



Volunteer Handbook

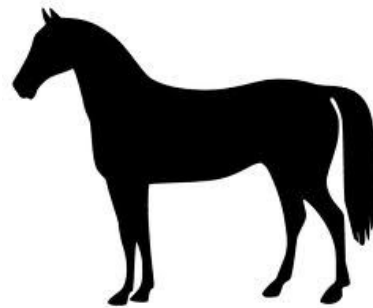
Revised November 2023

26665 West Cuba Rd Barrington, IL 60010
P.O. Box 376 Barrington, IL 60011
(847) 381-4231 office (847) 842-8349 barn
www.walkonfarm.org

WE VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are the backbone of all equine assisted programs. Duties include leading horses in class, sidewalking participants, horse care and assisting in the barn. Working directly with horses not your thing, you can help with the many unmounted tasks needed to keep Walk On running smoothly: office assistance, preparing participants for lessons, gardening and much more.

Walk On is an equine assisted program located in Barrington. Walk On works with children and adults with disabilities in a safe and enriching environment. The program runs six days a week, Monday thru Saturday, and our office hours are regular business hours, Monday thru Friday.



WALK ON HISTORY

Walk On is a program that provides equine assisted activities for people with physical, cognitive, social, and emotional disabilities. Walk On is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit charitable organization. The program began with its first participants in February 2007.

Walk On is governed by a Board of Directors with the support and assistance of an Advisory Board, professionally trained riding instructors and both office and barn support staff.



Walk On Personnel

Executive Director: Mary Rachel Taylor
Program Director: Mary Illing, OTR/L, Master Level Instructor
Instructor: Kelsey Thacker, Instructor
Barn Staff: Ramon Huerta, Barn Assistant
Christine Bania, Barn Assistant

Office Assistant: Lisa Barnett

Walk On's instructors are certified through PATH, Intl, the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship. Our facility is a member of PATH, Intl. and follows their guidelines for equine-assisted activities.

Contact Information

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 376 Barrington, IL 60011-0376
Barn Address: 26665 W. Cuba Road Barrington, IL 60010
Office Phone: (847) 381-4231 (Office open M-F, 8:30am-5pm)
Barn Phone: (847) 842-8349
Fax Number: (847) 381-4288
E-mail: walkon@walkonfarm.org
Website: walkonfarm.org
Social Media: Facebook – <http://facebook.com/WalkOnFarm>
Instagram – <http://instagram.com/WalkOnFarm>
Twitter – <http://twitter.com/WalkOnFarm>

Location

Walk On is located in Barrington Illinois on the South/ East corner of Hart Rd. and Cuba Road. It has a white 3 board fence and 2 white barns with green trim. There is a small sign at the end of the main driveway that says "Walk On" and a parking lot.

WARNING

UNDER THE EQUINE LIABILITY ACT, EACH PARTICIPANT WHO ENGAGES IN AN EQUINE ACTIVITY EXPRESSLY ASSUMES THE RISKS ENGAGING IN AND LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR INJURY, LOSS, OR DAMAGE TO PERSON OR PROPERTY RESULTING FROM THE RISK OF EQUINE ACTIVITIES.

Important Info

Program Volunteers

We ask that volunteers commit to a regularly scheduled time at least one day per week. Participant scheduling depends on the number of volunteers available each day. We do understand that illnesses, work responsibilities, etc. will occasionally conflict with your attendance, but please understand that we require volunteers to run lessons, and we count on you if you have sign up. If you must be absent on your regular day, please contact us as soon as possible so that we may contact a replacement volunteer. If you are unable to attend on a future date, please sign up on the volunteer absentee calendar in the barn, and make sure that you are not registered on the BAVC site. If you are ill or something comes up on a day you are supposed to work, please notify us by phone or email (847) 381-4231/walkon@walkonfarm.org). Please leave a message if there is no answer.

Signing Up

All volunteer lessons are booked through the Barrington Area Volunteer Connection <http://volunteer.thebavc.org>. Once you sign up for orientation, you will be sent a link to create your own personal profile. Once you are through orientation, you will be sent a link via email to add yourself to the Barn Volunteer user group. You can access all lesson timeslots through that user group. Open spaces are updated each session.

Volunteer Timeslots

Monday - 9-11:30am & 3-6:30pm
Tuesday - 3-5pm
Wednesday - 9am-12:30pm & 3:00-5:30pm
Thursday - 3:30-6:30pm
Saturday - 9am-12pm

We also have special groups that come in monthly and quarterly, and we have separate signups for them.

Volunteer Arrival

We ask that you arrive slightly prior to your scheduled time, in order to be briefed on the day's duties prior to the lesson. *PLEASE BE ON TIME.*

Upon arrival at the program:

- Find the *Daily Log* (located at the volunteer station in the front hall near the laundry room) and sign yourself in. Please print legibly if you need to use the paper sign-in book.
- Report to the instructor for job assignment.
- Sign out before leaving the program.

Clothing

- Dress in a fashion appropriate to work around horses.
- Closed toed shoes are required for safety. Tie shoes must be laced and tied.
- Dress for the weather. We recommend dressing in layers for comfort.
- Gloves are recommended in winter for outdoor tasks.
- No halter tops, crop tops, tube tops.
- No tight or loose fitting clothing that inhibits your ability to move safely.
- Remove loose jewelry that may get caught up or damaged.
- Perfume, body sprays or other scented items should be kept to a minimum.

Cancellations

Walk On tries to avoid canceling lessons. Canceling lessons keeps us from providing the services for our participants. Cancellations also cost the program time and money that is difficult to make up. Lessons may be canceled for the following reasons.

- Unsafe driving conditions.
- Insufficient number of volunteers.
- Holidays and special events.
- Instructor unable to conduct lessons.
- Participant canceled.

As much as we try to avoid times when classes are canceled or when the volunteer to participant ratio is not balanced - this can occur. During these times we may not need your help with the participants; however we will make every effort to find alternate duties for you. We appreciate your understanding during these times.

Should the staff deem it necessary to cancel the program due to weather or other unforeseen reasons every effort will be made to contact you prior to your scheduled arrival. In the event that you are unsure whether lessons are canceled or not please call the office at (847) 381-4231 or email walkon@walkonfarm.org. Please do not assume lessons are canceled. *All of our closings are listed on the Emergency Closing Center, as well as Facebook and Twitter.*

Your observations, concerns and questions are vital to the success of the program and they should be voiced to the instructors.

Special Information

- No phones allowed in the arena during lessons or in the barn aisle while you are working.
- No food or drink allowed in the arena.
- Participants cannot be given food due to possible food allergies.
- All photographs must be cleared by the riding instructor before being taken. Participants, volunteers and staff are protected by a photo release and confidentiality agreement.

General Emergency Procedures

If there is an emergency, the instructor must be notified as quickly as possible to start the emergency procedures. In the event of an emergency the instructor in charge will direct the staff, participants, guests and volunteers. No one is to leave the property in an emergency unless directed by the instructor-in-charge or municipal authorities.

Fire

In the event of a fire all participants will be dismounted and evacuated. If possible, the participant will be given their assistive device to facilitate in the evacuation process. Participants, volunteers, guests and staff will move to the gazebo. Everyone will be evacuated and will follow the directions posted throughout the building for the nearest exit. Designated staff will handle the care of the horses. The instructor in charge will designate one person to bring the volunteer sign in book.

Weather

In the event of inclement weather, Walk On will post any closings to Emergency Closing Center, Twitter, and Facebook. All volunteers and participants will be emailed. If none of these have been updated, Walk On is operating on a normal schedule.

Tornado

The instructor in charge will initiate emergency procedures and direct the evacuation process. All participants will be dismounted. Participants, volunteers, guests and staff will move to the office in the house. If time does not permit safe travel to the office, all participants, volunteers, guests and staff will move to the bathroom of the barn. Designated staff will handle the care of the horses. The instructor-in-charge will designate one person to bring the volunteer sign in book and the participant attendance book. The office and the barn bathroom are designated safe areas.

Guides for Volunteers

Grooming & Tacking

Grooming

All program horses require regular grooming. Horses must be well groomed prior to being tacked. Each horse has its own grooming bucket with its own grooming tools. However, sometimes grooming tools get misplaced. You must check the grooming bucket to have at least the following items- hoof pick, curry comb, hard brush and soft brush. Other tools included may be a shedding blade, mane and tail brush and/or mane and tail comb.

The horse should be tied in the stall when grooming. The bucket should remain outside the stall to prevent a tripping hazard, prevent the horse from being distracted and to let someone looking down the aisle that a horse is being groomed.

At the current time, volunteers are not allowed to pick the horses hooves. This will be done by Walk On staff. If you believe the horse needs to have their hooves picked, please find one of the barn staff to assist you.

After the hooves are cleaned and inspected it is time to move on to the curry comb. The second step is currying: make circular strokes about 6-8 inches in diameter on the muscled parts of the horse. Start at the neck near the head, move to the shoulder and upper leg and girth area, next to the back and sides of the horse and finally to the hip and upper rear leg. It is important to curry a horse to loosen dirt and hair and bring it to the surface where it can be brushed away.

Third, using the hard brush (like you might a broom) use short firm strokes to flick away all the loose hair and dirt from the horse. Begin at the neck near the head and move in the direction the hair grows (front to back and top to bottom). While hard brushing, use your free hand to feel for dirt, bumps, scrapes or anything else that might be out of order.

Finally the soft brush is used similar to the hard brush, but this time in long smooth strokes to bring out the natural oils in the horses coat.

Remember grooming is not just to get the horse clean but also to inspect the horse of injury or illness. Grooming also gives the horse and human a chance to learn each other's behaviors.

Tacking

Tacking requires great care to make sure the tack and equipment is properly fitted to the horse. In our program we use a wide variety of tack and equipment. It is important to know how this tack should fit the horse and how it affects the participant. The instructor will list the tack they want on the horse on the lesson board next to the tack room. New volunteers should ask for assistance when tacking to ensure it is done correctly. Improper tacking can cause great pain to the horse; it may be unsafe for the rider or may delay a lesson when the tack needs to be adjusted.

General Tacking Rules

- (1) Reins should only be attached just before entering the lesson and at no time should a horse be left unsupervised with reins on.
- (2) The girth should not be left too tight while in the stall. It will be tightened in the arena.
- (3) Saddles and surcingles should not cover or pinch the shoulders.
- (4) The girth should be just behind the elbow on the horse's girth line.

Volunteer positions during lessons

Volunteers assisting in lessons must work together as a team with the participant to encourage progress in a safe manner. *It is important to keep talking to a minimum to avoid distracting the rider.* This also makes it easier to hear the instructor's directions. It is important to know your duties and to not interfere with other volunteer's duties.

Remember, we want the participant to be as independent as possible while still supporting them as directed by the instructor.

Leader

The leader's job is to assist the participant in controlling and guiding his or her horse. A leader's first responsibility is to the horse, but you must be particularly aware of the instructor, participant, other volunteers and potential hazards in and around the arena. It is important that you should know the name of your participant as this is how the group will be addressed.

There are several things you will want to avoid when you are leading a horse. Here is a list of common mistakes leaders make. Be aware of what is going on around you and how your actions may affect the horse.

- Do not get too close to other horses.
- Do not pick up objects during the lesson because this reduces your ability to lead safely.
- Do not pat or play with the horse during the lesson they must remain focused on the rider.
- Be aware of the sidewalkers and avoid objects that they may run into such as barrels or the wall.

How to lead:

This section contains the basic concepts of leading. Leading not only requires a firm understanding of the information contained in this handbook but also **REQUIRES** active training under the supervision of an instructor.

Leading is probably one job that requires the most responsibility. While you are directly responsible for the horse you also are partly responsible for the rider, the volunteers assisting the rider and the correct tack and fit of the tack. The leader must be alert to the instructor's directions and be attentive to the actions of the rider. Sometimes, horse and leader combinations are not positive and the instructor may ask a volunteer to lead a different horse. This is not a bad reflection on the volunteer or the horse, sometimes horses and humans have temperaments that do not work well together. The instructor may give you time outside of lessons to understand how to improve your connection with a particular horse.

At Walk On we lead from both sides of the horse. The instructor may ask you to walk either on the “inside” meaning on the side closest to the middle of the arena, or the “outside” meaning the side closest to the wall of the arena. Because we switch sides often in a lesson, we attach the lead rope to the ring below the horses chin.

The leader's body position and body language can have a direct affect on the horse. Remember, when a horse is in a lesson it must be treated like any other service animal and not be distracted by being pet, rubbing against the leader or other behaviors that distract them from their work. Fast, sudden or irregular movement may startle a horse. Calm steady movement comforts horses because they can predict your intention.

Walk next to the horse between the nose and shoulder. Provide the horse with about 18 inches of lead rope from your hand to the halter. Remember not to drag or hold constant pressure on the lead rope. Doing so will make the horse unbalanced or pull away from the leader. If you must use the lead rope to encourage a horse to walk faster use short well timed tugs. Usually a horse will try to stay next to you and the use of the lead rope is not necessary. When halted for more than a minute the leader should turn and face the horse at a 90 degree angle. Facing position informs the horse they need to stand quietly. This also gives the leader a good view of the horse, rider, tack and other volunteers assisting the rider.

As a leader you must understand the directions given by the instructor. If the instructor asks for the participant to tell or cue the horse to walk on you must wait for the participant to do so. If the instructor looks directly at you and tells the participant to walk on you do not need to wait for the participant. The same idea is true for stopping the horse. The instructor may ask the rider to tell or cue their horse to “whoa.” The leader should continue walking until the participant makes some attempt to stop. However if the instructor needs the horse to stop at a particular point in the arena such as a barrel, cone or letter on the wall the instructor may tell the rider to stop at that specific point. The leader should stop the horse and the assistance to the rider should immediately ask the rider to cue “whoa” if they did not do so. The leader should limit their interaction with the participant if there are volunteers already assisting the rider. An example would be for the leader not to hand an object to the rider if they have a sidewalker that can perform this task. When the leader is assisting the rider they drastically reduce their ability to control the horse in the event of an accident.

If the leader becomes uncomfortable with a situation they should quickly and calmly get the instructor's attention. This can be for any reason, some examples are the horse beginning to be difficult to control, the rider or volunteer feeling suddenly ill, or something in the environment that appears to be unsafe. The instructor will take immediate action to correct the situation.

Finally, use good judgment during the lesson. If you are the leader and you see the participant unable or unlikely to perform a task assist them with as little effort as possible to complete the task. An example may be if the horse stops to smell the ground or begins to head for the arena door the leader should intervene to assist the rider as needed. Do not let a rider struggle to perform a task and finally fail to complete it. This may causes a serious set backs in their progress.

Points to remember when leading are:

- Maintain proper position to best influence the horse.
- Do not “play” with a horse while it is working.

- Provide enough space so sidewalker can avoid objects.
- Maintain a safe distance from other horses in the arena.
- You are responsible for the horse and its tack.
- Do not assist the participant if they have a sidewalker or spotter.
- Be attentive to the instructor and aware of the participant's cues.
- Never loop, wrap or wad the lead rope in your hand.

Spotting and Sidewalking

Spotting

The duty of the spotter is to provide assistance to the rider. The spotter must be within arm's reach of the participant as well as maintain vision of rider to assist as needed. The spotter is responsible to reinforce instructor's directions, reminding them to correct their position, give them verbal and visual cues and prepare the rider to perform a task.

Sidewalking

The sidewalker provides the same assistance to the rider as a spotter with the addition of performing a physical hold to the rider. The holds provide support, security, and safety to the rider. The three holds in increasing order of support are ankle hold, thigh hold, thigh and ankle hold.

- **Ankle Hold** - the volunteer grasps the cuff of the riders pant leg or their ankle with the hand closest to the rider. The rider's heel should be positioned under the rider's hip to maintain a correct balanced position. This gives the rider freedom of movement while still providing support.
- **Thigh Hold** - this is the most common support used with our participants. The volunteer grasps the front of the saddle above the rider's knee and lays their forearm over the rider's thigh. This hold may be adjusted, the closer to the rider's knee you hold, the less support you provide. The closer to the rider's waist you hold, the more support you provide. This instructor may ask you to perform a "low thigh hold" or a "high thigh hold".
- **Thigh and Ankle Hold** - this hold provides the greatest support to the rider. It is used for rider's that either have extremely poor balance. The arm closest to the rider performs the thigh hold while the other hand maintains the ankle under the rider's hip.

Unless directed by the instructor you should not release a hold without the permission of the instructor. You should also never attempt to support the rider's upper body, arms, shoulders or torso to assist in keeping them balanced unless directed by the instructor.

Mounting & Dismounting

Mounting

Mounting is primarily conducted at the mounting ramp located on the north side of the indoor arena. When mounting begins the instructor will ask for the horse to be brought up alongside and parallel to

the ramp and as close as possible. Usually the participant mounts from the horse's left side but there may be a time when the instructor wants to mount with the horse's right side closest to the ramp. The leader will stop along the ramp as directed by the instructor. The leader will then stand to the side of the horse's head opposite the ramp, facing the horse at a 45 degree angle. The lead rope should be held short to prevent any movement from the horse. The horse should stand balanced and quietly for mounting. The instructor may ask another volunteer to stand next to the horse to help the participant as needed. This is sometimes referred to as an off-side volunteer. The off-side volunteer may help the participant's leg clear the horse's back, assist in helping the foot in the stirrup or may transition into spotting or sidewalking as covered earlier. In the case of a lift mount, an instructor may require the volunteer to help the participant into and out of the lift mounting system. The instructor will give the volunteer specific directions.

Some volunteers may learn how to mount students without direction from the instructor from the ramp or from the lift. These volunteers are specially trained.

Dismounting

Dismounting to the ground

Most participants dismount to the ground. The instructor will ask for the participant to line up at a particular location. The leader should turn and face the horse and maintain a shortened lead rope to prevent unnecessary movement. Volunteers will continue supporting the rider as directed by the instructor. When the instructor conducts the dismount they will ask for both feet to be removed from the stirrup. The participant will then lean forward and extend their right leg over the horse's back. The participant will then lay across the saddle and slide down under the control of the instructor. The instructor may direct the volunteers to assist in the dismounting procedure.

Dismounting to the ramp

Participants who mount using the lift may also dismount using the lift. In this case, the instructor will ask the leader to line up at the ramp. Most likely the participant will have a leader and 2 side walkers. It is important that the side walkers maintain their support of the rider. The leader should line the horse parallel to the ramp under the lift track, providing enough room for the side walkers to stand comfortably. Do NOT get so close to the ramp that the sidewalker must let go or be squeezed between the horse and the ramp.

Participant's Riding Position

The participant's position while riding is very important. Proper position allows the participant to maintain balance, build core strength and perform tasks. The participant should be centered on the horse and not leaning left or right. The back should be straight with the participant's head facing forward. An imaginary line should be drawn from the rider's head, shoulder, hip and heel. This line should be perpendicular to the ground. The participant's foot in the stirrup should be level or with a slightly lowered heel, the stirrup should be near the ball of the foot. The reins should be held with the reins going from the horse's head up through the rider's hands out the top with their thumbs up. The participants at Walk On have a wide variety of abilities and it is important to strive for a correct position. Some participants may be physically and cognitively unable to demonstrate a correct, balanced riding position. The instructor will describe how best to support each specific the participant's

position.

Rider Fall and Emergency Dismount

Rider Fall

Should a rider fall from a horse the leader will move the horse away from the participant. The sidewalkers will remain with the participant and assist keeping them still and calm. All other volunteers and participants will halt their riders away from the scene and remain calm. The instructor-in-charge will determine the immediate needs of the rider and act accordingly.

Emergency Dismount

An emergency dismount is the action taken to quickly and safely remove the rider from the horse. This should be performed in any event that may pose a hazardous condition to the rider or to the horse. It is difficult to list all the possibilities that may require an emergency dismount. As a general rule, if anyone feels that the safety of the participant, volunteers, guests or horse is in jeopardy, they may perform an emergency dismount. After an emergency dismount has been performed the scene should be treated as a rider fall. How to perform an emergency dismount will be trained during volunteer continuing education. The general principles are:

- The leader maintains control of the horse
- The sidewalkers will remove the rider's feet from the stirrups.
- The sidewalker will reach around the riders waist and remove the rider
- The horse and participant should be removed a safe distance away.
- Anyone can order an emergency dismount if they feel safety is compromised

It is important to be alert during a lesson to perform an emergency dismount without hesitation. Even if you forget what action to take, do your best to safely remove the rider from the horse. Lack of action during an emergency is not acceptable.

Dismissal Policy

Walk On reserves the right to dismiss any volunteer for any reason including but not limited to the following:

- The volunteer's interaction with the horse, participant, parents, guests, other volunteers and staff is detrimental to any of the above. This includes behavior that endangers the person, animal or the premises.
- The work environment/responsibilities are detrimental to the volunteer's health.
- The volunteer is unable to complete the required tasks because of pressure, coping skills or emotional instability

The proceeding list is intended to give you notice of possible reasons for volunteer dismissal. It does not include, however, every type of unacceptable behavior or event that can or will result in a volunteer member's dismissal from Walk On's program. Walk On reserves the right to dismiss any volunteer member as it sees fit in its sole and absolute discretion.

Covid-19 Policy

Masking:

- Poll all participants, staff, and volunteers. Masks optional for timeslots (e.g. Monday Morning) where no one requests masks. Masks still mandated during sessions where mask requests are being made. In order to maintain anonymity, mandates will be for whole timeslot, not just a single lesson.

Please contact the office at walkon@walkonfarm.org or (847) 381-4231 in order to request that masks be worn during your session. It will be kept anonymous to ensure no one feels pressured.

Covid-19 positivity:

- If you have been in contact with someone with Covid-19 but you have no symptoms AND tested negative in the last 24 hrs, proceed as usual
- If you test positive, isolate for 5 days.
 - 1) If you have no symptoms, isolation is over after 5 days.
 - 2) If you have a fever, you must be fever-free for more than 24 hours before you return to Walk On (in addition to the 5 days)
- After a positive test, must mask (no exceptions) for 11 days OR two negative tests 48 hours apart.