

VOLUNTEER MANUAL

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*Where Hoofs & Hearts Take Flight &
Kids Shine!*

THE D.O.V.E.S. GUIDANCE PROGRAM

*Discovering **O**ur **V**isions through **E**questrian **S**ervices*

A Family & Youth Horsemanship Program

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Welcome new volunteer (Dove), we are delighted to have you join us!

Volunteers are indispensable at all levels of the organization *and need not be equine oriented*. Some do bring skills in horsemanship, others bring leadership skills, and others simply bring understanding and acceptance in helping others to seek fuller, more satisfying lives. Volunteers also bring many new ideas and insight to the program and frequently enlist their minds! Ask any DOVES volunteer and they will readily state that they gain as much, or more, than they give.

As a volunteer, *you* will learn and achieve, as well! The information in this manual is designed to assist you in understanding some of the DOVES Guidance Program policies and procedures. This handbook is not all-inclusive and does not include every policy or protocol relating to volunteers.

Please feel free to ask staff members or seasoned volunteers if you have further questions or concerns. Thank you for your interest The DOVES Guidance Program!

Benefits of Equine Activities

Riding a horse is a beneficial activity for any one. The uniqueness of equine assisted activity lies in the gait of the horse. The horse having gaits with a three dimensional swinging motion is a living therapy tool for the rider, enabling the rider to experience up/down, forward/backward, and side-to-side motion - all the while stimulating muscle, brain and social activity. Without doubt equestrian activities increase a rider's posture, balance, strength, focus and coordination while also positively enhancing flexibility, self-awareness, confidence and a sense of independence. Social and emotional growth is also gained from the natural bond created between horse and rider.

The physical benefits of riding include:

As the horse moves, the rider is constantly thrown off-balance. In an attempt to rebalance the rider's muscles are required to contract and relax.

- Improved posture control and balance
- Increased muscle tone and strength
- Greater range of motion
- Better hand-eye coordination
- Better concentration and focus

The cognitive benefits aid participants to excel in:

The repetition of patterned movements required in controlling a horse quickens the reflexes and aids in motor planning.

- Development of learned skills
- Tactile awareness and sensory integration
- Improved application of direction
- Greater skill at sequencing, patterning and motor planning.

The overall experience contributes to emotional gains by the rider:

Riding provides excitement and the sense of achievement of working independently as well as with a team.

- Independence
- Increased self-control and awareness
- Better emotional control
- Greater self-awareness and self-confidence

The social benefits reaped by riders:

Being involved as a rider creates a shared interest and experience on which to build a social foundation.

- Friendship building
- Increased experiences
- Improving social skills and cooperation

Mission of The DOVES Guidance Program

Our Mission is to give a special child a special experience, a time and place to remember. With the use of equine and ranch activities along with family participation and support, It is our goal to help children of all ages and backgrounds to build trust confidence and character. Encouraging each child to challenge themselves in ways that will develop them into caring and responsible adults.

Statement of Values:

The program and ranch is not associated with any particular religious congregation. However, D.O.V.E.S. is a faith-based organization. The ranch is founded on the same Judeo-Christian values that our nation was built upon. Faith on the ranch is "lived" not "preached." Because the Founders and Board of Directors believe in God and the saving grace of His Son Jesus Christ, it is our greatest desire to serve God by the demonstration of our faith through action by our love for Him and the support of families. It is our highest honor to serve children and families of all backgrounds.

History of The DOVES Guidance Program

Shannon & Gayle Oxford began the DOVES Guidance Program in the spring of 2008. Their love of children and horses along with their love of teaching and sharing their passion led them to a decision to open their ranch to children and families who yearn to experience the relationship with one of God's most unique and beautiful animal - The Horse. You can read the full story in the first newsletter the July/August 2008 Volume 1 Issue 1 and on our web-site.

What We Teach

A Solid Horsemanship foundation from the ground up

- Well rounded horsemanship from the ground up
- Caring and respect for animals. How to groom a horse
- Safety on and around the horse while riding and grooming
- Setting attainable goals
- Provide an environment where the student can build self-esteem and gain confidence
- How to approach and communicate with a horse
- How to lead a horse safely and confidently
- How to saddle and bridle a horse, if applicable for the child

On Horseback

- Balance, seat, leg and hand position
- Learn to feel and move with the horse
- Controlling the horse & develop confidence
- Stopping the horse
- Reining - direct and neck
- Speed work - rate, walk trot, and directional control
- Pattern work - circles, figure 8's etc.

Chores & Activities

- Good work ethics & taking on responsibility
- Taking direction and following through with a task
- Working with others
- Keeping a Joyful heart in work and play
- Taking initiative in finding a task to do
- Participation in fund raising

During your volunteer training process, all the above will be discussed and demonstrated.

Volunteering for The DOVES Guidance Program

Our program could not grow or operate without dedicated volunteers - they are the backbone of the program. Without the extra sets of hands to help riders sit tall, to groom and care for horses, or to help with maintenance, fundraising and promotion, it would be difficult to operate the program.

The DOVES Guidance Program takes considerable care and effort to find, train and keep excellent and motivated volunteers. The DOVES Guidance Program offers an ideal volunteer opportunity for adults and young people.

Volunteering provides:

- An outdoor activity
- A service that results in joy and growth for children and their families
- Light physical work and exercise
- Interaction with animals in a farm setting
- An expanded circle of friends
- Rewards in smiles, progress in skill and enthusiasm from everyone involved
- A chance to help and serve others
- Community service hours from some schools
- Service hours for service learning students
- Activities for clubs and professional organizations
- Fulfilling God's command to serve one another

Team Approach

We practice a team approach. No matter what job you choose to volunteer for, you are an integral part of the team. If you choose to work in the barn, the office - whatever - you are part of our team and are greatly valued.

Volunteer Jobs Available

There is a job for everyone. It may come as a surprise to you that not all volunteers are experienced equestrians. Certain tasks require horse experience, but that is not necessary in many other volunteer roles. Many of our volunteers begin with little or no experience, but through hands-on educational opportunities, have gone on to become fine horse handlers.

Barn & Facility Worker:

Since our horses are an integral part of the team, their care is of the utmost importance. Barn tasks include:

- Stall and barn cleaning
- Basic first aid
- Completion of daily barn chores

Horse Herd Manager/Trainer

Since our horses are used to teach children who usually do not know anything about riding horses, our program horses can get "sour" and/or "dull", the Horse Herd Manager/Trainer's job is to give the program horses daily or weekly tune ups as needed and:

- Work with instructor to make sure the correct horses/tack are ready for class
- Daily turn out/in
- Keeping horses "tuned" and work on advancing horses abilities
- Preparing new horses for program

Sidewalker: (with very young or unsure students & in our ranch & riding school field trip program)

The sidewalker (either 1 or 2) walks to the side of the rider during class their first and or second ride. The sidewalker's primary responsibility is for the safety of the student during class.

Sidewalker tasks include:

- Greeting the student as he/she arrives
- Remaining with the student and get his/her helmet fitted
- Assisting the student in balancing on the horse, utilizing special holds
- Following directions of the instructor during class and assisting the student only when needed to promote independence
- Understanding the special needs of each student
- Mounting assists
- Understanding safety and emergency procedures

Horse Handler/instructor:

The primary job of the horse handler is to deal with the horse, and the student. Horse handler tasks include:

- Grooming and tacking the horse before class or with the student
- Maintaining control of the horse
- Tack cleaning organizing
- Understanding horse body language and horse psychology

****Horse handler requires special testing. If you have extensive horse experience and want to be a horse handle/instructor, please contact the volunteer coordinator.*

Assistant:

The primary job of the assistant is to help the Instructor with any special needs during class (i.e. bringing items into the ring, helping with games, switching out sidewalkers who need relief, etc.) Assistants are also responsible for gates during class, and be ready, if any emergency occurs, to follow the directions of the Instructor. This is an extremely important task because if a gate is left open:

- The horse can get loose and create a safety problem
- Unauthorized persons can enter the ring or holding area and create a safety problem

Other Jobs:

Because The DOVES Guidance Program is primarily a volunteer program, if you have any special skills, talents, please let us know - you never know what help we might need. Some of these jobs include:

- Office help
- Accounting & Legal support
- Fundraising & Computer skills
- Facility repairs & maintenance; General Contracting
- Serving on Advisory Boards or Committees
- Public Relations
- Special Projects

General Volunteer and Ranch Information

Attendance

Volunteers must be willing to commit themselves to a regular day and time for a certain number of weeks so that our students are able to ride. They must also commit to notifying the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible if illness or time conflicts prevent them from performing their assigned duties. This notification is necessary so that a substitute may be found in time. Sometimes, "Murphy's Law" applies:

If one volunteer is unable to come at their appointed time and does not give ample notice or locate a substitute, several more will do the same for that particular lesson and cause a student to not be able to ride.

Do your best to contact someone and not just leave a message on the machine. DO NOT send an email to cancel unless you are pre-arranging an absence. In the event we know in advance of a student's absence, we will attempt to reach you by telephone as best we can, considering the amount of notice we are given. Understand that cancellations cause an enormous ripple effect.

We request that you notify the Volunteer Coordinator *with as much notice as possible-at least 24 hours - prior* to your scheduled time if you have to cancel.

Contact Information for Gayle Oxford, Volunteer Coordinator:

Ranch Telephone: (209) 224-0311

Cell Phone: (209) 329-7034

Email: doves@clearwire.net (use only for pre-arranging an absence)

Attire

Remember that you will be working in a professional setting. It is expected that volunteers will use good judgment in selecting appropriate clothing. When choosing your clothing - consider "Safety First" inquisitive hands can pull off your jewelry, excessively baggy clothes can get caught on things, etc.

What to Wear:

- Comfortable clothes-appropriate to the season-that you don't mind getting dirty
- Sneakers or boots
- Sunscreen, bug repellent, sunglasses, hat or visor
- Name Tag (for large group events)
- Long hair needs to be tied back

What NOT to Wear:

- Jewelry (necklace, bracelet, hoop/dangling earrings) - stud earrings are ok
- Excessively tight or baggy clothing
- Perfumes that can attract stinging insects
- Bare midriff or other revealing clothing
- Open toe shoes, sandals, clogs
- Clothing with inappropriate slogans, decals, etc.

Cell Phones

Please turn off or mute all cell phones when in the barns or riding arenas, as they can startle the student or the horse.

Confidentiality

We are a professional organization and bound by a policy to maintain confidentiality of information regarding our students, staff, and volunteers. Any personal information you may become privileged to through your work here must not be shared with others.

Commitment of Volunteers

The DOVES Guidance Program is committed to strengthening the relationships between the volunteers, students and the organization. We have found that taking the time and care in training and supervising volunteers results in "repeat" volunteers. We believe it is important to develop and maintain a relationship of mutual respect with our volunteers.

To each of you that agree to commit time, intelligence, energy, and talent to our program we ask that:

- you keep your commitment and are on time for your commitment,
- You listen to us and understand that the Instructor is in charge in the class environment. You accept feedback from Instructors regarding your work and understand that their goal is to offer the best and most effective riding experience for each student,
- you stay alert, listen, and learn from the other volunteers and Instructors,
- you give us your best effort, maintaining enthusiasm and goodwill at all times and
- You let us know if we are not recognizing you for your efforts as a volunteer.

Contact Information & Email Communication

Please keep all of your contact information current (email, phone number, address, etc.) The primary means of providing written information to all volunteers is email. **If you do not have email, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator frequently for updates.**

Dogs

For the safety of the horses and riders, dogs are not allowed to be brought to the property.

Emergencies

An emergency is defined, for our purposes, as any unexpected occurrence or set of circumstances resulting in a real or potential safety hazard, demanding immediate attention.

Before there is an emergency, be sure you are familiar with general safety procedures, which are posted in the barn. Also, know the locations of the following:

- Telephone for emergency use is the cell phone placed on the desk in the barn
- Human First Aid *Kit* are located in the barn in the horse medical cabinet.
- Equine First Aid Supplies are in the barn in the horse medical cabinet.
- Fire extinguishers are located in each door way at each end of the barn.

All these locations are shown during the Barn Tour at Volunteer Orientation Training.

Important-

The Emergency Information card is posted on the door of the boot & helmet room, the horse medical cabinet and in the office next to the door. It is our policy to call an ambulance if there is any doubt as to the seriousness of an illness or injury without delay.

Emergency During Class

- The word "STOP!" is called out alerting everyone in the arena to HALT.
- The Instructor proceeds to the emergency situation and assesses the incident. If necessary, the Instructor designates a volunteer to call 911. **If** injury should involve a horse, the Instructor designates a volunteer to call the Vet.
- **If** the incident is not serious, the class resumes.
- **If** the incident is serious, the Instructor designates trained volunteers to dismount the remaining

students with the assistance of parents, if needed, and stays at the incident site until Emergency Personnel arrive.

- **REMEMBER:** If an emergency occurs during class, the Horse handler is responsible for the horse and the Sidewalkers or instructor is responsible for the student.

Emergency Dismount

If you are side walking next to a horse that becomes involved in an emergency, shout "STOP!" to alert your Instructor and horse handler of the situation. If an emergency dismount becomes necessary, the side walker on the side the rider is falling away from needs to remove the stirrup and reins from the rider, while the side walker towards whom the rider is falling needs to remove the stirrup then hug the rider around the trunk and under the arms, pulling the rider off and away from the horse. If the sidewalker feels he cannot bear the full weight of the descending rider, a controlled fall can be initiated, taking care to protect the rider and side walker's heads and roll with the fall as much as possible. It is important that the side walkers break the rider's fall and does not fall on the rider.

Feeding the Horses

Hay and grain are only to be fed by the designated volunteer or authorized staff. Horse treats are to only be fed by participants if the instructor has included it in the lesson plan. **Treats are to be fed out of the horse treat buckets.** Staff and authorized volunteers may be seen using treats in training; however, no one else is authorized to do so.

Gates

All gates with the exception of main entry gate are to be kept closed and latched. If you see an open gate, please close it.

Helmets

A safety riding helmet is the single most important piece of equipment. It is important to understand that posture and balance of a rider will be directly affected by the fit of the helmet. An ill-fitting helmet will make proper balancing more difficult and will fail to protect the head during a fall. Overly large helmets are dangerous and uncomfortable. They may slip, obscure vision or fall off. A properly fitted helmet should be snug.

The well-fitted helmet should stay on the head when harnessed without rocking or moving. A good way to check a helmet's fit is to have the rider bend down at the waist and shake his/her head. With the manufacturer's suggested adjustment, the helmet should feel secure to the rider.

All participants in classes are required to wear a helmet once they enter the mounting/tacking area. Helmets are required for all groundwork for these participants. All volunteers 12 and under are required to wear a helmet when grooming or assisting in the mounting and tacking area. All personnel and volunteers are required to wear helmets when mounted on our program horses.

How to Help a Student with His or Her Helmet:

- Place the helmet on the head sliding it front to back. It should sit level on the head at above the eyebrow level. Allow it to rest so there are two fingers between the eyebrows and the edge of the helmet.
- Make sure the helmet is centered correctly and fasten the chinstrap. Just be sure it's tight enough so the helmet doesn't slip or fall.
- If there is a laced harness or dail at the back, undo it before fitting the helmet and re-adjust it after the helmet is on. Place the harness below the small bump at the back of the rider's head.
- If the harness is U shaped, adjust the neck or chinstrap firmly so the helmet doesn't rotate on the head when pushed up at the front or back edge.
- Practice fitting a helmet on a fellow volunteer first.
- Ask the rider how the helmet feels. For the rider whose head is a difficult size, try placing the foam spacers inside the helmet at the trouble spots.

Horse Handlers/Instructor

The horse handler's responsibility is **the horse and rider**. All handling of the horses must be cleared through the program director.

Prior to Class

- Arrive one hour earlier than class time to locate your horse, groom, lunge (if necessary) and tack him for class
- Familiarize yourself with the horse with some ground handling and grooming
- All horses are to be tied using a quick release knot or to the special tie ring.
- After using grooming tools, clean and replace to proper grooming box
- Tacking - Check to see what tack is to be used for each horse. Check which saddle is to be used with which horse and student The seat of the saddle needs to be level. Always pull the saddle pad up into the gullet of the saddle. Students may watch and in some cases assist or saddle with strict supervision.
- All horses *must be haltered* when being led into & out of pastures, paddocks or stalls.
- Girth should be a couple of holes higher on the right side
- Girth should be only as tight as needed to keep the saddle from sliding. Girth will be tightened by INSTRUCTOR (for class) prior to rider mounting
- INSTRUCTORS (only) are allowed to put on bridles. Once the bridle or reins are on: *DO NOT LEAVE THE HORSE UNATTENDED*
- At least 15 minutes prior to class and until the class begins, warm up the horse by allowing the horse to investigate some of the toys and props, practice leading the horse while maintaining your own space and that of the horse, stopping, backing, turning to the left and right and trotting. Horses should not be tied up at the rail prior to class.
 - **Instructing a student on leading a horse (on approval of director): Instructor should be on same side of horse along side of the student when a student is leading the horse.**
 - ~ Hold the lead rope about 6-8 inches from the snap with your right hand
 - ~ Fold the excess rope in a butterfly loop with your left hand. Never wrap the rope around your hands. Be sure the lead rope dangles between the reins
 - ~ *Maintain your own space*
 - ~ Look up to where you're going, *do not look at the horse*
 - ~ Keep the horse at your side with their eye about even with your shoulder ~ Do not allow the horse to get *ahead of you*
 - ~ Do not allow the horse to fall *too far behind you*

During Class

- **The Instructor always mounts and dismounts the rider.** Pay attention to the Instructor. The Instructor will address the rider, but as the handler you need to know what the instructions are as well.
- Whenever your horse is stopped, stand at an angle in front of the horse's shoulder. Your body language will tell the horse to stay put. This is during mounting, dismounting, and emergencies and or anytime the horse is stopped for extended periods.
- Maintain a steady, even pace. Avoid sharp turns or abrupt changes of gait. Follow the rail unless directed otherwise. Maintain two horse lengths between horses.

- **Allow the horse's head freedom of movement!** As they walk, all horses bob their heads up and down. This rhythmical movement starts at the head and moves all the way down the horse's spine. **This movement is what makes horseback riding therapeutic.**
- Reinforce the rider's attempts to control the horse. Keep an eye and ear on your rider's commands. Don't give a free ride!
- Don't drag the horse along. Encourage the horse to move out with the energy in your upper and lower body.
- Remember: with sidewalkers your horse is much wider. Be sure to leave enough room around barrels etc. for the sidewalker to pass without running into items in the arena.
- When the rider is controlling the horse, you may allow a little slack in the lead, do not influence the horse. (The horse may get confused if he feels tugs on both the reins and the lead). This may, at times be difficult if the horse tends to follow you. Allow the horse's head to point forward, not pulled towards you. Especially important at the trot. Once the student has control and balance the horse may be put on the long line, and the student may control the horse on the rail.
- Allow the rider time to process the information given by the Instructor and to make an effort to comply- be patient and listen to the instructor's directions as to what to do when.
- Manage the horse to avoid problems. NEVER discipline a horse with a rider mounted.
- Bring the horse to the center of the arena anytime the rider or sidewalkers need to make any adjustments. Avoid stopping on the rail.
- At the end of class, wait for the Instructor to dismount the rider. After all of the students have left the arena; lead the horse to the tacking area.
- If an emergency occurs with your rider or horse, such as: the rider is falling off, the horse is frightened, or any other emergency requiring an emergency dismount:
Stop your horse (turn him towards the wall, if necessary, as an aid for a quick stop) and stand at an angle in front of the horse to keep him stopped, then soothe him while the sidewalkers assist the rider.
Do not leave the horse or let go of the lead rope for any reason. When the rider is off of the horse, pull the horse's head towards the student, which will cause the horse's hindquarters to move away from the student. When the horse is away from the rider, halt the horse and wait for instructions.

After Class

- Assist student in untacking and grooming the horse; placing everything back in its proper location and find a chore of task for the student to do before leaving. Confirm your next lesson day and time and write it on the chart in the barn and make note of it in your own planner or calendar.
 - If the horse came to class with a fly mask or blanket, please make sure they go back to their paddock or stall dressed with these items
 - Bridles and saddles should be cleaned (not taken apart) after class/ride
 - After grooming is complete, please return grooming kit to proper place
 - Complete a "Horse Use and Student Log regarding your lesson class. This is also the place to note routine horse concerns. Leave the completed form in the designated section of the Master Horse Binder. Blank logs are located in the Master Horse Binder.
 - For urgent horse concerns contact the director.

Sidewalkers

The side walker's responsibility is the rider (not the horse). Be prepared to give the rider your undivided attention. Get to know him/her! If you ever feel your rider is "not himself or herself" or are concerned about him or her, notify the Instructor privately. At every lesson, reinforce what has been learned. Ask the student to share what they remember

Prior to Class

- Arrive 30 minutes before class so that you can assist the instructor to prepare the arena and activities for the class.
- When the rider arrives, greet your rider, then the parents/guardians. Review your rider's attire, check for appropriate and safe clothing, no dangling jewelry or objects, etc.
- Fit your rider with a properly sized helmet. See Helmet Fitting Guidelines in this manual for more information. When around a horse it is required that the rider always wears a helmet.
- Stay outside the arena with your rider until the instructor calls them.

During Class

- Only the Instructor is allowed to mount the rider. Listen for directions from the Instructor for your rider to mount in the arena or at the mounting block. Generally, the rider does not put his feet in the stirrups until he is fully away from the mounting block.
- Never leave your rider's side. If an object falls onto the ground, such as a glove, etc. leave it and tell the Instructor who will then pick it up.
- The side walker's position is always at the rider's knee. If possible, ask your rider what pressure is comfortable.
- If your rider has only one sidewalker, it is best for the sidewalker to be positioned on the rider's left side. Avoid putting a hand on the rider's back (unless told to do so). Encourage the rider to use his trunk muscles.
- Reinforce the Instructor's directions. When two sidewalkers are with one rider, they can share the task of communication with the rider, but be careful not to confuse the rider with too much verbal stimulation. Have the rider carry out tasks, allowing time to react to the instructions. Encourage the rider to do the exercises, games and reinforce the use of new skills.
The sidewalker should ask the rider and the leader to bring the horse into the center of the arena anytime a stop is needed. Some examples are: the rider is off balance and can not regain balance, the saddle pad has slipped or the girth is loose, the stirrups need readjusting, the rider's helmet needs adjusting, the rider is fatigued, in pain or needs to stop for any other reason (be discreet when discussing a rider in his presence), or if you need to change sides because you are having some difficulty and cannot carry out your job in comfort and safety. **When changing sides, one volunteer changes at a time.** If there is only one sidewalker, ask the Instructor for assistance.
- At the end of class, wait for the Instructor to dismount your rider. Only Instructors can do the dismount.

After Class

- Wipe out or spray the helmet and return helmet to the rack in its proper place, facing the correct direction so that the size is visible. If boots are borrowed, spray inside of boots and clean the outside and return to proper place. Keep the closet neat and clean.

Logging Volunteer Hours

Please be sure to log all volunteer hours in the logbooks located in the barn on the desk. Please include your travel time and be aware that you can deduct your mileage on your tax return. Tracking volunteer hours is very important to our organization. The information assists us in applying for grants and recognizing your contribution to The DOVES Guidance Program.

Before leaving the property please log your hours and read any announcements or notices on the bulletin board.

Parking

Parking for volunteers is on the north side of the barn or the front parking lot. Do not park on east side of barn, this area is reserved for horse traffic.

Private Residences and Surrounding Property

The houses, the kennel and neighboring property and are off limits to anyone except those residents, or by permission.

Smoking

For the safety, health, and pleasure of all that spend time at the ranch, smoking is not allowed anywhere on the ranch.

Spectators

Family members and friends of riders and volunteers are always encouraged to visit and observe *quietly*. When lessons are in progress or horses are out, guests are required to remain in the appropriate spectator area and should always enter and exit through the designated area.

Manual Contacts used with Riders

To assist a rider to mount and in the early stages of learning balance, a sidewalker often has to touch the rider. **Always speak to the rider first, asking permission to touch him/her and giving the location you wish to touch.** Most rider assistance can be given from the waist down. The following is a list and discussion of the manual contacts used in assisted riding.

Ankle Support: Often riders only need stabilization at their ankles so that they can achieve a balanced riding position. The volunteer *grasps just above* the rider's ankle from behind using the arm closest to the horse, if that arm is not being used for the Thigh hold. When the Ankle hold is being used in conjunction with the Thigh hold, the volunteer can use the hand farthest from the horse to hold the rider's foot by placing her hand over the rider's arch.

Thigh Hold: The volunteer uses her arm nearest to the rider and grips the front edge or flap of the saddle in a spot that allows her forearm to rest midway on the rider's thigh. You may even press down and inward when needing to provide greater security for the rider. Do not lean on the horse or rider.

Suggestions on How to Relate to Children

Children are individuals first and are entitled to the same respect and considerations expected by anyone.

Be yourself when you meet him/her.

Be patient. Let the child set their own pace in walking or talking. Don't be afraid to laugh with him/her.

This is a "no pressure" riding program, we do not teach competitive disciplines. We teach the children good and safe horsemanship skills and riding for pleasure.

Let the child do as much as he/she can on their own, provided they are capable of such. Give assistance as needed. Always be encouraging.

Do not force the child to do a task on a horse that they are uncomfortable with or if they become afraid. Be patient and take a couple steps back.

Let the child set their own goals.

Each child is expected to be courteous to everyone, and so you should be courteous to the child.

Encouragement and praise are the most important tools of our volunteers, use them often. Do not criticize or over control, instead suggest ways to do things and explain why we do things a certain way.

Therapeutic Riding Benefits for Various Disabilities

The DOVES Guidance Program is offered to all children, and we especially target children at risk, such as children from single parent families, “blended” families, ADD, and children with self esteem and emotional issues. Although The Doves Guidance Program is not a Therapeutic Riding Program for physically challenged children, we may accept children with certain challenges. This section has been included to assist volunteers with a basic knowledge of common conditions the challenges the students, and what benefits therapeutic riding can provide. The list is not all-inclusive but is intended to aid the volunteers in providing the best experience they can for our clients. Student's needs vary greatly. Remember that each child is a unique individual and that we need to focus on meeting those individual needs.

<u>Condition</u>	<u>Challenges to Student</u>	<u>Benefits of Therapeutic Riding:</u>
Autism	Inattentive, limited eye contact, delayed language, unusual fears	Postural and verbal stimulation
Emotional	Trouble coping with everyday life situations and interpersonal relationships, short attention span	Increases self-confidence and self-awareness and provides appropriate social outlet
Hearing Impairment	Challenged communication, may have attention deficits	Promotes self-confidence, attentiveness, balance, posture and coordination
Learning Disabilities & ADD & HADD	Problems sequencing and problem solving. Short attention & focus span.	Stimulates attention span, cooperation, language skills, posture and coordination

Notes:

Suggestions for Volunteers

As an volunteer, your role is to be a helpful presence and support to the program and children. Over time, you will develop friendships and personal relationships with participants of all ages. This is a wonderful part of being a volunteer, as it allows you to become part of the lives of a variety of children and their families, and lets you share your personal skills and talents.

We work with many children, you will get to know parents, grandparents and siblings of participants who may come along to observe a lesson or session. You will get to participate in and or share the progress and setbacks of participants who have particular life challenges.

We will provide all volunteers with training, where you will be introduced to specific guidelines and rules that we maintain to ensure that the extent of the relationship you have with our participants feels safe and appropriate for everyone.

It is important to keep in mind that "boundaries" are an important part of establishing relationships as a volunteer. While you will become a friend to many of the participants, you should also try to maintain a professional relationship. Remaining professional protects both you and the participant. While you may be asked to physically support a rider on the horse, it is usually discouraged to show physical affection to participants through touch. This is especially true of children. There are many ways you can show that you care and that you are happy to see the participants without touching.

However, boundaries go further than touch. You must prepare yourself for participants, who due to their personality, may be difficult, possibly rude, or overly dependent and attached to you. Remaining professional will help you deal with those situations.

The key to building supportive, safe, and appropriate volunteer relationships is to help where you can, but to keep in mind that you are a volunteer - not a psychologist, counselor, or therapist. Know your limits and role. If you have a question or concern, please feel free to discuss it with a director.

Further, for your own safety and the safety of our students, please let us know if you have any medical conditions that might prevent you from working at certain tasks, i.e.: high blood pressure, heart condition, allergies (i.e. bee stings), etc. Heat, deep footing on the trails, combined with these conditions, could create an emergency situation.

The volunteers who help are a dedicated group. Their love, commitment, and enthusiasm are second to none. But when a volunteer signs up to help, there are all sorts of things to think about.

Tips for New Volunteers

- Always be on time for your scheduled classes or other tasks.
- Call if you will miss a class. Otherwise, instructors and participants will be waiting for you.
- Be a cheerleader for staff, participants and the program.
- Leave the riding instruction to the instructor. You may want to yell "heels down, Suzanne", "hold your head up, Billy", but let the professional do his/her job. You are there to assist. What distinguishes effective class volunteers is that they develop a keen awareness of the instructor, the rider and the horse. They know when to interact and speak, but also know when to be quiet. Avoid constant chatting with the rider, do not have side conversations with other volunteers and keep focused on the goal of the class. It is a real skill to be an active participant without becoming a distracting presence.
- Make sure you follow all rules, such as not feeding the horses treats. Encourage others to do likewise. Your example counts and you represent our program.

- If you have a major concern about something (such as a policy) or would like to have something explained to you, set up a meeting with the Volunteer Coordinator or Executive Director. Don't stew on things and do not participate in the "gossip mill" with other volunteers over something that bothers you.
- Know that all your support of our program at classes, special events and other occasions is appreciated, even if you are not thanked on a regular basis.
- Food goes a long way - keep in mind that staff members, riders and other volunteers get hungry. Donations of delicious snacks are always appreciated.
- Make yourself useful by "finding" jobs, such as offering to clean stalls or paddocks, getting together a gardening group to do some landscaping around the facility, etc. Be creative, but always ask before you do something.
- **Don't burn out.** Volunteer enough of your time to get enjoyment, but not so much that you will feel overwhelmed and start to resent the program. Be prepared that you may be asked to give more and more of your time if you turn out to be a talented volunteer.
- The Volunteer Coordinator may call you at short notice to sub for another volunteer or to participate in yet another weekend activity or special event. Learn to say "no" if you need a break or if you have other plans and don't feel guilty about doing so. It is the only way to keep yourself fresh for years to come.
- Whether working in the barn or assisting with a class - it gets very hot being outdoors in the summertime in central California. Make sure you drink plenty of fluids to keep hydrated.
- Again, due to the heat, if at any time during performance of your volunteer tasks, you feel you need a break to cool off - immediately advise a staff member, the instructor, etc. Do not continue if you feel ill.
- Always sign in upon arrival and sign out when leaving. This way we can keep an accurate record of your volunteer hours.

The DOVES Guidance Program believes that every volunteer contribution, whether large or small, is immeasurable in it's worth and value for our organization and, ultimately, our riders. Please accept our sincere thanks for your willingness to be a part of our organization! Please inform our Volunteer Coordinator of any questions or concerns you may have. Also be aware that we always are happy to answer questions and assist you in any way. Please be willing to do the same for future volunteers. We look forward to meeting and working with all of you!