

Volunteer Manual



Dear Volunteer,

Thank you so much for your interest in volunteering at The Red Barn, and welcome! We are so glad that you are becoming a part of our barn family. Please know that we always want you to feel valued and like you belong here, and we sincerely hope that you get as much out of this experience as you can. We want to help you learn and grow as both a person and a volunteer during your time at the barn.

The beauty of The Red Barn, and the work going on here brings an overwhelming sense of peace. It is a great place to have *fun* while serving others. We want you to feel peace and have fun while making a huge difference in the lives of the participants every time you are here.

We love our jobs and the fact that we get to be a part of your serving experience. Our responsibilities are to help you be prepared for the tasks you are assigned, to communicate The Red Barn's needs to you, and make sure you realize how great our volunteers are! We appreciate everything YOU do. We have the best volunteers around - you are joining a great team. You make the lessons possible!

Looking forward to service together,

The Red Barn Staff

Galatians 5:13

“It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life...use your freedom to serve one another in love; that’s how freedom grows.”



About Us

Our Mission Statement: The mission of The Red Barn is to promote and support equine assisted activities to individuals of all abilities and circumstances, especially children.

History: The Red Barn began in 2010 as a sister organization of Spirit of Hope Youth Ranch. Spirit of Hope was founded in 2006 and inspired by Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch in Bend, Oregon. From 2007 to 2010, Spirit of Hope served at-risk and disadvantaged youth by allowing them to work with rescued horses. The Red Barn helped to see individuals that could not be served at Spirit of Hope's Wilsonville location. By 2011, The Red Barn had grown so much that Cornerstone Ranch offered the use of the white barn and indoor arena for program use. The Red Barn became a separate 501(c3) organization in February 2012 and in June 2012 merged with Spirit of Hope Youth Ranch.

What we do: We offer children and adults with disabilities and special circumstances the opportunity to work with and learn to ride horses.

Safety: The safety of our students, their families, as well as our staff, volunteers, and horses, is of the utmost concern at all times. You will notice many signs posted around the facility - please pay attention to all of them. One of your primary responsibilities is to help us maintain our high standards of safety. If you see a safety concern, please alert the staff with discretion, as soon as possible.

Our Programs

Camps: Traditional day camps with horses, art, music, and outdoor education. Camps are inclusive, including both typical children as well as those with disabilities and/or special circumstances. We also serve groups from other non-profit agencies through our Camp Program.

Adapted Riding Lessons: Weekly individual, or small group riding lessons for those with physical, cognitive, emotional disabilities, as well as those with special circumstances. We also offer students an opportunity to learn horsemanship skills, when physically possible. Our instructors work on life skills such as independence, self-control, and communication while working in a lesson.

Therapy Sessions: Weekly individual therapy session led by a medical professional (OT, SLP, PT) for children with physical, cognitive, and/or emotional disabilities. These sessions may be mounted or unmounted and will work to accomplish specific, measurable goals.

Veterans: Participants in this program are veterans, active or inactive military personnel, and their families. The activities for this program vary and are determined by the individuals or groups attending.

Classes: The Red Barn offers educational classes for almost everyone! We offer classes for students that are aligned with the state of Alabama standards. We offer continuing education classes for families, volunteers, and students. We offer clinics for future instructors, current instructors, and even therapy professionals looking to add equine assisted therapy to the services they provide.



VOLUNTEER CODE OF ETHICS

The Red Barn seeks to provide a safe, peaceful, and professional environment for students, visitors, staff members, volunteers and horses. The purpose of this code of ethics is to provide volunteers with an ethical and responsible framework from which to serve.

As a volunteer, I will:

1. Listen carefully to The Red Barn staff members and recognize that they follow certain procedures for a reason.
2. Respect my fellow volunteers.
3. Strive to keep the Executive Director or Assistant Director informed of opportunities in the community for promoting The Red Barn and potential funding opportunities.
4. Keep well informed of developments and policies relevant to my volunteer responsibilities and The Red Barn policies. **I understand that email is the preferred method of communication.**
5. Participate actively in volunteer trainings and assist other volunteers as they join The Red Barn.
6. Bring to the attention of the Executive Director or Assistant Director any issues that I believe will have an adverse effect on the organization or those we serve.
7. Help curtail any negative conversations, rumors or gossip.
8. Consider myself as having a vested interest in the organization and do my best to ensure that it is well maintained - keeping quality and safety in mind.
9. Always strive to learn how to be a more effective volunteer, while also assisting the staff in improving the volunteer program.
10. Notify staff if I cannot physically do something that is asked of me.

As a volunteer, I will not:

1. Criticize fellow volunteers and staff members or their opinions.
2. Use the organization for my personal advantage or that of my friends or relatives.
3. Discuss confidential issues with anyone not involved with those issues.
4. Interfere with the duties of staff members or undermine their authority.
5. Mistreat horses or any other animals on The Red Barn property in any fashion.
6. Take pictures of Red Barn students or participants.

Where repeated attempts have been made to rectify a volunteer's non-compliance with the Code of Ethics, or where a severe violation of the Code of Ethics has occurred, prompt action will be taken to remove or suspend the individual. As a Red Barn volunteer, I agree to adhere to and to be responsible for maintaining the above Code of Ethics.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

BARN RULES

1. No smoking anywhere on the premises.
2. Please drive slowly; we love our children and horses.
3. Direct access to any horse must be supervised by one of our instructors.
4. Closed-toe shoes are required when working with horses.
5. Safety stirrups or boots are required when on a horse.
6. Helmet is required when riding.
7. Observe all “off limits” signs.
8. No one is allowed in the red house or the brick house without permission.
9. No one should be on Red Barn property without permission.
10. No “horse play” in the barn (roughhousing).
11. Parents must supervise all students who are not in a lesson.
12. No dogs or other pets.
13. Please flush only toilet paper down the toilets on the property (no wipes or feminine products).

Volunteer Program

Those 14 years of age and older have several volunteer opportunities. There is something for almost everyone - those with horse experience and those without, those who wish to volunteer weekly or those who wish to volunteer occasionally. All volunteers 19 and older must pass a DHR child abuse/neglect check and all volunteers 18 and older must pass a criminal background check. Every effort will be made to place volunteers in the program of their choice. Volunteers may discontinue their service at any time, but advance notice is greatly appreciated. The Red Barn has the right to discontinue the service of any volunteer who fails to follow given code of ethics or breaches confidentiality. Attending volunteer orientation is required for all who wish to volunteer at The Red Barn. **Please be mindful of your own physical limitations and do not cause injury to yourself, others, or Red Barn property while volunteering.**



Volunteer Position Descriptions

Adapted Riding Lesson Volunteers

For many riding at the barn, a horse handler, 2 sidewalkers and/or spotters may be necessary.

Consistency is important for the success of our students. Riding lesson volunteers are asked to make a weekly commitment of at least one hour at the same time each week, per term.

Sidewalking: When a volunteer is sidewalking, their sole responsibility is the rider to which they are assigned. They stay aware of their rider by watching their balance and expressions. The sidewalker will receive instructions from the lesson instructor and should follow those instructions exactly. The ideal position for a sidewalker is to stay between the rider's knee and hip and about 4-6 inches away. Sidewalkers do not need previous horse experience, but will be required to complete volunteer training at The Red Barn. Sidewalkers must be physically capable of holding the sidewalking position for 30 minutes at a time and walking and/or trotting with their rider.

Horse Handling: When a volunteer is leading a horse, their sole responsibility is the horse which they are leading. They are to always be tuned in to what their horse is doing and, when needed, giving verbal feedback to the instructor as to how their horse is behaving.

Horse Handler Evaluation: All volunteers wishing to be Horse Handlers must complete and pass The Red Barn's Horse Handler Evaluation. You must have completed at least one term as a volunteer (either in the riding lesson program or as a barn volunteer) before you can be considered for evaluation. Horse Handler Evaluations are scheduled at the discretion of our instructors. Evaluations typically last about one hour.

Spotting: When a volunteer is spotting, they are asked to watch a horse and rider team. They are to verbally inform the instructor of any concerns about the horse and rider team, as well as intervene if the situation becomes hazardous. While this position does not seem "busy" or even necessary at times, please understand that it is very important for the safety of everyone involved for you to remain attentive.

Barn Volunteers

Barn volunteers may clean buckets, help feed and water horses, clean tack, muck stalls (without horses inside), or work on projects around the barn. Volunteers who have completed their Horse Handler Evaluation may help with turning horses out to pasture, bringing them in, or cleaning stalls while the horses are inside. Barn volunteers will only be scheduled during times when a staff person is present and available to supervise them, regardless of age or experience.

Camps and Class Volunteers

Volunteers in camps and classes perform a variety of tasks, such as help tacking up and grooming horses, help leading and sidewalking while participants ride, assistance with arts and crafts, keeping an eye on children to ensure safety, photographing the day's events, serving food, and much more. Previous horse experience is not required to assist with these programs.

Administrative Volunteers

When a volunteer assists with administrative tasks, they may be asked to make copies, file paperwork, audit files, complete data entry, or do other tasks necessary for operation of the barn's programs. All information obtained while volunteering is considered privileged and private information and should be kept confidential. Administrative volunteers will only be scheduled to come when office staff will be present to supervise.

Fundraising/Special Event Volunteers

The Red Barn holds a few fundraisers each year, as well as miscellaneous other events, like holiday parties. Each event requires planning, donation solicitation, set up, clean up, and evaluation. Volunteers are welcomed and encouraged to volunteer on event committees. Contracts for services should only be signed by Red Barn staff, and no funds should be promised or spent without prior consent by a Red Barn staff member.

Supply Drive Volunteers

The Red Barn is always in need of items like bottled water, paper products, office supplies, arts and crafts supplies, snacks, or tack and other equipment needed for the horses. Having these items donated by supporters allows us to use a greater percentage of budgeted funds for our programs. Volunteers are welcomed and encouraged to collect these items in the community for donation to The Red Barn. A Red Barn staff member should be consulted before approaching any businesses for donations, and before beginning a campaign for supplies. See the back page of the manual for The Red Barn's wish list.

Property Maintenance and Special Projects

Red Barn staff welcomes volunteer help in lawn maintenance, gardening, stick removal, repair of broken equipment, and special projects. Property maintenance volunteers will only be scheduled when a staff member is available to supervise them. We also welcome large volunteer groups from churches, businesses, etc. Contact us, if you are interested in scheduling a group volunteer day.



Frequently Asked Questions

When can I begin volunteering?

After completing training, many volunteers are extremely anxious to get started! While we would love to incorporate everyone as quickly as possible, it takes time to place new volunteers in the programs. Please be patient during this process and know that we're doing our best to get everyone involved as soon as possible.

What do I do when I arrive at The Red Barn the first time to volunteer? Before arriving, be sure to know where your event or lesson is going to take place. If it is on the red barn property you will park in the gravel parking area or in the grass across the drive. If you are to meet at the white barn, please drive up the gravel drive and enter in the gate (code 1234). Parking areas are marked. In both areas of our property there is a sign-in book. Please log your hours with us!

Why do I have to sign in?

Signing in is very important because tracking volunteer hours will help us to secure funding and show potential donors the tremendous community support we have. It also allows us to accurately report your served hours back to you.

Can I become friends with the students and/or their parents?

You are likely to feel a special connection with students however, please refrain from giving money or gifts to the students, offering rides or other personal favors, and giving out personal contact information. You are cautioned to consider the consequences before connecting with parents or guardians on any social media site. Please contact a staff member if you feel like a student and/or their family has significant need. Be a support person in their lives while they are at the barn and know that you are making an eternal difference even if you are only with them for a short time.

Will someone inform me of the student's reasons for participating in The Red Barn's programs?

Many of our participants have physical, cognitive or emotional disabilities. They want to be spoken to with respect; they don't want to be questioned or made to feel uncomfortable; they want to learn and have a good time; and they want to spend time with horses! Do not expect to be told the participant's circumstances for being at The Red Barn. Please do not ask prodding or inappropriate questions, and please let a staff member know if you are uncomfortable working with children with a specific disability.

Why is the student I'm working with progressing so slowly?

At The Red Barn, the pace is a bit slower than traditional barns. This is a low-stress, encouraging, uplifting, peaceful, and educational environment on purpose. Please help us to keep this atmosphere by encouraging the riders, listening when they would like to talk, giving positive feedback, and treating everyone the way you would want to be treated.

Will I be notified if a student cancels?

The barn will contact you upon hearing a student has cancelled. Occasionally, students will cancel their lesson at the last minute or not show up at all. This is inevitable. If the student you are scheduled to assist cancels or does not show up, please ask a staff person if there is anything else that you can do. Chances are pretty good that there are other tasks to be done! Flexibility and understanding are greatly appreciated.

What is the weather policy?

The weather also affects the lesson schedule at the barn. Please do not assume that lessons are cancelled due to rain. We may use the opportunity to do ground work with the students. If it is thundering and lightning, students will not be allowed to work with the horses. If you feel like traveling from where you are to The Red Barn is dangerous, please text the barn to let us know. Every effort will be made to notify volunteers of cancellations in advance. Again, your flexibility and understanding are greatly appreciated!

When am I allowed to take pictures?

Volunteers are encouraged to give your full attention to the student with whom you are working or the task for which you are volunteering. It is very important that The Red Barn be a safe place for our students and their families. **Please do not take pictures of our students or their families.** This is very important! If you need photographs for a school project or to advocate for the agency in the community, please ask a staff member.

Is there a dress code for volunteers?

It is required that volunteers wear closed toe shoes or boots that offer foot protection. We strongly advise against volunteers wearing dangling jewelry, perfume or loose, long hair. Clothing and overall appearance should be modest, professional, safe, and allow duties to be accomplished easily.

How can I stay informed about The Red Barn's schedule and upcoming events?

The best way to stay up to date is to provide an accurate email address on your volunteer application. An email is sent out monthly with that month's volunteer opportunities. You will also receive emails throughout the month with other requests to help. You are welcome to contact the Volunteer Coordinator through email at any time. Connecting with us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (TheRedBarnAL) is another great way to stay informed.



Most Common Disabilities

1. **Autism Spectrum Disorder:** Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurological and developmental disorder that begins early in childhood and lasts throughout a person's life. It affects how a person acts and interacts with others, communicates and learns. It includes what used to be known as Asperger syndrome and pervasive developmental disorders.
2. **Cerebral Palsy:** A number of non-progressive motor disorders with impairment of voluntary movement. May have restricted movement in one or more limbs.
3. **Down Syndrome:** Impaired mental ability accompanied by weak muscle tone.
4. **Intellectual Disabilities/Developmental Delays:** The learning process will be slow and will depend on the severity of the disability. These riders learn by repetition. Consistency is important along with age appropriateness. In other words, treat them as their age dictates.
5. **Muscular Dystrophy:** Progressive degeneration of muscle strength with no mental impairment. Becomes overly tired easily. Muscle strengthening is not possible.
6. **Multiple Sclerosis:** Wide range of symptoms and characteristics. Muscle weakness, lack of judgement or inattention. Avoid over fatiguing.
7. **Seizures:** Seizures can be associated with various disabilities. The rider may appear non-coherent suddenly or appear vacant immediately before a seizure occurs. Call the instructor's attention to the rider immediately if this is suspected.
8. **Reactive Attachment Disorder:** Characterized by significantly disturbed and developmentally inappropriate ways of interacting in most social circumstances.
9. **Fetal Alcohol Syndrome:** The main effect of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome is permanent central nervous system damage, especially to the brain. Effects can include poor memory, attention problems, impulsive behavior, poor cause-effect reasoning, and distinctive facial features.
10. **Anxiety Disorders:** A mental disorder characterized by excessive feelings of anxiety and fear. These feelings may cause physical symptoms such as racing heart and shakiness.
11. **Dyslexia:** Characterized by a difficulty learning to read fluently or comprehend the material being read, despite normal intelligence.
12. **ADHD:** A neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by problems with inattention, hyperactivity and/or acting impulsively that are inappropriate for the person's age.
13. **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):** PTSD may develop after a person is exposed to one or more traumatic events in which they experience intense fear, horror, or powerlessness. The diagnosis may be given when a group of symptoms, such as disturbing recurring flashbacks, avoidance or numbing of the memories of the event and hyper-arousal continue for more than a month after the traumatic event.

Sidewalking

Sidewalkers have the most hands-on duty during adapted riding lessons and therapy sessions. During the lessons/sessions, the primary responsibility of a sidewalker is to ensure the safety of the student.

- Try to avoid unnecessary talking with the student and other volunteers during the lesson/session. Too much input can be confusing and distracting to the student.
- Maintain your position at the student's knee.
- When the instructor/therapist gives instruction, allow the student plenty of time to process that instruction.
- Each student is different and has different goals. The instructor/therapist will give you direction as to the level of help you should give for your student. Feel free to ask if you are unsure!

Types of holds

Hand over thigh – grip the front of the saddle (flap or pommel) with the hand closest to the student, and gently rest your forearm on the student's thigh



Front Ankle – place hand in the front of the ankle, typically used to ensure proper leg position



Back Ankle – place hand on back of ankle/heel, avoid ankle tendon, typically used to ensure student isn't digging in to horse and/or as reminder to hold heels down for balance



Jobs within the Mounting Process

Horse Handler: When mounting, the horse handler's job is to align the horse's body as close to the mounting ramp as possible without rubbing the saddle against the wood, as well as keeping the horse still and calm throughout the entire mounting process.

1. Hold horse outside of ramp until instructor has performed a safety check and given you permission to enter the ramp.
2. Lead the horse in the ramp while keeping his body close to the ramp (2-4 in.).
3. Standing beside the horse, keep him quiet and still while instructor mounts the student.
4. Once given verbal permission by the instructor, walk horse straight out of the ramp. Reason being, the instructor/side walker will have a handhold on the student the entire way out of the ramp.
5. After approximately 4-6 steps the instructor will ask you to halt the horse. They will then adjust stirrups and give you further instructions.

Offside Guide: During the mounting process, the side walker's job is to stand on the offside of the horse (right side), either on the ground or on the ramp. You will act as a barrier to the horse as well as assist the instructor in mounting the student.

1. Before the horse enters the ramp, the instructor will ask you to take your place standing on the offside.
2. Once the horse is standing quietly, the instructor will begin mounting the student. Your job is to assist her by supporting the right leg as it comes over the back of the horse or weighting the stirrup as directed.
3. After the student is seated, the instructor will tell you what hold to do and will ask the leader to exit the ramp. You are to walk forward with the designated handhold on your student.



Emergency Procedures

Although the staff at does their best to keep any danger from coming to any students, there is always the possibility that something may happen. During an emergency, there are a few things to remember. Above all else, please stay calm.

- **Horse Handler:** Your job is to take care of your horse. In any situation, you are to never let go of your horse. If ever there is an emergency with your student, you are to halt your horse and calm him.
 - If the student is still mounted, stop the horse and calm him. Your side walker will notify the instructor of an emergency and will care for your student. The instructor will give you further information once the student is dismounted.
 - If your student has fallen, the side walker will notify the instructor and you are to move the horse out of the way with the horse's hindquarters pointing away from the student.
 - If you do not have a side walker present, stop your horse, verbally notify an instructor, and try to support your student. If the student has already fallen, move your horse away from the student and call on the instructor.
- **Sidewalkers:** Your job is to care for the student. In any situation, you are to verbally notify the instructor and take charge of your student. Two possible ways is to do this is by either holding your student on the horse or performing an emergency dismount.

If there is an emergency situation with another horse and student team in the arena or on the trail with you, all other horse and rider teams should stop their horses, remain calm, and wait for further instruction from your instructor.

Horse Handlers – NEVER let go of your horse's rope for any reason!

Sidewalkers – NEVER leave your student for any reason!

There is a phone to dial 911 next to the green couch in the red barn, in the office of the red house, and in the white barn office.

THE RED BARN'S WISHLIST

Many of these items are available for purchase online through our Amazon Wish list.

Bottled water

Forever stamps

Paper towels

Toilet paper

Kleenex

Individually packaged snacks

Shampoo

Trash bags

Batteries

Art supplies

Cleaning supplies

Office supplies

Hand soap

Hand lotion