

# Wings of Hope Volunteer Handbook



Welcome to Wings of Hope and thank you for joining us. Together we can provide a fun and exciting learning environment for our riders. It would be impossible for us to do this important work without you, **OUR VOLUNTEERS!**

---

Wings of Hope Equitherapy  
P.O.Box 445 Burleson, Texas 76028

4200 CR 806  
Cleburne, Texas  
76031

817 790 8810- phone      817 783 7072-fax

[www.wingsofhopehorses.org](http://www.wingsofhopehorses.org)

Volunteer Coordinator Jennifer Shank

[jennifer@wingsofhopehorses.org](mailto:jennifer@wingsofhopehorses.org)



## WINGS OF HOPE EQUITHERAPY Background

### **Mission Statement:**

It is the mission of Wings of Hope Equitherapy to provide quality equine-assisted activities to children and adults with disabilities.

**Core Purpose:** To provide hope and healing with gentle horses and the love of God.

### **History:**

Wings of Hope was founded by our Executive Director- Ameritus Margaret Dickens and Patti Pace in 1996. The present facility opened in the spring of 2000 on 25 acres. Our classes run year round in a covered open air arena. During the spring and fall seasons we will ride on our wooded trails, or our front sensory trail. 2014- Fall began our 18<sup>th</sup> year of classes.

### **Riders:**

WOH serves clients with a wide range of physical, mental, emotional, and learning disabilities. We teach children, teenagers, adults, and senior adults. Currently our program serves approximately 85+ riders a week.

Some Types of Disabilities and Conditions Served:

Autism	Down Syndrome	Mental Retardation	Visual Impairments
Brain Injuries	Hearing Impairments	Multiple Sclerosis	ADD/ADHD
Cerebral Palsy	Learning Disabilities	Speech Impairments	Stroke

**Lessons:** All lessons are conducted by a qualified, PATH Intl. certified Instructor. The Instructor will work with the client and their family to develop an equine assisted activity plan that may include exercises, horsemanship skills, care of the horse or stable management. Before each class instructors are required to: clear arena of any obstacles not being used, check for soundness of horses and replace unsound horses, ensure tack and equipment is safe and clean and a proper fit for horse and rider.

### **PATH Intl:**

Wings of Hope is a premiere member of The Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International. (PATH). Formerly known as NARHA-North American Riding for the Handicapped Assoc. We serve clients from Tarrant/Johnson and surrounding counties in the Dallas/Fort worth Metroplex. Every instructor goes through extensive training and is certified through PATH. [www.pathintl.org](http://www.pathintl.org)

### **Donations and Horses:**

Wings of Hope is a 501c3 non-profit organization and is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors as well as a small staff of instructors, 22 horses, and over 90 trained volunteers. We are funded through private and corporate donations. These donations provide scholarships for riders, support the horses, and purchase special therapeutic equipment. Most of our horses have been donated to the program. Our horses are composed of a variety of breeds, sizes and shapes. Prior to the acceptance into the program, all horses are extensively evaluated and screened during a minimum 90 day trial period.

**Calendar Year:** Wings of Hope Equitherapy is open year round. There are scheduled breaks for holidays, special events, horse rest, and inclement weather. **Closed the month of July and August.**

**Attendance:** If you can not volunteer on a specific date, tell the **Volunteer Coordinator** that you will be absent or notify the office 24 hours prior to class. For dates known ahead of time that you will need a substitute write it on the calendar on the check in desk! If you have an emergency or are ill, please call the office (817) 790-8810, as soon as possible, so that we may find a substitute and not cancel a riders ride.

**Hours:** Volunteers are asked to commit to minimum 1 hour weekly.

**Community Service:** You MUST let the Volunteer Coordinator know that you are obtaining hours for CS. You MUST commit to minimum 15+ hours over the span of 3+ months in order to volunteer for documented community service hours.

## Wings of Hope Horses 817-790-8810

[www.wingsofhopehorses.org](http://www.wingsofhopehorses.org)

### Volunteer Check In & Out Steps

#### Before Class

- Please arrive 30 minutes before class time to help prepare for the lesson.
- Check in at the volunteer desk on your time sheet.
- Get your name tag.
- Let the instructor know you are here so that you may receive your assignment for the day!

As a volunteer at WOH, it is important to record your volunteer hours. You may include your drive time to and from your home. We record all of your hours for insurance and grant purposes.

#### SIGNING IN:

The box for recording hours is located on the volunteer desk outside of the office. Please make this your first stop when entering the building. Remember to record your attendance each week!

Please mark on the big calendar any dates you will not be available that are on your regular schedule.

Please wear your name tag when you are in the barn, so you can be identified as a volunteer.

**BULLETIN BOARDS:** All volunteer information will be posted on the volunteer bulletin board above the sign in desk. Please review this every week for new information, events, and cancellations.

**EMAIL:** Wings of Hope uses email as a **primary** method of communication. Volunteer Coordinator Email: [jennifer@wingsofhopehorse.org](mailto:jennifer@wingsofhopehorse.org)

WOH- email is [office@wingsofhopehorses.org](mailto:office@wingsofhopehorses.org)

Volunteer Coordinator Hours: Monday-Thursday.

Please call the barn for information on Friday/Saturday 817 790 8810

**UPDATES:** A weekly email update is sent out once a week via email from [jennifer@wingsofhopehorses.org](mailto:jennifer@wingsofhopehorses.org) This is the only way to stay current with information and cancellations. If you are not receiving these emails from week to week you are not in the loop! Make sure I have your current email!

***“Like” us on facebook! “Wings of Hope Equitherapy and Wings of Hope Horses for Veterans” to stay updated with the latest information!***

**BEFORE YOU LEAVE:** Check with the Instructor for any additional duties. Record your total volunteer hours in the attendance log. Return your name tag.

## Dress Code

1. Long pants (jeans or riding type) to protect legs. Shorts must be long in length.
  2. Closed toe shoes or boots which offer foot protection in the dirt arena and trails.
  3. No dangling jewelry (earrings, necklaces, bracelets, etc..)
  4. Please dress conservatively. No spaghetti straps, no plunging neckline, no midriff showing.
  5. Please no large cowboy hats, or caps that might distract riders, or spook horses.
- In all cases use your best judgment and common sense when dressing for activities at the barn. Keep in mind safety of rider, volunteer, and horse.

## Side walker Responsibilities

### Side walker:

1. Assists the rider in maintaining balance. One or two side walkers may be assigned according to the riders needs. Some riders do not require side walkers.
2. Reinforce the instructor's directions. Some riders need a side walker to help them understand what to do.

### How to Side walk:

1. Different methods are used with individual riders depending on their needs. For example:
  - a. Place the arm closest to the rider across the rider's thigh and grasp the front edge of the saddle.
  - b. Hold the back of the riders boot or the riders pant cuff.
  - c. Walk beside the rider to assist when needed.
2. If there are two side walkers, the instructor will designate one person to verbally reinforce directions. **Too much input can confuse a rider.**
3. Focus the rider's attention on the instructor.
4. Limit personal conversation.
5. Give the rider the support needed but not more than is necessary.
6. Don't rest your elbow on the horses back. It will encourage speed and for the horse to move away from you.
7. Stay at riders side at all times. Do not pick up dropped toys.
8. Side walkers should change sides one at a time and always in the center of the arena, under the instructors supervision.
9. Check often to make sure your rider is still balanced and in the center of the horses back.
10. Ask leader to stop if rider is off center, inform instructor so they can shift the rider.

# Mounting Procedures

The **leader** is responsible for positioning the horse in the mounting ramp.

**Side walkers** are responsible for staying with the rider until they are ready to mount. Side walkers who are trained in mounting procedures also assist the instructor in the ramp area to make sure the rider is mounted safely.

1. The instructor will position a side walker on the off side.
2. Side walking begins at the mounting ramp and side walkers will use the thigh hold while exiting the mounting area.
3. The instructor may use several side walkers in the mounting area, depending on the needs of the rider. Side walkers who are not trained in mounting procedures are positioned in the arena.
4. Never put riders feet in stirrups. Stirrups are always adjusted in the arena only, never at the ramp.

## Emergency Dismount Procedure

In an emergency the horse handler brings the horses head toward the rider to inhibit the horses movement and keep the rider away from the hind feet. The instructor or primary side walker frees the rider's foot from the stirrup while instructing the other side walker to do the same. The instructor or primary side walker then directs the other side walker to dismount the rider in a controlled fashion. The primary side walker gives the rider back support, takes the trunk of the rider and pulls them off the horse and to the ground in a controlled fashion.

## During Class

### At a Halt:

**Side walkers:** Remain focused on the rider and stay at the rider's side.

### At a Walk

#### Side walkers:

- a. Adjust your pace to the horses pace .
- b. Stay by the rider's side at all times unless requested by the instructor.
- c. Reinforce directions to the rider as needed and when asked by the instructor.

### At the Trot:

#### Side walkers:

- a. Make sure the rider is centered in the saddle.
- b. Make sure the rider is prepared to trot according to the instructor's directions.
- c. If directed, support the rider with a thigh hold or cuff hold.
- d. Stay positioned beside the riders leg as the horse is trotting.
- e. Communicate to the leader if problems arise.

## **After Class**

**Only instructors dismount the riders.**

### **Side walker:**

- a. Assist the instructor as needed to dismount the rider.
- b. Walk with the rider outside the arena and return them to their caregiver.
- c. Clean the arena
- d. Assist untacking horses.

### **After Class:**

Return horse to stall. Tie the horse properly in the stall.

Instructor or Volunteer Captain will remove the bridle.

Loosen girth and lay over saddle. Gently lift saddle and pads together and remove them from the horses back.

Return tack to proper place in the tack room. Place wet pads bottom side up to dry.

Brush the horse. Remove halter and lead rope to allow the horse to move around and get water in the stall.

If the horse is finished for the day they can be put in the pasture. Check white board for correct pasture

**Thank you for committing your time and energy to Wings of Hope. We commit to making Wings of Hope a positive experience for everyone who takes part in our program**

### **RIDER/STAFF/VOLUNTEER AND /OR GUEST DISMISSAL POLICY**

#### **Conditions that may lead to dismissal:**

- Failure to comply with Wings of Hope Equitherapy Confidentiality Policy
- Use of drugs or alcohol on the property
- Repeated violation of posted safety rules
- Smoking on the property
- Disruptive or inappropriate behavior
- Threat of violence or mistreatment of persons or animal
- Theft of property

### **WINGS OF HOPE HELMET POLICY**

**ALL Wings of Hope riders, staff, volunteers and guests are required to wear ASTM/SEI approved helmets when mounted. If a lightweight helmet is deemed necessary, the helmet must meet PATH Lightweight Helmet guidelines.**

**WINGS OF HOPE STIRRUP POLICY - ALL Wings of Hope English saddles and many Western saddles are equipped with safety stirrups. Western stirrups require all riders to wear riding boots or hard soled shoes with heels. Any saddle belonging to the Wings of Hope staff, volunteers or participants must also meet the above requirements.**

# Wings of Hope Equitherapy Safety Rules

We ask all riders, families, volunteers, staff, and guests to comply with all posted safety rules!

**Safety is our top priority.**

1. **NO Firearms** allowed on property by any volunteer or CHL holder!
2. **No smoking** please. If you want to smoke, you will have to leave the property.
3. All persons riding horses must wear ASTM/SEI approved helmets.
4. No family pets. Please leave them at home.
5. Family and guests are requested to sit quietly on the bleachers or in the lounge but are always welcome.
6. Please refrain from leaning or climbing on arena walls/gates. **DO NOT SIT ON RAIL/ARENA WALL.**
7. The Instructor will accept treats for the horses. The carrots or apples will be included in their feed. **PLEASE DO NOT HAND FEED THE HORSES.**
8. The mistreatment, abuse, or verbal suggestions of abuse, of any person or of any animal will not be tolerated.
9. ALL CELL PHONES MUST BE ON QUIET MODE. PLEASE REFRAIN FROM USING YOUR PHONE DURING LESSONS
10. Parents are responsible for the supervision of their children at all times.
11. Expectant mothers are not able to volunteer, manage, or be around our equine partners for safety precautions.

Thank you for your help, we want to keep Wings of Hope safe and fun for everyone.

## Tacking and Grooming Rules

1. Only instructors and volunteer captains are to bridle the horses
2. Tie horses with a quick release knot/ short ties with quick release snaps, or use tie ring.
3. Always close the gate.
4. No more than 2 people in a stall at one time
5. Do not tie a horse when reins are attached to bridle or headstall
6. Do not clip, cut, or pull a horses mane or tail..

**Thank you for volunteering at Wings of Hope. Your time and desire to share your skills with us are greatly appreciated**