



Lone Oak Animal-Assisted Therapeutic & Educational Services

Volunteer Handbook

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LONE OAK ANIMAL-ASSISTED THERAPEUTIC & EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Welcome volunteers. We are delighted to have you. We are a 100% volunteer organization, so you are an invaluable part of the work we do. Thank you for offering your time and varied skills to our herd.

The information in this handbook is designed to assist you in understanding some of Lone Oak's policies and procedures. This handbook may not include every policy or protocol relating to volunteers, so please feel free to ask staff members or seasoned volunteers if you have further questions or concerns.

Volunteers are needed on a regular basis, but there are also opportunities for one time or occasional help. There are jobs with and without horses. Most volunteer opportunities at Lone Oak do not require special skills, but we will provide the necessary supervision and guidance to make your experience safe and enjoyable.

Our Mission Statement

To provide accessible services that promote healing and well-being through relationships with nature, animals, and other diverse community members.

Our Vision Statement

To establish a compassionate, just, and inclusive community that fosters attunement or connectedness across its members. Strength through compassion, justice through education, wellness through connection.

Our Philosophy

We believe that to grow and heal, we must provide a safe environment for authentic connection for individuals and groups to create the branches of our community. The lessons we learn from our equine partners teach us about relationships, community care, and collaborative leadership.

What Help is Needed?

Barn Volunteer: No prior experience required. Volunteers are given responsibilities according to their level of experience and offered opportunities to grow. Assist with daily chores that include mucking (removing manure from stalls and other areas), cleaning water buckets and troughs, raking, feeding, leading (walking), grooming, bathing, and managing our horses.

Farm Operations: For volunteers who have skills in repair/maintenance work. Gardening/landscaping, fence, equipment and other repairs, painting, etc.

Non-Horse Volunteer Opportunities: If you have experience in public relations (community outreach), grant writing, marketing, or fundraising, we need your skills. Additionally, we need help spreading the word in the form of brochure creation, website design, marketing, and other tools. We also need

administrative assistance that includes making and returning phone calls, mailing letters, organizing and office cleaning.

Attire

Lone Oak is a functioning horse farm. As a volunteer, you will get dirty and experience extremes in weather conditions. We require volunteers to prepare carefully for these conditions, and to wear clothing that is safe (not baggy), tasteful (no offensive sayings or logos), and appropriate for the weather.

What to wear:

- Comfortable clothes, appropriate to the season, that you don't mind getting dirty
- Sneakers or boots (no exposed toes)
- Sunscreen, bug repellent, sunglasses, hat or visor
- Long hair should be tied back
- Long pants, not too baggy or tight
- Shorts - appropriate length

What NOT to wear:

- Dangling jewelry
- Excessively tight or baggy clothing
- Bare midriff, see through, or other revealing clothing
- Short shorts
- Clothing with inappropriate slogans, decals
- Open toe shoes, sandals, clogs, or flip flops

Personal items are your responsibility:

Please leave cell phones, purses, and any other personal belongings in your locked vehicle. If you need a safe place for your keys, ask a staff person for the best location. If you must carry your cell phone, it needs to be on vibrate or silenced. Lone Oak is not responsible for any lost, stolen, or damaged items.

NO EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP

Your time with Lone Oak shall be as a volunteer, absent written authorization by Lone Oak. This Handbook does not intend to be, nor does it represent, an indication of an employment relationship.

CLEARANCES REQUIRED

Before beginning volunteer activities at Lone Oak, you must present proof of the following clearances to Sarah Primak at sarah.primak@millersville.edu:

- Pennsylvania State Criminal Background Check
- Pennsylvania Child Abuse Clearance

- FBI Clearance

No one will be permitted to participate in any Lone Oak activities without first obtaining the above clearances. For questions regarding how to obtain the required clearances, please consult with Sarah Primak.

CONFIDENTIALITY

As we strive to provide our clients with a safe and comfortable environment, confidentiality is of the utmost importance. Names, specific conditions or diagnoses, financial status, or other personal and/or sensitive details specific to clients, volunteers, or staff are to be held in strict confidence. All volunteers and staff of Lone Oak are bound by this policy to protect the rights and privacy of the individuals we serve and our larger community. Individuals involved with Lone Oak shall keep confidential all medical, social, referral, personal, and financial information regarding a client, past client, or prospective client, and their family. This includes information regarding donors and other volunteers. **NO EXCEPTIONS.** Individuals who breach confidentiality will be removed from the Lone Oak program. All individuals accepting responsibilities with Lone Oak are required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

SPECIAL RULES FOR PHOTOS AND SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES:

You cannot take pictures or videos of any clients or therapy sessions. You must ask permission to take the picture or video of another volunteer. If you plan on posting the photo on a social networking site (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) or any website, you must have permission from anyone that appears in the picture or video, including appearing by voice.

Acceptable photos would include the farm, horses, or our sign. If you are not sure, always ask. We appreciate the use of safe, respectful photos in social media, but we are always balancing that against the safety and comfort of our community.

INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

If you observe any unsafe or inappropriate behavior on the part of another volunteer toward a horse, volunteer, client, staff member, any other person, any other animal, or any Lone Oak property, please report it to an Executive Committee Member (EC) immediately (Heather Girvin, Katie Linebarger, Sarah Primak, Abigail Wilson, Shannon Wittlinger).

All individuals are required to conduct themselves in a cooperative, respectful, and appropriate manner at all times. Examples of inappropriate behavior would include: any form of harassment, bullying, aggressive or abusive behavior towards themselves, other people, horses, animals, or property. If you are subject to any type of inappropriate behavior, please do not approach the individual. Notify staff immediately. Please notify staff immediately of any concerns regarding the behavior of the clients in the program, or program horses. Inappropriate behavior may result in dismissal from the program.

DISCRIMINATORY HARASSMENT POLICY

Lone Oak strongly believes that discriminatory harassment in any setting is unacceptable conduct and cannot be tolerated. Lone Oak is committed to providing an environment for both its staff and clients that is free from all forms of discrimination and discriminatory harassment. This policy specifically applies to acts or expressions of discriminatory harassment committed both within and outside Lone Oak.

Discriminatory harassment includes sexual harassment and any harassment that is based on personal traits including, but not limited to, an individual's sex, race, religion, national origin, age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or genetic information.

It is important that all staff and volunteers are aware of the type of conduct or comments that may cause or contribute to discrimination or discriminatory harassment. One of the most common forms of discriminatory harassment is sexual harassment, but other forms of discriminatory harassment are also of great concern.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, demands for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct when such conduct has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

Sexual harassment can include, but is not limited to, unwelcome sexual advances or propositions, preferential or derogatory treatment based on gender, unnecessary touching, graphic verbal commentaries about an individual's body, the display of sexually suggestive materials or pictures, and explicit or offensive comments or jokes with a sexual content or based on gender.

All board members, staff, and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any conduct that might be considered sexual harassment. Any staff or volunteer who commits or condones sexual harassment will be subject to dismissal.

Other Forms of Discriminatory Harassment

Harassment based on a person's race, religion, national origin, age, disability, or any other protected trait is strictly prohibited. These characteristics are personal in nature, and Lone Oak prohibits all forms of harassing conduct based upon personal traits. No one at Lone Oak should be subjected to harassment or discrimination because they are a member of a certain group.

Certain conduct which may constitute discriminatory harassment includes, but is not limited to, preferential or derogatory treatment based upon protected characteristics, using insulting or degrading language that would reasonably offend members of a given race, religion, age, national origin, or disability or members of any other protected group, distributing or displaying any written or graphic material that would be offensive to members of any protected group, and using racial, religious, or ethnic epithets.

Lone Oak is committed to eliminating all forms of discriminatory harassment from our organization. It is unfortunate that some discriminatory stereotypes and prejudices apparently still exist in our society.

However, no one at Lone Oak may express or act on such unacceptable feelings and beliefs in or outside of our organization. Any staff member or volunteer who commits or condones discriminatory harassment will be subject to dismissal.

DRUG AND ALCOHOL POLICY

Lone Oak endeavors to ensure that its staff and volunteers are free from current substance abuse and alcohol abuse. The goal of this policy is to maintain a drug and alcohol-free environment and to reduce the potential for unnecessary accidents and injuries. We have an obligation to our clients and each other to take the necessary and reasonable steps to assure safety in our organization. The use of alcohol and drugs poses a serious threat, and we intend to do all that we can to maintain a safe, healthy, and productive environment. Therefore, this policy is applicable to all volunteers and staff.

Prohibited Conduct

Under this policy, the following conduct is prohibited:

- Lone Oak staff and volunteers may not possess, use, purchase, sell, or transfer alcohol on Lone Oak property (including parking areas) or while on Lone Oak business.
- Staff and volunteers may not consume alcohol on the premises.
- Staff and volunteers may not manufacture, possess, use, purchase, sell, or transfer illegal drugs or controlled substances, including marijuana (even if prescribed for medical use), or any amount on Lone Oak property (including parking areas) or while on Lone Oak business. Illegal drugs and controlled substances are those which cannot be obtained legally, including controlled dangerous substances and controlled substance analogues, as well as those drugs which, although legal, have been illegally obtained (i.e., prescribed drugs not being used for prescribed purposes, including amphetamines and barbiturates). Examples of illegal drugs include marijuana, cocaine, crack cocaine, heroin, morphine, phencyclidine (PCP), hallucinogens, methamphetamine, and other narcotics. Illegal drugs shall also include marijuana obtained for medicinal purposes, even if legally obtained in accordance with state law.
- Staff and volunteers may not be on Lone Oak property or on Lone Oak business under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs or controlled substances. If any staff or volunteer is suspected of being under the influence, they will be asked to leave the premises immediately and will be subject to dismissal.

DISMISSAL OF VOLUNTEERS

A volunteer may be dismissed at the sole discretion of Lone Oak for the following reasons:

- Disruptive, inappropriate or disrespectful behavior
- Threatening the safety of others, animals, or Lone Oak property
- Failure to comply with Lone Oak Confidentiality Policy
- Failure to comply with Lone Oak Dress Code
- Failure to comply with the Lone Oak Discriminatory Harassment Policy
- Failure to comply with the Lone Oak Drug and Alcohol Policy
- Failure to comply with the Barn Rules

- Failure to comply with the Farm Rules
- Failure to comply with Clearances Required

PROCEDURES

Attendance Logs

If you need verification of your volunteer hours for taxes, school, court, scholarships etc., this is where we take the information. If you do not sign in, you do not get credit.

First Day Volunteering

Check in with the volunteer coordinator at the location and time determined during your initial phone conversation.

Things to Remember

We focus on safety, courtesy, respect, and kindness.

- Speak softly. Therapy may be in session.
- Do not feed the horses unless directed to do so. Treats are only given with permission.
- Do not hand feed horses. All food (including treats) are to be placed in a feeding dish.
- Do not halter a horse over a stall door or gate.
- Do not tie a horse unless directed to do so by staff. Not all are trained to be tied.
- Do not leave a haltered horse unattended.
- Do not turn horses out without permission from staff.
- Do not turn a horse out with a halter on, unless directed by staff.
- Leave gates the way you find them. Make sure all gates are closed. This includes reconnecting wires above the gates.
- Do not use your cell phone when you are working directly with a horse.
- Never panic, scream, or run.
- Never leave any tool or foreign object in a stall or paddock unattended. (Wheelbarrow, mucking fork, brush, halters, etc.)
- Special grooming procedures such as clipping, cutting mane or tail, will be done by staff only.
- Please read the white board for any information that you may need for each horse that day. (blanketing, fly spray, medicine, etc.) If you have any questions, please ask staff or an experienced volunteer.
- Please take care of tack and put it back in its proper location.
- Exercising, lunging, or training of any kind is to be done by approved individuals only.
- The horses will be color coded designating the experience level a person must have to handle them. Volunteers' experience level will be determined at the sole discretion of staff. Only handle (walk, brush, bathe etc.) horses in your color category. (Green = ok for all levels. Blue = Moderate horse experience required. Red = staff or highly qualified volunteers only).
- Assume fence wires are on, meaning they will deliver a shock if you touch them.

Additional rules may be posted around the farm. Please take time to read them. Treat every person and horse with respect. Help each other and have fun.

Attendance

If you are unable to make it at your scheduled time, please either email, text, or call as soon as possible so we can locate another volunteer if needed. If you know that you will be away for certain days or weeks, please let us know as soon as possible so we can make arrangements. We understand that emergencies can come up, but PLEASE make sure to let us know you will not be coming.

Volunteers who fail to attend their scheduled volunteer times may be removed from the Lone Oak schedule going forward.

Severe Weather

In the event of a severe thunderstorm or other weather, sessions will be canceled. Anytime there is lightning in the area, extremely high winds, or the threat for tornadoes, sessions will be canceled. However, the horses will still need care. Please see the cancellation procedure if you cannot attend your volunteer shift due to the weather.

Winter Weather Emergency Protocol

In the event of inclement weather (snow or other winter weather conditions) sessions and programs will be canceled. However, the horses will still need to be cared for. Please see the cancellation procedure if you cannot attend your volunteer shift due to the weather. Chores will look different at this time.

During freezing temperatures and winter weather:

- Animals will require fresh water every two hours starting at 7am and ending at 7pm.
- Volunteer shift times will change to accommodate animals' need for water.
- This may include outreach to fill these extra shifts. As adults, please make your own informed decision regarding your responsibilities, obligations, and comfort in winter weather as to whether you can accommodate changes in shifts.
- Check in regarding any changes to chores that are affected by winter weather.

Emergency Procedures

At Lone Oak an emergency is defined as any unexpected occurrence or set of circumstances resulting in a real or potential safety hazard demanding immediate attention.

Every volunteer should be familiar with the location of the following:

- A cell phone with emergency numbers saved.

- Emergency phone numbers listed in the tack room. The staff member or volunteer in charge will determine if 911 should be called. If called, notify operators for EMT's to turn sirens and lights off once on the farm lane.
- Human first aid kit is located in the tack room.
- Horse first aid is also located in the tack room.

Precautions

Universal precautions are to be used to minimize contact with blood and body fluids by taking steps that may prevent non-intact skin exposures of individuals to specific organisms such as Hepatitis B and Human Immune-deficiency Virus (HIV/AIDS).

When you follow universal precautions, you assume that all persons are potentially infected with blood-borne pathogens.

- Only staff or properly licensed medical personnel (doctor, nurse, EMT) should attempt to aid an injured person and come into contact with bodily fluids.
- Wear disposable latex or vinyl gloves when it is likely that hands will be in contact with bodily fluids.
- Protect clothing with an impervious material when it is likely that clothing will be soiled with bodily fluids.
- Wear masks and/or eye protection when it is likely that eye and/or mucus membranes will be splashed with bodily fluids.
- Wash hands after injured client contact, paying attention to around and under fingernails and between the fingers, even if gloves are worn. If unanticipated contact with these body substances occurs, washing is done as soon as possible.

Helmets

A safety riding helmet is the single most important piece of equipment. All persons mounted on a horse **MUST** wear a helmet on the grounds of Lone Oak/Foxfield Farm. There are **NO EXCEPTIONS**.

The well-fitted helmet should stay on the head when fastened without rocking or moving. A properly fitted helmet should be snug. Overly large helmets are dangerous and uncomfortable. They may slip, obscure vision, or fall off.

When leading a horse:

1. Hold the lead rope about 12 inches from the snap with your hand closest to the horse. Our horses will lead from either side.
2. Fold the excess rope in a figure eight with your outside hand (the hand away from the horse). **NEVER** wrap the rope around your hand, shoulder, or any body part.
3. Maintain your personal body space.

4. Look where you are going, not back at the horse. You may keep the horse in the corner of your eye.
5. Keep the horse at your side with its throat latch (where head and neck meet) about even with your shoulder.
6. Do not allow the horse to get ahead of you.
7. Do not allow the horse to fall too far behind you.
8. Do not allow the horse to walk directly behind you.

UNDERSTANDING HORSE BEHAVIOR

Understanding a horse's basic instincts and senses improves your ability to predict behavior and communicate effectively with them. This understanding is the first step in managing risks, preventing accidents, and increasing the quality of your mutual relationship.

Sense of Smell

The horse's sense of smell is thought to be very acute, and it allows them to recognize other horses and people. Smell also enables the horse to evaluate situations.

Why is this important?

- Smelling allows horses the opportunity to become familiar with new objects, people, and other horses. Allow them time to smell new things.
- They can smell treats in clothing, so we recommend that you do not carry treats on you. Do not feed treats without permission.
- We discourage volunteers from eating or having food with the horses to avoid getting between jealous horses.

Hearing

The horse's sense of hearing is also thought to be very acute. Their ears are the most mobile of any domestic animal. They can hear higher frequencies than we can. The combination of their sense of hearing and sight helps them to become more familiar with new or frightening sounds. Often, hearing a frightening sound without seeing it causes the Fight or Flight response. Ears moving quickly back and forth may indicate that they have picked up a sound they are not familiar with. Ears laid or pinned back may indicate aggression or that the horse is upset. Soft drooping ears usually indicate relaxation and ears pointed in two directions indicates the horse is concentrated on two different things.

Why is this important?

- Ear position signals the horse's attention AND intention.
- There is no need to shout or speak loudly around such sensitive ears.
- Speak to horses in a calm, quiet manner to reassure them.

Sight

The horse's eyes are set on the sides of their head. This gives them greater peripheral vision. They have both binocular vision and monocular vision. This means that each eye can focus on something different or they can work together to see an object in front of them. Horses have a few blind spots: directly behind them in the area of their tail, directly below their nose, on their back, in the area of their withers and directly in front of their forehead.

Why is this important?

- The horse may notice if something is new on the farm. Allow the horse the opportunity to look at new objects.
- Plan your approach so you are not in their blind spot. Speak when approaching.
- A horse may need to touch a new object with its nose or hoof. They may paw it.

Taste

Taste is closely associated with the sense of smell and helps a horse distinguish palatable foods and other objects.

Why is this important?

- A horse may lick or nibble when becoming familiar with objects and people. Be careful as this may lead to biting.

Communication

Horses communicate primarily through body language. They are very perceptive to unconscious messages that we are sending through our body language.

Barn Rules

Lone Oak rules are designed to create and maintain a clean, safe, and fun environment for people and horses. Working with horses is a high-risk activity. The following rules must be adhered to at all times by participants, volunteers, staff, and anyone who visits Lone Oak.

- All paperwork must be completed and submitted in order to enter the farm. This includes clients, volunteers, staff, board members, and visitors. No Exceptions!
- No horseplay around the barn. This includes running, shouting, throwing projectiles, waving objects, wrestling, fighting, and chasing.
- All clients, volunteers, staff, board members, visitors etc. will wear closed toe shoes (boots, sneakers) in any area inhabited by horses (fields, paddocks, barn, stalls, pastures, etc.).
- No one is permitted in the barn, pastures, or paddocks unless accompanied by a trained volunteer or staff member.
- Absolutely no smoking or open flames are permitted in the barn or paddock area.
- No one is allowed to handle the horses, feed or pet horses, unless supervised by a staff member or trained volunteer.

- No hand feeding anything to the horses. Treats may be given in a bucket under the supervision of a staff member or trained volunteer.
- If you go through a gate, close it securely behind you.
- If you get it out, put it away.
- In case of fire, get to safety first. Then call 911. Then notify a supervisor.
- No riding horses unless Heather Girvin, Abigail Wilson, Katie Linebarger, or Sarah Primak are present **and** have given permission.

Farm Rules

- Children on Lone Oak/Foxfield Farm premises must be supervised at all times by their parent/legal guardian.
- No one may enter a pasture containing horses unless accompanied by a trained volunteer or staff member.
- Do not touch or feed horses unless you have permission from the owners of that horse.
- No pets allowed.
- No bare feet or sandals are allowed around the horses at any time, by anyone.
- No horseplay in the barn or around the corrals. This includes running, shouting, throwing projectiles, waving objects, wrestling, fighting and chasing.
- Keep all barn and arena gates closed at all times. This includes reconnecting wires above the gates.
- Turn out the lights if you are the last to leave. Also unplug any fans or heaters that may have been left on at the end of the day.
- In case of fire, get to safety, call 911, and tell a supervisor.

Verification of Rules and Regulations

In order for Lone Oak to run efficiently, we rely on our trained volunteers to assist us. Thank you for volunteering your time. It is our hope that you find it a rewarding experience and understand that you are a valuable part of Lone Oak's family reaching out to help our community members.

Please feel free to ask questions, because all questions are important. We encourage you to improve your education of horses and the world of equine psychotherapy by attending various workshops we offer. If there is something you are interested in learning, please mention it to a Director or any staff member.

Please print and sign this page after you have read and understand the guidelines as printed in this Volunteer Handbook and bring it with you to Lone Oak during your next visit.

As soon as you have completed and reviewed these educational tools, you will be ready for some hands-on training. When you have completed all your paperwork we will be happy to get you started. Thank you again for volunteering.

Signature of Volunteer

Print your name

Date

Signature of Parent (if volunteer is under 18 years of age)

Print your name

Date