



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

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Starbrite Mission and Goals:

The mission of Starbrite Therapeutic Equestrian Center is to serve individuals with physical, cognitive, social, and psychological challenges and to be known as a place of empowerment for these individuals and their families.

Our goal is to accomplish this through the following programs:

- Therapeutic Riding
- Horsemanship
- Horses for Heroes

We are pleased to currently offer therapeutic riding lessons to over 30 participants and are looking forward to offering physical, occupational, and speech therapies using the horse in the future.

The goals for Starbrite Therapeutic Equestrian Center are the following:

- Humbly serve God so that He may be glorified through the accomplishments of this program.
- Provide therapeutic riding for those with physical, mental, social, and psychological disabilities.
- Provide education and training for program participants, their families, volunteers, and staff.
- Increase community awareness of the benefits of equine-assisted services and programs at Starbrite.
- Seek financial funding and support.
- Provide juvenile intervention through our volunteer program.
- Continue to develop and enhance programs necessary to serve our communities and positively impact their families and environment.

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OVERVIEW

The History of Starbrite

Starbrite initially began operating under the umbrella of Windridge Therapeutic Equestrian Center of East Texas. After 18 months, the Windridge Board agreed that the Tyler Operation was well-prepared to sustain a quality therapeutic riding center independent of oversight by Windridge.

On February 1, 2020, the Tyler organization was rebranded as Starbrite Therapeutic Equestrian Center. On March 14, 2020, Starbrite officially moved to its “forever home” on 33 acres in Whitehouse, Texas.

Our Accreditation

Starbrite Therapeutic Equestrian Center is a member of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH). Their mission is “ensuring excellence and changing lives through equine-assisted services (<http://www.pathintl.org>).

What is Therapeutic Riding and How Does it Help?

Therapeutic Riding includes horseback riding and other activities with horses that can improve the cognitive, physical, emotional, and social well-being of individuals with special needs. For our participants, experiencing the rhythmic motion of a horse can provide improved flexibility, balance, and muscle strength. Furthermore, horseback riding also provides the natural benefits of outdoor recreation.

Learning about and riding horses can help our participants develop life skills. These skills include identifying and coping with feelings, developing communication and interpersonal skills, setting boundaries, overcoming fears, and learning to trust.

Why a Horse?

A horse is a dynamic living animal that lends itself perfectly to a multisensory approach. Grooming, mounting, and riding all contain therapeutic aspects. Touch, feel, smell, and movement all become important for learning and growing. Posture, balance, coordination, strengthening, and stretching all occur naturally when riding. Further, riding can be used as a form of low-level cardiovascular conditioning. Many individuals that use wheelchairs, braces, crutches, etc. can be independently mobile for the first time while riding a horse. This is very important in helping build self-esteem and confidence as well as for the neuro-connections to the inner core muscles that further contribute to posture and balance.

Important Information About Horses

Horses are prey animals with a well-developed fight or flight response. They are ruled by two questions:

- Will this eat me? Horses are designed by God to fear anything they haven't seen before. It is an instinct that keeps them alive in the wild.
- Can I eat this? Horses graze 15-17 hours a day in the wild. Food is always on their mind.

Horses do not understand human language. Horses speak through tone of voice, energy, and body language. They also have a very acute understanding of cause and effect. The "smarter" the horse, the better they make that correlation. That is the reason that horses are trained so easily. It is also the reason that a horse will not know what we want from them if we give varying cues. Therefore, it is so important that we are so strict in the procedures when encountering our horses. Everything we do is some form of training. We are either solidifying the training and behaviors we want from them, or we are undoing them. We greatly appreciate your support in this!

Starbrite's horses are hand-picked and highly trained. Due to their specialized training, we often do things differently than other equestrian centers. Because we are under PATH regulations, our horses are limited in the hours they can work during the day. We must also keep in mind that the population we serve has more trouble with balance and spatial awareness, making the specialized training of our horses very important.

Safety at Starbrite

General Guidelines

All individuals on the Starbrite property must comply with the following guidelines:

- For safety, cell phones are to be turned off. They are an easy distraction to staff, volunteers, participants, and horses. If you need to take a call, please step away from the lesson.
- Please do not smoke or chew (dip). We are a tobacco-free facility so we can ensure the safety of all persons and horses on the property.
- Do not chew gum or hard candy as it can cause choking.
- Feel free to bring a cold drink, snack, or lunch and store it in our community refrigerator, but clean up after yourself so that all volunteers, staff, and participants can enjoy that space.
- Only authorized personnel (instructors, volunteers, staff) are allowed in the stalls, teaching arena, and pastures.
- Mounted persons (program participants, volunteer riders, schoolers, and instructors/staff) must always wear a helmet.

Medical Releases and First Aid

Every volunteer and client are required to provide emergency medical contact information, a medical release authorizing treatment in the event of an emergency, and information about current conditions, precautions, allergies, treatments, or medications which might be important for us to know.

Emergency Procedures

In the event of an emergency, the instructor or director will immediately become the senior staff in charge. All other staff members, volunteers, program participants, family members, and visitors are to follow the instructor or director's instructions. If there is an emergency requiring an ambulance, fire truck, or police assistance, a 911 call will be made. Instructions for an emergency are in the common area outside of the tack room and office.

Please keep in mind:

- Emergency information is posted on the white board in the common area for: police, fire, ambulance, veterinarian, farrier, sheriff, and insurance. Directions to Starbrite and the calling procedure are also listed.
- Make sure you give clear directions and answer any questions the dispatcher has.
- Do not hang up until the dispatcher says you are clear to do so.
- There are horse and human first aid kits designated with a red cross located above the medicine chest in the common area.
- Please follow the evacuation procedures. Evacuation maps are posted inside each room to the right or left of the door.

Sample Mounted Emergency Plan

In the event there is an emergency while a participant is mounted, follow these guidelines:

- Horses will be halted.
- All handlers will position themselves off center, facing the horse.
- All sidewalkers will stabilize the participant with the hold asked of them.
- The instructor will instruct the dismount procedure verbally or physically.
- If circumstances call for the area to be evacuated, the participants will be dismounted from the horse(s) and the horses will be removed from the area by their handlers to a location determined by the instructor. If able, the participant will leave first.
- In the event of a medical emergency, the instructor will determine the necessity of dismounting the participant(s) and notify appropriate personnel.

Fire Procedure

- Fire extinguishers are in the tack room and in the main office.
- PLEASE immediately notify the staff!
- Call 911. Emergency information is posted on the dry erase board in the common area. Follow the written instructions for an emergency call.
- All personnel, volunteers, participants, and family members are to meet at the peace garden.
- An experienced person may be asked to get the fire extinguisher from the tack room or from the office if it is a small, controllable fire and use the PASS method.
 - Pull the pin
 - Aim the nozzle at the base of the fire
 - Squeeze the trigger
 - Sweep back and forth
- A judgment call will be made whether participants, families, and volunteers should evacuate and leave the property as well as if horses need to be turned out of the barn. If horses are released, close the gates to prevent horses from returning to the barn.
- A person will be assigned to meet the Fire Department at the driveway entrance and at the corner of FM 848 and Northwest Rd to direct them to the fire.
- Complete an Accident/Occurrence Report. Make a copy of the report.

Medical Emergency

- First Aid Kit is in the common area above the small medicine cabinet and is clearly labeled.
- If the person in need of Emergency Care is a participant – immediately notify the parent or guardian. This individual has the right to refuse the 911 call, if they are an adult.

- If the situation is life threatening:
 - Call 911. Emergency information is posted on the dry erase board in the common area. Follow the written instructions for an emergency call.
 - A person will be assigned to meet the Emergency unit at the driveway entrance and at the corner of FM 848 and Northwest Rd and have the siren turned off before approaching the barn.
 - An individual will be assigned to bring the human first aid kit to the instructor in charge, if necessary.
 - If the person in need of emergency care is the instructor in charge, and there is no other staff on the property, a trained volunteer can delegate assignments to others on the property.
 - Complete an Accident/Occurrence Report. Make a copy of the report.

Tornado/Severe Weather

- Starbrite does not have a storm shelter currently. Classes may be cancelled for the safety of all people and animals on weather conditions.
- During periods of extreme or severe weather conditions, weather reports will be monitored closely by an appointed person.
- Currently, Starbrite cancels classes due to imminent weather, lightning, tornado warnings, etc. Participants are to leave the property if classes cancel.
- Pop-up rain showers do occur from time to time and do not necessitate the cancellation of classes. Students can have an un-mounted lesson and learn about stable management, tack identification, etc., when appropriate.

Heat Exhaustion/Stroke

The hot summer months are difficult on humans and horses. Everyone is asked to drink plenty of water to prevent dehydration. Classes may be cancelled due to extreme heat and humidity.

Volunteer Information

All Starbrite volunteers must complete the necessary paperwork before their first shift begins. Turn in your paperwork to the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible to begin volunteering. This is an accreditation requirement.

Minimum Age Requirement

The minimum age required to volunteer at Starbrite Therapeutic Equestrian Center without a parent/guardian present is **14 years old**. Exceptions can be made for individuals who are **13 years old** and are highly experienced with horses, can provide a written letter of recommendation, and participates in appropriate training. Any individuals who are at least **12 years old** may help with barn chores such as: mucking, feeding, watering, sweeping, etc if a parent/guardian can be with them. Because working with horses can be potentially hazardous, the volunteer application includes a liability

release which our accreditation requires to be signed by all prospective volunteers (or parents in the case of minors).

What to Wear

Volunteers should dress appropriately for horse related activities around children.

- Wear closed-toe, closed-heel, supportive, and comfortable shoes when volunteering. It hurts when a horse steps on your foot, so make sure your footwear is sturdy.
- Please dress **modestly** in close-fitting clothing that is weather appropriate. Loose, floppy clothing can get caught and tangled with equipment. Long pants are required.
- During cooler months, bring a jacket that you can zip, and in warmer months, wear cool clothing, but please do not wear tank tops.
- Avoid dangly earrings and bracelets that can get caught and tangled, and if you wear a necklace, please tuck it into your shirt.
- Sunglasses are permissible. A hat gives much needed relief from the sun in warmer months and is encouraged, but not required.
- Leather gloves are also encouraged if you will be leading the horse.

Recording Volunteer Hours

Your time volunteering at Starbrite is important to us for fundraising purposes and recognizing outstanding volunteers. Please be sure to sign in and out on the computer each time you arrive. Manual sign-in sheets will also be available, if needed. Please round your hours up to the nearest half hour.

When You Can't Be There

It is **your** responsibility to find a substitute in the event you must miss a class. A sub list is published and made available each season and is made available to all volunteers. You can send out a group email to individuals on the sub list or call them to find someone who will sub for you. If it close to class time or you have really tried to find a sub and can't, please call or text the Volunteer Coordinator and let them know as soon as possible.

If you would like to be added to the sub list, please let the Volunteer Coordinator know. Offer to sub only if you really want people to contact you and you would be able to help at least occasionally.

If you are running late due to traffic conditions, weather, car problems, or other situations, please notify us with your ETA. If we know you are on the way, someone can stand in for you until you arrive.

Inclement Weather

Because Starbrite does not have a covered arena, classes may be cancelled occasionally due to weather situations. If a class is cancelled at the last minute due to weather, the staff will do all they can to contact you and let you know.

Attributes of a Good Volunteer

Reliability	Regular attendance is helpful to the instructors and very beneficial to the participants. Participants look forward to seeing their volunteers. We need you!
Punctuality	Late arrival can be very frustrating to a participant who has looked forward to their weekly lesson.
Training	Knowledge of horses is not necessary to begin volunteering. Starbrite is committed to teaching our volunteers. We ask that volunteers practice the methods we teach to ensure consistency with our horses. Please inform an instructor of any physical limitation you may have, so that we can find the right activities for you.
Curiosity	Please ask questions! Please ask at appropriate times, such as when a participant leaves. Always ask questions about safety issues or concerns.
Alertness	Despite your outward relaxation, always anticipate an emergency.
Patience	Help others learn and progress at their own pace.

Sensible, **modest** comfortable clothing – pants stay up, no underwear worn as outerwear, appropriate footwear, such as paddock boots, cross trainers, light hiking boots, sneakers, or western boots.

Disciplinary Action

Immediate action will be taken when there is failure to meet the guidelines set forth in this Volunteer Handbook, Starbrite's Policy and Procedure Manual, or when verbal instructions were given.

Examples of inappropriate behavior that will begin disciplinary action are:

- Weapons on the property
- Smelling alcohol on the volunteer's breath or altered behavior
- Abusive action or language towards or about an animal or human.
- Any sexual action or inappropriate language

A minor infraction will first be discussed privately. It is the Executive Director's judgment call whether an infraction is minor or an offense. If the infraction is an offense, the following steps will be taken.

1st Offense:

- Program Director will discuss the situation with the volunteer
- If volunteer is under 18 years old, the parent(s) will be notified of the offense and the action taken.

2nd Offense:

- Volunteer will meet with the Program Director and staff involved for a group discussion.
- Volunteer will be suspended for two weeks.
- If volunteer is under 18 years old, the parent(s) will be notified.
- If the volunteer is under 18 years old, he/she will communicate with Starbrite Staff only and will stay in designated area until parent arrives.
- If volunteer is over 18 years old, he/she will be asked to leave.

3rd Offense:

- Volunteer will meet with all staff and individuals involved.
- Volunteering is terminated for at least one year and possibly permanently.
- If volunteer is under 18 years old, parent(s) will be notified.
- If the volunteer is under 18 years old, he/she will communicate with Starbrite Staff only and will stay in designated area until parent arrives.
- If volunteer is over 18 years old, he/she will be asked to leave.

At any time, if any staff member or volunteer feels threatened, law enforcement officials will be contacted for assistance and security as appropriate.

The Program

Description of a Lesson

One or more volunteers and an instructor can work with a group of participants in an enclosed ring, open field, or stable area for any of several purposes. The participant may learn special riding skills, care of the horse, or how to saddle a horse. Each participant will be working toward individual goals. As a volunteer, you will be involved in every aspect of the lesson with grooming and tacking, through the lesson itself, and cleanup afterwards.

If you are new to working with or around horses or are unsure about working with or around a horse on your own, please ask for assistance or clarification from a staff member, your volunteer captain, or "buddy up" with another volunteer.

Riding Lesson Timeline

10-15 minutes before class:

- If you are horse handling, take your horse to the designated warm-up area and warm up the horse for the class.

Class:

- Usually lasts about an hour

After class:

- If you are handling the horse, take the horse back to the cross ties. If the participant is able, let them untack their horse and take their tack back to the tack room. If the participant is unable, untack the horse, put the horse back in the stall, and then put away the tack in the tack room.

Preparing for Class

It is important to arrive 15-20 minutes before class time to warm-up the horse if you are a horse handler. It is important that you are timely for the classes.

- Be wearing or pick up your name tag and sign in on the computer.
- Check the whiteboard to see what classes you will be assisting in.
- The schedule book in the tack room has the class time, participant, horse, saddle, girth, helmet size, reins, and stirrup length for each lesson day. The instructor will fit the participant's helmet.
- If you are not assisting in the class, check the whiteboard for a list of chores that need to be done in priority order. Make sure that you only do the chores that you have been signed off for. If you are unsure what you are cleared to do, please ask the Volunteer Coordinator.

Grooming the Horse

Grooming keeps the horse's coat clean and healthy, eliminates dirt, dried sweat, and loose hair that can irritate the horse under the tack. Grooming also stimulates nerve endings of the skin and helps to relax and warm up the muscles.

- Use the rubber curry comb in the large muscle group areas (neck, shoulder, back, chest, gently around the barrel, and hindquarters) to loosen the deepest layer of dirt, mud, and dead skin from the horse's hide. Use a firm, massaging touch in a circular pattern, working from the horse's head to the rear. Be sure to smooth your hand across the horse's chest (between the front legs) to check for cuts, scrapes, mud, or ticks that you can't see.
- Use the hard and soft brush to sweep the dust off the horse's body. Only use the hard brush on the large muscle group areas, but the soft brush can be used all over the horse's body. Again, brush in the direction of the hair growth, starting at the horse's head and working towards his tail.
- Use the hairbrush or comb provided on the mane and tail to remove twigs, bits of hay, shavings, burrs, etc. Start at the bottom and work your way to the top.

Remember, if you are grooming a tail, stand to one side and pull the tail gently over.

- Use the hoof pick to thoroughly remove dirt and debris from all four hooves. If you feel uncomfortable doing this, or find it difficult, ask for assistance. It is vital not to skip this task.
- Please return all equipment back to the horse's groom box. This allows for efficiency and ease for everyone at the facility.

Mounting Procedures

During mounting, handlers hold horses in the designated holding area while sidewalkers stay with the participants. Mounting is conducted by the instructor; volunteers assist as directed.

There are three types of mounting:

Ramp mount	Used for participants using wheelchairs or who are not yet independent
Step mount	Used for participants who are independent and able to step into the stirrup to mount
Block mount	Used for participants who need to mount the horse inside of the arena

When assisting in mounting, the handler should:

- Approach ramp, step, or block in the direction requested by the instructor, turning to face the horse just upon entering.
- Position the horse close to the platform where the participant will be positioned for mounting.
 - Allow the horse to relax, holding him quietly and not restricting his head.
- Once the participant is mounted and the cue is given by the instructor and participant to "walk on," guide the horse slowly and quietly out of the mounting area until both the offside sidewalker and instructor are standing on the ground. Once the horse is clear off the ramp, step, or block, turn to face forward and walk into the arena and stop in the center with the horse's tail toward the gate.
- Once stirrups and girth are adjusted and the participant has said or otherwise indicated "walk on," lead the horse slowly and quietly as directed by the instructor.

When assisting in mounting, the sidewalker(s) should:

- If doing offside, position yourself on the far side of the horse or as directed by the instructor.
- Support participant as directed by the instructor.
- If assisting at the ramp, assist the participant in putting his/her leg over the saddle to sit gently on the horse and then assist the participants foot into the stirrup. If the rider is doing a crest or croup mount, follow the instructor's directions to help the participant onto the horse. Maintain a thigh hold until out of the mounting

area. If assisting at the step or block, apply offside pressure on the stirrup by putting weight into the offside stirrup to balance the weight being added by the participant. Assist the participant's foot into the stirrup.

Learning to Horse Handle

- Hold the lead rope 6-12 inches from the snap to allow for the natural motion of the horse's head. Hold the extra rope in your inside hand, doubling the excess back and forth across your palm. **NEVER** wrap it around your hand; always fold the rope.
- The handler's responsibility is the horse always. The handler helps to maintain the horse's pace, calmness, and focus, while allowing the participant to do as much as they can do.
- Lead from the left side of the horse (unless asked to lead from the right side), just behind the horse's head, holding the lead line. Make sure the lead rope is between the reins, not over them.
- Keep a minimum of 2 horses' length between your horse and any other horse in the arena.
- Make turns gradually; sharp turns can throw the participant off-balance. Allow space for sidewalkers when next to a fence, rail, or obstacle. Make a big circle or cut across the arena to avoid getting too close. Let the sidewalkers and participant know when you are about to turn, circle, or cut across the arena.
- When the horse is stopped, the leader stands at a 45-degree angle in front of the horse, toes pointed at his chest, to keep the horse stationary. Allow the horse to move his head and stretch but keep him quiet and calm by petting him or softly speaking to him.
- To stop the horse, say "whoa" while adding a half-halt by gently pulling back on the rope and then releasing. If the horse does not stop, repeat with several small tugs.
- Participants are urged to gently control their horses to the best of their abilities. A horse handler must never take the place of the participant but should be there to assist as directed to keep the horse in control. Check with your instructor before the lesson regarding your participant's level of ability in controlling their mount.
- When the participant is controlling the horse, allow more slack in the lead (12 inches or as directed by the instructor) so that you will not inadvertently influence the horse. The horse may be confused if it feels a tug both on the lead line and the reins and may not attend to the reins as he should.
- When changing pace, have the horse follow your pace rather than you are following the horse's. Transition the horse from a walk to a fast walk into a trot by increasing your own walking pace and lengthening your stride, rather than jogging. Conversely, make a downward transition from the trot by slowing down to a fast walk, then to a walk. This will make for a smoother transition and will not throw the participant off balance.
- Horses perform best when they are given a command and allowed time to process it. To help keep the participant and horse balanced, use smooth

transitions, clear commands, large circles instead of small ones, and gradual starts and stops.

- Whenever possible, try to avoid making gait transitions on the turn (in the corners of the arena).
- **Be sure to hold the horse's head straight, especially at the trot.** Keep the horse's head level as well. If the head is too high, the horse will hollow his back and cause the participant to be unbalanced. If his head is too low, the horse will pull the participant forward.
- Pulling the horse will distort his gait and make him move crookedly; the participant will become unevenly seated and lose the rhythm of the gait. Even steps of the horse are crucial to maintain the participant's balance. Short tugs work better than a steady pull on a poky horse.
- When the horse is frightened by an object, let him stop, face the object, look at it, and sniff it (don't let the horse spin and try to flee). Give the horse enough time to overcome his fear, and then reassure him and help to calm him in a slow, soft voice.
- Keep conversation to a minimum so that the participant can listen to the instructor.
- When the lesson is finished and the participant dismounts, assist the participant with running up the stirrups. Be sure they walk in front of the horse to get to the other side.
- Utilize half-halts to warn the horse you are about to ask something new of them.

Learning to Be a Sidewalker

The side walker's role is to help the participant with balance and reinforce instructions in the lesson. If there are two sidewalkers, the inside sidewalker (the one closest to the center of the ring) will clarify instructions. Too many people talking to the participant can be confusing.

Different methods of physical support may be designated by the instructor, depending on the participant's needs. For example:

Thigh hold:	Place your arm closest to the participant across the participant's thigh and grasp the front edge of the saddle.
Ankle hold:	Hold the participant's boot/shoe near the ankle
Heel hold:	Grasp the heel and back part of their boot from behind and support it in place. Be careful not to inadvertently pull the leg or foot out of position with your movement.
Belt hold:	Hold the participant's safety belt or gait belt to assist with balance. This is done while supporting the legs.
Spotting:	Walk beside the participant's leg to assist when needed (i.e., at the trot or to reinforce directions).

If you are not clear what you should be doing, ask your instructor.

- Observe the participant with your front or side vision always. Never become so relaxed that you are not totally aware of the participant, horse, leader, instructor, and activities around you.
- Be sure not to lean on the horse or participant since this pressure may unbalance the participant or irritate the horse.
- When the participant is using body and leg aids and does not need to be supported, do not touch the horse, saddle, or pad, since this may interfere with the aid applied by the participant.
- You may need to reinforce the instructor's directions, assist the participant in carrying out instructions, or direct the participant's attention to the task.
- Listen to the instructor's directions so you can be ready to reinforce, when necessary, BUT allow the participant plenty of time to process the information before you begin to assist. For example, if the instructor says, "Pull on the right rein towards me," and the participant seems confused, gently tap the right hand and say "right."
- Talking to the participant while having a lesson is not recommended since it interferes with the communication between the participant and instructor. Many participants with a disability have difficulty focusing on instruction, so all unrelated talking should be kept to a minimum.
- Refrain from talking to the other sidewalker or handler during the lesson unless it has to do with the participant's position or balance, or to do with the horse. Be sure that you do not talk with other participants or volunteers in the arena as they pass you. Any unnecessary talking distracts the participant, shows disrespect for the riding lesson, and diverts the attention of the team.
- Participants who need moderate support, especially support to the back, will need more attention. Be sure that you understand and are comfortable with the method of support, both mentally and physically, before moving into the riding lesson.
- If you become tired during the lesson and would benefit by switching sides, let the instructor and handler know. The handler will stop the horse, and the instructor will provide support to the participant while you walk to the other side of the horse.
- Be careful not to inadvertently pull the participant towards you when you are physically supporting them.
- When the participant is dismounted, make sure he or she always walks in FRONT of the horse when going from one side to the other.
- **ALWAYS:** If you tire enough that you are unable to support the participant with the requested hold, let the instructor know. There are often other volunteers available to take your position while you rest; or you may be able to trade places with a sidewalker that is working with a participant that does not require as much support.

In short, SPEAK UP IF YOU NEED SOMETHING TO CHANGE DURING A LESSON

Adjusting in Class

It is always appropriate to ask the handler to stop the horse if ...

- The participant is off balance and cannot regain it while the horse is moving.
- The saddle pad has slipped, or the girth is loose.
- The stirrups need adjusting.
- The participant's helmet needs to be adjusted.
- The participant is fatigued, in pain, or needs to stop for other reasons.
- You need to change sides, or if you are having some difficulty carrying out your job in comfort or efficiently. When changing sides, have one volunteer change at a time. NEVER leave the participant unsupported.

Special Notes

Falls of a horse are rare, but they can happen. Don't panic! Handlers stop all horses, and each volunteer tends to their participant or horse. The instructor is responsible for the fallen participant.

Be patient with your participants; give them time-and-a-half to respond, to try, and to do the task asked of them. The rewards, no matter how small or large, make your volunteer work very worthwhile. Without volunteers, we would have a very difficult time making this program a reality.

After the Lesson

The reins can be taken off the horse if the participant used a halter. The handler or the participant and handler may lead the horse back to the crossties. If the participant leads the horse, the handler should stand behind the participant to assist if needed. The participant should hold the lead rope with two hands, and the handler generally walks behind.

Handlers:

- Attach the horse to the crossties. Detach the lead rope from the halter. **NEVER tie a horse with the lead rope attached to a bridle, or by the reins.**
- If the participant is able, allow them to untack the horse, taking off the girth if it is an English saddle and leaving the girth on if it is a Western saddle. If the participant is unable to untack the horse, the handler or sidewalkers can untack the horse and place the saddle in the tack room.
- Once the horse is untacked, the handler will put the horse back in the stall and remove the halter and lead rope.

Sidewalkers:

- Assist in untacking the horse if the participant needs help. If the participant is unable to untack the horse, assist the handler in untacking and bring the saddle and reins back to the tack room.

Getting to Know the Starbrite Participants

General Approach and Interaction

It is important to remember that every person, child, or adult is an individual and wants to be treated with that understanding, regardless of having a disability or not. These individuals can be mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, friends, neighbors, or coworkers. Each one of our participants has their own learning rate, style of learning, unique personality, and temperament, and they all deserve to be treated with dignity, respect, and patience. We must always look beyond the disability into the person, aiming to provide them with a warm and favorable environment to grow and learn in.

Relating to Our Participants

Being around someone with a disability, especially if it is more profound, may be a new experience for you. You may be overwhelmed at first with things that you have never seen or do not understand. This is natural for most people. Allow yourself time to get used to being with a person who has a disability. Do not give up on being a part of the program without a fair try, because your experiencing can be incredibly rewarding. At first, you may want to do jobs that are not in direct contact with the clients. Feel free to talk to a staff member about this. This is not an uncommon request. If working directly with our participants is a hardship for you, consider helping Starbrite in some other way.

Each of us must learn how to relate to others, especially if it requires new skills and understanding. Here are a few suggestions to create a positive relationship with a client:

- Understand that each of our participants were created in the image of God and deserve the same amount of kindness and love as everybody else.
- Always be your authentic self.
- Recognize that people with disabilities ALSO have goals within their own home; they also have families and, sometimes, a demanding job.
- Emphasize everyone's abilities, not their limitations.
- Always be patient as they are talking, walking, or responding to instructions – let them find comfort in their own pace.
- Explore mutual interests in a friendly way. For starters, talk about the horse and whether the person has ridden before.
- When conversing with the participant or the parent/caregiver near the participant, speak directly to the participant or include them in the conversation. They may not be able to speak, or may not even appear to be listening, but they appreciate the consideration.
- Use conversation and social behavior that you might use in any new situation. Participants enjoy discussing things such as TV shows, school, movies, sports, food, and other things we are all interested in.
- Allow the participant to expand their skills and independence, even when their movements may appear awkward to you. Stepping in to help them too quickly may hinder their efforts.

- Respect the participant's right to independence and their request for the kind of assistance they require.
- Be guided by the wishes of the person with a disability. Talk about the disability if it comes up naturally but respect their privacy as well.
- Appreciate what the participant can do. Remember that the difficulties the participant may be facing could stem from society's attitudes and barriers rather than from the disability itself. People with disabilities generally do not view themselves to be as handicapped as society perceives them to be.
- Be considerate of the extra time it might take someone to accomplish or respond to something. Be patient.
- Let the participant set the pace in walking and talking.
- It is okay to say to either a child or an adult, "I'm sorry, I cannot understand you. Please say it again."
- Communicate with your heart and see each person from their heart.
- Acknowledge that we all have the opportunity for vast potential in our lives. Share the feeling that our potential is found in the present moment.
- Please respect the privacy and confidentiality of our participants and their families and refrain from asking any questions about their incapacities or reasons for participating in Starbrite's programs.

If you have any questions or concerns, please speak with any of the staff members after the lesson in private.

Choosing Words with Dignity

Without realizing it, you may have adopted some common reference words or phrases about individuals and groups of people with disabilities in ways that undermine them as functioning, viable persons with their own unique abilities, interests, and skills. When active participation or communication is not possible for an individual with disabilities, they can still feel and express happiness, joy, pride, and a sense of accomplishment when encouraged. At Starbrite, it is important to remember that we are all people first, and when we refer to others in this manner, we exhibit and model an attitude of encouragement.

If there is ever a time when you need to refer a participant's disability, always mention the person first and the disability second. The disability should never be used as an adjective to describe the individual (i.e., autistic child, Down's child). Instead, it should be used as a noun (i.e., child with autism, child with Down syndrome). Avoid speaking with labels such as "he's crazy" or "she's autistic," or using words that have a negative connotation, such as "she suffers from a birth defect." Instead, phrase it as "she is an individual with autism" or "she has a congenital disability."

Appendices

The following pages offer additional information to help you learn more about Starbrite and being a volunteer. There are many opportunities to expand your horse knowledge, to add to your experience working for a non-profit, and to increase your responsibilities as a volunteer. We encourage you to utilize your skills and interests while volunteering at Starbrite.

Staff Email Directory

Main Starbrite Phone Number: (903) 530-4050
Starbrite Cell Number: (903) 312-1050

Name Job Title	Email
Borah, Sterling Instructor-in-Training	sterling@starbritetyler.org
Lauren Buford-Jordan Program Director	ride@starbritetyler.org
Clark, Helen Volunteer Coordinator	helen@starbritetyler.org
Goyette, Samantha Volunteer Coordinator	volunteer@starbritetyler.org
Lee, Melissa Barn Manager	melissa@starbritetyler.org
McCall, Cindy Executive Director	cindy@starbritetyler.org
Picard, Alissa PATH CTRI	alissa@starbritetyler.org
Phipps, Tonja Administrative Assistant	admin@starbritetyler.org

Frequently Asked Questions

Q *Can volunteers ride Starbrite horses?*

A Starbrite is excited to offer a schooling program for anyone who has experience riding horses. Anyone who is interested will be tested by the Program Director and Director of Volunteer Services to see if the volunteer is a fit for the program. If you are not chosen, you can choose to take lessons with us by contacting our Program Director to register.

Q *Where do the horses come from?*

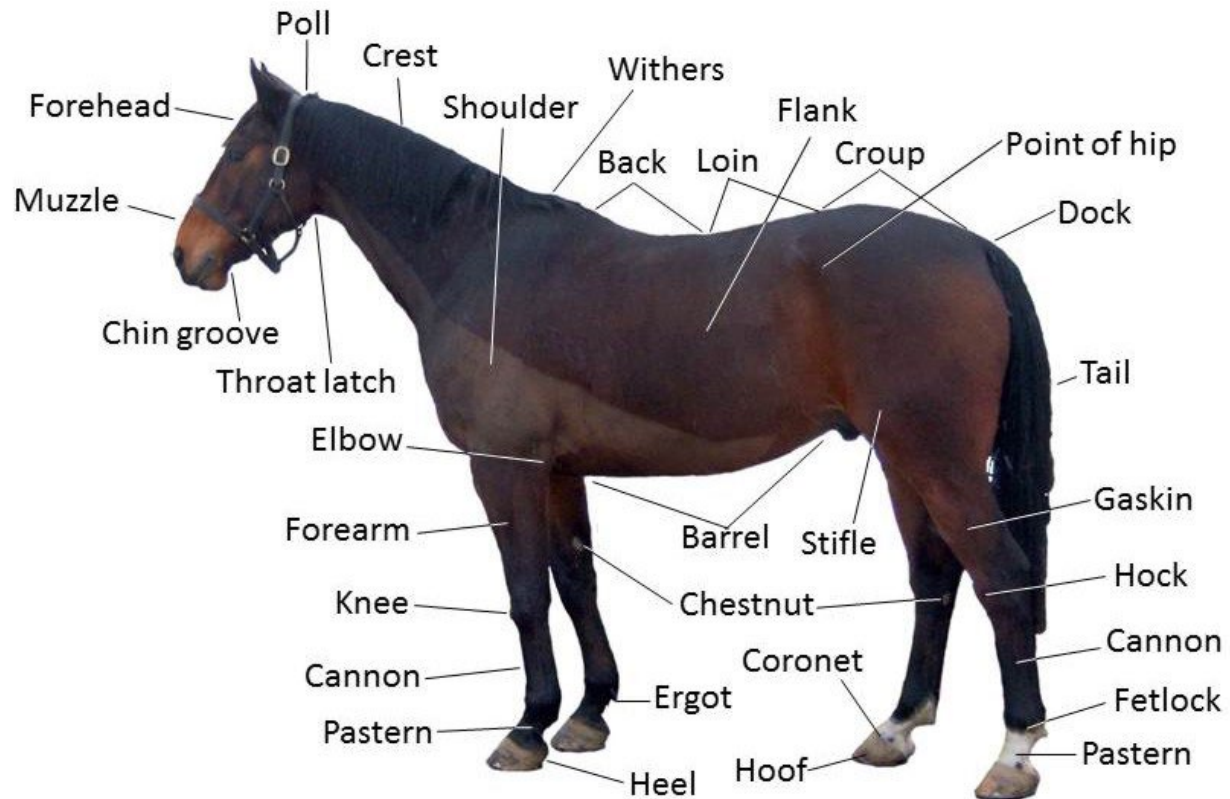
A All our horses currently have been donated to us from a variety of sources. If there is need in the future, we will also purchase horses. When a horse is offered to Starbrite, it will be brought into the barn on a trial basis and carefully tested and examined for therapeutic value, temperament, ability, soundness, and willingness. This trial period may last several weeks. Not every horse is suited for therapeutic riding, so if a horse is not a good match for our program, the horse either returns to the original owner or a new home is found.

Q *Who do I contact about ...*

A Becoming a schoolerProgram Director
Donating a horseProgram Director
Finding out more about client scholarshipsProgram Director
Client admission process Program Director
Corporate fundraisingExecutive Director
Making a donation Executive Director
Hosting/Coordinating a fundraising event Executive Director
VolunteeringVolunteer Coordinator
Helping with special/one-time eventsVolunteer Coordinator
Purchasing items from Starbrite storeVolunteer Coordinator

Horse and Tack References

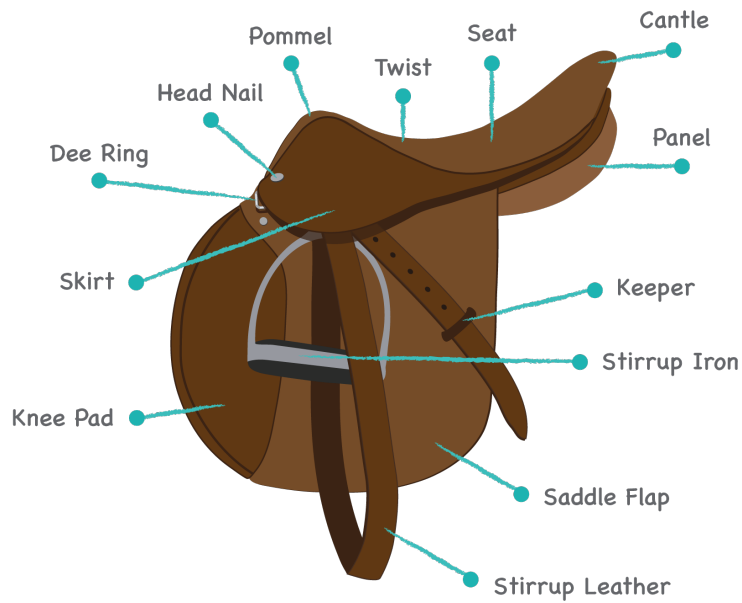
Parts of the Horse



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Parts of the Saddle – English and Western

English Saddle

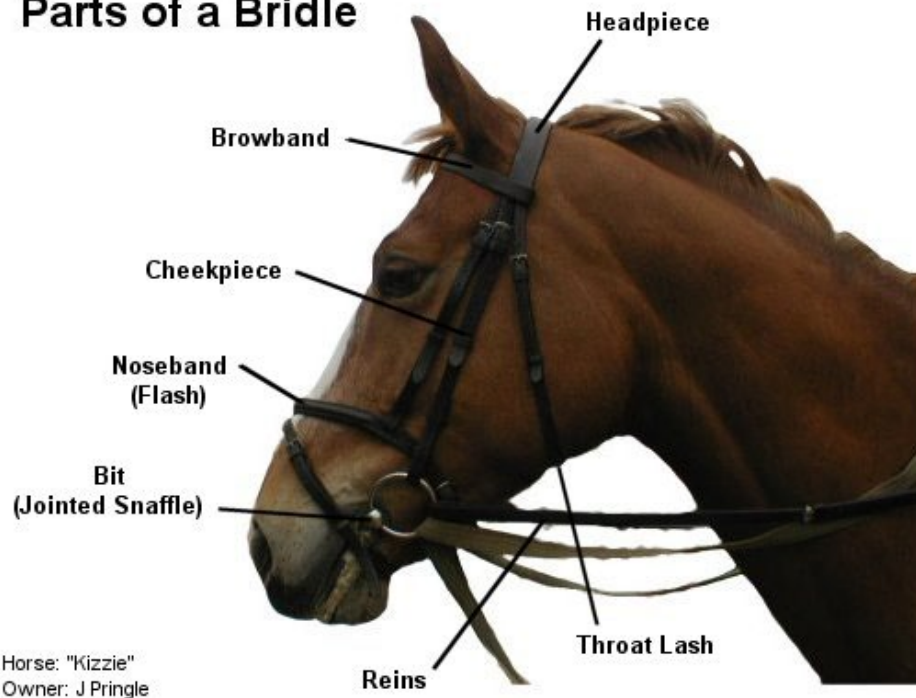


Western Saddle



Parts of the Bridle and Halter

Parts of a Bridle



Parts of a Halter



Special Equipment

Your horse may require one or more pieces of special equipment. Here are some that are commonly used at Starbrite.



Bareback pads: Often used in hippotherapy techniques. They provide the participant with greater ease of movement on the horse's back than is allowed in a saddle. They also allow the horse's movement to translate freely to the participant for the most benefit.



Gait belt/Safety belt: a medical device/product designed to provide stability for the user during ambulation or transfer to a chair/bed. We use them to give sidewalkers a hand hold for some participants.



Non-slip pads: thin rubber pad that is usually placed between the horse's back and the saddle pad. It keeps the saddle or bareback pad from slipping as the participant moves on the horse's back.



Rainbow reins: colored at intervals for appropriate cuing and holding with relation to the horse's face and participant's arm length. Participants can easily understand "Hold green to walk" or "Hold blue to trot."



Safety helmet: all riders must always wear a well-fitting helmet while mounted. This includes participants, schoolers, and instructors.



Surcingle: used in the equine world primarily for vaulting patterns. Vaulting is a series of gymnastic movements performed on/with the horse at varied gaits. For therapeutic riding, the surcingle provides one or two handles for a participant to use to stay balanced. The surcingle is placed on the bareback pad and attached using a dressage girth over the bareback pad cinch.

Understanding and Working with Horses

Reading a Horse's Ears

Understanding how to read what a horse's ears are telling you is key to understanding what the horse is thinking about. The horse can tell you how he is feeling and what he is paying attention to by the way he uses his ears. See the following examples.

Ears forward but relaxed	interested in what's happening in front of him, but not afraid
Ears turned back but relaxed	listening to his rider or what's behind him, but not afraid
Ears pointed stiffly forward	alarmed or nervous about what's ahead, looking for danger
Ears pointed left and right	relaxed, paying attention to the scenery on both sides.
Ears stiffly back	annoyed or worried about what's behind him; might kick if annoyed
Droopy ears	calm and resting, horse may be sleeping
Ears flattened back against neck	violently angry, in a fighting mood; may fight, bite, or kick

Other signs you should notice are:

- Tucking the tail down tightly: danger to the rear; horse may bolt, buck, or kick
 - Watch out if ears are flattened, too!
- Switching the tail: annoyance and irritation at biting flies, stinging insects, or tickling bothersome actions or a rider or another horse
- Droopy ears and resting one hind leg on toe: calm and resting, horse may be dozing
 - Don't wake him up by startling him!
- Wrinkling up the face and swinging the head: threatening gesture of an angry or bossy horse
 - Watch out for biting or kicking.

Pointers for Handling the Horse

- If you have had a busy day and are a little nervous, try to relax, breathe deeply and evenly, and speak to the horse. Keep your movements slow and deliberate. As you relax, so will the horse.
- Running around the horse can make him nervous. Minimize extreme joy or excited vocalization. Noises can make a horse anxious.
- When possible, approach the horse calmly from its side. When you can see his eye, he can see you.
- If you must approach the horse from the rear, always speak to him, since he may not see you, even if you think he knows you are there.
- The horse can learn to understand the sounds of different words.
- Pat the horse on the shoulder or neck, not on the head. Rub his head instead, he will enjoy being caressed (Museler, 1984).
- Do not abuse a horse. Horses are not naturally vicious. Control your temper. "Never deal with the horse when you are in passion" (Xenophon, 380 BC).
- Be firm, consistent, kind, and gentle.

The Nature of a Horse

- The horse will try to please you if he understands what you want.
- The horse will move away from pressure or resist force.
- Horses are herd animals and need the companionship of other horses, animals, or people. They copy the other horses' actions.
- Horses are gentle animals who will accept you as their leader.

Program Descriptions

Therapeutic Riding

Starbrite's Therapeutic Riding program focuses on teaching riding skills to participants with cognitive, physical, and/or emotional challenges. When the participants are mounted, experiencing the rhythmic motion of the horse can provide improved flexibility, balance, and muscle strength. With this rhythmic motion, our participants experience a freedom of motion and ability that they cannot or do not enjoy in other aspects of their lives.

Therapeutic Riding lessons can be conducted with an instructor and one participant, or an instructor with multiple participants. The instructor evaluates and sets goals for each participant that work toward achieving during each lesson. These goals may range from sitting up on the horse without the use of sidewalkers to holding a two-point position for an entire lap around the arena. Our instructors are dedicated to helping our participants grow and achieve their independent potential.

Physically, the horse in motion moves a participant with disabilities rhythmically and naturally through space in a way that simulates the human walking gait. This type of motion develops core muscle strength, balance, and posture. Horseback riding also develops gross and fine motor control and promotes coordination.

Cognitively, horseback riding increases concentration, improves sequential thought processing, and develops spatial awareness.

Socially, horseback riding nurtures a positive self-image and self-confidence as riding skills are learned. Participants often experience independence for the first time in their lives at Starbrite. Being part of a class at Starbrite offers opportunities to make friends and become part of a group activity.

Emotionally, horseback riding provides an opportunity for participants to bond with the horse, their instructor, and the volunteers. This helps develop trust and reinforces appropriate behaviors.

All new participants will visit Starbrite for an initial evaluation. During this visit, the new participant will talk with the instructor about issues and goals and begin to develop a plan of treatment to allow us to best serve that person's needs.

Horses for Heroes

Starbrite's Horses for Heroes program exists to serve the emotional, social, and physical needs of veterans who served through equine-assisted activities. Veterans can benefit greatly from working with and being around horses, due to the high perceptivity and reaction of horses to human emotions and feelings. Horses help veterans cope with mental health challenges by increasing emotional awareness, impulse control, interpersonal relationships, and independence as well as decreasing symptoms of PTSD.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms can include high levels of anxiety, flashbacks, and emotional numbing that can have a huge impact on daily activities. While we do not offer counseling or "therapy" for veterans, we hope that the presence of our horses can offer help, hope, and healing to those we wish to serve.

Most importantly, we are excited to offer these services **FREE OF CHARGE** to all veterans interested.

What are the benefits that horses offer veterans?

Emotionally, horses assist veterans in emotion regulation, coping, reduced anxiety and stress, and increased confidence. Furthermore, horses offer a friendship void of judgment that allow veterans to build a special bond and find healing from past hurts and experiences.

Socially, horses nurture a positive self-image and self-confidence as veterans learn how to interact with and teach new skills to the horse. Veterans may also experience the

freedom of independence for the first time since their service and learn how to build relationships and trust with the horses and the other individuals involved.

Physically, horseback riding can help improve a veteran's balance, core and leg strength, and flexibility due to the rhythmic movement of the horse.

All new veterans are encouraged to visit Starbrite on Mondays between the hours of 10:00 AM and 12:00 PM for an introduction to our facility and services. After completing a series of sessions learning safety and groundwork, they will be given an opportunity to sign up for mounted activities.

For more information, please contact alissa@starbritetyler.org.