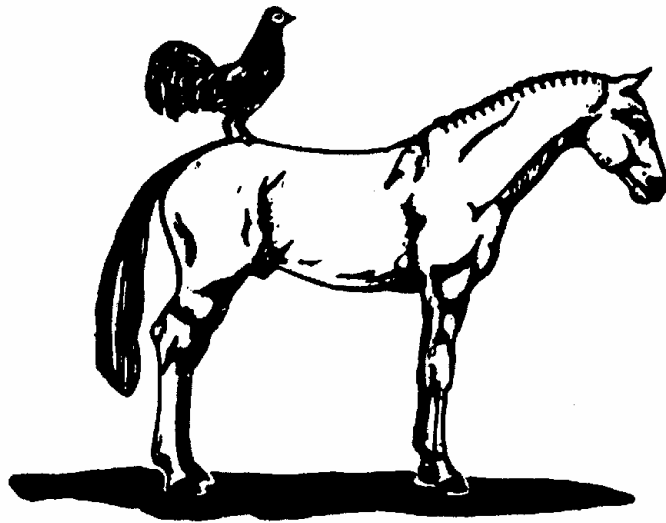


# **THORNCROFT THERAPEUTIC HORSEBACK RIDING**



***Where Volunteers Make The Difference!***

190 Line Road, Malvern, PA 19355  
610-644-1963

## Welcome!

Welcome to Thorncroft! We're pleased to have you among our family and hope you enjoy a wonderful experience. Established in 1969 by Saunders Dixon, Thorncroft was one of the early pioneers of therapeutic riding. Saunders and his wife, Sallie, continue to operate the farm, which is a 501c(3) not-for-profit. We are delighted that you want to assist us in our work with children and adults with disabilities. Volunteers are a very important part of the success of Thorncroft. When you look up the word volunteer in the dictionary it states: "a person who performs or offers to perform a service of his or her free will, a person who renders aid, performs a service, or assumes an obligation voluntarily." Everyone's job is important, so take yours seriously while having a good time and helping the riders have an enjoyable experience.

### THORNCROFT EQUESTRIAN CENTER PHILOSOPHY

"Our mission is to help build the physical, emotional, and mental well being of all people, particularly those with special needs." Through establishing an atmosphere of cooperation, respect and love in an equestrian environment we are able to accomplish this goal. It is our belief at Thorncroft that each volunteer, as well as each rider, has a unique contribution to offer our program. We are all teachers and all students continuing to learn. We share these volunteer guidelines only to outline some possible roles and terms we may use to express our needs.

Approximately 350 riders come for lessons weekly. Our success depends on the enthusiasm and dedication of our volunteers. Some of the disabilities may include:

Developmental delay	Epilepsy	Multiple Sclerosis
Learning disabilities	Attention deficient disorder	Speech/language delays
Cerebral palsy	Autism	Sight/Hearing impairments
Spinal cord injury	Down Syndrome	Behavioral disorders
Spina bifida	Stroke/CVA	

### BENEFITS OF THERAPEUTIC RIDING

The benefits of therapeutic riding are available to individuals with all forms of disabilities. Research shows that students who participate in therapeutic riding can experience physical, emotional, and mental rewards. For individuals with impaired mobility, horseback riding gently and rhythmically moves their bodies in a manner similar to a human walking gait. These riders can experience increased balance, muscle control and strength. Individuals with learning or mental disabilities are motivated by riding to increase concentration, patience and discipline. If a psychological or emotional disability is present, the unique relationship formed with a horse can help improve interpersonal relationships. As is expected all riders experience increased self-esteem, confidence, and independence.



# VOLUNTEERS GUIDELINES

1. Reliability

Regular attendance is important because the riders and instructors rely on the volunteers. Volunteers help the program run smoothly. Sessions are held weekly Monday - Saturday from 9:00 AM - 9:00 PM. PLEASE call the office and let the office manager know as early as possible if you are going to be absent.

2. Punctuality

Volunteers should arrive 30 minutes before the lesson to assist with tacking up the horse and greeting riders. The schedule placed on the front desk should be checked to know what tack is needed. It lists the time, rider, horse, and the equipment required.

3. Physical Fitness

Assisting with lessons shall include being able to walk with and/or support a rider for at least an hour, and in some cases may be asked to run along slowly as the horse trots for a few minutes at a time. If you have physical limitations that prevent you from meeting these requirements, please notify your instructor or the office manager to find you a better job.

4. Clothing

Clothes should be comfortable, durable, and appropriate for the weather. Sneakers or boots provide protection from the deep footing of the indoor ring or the mud outdoors. Loafers, sandals or other loose fitting footwear should not be worn. Remember, you will be working around horses.

5. Willingness

The riding instructors and physical therapists count on your calmness and willingness to help in a variety of situations. To aide a nervous rider the volunteer must remain calm and reassure the rider. The volunteer leading the horse also needs to be calm and aware to keep the horses relaxed.

6. Alertness and Anticipation

The volunteer must be alert to any unexpected situations when working with the horses and riders. They also must be aware of the rider's position on the horse, the rider's feelings, and the horse's disposition including reactions to changes in the environment.

7. Patience

Patience is required to adjust to the often painfully slow movements of the severely handicapped person. The rider needs firm, positive encouragement by avoiding false sympathy that implies pity.

# MAJOR AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR A VOLUNTEER

At times one person may be asked to do more than one job within a lesson. We would hope that you would be willing to learn to do many different jobs. We schedule volunteers to meet a particular need and we do count heavily on their services. Responsibilities of volunteers working with therapeutic lessons fall into three general areas.

## 1. Etiquette For Preparing The Horse And Putting The Horse Away

Once you arrive at Thorncroft your first responsibility is to find out what horses are needed and tack them up with the appropriate equipment. There is a schedule that lists the time and the horses that are needed. Getting the horses ready includes entering the horse's stall, taking the horse out of the stall, grooming the horse and tacking the horse up.

A few horses will be used for more than one shift and will remain in the arena. Others may need to be readied for a following lesson upon direction of the instructor. Some of the horses will need to be taken back to their stalls at the end of a lesson.

When returning the horses to their stalls be sure to remove all the tack and follow up with grooming. Once this is complete, please take direction from the scheduled barn manager regarding any questions about where to place the horse. It is advised that volunteers do not release horses into the pastures.

## 2. Side Aides

A side aide walks along side the horse to offer the rider support as needed but does not hold them on. Being a side aide is extremely important. This means that the instructor does not have to act as the side aide and can walk around the horse to work on the rider's position.

The side aides are present to assist the riders with support while riding, NOT to hold them on the horse. Depending upon the disability, the instructor will tell you which "hands on" method to use. When a very severely handicapped rider needs considerable support the side aides may need to change sides during the lesson. Many riders do not require "hands on" at the walk but may need assistance at the trot.

Your first reaction to the unexpected is to keep the rider on the horse. Conversation should be kept to a minimum and always for the benefit of the rider. You can encourage them to follow directions, but avoid aimless conversation with the other volunteers, the rider, or instructor during the lesson. (See pictures)

### 3. Leader

You will lead the horse with a lead shank that is attached to both sides of the bit. Always lead the horse standing on the your right side with your hand six inches away from the bridle. The left hand holds the excess lead. **NEVER WRAP THE LEAD ROPE AROUND YOUR HAND.**

Also it is important to keep the horses well apart, lined up facing the lobby when waiting for the rider to arrive. While waiting, the leader should stand in front of the horse at a “stand still” facing the horse.

The leader walks forward beside the horse’s neck without pulling. Do not look back if he stops because most horses refuse to move if you stare at them. When walking with other horses a distance of one horse length from another horse in front of you or further is best. The leader is responsible for controlling the horses pace to the rider’s ability. If your horse does not easily adjust his pace to the one in front, the leader can slow down or pass the leading horse accordingly. Sometimes the instructor will have the rider steer and control the horse, as much he/she is able. When this happens it is very important to follow the directions of the instructor and wait patiently for the rider to try each activity.

When outdoors, be ready for the horse to attempt to eat grass. To handle this just pull his head up with the lead. Remember that the surroundings outside are very different from inside; so be prepared for the horse to be more energetic and frisky.

## **THE STALL**

### 1. Entering a Stall

Always approach the horses from the front where they can see you. As you approach the horse speak to them in a quiet voice. Never surprise the horse by running or shouting loudly. If you have to approach the horse from behind talk to the horse and pat the horse lightly so that he know you are coming.

### 2. Taking A Horse Out Of The Stall

When taking a horse out of the stall always use a halter and a lead shank. A scheduled barn manager will be in the barn if there are any questions or if assistance is needed. Be sure to look up and down the aisle before exiting.

### 3. Putting A Horse In The Stall

When putting a horse back into the stall always use a halter and lead rope. When entering the stall make sure to walk ahead of the horse, turn the horse’s head to the stall door and remove the halter before leaving the stall. Again, a scheduled barn manager will be present if assistance is needed.

### 4. Placing A Horse In Crossties

The horse must be placed in the crossties facing the middle of the barn at all times for grooming and tacking up. *When attaching the crossties to the horse always make sure to attach the snaps to the halter not the bridle.* When placing the bridle on the horse, slide the halter from the horse’s head and place it on the horse’s neck. Leave the crossties attached to the halter during this transition; only remove the crossties once the bridle is completely secured.

## GROOMING

Each horse shall be groomed before and after each lesson. The grooming items needed are located on the wall near the door to the indoor ring. First use a currycomb in a circular motion to loosen the excess dirt. Then use a hard brush to clean and loosen dirt away by brushing in the direction of the hair. Use a dandy brush to give a shine to the coat after removing all the dirt. When the horse's body is clean use a hoof pick to clean the dirt out of the hooves. Please remember to watch for cuts, scrapes, or other sores and tell the current barn manager. Everyone shall sweep the floor at the conclusion of grooming. If at any time you do not feel comfortable please ask for help.

## TACKING

A dry erase board is located in the lobby above the counter to inform volunteers what is needed. The information will include the instructors name, the horse name, the tack needed and what time they are needed. All of the horses tack is located in the tack room labeled with each horses name.

## INSTRUCTIONAL LOCATIONS

The primary arena available for all lessons is the indoor arena. Be sure to stop at the door and look both ways to ensure not to collide with other riders. It is important to close all doors when entering or exiting the arena for safety.

At the start of all lessons riders mount their horses in the indoor arena, and for safety he/she should mount from the mounting block or ramp. Once the rider and instructor are ready to begin, the lesson can be completed in the indoor, outdoor or lawn arena. If other lessons are going on at the same time it is best if the therapeutic lessons remain towards the middle of the arena. The faster moving lesson has the track along the wall. A trail and large hill are also available for use during a lesson.

## MOUNTING AND DISMOUNTING PROCEDURES

- ❖ The instructor shall assist the rider in finding a properly fitting helmet.
- ❖ The instructor will check all equipment for safety.
- ❖ If you do not feel comfortable as the leader in the ramp tell the instructor and they will get help.
- ❖ When you are holding the horse that is your *only* job.
- ❖ A side aide shall be present on the mounting block to assist the instructor.
- ❖ Do not enter the ramp area until the rider is at the top of the ramp and the instructor confirms they are ready. Time in the ramp should be kept to an absolute minimum.
- ❖ Hold the horse with one hand on each rein. Do not hold the horse by the bit rings.
- ❖ The horse should stand quietly in the neutral place until it is time to go forward.
- ❖ If the horse really jumps backwards, let him go to the end of the lead shank. Do not yell "whoa" or pull hard on the lead rope. If possible, position the horse in the same spot.
- ❖ When the rider is mounted, the instructor will tell you they are ready. Bring the horse straight forward and gradually turn towards the middle of the arena.
- ❖ Continue to the middle of the arena past the track at stop for adjustments.
- ❖ Riders are dismounted to the ground or at the instruction of the instructor.
- ❖ The instructor shall offer specific directions to the leader and side aide.

# **FIRE POLICY**

## In the Event of Fire

All lessons shall stop; riders dismount, and exit the Indoor Arena with their horses through the South door

All riders on property shall dismount and meet in the Outdoor Arena

The Most Senior Staff Member is responsible for all directions in the Outdoor Arena

All riders, parents, volunteers, guests and staff shall exit the barn and meet at the Outdoor Arena

The Most Senior Staff member is responsible for all directions in the barn

Survey the scene to make sure it is safe to enter

Designated staff individuals will begin evacuating horses when all participants are out of the barn  
Lead horses through the nearest door beginning with horses closest to the fire to the nearest paddock

Frightened horses may not want to leave their stalls...talk to them in a reassuring tone of voice,  
it may be necessary to cover their eyes with a towel

If a horse is unmanageable or refuses to leave its stall, leave the door open and move to the next horse

Be prepared that a horse may try to run back to the barn once outside

# **SEVERE THUNDERSTORM POLICY**

## In the Event of a Thunderstorm or Loss of Electricity

All lessons in Indoor Arena shall stop; riders dismount, and return horses to their stalls

All riders outside on property shall dismount and return horses to their stalls, if  
time does not permit untack horses and turn out in the Indoor Arena

The Most Senior Staff Member is responsible for all directions

All office personnel, instructors, riders, parents, volunteers, and guests, shall proceed to the Lobby

The Most Senior Staff member is responsible for all directions in the barn

If the horses are outside, leave horses in pasture

# **TRAIL RIDE POLICY**

## Therapeutic Lessons

All instructors when going on a trail ride are required to have a leader or side aide present

All instructors are required to take a two-way radio and halter with lead rope

In an **EMERGENCY**, the instructor must stay with the rider

The instructor with injured rider should stay at the scene until help arrives

# THORNCROFT EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

## PROCEDURE IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

- A) Person sent by instructor to call for help:
1. Call 911 (Press Line 1 on the right side of the phone to get a line)
  2. Also inform Mr. Dixon, Sallie Dixon, or Jenny Abke
  3. Stay calm
  4. Tell the Operator
    - a. Your name
    - b. The location and directions:  
Thorncroft Equestrian Center  
190 Line Road  
Malvern, PA 19355  
(intersection of East Boot Road and Line Road)
    - c. Phone number  
610-644-1963
    - d. What happened
    - e. The injured person(s) condition
    - f. The help being given
    - g. Stay on the phone until Emergency Medical Service (EMS) arrives
- B) Person(s) sent by instructor to wait for EMS:
1. Open all gates to location of injured person(s) if necessary
  2. Obtain the injured person(s) medical form from the tan filing cabinets in the front office to give to the EMS crew
  3. Go to the end of the driveway to wait
  4. Explain to EMS the exact location of injured person(s)
  5. Ask the EMS to shut off lights and sirens
- C) Person(s) sent by instructor to obtain necessary supplies:
1. Obtain the First Aid Kit and Blanket from under the counter in the Lobby
  2. Locate the parent/guardian of injured person(s)
  3. Follow additional instructions by instructor only



# **THORNCROFT STANDARD PROCEDURES**

In the event of an emergency, the Most Senior Staff Member is responsible for all directions. During a lesson all leaders must stop horses, leaders assume halt position in front of the horse, and side-walkers assume the arm-lock position on the rider.

## **Things to keep in mind**

- It is most important for NECESSARY COMMUNICATION with all people who are working in the emergency situation.
- Stay calm and eliminate unnecessary talking.
- If a horse suddenly pulls backwards, DO NOT pull against him, instead, slowly and calmly follow the movement of the horse until he stops.
- Always be prepared.

## **If a rider becomes unbalanced**

- Leader stops horse
- Side-walkers try to keep rider in the saddle by stabilizing the rider with arm-locks over the rider's thighs.

## **If a rider must be removed from the horse**

- The instructor will notify the rider, leader, and side-walkers that an Emergency dismount will take place.
- Leader shall stop the horse, side-walkers shall remove the rider's feet out of stirrups and an instructor will dismount the rider to the ground quickly and quietly.
- The instructor shall tell the offside (right side) side-walker "Let go, I have the rider."
- If the horse will not stand quietly, the instructor shall hug the rider around the waist from side and slide the rider off and away from the horse.
- Leader shall remove the horse away from the scene by turning the hindquarters away OR back the horse away from the rider.

## **If a rider falls from the horse**

- The side-walker on the side closest to where the rider is falling shall try to soften the rider's fall.
- Leader shall halt the horse and very carefully move the horse away from the fallen rider.