

Volunteer Handbook

Greystone Manor Therapeutic Riding Center



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Welcome!

Thank you for volunteering at Greystone Manor Therapeutic Riding Center (GMTRC)! Volunteers are absolutely critical to the operation of GMTRC. We appreciate your willingness to dedicate your time with us. This handbook is meant to help answer questions about our program, purpose, policies, and basic procedures. While nothing takes the place of hands-on experience, this publication can serve as a helpful reference.

Previous experience working with horses or individuals with special needs is helpful, but not required. We welcome anyone with the willingness to help and to learn. If you ever have a question, please ask. We all work as a team and we are here to help each other, as well as to serve our clients.

About GMTRC

Our Mission, Vision and Core Values

Mission

To enhance the lives of individuals with special needs through equine assisted activities.

Vision

To grow as a diverse equine assisted activities program of distinction that is valued in our community and beyond.

Core Values

Dignity: We treat everyone at GMTRC with the highest level of dignity and respect everyone's contribution to the program whether large or small.

Safety: We promise to "do no harm" either therapeutically or environmentally.

Professionalism: We utilize trained instructors and volunteers to ensure program excellence.

Community: We cooperatively work with members of the community to build upon the network of opportunities available for individuals with special needs.

Transparency: We operate in an environment of trust and integrity offering full disclosure of our program.

Health and Happiness: We strive to provide a fun environment for all participants in conjunction with a focus on the health and happiness of our human and equine stakeholders.

Programs & Services

Therapeutic Riding

Our core program at GMTRC is our therapeutic riding lesson program. Instructors certified either through PATH Intl. (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship) or CECTH (Council for Education and Certification in Therapeutic Horsemanship) conduct lessons to teach riding skills using adapted techniques to individuals with cognitive, physical, emotional, and/or social special needs. The process of learning to ride a horse provides many benefits. Riding a horse moves the rider's body in a manner similar to a human gait, so riders often show improvement in flexibility, balance, and muscle strength. For individuals with emotional challenges, the unique relationship formed with the horse can lead to increased confidence, patience, and self-esteem.

Equine Assisted Learning

This is an additional program which offers opportunities for our participants to work with our equines and learn horsemanship skills on the ground. This program includes our Adult Horsemanship Clinics, which are offered periodically as a single seminar, and unmounted lessons. Unmounted lessons are occasionally offered as an alternative to therapeutic riding lessons for participants that instructors determine would benefit from an alternative lesson structure. Unmounted lessons are scheduled in conjunction with our six-week riding sessions.

Special Programming

GMTRC partners with several area organizations to provide unique programs and opportunities for the children and adults each organization serves. This includes education opportunities to learn about horses, equine behavior and care, and unmounted horsemanship skills; summer day camp programming including riding time, creative equine-centered projects, and group activities around our stable and grounds; and more! Partner organizations have included: Aaron's Acres, School District of Lancaster, Girl Scouts of the USA, and many others. If you are interested in developing a partner program with GMTRC, please contact the Programs and Instruction Coordinator at 717-615-9222 or programs.instruction.gmtrc@gmail.com.

Instructor-In-Training Program

GMTRC provides the opportunity for interested, qualified individuals to complete their required instruction hours for certification. Interested individuals are expected to become an instructor with GMTRC for a set period following certification.

Certification for TR instructors is provided by:

1. Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.): www.pathintl.org
2. Council for Education and Certification in Therapeutic Horsemanship (CECTH), formerly Pennsylvania Council on Therapeutic Horsemanship (PACTH): www.pacth.org

Candidate Requirements:

- Candidates must adhere to GMTRC Volunteer Policies and Procedures and GMTRC organization policies
- Candidates must volunteer with GMTRC for a minimum of three riding sessions prior to starting their required instruction hours

Any individuals interested in becoming a riding instructor for GMTRC should contact the Programs and Instruction Coordinator at 717-615-9222 or programs.instruction.gmtrc@gmail.com.

Nondiscrimination Policy

Greystone Manor Therapeutic Riding Center, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, does not and will not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, marital status, and/or political affiliation. This non-discrimination policy includes, but is not limited to, employment, retention, salary and benefits, participation on the board of directors, acceptance of volunteers, acceptance of participants desiring to utilize our services, and scholarships for those participants.

About PATH Intl.

Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.) was founded in 1969 as the North America Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA) to encourage best practices in the field of Equine Assisted Activities and Therapies (EAAT) through accreditation, instructor certification, and networking.

PATH Intl. consists of over 850 member centers worldwide. Through these programs more than 40,000 individuals with disabilities benefit from activities, which include therapeutic riding, hippotherapy, equine assisted learning, carriage driving, interactive vaulting, and competition. GMTRC is a PATH Intl. member center and therefore we strive to uphold PATH Intl. standards of quality in instruction, horse management, and organization policies.

About CECTH

Council for Education and Certification in Therapeutic Horsemanship (CECTH) was founded in 1984 as The Pennsylvania Council on Therapeutic Horsemanship (PACTH). The Mission of CECTH is to provide mentoring, education and certification in the field of Equine Assisted Activities and Therapy (EAAT). The three-phase CECTH Pennsylvania Qualified Instructor (PQI) Training Program is a highly regarded, rigorous program and has certified therapeutic riding instructors from all over the United States and abroad.

Volunteer Program Information

Volunteer Philosophy Statement

Greystone Manor Therapeutic Riding Center (GMTRC) is a community-based organization whose volunteers comprise its heart and hands. GMTRC volunteers are committed, passionate, willing, caring, and professional, and they enhance the quality of the activities we provide. At GMTRC we value people, and our volunteers are afforded the same respect and care that GMTRC provides its clients. From their service experience at GMTRC, our volunteers are provided an avenue to help others, receiving in return many more blessings than given.

Volunteer Requirements

1. Due to insurance requirements and PATH Intl. center standards, all volunteers must be at least 14 years old. **No exceptions to this policy are possible.**
2. Volunteers are expected to demonstrate commitment, reliability, and punctuality. It is preferred that volunteers are available for at least two hours weekly for the duration of a session, which typically runs for 6-8 weeks.
3. All volunteers must complete the following forms each calendar year: Waiver of Liability and Volunteer Acknowledgements Form.
4. Volunteers must attend trainings provided by GMTRC for the role(s) they select. All new volunteers must complete a volunteer orientation session.
5. Depending on your chosen role, you may need to be capable of performing moderate physical activity and working inside and/or outside in varying weather conditions. Please make sure that you are comfortable with your role's requirements.
6. All volunteers must be capable of working independently with little to no staff supervision once they have completed the required training for their role.
7. Volunteers must possess a positive attitude, be adaptable, and be willing to be flexible.
8. Volunteers must be able to understand and follow directions and receive instruction.

Required Background Clearances

Due to insurance requirements, the nature of the services provided by GMTRC, and the population we serve, all volunteers 18 years of age and older must provide a clean Pennsylvania State Police Request for Criminal Record Check and a clean Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance. (Volunteers who are 18 years of age but still attending high school do not need to obtain clearances until they graduate or are no longer attending high school.) Both clearances must be submitted to GMTRC prior to attending New Volunteer Orientation. An FBI Criminal History Clearance can be substituted for the PA State Police Criminal History Check. Our policies state that clearances are considered valid for three years from the issue date. Clearances obtained previously for volunteering or employment are acceptable if they are within the validity period.

Health Insurance Coverage

Due to liability and insurance requirements, all volunteers must have active health insurance coverage in order to participate in any volunteer activities at the GMTRC facility or on GMTRC grounds. Individuals without health insurance coverage are permitted to participate in off-site volunteer opportunities, such as special event committees, serving on the Board of Directors, etc., however these opportunities are limited. Volunteers must provide health insurance coverage information to GMTRC as requested in their volunteer registration and must notify GMTRC of any changes, lapses, or discontinuation of coverage in an appropriate and timely manner.

Volunteer Training

GMTRC provides a mandatory New Volunteer Orientation session for all new volunteers. At this orientation, volunteers are introduced to GMTRC, our policies and procedures, and will complete sidewalker training. Many of our volunteers start with little to no previous experience with therapeutic riding, knowledge of horses, or skills in working with individuals with special needs. GMTRC offers trainings on a variety of topics throughout the year, and volunteers are strongly encouraged to attend trainings in any areas of interest.

Volunteer Positions & Roles

Lesson Program Volunteers

Lesson program volunteers assist in various positions to help ensure participant and horse safety and facilitate participant learning. Lesson volunteers should be capable of walking continuously for the 45-minute period of each lesson, with occasional short periods of jogging. Lesson volunteers should be comfortable working with both horses and individuals with special needs.

Sidewalkers

Sidewalkers are volunteers whose primary responsibility is to ensure the safety of the rider. Sidewalkers walk next to the horse during lessons and provide physical and/or emotional support to the rider.

- Physical support generally means utilizing a “hold” to help keep the rider balanced.
- Emotional support may include verbal cues and/or encouragement as directed by the instructor.

Sidewalkers are expected to arrive ten minutes prior to the scheduled lesson time and remain at the completion of the lesson to assist the rider with dismounting, ensure rider’s safety when exiting the arena, remove horse’s equipment (if applicable), and discuss progress on any goals with the instructor.

Horse Leaders

Horse Leaders control the equine during lessons. Leaders have an important role in maintaining the safety of the entire rider team and should understand equine behavior and be able to maintain awareness of the rider, instructor, and any potential hazards in or around the arena.

It is helpful for leaders to have previous outside experience with horses. Horse experience may also be obtained through assisting as a barn volunteer in our program, however it may take longer to obtain the necessary skills.

- Volunteers must serve as sidewalkers for at least one session prior to attending horse leader training.
- Leaders should be familiar with grooming and tacking procedures, basic riding equipment, and the specialized equipment used in a therapeutic riding program.
- Leaders must successfully complete appropriate trainings prior to working with horses in lessons.
- Leaders must be capable of maintaining horses in the event of an emergency.

Leaders are expected to arrive 25 minutes prior to their scheduled lesson to prepare their assigned horse by tacking and warming up in the arena. Leaders are also responsible for appropriate care of horse and tack following completion of the lesson, including but not limited to: sponging the horse (if needed), returning the horse to their stall or pasture, and putting away all tack and equipment appropriately.

Equine Learning Assistants (ELAs)

ELAs help in unmounted lessons to facilitate the learning of horsemanship skills with the participant on the ground. ELAs should be comfortable handling horses as needed and be familiar with general horse care and equipment.

Barn Volunteers

Barn Volunteers are a vital part of our volunteer team who work directly with barn staff to assist in the care of GMTRC's equines. This may include grooming, tacking, turn out/in, feeding, mucking stalls, cleaning, and a variety of other barn chores. While this is not always glamorous, it is very important for the health and safety of our herd and the operation of our programs. Barn Volunteers should be comfortable working directly with horses. Previous experience with horses is helpful, but not required. Skills can be obtained through volunteer trainings and/or mentorship.

Facility Volunteers

Facility Volunteers help with a variety of maintenance, cleaning, and grounds keeping duties. These may include, but are not limited to, lawn mowing, weeding, mending fences, painting, plumbing repairs, maintaining arenas, building and designing props, replacing bulbs/lighting, raking leaves, leveling ground, and cleaning bathrooms.

Office Assistants

Office Assistants can help with several administrative tasks, such as helping with mailings, new volunteer recruitment, writing articles for our newsletter, fundraising, filing, making copies, etc.

Schooling Riders

Schooling Riders are competent equestrians chosen by the GMTRC staff to school and exercise our equines. Schooling Riders work to maintain the fitness, obedience, and responsiveness of our lesson mounts, and to correct behavior problems. Schooling Riders must adhere to our *Schooling Riding Policy* and meet the requirements to become a Schooling Rider.

- Volunteers must serve with our program regularly (at least once per week) for a full session before being eligible to take the Schooling Rider Test.
- Schooling Riders must be physically fit and meet the weight/height requirements for their assigned horse(s). Schooling riding is not recreation; it is intended to improve the training, health, and wellbeing of our herd.

Schooling Rider Test

The Schooling Rider Test will assess candidate's riding ability and style to ensure that they have the competency to effectively school our equines. All GMTRC horses are ridden and schooled with English style gear and techniques. The test includes correct handling of the horse on the ground, including tacking, as well as mounted at the walk, trot, and canter, including use of appropriate lead changes. Candidates must have knowledge of basic horse management and terminology. Volunteers are not permitted to utilize GMTRC's equines to practice the exam pattern. When you are ready to schedule your test, contact Ellen Barnes: ebarnez1@yahoo.com.

Professional Volunteers

Volunteers can donate their professional services in areas such as photography, gardening, architectural design, electrical wiring, public relations, plumbing, painting, landscaping, finance, marketing, stable management, and more! If you have specific skills that you would like to offer, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator.

Volunteers with Special Needs

GMTRC will accept individuals with special needs as volunteers on a case-by-case basis, provided they are able to meet the same requirements as all GMTRC volunteers. For safety reasons, volunteers must be capable of completing all assigned duties with little to no supervision and without a personal aid or the assistance of equipment such as canes, walkers, wheelchairs, etc. Volunteers must also be capable of quickly adapting and reacting appropriately and calmly to any situation that may arise during their service, including emergency situations.

GMTRC reserves the right to determine that an individual must be reassigned to a more appropriate role, or discontinue their volunteer service if there are concerns relating to the safety of the individual volunteer or other volunteers, participants, staff, equines, etc. Please contact the Volunteer Coordinator with any questions.

Volunteer Recognition and Incentive Program

1. Volunteer Appreciation Wall
 - ⇒ Volunteers, staff, participants, etc. are encouraged to write notes of appreciation to volunteers and place them in the "Appreciation Box"
 - ⇒ Notes of appreciation will be posted monthly on display so that volunteers can see the positive contributions they and others have made
2. Volunteer of the Month
 - ⇒ Each month a volunteer is chosen and recognized for their great contributions to our program, and will receive a small gift
3. Free ongoing trainings and workshops
4. Annual Volunteer Appreciation Event

Volunteer Guidelines, Policies, and Procedures

Arrival at the Barn

Volunteers are required to wear their name badge during all activities at GMTRC. Name badges should be kept in the volunteer room when not in use. If your badge becomes lost, please notify the Volunteer Coordinator to obtain a new one. *Please check the lesson or barn duty boards for any changes upon arrival.*

Please turn off your cell phone prior to arrival at the barn. Unexpected sounds and loud noises may startle horses and cause an unsafe situation.

Kiosk Check In/Out

All volunteers should check in and out on the tablet kiosk in the Volunteer Room. This will record your volunteer service hours and help us know who is at the barn in the event of an emergency. Recording volunteer hours is very important because GMTRC utilizes service records when awarding volunteer incentives, applying for grants, board reports, etc. We also utilize them when writing recommendations for volunteers or providing hours verification for school or employment (see the [Community Service Hours](#) section of this Handbook).

Before Leaving the Barn

Check with Instructor or Staff Member

- Help may be needed with removing horses' tack, cleaning up the arena, etc.
- Instructors may want to briefly discuss the lesson and check with volunteers about any questions or concerns they may have.
- The needs of our herd and the barn periodically change, so there may be additional tasks that need to be completed, and extra help is always appreciated!

Program Closures and Lesson Cancellations

In the event of a weather-related cancellation for any GMTRC program, we will make every effort to contact volunteers via phone call or text message at least one hour prior to their scheduled shift. GMTRC reserves the right to cancel lessons based on changes in instructor, volunteer, horse, and/or participant availability. GMTRC staff reserves the right to cancel or discontinue any activity if a situation arises which would make continuing unsafe for participants, horses, staff, and/or volunteers.

Weather Cancellation Policy

Lessons will be cancelled if any of the following conditions occur:

- The high temperature is above 95 degrees or heat index is above 100
- The following weather conditions are strongly predicted to occur at the barn during the lesson:
 - Tornado warnings, severe rain, hail, or snow, and/or thunder or visible lightning
- Hazardous driving conditions

Please note: If lessons are cancelled due to weather, barn volunteers are still needed to care for our equines, except in the case of unsafe driving conditions. Our volunteers come from many different areas, so if driving is hazardous in your area, please do not feel obligated to attend your regularly scheduled volunteer shift. We just ask that you please notify the Volunteer Coordinator and/or appropriate staff member if you are unable to attend.

Volunteer Commitment

Volunteers are critical to the operation of GMTRC's programs and therefore your support is truly needed. Consistency in our volunteers is incredibly important for our participants and equines. Sessions are scheduled for six weeks and volunteers are expected to attend all lessons for which they are scheduled during the session.

Cancelling Your Shift

Please reserve cancelling your scheduled day and time for emergencies only. If you know you will be absent for two or more of your scheduled shifts during a session, please notify the Volunteer Coordinator. It may be decided that it is best to schedule a volunteer that will be available for the entire session. Please notify the Volunteer Coordinator of an absence or change in availability as far in advance as possible. In the event of a change in your schedule within 48 hours of your scheduled shift, please text or call the Volunteer Coordinator at 717-203-7388 and your supervising barn staff member (if applicable).

Communication, Conduct, and Behavior

Communication is key when working in a team environment. Communication can be verbal and/or non-verbal. If needed, arrange a non-verbal signal with your instructor to use in case you have an issue or need assistance. Open communication is very important, so please let your teammates or instructor know if you need a break or have a question or concern at the appropriate time. Our goal is for everyone to be comfortable and enjoy themselves. Working in a therapeutic riding team can be challenging but should not be overwhelming.

Individuals involved with GMTRC's programs are always expected to conduct themselves in a cooperative and appropriate manner. Examples of inappropriate behavior include, but are not limited to, consciously ignoring or contradicting staff directions; any form of harassment; or aggressive or abusive behavior to self or others, including horses. Individuals exhibiting inappropriate behavior will be requested to leave immediately and if determined, additional assistance may be called for by dialing 9-1-1. **Inappropriate behavior may result in dismissal from GMTRC's programs.**

Confidentiality

All information including, but not limited to, participants' personal, medical, and/or financial information are considered confidential. Confidentiality is one of the most basic responsibilities of GMTRC. Volunteers should maintain confidentiality and not discuss any related or identifying information with anyone outside their immediate team. **Individuals who breach confidentiality will be subject to dismissal from GMTRC's programs.**

Dress Code

Always keep in mind the weather as you may be working inside and/or outside on any given day.

What to Wear

- Your volunteer name badge! This should be clipped to a part of your clothing, visible, and should not get in the way of your movement.
- Shoes must be comfortable and suitable for your assigned duties. Footwear must always have closed toes and heels. Sturdy boots that cover your ankles are recommended.
- Long pants and long-sleeved shirts. In very hot weather shorts which cover most of the thigh, and t-shirts that do not expose the chest or midriff may be worn.
- Long hair should be secured back away from the face.

What NOT to Wear

- Overly loose or baggy clothing, or dangling items such as scarves, jewelry, lanyards, etc. These items create a hazard as they may become caught on tack, stall doors, or be inadvertently grabbed by a participant.
- Clothing which restricts vision or movement.
- Strong perfumes or very fragrant deodorants. Participants and horses can be very sensitive or allergic to strong smells and the scent may attract stinging insects.

Tattoos, Piercings, Body Modifications, etc.

Tattoos, piercings, and body modifications are not automatic disqualifiers for volunteer service. However, health and safety for all involved with our programs and service to our participants are always our first priority, therefore volunteers must follow these guidelines:

- Tattoos must not contain any graphic, obscene, offensive, or disturbing words or images.
- Facial or body piercings should have a plain, neutral colored, flexible retainer. Dangling jewelry of any type is a safety hazard and not permitted.
- Any gauged ear piercings should have a neutral colored, solid, flat plug, and must not exceed 0.5 inches in diameter. Facial or other gauges are not permitted.

GMTRC reserves the right to determine if any tattoos, piercings, modifications, etc. are inappropriate or unsafe for volunteer service.

Group Volunteering

GMTRC occasionally offers opportunities for groups of volunteers to come and complete a special project or service opportunity. Most frequently these opportunities involve facility and grounds beautification projects, such as cleaning, general maintenance, groundskeeping, etc. If you have an idea for a special project or are interested in scheduling a group volunteering opportunity, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator.

Community Service Hours

GMTRC is happy to assist individuals that need to complete hours to fulfill academic or employer requirements. Those needing to complete service hours must meet our volunteer requirements and must be able to complete their service during our regularly scheduled volunteer activities. GMTRC is unable to accommodate individuals who need to complete hours “at the last minute” or create opportunities that are largely outside our typical volunteer roles. Due to the nature of the services we provide, we are currently unable to assist individuals who need to complete court-mandated community service hours.

Please be aware that our ability to provide individuals with volunteer opportunities varies depending on available openings. Consistency is very important for our participants and our equine team, so returning volunteers are always given preference to stay in their assigned time slot or with participants whom they have worked with previously. Because of this, GMTRC cannot fully guarantee that we can provide any specific number of hours to an individual volunteer, however we will do our best to help you meet your service requirement. *If you need a letter or form completed to certify your hours, please allow 7-10 business days to fulfill your request.*

Health, Safety, and Emergency Situations

Volunteers must remain alert and be prepared for unexpected situations when working with horses and participants. They must be aware of the rider’s position on the horse, the participant’s emotional state, the horse’s disposition, and how the environment around their team could affect the horse or participant.

Helmets

All GMTRC participants, staff, and volunteers are required to wear protective headgear that is ASTM-SEI certified for horseback riding while taking part in any mounted activity. Participants also must wear appropriate, certified headgear during any unmounted activity involving equines.

First Aid

Volunteers should be aware of the location of first aid kits and AED devices; this will be reviewed at orientation. All instructors are CPR/AED certified.

- AED device is located on the wall of the Tack Room. Human first aid kit is in the Tack Room cabinets. Equine first aid kit is in the Toy Room cabinet.
- Use universal precautions in all situations involving human body fluids (i.e. blood, vomit, urine, or feces). ALWAYS use rubber gloves when handling human body fluids. Waste must be disposed of in a sealed plastic bag and placed in the trash. Sealable bags and rubber gloves are in both first aid kits and in general supplies storage.

Emergencies

- In the event of an emergency, sidewalkers are responsible for the safety of the rider and leaders are responsible for the safety of the horse. Instructors should give specific direction to all parties based on the situation.
- All lesson volunteers should be familiar with emergency dismount procedures; this will be reviewed at orientation.

Additional Guidelines

- ✓ Wash hands and/or use hand sanitizer before and after contact with each client, before and after eating, and after using the toilet, blowing the nose, touching contaminated surfaces, or when soiled.
- ✓ Be aware of and remove objects on the ground which could pose a risk to equines, participants, or volunteers. If you are not able to do so, alert your team so the object can be avoided and removed at a more appropriate time.
- ✓ Smoking and/or use of electronic cigarettes is not permitted anywhere on GMTRC property.
- ✓ Use of non-prescription drugs or substances that may cause impairment (including alcohol) is strictly forbidden and will result in immediate dismissal from the volunteer program.
- ✓ Do not chew gum or have objects in the mouth (i.e. toothpicks, lozenges, etc.) while at the barn.
- ✓ If you are allergic to insect bites, bring any appropriate medication each time you come to GMTRC. Be sure to let your team know of your sensitivities and the location of the medication.

Incident Reporting

Volunteers are required to report any incidents that occur while at our facility or during volunteer activities to a GMTRC staff member. Examples include, but are not limited to, injuries, issues due to misconduct, difficulties during mounting a rider, an equine stepping on a human foot, an equine bite, fires, natural disasters, or other situations posing serious threat to the safety of any person or animal within the program. This also includes “near misses” or other situations that may not result in immediately apparent injuries.

Reassignment and Termination Policy

GMTRC policies have been developed to serve the best interests of the entire GMTRC community. Safety, confidentiality, respect for humans and equines, and the preservation of an optimal environment for beneficial therapeutic riding are the primary reasons for strict adherence to these policies and procedures.

Individuals who are not able to perform their role, maintain a reasonable level of commitment, or fail to observe rules and procedures of the program will be given an opportunity to discuss any situation that is perceived to be a violation of GMTRC policies and may be provided with job reassignment. GMTRC reserves the right to make the final determination of the appropriateness of volunteers for our organization and may determine that it is best to terminate a volunteer's involvement with the program.