



Volunteer Handbook



Great Plains' partners with the community by teaching foundational riding skills improving rider's physical and emotional well-being. Through equine adaptive riding, riders will learn horsemanship skills, gain body strength, coordination and flexibility, improve social and emotional skills and grow their confidence and self-esteem.

13400 Donahoo Road | Kansas City, Kansas | 66109 |
913-608-7646



Confidentiality

Out of respect for the students who ride at Great Plains Adaptive Riding Academy, we require that you keep all information confidential. The professional relationship between you and our clients requires there be no disclosure of any information about an individual client, without proper authorization. By attending an orientation and training session you acknowledge an understanding of this policy.

Photo Consent & Social Media Policy

Consent is required for the use and reproduction by Great Plains Adaptive Riding Academy of any and all photographs and any other audiovisual materials taken of volunteers for promotional material, educational activities, exhibitions or any other use for the benefit of the program.

Diversity

Great Plains acknowledges and honors the fundamental value and integrity of all individuals, therefore employees and volunteers will work diligently to maintain an environment that is welcoming and respectful to all.

Code of Conduct

As volunteers, you are representatives of our organization. All volunteers are expected to set a good example for the students. Thoughtful conduct and self-control factor into the safety and enjoyment of all participants. All persons at Great Plains will be expected to adhere to the following code of conduct:

- Respect all persons-no abusive language or actions
- Respect all property
- Refrain from loud, abrupt noises, actions of behaviors which may startle horses
- No volunteer should ever be alone with a participant. Always have at least 2 volunteers (or be in a group setting) in any activity that involves participants (in the arena, barn, trails, waiting area, etc.).



Grounds for Dismissal

Volunteers that cannot adhere to the policies or the Code of Conduct set forth in this handbook will be dismissed from all program activities.

Smoking, Alcohol and Weapons

Other than certain designated times and areas, smoking, vaping and alcohol are not allowed within any structure on 's property. Volunteers are asked to not consume alcohol prior to volunteering. *If caught they will be asked to leave the property immediately and risk the possibility of being dismissed as a volunteer.* Great Plains prohibits the wearing, transporting, storage, possession, or use of dangerous weapons on the property, regardless of whether or not the person is licensed to carry the weapon. This includes firearms, tasers, knives, crossbows, arrows, etc.

Emergency Procedures

Pre-existing weather conditions: Lessons will be canceled ahead of schedule in cases where weather plays a role in the safety of our riders, volunteers, or horses. Examples are tornado warnings, high heat index, icy/snowy road conditions, electrical storms, cold temperatures, and high wind conditions. All factors will be considered, and the determination made will be communicated to riders, staff and volunteers.

Our Heat Policy is as follows:

Heat Index Over 100 degrees- Classes canceled

Our cold weather Policy is at the instructor's discretion.

If temperatures dip to unsafe lows or if there are dangerous conditions on our road or driveway, classes will be canceled.

The lessons will be *designed* with the needs of the rider, horses, and volunteers for their safety. Communications are posted on Facebook and messages are sent to volunteers through SignUp email portal.



Thank You for Becoming One of Our Volunteers!

Our program could not survive without our dedicated volunteers. Our volunteers are a vital part of our program's success. This handbook is our guideline for your reference.

General Information – Our volunteers

- Are the SAFETY MONITORS and the extra set of hands for the instructor.
- Should be attentive to surroundings at all times.
- Should know the responsibilities and expectations of a leader and a side walker.
- Should be familiar with all Emergency Procedures.
- Should try to volunteer on a regular basis in order to experience the benefits of volunteering and get to know other volunteers. It also helps with familiarizing yourself with the riders and horses. **We ask you to volunteer at least one lesson a month.**
- Must be at least 16 years old, physically fit to walk approximately 45 minutes to an hour and jog occasionally. Side walkers must be able to hold at least one arm up at shoulder height to support a rider when necessary. If you struggle to jog, the VC will contact you to let you know who you can volunteer for. We have a few walk-only riders. This is for the safety of everyone.
- Should NOT HANDLE THE RIDERS unless given specific instructions by the instructor or therapist. Handling the rider without knowledge of his/her disability could be harmful to the rider.
- Should be prompt and dependable.
- **Must fill out all required volunteer information forms, including emergency contact and medical information.**
- **Volunteers who do not show up on time or do not show up for their slot without prior notification to the instructor may be removed from volunteering for future positions. Our programs depend on our volunteers, those who do not show up for their shift put our instructors in a bind and potentially make us cancel a rider's lesson with little to no notice.**



Volunteer Opportunities

We are in need of regularly scheduled volunteers year long, as we ride all year long. We ask that you **commit to lessons at least once a month**. This helps with familiarizing yourself with the riders, horses, other volunteers and procedures.

Our volunteer work can be strenuous and typically requires the following: being able to stand on your feet for at least 1 hour at a time, walking and jogging on uneven ground, possibly support a moderate amount of weight, being able to handle a dusty environment, and being able to move quickly around large animals. Please Note: No prior horse experience is necessary, but very helpful!

Volunteers without horse experience must sign up as a side walker for the first several lessons to familiarize themselves with the lessons, horses, and riders.

SIDE WALKER: A person who walks beside the horse and offers stability to the rider. *Side walkers must be able to hold at least one arm up at shoulder height to support a rider when necessary.* Depending on the rider, this can be the entire lesson. This person must be attentive to the rider and the instructor. MUST not leave the rider without an instructor present.

HORSE LEADER: A person who is responsible for controlling the horse for the rider. This person must be attentive to the horse and the instructor.

FLOATER: An extra person in the arena who helps the instructor and fills in for absent volunteers as needed.

HORSE HANDLER/ BARN HELP: A person who is trained to be a side walker / leader but chooses to volunteer in the barn. Responsibilities in this area may include cleaning and general barn maintenance (sweeping, watering, caring for horses after class, organizing and cleaning grooming buckets or tack, etc.) This person arrives 30-45 minutes prior to the lessons and they retrieve the horses from the pasture and feed them in the stalls. They will be around to assist volunteers/riders with grooming and tacking. They are responsible for sweeping the cross-tie area and cleaning the buckets used during feeding. They are also responsible for cleaning the arena. **This position requires approval from the lead instructor or volunteer coordinator. Please do not sign up for this position until you speak with one of these individuals.**

OFFICE VOLUNTEERS: We also could use your help in the following areas: Please email admin@GreatPlainsARA.org if you are interested in any of the office positions.

- Assisting with fundraising and events
- Assisting with community outreach, marketing, graphic design and grant writing
- Assisting with administrative duties



All volunteers must complete one course of training covering the above duties to be considered for a volunteer position.

Volunteer Safety Policies and Responsibilities

- CELLULAR PHONES: Phones are **not** permitted in the riding arena or on trail rides. Please leave cell phones in your car or in the cubbies provided in the lounge. Horses can get spooked even when the phone is set to vibrate. Volunteers must have 100% of their attention on the rider and horse during the lesson.
- REFRESHMENTS: Refrain from chewing gum at the barn. Water is recommended during warm weather – please bring plenty!
- PETS: Please leave pets at home.
- FAMILY AND FRIENDS: Only certified personnel and trained volunteers are allowed in the arena. All visitors should remain in the parking area and designated viewing areas. An adult must attend children of volunteers while the volunteer is working in the barn or in a lesson.
- NO ONE PERSON WITH ONE RIDER: All volunteers are asked to **never** be alone with a rider. Should you be asked to take a rider somewhere, make sure you are in a group situation at all times.
- HORSES: Treat horses with kindness, never reprimand them. Let the instructor know if there is an issue. If you notice an injury, missing horse shoe or anything concerning, let the instructor know before taking your horse in the arena.
FEEDING HORSES: Only feed horses under the direct supervision of the instructor or barn manager. Do not hand-feed horses treats. **Not all of the horses are allowed treats, please ask before feeding anything to the horses.**
- LISTEN TO THE INSTRUCTOR at all times. You must be aware of what the instructor is asking you and the rider to do.
- RIDER: Only the instructor can help the rider on and off the horse. Respect the rider, treat them with dignity. Be positive and encouraging. Also be patient, some riders may process directions differently.
- ARENA: Only the riders and volunteers for the current lesson are permitted in the arena. Once the riders and horses are prepared, do not allow them to enter the arena without the instructor's permission.
- EQUIPMENT: **All tack and equipment must be put back in its designated place after each lesson.**
- CLEANUP: After each lesson, if possible, sweep the cross-ties and grooming area.
- VOLUNTEER ATTIRE: Comfortable clothing is a must. We suggest walking/jogging attire and/or jeans. **Closed toe shoes are mandatory at all times.** A sturdy shoe or boot will better protect toes from inadvertently being stepped on by a horse. Avoid dangling jewelry and



hats which could be grabbed by a rider or get caught. Do NOT wear overly revealing clothing or clothing with inappropriate pictures or words.

Arrival Procedures

Please arrive at LEAST 15 minutes before the lesson is scheduled to start. This is needed to ensure the horses get groomed and tacked in time for the lesson. (NOTE: in wet/muddy weather, this can take longer, so arrive earlier if possible.) Plan to stay 10-15 minutes after the end of the lesson to remove tack and brush horses.

Please park your car in the area designated for volunteers, close to the grass (not next to the barn). Please keep the main parking area closest to the arena available for riders and their families.

Upon arrival, check in with the instructor or staff person in charge. Check the volunteer board for your assignment and rider tack information. Due to scheduling, this might change from what you signed up for.

UNEXPECTED WEATHER CONDITIONS: Should electrical storms or tornado warnings occur during the lesson, the lesson will be delayed until safe conditions are restored.

- Electrical Storms: Riders will dismount using normal dismounting procedures, then follow the instructor's directions.
- Tornado Warning: Riders will dismount using normal dismounting procedures. Volunteers and riders will proceed to the basement of the house and shelter. Follow the instructor's directions.

NOTE: In the event of a "sudden emergency," horse leaders and staff will hold the horse's head. Side walkers will help the instructor dismount the riders in the ring and proceed to the shelter. The horse leader is only responsible for the horse. The side walker is only responsible for the safety of the rider. Listen to the instructor for different instructions during an emergency.

If a rider falls off the horse in adaptive lessons or conventional, stop all horses and wait for instructor's directions.



Volunteer Termination Policy

- Volunteering at Great Plains is a privilege. We do appreciate all the skill, energy, and commitment volunteers bring to our program.
- Please understand, for the safety, security, and continuation of excellence in programming, an inattentive volunteer, or one that cannot perform the functions or duties of a volunteer, will be relieved of his/her volunteer position.
- Absolutely no intoxicated or chemically impaired volunteer will be allowed to volunteer at . If there is a suspicion of impairment, staff will err on the side of caution and will not permit the individual to volunteer.



New Volunteer Information - Scheduling

Welcome! Thank you for deciding to join our AMAZING team of volunteers!

***Over the next couple of days, the volunteer coordinator (VC) will enter your information into the website we use for our schedule (signup.com). You will then receive an email from that website inviting you to view the schedule. Please do so as soon as possible after getting the link.**

*Once those emails have been sent, the VC will send you a text message to let you know it was sent and make sure you have the VC's phone number. Save it to your contacts! It is the best way to communicate with the VC.

*You will be able to view the lesson schedule and sign up for the times that work for you!

***We ask that you plan on arriving at least 15 minutes before the lesson to help get the horses ready. This is very important so that the lessons can start on time. We also ask that you expect to be here about 15 minutes after the lesson to help untack. THE TIMES IN SIGN UP REFLECT THIS. (for example: the time 9:45am-11:15am in Sign Up is for a 10am lesson)**

*A new invitation will be sent at the beginning of each month.

- *If we have lessons for which we are still looking for coverage the VC will send out emails and texts. We try to limit these to once a week. However, if we do not have coverage, we may need to cancel lessons, so we try to reach out as many ways as possible to get them covered. Without coverage, the riders cannot ride!

*Sometimes our riders cancel due to illness, weather, etc. The VC will text you as soon as informed of this. Some of our riders are in the saddle rain or shine, 0 or 100 degrees and never cancel. Others aren't able to ride in all conditions or may have more fragile immune systems and unfortunately aren't able to make it sometimes. We appreciate your flexibility and understanding when they need to cancel. If we have gaps in coverage and your rider cancels, we will still need you to help as well!

***If you have signed up for a lesson and are not able to make it for some reason you will be able to take yourself off the schedule. However, if you do, please give us as much notice as possible AND please send the VC a text as well! Signup does not give alerts via phone when you cancel, so texting will put it on the radar sooner so a replacement can be found.**



All Volunteers

- Parking for volunteers is on the North side (towards the grass).
- When you first arrive, read the white board - look for your lesson/rider's name. Then the horse you'll be using and the saddle.
- Check to see if your horse has already been brought into the cross tie area. If not, your horse will either be in the indoor stalls or in the dry lot. Ask for assistance if you need help locating your horse.
- Leader and side walker(s) should work together to get your horse and tack ready.
- First get your saddle, pad, cinch/girth and reins out and put them on a rack under the white board. (in the tack room, everything is labeled)
- Once you have your horse on the cross tie, get their bucket of brushes (in tack room, they're name is on the bucket). Buckets - if you cannot find your horse's bucket just use another bucket.
- Use the hoof pick to clean the outside and bottoms of the hoof. **Ask for assistance if you are not comfortable doing this.**
- Next put the saddle pad on, tented at the withers, there should be 2-3 fingers of saddle pad showing near the withers then put on the saddle. For the girth/cinch start on the horses right side, start on the 2nd hole unless white board says otherwise. Then attach on other side using the "7, 4 system". **Do not tighten** (instructor will tighten once in the arena)
- **PLEASE do not set tack on the ground.** We want to try and keep all the tack as clean as possible.
- Attach the rope reins to the side rings of the halter, with clasp to the outside.
- Attach lead rope to the bottom ring on halter.
- Unhook crossties and lead your horse into the area.
- When entering the arena, watch for other riders.
- When your lesson is finished, check the large white board to see if your horse has another lesson or can be released into the dry lot.
- Fly Spray - please ask for assistance until you are taught how to use it.
- **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCE ARE YOU ALLOWED TO MOUNT THE RIDER ON THE HORSE.**

Whenever you want your horse to walk say "walk on".



Leaders and side walker

- Walk your horse around the arena, 2 laps to warm them up. If there are other lessons going on, please stay towards the inside lane of the arena.
- When walking your horse stay by their head, so that they can see you, do not walk in front, dragging them.
- When you stop your horse, tell them “Whoa” and pull back a little on the lead rope. Once they have come to a complete stop, move to stand in front of them. This tells them to not move.
- When you are done with your warm up, stop in the middle of the area and wait for the instructor to tighten the cinch/girth.
- Wait for directions from instructors. Side walker(s) should also be ready, by the horse.

Leader

- The horse is your responsibility! You are in charge of controlling the horse. When the instructor tells you, take the horse to the location for the rider to mount. (It might be a mounting block or the platform depending on the rider.)
- Leaders - When entering the arena be aware of riders already in the arena and enter at a safe time - go with the flow of traffic.
- After you come to a complete stop, move to stand in front of your horse, this tells them not to move. Leaders - when stopping your horse please do not jump in front of the horse to stop it. Say whoa, slow your walk down and lightly pull back on the lead rope. The horse should stop at this point.
- Once the rider is on, the instructor will make any necessary adjustments then say it's OK to go, wait for the rider to acknowledge that they are ready, and then 'walk on'. If using side walkers be sure they are also ready to go.
- When walking with your horse, look forward, with confidence in your stride. The horse can read your movements and reacts to them accordingly.
- Listen for the instructor to give directions on what you should be doing.
- Be sure to keep distance of an elephant between the horses, some horses do not like others close by them.
- If you are turning your horse, turn towards the middle of the arena.
- If your rider is advanced enough to be off lead (the instructor will tell you to “unhook”) stay walking alongside the horse's head. You are now there for assistance if needed, otherwise continue to walk alongside the horse without steering or guiding.
- UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCE ARE YOU ALLOWED TO MOUNT THE RIDER ON THE HORSE.



Side Walker

- The rider is your responsibility! You are in charge of making sure that the rider is safe at all times. If they need a thigh hold, the instructor will let you know. They may need this the entire time! **You cannot leave this position!** If something drops to the ground and your rider requires a continuous thigh hold, you cannot get it! Let the instructor know about it.
- You are there to support and guide the rider. Help them to accomplish the directions given by the instructor. You are not the teacher, but can give gentle reminders. Encourage the rider to do things they can physically.
- Sometimes the riders become overwhelmed, patience and encouragement are key. It's ok to let them take a minute to breathe and process the information. Riders respond differently and sometimes need more time to absorb the information.
- **Please make sure to not touch the horse or rider unless instructed to do so.** Many volunteers will hold onto the saddle pad or horse to balance themselves and we want to make sure to provide the horse and rider their own space.



STEPS TO GROOMING

Follow the steps below to groom your horse
Try 3 times, then ask a friend, teammate or instructor if you need help!

01



Use the rubber curry comb to lift any dirt, mud or hair off your horse.
OK to use gently on legs.

02



Use the metal curry comb for any dried mud or for shedding any winter hair.
Do not use on legs.

03



Use the stiff brush to flick dirt and hair off the horse.
OK to use on legs and gently on the face.

04



Use the soft brush to help make your horse shiny and clean.
OK to use on legs and face.

05



Use the mane and tail brush to gently untangle and clean the mane and tail.
Ask an instructor if your horse needs detangling spray.

06



Use the hoof pick to clean the outside and bottoms of the hoof. Be sure to pick out any mud and rocks.
Be cautious of the frog in the hoof!