



EQUINE-ASSISTED ACTIVITIES CENTER

Where the impossible becomes possible

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www.autumntrailsstable.com

VOLUNTEER MANUAL 2020



Please LIKE the ATS Volunteer page to stay updated on upcoming events, cancellations and lots of other helpful info:

<https://www.facebook.com/ATSvolunteers>

LIKE & invite your family & friends to like the ATS Program page:

<https://www.facebook.com/pg/autumntrailsstable/>

Welcome to Autumn Trails Stable (ATS) Volunteer Program! We are thrilled to have you as a volunteer. As a non-profit organization, we could not possibly pay the number of staff needed to work in the ring and barn with our therapeutic riding students, so your help is essential, and we truly appreciate it!

We would like you to know that your safety is our number one priority, so if you are coming to help with set up, clean-up, barn work, special projects, or our riding programs, please always make sure an ATS staff member is present. If you have questions at any time, please ask!

Our Mission Statement

Autumn Trails Stable is a nonprofit 501c3 organization that strives to nurture the full potential of individuals in our community through the therapeutic power of horses.

Our vision is to be a transformative center serving our community in a collaborative, professional and encouraging environment that brings together medical and recreational models with the healing power of the human-equine bond to make the impossible become possible for everyone we serve.

Our Story

Autumn Trails Stable was founded in January of 2016. We began with the hope that we could help individuals in Springfield and surrounding areas reach their full potential through riding and interacting with horses. In the first session we served seven individuals and our volunteers were predominately our family and board members. Throughout 2016, we grew to serving 23 individuals and having over 30 volunteers. By 2019, we were serving 59 participants and had expanded to almost 100 active volunteers. We are excited to keep growing & impacting lives!

In 2017 we added two Summer Camps and in 2018 we partnered with Finally Home Farm to launch Odyssey, our Veteran's and First Responders program. We have hopes to add an Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy program and a Hippotherapy program in the near future.

Our funding comes from grant writing, individual donations and fundraising as our lesson fees are only one quarter of what they actually cost us to give. We appreciate any and all help you can give us with our fundraising efforts!

It is a privilege and a responsibility to be a volunteer. Volunteer commitment must include the following:

- ✓ Support for the Center's Mission and Goals
- ✓ Support for staff, other volunteers, and horses
- ✓ Represent the Center with a positive image
- ✓ Support for current programming and future growth
- ✓ Have an ability to be a team player; to work with staff to implement programs throughout the organization

Welcome to the ATS family!

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES WITH ATS

We have a place for everyone! Volunteers MUST be 14 years or older (12+ for Barn Buddies). Volunteers MUST attend an appropriate Training Workshop before entering the program.

✓ **Barn Buddy**

Provide care for the horses by completing barn chores - stall cleaning, sweeping, unloading feed and bedding deliveries and grooming horses. It's a physically demanding area of volunteering but incredibly valuable to us.

All barn buddies must attend a workshop or individual training session before being added to our schedule.

✓ **Side Walker**

Side Walkers accompany students in their lessons through grooming, tacking, and riding. They are responsible for assisting with the rider's balance and maintaining safety during the ride.

✓ **Horse Leader**

Leads the horse and is responsible for seeing the horse responds appropriately to the students' signals. To be considered for this position, you must attend a Horse Leader workshop, be an experienced horse person and have first completed one lesson session as a Side Walker.

✓ **Exercise Rider**

Exercises, grooms and cares for ATS horses. Due to the nature of this role, ATS stipulates the following for anyone who would like to exercise horses:

- Must have extensive horse handling and riding experience
- Must be able to correctly groom and tack up a horse in an English saddle and bridle
- Have logged 30 or more hours as an ATS Volunteer OR have logged 20 hours and are currently taking lessons with an ATS instructor
- Be able to complete a written horsemanship test and a pass a riding evaluation

✓ **Administration Angel**

Help with events, paperwork and mailings, put packets together, and other special projects. This may consist of physically coming to the barn to help and/or include some work from home.

✓ **Board Member**

✓ **Committee Member**

If you are interested in any additional volunteer opportunities with ATS, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator at volunteer@autumntrailsstable.com for more information.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Smoking, Drug & Alcohol Policy

ATS is a smoke-free environment. There is a no-tolerance policy with regards to alcohol and other controlled substances. Staff reserves the right to require a volunteer to leave the premises if they appear to be impaired.

Arrival and Sign In

We ask lesson volunteers to arrive at least 15 minutes BEFORE the start of class; if you are a side walker this is to prepare your student's tack and equipment and if you are a horse leader, to get your rider's horse prepared. Arrive accordingly. Please plan to stay 15 minutes after the end of class.

Upon arrival, volunteers are required to sign in to the ATS Volunteer Hours Log in the tack room. Before leaving, volunteers are asked to sign out by recording the number of hours they worked and the duties they performed in the log ATS Volunteer Hours Log.

Volunteers are also asked to complete a page in the Lesson Notes binder, this is an opportunity to communicate in more detail to the instructor any information about the student such as improvements made, difficulties they had or goals the student may have mentioned for the next lesson.

Cancellations

As a volunteer, your role is critical to the success of our program and ultimately our riders. As part of the commitment we ask that you reserve cancellations for emergencies. Your service is extremely important to the safety of our clients and the wellbeing of our horses.

If you need a substitute, immediately contact Jess Knowles-Thomas at (937) 900-1984 or volunteer@autumntrailsstable.com. If you are able to give a 24-hour notice and/or want to let us know about an upcoming absence, please fill out the ATS Volunteer Scheduling Form at <http://www.autumntrailsstable.com/our-current-volunteers.html>.

In the event that your rider has canceled with us, we will do everything we can to contact you in advance via text and Facebook through our Volunteer group. It is important that we have all your contact information on file. We also utilize Facebook to coordinate with our volunteers. Please like the ATS Volunteer Facebook page to stay up to date on all events and occurrences at ATS!

Parking

Please park to the LEFT side of the driveway (around the circle in drive) and utilize a single parking block where possible to allow space for all vehicles. Please do not park anywhere else on the property as access to the driveway and other buildings is necessary at all times. If all parking spaces are occupied, please see a member of ATS Staff for advice on the best place to park.

Dress Code

Appropriate footwear and clothing should always be worn; volunteers should not wear open-toed shoes, clogs or sandals. Shoes with good grip and foot protection are recommended, boots are ideal but not mandatory. Dangling jewelry is considered unsafe and strong perfumes can cause sensory reactions in some participants, as well as attracting biting insects which are an irritant to equines. It is advised that you refrain from wearing either while volunteering with us.

Clothes that make noise must be avoided (i.e. 'swishy' pants/jackets) as these can startle equines. Hats that will impair your peripheral vision must also be avoided.

Provocative clothing (i.e. very short shorts, bra straps showing, offensive logos, etc.) are prohibited. Please consider all types of individuals that may be participating in lessons.

Commitment and Availability

Adequate support is critical in safely serving our clients. We therefore request that volunteers directly involved with our riding program (horse handlers and side walkers) be willing to commit a minimum of one and a half (1 ½) hours each week on the same day and time for the length of a session.

Volunteers must be willing to accept feedback from instructors and understand that the instructor is in charge of the class environment at all times. In addition, it is important that you understand that the instructor's goal is to offer the best riding experience for each student.

Communication & Confidentiality Policy

Out of respect for the students who ride at ATS, we require that you keep all information confidential. The professional relationship between ATS and our clients requires there be no disclosure of any information about an individual client, without proper authorization. By attending an orientation and training session you acknowledge an understanding of this policy.

As a volunteer, you will be given only the medical information necessary for the safety of the rider. We must respect our clients and personal health information.

Conduct, Behavior and Dismissal

As volunteers, you are representatives of our organization. All volunteers are expected to set a good example for the students. Inappropriate language, disruptive behavior or behavior which threatens the safety of others is not acceptable, nor will it be tolerated. After a first attempt to correct the behavior, offenders will be asked to leave the premises by a staff and withdrawal from the program will be immediate.

Under no circumstances are volunteers permitted to transport clients or other volunteers as part of ATS. A volunteer is not permitted to aid a client in the restroom. Only a client's parent or care provider is permitted to assist the client, **NO EXCEPTIONS. DO NOT** put yourself in a situation where you would be alone with a client.

If you are subject to any type of inappropriate behavior by a student or volunteer, please do not approach the individual. Notify staff immediately. If you feel that an ATS staff member acts inappropriately, please notify ATS' Executive Director, Angela Stan at info@autumntrailsstable.com or by calling her at (937) 536-9912.

Discrimination Disclosure

It is the policy of the ATS to provide equal opportunity for all persons and to prohibit unlawful discrimination because of age, disability, race, color, creed, religion, gender, national origin, or veteran status. This policy applies to all participants, potential participants, volunteers and employees.

Criminal Background Checks

ATS strives to provide the safest possible environment for students, volunteers, visitors and staff. In order to maintain a safe environment, ATS will conduct criminal background checks on all volunteers and employees.

The business manager is responsible for conducting the background checks. Criminal history information will be used for the purpose of evaluating candidates for employment and/or volunteer positions and shall in no way be used to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability or age. This policy does not automatically exclude from consideration for employment or volunteering all individuals with criminal convictions. However, ATS does not accept individuals with a conviction of sex offender.

Failure to disclose criminal convictions or guilty pleas is grounds for termination of employment or volunteering.

AUTUMN TRAILS STABLE RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REFUSE THE SERVICES OF OR DISMISS ANY VOLUNTEER IF IT IS DETERMINED TO BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE ORGANIZATION.

SAFETY RULES

- All riders must wear an ASTM/SEI certified helmet
- No running, yelling, jumping, or screaming in the barn or observation room. "Horsing around" can be harmful.
- If you take it out, put it away!
- If your horse makes a mess, clean it up!
- Never approach a horse directly from the rear. Always try to approach from the side, talking to them in a low voice. Keep your hand on your horse when walking around them.
- Always speak to a horse when approaching or touching them. Horses doze while standing up and may jump or kick out if startled so always talk in a clear, projecting voice.
- If the horse hangs back on the end of the rope, lead them a few steps forward before touching them with your hand.

- Use a long lead rope and lead the horse from the left side. Your right hand should be 6 inches from the halter and your left hand holding the rest of the lead **Never wrap a lead rope around your hand, wrist, or body.**
- Walk beside the horse when leading, not ahead or behind them. Position yourself between the left shoulder and head.
- Never lead a horse under another horse's occupied crossies. Have someone unhook it to go through.
- Students/volunteers may not be **INSIDE** occupied horse stalls without the permission of a staff member or lead volunteer.
- Horses should not be fed treats by hand; treats should instead be placed into the horse's feed bucket.
Exceptions may be made with riders for therapy purposes under the direct supervision of a staff member.
- Do not allow yourself to become distracted. Watch where you are going and keep an eye on your student as well.
- If a horse pulls back, step back with them rather than pulling against them. Push the horse back further then ask them to step forward.
- Pet a horse on their shoulder or neck. Don't play with their mouth or muzzle. This can encourage nipping.
- Always walk around your horse, never under the rope. Remind students of this too.
- When leading into a box stall, turn the horse so that he faces the door. Close the door leaving enough space for yourself, but not the horse before releasing the lead rope.
- Keep your head in the clear when bridling, the horse may throw their head to avoid the bridle.
- Stand with feet well back in the clear and reach forward when saddling your horse.
- Adjust saddle carefully and **tighten the girth only enough to hold the saddle in place.** (It will be tightened again prior to the student mounting.)
- Always remove the lead rope before taking the halter off your horse. This may prevent them from pulling back. **Never remove a halter before the horse is completely in the stall or pen.**
- Keep reins and lead ropes off the ground.

VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES

- We ask that all our volunteers arrive at least 15 minutes before a scheduled class time and volunteer at least once a week per session. Your consistency helps our organization deliver the highest quality program to our riders. In many cases, your attendance is critical for a client's safety during a lesson.
- Be aware of parking. Park in designated areas only. Know what time to arrive.
- Be punctual. When you arrive, **SIGN IN**, get your nametag, and then check with the instructor.
- Make sure you know your rider's name. Many instructions are directed to the rider, not to the volunteers or horse. Be aware of your surroundings and be "present" during the lesson
- Establish a rapport with the student you are working with. Help your student focus on the lesson. Learning information about handedness, likes/dislikes as it pertains to

grooming, riding, and goals for that rider is very helpful. Be sure to report signs of fatigue, discomfort, or unusual behavior to the instructor. If you have a question about a client you are scheduled to assist during a lesson, ask the instructor.

- Be prepared to keep your rider interested and occupied during times when they need to wait. Once the rider is under your care, their whereabouts and safety are your responsibility! Never leave riders unattended! Safety is our NUMBER ONE concern for humans and horses at all times.
- Get to know your horse – enter their space calmly and quietly to begin interacting. Be aware of the horse’s mood and temperament. Be aware of your own body language and intent as you begin interacting with the horse.
- When you meet a person with a disability, be yourself! Be a friend and treat them as an equal whilst being aware of their disability. One of the hardest aspects of volunteering is standing back and letting the student do things for themselves. Provide help, if asked, or if you see an unsafe situation arising. Be patient and try not to predetermine the student’s abilities. Do not talk about the student in front of them, always talk to the student.
- **Use appropriate language.** Don’t say “what’s wrong with...”, if you must ask, be tactful! Ask the parent “Can I ask what your child’s diagnosis is?” or “Would it be okay if I ask...” if in doubt, ask the instructor for guidance on appropriate questions and how to phrase these.
- Know what to do in the event of an emergency! This includes falls, seizures and weather-related emergencies.
- Know general procedures for handling body fluids, injuries, and where to find the first aid kit, fire extinguishers, and telephone.
- Be sure to log your volunteer hours in the designated notebook before you leave.

For any questions and/or concerns, please contact:

Jess Knowles-Thomas

Volunteer Coordinator

(937) 900-1984

volunteer@autumntrailsstable.com

OR

Angela Stan

Executive Director

(937) 536-9912

info@autumntrailsstable.com

**We recognize that volunteering at Autumn Trails Stable involves an ongoing process of training and learning. We welcome all questions and suggestions, and once again, thank you for your interest and help in volunteering!
We truly could not do what we do without you!**