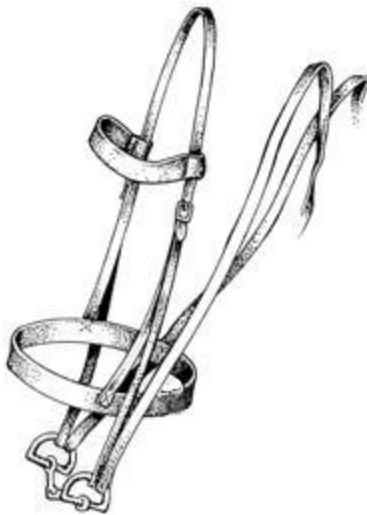
Mounting Ramp



Mounting Block



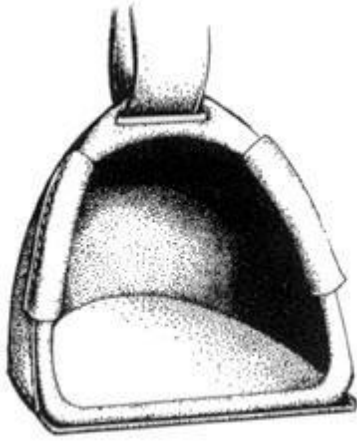
Safety Helmet



English Bridle



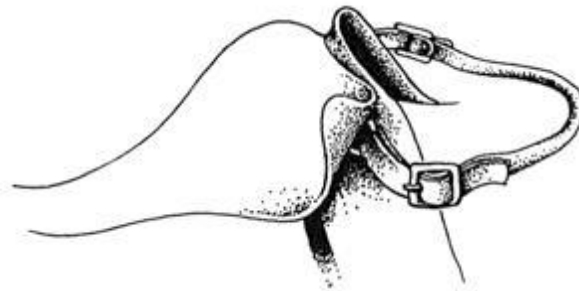
Ladder & Web Reins



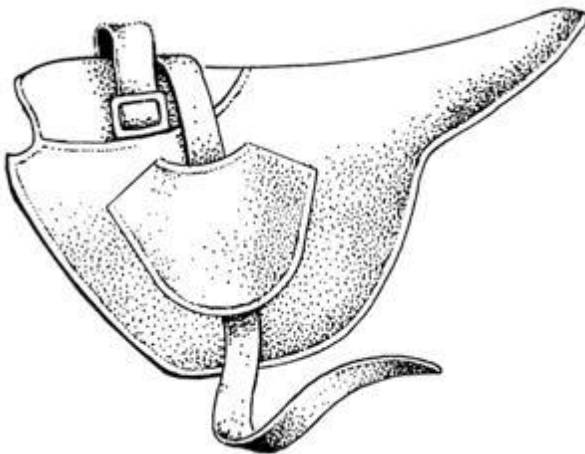
Stirrups: Devonshire



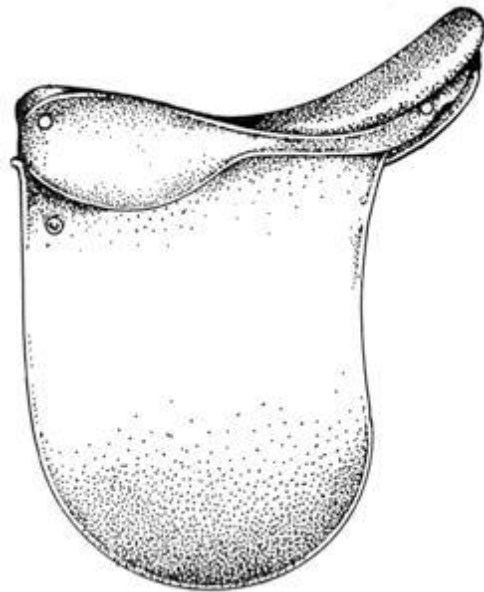
Peacock



Handhold



Bareback Pad



All Purpose English Saddle

## **Let Me Teach You**

*When you are tense, let me teach you to relax.  
When you are short tempered, let me teach you to be patient.  
When you are short sighted, let me teach you to see.  
When you are quick to react, let me teach you to be thoughtful.  
When you are angry, let me teach you to be serene.  
When you feel superior, let me teach you to be respectful.  
When you are self absorbed, let me teach you to think of greater things.  
When you are arrogant, let me teach you humility.  
When you are lonely, let me be your companion.  
When you are tired, let me carry the load.  
When you need to learn, let me teach you  
After all, I am your horse  
--William Lamm*

## **We Play No Favorites**

*Blessed are you who take time to listen to difficult speech,  
For you help we persevere until we are understood.  
Blessed are you who walk with us in public places and ignore the stares of  
others,  
For we find havens of relaxation in your companionship.  
Blessed are you who never bid us to "hurry up" and more blessed  
Are you who do not snatch our tasks from our hands to do them for us, for  
often we need time rather than help.  
Blessed are you who stand beside us as we enter new and untried  
ventures,  
For the delight we feel when we surprise you outweighs all the frustrating  
failures.  
Blessed are you who ask for our help for our greatest need is to be needed.  
--author unknown, from *Imaging the Word**

# Michigan Equine Activity Liability Act

The Michigan Equine Activity Liability Act reads:

**WARNING!** Under the Michigan Equine Activity Liability Act, an equine professional is not liable for an injury to or the death of a participant in an equine activity resulting from an inherent risk of the equine activity.

## Emergency Procedures

### Heat Index/Wind Chill Factor

If the heat index reaches 92 degrees or the temperature reaches 20 degrees, for the safety of our riders, volunteers and horses, all lessons will be cancelled. If you are scheduled volunteer, you will be contacted by phone as far in advance as possible.

### Tornado

In the event of a tornado, all horses are to be put in their stalls and all students, staff and volunteers are to go carefully to a place of safety.

### Fire

In the event of a fire, all horses are to be turned out into a designated pasture. Students, staff, and volunteers are to all meet at a specified location outside of the outdoor arena for a head count. Depending upon the severity of the fire, it may be necessary to move farther away after everyone is accounted for.

### Accident/Injury

In the event that a student falls from a horse, the leader must immediately move the horse away from the area.

The instructor will attend to the student, if there are volunteers available with additional medical training, they may be asked to assist, otherwise, all volunteers will stay with their assigned student. If there is a serious injury, the instructor or instructor assistant will dismount the remaining students. If you sustain any injury while volunteering, please notify your instructor or another staff member.

### First Aid and CPR

There is always American Red Cross certified person on site during riding lessons. The First Aid Kit for humans and for horses will be kept in the feed room. Emergency information for riders and volunteers will be kept in the observation room. Rubber gloves are also available. Emergency contact numbers, medical releases and emergency procedures are kept in a locked file in the tack room.

Classes in First Aid and CPR are periodically offered at TEC at a minimal cost to benefit both volunteers and riders.

### Insurance

All participants at TEC are covered by Markel Insurance while they are participating in Center activities.

# **Therapeutic Equestrian Center**

## ***Grievance Procedure***

### **Purpose:**

To establish a process for resolving issues that may come up between staff, volunteers and/or participants.

### **Policy:**

If there is a concern or complaint with another person involved with TEC, the first step is to talk to that person regarding the concern. If that is not possible, or the problem isn't settled, then discuss the concern with that person's instructor or supervisor. If you do not agree with the supervisor's decision, you can talk to a member of the Board of Directors. This person will gather information and make a decision about how to settle the problem.

If the problem is not settled by the discussion process, a formal grievance may be filed. Forms are available from the Board of Directors. If the issue, concern or complaint involves a board member, you may file a formal grievance with the President of the Board of Directors.

If you need assistance in filling out the form for a Formal Grievance Procedure, you may ask a staff member or someone not participating in TEC programs to assist you.

### **Steps:**

#### **Informal Problem Solving**

- Talk to the person about the issue, concern or complaint. If the problem is not settled or it is not possible to talk to the person, discuss the problem with that person's instructor or supervisor.
- If the problem is still not settled or you disagree with the decision, talk to a board member by calling (269) 429-0671.
- The board member will gather information and make a decision about how to resolve the problem.
- If the problem is not settled by the discussion process, a formal grievance may be filed.

## **Formal Grievance**

- Submit a written grievance to the Board of Directors.
- Include the names of people involved, the date(s) of the incident, the facts of the incident and other information that can help the Board of Directors gather all of the facts needed to make a decision.
- The grievance must be filed within 30 days of the incident.
- The Board of Directors will investigate the incident and will respond in writing within 7 days.
- The Board of Directors decision is final.
- Time limits set forth in the preceding steps may be extended only by mutual written consent of all parties to the grievance.
- No one will be penalized for proper use of the Grievance Procedure.
- Final decisions on Grievance Procedures are not precedent setting or binding on future grievances.
- All matters under this policy are treated as confidential.
- If the grievance is about a member of the board, the Chair of the Board will follow the same steps as listed above.