



H.E.A.R.T.s
Astride

Handicapped Equine Assisted Riding Therapy

Volunteer Handbook

Revised March 2009



H.E.A.R.T.s Astride

16250 Hwy. 17
Crocker, Missouri 65452
(573) 528-6525
(573) 736-2681
www.heartsastride.org

Welcome to H.E.A.R.T.s Astride!

We at H.E.A.R.T.s Astride deeply appreciate our volunteers. Without your energy and generous sharing of time and talents, we could not exist to offer our services to the community. At this time, not a single person working for H.E.A.R.T.s Astride receives monetary compensation. We are simply a group of persons with a desire to help improve the lives of our clients physically, emotionally, mentally, and socially.

Volunteer training is an ongoing process. Training begins with a 2-hour volunteer orientation. After completing the orientation, you are qualified to participate as a class facilitator, in fund-raising and in barn maintenance activities. A volunteer desiring to work directly with children and horses may sign up for Side Walker training, which involves three separate one-hour sessions. After completing the first session a volunteer may assist in a class as a Side Walker In Training, and will be paired with a fully trained Side Walker.

Volunteers wishing to work directly with the horses, whether as a horse handler in class, or in the barn grooming and feeding horses, must complete three 2-hour sessions of Horse Handler training. (Horse Handlers are required to complete Side Walker Training first.)

Additional training is offered for special skills, including Mounting Specialist.

Volunteers for H.E.A.R.T.s Astride must be at least 15 years old. Persons younger than 15 that wish to participate in H.E.A.R.T.s Astride activities may complete orientation, and assist in a variety of ways that do not require direct involvement of clients.

We recognize that volunteers are the backbone of this organization. Wherever you decide to help out, your services are valued. We want your time with us to be safe, fun, and rewarding.

Warm regards,

Diana Gerdes
H.E.A.R.T.s Astride Executive Director

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For signature

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Mission Statement

H.E.A.R.T.s Astride utilizes equines to provide a safe, recreational, and educational environment for children and adults with physical, cognitive, and emotional handicaps, regardless of financial position, in the southern Missouri area.

Contact Information

Staff:

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Board of Directors:

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Diana Gerdes, Vice President
Beth Holler, Secretary
Kellie Kowalski, Financial Secretary
Beth Murray, Member
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Our Motto: "Open your hearts to help others."



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Guidelines

For some of you this will be your first time around either handicapped persons or horses, or both. NARHA (North American Riding for the Handicapped Association) has established many guidelines and standards to provide for the safety and comfort of clients, volunteers, and horses. These guidelines and standards will be followed.

The following guidelines are not debatable:

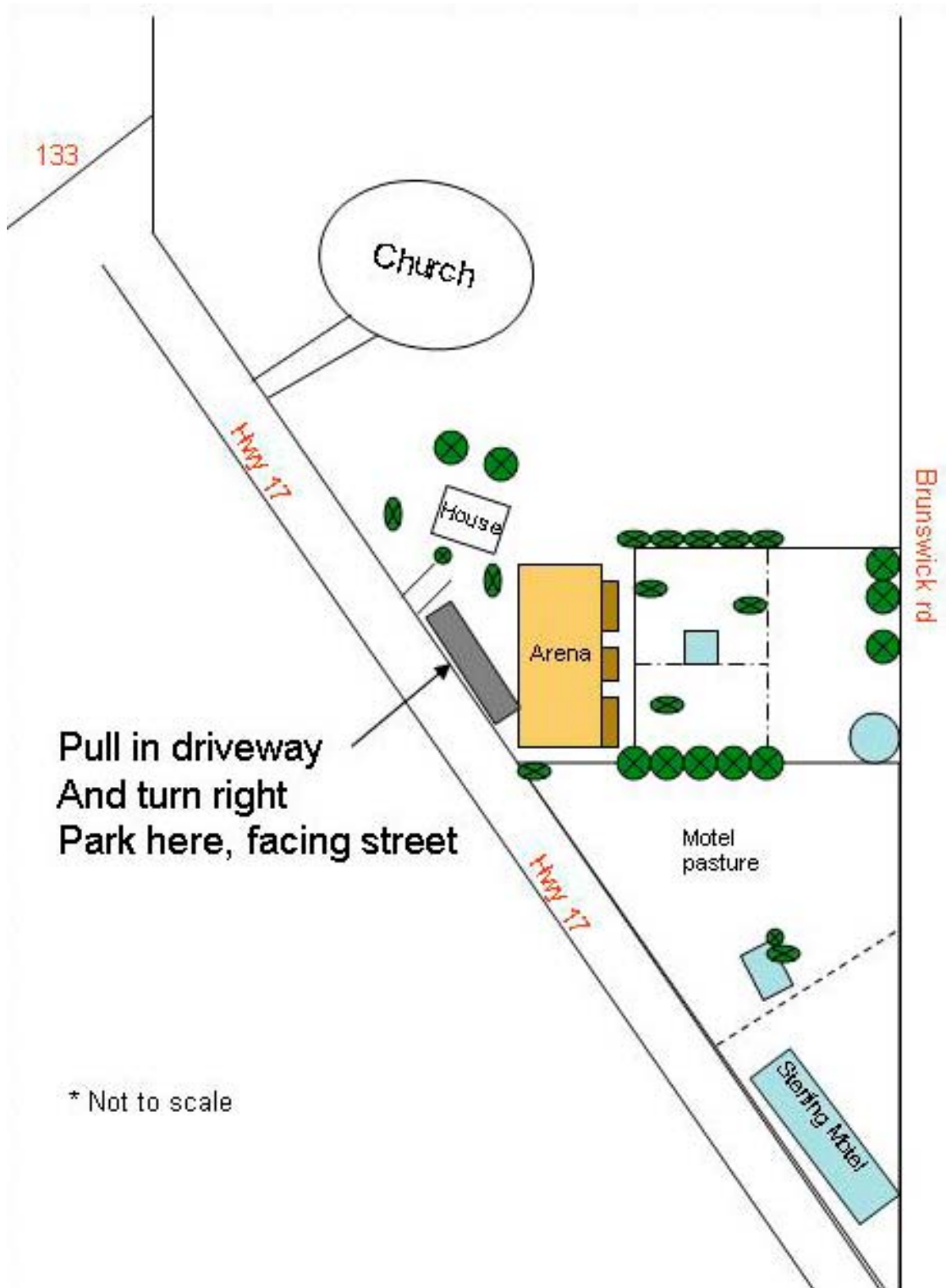
1. The instructor is in absolute control of the class.
2. Helmets will be worn and secured while mounted.
3. Any injury will be reported immediately to the instructor, and an occurrence report completed within 24 hours.

Dress Code

Volunteers should dress comfortably for their job description and the weather. Closed toed shoes are required for side walkers, horse handlers, and mounting specialists. No vulgar or inappropriate messages should be visible on clothing, tattoos, or jewelry. For safety, perfume is discouraged as it may attract bees. Dangling jewelry and noisy or flapping clothing (such as parachute fabric) may excite the children and horses or get caught in the equipment, so should be avoided.

Parking

For the safety of H.E.A.R.T.s Astride participants and livestock, we ask that All staff, volunteers, and participants park between the arena and Hwy 17, facing the highway. Please do NOT park by the house.





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H.E.A.R.T.s Astride Information

- H.E.A.R.T.s Astride is a member center of the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA).
- The ultimate goal of equine assisted activities is to encourage lifelong leisure activities and to promote physical health and self esteem, which help further integrate handicapped individuals into the community.
- The natural bond that forms between people and animals is a proven and powerful way of enabling riders to achieve their full potential. The unconditional love and friendship of the horses is a great benefit to all.
- H.E.A.R.T.s Astride has an all volunteer, part- time staff including Executive Director, Program Director, Volunteer Coordinator, a NARHA certified instructor and an instructor in training.
- Riding Sessions are held between March and October.
- During each lesson, the client will spend approximately 45 minutes to one hour doing a mounted lesson and/or groundwork with a horse.
- Lessons are located at Germania Stables, 16250 Hwy 17, Crocker, MO. 65452.
- H.E.A.R.T.s Astride follows NARHA (North American Riding for the Handicapped Association) safety standards and guidelines.
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When You Meet a Person with a Disability

1. Relax and treat him/her like any other person.
2. Talk about the same things that you would with anyone who comes to ride.
3. Do not offer too much help. It will be requested if needed.
4. Be patient. The student will set his/her own pace walking, talking, and thinking.
5. Do not show pity or sentimentality. The student will want to be treated as an equal.
6. Do not expect less from a person with a disability. You may be surprised at how wrong you are at judging his/her interests and abilities.
7. Enjoy your friendship. Individuals with a disability often have a super abundance of good humor, wisdom, acceptance, courage, and ability.
8. Do not ask a student or a family member about the disability. If a student or family member would like to talk about the disability, he/she/they will bring it up.
9. Do not separate the person with a disability from his/her wheelchair or crutches unless he/she asks you to take them away.
10. Do not make up your mind about the person with a disability before getting to know him or her.



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Basic Horse Safety Rules

1. The horses utilized at H.E.A.R.T.s Astride for therapeutic riding have proven themselves to be appropriate mounts for children and adults with disabilities. However, just like people, all horses have unique personality traits that may require special handling. When working with a horse for the first time, ask the instructor leading the session if your horse has any special 'needs'.
2. Never approach a horse directly from the rear. Even in a stall, the horse should turn to face you.
3. Approach your horse at his shoulder, talking to him in a calm voice. REMEMBER: Horses are creatures of REACTION; so always let the horse know where you are.
4. DO NOT feed the horses. DO NOT have food in your pockets while volunteering with a class.
5. Horses have better hearing than sight, due to the position of the eyes on the head. Talk calmly, and do not use a loud voice.
6. Pat horses on the neck not on the nose or face.
7. Horses may kick, bite, strike and/or bolt if startled.
8. Use a lead rope and both hands when leading. The excess lead should be folded in a figure 8 (NEVER WRAPPED OR LOOPED), and held in the hand farthest from the horse.
9. Do not allow the lead or reins to drag on or near the ground.
10. If the horse rears, release the hand closest to the horse's head so that you will not be jerked off the ground. Releasing pressure calms most horses (tighten/ release)
11. When leading a horse, resist the temptation to hold the lead line so tightly the horse cannot bob his head. Horses may react to a tight lead line by pulling sharply away.
12. You weigh a lot less than any horse: you cannot "out pull" the equine. If a horse pulls back, step with it rather than pull against the equine.

13. If the horse will not move, try turning his head away from you. (Remember to look where you are going not at the horse.)
14. If walking behind your horse, either walk BODY TO BODY with your hand on the horses rump, or at least 15 feet away.
15. ALWAYS walk AROUND your horse, preferably in front UNLESS your horse is tied to the rail.
16. NEVER duck under or step over the lead.
17. ALWAYS tie your horse with a lead (NEVER the reins) at wither height or higher in the designated tie up areas.
18. When releasing a horse, always turn it to face you, stand at the horses side and pat it quietly before removing the halter. Never yell and/or try to chase the horse away from you.
19. If releasing more than one horse at a time, line them up, communicate with other horse handlers, then release horses at the same time.
20. Make sure that all gates and doors are always closed and secured. If it is open, close it.
21. Keep tack and equipment off the ground and in proper places. Do not leave things where people or horses could damage or be hurt by them.
22. When grooming and tacking, do it from the side with your back toward the horses' head.
23. NEVER squat, sit, or kneel near a horse.
24. THINK SAFETY! The student will be more likely to do as you do.

All of the horses used for equine assisted activities at H.E.A.R.T.s Astride are either mares (female horses), or geldings (castrated males).



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Volunteer Sign Up Information

Volunteers will receive a schedule of classes monthly via email. (A volunteer may request to receive the schedule by standard mail, if they prefer.) A copy of the class schedule will also be posted in the purple Volunteer Book at the center. Volunteers may sign up for a class by one of three ways:

1. Calling the Volunteer Coordinator at 573-433-6793 and stating which classes he or she is available for.
2. Emailing the Volunteer Coordinator at kufans@embarqmail.com and stating which classes he or she is available for.
3. Signing up directly on the class schedule in the purple Volunteer Book at the center.

Volunteers will receive a reminder email (or phone call, for those without email) 48 hours prior to the scheduled class. If a volunteer needs to cancel on the day of the class, they are required to call the Volunteer Coordinator at 573-433-6793 so other arrangements can be made.



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H.E.A.R.T.s Astride Disaster Policy and Procedures

General Policies

H.E.A.R.T.s Astride maintains a first aid kit in all buildings potentially utilized by the program. Flashlights are available in case of a power outage. Additionally, a tornado kit is maintained in the tack room that contains a battery powered radio and bottled water. The instructor will determine that all class participants are accounted for.

Parents and/or guardians that remain at the facility during classes may seek shelter with their child in the case of a disaster. We ask that parents follow the procedures of H.E.A.R.T.s Astride to promote the safety of all children. Parents are reminded to park in the gravel parking area, and not by the house, to allow access for emergency vehicles.

Inclement Weather

It is the policy of H.E.A.R.T.s Astride that classes will not be held during inclement weather. If possible, classes will be canceled in advance. In the event of a sudden deterioration in weather conditions while students are on the premises, the following procedures will be followed:

- A. Lightning, thunderstorms, and/or hail – Horse leaders will retain control of horses until all children have left the arena. Sidewalkers will escort all students to the classroom where they will remain until picked up by the parent, or weather improves. Instructional activities may continue in the classroom. Horse leaders will then untack horses and return them to the pasture if warranted.
- B. Tornado – Horse leaders will retain control of horses until all children have left the arena. Sidewalkers will escort all students to the tack room, where students will sit along the concrete wall, facing the wall and covering their heads with their arms. If additional space is needed, the adjacent horse stalls and feed room will be used. The director will monitor current weather conditions on the radio using local stations, KFLW or KTTR, 1390 AM or 99.7 FM.

Fire

- A. In the House – Horse leaders will retain control of horses until all students have left the arena. Sidewalkers will escort all students to the classroom. The director or another adult will activate the emergency system by dialing 911. Students will remain in the classroom until the fire department issues an ‘all-clear’. Horse leaders may move horses if warranted.

- B. In any of the Stable Buildings, to include feed room, classroom, or hay barn – Horse leaders will retain control of horses until all children have left the arena. Sidewalkers will escort all students to the house. The director or another adult will activate the emergency system by dialing 911. Students will remain in the house until the fire department issues an ‘all-clear’. Horse leaders may move horses if warranted.

Earthquake

A. Horse leaders will retain control of horses until all children have dismounted, and then they will lead horses out of the arena. Sidewalkers will escort all students to the middle of the arena, where students will sit down until the immediate danger is past, or until children are picked up by parents.

Incoming Ambulance

In the event a student, volunteer, or staff member requires emergency medical care, it is the policy of H.E.A.R.T.s Astride to remove all students from the scene for their safety and well-being. After activating the emergency system by calling 911, the following procedure will be followed:

A. Horse leaders will retain control of horses until all students have left the arena. The director and another adult will stay with the injured person, while sidewalkers will escort all other students to the classroom. Instructional activities may continue in the classroom, if appropriate. Horse leaders may move horses if warranted.