



# PEGASUS PROJECT

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## THERAPEUTIC RIDING

### **Volunteer Training Manual**

#### **Mission Statement**

The Pegasus Project provides quality therapeutic riding and equine related activities to improve the health and well-being of people with physical and/or emotional disabilities.

Located at Tumbleweed Ranch 4680 HWY 12 Yakima WA 98903  
[www.pegasusrides.com](http://www.pegasusrides.com)

## Welcome to Pegasus Project

Thank you for your interest in our volunteer program. Volunteers are a vital part of the services we provide and we are looking forward to having you join our team.

The **Pegasus Project** is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization serving children and adults with disabilities. Pegasus was founded in 2003 with seven riders, one instructor, an imaginative director, and an advisory board for an initial eight-week session at Snow Mountain Ranch. Since then, our program has grown substantially, offering sessions year-round and serving over 50 riders per week in both our Therapeutic Riding & Hippotherapy programs. In December 2008, the Pegasus Project was recognized by PATH as a Premier Accredited Center in the State of Washington.

At Pegasus Project, our focus is on the ability level of each rider, not his or her diagnosis. The results are quite remarkable. Fun games, obstacle courses, and trail rides are just a few of the activities in which our riders participate. These riders are an inspiration to all who have ever wanted a horse and to all who have experienced the joy of riding themselves.

We appreciate that you take the time to read and understand all of the information that provided. It will increase your knowledge and confidence level while involved with our program. Please look at the information, ask questions, and observe a few classes. We want you to know that you are a valuable asset to us and we value both your time and expertise.

## PATH International

**PATH** stands for the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship, formerly known as NARHA, the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association, and is a non-profit organization, headquartered in Denver, Colorado, that exists to promote equine activities for individuals with disabilities. It is the “grand central” for international development and standards of this industry.

Formed in 1969, NARHA, now PATH International, members are individuals and centers that participate in equine-assisted activity programs. Individual members are volunteers, riding instructors, riders with special-needs and their families, physicians, therapists, teachers, researchers and concerned individuals. The PATH (hereinafter referred to as “PATH”) centers are the heart of riding for the community of people with disabilities as they bring together all the necessary individuals, horses, equipment and program knowledge. PATH centers range from small, one-person programs serving a half-dozen riders, to large operations with several instructors serving up to 200+ riders each week.

PATH promotes therapeutic riding primarily through public awareness campaigns and educational events. Above all, PATH is concerned with safety and service to members and riders. Consequently, PATH has developed several programs that are designed to benefit everyone concerned with therapeutic riding.

### **Accreditation Program**

This program assures that the PATH center is running a safe program and that it is following the PATH Standards. All PATH centers are expected to complete the accreditation process within the time frame prescribed. If they do not, they are no longer eligible for membership or insurance. PATH centers must renew their accreditation periodically. The application includes paperwork, photos of the facility and equipment, and samples of forms used at the center.

### **Instructor Certification Program**

This program provides criteria for competency and a process to recognize levels of capability for PATH instructors to achieve professional certification. Three levels of certification are available: Registered, Advanced and Master Instructor. Instructors have three key priorities to fulfill during each class: teach a riding skill, guide the volunteers and keep the riders, volunteers and horses safe.

For more information about PATH, please visit their website @ [www.pathintl.org](http://www.pathintl.org)

## Introduction to Therapeutic Riding

Therapeutic riding uses equine-oriented activities for the purpose of contributing positively to the cognitive, physical, emotional and social well-being of people with disabilities. At Pegasus, Therapeutic Riding encompasses four unique programs:

1. **Therapeutic Riding** - This is a 30 to 45 minute long lesson with 1 – 4 riders similar in cognitive age and ability. The lesson focuses on increasing individual riding skills while gaining a therapeutic benefit such as increasing muscle tone, strength, self-esteem, improve coordination and balance, social interaction, communication and development of a sense of control. Class activities include learning riding skills, trail rides, and group activities such as competitive games. Students can also expand their horsemanship skills by learning how to help groom and tack their horses (as appropriate).
2. **Life Skills** is a program developed for local High School students in Special Needs classes. During their 2 hours, one day per week, students will receive pre-vocational training and basic skills in equine care and stable management. There will also be large amounts of “hands-on” work in the barn and with the horses, including riding lessons.
3. **Pony Pals** - A program where we haul two of our special equines to senior care centers in the Valley to offer residents a chance to pet and groom. This program is offered once per week, for a two-hour slot. Horse leaders are needed to help with the ponies.

*Pegasus staff periodically review the offered programs to determine any changes or additions that are necessary to meet our riders' needs. The decision to add a new program is also dependent on the available resources (volunteers, horses, staff, arena time, and money).*

## The Volunteer Experience

### **Why am I important as a volunteer?**

Class volunteers are the **backbone** of our therapeutic riding program. Most of our riders would not be able to participate without the physical and emotional support of their volunteers. Your relationship with the rider helps to build confidence and self-esteem. Your encouragement and assistance during the lesson helps the rider to learn and be successful and foster independence.

### **What is my role as a volunteer?**

Class volunteers play a key role in assisting riders to meet their goals. Both the rider and volunteer will benefit from establishing a lasting relationship with one another. Your feedback about the rider's performance to the instructor after class is helpful in lesson planning and evaluation of the day's lesson.

### **How do I get started?**

- 1) Complete the Pegasus Volunteer Application and Liability Release form.
- 2) Attend a New Volunteer Training

*Pegasus volunteers must be at least 14 years of age and have parental consent if under 18.  
All volunteers must PASS the training as determined by Instructors present.*

## Code of Ethics

The PATH Intl Code of Ethics sets forth ethical principles for all PATH Intl. members, which includes individuals and centers and is binding on all staff. Centers are obligated to ensure that **all staff, professionals and volunteers**

**comply with this code.** While each of the following codes will apply to all members, the applicability of each code may be determined by the role of the member and the setting. The practice and preservation of the highest standards of ethical principles and integrity are vital for the responsible implementation of obligations, activities and services provided by PATH Intl. members and centers. All members and centers are responsible for maintaining and promoting these ethical practices.

The PATH Intl. Code of Ethics is intended to be used as a guide for promoting and maintaining the highest standards of ethical practice, personal behavior, and professional integrity. The guidelines expressed in the code are not to be considered all-inclusive of situations that could evolve under a specific principle, nor is the failure to specify any particular responsibility or practice a denial of the existence of such responsibilities or practices.

The guidelines are specific statements of minimally acceptable conduct or of prohibitions applicable to all members and centers. The PATH Intl. Code of Ethics is designed to be appended to such other codes as may be applicable (such as: medicine, psychology, nursing, social work, etc.). In recognition of the responsibility inherent in the delivery of services provided by equine-assisted activities and therapies, PATH Intl. asks all members and center personnel to subscribe to the following to the extent permitted by law.

- The member respects the rights, dignity and well-being of all individuals (human and equine) and promotes well-being for all involved.
- The member accepts responsibility for the exercise of sound judgment and professional competence.
- The member shall respect the integrity and well-being of program equines and animals whether owned, leased, or borrowed.
- The member shall be truthful and fair in representing him/herself and other members or centers.
- The member shall seek to expand his/her knowledge base related to the field of equine-assisted activities and therapies.
- The member shall honor all financial commitments to participants, personnel, vendors, PATH Intl. and others.
- The member shall abide by PATH Intl. standards, guidelines, and all state, local and federal laws.
- The member supports PATH Intl. in its efforts to protect participants, equines, the public and the profession from unethical, incompetent or illegal practice.

### **Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities**

#### **Rights**

- The right to be treated as a co-worker.
- The right to know as much about the organization as possible; its policies, procedures, people and the educational programs it may offer.
- The right to train for the job – attending thoroughly planned and effectively presented training sessions.
- The right to sound guidance and direction by someone who is experienced, well informed, thoughtful, patient, and who has the time to invest in giving guidance.
- The right to continuing education on the job as a follow up to initial training, information about new developments, and training for greater responsibility.
- The right to advancement to assignments of more responsibility; to transfer from one experience to another.
- The right to work in a place that is designated for the type of work to be done.
- To work in a place that is orderly, clean and safe.
- The right to be heard, to have a part in planning, to feel free to make suggestions and have respect shown for an honest opinion.
- The right to recognition and appreciation for work that is done.

## **Responsibilities**

- To be sincere in the offer of service and believe in the value of the job to be done
- To maintain the dignity and integrity of the people with whom you work
- To perform duties as assigned by staff members
- To accept the guidance and decisions of the staff, and be accountable to the staff
- To be willing to learn and participate in orientations, training programs, meetings and to continue to learn on the job
- To understand the function of the paid staff; maintain a smooth working relationship with them and stay within the bounds of volunteer responsibility
- Be aware and prepared for emergency drills and evacuation procedures during scheduled lessons
- To keep Pegasus Project rider information confidential

Your time and dedication are essential to our success. Thank you for your efforts!

## **Volunteer Criteria Guidelines**

Pegasus Project accepts volunteers regardless of race, color, nationality or ethnic origin and economic status. In the interest of maintaining the highest standards of quality and safety, volunteers of Pegasus Project Therapeutic Riding Center will be assessed according to the criteria outlined below.

### **Baseline Criteria**

All volunteers **must**:

- commit to a regular schedule or be available to substitute
- inform the Program coordinator when they are unable to attend
- be a minimum of 14 years of age and demonstrate mature, responsible and reliable behavior
- submit to a criminal background check if over 18 years of age
- abide by Pegasus Project barn rules and general facility procedures as well as the guidelines outlined in this manual

### **Teamwork Guidelines**

All volunteers **must**:

- demonstrate good judgment
- work with students, staff and volunteers in a respectful, cooperative, positive manner
- take direction willingly from staff
- communicate areas of concern to the instructor or Program coordinator

### **Physical Guidelines**

All Pegasus Project program volunteers (side walkers and Horse Leaders) should possess the willingness and ability to:

- React quickly and sensibly to an emergency in the barn aisles, stalls, arena, crossties or surrounding areas
- Perform an Emergency Dismount
- Lead or sidewalk for one full hour without leaning on or into the horse, using the correct holds if necessary
- Lead or sidewalk with a rider around the entire sensory trail
- Lead or sidewalk at the trot one-half lap around the ring while maintaining control of horse and/or rider
- Handle the responsibility involved in working directly with participants

## Reasons for Volunteer or Guest Dismissal

Volunteers are subject to rules and regulations to help produce a safe experience for everyone involved in Pegasus Project activities, and to avoid serious injury to riders, horses, staff or fellow volunteers.

### **Reasons for dismissal include but are not limited to:**

- Creating an unsafe situation through careless behavior, disregard for rules or ignoring instruction from staff.
- **Striking or hitting a horse in the head – immediate dismissal**
- Arriving under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs or abuse of medication.
- A background check showing a history of criminal activity.
- Possessing a weapon such as a firearm, knife, hunting tools etc. If you carry a sidearm for your profession, please leave it locked in your vehicle and provide written documentation to the Executive Director detailing why your weapon must be on site (this information will be kept confidential).
- Violation of the Confidentiality Agreement
- Physical or emotional mistreatment or abuse of client, horse, staff member, volunteer or visitor to Pegasus Project.
- Inappropriate use of facilities, phone, mailing lists or monies.
- Any other serious violation of the volunteer conduct pledge not listed above.
- Less serious infractions of rules such as absences, dressing inappropriately, use of foul or obscene language.

**Violations will be dealt with first with a verbal warning, then a written warning, then dismissal.**

## Paperwork

All paperwork must be completed before volunteers may begin. Parental consent and signatures are needed for those under 18 years of age. As required by state and PATH standards, volunteer paperwork and background checks are updated annually. Current volunteers should let the office know if there is a change of address, phone numbers, email, as well as changes in health or recent physical injuries.

All volunteer information is kept confidential; we do not give out names, addresses, email addresses, or phone numbers unless we have permission from the volunteer.

## Scheduling

All scheduling is done through [www.Wranglr.app](http://www.Wranglr.app) We will send you an invitation to confirm and update your account. Please be sure to set your availability. This will reduce the number of unwanted emails and texts you receive.

We send out a weekly email by the Friday prior to the following week's classes. This will include the openings for the week. **Please sign up promptly via Wranglr.app**

If you have a last minute emergency (within 24 hours of lesson) and cannot make it to your scheduled time or are running late, please text or call the PC at **509-949-1880**

In the event of a rider cancellation, Pegasus will notify you as soon as possible.

You are extremely important to the successful operation of our program. Pegasus could not function without our volunteers; therefore, it is very important that everyone be **prompt** and **dependable**. We understand that scheduling conflicts will occur, yet because of the nature of our program, volunteer cancellations affect everyone involved in the class. Advance notice, when possible, is crucial so we can plan the class accordingly.

### Pegasus Project Confidentiality Policy

*At the Pegasus Project Therapeutic Riding Center all staff and volunteers shall preserve the right of confidentiality for all individuals in our program. All persons are expected to keep confidential all medical, social, referral and personal information regarding all riders and their families.*

### Volunteer Guidelines

**The following guidelines outline the behavior we expect while performing as a Pegasus Project Volunteer:**

- Remain committed throughout the session to the spots you signed up for and call ahead when you are unable to make it.
- Do not possess, use, or be under the influence of alcohol and/or illegal drugs while in any Pegasus Project class or volunteering at any Pegasus Project event, meeting, or activity.
- Do not use obscene or discriminatory language in any Pegasus Project class, event, meeting, or activity.
- Dress conservatively and appropriately at all times when on Pegasus Project premises and while volunteering for a Pegasus Project event.
- **Handle Pegasus Project horses as you are trained to at Pegasus Project, which includes never to strike, hit, slap, jerk, or discipline the program horses in any manner.**
- **Report the mistreatment of the horses to Pegasus Project staff immediately.**
- Respect individual confidentiality, rights, safety, and property of others whether they are staff, riders, or fellow volunteers.
- No cell phone use when 'on duty'. Please silence or turn them off and leave them in the white dresser.
- **No dogs allowed on the property or in your car.**
- Do not discriminate based on race, religion, color, national origin, political association, sexual orientation, age, mental condition or disability.
- Inform staff immediately if you have an injury or condition that would compromise safety to yourself, the rider, or others during your scheduled volunteer time.
- Follow established processes to report horse behaviors, which are out of the norm to your instructor or therapist before you leave the Pegasus Project property for the day.
- Volunteers are required to wear an ASTM-SEI approved helmet if ever mounted on a horse at Pegasus Project.

### Volunteer Attire

#### Hot Weather

- We always recommend long pants; dust, horsehair, and bugs can be bothersome. Please make sure your pants are of appropriate length, not long enough to drag on the ground or frayed at the ends. A horse may shy or bolt or may step on the ends, or you may trip. Skirts and/or dresses of any type are not appropriate nor allowed. If you wear shorts, please make sure they meet fingertips in length when arms are extended straight down.
- Summer shirts are acceptable. Shirts can be sleeveless, but **no bare midriffs or low-cut shirts**. Shirts must be long enough to cover the top of pants or shorts at all times.
- We recommend ball caps, sunglasses, and sunscreen during warm weather. We will go out for rides on the sensory trail and around the property.

#### Cold Weather

- You may not to have your hands in your pockets while on duty. So, gloves are advisable for warmth and protection.
- Horse leaders - Please be sure your gloves will have a firm grip on the lead rope.
- Dress in layers. Removing clothing is easier than adding.
- Bring a jacket with you to the ranch. It can be cooler than you may think!
  - Tuck scarves into your jacket.

- If you remove a layer, do not tie it around your waist. As it loosens, it could drop to the ground, distracting you, tripping you, or spooking the horse.

### **Shoes**

- **Closed toed/closed heeled shoes are required!** Protect your feet. Supportive tennis shoes, hiking boots, and paddock boots are ideal.
- Keep in mind that even during fall, the riders may go out for trail rides and the ground may be wet and muddy (be prepared to walk through puddles, not around them, which could take you away from your horse and/or rider).

### **Miscellaneous**

- Tie back long hair.
- Wear shoes and clothes that are comfortable.
- No jewelry! Anything that dangles may be a distraction to the rider – small children may grab or pull. Jewelry can get lost in the arena or in a stall.
- Wear no perfume, or scented lotions. Certain scents may cause a reaction in some of the riders and it may attract bees or other bugs.
- Please note that some of our male clients have inappropriate social behaviors directed towards women. Please do not help stimulate this behavior and dress conservatively.
- You must wear your nametag where easily visible at all times. This helps the other volunteers, the instructors, staff, riders, and the riders' families recognize you.

### **Problem Solving and Grievance Procedures**

Pegasus wants to assist you to solve problems and settle grievances quickly and fairly. We believe the best way to settle disagreements and problems are to talk about them and try to find mutually agreeable solutions to the problems. The grievance procedure can be used if you feel you have been discriminated against due to race, creed, color, sex, and sexual orientation or if you feel your rights as a volunteer have been violated.

#### **Solving Problems**

If you have a complaint or disagreement with a volunteer, staff member or the program, the first step is to talk to the person about it. If you cannot do that or you feel that the problem is still not resolved, talk with a staff member or supervisor. Depending on the situation, the supervisor may talk with both of you together to help reach an agreement. If you do not agree, the supervisor will make a decision on how to solve the problem. If you do not agree with the supervisor's decision, you can talk with the Director.

#### **Filing a Formal Grievance**

If the problem is not settled by the discussions above, you have the right to submit a written grievance to the Program coordinator and/or Executive Director. The grievance must be signed and dated by you or someone representing you. Useful information includes: the names of people involved, date of the incident(s), a description of what happened and other facts that describe the problem. If you need assistance in writing your grievance, you may choose to be assisted or represented by an advocate not associated with Pegasus. Present your written grievance to the Program coordinator and/or Executive Director. The Executive Director will investigate and respond within 14 business days.



## Volunteer Positions

### Side walker

*A side walker's job is to ensure the safety of the rider before, during, and after lessons. All side walkers greet the rider & the rider's family before the lessons and assist the rider with their helmet.*



### Side Walker Responsibilities:

- Assister the rider to put on and properly fit their helmet.
- Until your rider mounts, wait in the waiting area with your rider. You will be invited into the arena by the instructor. When using the mounting ramp, you may be asked to stand next to the rider. Remember to do a thigh hold on your rider while exiting the mounting area if they do not have their feet in the stirrups yet.
- Important! Stay within arms-reach of your rider at all times. **Do not leave your rider at any time**, even if you become tired. If you must stop, ask the Instructor if your team can bring the horse into the center of the arena so that you can safely stop and get assistance.
- Keep your hands and arms free at all times. **Do not** walk with your hands in your pockets or arms crossed.
- The Instructor will tell you how to support your rider (i.e. thigh hold, ankle hold, or none). Please refrain from any unnecessary touching of the rider or horse.
- When there are two side-walkers, you may need to change sides (due to fatigue or directions from the Instructor). Wait until you are at a halt. **Wait for the Instructor to step in as a SW, then change sides, one person at a time. Do not both let go of the rider.**
- If the equipment needs to be adjusted (saddle, stirrups, etc.), let the Instructor know and they will take care of it. Do not remove the rider from the horse. Go into the center of the arena for any adjustments, questions or problems.
- If the rider is showing signs of wanting to get off the horse and is determined to do so, get help from the Instructor. The Instructor will guide you on what to do next. Be prepared to do an emergency dismount.
- **Do not** lean/rest elbow on the horses back as that area is very sensitive.
- It is crucial that SW's listen for directions from the Instructor to be effective.
- You have the right to let the rider know when they are being inappropriate. (i.e. Pulling hair, kicking, using incorrect language, etc.) Redirect the rider with appropriate task or action immediately.

### Advanced positions include:

**Horse Leader:** Responsible for tacking the horses up before lessons, walking around the arena for a warm up, and leading horses during lessons. Must pass a Horse Leader Training before assuming this role.

**Arena Assistant:** Responsible for overseeing that horses are ready for lessons in a timely manner, assist instructors with arena set-up, answer questions from other volunteers, fill in during lessons when needed.

Note: All Sidewalkers must participate in **one 8 week session of classes**, or **16 hours of side-walking**, before being eligible to participate in **Horse Leader** training. If you are interested in advancing to a HL or Arena Assistant, please contact the Program Coordinator.

### Arriving at the Barn

**Side walkers** need to arrive at least **15 minutes** before the riders' scheduled time.

**Horse leaders** need to arrive at least **30 minutes** before class time.

### **Before Class:**

- **Wear your nametag on upper shirt or jacket area** where it can be easily seen by riders, instructors, parents and other volunteers. Nametags are located on the table near the rider board and indicate your training and experience.
- Check the Facility schedule for the day in the tack room and find your rider's helmet.
- **Do not let the rider** or their family members **cross the WHOA line.**
- **Please do not open the arena gates at any time with mounted riders without first getting permission from the instructor.**

### **After Class and Before Leaving Barn:**

- The rider will dismount with the help of the Instructor.
- The side walkers will take the rider back to the waiting area.
- The horse leaders take the horse back to the crossties.
- Lightly spray the helmet with Lysol after each use.
- Sign out on the volunteer sign in sheet. Put your nametag away in the basket.

### **Facility Schedule**

On Wranglr, the facility schedule lists the details of each class including the instructor's name, rider's name, which horse they will use, and volunteer names and assignments. **It is extremely important for you to check Wranglr each time you come in;** a rider may cancel, a horse may be substituted, or volunteers re-assigned. If you have any questions or concerns about the Schedule, ask the Program Coordinator or the class Instructor for help.

**As a new volunteer, if you have any fear at all of horses, please let the instructor know.**

### **Working with Riders with Special Needs**

#### **“Person-First” Terminology**

Just as any tool can be powerful in a positive or negative way, language can either work to your advantage or it can result in negative effects. If you are not aware of the appropriate language, you might inadvertently offend a person or convey a message you did not intend to convey.

When thinking about how to talk about special needs, remember that a person with a special need is a person first. Referring to a person by a disability, for example, “an epileptic” or “the deaf teacher,” is inappropriate. Instead you might say “a person who has epilepsy” or “a teacher who is deaf.”

People with special needs prefer to be called just that, people with special needs. Mention a person's disability only if it is relevant to the issue. If it is not relevant, why mention it?

#### **Getting to know the Rider**

It is important to remember that every child or adult is an individual and wants to be treated with that understanding, regardless of having a disability or not. Each has his/her own style of learning, unique personality, and temperament. One must always look beyond the disability into the person.

Being around people with special needs may be a new experience for you. You may be overwhelmed at first with things you have never seen or do not understand; this is natural for most people. Allow yourself time to get used to being with the person who has a special need. Do not give up on being a part of the program without a fair try; for your experience can be very rewarding. At first you may want to do jobs which are not in direct contact with the riders. Feel free to talk to a staff member about this; this is common. If working directly with our riders is difficult for you, consider helping Pegasus in some other way.

## **Communication Techniques & Suggestions**

- Relax and be yourself.
- Be open, accepting, non-judgmental, and erase preconceived notions from your mind.
- Speak directly to the person
- Use active listening skills; listen for comments. Children and adults will be glad to talk about themselves.
- Use conversation and social behavior that you might use in any new situation.
- Use simple, clear, precise language.
- **Help only when it is needed.** Please listen for “prompts” from the Instructor during class and resist the temptation to constantly assist students. Allow them to develop more independence by doing things for themselves.
- Be guided by the wishes of the person. Talk about the disability if it comes up naturally, but do not pry.
- **Be patient.** Be considerate of the extra time it might take a person with a disability to accomplish something or respond to something. (see above)
- Do not be afraid to say to either a child or adult, “I’m sorry, I cannot understand you. Please say it again.”
- Do not separate a rider from his or her assistive devices unless asked.
- Enjoy your friendships with the riders. Their good humor, achievements and perspectives on life can be a rewarding experience for all involved.
- Examine the basics of some of the special needs we work with at Pegasus listed in the back of the manual.
- **Practice Active Listening** – comprehending, retaining, and responding

**Prompts** Instructors use in class to engage volunteers with their riders:

1. “Have your Side walkers help you . . .”
2. “Hand-over-hand” to turn, stop, etc.
3. “Assist with reins” - actually pull the rein with the rider
4. Verbal cues i.e. “1,2,3 Walk on”, etc.
5. “You may Walk On when you’re ready” – cue to volunteers to remain quiet because that rider needs more processing time than may seem natural to us.
6. **\*SW’s communicate to HL about actions of riders\***  
The Instructor will decide when/if a prompt is necessary.  
“Walk On” – SW’s will give the prompts but try to duplicate the Instructor’s timing
7. “Social Time/Lap” – feel free to talk about appropriate life topics with your rider

### **Why do we use prompts that are group-focused?**

To ensure that the riders do not feel like they are being criticized or are being singled out negatively.

**We teach to the group, but give individual praise.**

## **Barn and Arena Safety**

Keeping riders, volunteers, horses, families, visitors, and Pegasus staff safe each day is extremely important and everyone needs to help!

**Observing rules in and around the barn is not only a necessity, it is MANDATORY;** failing to do so could result in serious injury. Refer to these basic rules, the Volunteer Manual and the Volunteer Conduct Pledge at all times when working with our riders, horses, and supporting the mission of the Pegasus Therapeutic Riding Center. Thank you for being safe!

## Horse Behavior

When people think of The Pegasus Project, one of the first things that come to mind is our amazing horses. The horses are a big attraction to many new volunteers and they are why all our riders are drawn to this program as well. No matter the reason you are here, as a volunteer, there are things you need to know about this unique animal, the "Therapy Horse."

We have carefully chosen our horses for their ability to handle all the different people and situations they come in to contact with at the ranch. Our horses are also very well trained. They have to walk, trot and lope correctly, as well as tolerate toys, balls, games, wheelchairs, crutches, walkers, bubbles, ramps and noises. Our horses are handled or are surrounded by 50 or more people per week. They work 4-6 days a week for eight week sessions.

Although the staff works diligently to keep the training of the horses maintained and their minds fresh, they may become agitated due to the high volume of different people touching and handling them. This may lead to bad behavior such as nipping, being cinchy, pinning of the ears, or they may have a hard time standing still.

We have developed a Horse Leader Training program for our horses that will add the consistency that the horses need. We have developed rules around the horses that staff and volunteers must abide by to ensure every horse's continued participation in The Pegasus Project.

## Rules around the Therapy Horses

1. **No hitting of the horses in the face. This will result in immediate dismissal of the volunteer.**
2. No volunteer shall abuse or discipline the horses in any way to include hitting, kicking, jerking of the lead rope, or any other forceful form of handling. (ask instructor for help with a horse that may be misbehaving)
3. **Refrain from snuggling the horses AT ALL during working hours.** We know you all love the horses, but they may become over stimulated by too much physical contact. They are working during lesson hours, so please be mindful of keeping their stress levels as low as possible.
4. **Do not feed the horses.**
5. Report any bad behavior from the horses to the Instructor or any other staff member. Bad behavior builds up and another volunteer or rider may get unintentionally hurt because of an underlying issue with the horse.
6. Keep aisle-way and tack room clear of unnecessary items. Backpacks, purses, or other items you bring with you should be stored in the parent area, locked in your vehicle or in the Volunteer area. Help keep areas clear to avoid tripping or blocking safe passage at all times.
7. **Practice 'Safety Spacing' at all times.** Whether in the barn aisle, arena or on the trail, never get too close to the horses around you. Use caution and control when approaching horses in the barn aisle or at the tacking area. In the arena and on the trail, keep at least one horse-length distance between horses.

## Cross Tie Etiquette

All horses are groomed in the CROSS-TIE AREA using the orange rope ties with slip knots on the posts at both sides and clipping onto their halter. Cross ties should never be clipped onto anything other than a halter (ie., no bridles or side pulls). As our class time preparations can be extremely busy, it can become very stressful for the horses. It is important to go over some points for the safety and consideration of the horse.

Please read over these tips, **even if you have done this a hundred times**, to ensure those with the most experience are setting a great example for the riders and new volunteers who are just learning to practice safe horsemanship.

- While horses are in the cross-ties, special care shall be taken from the **side-walkers to stay behind the yellow line** and let the horse leaders work with the riders to tack and untack. Side walkers are there to help riders put away tack; horse leaders stay with the horse.
- **2 person limit in the individual cross-tie for all therapeutic riding lessons.** This does not include the instructor.

### **Standard Mounting and Dismounting Procedures**

*THE INSTRUCTOR IS THE ONLY PERSON TO INITIATE THE MOUNT OR DISMOUNT OF RIDERS, UNLESS VOLUNTEERS ARE PERFORMING EMERGENCY DISMOUNTS.*

#### **There are two types of mounting...**

- **Mounting Ramp** – we primarily use this option to mount
- **Block Mount** – we do not use this option regularly

#### **Mounting at the Ramp**

- Walk calmly and slowly up the ramp and stand quietly.
- There always needs to be an offside person before the rider mounts.
- The side walker on the offside needs to maintain a thigh hold once the rider is mounted.
- Leave the rider's feet out of the stirrup unless directed by the instructor. This will ensure the safety of the riders whose legs may be long enough to get wedged in between the ramp and the horse.
- **Pay close attention to instructions given and let instructor know if you are uncomfortable with helping the rider mount.**

#### **Mounting In the Arena**

- **DO NOT EVER ATTEMPT TO MOUNT OR TO DISMOUNT THE RIDER BY YOURSELF**, unless performing an Emergency Dismount.
- The Instructor will always prompt the rider to mount or dismount.
- Side-walkers can assist on the off-side by supporting the saddle and stirrup while the rider mounts and guiding the rider's foot into the stirrup.

#### **Dismounting**

##### In the Arena

- The horses will line up in the center of the arena. Be sure to watch your safety spacing!
- The Instructor will dismount the riders one by one. When appropriate, the rider will help put their stirrups up and lead their horse back to the cross ties.
- When invited, riders will go with their side-walkers back through the half door to the waiting area. More independent riders will sometimes exit the arena with the horse at the gate, one at a time.
- The horse leader takes the horse to the cross ties, removes the tack, grooms, and returns the horse to the stall.

To the Ramp - Some riders dismount back at the mounting ramp.

- The horse leader brings the horse to the ramp – the same as if the rider were getting on.
- The rider dismounts.

#### **After Class:**

- Please be available to assist in tidying up and putting tack away.
- Be certain that rider returns safely to their parent or guardian; **never leave a rider in the barn unattended.**

## Emergency Procedures

*Throughout the year, we randomly do emergency procedures during class time.*

Severe weather (smoke, extreme heat, wind, rain, hail, thunder and lightning) can come up suddenly. If the instructor deems appropriate, they will cancel classes for safety.

### In the Arena

- All riders' halt, leaders get into the halt position.
- Listen for directions from the Instructor.
- Side-walkers do a thigh hold on the rider and reassure them, using low voices.
- Stay with your rider at all times.

### If a Rider has a Seizure

Cues that a seizure is coming on: rider stops talking and/or is non-responsive

- Stay calm and use low voices.
- Horse Leaders should stop the horse and get in the halt position.
- Side-walkers should secure the rider; do not remove them from the horse.
- Horse Leaders get the attention of the Instructor as quickly as possible – yell “Instructor!”
- Other riders, leaders and side-walkers should come to a halt in the arena.
- Listen for directions from the Instructor:
  - Absence Seizures – Stop horse, do a thigh hold, yell “Instructor.”
  - Petite Mal Seizures – Stop horse, do a thigh hold, be ready to support rider as directed by Instructor.
  - Grand Mal Seizures – Rider will stop talking or responding, yell “Instructor,” and perform an Emergency Dismount.

### If a Horse gets Loose in the Arena

- All riders halt and horse leaders get in the halt position.
- Listen for directions from the Instructor.
- Side-walkers do a thigh hold on the rider to secure them.
- All volunteers stay with the rider; do not leave the rider to help catch the loose horse!

### If a Rider Falls Off

#### With a Leader and/or side-walker(s)

- **Do not attempt to move the rider.**
- Get the Instructor's attention and follow their directions.
- Horse Leaders should move the horse a safe distance away from the rider.
- Side-walkers stay with the rider.
- All other riders come to a halt and horse leaders get in the halt position. One person may be asked to get help (never leave until you are directed to do so).
- Be prepared to Emergency Dismount other riders in class if directed by Instructor.

### Independent Riding Class

- Listen for directions from the Instructor.
- The staff or Arena Assistant will secure the horse, if possible.
- All volunteers will go to the rider and horse they were assigned.
- One person may be instructed to get another staff person or emergency help.

#### If there is a Fire and/or the fire alarm signals

- Upon hearing fire alarm, participants will halt.
- **Primary sidewalkers** will dismount **all participants** using the emergency dismount procedure.
- **Independent riders** will dismount and lead their own horses to the outdoor arena with staff supervision.
- If in indoor arena, participants will exit with sidewalkers through the gate, and out the large arena door.
- Horse leaders will lead their horses, after all persons have exited through the large arena door, to the designated outdoor arena.
- Sidewalkers will escort **participants** to the rendezvous point (pump house, cement slab).
- Parents and guests will gather and exit out the large arena door and proceed to the rendezvous point (pump house, cement slab).
- Instructors will supervise the exiting process and follow last person up to the rendezvous point.
- Staff will check bathrooms and pick up the volunteer check-in sheet.
- Anyone driving in will be signaled to park in a safe area away from buildings and proceed to rendezvous point.
- Everyone will remain at the rendezvous point until an “all clear” is given by Pegasus Personal or City/County Emergency Personal
- Emergency Drills will be conducted **once per session**

### Evacuation Procedures

#### Designated Meeting Areas

- South end of the barn, by pump house for arena evacuation.
- South end of the barn by pump house for barn evacuation.
- The Program coordinator or staff member pick up the volunteer check-in sheet
- One staff or volunteer will call 911.
- If instructed, volunteers will lead horses to a designated safe place.
- An Instructor or staff member determines/supervises immediate care of any injured person until emergency personnel arrives.
- Keep calm.

**IN CASE OF FIRE IN THE BARN, DO NOT RETURN TO THE BARN FOR ANY REASON.**

## Ways to Help

- Sweep crossties
- Sweep walkway by stalls
- Sweep by arena
- Clean arena stalls
- Scoop manure in arena
- Dump manure wheelbarrows
- Do laundry – check dryer for towels to fold
- Restock toilet paper
- Weed
  - Parking area
  - By the lavender
  - In the flower beds
  - By the Barn
- Dust boots and rack
- Dust volunteer table
- Clean crosstie rails
- Clean windows in waiting area/playroom
- Tidy waiting area/playroom
- Swiffer horse bio pictures in waiting area
- Tidy lobby
- Dust photo collages in hallway
- Brush Millie and or Max
- Rake arena edges (not during lessons)
- Before or after lessons Shop-Vac tack room (do not sweep)
- Sweep office



## Glossary of Medical Conditions

The following are brief, non-medical descriptions of some disabilities and conditions of participants one might encounter in a therapeutic riding setting. This is not a comprehensive explanation of any specific disability. Rather, it is a general overview with an explanation of how therapeutic riding can be beneficial.

### Arthritis

Is described as an inflammatory disease of the joints.

**Types:** Osteo, rheumatoid and juvenile rheumatoid.

**Characteristics:** Pain, lack of mobility, deformity, loss of strength.

**Benefits (of therapeutic riding):** Gentle rhythmic movement to promote joint mobility and relieve pain.

### Autism

A developmental neurological condition varying in severity, characterized by a difficulty in social communication and interaction.

**Characteristics:** Could include unresponsiveness to the presence of others; withdrawal from physical contact; severely delayed and disordered language; self-stimulating behaviors; unusual or special fears; insensitivity to pain; unawareness of real dangers; hyperactive; passive; unusual behaviors such as smelling/tasting/licking or mouthing all objects; ritualistic behaviors; developmentally delayed; unusual response to sounds; clumsiness; social withdrawal; resistance to change.

### Asperger's Syndrome

A high functioning form of autism, usually with difficulty in social interactions.

**Benefits:** Interactions in a group setting stimulates interest away from self and toward others and the horses. Postural and verbal stimulation.

### Cerebral Palsy

A broad term that describes a group of neurological disorders. It is a life long condition that affects the communication between the brain and the muscles. It is a non-progressive motor disorder.

#### Types and Characteristics:

**Spastic** – hyper tonicity with hyperactive stretch reflexes, muscle imbalances and equilibrium. Increased startle reflex and other pathological reflexes.

**Athetoid** – extensor muscle tension, worm-like movements, abnormal posturing and slow and deliberate speech.

**Ataxic** – poor balance, difficulty with quick, fine movements and are often described as having a “rag doll” appearance.

**Benefits:** Normalization of tone, stimulation of postural and balance mechanisms, muscle strengthening and perceptual motor coordination.

**Associated Problems:** Seizures; hearing defects; visual defects; general sensory impairment; perceptual problems; communication problems; mental retardation; emotional disturbance; learning disabilities.

### Cerebral Vascular Accident (CVA or Stroke)

Hemorrhage in brain, which causes varying degrees of functional impairment.

**Characteristics:** Flaccid or spastic paralysis of arm and leg on same side of body. May cause mental impairment; impair speech, sight, balance, coordination and strength.

**Benefits:** Promotes symmetry, stimulates balance, posture, motor planning, speech and socialization.

### **Developmental Disabilities (DD)**

A general term applied to children functioning two or more years below grade level.

**Characteristics:** Varied, but can include slow physical, motor and social development.

**Benefits:** Provides arena for success, opportunity for sport and recreation, stimulates body awareness.

### **Down Syndrome**

A genetic condition in which a person is born with an extra chromosome, possibly resulting in mental retardation and/or developmental delay.

**Characteristics:** Usually Hypotonic, have hyper mobile joints. Can be prone to respiratory infections.

**Benefits:** Riding improves expressive and receptive language skills, gross and fine motor skills, balance, muscle tone, and coordination.

### **Emotional Disabilities**

A congenital or acquired syndrome often compounded by learning and/or physical disabilities incorporating numerous other pathologies.

**Characteristics:** Trouble coping with everyday life situations and interpersonal relations. Behaviors such as short attention span, avoidance, aggression, autism, paranoia and schizophrenia may be exhibited.

**Benefits:** Increases feelings of self-confidence and self-awareness, and provides appropriate social outlet.

### **Epilepsy**

Abnormal electrical activity of the brain marked by seizures with altered consciousness.

#### **Types and Characteristics:**

**Petit Mal:** Brief loss of consciousness with loss of postural tone. May have jerky movements, blank expression.

**Grand Mal:** Loss of consciousness and postural control. Usually preceded by an aura.

(Note: an active seizure disorder is a contraindication for horseback riding.)

### **Hearing Impairment**

Congenital or acquired hearing loss varying from mild to profound.

**Characteristics:** Communication difficulties – may use lip reading, finger spelling or sign language. Often phase out and have attention deficits.

**Benefits:** Stimulates self-confidence, balance, posture and coordination. It also provides appropriate social outlets and interactions.

### **Learning Disabilities (LD)**

Catch-all phrase for individuals who have problems processing, sequencing and problem solving, but who appear to have otherwise typical or average intelligence skills.

**Characteristics:** Short attention span, easily frustrated, immature.

**Benefits:** Effects depend upon the particular disorder. Stimulates attention span, group skills, cooperation, language skills, posture and coordination.

### **Mental Retardation (MD)**

Lack of or decreases ability to learn and perform at normal and acceptable levels. Degree of retardation is referred to as educable, trainable, severe or profoundly retarded.

**Characteristics:** Developmentally delayed in all areas. Short attention span.

**Benefits:** Stimulates group activity skills, coordination, balance, posture, gross and fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination. Provides a structured learning environment.

### **Multiple Sclerosis (MS)**

Progressive neurological disease with degeneration of spinal column tracts, resulting in scar formation.

**Characteristics:** Most commonly occurs in the 20 to 40 year old range. It is progressive with periods of exacerbation and remissions. Fatigues easily. Symptoms include weakness, visual impairment, fatigue, loss of coordination and emotional sensitivity.

**Benefits:** Maintains and strengthens weak muscles and provides opportunities for emotional therapy.

**Associated Problems:** Visual impairment, emotional lability, and impaired bowel and bladder function.

### **Muscular Dystrophy (MD)**

Deficiency in muscle nutrition with degeneration of skeletal muscle. Hereditary disease that mainly affects males.

**Characteristics:** Progressive muscular weakness fatigues easily, sensitive to temperature extremes.

**Benefits:** Provides opportunity for group activity, may slow progressive loss of strength, stimulates postural and trunk alignment, and allows movement free of assistive devices.

**Associated Problems:** Lordosis, respiratory infection.

### **Polio**

Infectious viral disease.

**Characteristics:** Flaccid paralysis, atrophy of skeletal muscle, often with deformity.

**Benefits:** Strengthens non-paralyzed muscles, stimulates posture.

### **Scoliosis**

Lateral curve of the spine with C or S curve with rotary component.

**Characteristics:** Postural asymmetry. May wear scoliosis jacket or have had stabilization surgery.

**Benefits:** Stimulates postural symmetry. Strengthens trunk muscles.

(Note: Severe scoliosis is a contraindication for therapeutic riding.)

### **Spina Bifida**

A congenital failure of vertebral arch closure with resultant damage to the spinal cord.

**Characteristics:** Varying degrees of paralysis of the lower limbs and sensory loss.

**Benefits:** Stimulates posture and balance, improves muscle strength and self-image.

**Associated Problems:** Hydrocephalus, incontinence, urinary tract infection, lordosis, scoliosis, and hip dislocations.

### **Spinal Cord Injury (SCI)**

Trauma to the spinal cord resulting in a loss of neurological function.

**Characteristics:** Paralysis of muscles below the level of injury – can be flaccid or spastic. Fatigue, sensory loss and pressure sores.

**Benefits:** Stimulates posture and balance, strengthens trunk muscles, is an option for sports participation and recreation.

### **Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)**

Accidental injury to the head resulting in intra-cranial bleeding with death of brain cells.

**Characteristics:** Gross and fine motor skills deficits. Often have impaired memory, speech and/or vision. May have psychological effects.

**Benefits:** Stimulates balance, posture, gross & fine motor skills, speech & perceptual skills.

### **Visual Impairment**

Moderate to total loss of sight.

**Characteristics:** Insecure posture, lack of visual memory, anterior center of gravity, fearfulness and developmental delay.

**Benefits:** Stimulates spatial awareness, proprioception, posture and coordination.

Provides social outlet, structured risk taking and freedom of movement.