



FREEDOM  HOOVES
THERAPEUTIC RIDING
C E N T E R

Volunteer Handbook

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|------|
| BARN RULES | P.3 |
| WELCOME! | |
| Our Mission | P.4 |
| History..... | P.4 |
| Confidentiality Policy | P.4 |
| Conduct/Behavior..... | P.4 |
| Communication/Questions..... | P.4 |
| VOLUNTEER GENERAL INFORMATION | |
| Physical Considerations | P.5 |
| What to Wear | P.5 |
| Cancellation..... | P.5 |
| Liability Release | P.5 |
| Parking..... | P.5 |
| Sign in Procedure | P.5 |
| EMERGENCY PROCEDURES | |
| First Aid Kits | P.6 |
| Severe Weather | P.6 |
| Facility Emergencies | P.6 |
| Horse Emergencies | P.6 |
| VOLUNTEER PROFICIENCY LEVELS | P.7 |
| VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTIONS | |
| Sidewalker..... | P.8 |
| Leader..... | P.8 |
| Office Volunteer | P.8 |
| Special Skill Volunteer | P.8 |
| Special Event Volunteer | P.8 |
| Equestrian Volunteer | P.8 |
| GROOMING..... | P.9 |
| UNDERSTANDING HORSE BEHAVIOR..... | P.10 |
| GLOSSARY OF PHYSICAL AND COGNITIVE DISABILITIES | P.11 |
| OTHER WAYS TO HELP FHTRC | P.14 |

Staff information

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First Things First! - Barn Rules

- There is absolutely **NO SMOKING** while in or around the barn!
- Volunteers must sign in and put on their name tag prior to volunteering
- Volunteers are only allowed on the barn premises when FHTRC staff are present
- Helmets must be worn by anyone riding a horse for FHTRC
- Close all gates that you open
- All phones must be turned to silent or vibrate when in the barn.
- Please keep talking to a minimum while side walking or leading a horse during a lesson, it is a distraction to the rider as well as the instructor and a direction may be missed.
- Please do not feed the horses any treats. Giving treats can promote biting, also some of our horses are on a special diet, and treats can be detrimental to their health. Please do not allow horses to lick your hands as this encourage biting.
- Do not enter a stall or outside pen unless asked to do so by a FHTRC staff member
- Only approved horse leaders will be allowed to get horses from outside pens and lead horses into the barn or designated area.
- Keep aisle way clear at all times. All wheelbarrows, tools, and grooming buckets need to be kept out of the walking path.
- When approaching a horse always consider the horse's limited field of vision. Horses cannot see directly behind or in front of them without moving their head. Approach at the horses shoulder.
- Avoid sudden movements when around the horse. This includes removing coats, raising arms suddenly, running, jumping, climbing, etc. Horses can spook, please keep this in mind at all times when around horses.
- If you are not directly involved with a session please keep all activities and conversations to the designated waiting areas or check the volunteer board to see what additional tasks need to be done.
- The instructor is ultimately responsible for all aspects of the session from the time the first horse is taken out of the stall until the last one is put away. Please listen and follow all directions given by the session instructor.
- Volunteers must be at least 14 years old, unless otherwise approved by FHTRC staff.
- Some horses on the property are not owned by FHTRC, please **DO NOT** pet horses not owned by FHTRC.
- Please do not arrive at the barn before your scheduled time. For insurance purposes there cannot be visitors at the facility when FHTRC staff members are not present.
- **NEVER** sit, kneel, or lay on the ground near a horse
- The cats are cute and fun to play with but remember they can bite and scratch. Playing with cats is done at your own risk. Please monitor children when they interact with the cats.
- **NO PETS PLEASE.** Please do not deny your pet the comfort the home. **PETS ARE NOT PERMITTED.** Service dogs are welcome.
- No Goodies please! Be aware that some riders may have medical conditions such as allergies, diabetes, etc. which make certain foods off limits or incompatible with their medication. Check with the staff or the family before sharing "goodies."
- Adhere to a **10 MPH** speed limit at all times while on the property
FHTRC Volunteer & Guest dismissal policy: FHTRC reserves the right to dismiss a guest or volunteer from the facility and the program if their behavior is putting themselves, a student, staff, other volunteer, or horse's mental or physical health in jeopardy. The FHTRC instructor in charge at the time will review the behavior with the individual and determine the level of intervention necessary. The level of intervention could include verbal or written warning, or immediate dismissal from the FHTRC facility and program. Physical, emotional, mental or sexual abuse by a person at the FHTRC facility will not be tolerated and will result in immediate dismissal. Alcoholic consumption by a volunteer prior to a session is not allowed. A volunteer smelling of alcohol will not be allowed to assist in that day's session.

WELCOME to Freedom Hooves Therapeutic Riding Center!

As a non-profit organization Freedom Hooves Therapeutic Riding Center (FHTRC) relies strongly on the strength of our dedicated volunteers to assist our riders and staff in a variety of areas. This manual is to serve as a guide for any concerns or questions that you may have regarding your job as a volunteer at FHTRC. Keep it in a safe place, as it is great reference tool! Because of the nature of our work and the people we serve, it is so important that everyone be as knowledgeable and consistent as possible. Volunteering is a wonderful way to make great friends while making a difference in the lives of our special riders.

Our Mission:

Freedom Hooves Therapeutic Riding Center improves the quality of life for children and adults with physical, behavioral, or emotional disabilities through therapeutic horseback riding.

History of FHTRC

Freedom Hooves Therapeutic Riding Center was founded in 1999 as a 501©3 to provide an alternative form of therapy to individuals with special needs and disabilities ranging from birth defects, autism, stroke, developmental delays, PTSD, traumatic brain injury, cerebral palsy, MS, to name a few. As a Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship center (PATH), Freedom Hooves Therapeutic Riding Center adheres to PATH standards and guidelines to promote a safe, quality therapeutic riding program

Confidentiality Policy

Freedom Hooves Therapeutic Riding Center has strict confidentiality guidelines regarding the right to privacy for individuals involved with the program. This policy extends not only to program participants and their diagnosis/special needs and any sensitive information, but also extends to protect the privacy of others involved with the program including volunteers and staff. It is extremely important that volunteers and staff respect the individual circumstances of those involved with the program. Please do not take the personal information of our participants beyond the facility.

Conduct/Behavior

All individuals involved with the program are expected to conduct themselves in a cooperative and appropriate manner at all times. Examples of inappropriate behavior would include – any form of harassment, aggressive or abusive behavior towards themselves, other people, or horses. If you are subject to any type of inappropriate behavior, please do not approach the individual. Notify staff immediately. Please notify staff immediately of any concerns regarding the behavior of the riders in the program, or the program horses. Inappropriate behavior may result in dismissal from the program.

Communication and Questions

The instructor is ultimately responsible for each rider, horse and volunteers. All directions should come from the instructor, including the assignment of riders, horses and volunteers, the time and method of mounting, and the structure of the lesson. **Unless notified otherwise, all volunteers must defer to the instructors' decisions. This is extremely important to help ensure safety.** If at any time, you are unclear regarding your volunteer role or responsibilities, please direct questions to the instructor, program staff or an experienced volunteer.

Volunteer General Information

Volunteers come to the program with a wide range of knowledge and experience. However, it is important that while working with FHTRC riders and horses that you follow and teach **ONLY** the methods taught at your training, in the manual, or by our staff. There has been significant thought put into the methods used for our riders and our horses. Using multiple methods can be confusing to them.

Training for program volunteers is mandatory. Training sessions are offered throughout the year.

Physical Considerations:

Side-walking and leading in the arena, as well as assisting in the stable and facility, can be physically demanding at times. It is important for you to inform FHTRC staff if you have a condition such as high blood pressure, heart condition, allergies, etc., that may prevent you from working a half hour in the arena at a walk or a jog, or walking on trails. If you feel that being a riding program volunteer is not something you are physically unable to do, volunteers are needed in many other areas of the program.

What to wear!

Volunteers should wear close-fitting clothing for both safety and comfort. Loose clothing can get caught and tangled in equipment. Long pants, such as jeans, riding breeches or other comfortable pants are recommended. **For the sensitivity of our riders, revealing clothing (exposed belly shirts, low cut shirts, skin tight clothing, and see through clothing) should NOT be worn.** Dangling jewelry should not be worn, as it can be unsafe. **Close toed shoes are REQUIRED!** And boots are highly recommended, but tennis shoes are acceptable. Open toed shoes, and sandals are not allowed when working near equines. Do dress weather appropriate (gloves, jackets, sunscreen, etc.)

Cancellation

If you are not able to make it to your scheduled class, please either email, text or call at least 24 HOURS ahead of time so we can locate another volunteer to assist in the class. If you know that you will be away for certain weeks, please let us know at the beginning of the session so we can make arrangements. We understand that emergencies can come up, but **PLEASE** make sure to let us know you will not be coming. Our riders need their volunteers, and without you, they are not able to ride.

Liability Release

Working with horses can be potentially dangerous. Because of this all prospective volunteers must sign the liability release for FHTRC and D&J Ranch.

Parking/ Driveway

Please use caution when driving at the facility – Drive slowly, **adhere to a 10 mph speed limit**, and check for pedestrians and horses!

Volunteer parking is located near the trailers on the North end of the barn. Parking in front of the barn is reserved for riders and their families.

Sign In Procedures

Your time spent volunteering is important to us! It can be used for certain grants and allows us to recognize outstanding volunteers. Each time you come to the barn make sure your record your hours in the computer provided. Any time used outside the barn for FHTRC purposes can be emailed to the volunteer coordinator.

Emergency Policy and Procedures

Volunteers are responsible for – knowing and following all safety rules, emergency policies and procedures as indicated, supporting all efforts to promote safe working conditions, making full use of safety equipment, reporting immediately any unsafe working condition or behaviors, and knowing the location of first aid kits, fire extinguishers, emergency exits and emergency plans.

In all emergencies, the instructor is responsible for incident management and must assess the situation, and apply any first-aid needed. No persons are to enter or leave the arena without direction from the instructor. If further assistance is needed, the instructor will designate a person to call 911 – telling the dispatcher the center location, what happened, and any information about the person's condition. Emergency information (emergency phone numbers, the center's address, etc.) is posted on the wall in the office near the first aid kit.

First Aid Kits: The human first aid kit is located in the office area. The horse first aid kit is located in the FHTRC tack room.

Severe Weather

In the event of a severe thunderstorm sessions will be immediately canceled. Anytime there is lightening in the area, extremely high winds, or the threat for tornadoes sessions will be canceled.

Facility Emergencies

Power Outages - If a power outage occurs after dark while sessions are being held in the indoor area sessions will be immediately discontinued. Taking direction from the instructor, horse leaders head off the horses and side walkers prepare for riders to dismount and escort riders to the office area. Leaders return horses to their stalls.

Fire – If a fire should occur, all participants, volunteers and observers should immediately vacate to the area by the horse trailers to the north of the barn. The instructor will then proceed to call the Fire Department. No one should enter the facility unless directed by the Fire Department.

Horse Emergencies

Spooked Horse - Should a horse become frightened or overly nervous, side walkers are to “close in” and provide a full hold to the rider. The horse leader should attempt to halt the horse and head it off. The horse leader must always stay with the horse and be aware that the horse may move quickly forward or side step in either direction. As the horse moves side walkers need to continue their support to the rider, staying close to the horse's side as it moves. Follow direction from the instructor.

Loose Horse – Should a horse become loose in the arena while a session is in progress, the session immediately stops. Horse leaders are to immediately halt and head off their horses; side walkers should “close in” and provide a full hold to their rider. Only the instructor or a staff member will approach the loose horse.

Fallen Rider or Medical Emergency – Should a rider or volunteer become injured or have a medical emergency during a session, the session is to come to an immediate halt. The instructor will assess the situation and will inform volunteers and staff if medical assistance is needed, the nature of the injury, and if 911 should be called. Volunteers may be asked to assist by retrieving items from the first aid kit. No one, including riders' parents, should enter or leave the arena without direction from the instructor.

Emergency Dismounts – During riding sessions it is always the instructor, or volunteers trained in mounting, that will perform rider mounts and dismounts. However, in an emergency the instructor may ask volunteers to perform an emergency or “safety” dismount. Emergency dismounts are ONLY performed at the discretion of the instructor. Safety dismounts are performed as follows:

- Horse leaders halt and head off their horse. The side walker located behind the leader will perform the dismount by –
- Inform the rider that they will be dismounted, requesting that the rider remove their feet from the stirrups. (The side walker not performing the emergency dismount should follow the POP/PUSH/POSITION method)
 - Pop the stirrup off the rider's foot
 - Push leg up and over so it clears the saddle
 - Position – Move to horses shoulder so that if the horse shifts their back end over you are not knocked over by it.
- The side walker who performs the dismount will grip the rider's waist, bring their body to theirs and shuffle backwards, moving away from the horse.

Please keep in mind that these procedures are only suggested guidelines and that the specific circumstances may warrant changes to be made by the instructor of staff.

Volunteer Proficiency Levels

To accommodate the growth and advancement of FHTRC volunteers, the following system has been designed to identify horse experience as well as experience working with disabilities through the designation on each person's name badge. All volunteers are *required* to attend the New Volunteer Orientation *regardless* of previous experience, and all volunteer placements are made at the discretion of FHTRC staff.

To show interest in moving up a level all volunteers must spend a minimum of 4 weeks, or the equivalent of 8 hours at each level, approval by 2 staff members is also required. Keep in mind that additional training will be required, whether in a group or a private session to advance once a star volunteer.

White Badge/ New Volunteer Badge

A volunteer who has completed the volunteer training, these volunteers may assist an established volunteer with grooming and tacking the horses for classes. This volunteer is trained to sidewalk in a class, and is aware of safety protocols. They have received a **Disabilities Overview** and are aware of the most common disabilities served. All White Badge volunteers must work with an established volunteer when around program horses regardless of prior horse experience.

Green Star

In addition to the duties mentioned above, this volunteer can safely and correctly place a halter and a bitless bridle. They can also safely groom and clean the hooves of the Green Star horses. They are able to understand basic saddling techniques and need minimal reminders. This volunteer is able to demonstrate proper hand and body placement while leading. This volunteer will also receive a **Tacking Certification** when trained, and are able to tack program horses without supervision.

Red Star

In addition to the above, this volunteer is able to demonstrate a thorough understanding of tacking and leading a program horse through experience or skill trainings. Has been a Green Star Volunteer for at least 4 weeks, or has approval of 2 staff or Purple Star Volunteers and is able to recognize behavioral changes in the horse. This volunteer is required to obtain a **Bridle Certification** to bridle green and red level horses.

Purple Star

In addition to the above this volunteer understands quality horse movement, and is able to influence tempo, rhythm, and frame while leading any program horse. This volunteer is able to control energy and forward movement of the more challenging Purple Star horses. They are able to see changes in horse behavior, and predict the horses response to stimuli and effectively deescalate or redirect unsafe equine behavior, able to adjust leading styles in reaction to situations and able to physically handle an energetic or big-strided horse. These volunteers are also required to obtain a **Long-Lining Certification**, and are able to safely long line in a class with 2 sidewalkers. They understand how to handle a spooking horse when long-lining and can demonstrate this.

These volunteers are able to handle strong horses, fussy horses in the mounting area, misbehaving horses and are able to react appropriately in various emergencies involving either horse or rider. Purple Star Volunteers must attend at least one training a year to maintain their level. They also agree to serve as mentors to less experienced and new volunteers, accept authority, and communicate clear instructions if needed. They must be able to follow directions, and accept correction. This level *must* be approved by staff.

Please see a staff member or instructor when you believe that you are ready to move up to the next volunteer level. You will receive the "Star Volunteer Handbook" with more information on requirements.

Volunteer Job Descriptions

The Sidewalker

Sidewalkers are the ones who normally get the hands on duties in a session. **They are directly responsible for the rider.** One or two sidewalkers may be assigned to each rider depending on the rider's needs. Sidewalkers should greet their rider, check helmet for proper fit, and assist rider to the mounting area when the instructor indicates that it is time. The sidewalkers primary role is to walk alongside the horse and assist the rider in maintaining balance. They may also reinforce the instructor's direction, or act as spotters for more independent riders.

Reinforcing a Direction: Always allow the rider plenty of time to process the instruction given. If the instructor says "Turn to the left, toward me," and the rider seems confused; gently tap the rider's left hand and say, "left" to reinforce the command. You will get to know your riders and will learn when they need your help, and when they are just not paying attention.

Holds:

- **Spotting** – This side walker walks beside the rider (lined up with the riders shoulder), prepared for "hands on" when indicated by instructor
- **Thigh Hold** –The side walker places the arm closest to the rider over the rider's thigh and grasps the front edge of the saddle.
- **Ankle support** – The sidewalker cups the riders ankle to stabilize the riders lower leg
- **Full hold** – Occasionally, a rider needs support provided by doing both an arm over thigh, and cupping the ankle. Also used if the horse spooks

Helmets: *All participants and personnel (staff and volunteers) of FHTRC are required to wear protective headgear that is ATSM-SEI approved for horseback riding while mounted or driving.* To be effective the helmet should fit firmly. The helmet should sit level on the head, with the front edge just above the eyebrows. Once the chin strap is fastened, adjust each slide glide so that it sits directly below each ear. You should only be able to fit two fingers between the strap and the riders chin.

Mounting and Dismounting:

Only instructors, and volunteers trained in mounting and dismounting may assist a rider!

Mounting and dismounting are two of the most important phases of a therapeutic riding program. They may be relatively simple for an able-bodied, agile rider, but mounting and dismounting a rider with special needs can be complex. The procedures used will depend on the weight and needs of the rider, and assistive devices such as wheelchairs, crutches, walkers, or canes. The instructor will determine the mounting and dismounting procedures and whether the rider will mount from the ramp or a mounting block. It is important the entire team is communicating with each other during this time. The goal is to get the rider on as safely and efficiently as possible.

- **Mounting Block:** Sidewalkers on the offside (the right side) should put weight in the stirrup if the rider is using a saddle. If there is no saddle, assist the rider by helping their leg clear the horse and helping them sit balanced. When dismounting, make sure the riders foot is out of the stirrup, and clears the horse.
- **Mounting Ramp:** Sidewalkers on the offside will help the rider bring their leg over. (By grabbing the knee and gently bringing it into place, NEVER force a rider into any position!)

The Leader – *This position requires further training!*

As a leader, your first responsibility is the horse. If you are working without sidewalkers, you must be constantly aware of the student also. Bring your horse into the arena five minutes prior to a session, to allow the horse time to warm up. If others are in the arena, please call “door” before entering, wait for the response, “enter”, closing the arena barrier behind you. **Further information on Leading can be found in the “Star Level Volunteer Handbook.”**

Office Volunteers – Office program volunteers are responsible for assisting with phone inquiries and general clerical duties including but not limited to – answering the phone, sending out program information, filing, typing, data entry, word processing, making copies, assisting with special mailings, etc. Office volunteers receive training provided by the Executive Director.

Special Skills Volunteers – Under the direction of the Volunteer Coordinator volunteers offering to share a special skill or technical experience that may benefit the program are encouraged to do so. Areas of special skills/experience may include – Computers, grant writing, public relations, photography, etc.

Special Event Volunteers – Under the direction of the Volunteer Coordinator and Executive Director, Special Event Volunteers may assist in special events hosted by FHTRC throughout the year, such as – volunteer gatherings, the Rockin’ Roundup, fundraisers, etc. Volunteer duties may include assisting with coordinating an event, serving on a special committee, and /or assisting the day of the event. FHTRC staff will provide special event volunteers with training and information required for each event.

Equestrian Volunteers – Under the direction of the Equine Manager and Instructors, Equestrian Volunteer’s are advanced equestrians who assist the program in the exercising and training of the program horses. Prior to being accepted these volunteers must schedule a riding evaluation to determine their riding skills and comfort level with horses. All Equestrian Volunteers need to assist the program in another area, such as sidewalking or leading through an entire session. **This is an invitation only position.**

Grooming

Grooming, tacking, and learning the parts of the horse all take place in the cross ties. We have set up the following guidelines for grooming and tacking a program horse. This is to ensure that everyone is teaching the same thing to all students. **Remember that the students will imitate the things you do, even if you tell them something different! That is why it is vital that you follow the instruction given here.**

Before grooming, students and volunteers should walk up and greet the horse in a quiet and unhurried manner. Please be sure that all brushes are returned from where you got them after they have been used. Grooming is done in the following order:

- **Curry Comb** – A round, rubber grooming tool used to loosen the dirt in the horses coat. It is used in circular motions. Always start near the poll (behind the horse’s ears) and work toward the tail. The curry comb is not used on the face or the legs.
- **Stiff (hard) Brush** – This is used to remove the dirt brought to the surface by the curry comb. It is used in short, flicking strokes in the same direction that the hair grows. Start at the poll and work toward the tail.
- **Soft Brush** – This is used to remove any dirt missed by the stiff brush, as well as smoothing and adding shine to the horse’s coat. It is used in long, smooth strokes, moving in the same direction that the hair grows. Start at the poll and work toward the tail. This may be used gently on the face and legs.
- **Mane and Tail Comb** – Used to remove tangles from the mane and the tail. Start from the end and work in small sections. It is used on the tail by standing to the side of the horses hindquarters, **NEVER BEHIND THE HORSE.**
- **Hoof Pick** – The feet should be cleaned thoroughly as part of the grooming procedure. Students should not generally do this, but they enjoy watching. (If you are uncomfortable doing this, please ask another volunteer or instructor to help you.)

Understanding Horse Behavior

When developing relationships with horses, communication is key. It is critical to provide a safe environment in a therapeutic riding setting. Beginning a process of understanding the horse senses, instincts, and implications is a step in predicting behaviors, managing risks, and increasing positive relationships.

Smell – A horse’s sense of smell is thought to be very acute, and it allows them to recognize horses and people. Smell helps a horse to evaluate certain situations.

- Allow the horse the opportunity to become familiar with new objects and their environment by smelling
- It is recommended that treats are not carried in your pocket since horses may desire to go after them

Hearing – A horse’s sense of hearing is also thought to be very acute. A horse may also combine their hearing and sense of sight to become more familiar with new or alerting sounds. “Hearing and not seeing” is often the cause of a fright/flight response. Forward ears communicate attentiveness and interest. Ears that are laid back often communicate that they are upset and/or showing aggression.

- Horses are wary when they hear something but do not see it. If a horse is nervous you can talk in a calm and quiet voice to reassure him. Avoid shouting, as this can be frightening to a horse.

Sight – The horse’s eyes are set on the either side of the head; they have good peripheral vision, but poor frontal vision. A horse focuses on objects by raising or lowering its head.

- The horse may notice something that is different. Allow the horse an opportunity to look at new objects.
- There are two blind spots, directly in front and behind the horse. Approach a horse at its shoulder so you do not startle him.

Touch – Touch is used as a communication between horses, and between horses and people. They are sensitive to soft or rough touch with a person’s hands or legs.

- Be familiar with a horses sensitive areas (Flank and belly areas)
- Watch rider’s leg position, as they may need assistance to reduce a “clothes pin” affect with their legs.

Taste – Taste is closely linked to the sense of smell, and helps horses to distinguish palatable foods and other objects.

- Avoid letting the horse lick your hands, as this can promote nipping.

Sixth Sense – Horses do have a “sixth sense” when evaluating the disposition of those around him. Horses can be hypersensitive in detecting the moods of their handlers and riders. A good therapy horse is chosen for their sensitive response to the rider. At times there may exist a personality conflict between handlers and horses. It is important to let the instructor know if you’re having a difficult time relating or getting along with a particular horse.

Flight as a Natural Instinct

Horses would rather turn and run away from danger than face and fight it.

- At a sudden movement or noise, the horse might try to flee. Speak calmly to the horse and relax your hold. A tight hold can make a spooked horse more nervous.
- If flight is not possible the horse could either turn to kick out or face the problem and rear. Be aware of this when in a tight space, such as a stall. Alert staff if a horse appears frightened.
- Most horses chosen to work in a therapeutic riding setting have less of an instinct to flee. The horse may look to you for reassurance. It is helpful if the volunteer remains calm.

GLOSSARY OF PHYSICAL AND COGNITIVE DISABILITIES

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 intended as a comprehensive explanation of a specific disability. Rather it is a general overview with an explanation of how therapeutic riding can be beneficial.

Arthritis

Inflammatory disease of the joints.

Types: Osteo, rheumatoid and juvenile rheumatoid.

Characteristics: Pain; lack of mobility; loss of strength.

Benefits of therapeutic riding: Gentle rhythmic movements to promote joint mobility and to relieve pain; increase strength.

Autism

A broad spectrum of disorders ranging from mild to severe, which affects thought, perceptions and attention.

Characteristics: Impairments in social interaction and communication; restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior, interests and activities; impairments in the use of nonverbal behaviors such as eye to eye gaze and facial expressions; lack of social or emotional reciprocity; delays in, or lack of the development of spoken language; impairments in ability to initiate or sustain conversations with others; abnormal responses to senses such as sight, hearing, touch, balance, smell, taste, reaction to pain; deficits in gross and fine motor skills.

Benefits: Provides sensory input and promotes sensory integration. Promotes communication skills (expressive and receptive). Develops strength, coordination, muscle tone and gross and fine motor skills. Promotes socialization.

Cerebral Palsy

Brain damage occurring before, at or shortly after birth. It is a non-progressive motor disorder.

Types and characteristics:

Spastic: increased muscle tone, muscle imbalances and equilibrium. Increased startle reflex and other pathological reflexes.

Athetoid: Extensor muscle tension, involuntary movements, difficulty maintaining upright posture.

Ataxic: weakened muscles, poor balance, difficulty with quick, fine movements.

Benefits: Normalization of muscle tone, muscle strengthening, development of posture, balance and motor coordination. Promotes socialization and confidence.

Cerebral Vascular Accident (CVA) – Stroke

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

Characteristics: Flaccid or spastic paralysis of arm and leg on same side of the body. May impair thought, speech, sight, balance, coordination and strength.

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

Developmental Disabilities (DD)

A diverse group of physical, cognitive, psychological, sensory and speech impairments that begin anytime during development up to 18 years of age.

Characteristics: Varied, but can include processing delays, and delays in physical, motor and social development.

Benefits: Increase confidence and self-esteem, stimulates processing, speech and body awareness, provides opportunity for sport and recreation, promotes socialization.

Down Syndrome

A genetic disorder in which a person is born with an extra chromosome (chromosome 21).

Characteristics: Mild to severe learning disabilities, low muscle tone, speech impairments.

Benefits: Promotes expressive and receptive language skills. Increases gross and fine motor skills, balance, coordination, posture and muscle tone. Promotes social skills. Increases confidence and esteem.

Emotional Disabilities

Social, emotional or behavioral functioning that is not age appropriate and affects a child's academics, social relationships and self-care.

Characteristics: Difficulty coping with everyday life situations and interpersonal relations, inappropriate affect or behavior responses, depression, anxiety, physical symptoms, difficulty learning, withdrawal, and aggressiveness.

Benefits: Increase confidence and self-esteem, provide opportunities for accomplishments, promotes positive socialization.

Hearing Impairment

Congenital or acquired hearing loss varying from mild to profound.

Characteristics: Difficulties in communication or communication through sign language, lip reading or finger spelling.

Benefits: Increases confidence, self-esteem and sense of accomplishment. Provides recreational activity with opportunity for socialization. Stimulates balance, posture and coordination.

Learning Disabilities

Neurological disorders that interfere with a person's ability to store, process or produce information.

Characteristics: Difficulties with reading, writing, speech, computing math. May affect development and social skills.

Benefits: Promotes processing, language skills and attending skills, increases confidence and self-esteem, provides opportunity for success, increases balance, coordination and posture, provides opportunity for Socialization.

Mental Impairment or Mental Retardation (MR)

A disorder in which a person's overall intellectual functioning is below average with an IQ of 70 or less. Impaired ability to cope with common life demands and daily living skills.

Characteristics: Impairments in learning, communication, social interaction, self-care.

Benefits: Increases balance, coordination, strength and posture, improves gross and fine motor skills, promotes Socialization, increases confidence, reinforce life and vocational skills.

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, maintains balance, increases confidence and self-esteem.

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 recreational, physical, and social activity. May help slow progressive loss of strength, stimulates postural and trunk alignment, allows for movement free of assistive devices.

Scoliosis

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

Characteristics: Shoulder, trunk and waistline asymmetry. May have back pain and postural fatigue.

Benefits: Stimulates postural symmetry, strengthens trunk muscles.

Spina Bifida

Congenital failure of vertebral arch closure that results in spinal cord damage.

Characteristics: Varying degrees of paralysis of the lower limbs coupled with sensory loss. May also be associated with hydrocephalus, lordosis, scoliosis and hip dislocations.

Benefits: Stimulates posture and balance, increases strength, balance and coordination, promotes confidence and self-esteem.

Spinal Cord Injury (SCI)

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

Characteristic: 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, and provides opportunity for recreational and social activity.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Accidental injury to the head resulting in impairment of cognitive, emotional and/or physical functioning.

Characteristics: May include deficits in gross and fine motor skills, balance, coordination and strength. May have deficits in language, communication, processing, memory and perceptual skills.

Benefits: Stimulates balance, posture, coordination, and gross and fine motor skills. Stimulates speech and perceptual skills. Increases confidence.

Benefits of Therapeutic Riding

***Physically,** it is the horse's movement that has a dynamic affect on the rider's body. The horse stimulates the rider's pelvis and trunk in a manner that closely resembles the normal gait of a human. This movement can be used to produce specific physical changes in the rider including normalization of muscle tone and improvements in posture, balance, coordination, and increased endurance.*

***Sensorial,** the horse and the riding environment offer a wide variety of input to participants. Movement exploration on the horse combined with so many other sights and sounds one encounters in the riding program contribute to the overall sensory experience.*

***Emotionally,** the success of overcoming fear and anxiety and the ability to achieve riding skills help a rider to realize self-worth and increase self-esteem. For those involved with the various activities of a therapeutic riding program, the companion animal bonding and development of new skills are critical components to the success of the experience offered. Relationships develop between riders, volunteers, horses, and staff and are all an integral part of a positive, emotional experience provided by a therapeutic riding program.*

***Cognitively,** the horse provides a strong motivator for riders. Riding sessions incorporate activities and games on horseback designed to help each rider achieve specific goals such as following directions, staying on task, color and number recognition, and reinforcing existing skills as well as learning new ones.*

***Socially,** therapeutic riding programs and their associated activities provide an excellent opportunity for participants to interact with their peers, program volunteers and staff in a positive and enjoyable environment.*

The horse, rider, instructor and volunteers make up a unique treatment team providing an opportunity for physical, emotional, social, recreational, and educational gains for participants with disabilities.

Other Ways to Help FHTRC

Any donation is appreciated! Here are some of the ways you can easily support FHTRC!

FHTRC Merchandise

On different occasions throughout the year FHTRC will have T-shirts, hats, hoodies, etc, for sale. We will always make these available for purchase for our volunteers and our families.

Goodsearch.com

Yahoo has a search engine called GoodSearch. Once you log n at www.goodsearch.com you are able to designate a charity of your choice. Every time you do a search they donate one penny to FHTRC. You can add their toolbar to your browser page and assist in raising money for FHTRC every time you make a search on the internet!

Amazon Smile

Support FHTRC while doing your online shopping through AmazonSmile. Amazon donated 0.5% of the price of your eligible Amazon purchases to the charitable organization of your choice. Just search “Freedom Hooves Therapeutic Riding Center” on smile.amazon.com!

Dillons Plus Card

Enroll your Dillons Plus Card online at www.dillons.com/communityreward. Select 34747, “Freedom Hooves Therapeutic Riding Center” as the organization you choose to support. This means that everytime you shop with your plus card you will be supporting our horses and their riders.

Additional information about any of these programs and many more ways to help can be found on the FHTRC website (www.fhtrc.org) under “How to Help”!