



Volunteer Sidewalker Presentation



WE

OUR VOLUNTEERS!



SIDEWALKER QUALIFICATIONS

Sidewalkers should be able to:

- If possible, commit to an entire lesson session (i.e. six weeks), unless otherwise discussed with the volunteer coordinator.
- Follow directions of program staff and instructors at all times.
- Become familiar with horses and riding equipment used in programs.
- Communicate diplomatically and enthusiastically with others.
- Commit to a defined time to fulfill lesson and event responsibilities.
- Be willing to learn necessary safeguards of the program.
- No tobacco, alcohol, or drugs (at this facility) due to the youth environment.
- Physically meet the qualifications for the sidewalker position, including walking for 1 hour and jogging for short distances.

WE CAN'T DO THIS WITHOUT YOU!



We cannot stress the importance of reporting to your volunteer commitment as scheduled. Participants are unable to ride without you. Would you please help us ensure that each participant receives the full benefit of their activities?

If volunteers do not show and do not give us prior notice, there is a chance we will not be able to allow the participant to ride.

We will not ride in an unsafe environment.

SHOW OFF YOUR EQUI-KIDS APPAREL!



VOLUNTEERING IN LESSONS

Volunteer Ability Guidelines

Due to the inherent risks associated with volunteering at a therapeutic horseback riding program, and for the safety of our participants and volunteers, we offer the following guidelines to prospective volunteers in order to acquaint you with the variety of tasks associated with the weekly mounted lessons.



The Lesson Team

INSTRUCTOR

Responsible for teaching riders and supervising volunteers in the arena and barn

TEAM LEADER

Tenured volunteer-responsible for supervising/coaching other volunteers during grooming, tacking and in lessons

HORSE LEADER

Responsible for grooming and tacking the horse before the lesson, leading and communicating with the horse before, during, and after the lesson, and returning the horse to their stall at the end

SIDEWALKERS

Responsible for the rider during the lesson



**HORSE
&
RIDER**

SIDEWALKERS

Responsible for acting as coach and support for rider

SIDEWALKER DUTIES

Responsible for the rider during the lesson.. . After the lesson, sidewalkers can report to the tack cleaning station (located in the barn by the gate to the indoor arena) to begin cleaning all tack that was used. During the lesson, sidewalkers are positioned at each side of the rider in order to assist the rider.

- Ability to walk with arms in a supporting position for a minimum of fifty minutes. The supporting holds can be different for each rider. Holds will be discussed in the mock training. Some holds can be tiring on the volunteer and volunteers are encouraged to change sides to assist with the volunteer's comfort. Proper change guidelines are required to maintain safety guidelines for your rider (ask for your instructor's permission and alert your team before changing sides).
- Ability to walk/jog alongside horse and rider as spotter for fifty minutes. Spotting at the trot requires some jogging but is limited to short distances. Volunteers can request a stand in during the trot if needed.
- Ability to relate to children and adults in an encouraging and humorous manner.
- Ability to reassure frightened/nervous riders.
- Responsible for the safety of the rider while mounted.
- Ability to assist a riding instructor with the proper mounting and/or dismounting of a rider if needed.



SIDEWALKER POSITION

Sidewalker location and positioning - Sidewalkers are positioned at the rider's knee. Being too far forward or back will make it very difficult to assist with instructions or provide security to the rider if needed. It is also a safe place to be positioned as far as your safety around the horse.

The Holds

- Arm Over Thigh Hold – Sidewalkers will place their forearm against the rider's thigh with their fingers laying over the flap of the saddle, be careful not to wedge fingers under the saddle or between the saddle pad and saddle to prevent injury. Be careful not to lean into the rider's thigh to prevent bruising or injury to the rider who may not be able to express any pain or discomfort they may be feeling.
- Ankle Hold – Sidewalkers will place their hand closest to the rider by cupping the back of the rider's ankle. Instructors may call for this by keeping the rider's legs stabilized.
- Spotter – Sidewalkers will walk beside the rider, maintaining their position by the rider's lower leg, while keeping hands down by their sides. Please do not put your hands into your pockets as this could prevent a delay in your reaction time in the event of an emergency.

SIDEWALKER POSITION CONTINUED

Please be mindful of your position when sidewalking. If you drift too far forward in front of the rider's leg, then you can no longer see what the rider is doing. If you drift too far back behind the rider's lower leg, then you are putting yourself in a precarious position with the horse.


- Balance - The job of the sidewalker is to help maintain the balance of the rider when they cannot sustain it themselves. Some students have a definite balance problem on the horse as well as off. Depending on the skill level or ability of the student, there will be either one or two sidewalkers assigned to each rider. The instructor will inform you as to the requirement of each participant during the mounting time.
- Changing positions or sides - Since the student with less muscle tone requires the volunteer to exert more physical support, you may need to change sides throughout the lessons. To do so, notify the instructor and horse leader that you need to "switch" sides. Come to the center of the ring and change with the other sidewalker one at a time, while the instructor steps in to assist with the switch. The student must never be totally left alone when switching sides since falling could occur.
- Correct rider position - Do not grab at the student if he/she starts to slip, gently guide them back into the correct position. Sidewalkers are very important, as they need to be always aware of the student and what they are doing. Our sidewalkers are the rider's "safety squad"! Anything more than a minor adjustment must be handled by the instructor.

SIDEWALKER POSITION CONTINUED


- Communication - Since the sidewalkers are always close to the rider, you will find they will want to talk to you a great deal. Do not ignore direct questions, instead, try to get your rider to focus their attention on the instructor. If your student is not paying attention or does not hear the instructor, you can “coach” or help reinforce the directions of the instructor by repeating instructions, “modeling” or prompting the action requested by the instructor. One of the greatest distractions during lessons can be the excessive talking in the ring by volunteers. Please limit your conversations with the students and other volunteers during lesson time to what is necessary, do not talk over the instructor. Conversations between the volunteers and riders are encouraged and can take place during warm-ups and cool downs. The sidewalker on the inside of the arena will be the primary communicator “coach” for assistance to limit too many people talking.
- Assisting the Rider with instructions - When an instructor gives a direction, allow your student plenty of time to process. If the instructor says, “turn to the right”, and the student seems confused, gently tap the right hand and say, “right” to reinforce the command. You will get to know the riders and learn when they need help and when they’re just not paying attention. The instructor should always let you know what kind of prompting a rider may need during the lesson as well. Sometimes volunteers forget that the riders are to do the exercises, the same applies to games, we want everyone to have fun, but remember that the ultimate goal for therapeutic riding is to encourage the rider to stretch and grow to be as independent as possible. You are there to support and help challenge the rider to be the best of their ability.

SIDEWALKER POSITION CONTINUED

- Attention - The sidewalker will need to observe the rider at all times. Never become so relaxed that you are not totally aware of the rider, the horse and leader, the instructor or other activities around you. Be aware of your position near the horse. Do not lean on, tap or “push” the horse, as this can agitate the horse, throw off the horse's balance, and interfere with the communication between the horse and rider. It is important to remember that our horses are working. We do not want to interfere with their job by leaning on them, petting them, etc.
- Anticipate - Sidewalkers will learn from experience how to anticipate difficulties from the horse or rider which might create accidents. Be as prepared as possible for the unexpected. Use your judgment as necessary. The horse does not always act in a predictable manner or “according to procedure”. Always be alert to your horse.
- Periodically, workshops and practice sessions are held. You may be asked to take advantage of the practice time and opportunity to improve your skills and knowledge.



Thank you for viewing the
Sidewalker Training
presentation! We are so
excited that you are interested
in joining our Sidewalker team!



If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to
contact our volunteer department.

volunteer@equikids.org | (757) 721-7350 | www.equikids.org