



GREAT OAK

EQUINE ASSISTED PROGRAMS

GREAT OAK VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

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WELCOME TO GREAT OAK VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS!

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with Great Oak! Volunteers are the key to the success of all of our programs. Great Oak will provide the necessary training, continuing education and guidance to make your volunteer experience safe and enjoyable. This manual will serve as a guide to volunteer expectations and opportunities. Please contact our office if you have any questions during your time here with our program. Once you have completed the volunteer paperwork you will be scheduled to attend volunteer training. The training will give you the tools to encourage a successful lesson and or session utilizing verbal and physical support. Great Oak offers volunteer enrichment programs and continuing education opportunities throughout the year to broaden your horsemanship skills, knowledge and learn more about working with individuals with special needs.

WHO IS GREAT OAK?

Great Oak is a therapeutic horseback riding program that provides equine-assisted living activities that promote the physical, emotional and psychological health of individuals with special needs. Great Oak is a 501(c)(3), nonprofit organization. Great Oak was originally founded as STAR Riding in 1996, providing equine assisted therapy to children and adults in the Aiken community.

In the fall of 2015, the board voted to reconfigure the organization. A new name, expanded programs and a year round facility was initiated. Great Oak is currently located on Edgefield Highway within five minutes of downtown Aiken and the major interstates. Great Oak is poised to offer an array of equine-assisted therapies on its 20 acre farm that program participants will find rewarding and beneficial in an almost undefinable way.

Great Oak is a member of PATH (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship) International. The facility at Great Oak adheres to PATH's rigorous standards to ensure the health and safety of our participants, horses, volunteers and staff. PATH was founded in 1969 as the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association to promote safe and effective therapeutic horseback riding throughout the United States and Canada. Today, PATH International has more than 850 member centers and nearly 7,600 individual members in countries all over the world, which help and support more than 54,000 men, women and children with special needs each year. The Great Oak is symbolic of the facility's impact as a place of nourishment for every aspect of one's being and as a secure and safe place open to everyone's journey.

MISSION

Our mission is to provide equine-assisted activities that promote the physical, emotional and psychological health of individuals with special needs.

VISION

Our vision is to impact the lives of participants through transformative healing and personal growth by creating the premier accredited equine assisted activity center in the Southeast.

WHO DO WE SERVE?

This dreamlike place is open to people of all ages. Children, teenagers, and adults will feel welcome. Their challenges may be physical, mental or emotional, and often reflect a combination of these factors. Sound horses and certified professionals guide participants down the path of discovery and recovery.

HOW DO WE DO IT?

Under the leadership of our Board of Directors, Great Oak employs three PATH certified instructors, a program and volunteer coordinator, and executive director. Great Oak currently has seven horses in its possession. These special equines have passed a stringent trial period and tests to determine their suitability for therapy work at Great Oak. Along with certified instructors and capable horses, Great Oak's work is dependent upon trained volunteers to help facilitate lessons and the day to day program operations.

BENEFITS OF THERAPEUTIC RIDING

Each individual we treat at Great Oak comes with his or her own diagnosis, necessitating an individualized treatment plan with specific therapeutic goals. The benefits of using a horse as part of a treatment plan for individuals with special needs are vast and varied, and there is significant evidence of success.

PHYSICAL BENEFITS

The horse's movement has a dynamic effect on the rider's body. The horse stimulates the rider's pelvis and trunk in a manner that resembles a human's normal gait. This helps improve an array of areas including balance, strength, tone, and endurance.

SENSORY BENEFITS

The movement, as well as the multi-sensory opportunities on the horse, can help with a variety of sensory integration issues. A smooth-gaited, consistently-paced horse provides needed input to help a rider establish rhythm. A rough-gaited horse may provide a rider with the stimulation to help organize and integrate sensory input.

EMOTIONAL BENEFITS

The impacts are vast — success in overcoming fear and anxiety, the ability to achieve independence, master a riding skill, control and attend to an animal will help a rider to realize self-worth and increase self-esteem. The relationships that develop between riders, volunteers, horses and staff are integral to the positive emotional experience at Great Oak.

COGNITIVE BENEFITS

The horse's gait helps organize the nervous system of the rider and thus is a perfect time to work on educational goals such as multitasking, cause and effect learning, sequencing and attention while riding. The alternative setting also proves the motivation and inspiration to address other specific cognitive tasks.

ABOUT OUR RIDERS

Working with individuals with cognitive, physical and emotional needs may be a new experience for some of our volunteers. Great Oak's staff is available to answer questions you may have. Below are brief descriptions of some disabilities and conditions you may encounter.

Autism - is an impaired ability to relate to others. Characteristics may include impaired speech and poor social and communication skills.

Brain Injuries/TBI - are the result of a severe injury that occurred to the head that caused the death of brain cells. These individuals' motor skills, memory or speech may have been affected.

Cerebral Palsy (CP) - condition caused by brain damage that has occurred before, at, or after birth. A lack of coordination and postural balance can result from the damage. Individuals can have high or low muscle tone.

Developmental Disabilities - a broad term applied to children that are functioning two or more years below their actual grade level. These children can have slow physical, mental or social processes.

Down's Syndrome - a chromosomal disorder often recognized by physical features and low muscle tone. The individual's development and learning capacity may vary widely.

Emotional Disabilities - a disturbance of emotional equilibrium as manifested in unadaptable behavior and impaired functioning caused by genetic, physical, chemical, biological, psychological, or social and cultural factors. These individuals may display inappropriate behaviors, have difficulty with learning, coping or have vast and dramatic mood changes.

Hearing Impairment - may be a range of partial loss of hearing to complete inability to hear. Individuals with a hearing impairment may communicate with sign language, lip reading or communication devices.

Learning Disabilities - a term used to describe individuals with difficulty processing information and problem solving skills. Individuals may not appear to have a disability.

Intellectual Disability - impairment of intellectual functioning, social skills, communication and skills in daily living and personal care.

Multiple Sclerosis - the chronic destruction of the myelin sheath throughout the brain or spinal cord or both. This interferes with the nerve pathways causing muscular weakness, loss of coordination and fatigue.

Muscular Dystrophy - a condition causing the person's muscles to progressively weaken. As a result their muscles tend to fatigue easily.

Paralysis - the loss or impairment of the sensation of a body part, usually as a result of damage to its nerve supply. As a result, the person will lose the ability to move or function the affected area of the body.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) - a common anxiety disorder that develops after exposure to a traumatic situation in which grave physical, mental or emotional harm occurred or was threatened. Family members of victims may also develop the disorder. PTSD can occur in people of any age, including children and adolescents. More than twice as many women as men experience PTSD following exposure to trauma. Depression, substance abuse or other anxiety disorders frequently coexist with PTSD. **Sensory Integration** - the integration and interpretation of sensory stimulation from the environment by the brain. This disorder occurs when sensory input is not integrated or organized appropriately in the brain. As a result problems in development, information processing and behavior occur.

Visual Impairment - characterized by a moderate or total loss of sight. These individuals may have poor balance due to their lack of sight and an increased level of fearfulness may occur.

WORKING WITH SPECIAL NEEDS POPULATION

Wheelchair Etiquette:

- Always ask the individual if they would like assistance before you help.
- Do not hang or lean on their wheelchair.
- When speaking to someone in a wheelchair, be aware of their personal space; if the conversation lasts more than a few minutes, sit so you are speaking to them at eye level.
- When assisting an Instructor or Therapist with a transport of an individual from their chair, keep open communication between all parties to assure that everyone included is moving cohesively to avoid any incident or injury.

Visual Impairment Etiquette:

- When escorting individuals with visual impairments ask if they need assistance before you help.
- If physical assistance is needed allow the individual to hold your arm or elbow and walk one step ahead or ask if there is a specific way they prefer to be assisted.
- Be aware to communicate potential hazards, terrain changes and movements.
- Be sure to verbalize/repeat information or instructions that are posted or written.
- If you are unclear of what to do, ask the Instructor or Therapist for further instructions.

Hearing or Language Impairment Etiquette:

- Try to maintain good eye contact. While you are speaking to the individual, be sure to look at them.
- Speak clearly; avoid talking too slow, too quick or over-emphasizing words. Keep directions and conversations concise.
- Become familiar with hand gestures or body positions that the rider may be using to represent words and concepts.
- Ask the Instructor or Therapist for instructions or communication aides specific to the participant.

Non-Verbal or Limited Verbal Etiquette:

- Become familiar with communication aides specific to the participant.
- Ask the Instructor or Therapist for instructions or reinforcement needs.
- Become familiar with hand gestures or body positions that the rider may be using to represent words and concepts.
- Keep directions and instructions clear and direct. Less conversation utilizing uncomplicated wording is always best.

GENERAL VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

- Volunteers are encouraged not to bring any valuables into the barn. Great Oak cannot be held responsible for the loss of personal property.
- Parking is available in the parking lot. Please park further away or at the bottom of the hill so that our riders may have easy access to the building.
- Please do not bring your pet.
- We will contact you as soon as possible if the lesson is canceled.
- If circumstances prevent you from coming at your regularly scheduled time, please contact Great Oak in advance. If the office voicemail picks up, please leave a message. The earlier you can advise us, the better chance we have to find a substitute.
- In order to maintain appropriate social boundaries there should be no Facebook, email or phone communication between students and volunteers.
- If you are in contact with horses outside of Great Oak, please do the following “best practices” as recommended by our vet to prevent and spread diseases. Before entering the barn please: Change or disinfect shoes, wash hands, and change clothes.

GREAT OAK VOLUNTEER POLICIES

Training

Volunteers will receive training as part of their service with Great Oak. All volunteers must complete an orientation and training session prior to their service at Great Oak. Continuing education programs will be offered monthly for volunteers to increase their knowledge on horsemanship skills.

Attendance

Volunteer attendance is important to the operation of each program. Volunteers should notify the Program and Volunteer Coordinator in advance if they are unable to be present for their time commitment.

Confidentiality

All information (written and verbal) regarding participants for Great Oak is confidential and is not to be shared with anyone without the expressed written consent of the participant or parent or guardian of the participant. The use of rider or horse information/photographic materials for personal use especially on social media is not acceptable. All published materials or information must come from Great Oak or have the approval from Great Oak and affiliated parties. If it is reported to Great Oak that information about our organization, staff, riders, horses or other volunteers is being exploited on social media, you may be asked to leave the program.

Evaluation

Volunteers will receive periodic evaluations to review their performance. The evaluations will allow for a volunteer and supervisor to suggest changes, seek suggestions and enhance the relationship between the volunteers, staff and Great Oak.

Emergency Closings

Great Oak strives to ensure the safety of all volunteers. In the event of inclement weather, volunteers will be responsible for contacting the volunteer coordinator to inform them that they will not be performing their scheduled service. If Great Oak should close, the volunteer coordinator will notify volunteers of the closing.

Security and Safety

Great Oak desires to provide a safe volunteer environment. Volunteers are responsible for using the following common-sense suggestions to help ensure a safe environment. Be aware of any unknown person who enters Great Oak property. Do not bring valuables on site.

Great Oak aims to provide a safe and healthy environment for all volunteers. If a volunteer is injured in the course of the volunteer's service, it is important that the volunteer notify his or her supervisor immediately. Volunteers should also complete an incident report and submit the report to Great Oak staff.

Attire

Volunteers are representatives of Great Oak and are responsible for presenting a positive image to our participants and the community. Volunteers will dress appropriately for the conditions and performance of their duties. All volunteers must wear closed-toe shoes. All volunteers must wear their Great Oak shirt and name tag when on premises.

Cell Phone Usage

While volunteering at Great Oak, no cell phones will be permitted.

First-Aid

All volunteers will know where the first-aid kit is kept and will be advised on how to use and

EMERGENCY POLICIES

In case of an incident or fall:

- Check the scene and ensure that the individual is not in immediate danger. If it is not necessary to move the individual, do not *move the individual*. In case a rider falls, do not remove their helmet or boots. The Instructor or Therapist may choose to clear the ring of all activity.
- If medical attention is required the onsite PATH Intl. Certified Instructor or Great Oak staff will call for emergency services.
- Stay calm. Allow Great Oak staff to take charge of the situation. Unless asked to assist in any tasks, please keep clear of the area where the incident has taken place.
- If there is an open wound, blood or other bodily fluid present, do not touch it. The PATH Intl. Certified Instructors or Great Oak staff will wear gloves and tend to it.
- For incidents regarding bee stings, horse bites, or injury incurred at the barn, immediately contact Great Oak staff.

Weather Related Emergencies:

- Lightning/Thunder - At the first sign of thunder and or lightning, volunteers are to assist instructors in dismounting riders off their horses and bringing the horses back to their stalls in a safe and orderly fashion. Riders will be escorted to the viewing room by volunteers. Lessons can continue 20 minutes after.
- Extreme Wind Conditions - In the case of extreme wind gusts, keep a good handle on the horse and rider. Communicate to the Instructor or Therapist if you feel the horse is sensitive to the wind.
- Extreme Cold Conditions - In the case of extreme cold temperatures be aware of hazards to humans if unprepared for the weather. Proper attire including hats, gloves and jackets should be worn. Horses should be wearing appropriate layers of coolers and quarter sheets, if necessary.

In Case of a Loose Horse:

- Calmly inform Great Oak staff immediately.
- Volunteers are to assist Great Oak staff to gather riders and volunteers together and have them stand still in a safe place, away from the path that the horse may run.
- Great Oak staff in the arena should stop all horses and have them line up with the loose horse in their vision. Riders may be dismounted at this time.
- If appropriate, close all gates.
- If instructed, grab a bucket of grain; many times the sound will get the horse's attention and make them more attentive. Volunteers may be asked to assist by getting a halter and lead line to bring the horse in once caught.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- A) Volunteers for the Barn
 - Barn Support
 - Horse Leader
 - Sidewalker
- B) Green Team
- C) Ambassadors- Fundraising, Community Outreach, Special Events
- D) Interns
- E) Administrative- Office Support, Fundraising, Grant Writing

JOB DESCRIPTIONS

A. Barn Support

- Barn Support Stable Support (Groomer and Tacker)
- Barn Support-Groomer -

Great Oak has grooming opportunities available before and after lessons, which may include weather related care of horses. When grooming horses the volunteer is well versed in horsemanship and horse care to ensure proper hygiene according to Great Oak standards. Volunteers must be approved and supervised. Grooming is an essential element of horse care and is part of the daily maintenance of our herd.

Equipment Checklist

1. Grooming kit box
2. Curry comb
3. Hard brush
4. Soft brush
5. Mane and tail brush
6. Hoof pick
7. Sponge and/or cloth

STEP 1: Secure Your Horse

Even the most trained and well-behaved horses may still need to be secured during grooming. They may feel the need to shift or move their feet while being groomed, which is completely natural and in no way a reflection of their obedience. To help keep them in position so that you can groom them properly, you will need to place them on the cross-ties in the barn aisle or wash stall. As you move about your horse, always make sure he knows where you are.

STEP 2: Loosen Hair and Dirt with a Curry Comb

A curry comb can help you to loosen hair and dirt from your horse's coat. Starting behind their ears, work your way to their tail using circular motions that are gentle yet firm enough to lift dirt from their coat. Practice caution around bony areas and with moving down lower legs.

As you continue these circular motions across their body, you'll likely notice grains of dirt coming up from their skin, which should be much easier to now remove. Always work from the side of the horse, never in front or behind the horse.

STEP 3: Remove Hair, Dirt and Sweat with a Hard Brush

Now that you've brought hair and dirt to the surface of your horse's coat, you can use a hard or dandy brush to remove the debris and really get their coat cleaned up. This hard bristled brush can be used from ear to tail in straight flicking motions to effectively remove the debris. Ensure that you press firmly to avoid tickling your horse! Brush in the direction of the hair.

STEP 4: Smooth and Clean with a Soft/Body Brush

Since your soft brush or body brush has much softer bristles, it can be used on all areas of their body, including their face, mane and tail. This step can help to finish off their coat, leaving it with a soft and shiny look and feel.

To use this brush, you will need to work your way from their head to the rest of their body, maintaining long and smooth strokes. When brushing their lower legs, we suggest using quicker sweeping motions, especially for areas that are too sensitive for the hard brush. In fact, your soft brush or body brush can also be used to brush along the bridge of their nose and cheeks. Just be careful to avoid sensitive areas such as the end of their nose and eyes. Some horses may be head shy, about a brush on the face, approach slowly.

STEP 5: Pick Hooves

- Stand beside your horse, facing the horse's tail.
- Place your hoof pick in your hand that is on the opposite side of your horse.
- Run your hand closest to the horse gently down the front of its leg, until you reach their hoof.
- Gently lean into your horse at the same time, encouraging him or her to shift their weight onto the other side, so that you can pick up their hoof.
- While supporting and securing their hoof in your hands, use the hoof pick to remove rocks and dirt. Start at the back of their hoof and work your way carefully towards the front.
- Clean the grooves on either side of the frog, which is the V-shaped part of the hoof. Do not pick this area or dig deep into the grooves, as you can damage the hoof and cause injury to the horse.

**Please note that if you observe any unusual bumps, cuts or signs of an injury, please notify Great Oak Staff immediately.*

- **Barn Support-Tacker** - The word tack means the horse's equipment. The phrase "tacking up" refers to the process of putting all of the equipment onto the horse in preparation for riding. This includes the bridle, saddle, saddle pad, girth, stirrups and/or adaptive equipment. "Untacking" means removing all of the equipment after the ride.

Great Oak's volunteers in this role must be comfortable working independently with all of Great Oak's horses. This volunteer is well versed in horsemanship and equine related activities including full knowledge of equipment and tack. This volunteer is responsible for getting the horse ready to ride by putting on all of its tack. This volunteer is also responsible for removing the horse's tack after the lesson, cleaning it and putting it away in its proper place. Tacking up horses correctly takes a lot of patience and practice. All volunteers in this position will be approved by the Equine Manager and staff. Please do not hesitate to ask for help! Tacking horses correctly can affect the horse's behavior and gait. Most importantly, proper tacking is necessary for our rider's safety.

Guidelines for tacking and untacking Great Oak horses:

- The volunteer ensures that cross-ties are available to groom and tack the horses for the lesson.

- The cross-ties are only attached to the halter, NEVER the bridle or bit.
- Horses that are used in another lesson within the hour will be placed in their stalls, keeping their saddles on. *Check with the Equine Manager or a staff member.* Make sure the stirrups are rolled up and loosen the girth one or two holes. Remove the horse's grooming halter and bridle.
- When the horse is finished for the day, the horse will be placed in its stall or on the cross-ties and all tack will be removed. Run a hard brush or soft brush over their entire body to remove any saddle marks, sand or dust. In summer months, if the horse is sweaty, either hose them off or take a wet cloth and wipe under their saddle and girth to remove sweat and grime.

Steps to saddle a horse:

- Secure your horse. Place a halter on your horse and move him to the cross-ties. This will make sure he stays in place, keeping you safe.
- Always saddle a clean, dry horse. If your horse is wet, allow the horse to dry in the sun, or towel the horse dry. Dirt and moisture trapped between the saddle and the horse can cause painful saddle sores, girth galls or blisters.
- Before you start tacking your horse, collect all of the equipment so you have it close by and easy to access.
- Stand on the left side of the horse with the saddle pad in hand. The side of the pad with the billet straps should be facing upwards and toward the front of the horse. Place the saddle pad high on your horse's shoulders and slide it down toward the horse's back up close to the withers. Doing this ensures that the hair under the saddle pad stays smooth and prevents hair from being rubbed out by friction between the saddle and your horse's back. Once the saddle pad is in place, the pad should lie equally on both halves of your horse's back with the front of the saddle pad resting on your horse's withers.
- Gently place the saddle over the saddle pad. Make sure that the saddle is put on with the pommel in the left hand and the cantle in the right hand. When the saddle is on the horse, the pommel is near the front of the horse and the cantle is near the hind end. Make sure the saddle is sitting evenly on the horse's back and that the pad has not slipped or wrinkled under the saddle. Properly seated, the saddle should have about 2 inches of pad in front of it.
- Go around to the right side (walk in front of the horse) of the horse and make sure the saddle and pad are flat and even. Put the billet straps through the billet keepers on the saddle pad. If the billet straps are short, place the girth through the billet keepers before attaching or buckling the girth.
- Return to the left side (walk in front of the horse). Reach under the horse's belly to grab the girth and pull it up to the billet straps. Make sure to put the billet strap through the top of the metal buckle of the girth, this is where the rollers are for ease of adjusting fit.
- Tighten the girth once it's attached on both sides. It should be behind your horse's front legs, with a small gap between the elbow and the girth. You should be able to place a hand between your horse and the girth if it's properly fitted. Always check the girth tightness from the horse's belly, not the side. The girth should be even on both sides. (*For example three holes on both the right and left sides.*)

The girth should be tightened enough for a rider before the horse enters the arena and the instructor will double check the girth before the student mounts the horse.

Steps to removing saddle:

- Make sure the stirrup leathers are taken off the saddle.
- Unbuckle billets from the right side and the left side of the horse to remove the girth.

- If the horse wears a martingale, make sure to unbuckle from the girth prior to removing the saddle
- Take the girth and place it on top of saddle
- Standing on the left side of the horse, lift the saddle and pad up before pulling it towards you; don't pull it into the horse's spine. If you cannot reach, ask for assistance.
- Place the saddle on a saddle rack or return to the tack room in its proper place.

Steps to bridle a horse

- First prepare the bridle by undoing the throat-latch and noseband if it is buckled up.
- Choose a pair of reins and snap them to the bit of the bridle.
- Place a black grooming halter over the horse's nose and pull over the horse's ears. Make sure it fits correctly over the horse's nose and that the buckles are 1-2 fingers below the horse's cheek bones.
- Holding the bridle with your left hand, put the reins gently over the horse's head with your right hand.
- Standing at your horse's left shoulder facing the front, put your right hand under the neck and round the front of the horse's nose. Pass the bridle from your left into your right hand, holding it about halfway up the cheek-pieces. Do this carefully so the horse doesn't back off. If he does, stay with him. Stabilize the horse's nose with your right hand (which is holding the bridle) and lift the bit up to the horse's mouth with your left hand.
- When you bring the bit up to his mouth let him take it as voluntarily as possible. While you hold the bit close to his mouth, you can gently massage and play with his lips and gums with your free left hand. Don't try to pry the jaws apart or poke the gums, stay gentle, until he opens his mouth himself. When he does open his mouth, lift the bridle up promptly but never abruptly and ease the bit inside. With a less willing horse they may only be a short window when the mouth is accepting the bit. As long as you are gentle, but firm, you will not upset the horse.
- Keeping the bridle carefully supported to make sure the bit stays in the horse's mouth, you can lift the headpiece over the left near-side ear with your left hand. Make sure the browband is in front of the ear and the crown piece is behind the ear resting on the horse's poll. Then guide the bridles' crown piece over the horse's right ear.
- Stay patient and calm throughout. It is good training in general handling technique for you and trust building between you and your horse.
- When adjusting the throat-latch make sure you can get a fist in under the horse's jaw.

Steps to removing the bridle:

- Make sure the reins are still over the horse's neck.
- Unbuckle throat latch and noseband.
- Gently pull the crown piece along with the grooming halter over the horse's ears. Allow the horse to drop the bit. Do not pull the bit out of the horse's mouth or knock his teeth.
- Once the bit is out of the horse's mouth, pull the reins over his head.
- Detach reins from the bridle's bit and return to tack room.
- Before putting the bridle away, clean the bit. Wrap the bridle with the throat latch and hang by the crown piece on the appropriate hook in the tack room with the browband facing out.

As a leader you take responsibility for the whole herd. As soon as you ask anything at all from your horse, you are asking for their compliance and you are therefore assuming the leadership role. Every gesture you make is evaluated by your horse and a decision is made on whether you are a suitable leader or not. If you have decided in your own mind that you are willing to take that role, your body language will be in alignment with this and you won't have to analyze everything you do.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS, CONTINUED

Horse Leader - Assists in handling the horse during the lesson. The leader's sole responsibility and

focus is the safety and well being of the horse they are working with.

Qualifications of a leader:

The leader must be a volunteer who has vast horse knowledge, is fully capable of completing the role of a sidewalker, is capable of anticipating an unsafe situation and can take steps to avoid them.

Guidelines for being a leader:

- The leader assists the rider with steering, stopping and starting when the rider is asked to do so by the instructor.
- Unless instructed otherwise, the leader always leads from the left side, holding the lead rope no less than 18 inches from the horse's chin with their right hand, and holding the remaining part of the rope with the left hand at all times. Do not wrap the lead rope around your hand or wrist. Avoid letting the lead line drag on the ground. Avoid hanging on the bit and or holding so tightly the horse tosses it's head or moves around in discomfort.
- The leader maintains constant communication with the instructor and listens to the rider for cues. For example, if the instructor asks the student to "walk," the leader should wait for the student to say, "walk please."
- The leader maintains a safe distance between the other horses in the ring.
- The leader is aware of the sidewalker's position and makes sure the horse does not push the sidewalker into the fence.
- The leader walks or jogs just behind the horse's head but in front of the shoulder.
- In an emergency, maintain control of the horse; when the rider is clear from the horse, the leader walks the horse away from the incident. If the emergency occurs to a rider on a different horse, the leader brings the horse to the middle of the ring and waits for directions from the instructor as to whether or not to dismount the rider.
- The leader stays with the horse at all times.

Sidewalker - Assists with the safety of the rider. Volunteers walk alongside the rider to assist with positioning, skills, taking directions from the Instructor or Therapist and relaying information to the rider. The sidewalker helps to ensure the safety of the rider by assisting with the position of the rider's leg, taking all directions from the instructor, and offering an additional prompt to the rider if directed by the instructor.

Guidelines for being a sidewalker:

- The sidewalker assists in balancing the rider on the horse by being positioned along the rider's leg.
- The sidewalker always walks next to the student's side facing the front.
- The sidewalker takes all directions from the instructor and if needed reiterates them to the student.
- The sidewalker helps keep the rider's attention focused on the instructor.
- In an emergency, the sidewalker is responsible for the rider. The sidewalker stays with the rider. If the rider falls off the horse the side walker remains with the rider without moving him or her, keeping the rider calm until assistance comes or is instructed otherwise.

B. Mentors

- Must complete a Mentor training and demonstrate proficiency with Great Oak Equine Assisted Programs volunteers policies and procedures.

- In addition to Orange Badge proficiencies, this volunteer demonstrates a thorough understanding of tacking and leading the horse.
- This volunteer has been a volunteer for at least 6 months and has exhibited substantial capability with leading methods and has the approval of the Volunteer Manager and other Staff members to work as a mentor to appropriate color badges.
- This volunteer has participated in advanced horsemanship training and has the skills to oversee the preparation of horses for lessons, as well as aid volunteers in enhancing their horsemanship skills in accordance with Great Oak Equine Assisted Program program and procedures.

C. Green Team

- Maintaining and improving the 43 acres farm
- Must be trained on all Great Oak Equipment they will be using (Tractor, Mower, Tools, etc.)
- Maintenance tasks for the barn, paddocks and other tasks by Volunteer Manager and Equine/Facilities Manager.

D. Intern Opportunities

- **Who we are looking for:**
 - i. Highly personable, compassionate, and articulate individuals with passion and interest in helping individuals with special needs and would like to learn the skills that are needed to teach this group of individuals
 - ii. Working with the staff and volunteers to help coordinate lessons
 - iii. Working alongside volunteers and participating in lessons as a sidewalker or observer
 - iv. Come up with lesson plans and ways to engage with the participants
 - v. Support and uphold the Mission and Vision of Great Oak at all times
 - vi. Serve as an ambassador for the organization to the public
 - vii. Perform ethically and professionally, demonstrate patience and compassion with all participants
 - viii. Other duties as assigned by the staff
- **Qualifications**
 - i. Must be willing to learn about Equines
 - ii. Creative mind to come up with new lessons and ideas to engage with participants
 - iii. Proven organizational, management, and communication skills
 - iv. Ability to multitask
 - v. Endurance to walk for long periods
 - vi. Clearance of a background check
- **Experience Opportunities**
 - i. Discover how to integrate physical, occupational, and speech therapy as well as psychology, social work, and education by using the movement of the horse
 - ii. Hands on experience with horses and those with special needs or disabilities
 - iii. Discovering how to implement a lesson plan for the riders
 - iv. Ins and Outs of working at a non-profit organization
 - v. Discovering new interests, outlooks, and hobbies

Volunteer Proficiency Levels- Path to P.A.T.H.

To promote the growth and advancement of Great Oak Equine Assisted Programs volunteers, we have designed a system to identify volunteer training and horse experience via your volunteer name badge. All volunteer must:

- Meet the requirements set forth in the volunteer Criteria Guidelines
- Complete a New Volunteer Orientation regardless of previous horse handling experience
- Be place in jobs the discretion of the Great Oak Equine Assisted Programs Staff
- Understand Great Oak Equine Assisted Program’s rules and procedures

Learning Objectives:

1. Understand the benefits of implementing a color coded volunteer structure in Equine Assisted Programs
2. Identify the key components of a successful color coded volunteer program
3. Develop strategies for recruiting and retaining volunteer for Equine Assisted Programs
4. Implement Effective Volunteer Training methods specific to each color coded structure.
5. Assign appropriate volunteer roles and responsibilities based on color coding.
6. Establish clear communication channels between volunteers, staff, and participants
7. Create a system for monitoring and evaluating volunteer performance
8. Address challenges and conflicts that may arise within the color coded volunteer structure
9. Understand legal and ethical considerations related to volunteer management in equine assisted programs.

	Skills	Notes	Qualifiers to move to next phase
Level 1	Introduction to Barn (SSG)		

GREEN	Cleaning Stalls	At least 4-6 hours of volunteering	Assessment by Volunteer Manager and other Staff that are involved.
	Filling water buckets		
	Filling hay nets		
	Feed hay in paddocks with guidance		
	Sweeping and general housekeeping		
	Removing manure from arena		
	Setting up arena with instructor		
	Observing lessons		
	Set out tack with guidance		
	Observing leading horses from pasture to barn		
	All barn support tasks		
Level 2	Horse Care (HCY)		
YELLOW	Grooming horses in cross ties	3-4 Weeks of volunteer time	Assessment by Volunteer Manager and other Staff that are involved.
	Saddling most horses with observation		
	All Barn Support tasks		
	Leading horses from pasture to barn, with guidance		
	Picking feet-supervised		
	Mentor Green Volunteers		
	Observe Lessons		
Level 3	Lesson Prep (LPP)		
PURPLE	Grooming and Saddling most horses	1-2 Months of volunteer time	Assessment by Volunteer Manager and other Staff that are involved.
	Introduction and usage as a Sidewalker		
	Observe leading during lesson		
	All Barn support tasks		
	Leading horses from pasture to barn independent		
	Mentor for Yellow and Green Volunteers		
Level 4	Side Walker Only (SSP)		

	Can only Sidewalk in lessons	3-4 weeks of Volunteering	Assessment by Volunteer Manager and other Staff that are involved.
	All Barn Support Tasks as needed		
	Mentor for only Purple (SW) Volunteers		
Level 5	Horse Leader (HLO)		
ORANGE	Grooming and saddling all horses	6 months of volunteer time	Bit of Knowledge- Needed on Horse Handler
	SW in lessons		Assessment by Volunteer Manager and other Staff that are involved.
	Can bridle some horses		
	Can lead some horses in lessons		
	All barn support tasks		
	Mentor for Purple, Yellow, and Green Volunteers		
Level 6	"GO" Mentor (GMB)		
BLUE	Grooming and tacking all horses	6 months to a year of volunteer time	Bit of Knowledge- Needed on Mentoring
	SW in lessons/Leading in lessons		Assessment by Volunteer Manager and other Staff that are involved.
	Can bridle most if not all horses		
	All barn support tasks		
	Mentor to Orange, Purple, Yellow Volunteers		

Volunteer Proficiency Levels- Path to P.A.T.H.

SSG-Green Badge

A volunteer who has completed volunteer orientation and training. This volunteer may assist an established volunteer with Barn Support Tasks. The Green Badge indicates a brand new volunteer with less than 6 hours worth of volunteering experience. Once the trial period is fulfilled, the Volunteer Manager will create a Yellow Badge for the volunteer at her discretion. All new volunteers must work with an established volunteer regardless of prior horse experience.

HCY-Yellow Badge

This volunteer has served over 6 hours of volunteering and has been approved by the volunteer Manager and staff to wear a Yellow Badge. This Volunteer may assist an established volunteer with grooming and saddling program horses and may observe lessons. Yellow badge volunteers have indicated a familiarity with beginning horsemanship and horse safety and have demonstrated attentive side walking skills in their introductory period.

LPP-Purple Badge

This volunteer has served at least 2 weeks of volunteering and has been approved by the Volunteer Manager and other Staff involved in training to wear a Purple Badge. This Volunteer can groom and tack up most program horses, lead horses from pasture to barn independent and demonstrate attentive side walking skills.

SWP-Pink Badge- Sidewalking (SW)

This volunteer has served at least 2 weeks of volunteering and has been approved by the Volunteer Manager to start participating in lessons as a sidewalker. This volunteer has expressed interest in only working as a sidewalker or helping with barn support tasks. This volunteer would still need guidance and when grooming and saddling up program horses.

HLO-Orange Badge-Horse Handler

Orange Leaders must complete a Leader Training and demonstrate proficiency with Great Oak Equine Assisted Programs leading technique before earning the role as Horse Leader. In addition to all Side Walker lessons and horsemanship duties, this volunteer can properly place a grooming halter and bridle, can safely groom horses, and understand basic tacking techniques with minimal reminders. This volunteer has completed leader training and shows the ability to lead easier program horses, as well as constantly utilize the Great Oak Equine Assisted Programs leading technique effectively.

GMB-Blue Badge- Volunteer Mentor

Blue leaders must complete a Mentor training and demonstrate proficiency with Great Oak Equine Assisted Programs volunteers policies and procedures. In addition to Orange Badge proficiencies, this volunteer demonstrates a thorough understanding of tacking and leading the horse. This volunteer has been a volunteer for at least 6 months and has exhibited substantial capability with leading methods and has the approval of the Volunteer Manager and other Staff members to work as a mentor to appropriate color badges. This volunteer has participated in advanced horsemanship training and has the skills to oversee the preparation of horses for lessons, as well as aid volunteers in enhancing their horsemanship skills in accordance with Great Oak Equine Assisted Program program and procedures.

Evaluation

Name:

Position:

Start Date:

Check-In Date:

Contact Person:

A. Evaluation by Great Oak Equine Assisted Programs Staff for Volunteers

1. KNOWLEDGE OF THE POSITION

Volunteer has an overall knowledge of the position/tasks and relationship to the organization and the badge that is assigned. Has the Volunteer meets or exceeds requirements, or needs improvement?

2. QUALITY OF WORK

Volunteer is accurate, thorough, follows procedures, fulfills tasks within their assigned badge?

3. DEPENDABILITY

Volunteering is timely, attends shifts, punctual, meets goals, and is reliable.

4. INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

Volunteers have a good rapport with other volunteers; volunteers have a cooperative nature.

5. PERSONAL QUALITIES

Volunteers take initiative, are creative, go beyond the call of duty, and are willing to help in areas beyond their individual role and would like to move up the Path to P.A.T. H.?

B. Issues, Concerns, Suggestions or Recommendations done by the Volunteer

1. Are your needs being met? Do you require more training or information about the organization in order to fulfill your responsibilities? Do you need clarification on any policies or procedures? Would you like more responsibilities, hours, or tasks?
2. Are your expectations being met? Is the role as described to you? Are you interested in gaining more knowling and moving up?
3. What is your overall satisfaction with the organization in general, and your role in particular?
4. Do you have any other issues, concerns, or suggestions?

FACILITY SAFETY RULES

These rules have been established for the protection and safety of everyone, including staff, horses, riders, family and friends. Please follow them and use common sense when around horses. If you ever have a question about anything, please ask.

- Children must be supervised at ALL times.
- Do not enter a horse stall unless instructed to by a Great Oak instructor.
- Do not feed the horses unless accompanied by a Great Oak instructor. Horses are to be fed in their buckets only.
- Helmets are required for all mounted riders. Riders participating in ground work may be asked to wear a helmet as well.
- Wear barn appropriate footwear.
- Proper clothes for the weather.
- Flat soled boots with a heel are best.
- No open toed shoes, sandals or Crocs.
- No dogs are permitted at Great Oak.
- Anyone on property must sign a Great Oak release.
- No smoking on the property.
- No drugs or alcohol on the property.

Dismissal of Volunteers and Guest from Center Activities

All personnel, participants, and guests are expected to behave in a way that does not put other people, animals, or property at unreasonable risk. Recognizing that while the behaviors of some participants and guests may be caused by medical or behavioral health diagnoses, Great Oak EAP volunteers and staff are not able to provide a sufficient level of safety to allow the exhibition of behaviors that, by their nature or magnitude, put others at unreasonable risk.

Unbecoming Conduct shall consist of any of the following:

- Removing property from the premises without proper authorization
- Gross immorality and/or disorderly conduct; including actions and/or words
- Violation of posted or signed rules and regulations
- Damaging, defacing, or destroying property
- Verbal intimidation, including, but not limited to, inciting and/or derogatory statements
- Physical intimidation, assault, and/or battery against another
- Making false and/or incomplete accusations or charges
- Conduct tending to bring Great Oak EAP into disrepute and/or injury to its good name
- Theft and/or misappropriation of funds
- Making false or misleading statements and/or reports (by act or omission).
- Conducting an illegal and/or unapproved activity.
- Any activity that puts participants, volunteers, horses and/or staff at unacceptable risk of injury due to their behaviors towards themselves or others, as determined by the Executive Director
- Individuals who have been accused or convicted of a sexual offense or any offense against a child
- Participants who do not willingly participate
- Participants/volunteers/guests who are obviously impaired by alcohol or street drugs, or prescription medication not being taken as directed
- Failure to follow signs or established safety procedures
- Indecorous conduct, not otherwise listed above, as defined by the Executive Director

The severity of the violation will dictate the response. Lower level infractions will result in a verbal discussion with the participant, volunteer, guest or personnel. If the behavior continues, a written disciplinary action will be completed. If a second disciplinary event occurs, the guest/participant/ volunteer, staff person may be

removed from the program, at the discretion of the Executive Director, Program Director, and Volunteer Manager. Any behavior that is so severe that it has the potential to put people, animals or property at serious risk may result in the immediate suspension of the person from all Great Oak related activities. The Program Director or Volunteer Manager can make this determination in the absence of the Executive Director.

GREAT OAK VOLUNTEER INFORMATION SHEET

General Information

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

DOB: _____ T-Shirt Size _____

Driver's License State: _____ Identification Number: _____

I, _____, authorize Great Oak to receive information from any law enforcement agency, including police departments and sheriff's offices, of this state or any other state or federal government, to the extent permitted by state and federal law, pertaining to any convictions I may have had to violations of state or federal criminal laws, including but not limited to convictions for crimes committed upon children or animals.

I understand that such access is for the purpose of considering my application as a volunteer and I expressly DO NOT authorize Great Oak, its directors, officers, employees, or any other volunteers to disseminate this information in any way to any other individual, group, agency, organization, or corporation.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

How did you hear about Great Oak? _____

Please indicate areas of interest:

Barn Support
Horse Leader
Side-Walker

Green Team
Social Media/Marketing
Office Support

Fundraising, Grant Writing
Special Events/Community
Outreach

	9AM -12AM	11:30AM - 1PM	1:30PM - 4PM	3:30PM - 6PM	5:30PM - 7PM
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					
Saturday					

GREAT OAK VOLUNTEER HEALTH HISTORY

Emergency Contact

Name: _____

Phone: _____ Relation: _____

If Minor (under 18):

Parent/Guardian: _____ Phone: _____

Any Medical Information we should be aware of?

Allergies:

Medications:

Date of Last Tetanus Shot:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

PHOTO RELEASE FORM

Permission to Use Photograph

I grant to Great Oak, its representatives and employees, the right to take photographs of me and my property in connection with the above-identified subject.

I authorize Great Oak, its assigns and transferees to copyright, use and publish the same in print and/or electronically.

I agree that Great Oak may use such photographs of me with or without my name and for any lawful purpose, including for example such purposes as publicity, illustration, advertising, and web content.

I have read and understand the above:

Signature:

Printed name: _____

Date: _____

GREAT OAK VOLUNTEER OATH

We are **safe**

Great Oak volunteers will engage in best practices as set forth in Volunteer Training. Safety is our number one priority and it is each volunteer's responsibility to ensure that they are providing a safe environment for our participants and equines.

We are **kind**

Great Oak volunteers will display kindness toward participants, families, staff, and other volunteers.

We are **respectful**

Great Oak volunteers will show compassion toward participants and their families. Inappropriate and derogatory language will not be tolerated. Use of such language could result in a volunteer being removed from the program.

We are **considerate**

Great Oak volunteers will always do their best to honor their commitment to Great Oak. If a volunteer is unable to make their scheduled shift, they will provide as much notice as possible to Great Oak staff. Great Oak volunteers understand that their presence is imperative for the riders to participate in their lessons. A volunteer no show may prevent a rider from participating in their lesson.

We are **conscientious**

Great Oak volunteers will always communicate safety concerns including those involving participants, equines, property, volunteers, and staff with Great Oak staff. This includes your personal safety and well being. If you are unhappy with your current role at Great Oak, please communicate with Great Oak staff so we can develop a solution.

We are **consistent**

Great Oak volunteers understand that Great Oak equines are to be handled in the manner that is set forth by Great Oak staff. If a volunteer has suggestions, they should bring it up with Great Oak staff and never implement a change in an equine's routine without consent.

We are **flexible**

Great Oak volunteers understand that Great Oak has set forth policies and procedures. However, daily programming will involve many variables and volunteers may be required to adapt to a variety of situations.



GREAT OAK

EQUINE ASSISTED PROGRAMS

GREAT OAK VOLUNTEER OATH

Failure to adhere with the Great Oak Volunteer Oath may result in removal from the program.

I, _____(name of volunteer), have read and understand the Great Oak Volunteer Oath. By signing this Oath, I am accepting responsibility for following the above guidelines.

Signature

Date



GREAT OAK
EQUINE ASSISTED PROGRAMS

GREAT OAK EQUINE ASSISTED PROGRAMS
RELEASE OF LIABILITY, WAIVER OF RIGHT TO SUE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT

WARNING: PURSUANT TO S.C. CODE ANNOTATED SECTION 47-9-720, AN EQUINE ACTIVITY SPONSOR OR AN EQUINE PROFESSIONAL IS NOT LIABLE FOR AN INJURY TO OR THE DEATH OF A PARTICIPANT RESULTING FROM AN INHERENT RISK OF EQUINE ACTIVITY, AND NO PARTICIPANT OR PARTICIPANT'S REPRESENTATIVE MAY MAKE A CLAIM AGAINST, MAINTAIN AN ACTION AGAINST, OR RECOVER FROM AN EQUINE ACTIVITY SPONSOR, OR AN EQUINE PROFESSIONAL, FOR INJURY, LOSS, DAMAGE, OR DEATH OF THE PARTICIPANT RESULTING FROM AN INHERENT RISK OF EQUINE ACTIVITY.

On behalf of myself, my personal representatives, heirs, next of kin, spouse, and assigns hereby acknowledge that horseback riding involves serious risks and that it is not possible to foresee or prevent all such risks. I am aware that the fall of a rider from a horse and other accidents involving the horse and its rider can be caused by sudden, unforeseen occurrences and that a fall or other accident can be crippling or fatal to the rider and may cause an injury to or the death of the horse. I understand that the behavior of horses can be unpredictable and irrational regardless of their past training and past performance.

On behalf of myself, my personal representatives, heirs, next of kin, spouse, and assigns hereby acknowledge the risks related to COVID 19 also known as the Coronavirus. I agree to hold Great Oak harmless from any claim for illness or death arising from the Virus that may be alleged to have been caused directly or indirectly from exposure to the Virus at any facility maintained by Great Oak or at any function organized by or on behalf of Great Oak. I agree that Great Oak shall not be liable for any sickness, disease, or death which may be suffered by myself or any guest or invitee of mine arising from our relationship to the Virus. I agree that all risks relating to the Virus are to be borne by me. I hereby assume the sole responsibility for and agree to indemnify, defend and save Great Oak harmless from any and all loss and expenses (including legal and expert witness fees actually incurred) by reason of the liability imposed upon any of Great Oak due to illness, including death at any time resulting therefrom, sustained to myself, my guests and invitees, on account of the Virus. I expressly warrant and represent to Great Oak that neither I nor any of my guests or invitees have knowingly contracted nor been exposed to the Virus nor are any of the aforesaid exhibiting any symptoms of the Virus. In the event that I later discover that the aforesaid representation and warranty is false in any manner, I agree to immediately notify Great Oak and provide as much detailed information as is available.

In light of the above, I voluntarily assume the risk and danger of injury or death inherent in the use of the horse, equipment and gear provided to me by Great Oak Aiken Therapeutic Riding Center, and/or its officers, directors, employees, agents, sponsors and volunteers (all of the aforesaid being collectively known as "Great Oak"). If I have requested my own equipment be used, I agree that Great Oak shall have no responsibility to maintain such equipment and that safety hazards may be present.

I agree to and do Release, Discharge, and Promise Not to bring a lawsuit against Great Oak doing business under their own name or any other names.

I agree and promise to hold Great Oak harmless and to fully indemnify then from and against any claim, judgment, or expense that may incur arising out of or in any way connected with either my use of the horse and any equipment provided therewith or the facility and landowners, or any acts or omissions of other employees and agents and volunteers.

I agree to abide by and follow any instructions given or rules established by Great Oak.

The laws of the State of South Carolina shall govern this release and waiver. If a court holds any portion of this release invalid, it is agreed that the remainder of this release shall continue in full legal force and effect notwithstanding the invalidity of some part of it.

I HAVE READ THIS DOCUMENT. I UNDERSTAND IT IS A PROMISE NOT TO SUE AND A RELEASE AND INDEMNITY FOR ALL CLAIMS. I SIGN THIS RELEASE VOLUNTARILY.

Volunteer Name: _____

Signature (or Legal Guardian if a Minor): _____

If signed by Legal Guardian, Print Name of Legal Guardian: _____

Date: _____

Email: _____

Phone Number: _____

Name of Personal Insurance Provider: _____

Policy Number: _____



GREAT OAK
EQUINE ASSISTED PROGRAMS