



**TROT**  
*Therapeutic Riding Of Tri-Cities*

## Volunteer Handbook

*104 E 41st Pl, Kennewick, WA 99337 • 509-412-0112*  
[www.trot3cities.org](http://www.trot3cities.org) • [info@trot3cities.org](mailto:info@trot3cities.org) • 501c3 EIN:46-3822277

*Issue #2 - 2025*

## Table of Contents Page

### Mission and Beginnings 2

#### I. Our Special Riders 3

##### II. Facilities 3

A. Office 3

B. Arena 3

C. Tack Shed 3

D. Feed Shed 3

E. Accessibility 3

#### III. The Horses 4

A. Why A Horse

B. Program Horses

C. Horse Sense 4/5

D. Verbal Commands

#### IV. Rules and Procedures 5

A. Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy 5/6

B. Reasons for Disciplinary Action

C. Appropriate Clothing

D. Cell Phone Usage 7

E. Honoring Confidentiality

F. Parking

G. Visitors

H. Attendance and Punctuality

I. Limitations 7

#### V. Your Role as a Volunteer 8

A. Sign In, Please!

B. Barn Etiquette

C. Duties

D. Grooming Procedures and Preparing the horses for Riders 9

E. Getting the Riders Ready 10

F. Instructors, Horse Handlers, & Sidewalkers

G. How to Sidewalk with a Rider 11

H. We're Walking Where? 11

I. Finishing Up 12

#### VI. Emergency Procedures 12

A. Horse Emergency – Fallen Rider

B. Cancellation policies

#### VII. Volunteer Communication 13

#### VIII. Final Thoughts 13

## Welcome to TROT

### **Our Mission:**

*To build a community that promotes the physical, emotional, and social well-being of individuals of all ages and abilities through the transformative power of animal-assisted therapies and activities.*

### **Our Program at TROT:**

Therapeutic Riding of Tri-Cities began in Cynthia Macfarlan's backyard with one special rider that created a ripple effect. Here is her story....

I often get asked, "How did TROT get started?". I would like to answer that for you and tell you a little about myself. Short answer: "a boy, a horse, and an 'r'."

For over three decades I used my therapy dogs to facilitate communication in my patients. As a Speech/Language Pathologist I worked with all ages and different disorders in a variety of settings. My labrador and golden retrievers should have been on the payroll because they elicited more speech from people than I could!

One day in 2013, while working at the Lourdes Hospital, a 12-year-old boy was brought to me to 'fix' his misarticulation of /r/. Neither he nor I were thrilled about the idea, but both recognized the importance of not letting his speech impediment interfere with people's perception of intelligence and maturity. So, we struck a deal, "work hard in the clinic and I will let you mess with my horses". He did. Our carryover maintenance work was done in my backyard with my two *hoRses, in the aRena, using Rope, Reins, and Riding aRound the pastuRes*. The rapid functional improvement evoked my response, "Why isn't there a therapeutic riding center in the Tri-Cities?" This clearly could be an effective and important service.

For six years TROT operated and grew out of my backyard with one part-time employee, until It became clear that TROT was outgrowing my tiny arena and backyard and needed to move. About this time, I was winding down my 40 + year career and able to give 110% to TROT. TROT's move to Kennewick, in the middle of covid (when opportunity knocks...) was the best thing that happened. The full-size arena, an office with heat and a bathroom (a converted garage half but still better than a trailer) and room to grow was an answer to prayer. If you build it, they will come -and come they did! The growth and energy behind this project was remarkable in a relatively brief amount of time.

Now in 2023, TROT offers the community six different programs. TROT now has eight horses, over 40 riders, and over 80 volunteers a week.

## I. Our Special Riders

Although individuals receive services from TROT due to their disability, we recognize every individual as a person first and not by the challenges he or she faces. The person-centered approach requires awareness in the language we use and in the way we communicate with our riders. Although our riders may face challenges, they are individuals who have the right to encounter life just as any other person.

At times some of our riders may not be able to or might have difficulties expressing their needs. If you see or suspect at any time that a rider may be uncomfortable or in need of assistance, you should address them in a supportive manner and alert staff to help meet any needs.

Understanding the rider's needs can help you gain a perspective of how you can be of assistance to them. This can be achieved by actively listening and providing empathy to our riders. Allowing riders to feel heard is an important factor so that they can feel understood. It is also important not to talk over the riders with other volunteers in a manner that ignores the rider.

## II. The Facilities

**A. The Office:** The office is located at 104 E 41st Place, Kennewick, WA 99337. There is a large gravel parking lot where all clients and volunteers are asked to park. The office is where the most staff is located. This is also where some Hippotherapy sessions, Path To Success classes, and conferences take place. There is a restroom and water inside. You are welcome in this space!

**B. The Arena:** The arena is south of the parking lot, and is utilized for riders during lessons. Riders mount and dismount from either the ramp or the "block" that is inside the arena.

**C. The Tack Shed:** The Tack Shed has all materials needed for class. The Tack Shed has each horse's tack organized under their name. There are also toys which are used for classes.

**D. The Feed Shed:** The feed shed is located to the East of the Tack Shed. This shed has pellets, supplements, and all horse care. Medical materials for the horses can be found here.

**E. Accessibility:** There is handicap accessibility for dial-a-ride with a cement sidewalk to the mounting ramp. There is a porta potty which is wheelchair accessible in the parking lot.

### III. The Horses

#### A. Why A Horse

- **A horse's gait is the closest thing to a human walk.** It is three dimensional, repetitive, and horses, like humans, walk with one foot in front of the other. Therapeutic horseback riding teaches the muscle groups to work properly and together.
- **Horses make extended eye contact.** The eye contact made between a horse and a human signals an unconditional acceptance on the part of the horse. Additionally, horses are non-judgmental animals and have the ability to establish trusting relationships with humans.
- **Horses and humans have the same internal rhythm.** The human brain is able to recognize, and eventually mimic the rhythmic movements of the horse. These recognizable movement patterns quiet the brain and allow for various outside forms of communication input.
- We teach riding skills so that riders may enjoy horseback riding as recreation. Through carefully prepared activities, riders learn to stop; start; turn; and navigate obstacles. Riders also move through various changes of speed when appropriate. Activities include games that assist in balance, motor planning, spatial awareness, and sensory integration.

#### B. The Program Horses

The therapy horses at TROT are well-trained and generally well-behaved. The horses used in the program are adopted, leased, purchased, or donated and are all trained before being used in therapy sessions. Just like people, they each have their own personality which you will learn as you work with them. Each horse has his own paddock, and his/her name appears on their gate. The halters and lead lines are hanging on the front of their paddock. Other equipment and supplies are located in the tack shed under their photo. Each piece of equipment used for a particular horse has a label with the appropriate name.

#### C. Horse Sense

If you've never worked around horses before, it can be a bit intimidating the first time. But, it doesn't have to be. The following are a few pointers to keep in mind when working with horses:

1. When you approach a horse, do not hurry. Be calm and confident as horses are intuitive by nature.
2. Speak to the horse in a **low** but **clear** and **friendly** voice, and rub it gently on the neck. Please **do not** pet the horses' faces or try to pet them when they are loose in the pastures.

3. Since horses **can't see behind their bodies or directly in front of their heads**, let them know you are there by speaking to them and gently touching their body as you move around them.
4. Never put your hands around the horse's mouth or feed them by hand.
5. Never pet the horse during lessons. This can distract the horse.
6. Never approach a horse from behind or make sudden movements around a horse as they can spook very easily.
7. If a horse spooks in lessons, move with the frightened horse. Do not move away from the horse or the rider. Keeping your body on the side of the horse lessens the chances of getting hurt.
8. Always maintain a balanced position when grooming so you can move away quickly.
9. Keep your feet away from the horse's feet. The horse may accidentally step on you, causing serious pain and possible injury. (They can weigh over 1,000 lbs.)
10. Never bend down to do something and lose awareness of what the horse is doing. Be alert, be careful.

#### **D. Verbal Commands**

The horses at TROT respond to a number of commands during the course of any given session, or at any time that you are working with them. There are times they will need a **gentle** reminder of what they should be doing at a given moment or what the command means.

1. Walk on	Some of our riders tap the horse, this also means walk on
2. Trot	Light jogging for the horse
3. Whoa	Use this when you want the horse to stop (often heard on TV or in movies)

### **IV. Rules and Procedures**

#### **A. Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy**

One of the first steps in enabling a volunteer to be successful on the job is the reestablishment of position standards and performance expectations. Within this handbook, volunteers are furnished with TROT's policies with respect to conduct on the job. All volunteers are urged to become familiar with TROT' rules and standards of conduct and are expected to follow these rules and standards faithfully in carrying out TROT' mission. Volunteers who are unsure of what is expected of them should meet with the program coordinator as soon as possible to gain a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities. TROT's disciplinary policy has been developed to ensure a

safe and conducive environment for all persons and equines involved in our therapeutic riding program. The TROT executive Director, Program Coordinator, Equine Director and/or Instructors have the right to discipline volunteers. Discipline situations are handled by first offense; a verbal discussion; second offense, written warning; third offense by meeting with Executive Director and Program Coordinator.

### **B. Reasons for Disciplinary Action**

- Disruption of a class
- Unacceptable or unsafe behavior
- Inappropriate sexual comments or sexual misconduct in any form
- Showing any form of disrespect to instructors, riders, families, or other volunteers
- Carrying out unsafe actions that put individuals at risk
- Use of cell phones or other personal electronic devices in the arena. Please let the instructor know if you are expecting an important call.
- Use of alcohol, tobacco, or any other illegal substances on TROT property
- Failure to adhere to program policies
- Inattentiveness to tasks
- Swearing or inappropriate language
- Rough-housing and inattentive socializing
- Excessive absenteeism or tardiness
- Avoidance of work
- *Inappropriate attire*

### **C. Appropriate Clothing**

- Wear comfortable shoes that protect your feet and ankles.
- Waterproof shoes are preferred
- No sandals, open-toed shoes, crocs, or steel-toed boots are permitted in the arena.
- Wear long pants to protect your legs. Shorts, which come to the knee, are permitted.
- Belly shirts are not permitted.
- During the winter months, remember to dress warm!
- Please wear a volunteer T-shirt when working.
- Wear gloves not mittens, as they do not allow you to use your fingers.
- No clothing with offensive or suggestive messages advertising alcohol or drug use.
- No long or dangling jewelry. Wearing jewelry of this nature is a safety risk to you, our riders, and our horses.

**\*If you fail to comply with the dress code, you will be asked to leave for the day.**

**D. Cell Phone Usage**

- No phone usage while volunteering including texting or receiving phone calls
- Phones should be turned OFF and kept on your person while at TROT. TROT is not responsible for lost or missing phones.
- No pictures or videos of riders are to be taken and/or posted to social media
- In an emergency during lessons, you can be reached on the office phone 509-412-0112

**E. Honoring Confidentiality:**

Details of rider's condition and/or progress should not be discussed with any individual outside of the program and/or posted on any social media site.

**F. Parking:**

Please drive with care and respect while in TROT's parking lot. Please watch for children and our two cats, Timothy and Alfalfa.

**G. Visitors:**

Only authorized visitors are permitted in the workplace. When making arrangements for visitors, volunteers should request that they call prior to the visit date and speak with the Program Coordinator. Additionally, they will be required to fill out a visitor liability form before the visit begins.

**H. Attendance and Punctuality**

1. Good attendance and punctuality are essential elements of effective volunteer performance which are measured by objective standards. Poor attendance and tardiness disrupt productivity, place a hardship on others who must then do the work of the absent, and make it difficult for TROT to function effectively. Volunteers are expected to maintain a good attendance record.
2. It is your responsibility to log your hours in Wrangler. Please sign in when you arrive and sign out when you leave.

**I. Limitations**

At TROT, we welcome all volunteers. It is, however, important to note that all volunteers must be able to understand directions, and that certain volunteer opportunities require more physical effort than others. Physical jobs are jobs that will require you to be able to meet certain physical requirements. These jobs entail

being able to walk continuously at a brisk pace for thirty (30) minutes, jog for short intervals, support 50 lbs. of weight, hold hands at shoulder height or above for a thirty (30) minute class, and help support a rider in case of an emergency dismount. TROT reserves the right to assess your suitability to safely volunteer and set specific parameters for participation in our program. TROT does not accept volunteers for court ordered community service. These standards may result in the determination that volunteering at this time is unsuitable for you.

**If you are unable to perform these actions, please inform the individual who is doing your volunteer training prior to being assigned to a class time.**

## **V. Your Role as a Volunteer**

### **A. Sign In, Please!**

1. Each time you arrive at TROT, the **first** thing you need to do is sign in on your Wrangler account. Be sure to sign out as well. **Second**, read the cork board on the table on the front porch for important updates! **Lastly**, find your name tag in the alphabetical ordered (by last name) tote. Your name tag should not leave the premises.
2. Any change in a volunteer's name, address, telephone number, or insurance information needs to be reported immediately to TROT Staff as to ensure uninterrupted communication and for liability purposes.
3. The monitor in the tack shed will be referred to by horse leaders to determine appropriate tack for their rider that day.

### **B. Barn Etiquette**

1. Check the cork boards for any important new information **FIRST**.
2. Only approved horse leaders can lead horses. **NEVER** lead or move a horse to or from the paddocks if you are not an approved handler, regardless of past or present horse experience.
3. No eating in the barn.

### **C. Duties**

Some of the activities you can help with at TROT while not sidewalking, leading, or getting the horses ready for lessons include, but are not limited to:

1. Sweep aisles
2. Fill/ clean water buckets (please only fill half way)
3. Sweep office area
4. Alleyway clean up ( in between the tackshed and the arena)
5. Put tack away

6. Setting up and cleaning up the arena
7. Assisting instructors

#### **D. Grooming Procedures and Preparing the Horses for Riders**

All of the horses must be groomed, but the ones that will be used in the upcoming session need to be done first. If you are a new volunteer, please team up with a volunteer who is experienced. A schedule is posted on the bulletin board on the front porch or on the TV in the tack shed that shows which horses will be used in the sessions.

1. Each horse has his own grooming supplies. They are kept in a basket in the tack room under their picture. Look for the label on their basket.
2. **Always** check the schedule before you start grooming the horses. The same horses may not always be used for a particular session.
3. Since you usually don't have much time before the session starts, you will need to learn to work quickly. Remember, each horse has his own personality. While most enjoy the process, some may need to be handled more gently than others. Two people at the most may work on each horse. Stay alert, always maintain your balance, and speak quietly.
4. Once you're done grooming and if all the horses for the sessions have been groomed, look or ask to see what else can be done.

#### **TROT Grooming Procedures**

- a. Have a trained handler bring their horse to their assigned sport on the tie rack.
- b. Use the round curry comb in a circular motion on the whole body, from behind their ears to the top of the legs. Make sure to clean the girth area (belly behind the front legs) well.
- c. Hard brush the same area, cleaning the dust from the brush often.
- d. Use the rectangular curry to brush the face in a scrubbing fashion. Brush the way the hair naturally grows.
- e. Soft brush the horse's face first and then brush from the top of the ears all over the horse's body, including the legs and underneath the tail.
- f. Hoof pick the horse's feet. Then clean the mud from his hooves and paint the feet with hoof dressing.
- g. Have a trained handler lead the horse back to his stall, always using a lead line.

Please alert instructors or head volunteers if you notice anything out of the ordinary.

Please check the cork board in the tack shed for any pertinent information about the horses.

## **E. Getting the Riders Ready**

1. As the riders arrive for their lessons, you should be available and willing to participate.
2. All riders must wear a helmet and **some** riders wear a safety belt (check the tack assignment sheet on the cork board on the front porch).

Example: Helmets should stay on the head when harnessed without rocking or moving. It should rest so that there can be two fingers placed between the eyebrows and the edge of the helmet.

Example: Safety Belts should stay around the waist without sliding up and down or side to side. The handles should be positioned so that they are on the rider's back/hip area.

3. When the riders are ready, the parent or sidewalker will take them to the area where they will wait to mount the horse. Sidewalkers should stay close and offer assistance so the rider can move about safely.
4. Most riders will mount their horse using the ramp. Wait for the instructor to let you know if they are ready for you to lead a rider up. If you take a wheelchair up the ramp, be sure to lock it in position and be careful not to frighten or strike the horse with the chair.

## **F. Instructors, Horse Handlers, & Sidewalkers**

1. TROT has several instructors and instructors in training. The instructors are responsible for evaluating the riders' abilities, designing exercises and activities suited for each individual rider, evaluating the rider's progress, redesigning the sessions as needed, and supervising each session to ensure the rider's safety and comfort. They also are responsible for checking all tack and being in a lead role during a rider's mount and dismount.
2. **Horse handlers are responsible for the horse.** They assist the rider by guiding and controlling the horse throughout the entire lesson.
3. **Sidewalkers are responsible for the rider.** They walk on either side of the horse or pony and give the rider as much help in maintaining his/her balance as needed. Only leave your rider if told to do so. One or two sidewalkers will be assigned to each rider depending on the amount of assistance that is needed.
4. Most of the volunteers at TROT start as sidewalkers. If you are interested in becoming a horse handler, email our equine manager. The equine manager will review your skill level and determine when you can progress to leading the horse.

## **G. How to Sidewalk with a Rider**

1. Always listen for directions from the instructors. He/she will tell you how much and what type of assistance a particular rider needs during the lesson. The amount of help needed depends on the rider's riding experience and the characteristics of the disability. The goal is to allow riders to be as independent as possible while making sure their safety is not in jeopardy.
2. Walk next to the mounted rider, in line with the center of the saddle or pad. Do not walk behind the saddle/pad or next to the horse's hindquarters.
3. Always remain alert to the needs of the rider. What once felt fine in a previous session could be causing problems in the current one. Tell the instructor about the problem and notify the horse handler before making any changes specified by the instructor. Most changes will be made in the center of the ring to avoid interrupting the rest of the class.
4. **DO NOT LEAN ON THE HORSE.**
5. You need to work closely with the horse handler, letting him/her know of any special needs the rider may have. However, do not engage in casual conversation with him/her since it may distract everyone's attention from the lesson.
6. Never walk with your hands in your pockets. You may not be able to help the rider quickly enough should a problem arise.
7. Be enthusiastic during exercises and games to help make it fun and interesting for the rider. Allow the rider to participate as independently as possible.
8. At the halt, remain in position and listen for directions. Be especially alert for balance changes as the horse stops and starts. Never let go of the rider, even when the horse halts (stops).
9. When it's time to dismount, remain next to the rider until the instructor is ready to help with dismount. Never dismount or mount the rider without the instructor.

## **We're Walking Where?**

Lessons may take place in the arena, the round pin, sensory course, classroom or paddocks depending on the rider and weather conditions. Whether you are a sidewalker or a horse handler, you must always remain alert to the needs of the rider and their safety. If the lesson is taking place outdoors, you must also remain alert to the general surroundings and how they might affect everyone involved in the lesson. If you are having any issues that interfere with your ability to perform your role, please inform the instructor immediately.

- if class is in the arena or paddocks, be aware of the gate and make sure it is closed while the class is in session.
- Please be aware of all noises and activity around you. Any of this can startle the horse.

## I. Finishing Up

When the lesson is over and the rider has dismounted, offer assistance with riders, helmets, belts, reins, and any arena or barn clean-up. Please assist your rider outside the arena and do not leave them until they are with their parents or caretaker.

## VI. Emergency Procedures

A. Horse Emergency – If a rider has fallen to the ground, anyone on the team must loudly announce, “Fallen rider” into the arena, so that everyone can hear. It is the horse leader’s job to position the horse so that its body is away from the rider and at a stop. It is a sidewalker’s job on the fall side to place themselves between the horse and rider. The other sidewalker stays with the horse. When the instructor arrives, it is still a sidewalker’s job to stay with the horse or place themselves between the horse and rider.

B. Cancellations: TROT may cancel riding in the event of extreme weather in consideration of all Center personnel, participants, parents and equines (e.g., thunderstorms, heat > 95°/weather advisories, extreme cold < 30°, wind, etc.). Generally TROT follows the Kennewick Public Schools cancellation policy. TROT will make an attempt to reach participants by phone/email/text in the event of a cancellation. If a participant must cancel, please send an email to [volunteer@trot3cities.org](mailto:volunteer@trot3cities.org) or call as soon as possible, so that our volunteers/horses will not be waiting. TROT reserves the right to cancel lessons in the event that the safety of all personnel, participants and horses is compromised. We will make an attempt to notify participants of a cancellation at least two hours prior to cancellation. Lessons canceled by TROT may or may not be made up depending on available resources, i.e. barn, classroom or arena space, instructor and/or volunteer staff.

## **VII. Volunteer Communication**

Volunteers will communicate directly with the program coordinator. The program coordinator will text or call volunteers with reminders about classes. Please let the Program Coordinator know if you cannot attend your sessions. Volunteers can call, text, or email the program coordinator if they are not able to make it to a class.

Facebook messaging and emails are not an appropriate way to call. TROT encourages volunteers to discuss any issues they may have either verbally, in writing, or via email. Volunteers should maintain open and respectful communication with one another and staff so to ensure a safe and happy working environment. If a resolution between volunteers cannot be reached by discussing the issues at hand, volunteers should arrange a meeting with the instructors. If the concern, problem, or issue is not properly addressed, volunteers should contact the Equine Director, Program Coordinator, or Executive Director. Any information discussed in an open communication meeting is considered to be confidential to the fullest extent possible. Retaliation against any volunteer for appropriate usage of open communication channels is unacceptable.

## **VIII. Final Thoughts**

Anyone interested in volunteering their time to help with the program is welcomed, regardless of experience. Volunteering at TROT can be a rewarding and challenging experience. It can also be exciting, especially if you don't have any experience working with horses or people with disabilities. The program will teach you many things, if you let it. This handbook was developed to help make your experience at TROT as pleasant, fulfilling, and productive as possible. Since the program is continually restructured to meet the needs of its participants, this handbook is designed to serve only as a guide. Although many of the basic principles remain constant, one of the key requirements for volunteering at TROT is flexibility. It would be almost impossible to adequately cover every possible variation of all the different programs offered on a daily basis at TROT. It is our hope that this handbook will serve as a useful reference for both new and continuing volunteers. And, as always, if you have any questions, just ask.

Thank you for supporting our mission to promote physical, psychological and social well-being of people with special needs by providing animal-assisted therapies and activities.