



VOLUNTEER MANUAL



Chastainhorsepark.org

4371 Powers Ferry Road, NW, Atlanta, Georgia 30327

404-252-4244

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Chastain Horse Park is a premier non-profit, equestrian facility dedicated to serving riders of all skill levels from beginner to advanced, as well as riders with cognitive, physical or mental disabilities through our Therapeutic Programs and inner city and at-risk children with our Outreach Program. We develop and strengthen skills such as awareness, focus, leadership, confidence, coordination, and courage and have fun doing it!

CHASTAIN HORSE PARK SCHOOL LESSON PROGRAM

Chastain Horse Park offers riding and horsemanship lessons to beginner through advanced level riders, and lesson horse leases for show or pleasure riding as available. To have your information distributed to potential instructors, send an e-mail to lessons@chastainhorsepark.org with your name, age, address, contact information, experience, and lesson time preference.

SCHOOL LESSON PROGRAM; 404-252-4244, ext. 1

HORSE BOARDING

- 4 Barns, immaculately kept – stalls available
- 4 Arenas, including a large covered arena and 45,000 square foot jumping arena
- 12 x 12 stalls (dutch doors available)
- Individual turnout paddocks, with options for trailering to offsite pastures
- Top level instruction available on-site, outside trainers welcome
- Local and A shows

Board includes:

- Feeding and stall care
- Daily turn-out
- Worming
- Blanketing in the winter
- 24-hour on-site management

HORSE BOARDING: 404-252-4244, ext. 2



Chastain Horse Park’s Therapeutic Program participants are children and adults with traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injury, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, autism, multiple sclerosis, stroke, cancer, genetic disorders, developmental delays, sensory integration disorders, learning disabilities, conduct disorders, mental illness, and speech, hearing or vision impairments and other disabilities.

The Team

- Instructors teach therapeutic riding lessons. They also oversee Hippotherapy sessions, which are provided by licensed therapists. Instructors are certified as Registered or Advanced Level PATH instructors. Chastain Horse Park’s instructors have been active on a national level, teaching PATH workshops, presenting at regional and national conferences, or serving a PATH committee.
- Physical, Occupational, and/or Speech Therapists provide Hippotherapy sessions. Chastain Horse Park’s Hippotherapy providers have completed specialized training and supervision through the American Hippotherapy Association. Psychotherapists offer Equine-facilitated Psychotherapy.
- Trained volunteers lead the horse and walk beside the rider as needed.

Why is being on a horse therapeutic?

Internationally, equine movement has been used as a treatment tool by medical professionals for over forty years. Physical Therapists, Occupational Therapists, and Speech-Language Pathologists in the United States use the movement of the horse as a therapy tool – “Hippotherapy”. Hippotherapy research has shown relevant functional outcomes such as significant improvements in postural control, motor function, weight-bearing, and gait, as well as relaxation of spasticity.

Therapeutic work with the horse is not just for those in wheelchairs, but also those with learning disabilities and related challenges. Sensorimotor input provided by the horse’s movement and horse-care tasks can help the central nervous system organize itself, improving eye-hand coordination, spatial awareness, midline orientation, attention span, dexterity, right/left handedness, verbalization and vocabulary, and sequential thinking.

Mental health professionals and educators are using equine assisted therapy to promote mental and emotional health in the burgeoning field of Equine-facilitated Mental Health. Studies have shown that therapeutic riding can result in statistically significant decreases in aggressive behaviors, and improvements in self-concept, intellectual and school status, perceived popularity, and self satisfaction in emotionally disturbed children and adolescents. The therapeutic riding experience provides a rich environment for teaching cooperation, thoughtfulness, self-control, and for fostering self-esteem through the ability to do and succeed.

EQUINE ASSISTED ACTIVITIES AND THERAPIES

Imagine a place where children and adults with disabilities or challenging life situations can experience carefree fun, out-of-doors. Then imagine recommendations by doctors and health professionals for the physical results. Add teacher recommendations because of social and educational rewards, and parent excitement because of emotional benefits. This is Chastain Horse Park!

- Therapeutic Riding Lessons
- Hippotherapy: Equine-assisted Physical Therapy , Occupational Therapy, and/or Speech Therapy
- Equine-facilitated Mental Health Activities and Therapies
- Equine-facilitated Learning programs for school students
- “PATH Horses for Heroes” activities for injured servicemen and women, and their families

Because of its adherence to the highest standards in the industry, Chastain Horse Park is designated a PATH Premier Accredited Center.” Instructors hold one or more certifications, and therapists have completed training through the American Hippotherapy Association. Riders range in age from children as young as two to adults in their senior years. Registration forms may be accessed at www.chastainhorsepark.org, or e-mail lessons@chastainhorsepark.org.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Involvement in the larger community is a hallmark of Chastain Horse Park.

- Sponsored riding lessons for those without opportunity or resources
- Summer camps for children from the inner city and local children
- Field trips for school and community groups
- Birthday Pony Parties
- Pony Rides
- Daily volunteer opportunities assisting during therapeutic and Hippotherapy lessons
- Volunteer partnerships with businesses and community groups

Therapeutic Program/Community Outreach/Camps	404-252-4244, ext. 1
Volunteer Program/Orientation Schedule	404-252-4244, ext.
Birthday Pony Parties and Pony Rides	404-252-4244, ext. 4

Volunteers are usually asked to help groom and tack up horses for lessons and untack and groom after lessons. The following pages will help you understand these procedures. Please consider signing up for mentoring sessions to groom and tack with an experienced mentor if new to volunteering at Chastain Horse Park – links to mentors are found at www.chastainhorsepark.org/volunteer.

POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY: Information regarding clients of Chastain Horse Park is highly privileged and confidential. Additionally, all persons associated with Chastain Horse Park have a right to privacy that gives them control over the dissemination of their medical history or other sensitive information. All medical, social, referral, personal and financial information regarding any person and his/her family shall remain confidential. It is the responsibility of every volunteer to adhere to the privacy and confidentiality of all clients.

GUIDELINES TO DETERMINE ABILITY TO PERFORM AS A LEADER OR SIDEWALKER:

1. Must be 14 years of age or older
2. Must complete volunteer training with Chastain Horse Park personnel
3. Must complete volunteer form with required releases.
4. Must adhere to Chastain Horse Park policies.
5. Must be able to respond to instructor's directions.
6. Must be attentive to rider and horse.
7. Must be reliable in attendance.
8. Must be able to follow emergency procedures.
9. Must perform only tasks covered by training.

VOLUNTEER ATTIRE POLICY:

As partners in offering therapeutic services to the Horse Park's clients, volunteers are encouraged to wear attire that is appropriate to the work, yet professional. Horse Park volunteers are a significant part of the image the park presents to the surrounding community and the general public.

Volunteer attire must also be safe for the volunteer. For this reason, volunteers will be required to wear appropriate footwear during work in the barns and arenas. Shoes or boots that offer foot protection are suggested. Volunteers wearing open toed shoes or sandals will be unable to participate. Please, no halter-tops or sports bras showing.

Dangling jewelry may pose a hazard when working around horses as well as loose, floppy clothing or hats. These may catch on other items or equipment, or blow and spook a horse.

Perfumes can attract bees or biting insects or bother some participants.

Dress in layers as able for comfort or warmth. Bring a jacket and gloves and a secure hat during winter months. Sunscreen and a water bottle are suggested in warmer months.

NOTE: Please keep valuables locked out of sight in cars to prevent break-ins. Turn off cell phones and pagers during lessons.

MOUNTING AND DISMOUNTING POLICY: To ensure the safety of the participants, only trained personnel are permitted to mount and dismount participants. Most participants in the Therapeutic Program will be mounted and dismounted only by the certified instructor. Occasionally, the instructor may need the assistance of another trained person to mount or dismount a client. In this case, instruction in proper mounting technique, disabilities, body mechanics and individual horse personalities must be provided by the instructor prior to granting mounting/dismounting privileges. The instructor supervises all mounting/dismounting during the lesson and assumes responsibility for the safe performance of any individual the instructor trains to mount or dismount program participants.

TREATS FOR HORSES – A “NO”:

Our horses are fed very well. Occasionally, some horses require a special diet for health reasons. Please do not feed the horses treats. Horses that are fed treats can become nippy, endangering our participants.

VOLUNTEERING – MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN SOMEONE’S LIFE

Along with the horses, volunteers are the single most important part of any Therapeutic Program activity. Without dedicated people to help groom, tack, and lead horses, encourage and walk beside riders and do many other important tasks, Chastain Horse Park’s Therapeutic Program could not exist.

You may participate as a volunteer for any one hour lesson or multiple lessons. We ask that you consider volunteering for at least one lesson each week.

SCHEDULING: You will typically receive emails from Chastain Horse Park on Sundays and Thursdays containing links to instructor calendars, where you may sign up to volunteer in the open highlighted spaces. You may also go to www.chastainhorsepark.org/volunteer to access links to the online instructor calendars. Information about how to contact the instructor directly, if needed, is found on the online calendars. An e-mail reminder will be sent prior to the day for which you have signed up to confirm the time for which you have signed up.

A weekly schedule will be posted in the barn on Sunday mornings. The posted schedule serves as a record of attendance. Please legibly sign your name in the volunteer space when you volunteer for a lesson, or write your initials beside your name if your name is already typed onto the schedule as a regular volunteer.

CANCELLATIONS: When the instructor is made aware of a **student cancellation**, the instructor will call or email (if the cancellation is days in advance) the volunteers assigned to that rider’s lesson to inform them of the cancellation. There will be times when the instructor is not notified in advance. **Classes are not cancelled because of rain!** Should there be a reason such as icy or dangerous weather, and classes have to be cancelled for the day, your instructor will let you know. You may want to keep the instructor’s contact information handy to be able to contact the instructor directly if you have questions. **If you have to cancel** a time you have signed up for, please contact your instructor or the volunteer coordinator as soon as possible.

You may request from an instructor a “regular” time slot. If you find a student or time that you prefer, you may request that time each week. You will not have to sign up weekly, but you will be required to give advance notice to your instructor or the volunteer coordinator when you cannot be there for your regular time.

At Chastain, we understand that things come up at the last minute that causes volunteers to cancel. If, however, a volunteer is a NO SHOW three times, that volunteer will be removed from the volunteer database and not allowed to volunteer. When there are an insufficient number of volunteers, lessons have to be cancelled for the safety of the rider. A No Show is a volunteer who, after receiving confirmation of their commitment to volunteer at a certain time, does not come to the horse park or call to notify an instructor or volunteer coordinator that they cannot be present.

VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES

The Horse Park will provide all volunteers with training that will include:

- Orientation to the Horse Park's Therapeutic Program
- Volunteer Roles and Responsibilities
- Emergency Procedures
- Safety
- Additional Training as Available

The two main volunteer tasks at Chastain Horse Park are horse leader and sidewalker.

The horse leader is responsible for the **horse**. The sidewalker walks beside the rider during the lesson and is responsible for **the rider**. On the following pages, these jobs are described in more detail, including emergency procedures. Please read these carefully! In addition to these tasks, volunteers may be offered opportunities to help with additional activities such as horse shows and fundraisers.

DISMISSAL POLICY:

Volunteers and guests are expected to follow Chastain Horse Park's rules and policies and may not engage in disruptive, unsafe or inappropriate behavior. In the event a volunteer or guest does not comply, one or more of the following actions may be taken:

Initial Verbal Warning: Breaking of Chastain Horse Park's rules and/or policies and procedures may be initially communicated by a one-to-one, e-mail, or phone warning.

Meeting with Chastain Horse Park Personnel: Breaking of Chastain Horse Park's rules and/or policies and procedures may be followed by a meeting with one or more Chastain Horse Park personnel for discussion regarding the infraction. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the problem with the volunteer/guest and explain the requirements for solving the problem as well as potential for dismissal if problem continues.

Dismissal from Organization

Immediate dismissal from the property and organization may be directed by a Chastain Horse Park staff member for:

- Endangering the safety of others
- Inappropriate use of the facilities, mailing lists or monies
- Disruptive or abusive behavior to the animals or people
- Repeated disregard of the organization's rules, policies and procedures
- Possession of a weapon
- Suspicion of the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Pattern of "no-showing" for lessons

Dismissal by staff other than the Executive Director or President: Will be reported, and an occurrence form completed and forwarded, to one of these supervisors as soon as possible.

STANDARD EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES WILL BE DIRECTED IN MOST CASES BY THE CERTIFIED INSTRUCTOR.

In the event of an accident or an emergency in the activity area:

Remain with your team.

Leader – halt and face horse.

Sidewalkers – remain with rider. Stay calm and follow instructor's directions.

If the rider(s) must be dismounted:

Remain or line up where instructor indicates.

Sidewalkers – assist rider's feet out of stirrups.

Left sidewalker – assist rider to dismount to left, head uppermost.

Sidewalkers – escort/carry rider to designated area.

Leader – run up stirrups, tuck reins under left stirrup – await direction from instructor.

If a rider must be dismounted quickly (emergency!):

Instructor will indicate need for emergency dismount.

Leader – halt if possible, or stay with a moving horse.

Right sidewalker – remove rider's foot from stirrup and assist leg over horse; go around to assist other sidewalker **after** the left sidewalker has a hold on the rider.

Left sidewalker – pull rider from horse with his back on your chest, drag away from horse, and wait for further instructions.

If emergency personnel must be called:

Instructor may ask a volunteer to call 911 and report...

Location of emergency

Telephone number of phone being used

Caller's name

What happened

Number of victims

Condition of victims

Help being given

Request **NO SIRENS** close to barn

ALSO:

Send a volunteer, if available, to **entrance of property on West Wieuca Road** to signal EMT to location of incident

Stay on line for further instructions

Contact barn manager on site

REMEMBER:

The safety of our riders and other personnel is our first priority.

The safety of the horses we are using is our next priority.

Grooming

Use grooming equipment gently on the horse, particularly on animals with sensitive skin. Some horses begin nipping at you if they anticipate discomfort during grooming. Be sure not to leave grooming equipment where the horse could step on it.

Put the horse in an outside grooming bay, wash stall or hallway crossties before beginning grooming. When a horse is in crossties in the barn, the horse needs to face the covered arena or outside grooming stalls. This will prevent horses from being tail-to-tail or face-to-face. Stay near the horse and keep a hand on it at all times so you can anticipate its movements. Never sit on the ground or groom from your knees, and always be in a position to move away quickly.

Begin grooming with a rubber currycomb, which is gentler than a metal one. Start on the neck and brush in a circular motion. Work from front to back, grooming carefully in bony areas. Avoid using the currycomb on the face, lower legs, hips and shoulder (flanks and withers).

After you have loosened the dirt and hair with the currycomb or shedding blade, use a brush to remove it. If using two brushes, use the stiffer one first. Start on the neck and brush in the direction of the hair growth, working from front to back. Be sure to clean the horse's belly where the girth lies to prevent saddle sores.

Use a soft brush to put on the finishing touches and to brush the face. Work slowly and gently, as many horses are sensitive. Start on the top of the forehead and be careful around the eyes, mouth and nose. Avoid placing your face over or too close to the horse's face as the animal can move its head quickly and hit you.

Use the soft brush on the mane and tail. If there are tangles, it is best to pick through them with your fingers to avoid pulling out too many hairs. Stand near and to the side of the hind leg when grooming the hindquarters and brushing the tail. If you must stand behind the horse, be sure you can move away quickly if something from the front scares the horse. When working in the flank and loin areas, get a feel for the horse's reaction. If it shows anxiety, work on these areas more gently.

Hooves should be cleaned daily. Pick out the horse's feet before and after each ride. Start with the left front and work around to its right front since most horses are accustomed to this order. Facing the rear of the horse, place your left hand on its shoulder, moving it down the back of his leg towards his hoof. Lean slightly against the horse to encourage him to balance on his opposite leg. If he does not pick up his foot, gently squeeze the tendons above the fetlock until he picks up his foot. If you try to force the foot up, it is likely that the horse will lean on you or lose its balance. As the hoof yields, slip your hand in front of the hoof and raise it to knee height promptly, but without jerking. Holding the hoof firmly will encourage the horse to not jerk it away from you. If the horse gets anxious and struggles, put the foot down and start over. Be sure your feet are not placed where the horse will step on them if he pulls away. Use the hoof pick in a downward motion toward the toe. Never use the hoof pick from toe to heel, because it is more likely to get caught in a crevice and puncture the sole or frog if the foot is jerked away from your grasp. Clean the sole, the frog and the crevices around the frog well. Look for bruises, punctures, foreign objects or signs of disease. If you find a problem, report it to the instructor.

When cleaning the hind feet, start with your hand on the horse's hip and repeat the same process. Make sure when you put the hoof down to release it slowly making sure not to drop it.

Understanding Horses

Horses are prey animals, meaning they are preyed upon in nature but do not prey on any other animals. In nature they live in herds, and their first response to any threat is to flee. When you handle a horse, the fact that they are flight animals is important to keep in mind. This flight response is so strong that even the most docile horse may react with sudden blind panic to a perceived threat. Defense mechanisms include kicking, biting, rearing, bucking and striking, although many of these behaviors are displayed only in situations of harsh manipulation and restraint. Most of the latter behaviors are the horse's way of preserving life in a non-domestic situation. Some, however, are seen in the domesticated horse.

Because horses are herd animals, they are social and follow a herd leader. In any given group one horse will be the leader. Even in a domestic situation where there might only be two horses, one will be the leader.

Horses do not understand delayed reward or punishment. Rewards or punishment given more than 3 seconds later will not be associated with the behavior. They may associate pats and a soothing voice with a job well done but the rewards should be immediate. An unfamiliar change to the horse's environment may make them uneasy until the "new thing" has been inspected and established to not be a threat. A patient handler gives the horse time to be comfortable with what is around him.

A horse has a keen curiosity. It needs to be very familiar with the details of its surroundings. Its curiosity quickens at the sight, sound, smell, or touch of a new object. What is this activity? What is that in the sky? What is that noise? The horse needs to identify and catalog these unfamiliar things. It is important to give him a moment to adjust to changes and understand that these changes are not a threat.

As discussed before, horses are prey animals and can become frightened. Because of this, the biggest safety risk to a human is being around a horse when it is frightened.

The easiest way to prevent accidents between horse and human is to understand what frightens a horse. As mentioned in the previous section, an unusual dog or car or object, a change to the horse's environment, an unfamiliar noise, or unsure footing are the most common things the horse will be nervous about. You will learn to notice when a horse is in alert mode about some new object or noise. First, a horse will usually freeze. This makes him less noticeable to the potential predator while being able to better identify the source of his fear. The horse will usually look intently in the direction of the surprising stimulus with its head up and ears perked.

Second, horses run. Many will freeze momentarily before running but many won't. Prior to running a horse may sidestep, spin, rear, or jump and it is these actions that are particularly likely to injure those around him.

When approaching a horse, be aware that horses are most easily scared by sudden movements or loud noises, particularly outside of their field of vision. In particular, avoid approaching horses from the rear where they may not see you. Most horses are used to being approached towards their left shoulder. Announce your presence and put your hand on the horse's neck or shoulder so he knows where you are.

As you spend more time around horses, it is easy to become too comfortable and forget to be careful, so remember a couple of things:

Don't let the horse's lead rope or reins hang down between the two of you or on the ground. If the horse steps on the rope or reins, quickly unhook the rope or reins if possible as the horse may struggle if he feels pressure as he raises his head. The best approach is to simply pick up the horse's hoof or push him over until he steps off the lead line.

Don't get on your knees around a horse because you can't get out of the way fast enough if needed.

Don't position your head above the horse's head; he may bring his head up fast and hit you under your chin.

Horse Body Language

A horse communicates with its head and hindquarters. These are the “speaking ends” and the “dangerous ends”. Watch both when you are working around the horse. The following is a quick look at some of the key signals to be mindful of.

EARS BACK

The horse’s ears are its most mobile and expressive feature. Most people believe that when a horse puts its ears back it is expressing anger or aggression. This is true only some of the time. Other times it may indicate that he’s listening behind him, that he’s afraid, or even that he is a little sleepy. When a horse puts his ears flat to his neck and shows the whites of his eyes, he means it! You should react with caution. You will mostly see this expression flashed between horses as they pass. You could see a mild version of this if you tighten the girth too rapidly.

When a horse’s ears go back, it doesn’t always mean it is angry or threatening. When you are working around him, a horse will tip one or both ears back. This shows that he’s paying attention to you. He’s listening for your voice or footsteps. This is a good attitude which increases your coordination together and your safety. If the horse is bored or half asleep, his ears will tip back and out to the side at a gentle angle. Approach a horse in this position slowly and give him a chance to realize you’re there.

EARS FORWARD

People usually interpret ears pointed forward as an expression of friendliness and good cheer, a safe expression. Often this is true, but there are situations in which a horse’s pricked ears are a definite danger signal. A horse’s ears will always point to where its interest lies; that grain pail, the horse across the road, or the flying piece of newspaper. Usually the horse is taking in the sights and paying more attention to his surroundings than to you. It can mean that the horse is nervous about some new object and needs a moment to establish that it is not a threat to him. It is a good idea to be extra watchful for a minute when the horse is in this posture because he can jump or spook if pushed before he settles back down.

If the horse doesn’t seem to be settling down, inform the instructor right away.

HEAD MOVEMENT

Horses make a lot of moves with their heads. Shaking their heads usually means they are being playful, as they frequently are when turned out with a friend. They also shake their heads when flies are bothering them. A horse may also turn his head toward you for a good rub if he is itchy, or he may turn his head to nip you. To stop this, pull his head away from you or let him bump into your pointed finger a few times to discourage it. If you use this approach, bump on his cheek, not his muzzle to prevent head shyness.

A horse that lowers his head as if to touch his nose to the ground, or paws as doing so may be thinking about dropping to roll. Gently tug the horse’s head up to a higher position and keep him walking.

Saddling and Bridling (Tacking Up) Horses Safely

Saddling

Most people choose to saddle the horse first, and then bridle it. This is the procedure used at our facility. In this way, you can still restrain the horse on cross-ties while you tack up.

Groom the horse before tacking up. Pay special attention to the areas where equipment will touch. While grooming, check these areas for injuries. If you notice any abnormality that might hinder the ride, please report this to the instructor. When finished grooming, make sure all the hair that is to lie under equipment is brushed in its natural direction. Ruffled hairs under the saddle or girth can cause irritation and saddle sores. Make sure you pick out the horse's feet before the ride.

Generally, you saddle from the left or near side. Stand slightly behind the shoulder of the horse and place the saddle blanket with the straps toward the horse's head. Place the blanket just behind the horse's shoulder blades, partially covering the withers. Place the gel pad in the same position over the blanket. Next slide it backwards over the horse's back, leaving about one inch over the withers. This straightens the hair that is to lie under the saddle. Make sure equal portions of the pad or blanket are on each side of the horse. Never slide the blankets and saddle forward! Instead, if they are too far back, take them off and start over. Pick up the saddle and arrange it so the stirrups and girth are not underneath the saddle or dangling. With an English saddle, the stirrups should be run up on the leathers and the girth draped over the seat. Since the western saddle is less frequently used at Chastain Horse Park, we will discuss English tack here. Place the saddle gently on the horse's back. Never throw the saddle on the horse's back, or drop it suddenly into place.

With the saddle in place, secure the girth to the saddle on the off-side first (the right side of the horse). The girth is secured just behind the horse's front legs. The elastic side of the girth should be on left side of the saddle. Do not allow the girth to swing and hit the horse's legs. Go around to the other side of the horse, reach under the belly and grab the free end of the girth, making sure it is not twisted. Keep an eye on the horse as you do this. Some horses may try to kick or nip when you are not looking.

If you are using any straps that connect to the girth such as a breastplate or martingale, remember to connect them before you secure the girth on the near side (the left side of the horse). Make sure the martingale or breastplate is centered before securing the girth.

The girth should be tightened in 3 or 4 phases. Secure the near side of the girth loosely at first, not all at once with a quick jerk. A gentle, consistent movement is much more comfortable for the horse. The girth should be checked again before the lesson begins. The final position for the girth should be tight enough to slide only your fingers between the girth and the horse.

Make sure hair under the girth is lying flat and the girth is not pinching the horse's skin. Smooth any wrinkled skin under the girth by bending each front leg at the knee and gently stretching it forward from the elbow.

The stirrup should remain run up until the rider is mounted by the instructor and the stirrups are adjusted. It is up to the instructor whether you will help with stirrup adjustment or whether the instructor prefers to do this. The stirrups should be run up the leathers and the girth should be slightly loosened after the rider dismounts.

Bridling

The crossties should be unfastened and the halter removed before bridling the horse.

Pick up the bridle by the middle of the crownpiece and carry the reins either over your shoulder or in your other hand. Stand to the side and just behind the horse's head on the left side, facing in the same direction as the horse. Standing in this position will protect your head from a blow if the horse tries to throw its head to avoid the bridle. Place the reins over the horse's head. With your right hand, raise the crownpiece up to the horse's ears as you guide the bit into the horse's mouth with your left hand. Be careful not to knock the bit against the horse's teeth. Do not try to force the bit against the

horse's teeth or lips. If the horse refuses to accept the bit ask for assistance.. Be sure to keep the crownpiece raised once you insert the bit, or the horse will open its mouth and drop the bit. Once the bit is in the horse's mouth, settle the crownpiece behind the ears, starting with the right ear. Carefully fold the ears forward under the crownpiece to get it in position. Smooth any loose mane hairs that might be under the crownpiece. Pull the forelock over the browband.

Adjust the bridle for comfort and appearance. The throatlatch should be fastened loosely enough to fit your whole hand between the strap and the horse's jaw. The bit should be adjusted so that it causes one wrinkle to form at the corner of the horse's mouth. If the bit hangs too high or too low, it can be adjusted by the cheekpieces. Any bit adjustment should only be done by the instructor. Tuck all loose strap ends into their keepers. Remember, the three points to check to be certain the bridle is adjusted to fit the horse: 1) placement of the bit, 2) adjustment of the noseband, 3) adjustment of the throatlatch.

After bridling, reattach the halter over the bridle if directed. Attach the lead line to the halter, and you are ready for the lesson!

Untacking:

After the lesson, lead the horse back to the crossties or wash stall and attach the crossties to the halter. **Never** attach crossties to the bit, as the horse's mouth may be injured if he pulls. Make sure the stirrups are run up the leathers. To unbridle the horse, simply reverse the process of bridling. Undo the throatlatch and nosepiece. As you slide the crownpiece over the ears and down the horse's head with your left hand, grasp the horse's nose with your right hand to keep its nose down low enough for you to reach and reattach the halter. Also, with the head down, the bit will not hit the teeth when removed. Attach the halter as you did when bridling.

Unsaddling is also in reverse order. Undo the girth on both sides, left side first, and lay it over the saddle. Remove the saddle and pads from the left and return to the tack room. Place the saddle pads back on the stack in the tack room upside down so they can dry. Make sure to hang the girth on the hook labeled with the appropriate number.

Groom the horse after untacking, paying special attention to sweaty areas and places where the hair has been moved out of place by the tack.

If the horse is to be used again, you will probably want to take him to the stall to get water. Horses may be put in the stall for a short time with their saddles on, but someone must stay in attendance with the horse, and any halters or bridles must be removed.

Check to be sure the horse is sufficiently cooled down. A horse that is put in its stall while still hot can become seriously ill. Please have the instructor or a senior volunteer check the horse for you if you are not sure how to determine the horse's temperature. If the horse is too hot, it will need to be walked and hosed off.

Be sure to put all equipment you used during the lesson away. **DO NOT** leave grooming buckets or tack in the hallways of the barn or in the outside grooming bays as this can become a safety hazard!

HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE HORSE LEADER

As the horse leader, you are in charge of the horse at all times!

Walk on the left beside the horse's head staying just behind the horse's nose.

Hold right hand about 8 inches from the clip end of the lead rope.

Hold extra rope folded in a figure eight in your left hand. NEVER loop the rope or wrap the rope around your hand.

Look up and forward, but always be aware of the horse's focus.

Keep your attention on the lesson and your team. Glance back occasionally at the rider and sidewalkers to make sure they are safe.

Keep at least a horse length distance between your horse and the other horses. Wait for your rider to ask the horse to "walk on" before proceeding.

Be sure you don't crowd your sidewalkers. If you don't watch your distance they can become squeezed between the horse and the fence.

Walk on, giving a couple of clucks with your voice and use a gentle tug with the lead rope if your rider is unable to motivate the horse. Don't pull on the horse or face him to try and get him to walk on – If you have trouble getting the horse to start walking, turn his head away from you a bit (to the right) and then begin to walk forward.

Try to synchronize your steps with the horse's footsteps, and he will be more likely to match your pace when you slow or speed up.

When it is time to trot, wait for your rider to ask the horse to "trot on" before proceeding.

When trotting, look up and forward. Stay aware of the horse's focus. Start jogging slowly, cluck with your voice, and gently tug forward on the lead rope.

During the walk and the trot, avoid downward tugs or pulls on the lead line – the horse may become unbalanced.

Do not let the horse's head get too low to the ground. This may unseat the rider and it affects the way the horse moves.

Adjust your step to the horse – be careful not to get too far ahead, behind, or away.

Be aware of what the rider is asking of the horse. Turn as or after the rider uses the reins to turn the horse, not before. Encourage the rider to do as much as possible on his/her own – do not do it for them.

Try not to put pressure on the horse's head if they are doing what is asked of them. The release of pressure is their reward for doing the right thing. THIS IS IMPORTANT! It continues the proper teaching of the horses.

If you have the feeling your horse is tense, inform the instructor immediately. Pay extra attention to your horse when there is abnormal activity around the arena which might scare the horse (wind gusts, people running, trash blowing, noise from the parking lot, dogs barking, etc.).

Avoid the temptation to interact and assist the rider while leading the horse.

IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY OR ACCIDENT, THE LEADER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE HORSE. STAY WITH THE HORSE AND FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTOR'S DIRECTIONS.

There are important differences between “Therapeutic Riding” and “Hippotherapy” at Chastain Horse Park:

“Therapeutic Riding” is riding skill instruction from a PATH Intl. certified instructor. During Therapeutic Riding lessons, the rider learns skills to direct the horse’s movement. Therefore, in Therapeutic Riding lessons, the horse’s leader is encouraged by the instructor to permit the rider to increasingly control the horse’s movement.

“Hippotherapy” is a physical, occupational, or speech/language therapy that utilizes equine movement; Hippotherapy literally means “treatment with the help of the horse” from the Greek word, “hippos,” meaning “horse.” During the licensed therapist’s Hippotherapy session, a horse leader who has been trained in leading skills specific to Hippotherapy controls the movement of the horse as a key component to the therapy session. In other words, the horse’s movement influences the rider, rather than the rider controlling the horse’s movement.

HORSE HANDLING: A Respectful Horse

- walks in same step and rhythm with you
- keeps his head at least six inches away from you unless asked to come closer
- halts with you without pulling on leadline
- lowers head at or below withers and relaxes his neck
- stands still on a loose leadline until you ask him to move
- sighs gently or exhales
- makes a licking or chewing motion with his lips
- gently flicks his ears back and forth towards you

Watch your horse after you have followed the steps below for a few minutes; as he accepts that you are in charge of how he moves his feet, you will begin to see a horse that respects your leadership.

“Ask, Tell, Reward” For Respect, Every Time:

- Ask your horse to move his feet backwards or sideways to establish his respect for you each time you work with a horse – in nature, this is how a horse shows respect to another horse.
- Tell your horse to move by using an assertive body posture and direct gaze (this is what horses do to “talk to” each other). Wave, then tap, then slap with the end of your lead rope or a crop if needed to make him move.
- Reward your horse as soon as he takes a step, by slouching your body posture. Turn or move slightly away from him, and keep him in view out of the corner of your eye – the horse likes this reward even better than a hug. Move him backwards a step every time he steps towards you without your invitation. A respectful, safe horse moves his feet when you ask him to (a disrespectful, unsafe horse makes you move your feet instead!).

Take steps to get your horse’s respect FIRST every time, and then you’ll be able to safely work with him!

HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE SIDEWALKER

As the sidewalker, you are responsible for the rider at all times!

You are the person responsible for the rider's safety. You will help riders maintain their balance and feel safe during their lessons.

Depending on the rider's condition or balance, one or two sidewalkers may be assigned to the rider by the instructor.

Reinforce the instructor's directions. Some riders need a sidewalker to help them understand the instructor's directions.

When only one sidewalker is needed, this sidewalker will usually be on the right side of the rider, while the leader walks on the left side of the horse.

Different methods are used with individual riders depending on their needs. The instructor will tell you how much support the rider needs.

If directed to do so, give support at the thigh and/or ankle. Try NOT to lean on the horse or to put pressure on the rider's leg, as the horse will think he's being signaled to go faster or his gait may be affected.

If directed, walk beside the rider's leg assisting only when needed, for example at the trot or to reinforce the instructor's directions. Stay in position by holding excess stirrup leather or other piece of tack. Do not drop back beyond the horse's middle.

In the case of an emergency dismount, the sidewalkers must make sure the rider's feet are out of the stirrups and the rider should be taken off the horse immediately.

Remember:

Be sensitive to where you are touching the rider. It's easy to be holding a small child without realizing where your hands are. Be sure you are never touching a rider where you would not want to be touched.

Learn to visualize the basic riding position so you can help your rider adjust his position.

If the rider slips in one direction or another, have the rider regain position in the center of the horse. If necessary, halt, reposition the rider and continue the lesson.

Limit conversation during class. Direct the rider's attention to the instructor. Reinforce the lesson, encourage the rider, give congratulations for a good effort.

If a problem arises, tell the leader and the instructor so that they can take appropriate action.

Change sides with the other sidewalker frequently. Ask the horse leader to halt and sidewalkers change sides one at a time. Never leave the student alone or unassisted. Always walk in FRONT of the horse when changing sides.

Be sensitive to your rider. A student who cannot speak can frequently hear and understand. Be careful that your elbows don't dig into the horse while holding the rider.

Be careful that you don't apply too much pressure to the rider's legs. Sometimes pressure on the thigh can increase or cause muscle spasticity. Check with the instructor on the best way to assist.

OTHER VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

At times there will be landscaping, trash pickup, office work and a variety of other possible volunteer jobs that need to be done. When these opportunities are available an email will be sent.

Fundraising is a regular part of our yearly activities at Chastain Horse Park. You will receive notices of fundraising activities and possibly a request for volunteers for some of these fundraisers.

Camps and special field trips are also held at varying times and will require volunteers to function as they would in a therapeutic class.

An annual therapeutic horse show is held and requires many volunteers to make it a success. Watch for the email!

Interested in becoming a certified therapeutic instructor? Go to www.PATHInternational.org or check with the Executive Director for more information.

We are always looking for volunteers to help train new volunteers. If you are good at presenting to a group and have experience with horses, you are a candidate. Let your instructor know if interested.

There are many needs when operating a therapeutic riding center so there are many ways we try to raise the funds we need in addition to our regular fundraisers. We have the “adopt a horse” program, scholarships for our therapeutic riders, and a “wish list” of equipment we need. Please take a look at the Chastain Horse Park web site www.chastainhorsepark.org, to review these opportunities. We need you to tell our story; it helps remind people that we need their donations!

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION:

The first Sunday in December each year, there is a holiday party for the Chastain Horse Park family. At this party, we recognize outstanding contributions by volunteers.

VOLUNTEER RIDING LESSONS:

Volunteers may enroll as desired for lessons with any Chastain Horse Park instructor, at the instructor’s regular rates. Occasionally, discounted lessons will be offered by an instructor to active volunteers, on an as-available basis.