

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

HorseBuds Inc.

Location: 16696 County Road 70, Greeley, Colorado 80631

Founder: Deb Michael, Executive Director 970-396-4181
horsebuds.deb@gmail.com

Our Mission

Promoting independence through equine assisted activities for the purpose of contributing positively to the cognitive, physical, and social well being of children and adults with special needs.

Our Motto

Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can—*John Wesley*

Who are we?

HorseBuds Inc. incorporated June of 2013, is a Colorado State 501(c)3 non-profit. Direct public support and donations are relied upon to operate the center.

Serving the communities of Northern Colorado. HorseBuds' staff, aided by volunteers, provides a unique center on an 80 acre private farm. HorseBuds operates on Coyote Run Farm, LLC, and has the generous use of the facilities, horses, and tack.

HorseBuds is Greeley's only PATH International Center. The Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International was established in 1969 to produce guidelines and standards in the various fields, disciplines and professions associated with Equine-Assisted Activities and Therapies (EAAT).

The organization placed emphasis on center accreditation and instructor certification to ensure that participants receive the best possible instruction at centers that uphold the highest quality standards.



Volunteers make equine assisted activities possible.

As of 2019, over 13,000 volunteer hours have been recorded. Without volunteers support classes could not run. Volunteers (ages 14 to 70+) help program participants achieve their individual goals.

Benefits of Volunteering:

- Give back to the community
- Develop new skills
- Improve well-being
- Gain community service volunteer hours
- Improve self-esteem and confidence while helping others do the same
- Connect with new people in a different environment
- Be a part of the HorseBuds family!

Volunteers are needed—in the barn, to give TLC to the animals, to help run the programs, for special events, fund-raising, and to represent our HorseBuds family!

HorseBuds programs

Please note therapeutic riding is not offered at this time.

PATH International programs:

Instructor: PATH International CTRI and Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning

1. HorseBuddies

Classes are taught using equestrian activities, farm animals, and fun to benefit the bodies, minds and spirits of people with all-abilities. Classes provide “farming-related therapeutic and educational activities” including animal husbandry (livestock, small animals, poultry), exposure to agriculture, horticulture, animal management, horse training from the ground, and more.

2. Curly Horses for the Cure

Participants (affected by cancer, grief, or loss) enjoy being in the moment with the horses and learn horsemanship safely from the ground. Understanding emotional and physical needs help builds confidence and trust between horse and human teams.

3. Wild About Veterans

This is a program for veterans and their families that will be tailored to fit family interests. Equine activities and horsemanship will be taught from the ground. Farm activities and small animals are included.

Horse Boy programs:

Instructor: Horse Boy Practitioner, Movement Method Mentor

4. Sensory Saturdays/The Horse Boy Movement Method

These family play dates are specific to families of children/adults on the autism spectrum or neurodevelopmental special needs that affect emotion, learning ability and memory.

Neurodevelopmental challenges may have significant mental, emotional, and physical consequences for individuals, and in turn their families. Therefore, the program is inclusive of the whole family as circumstances, and volunteer coverage allow. There are a wide variety of activities for the whole family to enjoy. For the child with special needs this experience is primarily about opening up physically, emotionally, and cognitively to the world around them in a safe environment while learning how to transition between activities. Participants enjoy the animals and the farm environment while having the freedom to explore their interests. Academics are introduced in a way that is fun. The program is beneficial to all ages. You are never too old to experience and learn something new!

These play dates utilize volunteers, and a Horse Boy Method™ practitioner and a Movement Method Mentor.

5. Preschool Art and Sensory Play

Sensory activities are child-led and supervised by the child’s caregiver.

6. Toddler Art and Sensory Play

Sensory activities are child-led and supervised by the child’s caregiver.

WHY THE HORSE?

Equine assisted activities offers mental and physical benefits to all participants. The participants' individual goals are designed to compliment ongoing therapy and education.

The benefits of equine-assisted activities:

1. Self-confidence is gained by interacting with horses
2. Better concentration and attention span
3. Improves muscle tone and coordination
4. Reduced stress
5. Provides companionship and bonding
6. Helps with self-discipline
7. Develops empathy and respect for animals
8. Participants with PTSD relate to hyper-sensitivity in horses
9. Cancer patients focus in the moment with relaxing equine activities.

WORKING WITH HORSE AND INSTRUCTORS

The instructor's most important job is ensuring the safety and well being of all participants and animals at the HorseBuds. The volunteers assist the instructor with this goal!

Volunteer requirements: Giving valuable assistance does not require prior knowledge of horses or experience in working with special needs participants. While great physical strength is not necessary, you must have the stamina to walk at a steady pace for up to 60 minutes at a time and jog alongside a horse for short intermittent periods. It is preferable to be able to commit to a specific schedule of classes, at least one, 1.5 - 2.5 hour time period a week for 5-8 weeks. A bonding of horse, participant and volunteer takes place during these sessions. Please give notice for planned absences. If sickness occurs the day before your class, please contact staff immediately to find a substitute volunteer.

A Day in the Life of a Volunteer

Please arrive dressed modestly and prepared for the season to be outdoors. If you bring food, due to allergies, please check with families before sharing. Wear long pants or modest shorts and sturdy footwear. For the sensitivity of all involved at HorseBuds: Please, no low cut tops, spaghetti strap or midriff shirts, or Daisy Duke shorts, see-through clothing or underwear showing.

Arrive - 30 minutes before class: Silence Cell phones, and do not bring them out during class unless asked. Please park northeast side of the barnyard.

Enter office (west entrance), sign volunteer log (very important), and do not leave valuables in the office. Gather for briefing by instructor as to the plan for the class.

Horse Leaders:

Find the halter (large, medium, mini) on barn wall for the horse.

Get help to open and close gates if possible. Make sure all gates are closed and double-checked! Manger can be filled with hay; horse can be secured with about 1.5 feet of rope from lead to rail and the rope is doubled and weaved through the stall rails—**Do Not Tie Fast** to stall rails or anywhere else. Always insist horse stands perpendicular to the wall. Find grooming bucket belonging to the horse from the tack room.

Horse Grooming: Groom horse and always clean feet before and after class using our method. (Please do not kneel or squat on the floor when working with the feet.) Brush tail (if needed) by standing to the side of the horse, never behind the horse. (Never brush a Curly horse's mane or tail—use hands or a special pic.

Allow for horses to walk slowly down the hill on their haunches. If the student is leading the horse stay on the left side of the student or in some cases walk between the horse and student to assist with the rope if needed. Never walk the horse over grass if you have a choice. NEVER ALLOW horses to eat while leading. If the horse snags grass, do not pull its head up as you might hurt yourself. Wait until the horse raises its head and then walk-on. (Please get instructor's help to learn techniques to prevent this from happening again.)

Horse Leaders after class: Groom and pick feet. Return horse to original location. Put tack away. Help tidy up. Important: Please stay to give input to be recorded in student's progress report.

Sidewalkers/Shadows—

Greet Student and assist student with finding and fitting helmet (ask for instructor's help if needed). Always keep your finger between the buckle and neck to avoid pinching skin.

If student grooms or paints the horse, assist horse leader in helping student to keep feet safe. The side walker/shadow's job is to be with and FOLLOW the participant at all times. Engage with them by their interests. **Remember do not be alone with a child.**

Walking to Arena: Extra participants walk beside or ahead of the horse leader; not behind the horse. Note: Paddock wires are HOT. Do not stop on bridge. Keep moving to arena. Never allow anyone near ditches whether dry or water-filled.

In the Arena: Please keep personal talking and personal information light and fun and to a minimum during class. Conversation should be participant focused.

Side Walkers/Shadows after class: Stay with your participants until they leave. Help put away teaching aids and tidy. Important: Please stay to give input to be recorded in student's progress report.

Horse Leader Responsibilities and Duties: FOCUS on the HORSE

The horse leader is responsible for the safety of the horse. Also, for the horse leader's safety do not walk backwards. Horse leaders are attentive to the horse at all times while being aware of the participant, other objects, and the instructor in all situations.

Duties to the horse: Horse leader is responsible for all the horse's movements. When a horse is walking, they must stop before exiting doors and gates. When handling, the horse cannot take its own steps by their own decision. When standing the horse is not allowed to take any steps or half steps. Lightly correct with the rope or touching their chest with your finger. If asked to stand, horse's head does not look left or right or is allowed to go to the ground. Adjust lead rope as lightly as necessary for correction. Horses are not allowed to walk until commanded.

Duties of the horse leader: Holding lead rope: Fold rope in left hand (never coil around hand). Hold the rope in right hand. Give horse about 2 ft. of rope, so the horse's movements are not restricted. Do not have the rope so long that a leg could step over it. Give clear consistent cues and commands. Focus and timing is important, so keep a "smile" in the rope and always give pre-cues by voice, arms and hands. Give processing time to the horse to be respectful so the horse is never surprised. (Leading a horse from under the chin is like leading someone by the shirt neck.) The horse learns to pull back when pulled or dragged.

Our horses are led from their left side with a slack rope, with the horse behind and to the side of the handler. If the horse gets behind your back just bring your right hand out to guide the horse to position and release. For horse LEADING YOU, please stop, and restart in the proper position or get help from instructor.

Sidewalker to a Participant Responsibilities and Duties FOCUS on the PARTICIPANT

- Greets the participants and their family or caregivers.
- Assists participant.
- Uses positive encouragement and models appropriate behavior.
- Aids the instructor to ensure the participant's safety around the animals, play and farm equipment.
- Reinforces the instructor's directions and provides physical and emotional support to the participant.
- Assist instructor in helping participant be close to a horse while keeping their feet and head safe.

Allow participant to give their horse a treat (Put horse candy in bowl; do not hand feed) Horse leader handles the horse.

End of Class: Side walkers must stay with their participant until their departure. *(If the participant needs to use the restroom, communicate to the instructor. Parents/caregivers will assist.)*

NOTE TO VOLUNTEERS: DO NOT KEEP HORSE CANDY IN YOUR POCKET DURING CLASSES. The horses will be distracted and could be dangerous to participants.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES Follow instructor's guidance.

A diligent Horse Handler/Side walker team can prevent many emergencies. The horse handler must assess the attitude of the horse for his work on that day and notify the instructor if the horse is not be suitable.

The side walker must assess the attitude and condition of the participant. Side walker will notify the instructor should they believe that a lesson adjustment is indicated.

Unsafe horse behavior: Instructor will handle this.

OTHER EMERGENCIES

In case of barn evacuation please gather everyone outside north of the barn.

Emergency information is on the wall in the office by the door.

Emergency Human First Aid Kit is in the barn office - labeled

Emergency Horse First Aid is in the tack room - labeled

See instructor for horse medical or behavioral concerns as they occur.

Veterinarian Information posted in the office bulletin board and on the door to office.

Disabilities Defined: Language Guidelines:

Person First Language is preferred for all individuals with developmental/intellectual special needs. This respectfully puts the individual first. For example, say "a child with autism, but not, "an autistic child."

Disability is a natural part of the human condition. There is nothing "wrong" with someone with ASD. It is not something to be fixed. They are who they are. See the child or adult with ASD as a unique individual. Focus on the person's unique and positive characteristics.

Please never use the R-word, even though the phrase "mental retardation" is considered a medical term.

Some Disorders Defined:

Attention deficit disorder (ADD)/Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a common behavioral disorder that affects boys three times more than girls. Kids with ADHD sometimes act without thinking, are hyperactive, and have trouble focusing. They may understand what's expected of them but have trouble following through because they can't sit still, pay attention, or focus on details. Of course, most kids (especially younger ones) act this way at times, particularly when they're anxious or excited. But the difference with ADHD is that symptoms are present over a longer period of time and happen in different settings. They hurt a child's ability to function socially, academically, and at home.

Autism spectrum describes a range of conditions classified as **neurodevelopmental disorders**. The autism spectrum encompasses diagnoses of **autism**, **Asperger syndrome**, **pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified** (PDD-NOS), and **childhood disintegrative disorder**. These disorders are characterized by social deficits and communication difficulties, stereotyped or repetitive behaviors and interests, sensory issues, and in some cases, cognitive delays.

Asperger syndrome (AS), also known as **Asperger's syndrome**, **Asperger disorder (AD)** or **Asperger's**, is an **autism spectrum disorder (ASD)** that is characterized by significant difficulties in **social interaction** and **nonverbal communication**, alongside restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior and interests. It differs from other autism spectrum disorders by its relative preservation of **linguistic** and **cognitive development**. Although not required for diagnosis, physical clumsiness and atypical (peculiar or odd) use of language are frequently reported.

Cerebral Palsy (CP) is a group of permanent **movement disorders** that appear in early childhood. Symptoms vary and often problems include: poor coordination, **stiff muscles**, weak muscles, trouble swallowing or speaking, and **tremors** among others.

Emotional Disabilities can be social, emotional, or behavioral functioning that is not age appropriate and affects a person's academics, social relationships, and self-care. Difficulty coping with everyday life situations and interpersonal relations, inappropriate affect or behavioral responses, depression, anxiety, physical symptoms, difficulty learning, withdrawal, and sometimes aggressiveness are some symptoms.

Oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) is defined as a pattern of angry/irritable mood, argumentative/defiant behavior, or vindictiveness lasting at least six months.

(PTSD) Post traumatic stress disorder (or PTS) is an anxiety disorder that can develop after a person is exposed to one or more traumatic events, such as major stress, sexual assault, warfare, or other threats on a person's life. Symptoms include disturbing recurring flashbacks, avoidance or numbing of memories of the event, and hyperarousal, continue for more than a month after the occurrence of a traumatic event.

Spina Bifida is a congenital failure of vertebral arch closure that results in spinal cord damage with varying degrees of paralysis of the lower limbs coupled with sensory loss. May also be associated with hydrocephalus, lordosis, scoliosis, and hip dislocations.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) An accidental injury to the head resulting in impairment of cognitive, emotional and/or physical functioning. Characteristics may include deficits in gross and fine motor skills, balance, coordination and strength. May have deficits in language, communication, processing, memory and perceptual skills.