



## Volunteer Handbook

Thank you for becoming a member of our volunteer team at Halleck Creek Ranch. We hope that volunteering at Halleck Creek Ranch will give you a great sense of achievement and fulfillment, as you care for our ranch and horses, and help our participants reach their goals and improve the quality of their lives. In addition to giving back to our community, volunteers learn a great deal about horsemanship, leadership, and about the issues facing people with special needs.

Please don't hesitate to contact us with any issues, questions, or concerns that arise at any time. I am available and eager to hear about your volunteering experience as you become a member of our community.

With a warm welcome,

Kayla Andersen

Volunteer Coordinator

(415) 662-2488

kandersen@halleckcreekranch.org

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

We believe that providing challenging experiences in a supportive environment will make a lasting, positive change in the attitudes and abilities of children and adults with disabilities, and in the people who care for them. Through the beneficial activity of therapeutic horseback riding, our participants learn new skills and expand their self-perception, enjoying a sense of freedom. We believe their families benefit from the relaxed atmosphere of the ranch and a valuable chance to network with other families and caregivers. We are committed to providing our program at low or no cost to our participants, so that the therapeutic benefits available through connections with people, animals and nature are never denied to a single individual in need.

## **PRIMARY ACTIVITIES**

With the generous support of our donors, Halleck Creek Ranch (HCR) improves the lives of Bay Area children and adults with special needs by providing low cost individual and group therapeutic horseback riding lessons and Equine Assisted Services (EAS). These activities provide our participants with a critical bridge to greater independence, improved physical and mental health and valuable friendships. Therapeutic riding builds the physical strength, coordination, self-confidence and social skills needed to reduce stress and improve each participant's quality of life, allowing them to reach their full potential both now and for years to come. In addition to improving their lives, Halleck Creek Ranch is instrumental in supporting their families. The ranch offers parents peace of mind as their children gain critical life skills, become more independent, and make new friendships. Our programs build important connections between the disabled and non-disabled communities by giving volunteers the opportunity to interact with youth and adults with special needs. Through their experiences, volunteers gain valuable perspective on their own abilities, strengthen interpersonal and leadership skills, and discover the joy of helping others.

Halleck Creek Ranch is a member of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.), a federal nonprofit organization formed in 1969 to promote Equine Assisted Services (EAS) for individuals with special needs. With more than 4,800 certified instructors and equine specialists and 873-member centers, more than 7,600 PATH Intl. members around the globe help nearly 69,000 children and adults (including more than 6,700 veterans and active-duty military personnel) with physical, cognitive and emotional challenges find strength and independence through the power of the horse each year.

## **BENEFITS OF EAS**

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In therapeutic riding, the horse is used as a tool to improve the mental and physical well-being of the disabled person. Therapeutic riding is recognized by the American Occupational Therapy Association and the American Physical Therapy Association. The benefits are available to individuals with just about any disability, including but not limited to:

- Autism
- Emotional Disability
- Muscular Dystrophy
- Cerebral Palsy
- Visual/Hearing Impairments
- Down syndrome
- Cognitive Impairments
- Spinal Cord Injuries
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Stroke
- Learning Disabilities
- Brain Injuries

**Physical Benefits:** Horseback riding gently and rhythmically moves the body (pelvis and trunk, most specifically) in a manner similar to that of the human walking gait. For participants who walk with difficulty, or are unable to walk independently, therapeutic riding develops and strengthens specific muscle groups that are not worked in everyday life.

**Neurological and Psychological Benefits:** Exercise in the fresh air, away from hospitals, doctor's offices, therapy rooms or home help is a refreshing change for participants and their families. Confidence is gained by mastering new skills and making new friends. The ability to control an animal much larger and stronger than oneself is a great confidence builder. Riding increases interest in what is happening around the participants, as they explore the world from the back of a horse. The excitement of riding stimulates participants, encouraging them to speak and communicate about it. Participants are highly motivated, and therefore learn how to control their emotions and how to appropriately express them.

## **HISTORY**

Halleck Creek Ranch was founded by Duane Irving and Joyce Goldfield with the vision of bringing children and adults with disabilities into the wilderness using the four strong legs of a horse. They created the program as a unique gift for people with disabilities, wanting these special riders to experience the same joys as their non-disabled peers.

With the help and guidance of the Marin County 4H office, they began the therapeutic riding program in 1977, offering two sessions to 12 riders every Saturday at the Irving Ranch in Nicasio. In 1985, prior to the division and sale of Irving ranch, an easement on the property immediately

adjoining what is now Halleck Creek Ranch was put in place to ensure the continuance of the program's trail rides. Shortly thereafter, the program grew to include additional trail rides each Saturday, as well as a weekday lesson program offered four days a week. Halleck Creek Ranch incorporated in 1979, and is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, tax exempt corporation and a registered California charity.

Halleck Creek Ranch owns the 60-acre ranch located deep in the heart of the Nicasio Valley, where it operates. The program has grown to operate five days a week, serving nearly 100 participants every week, providing more than 3,900 hours of programming a year.

## **GOVERNANCE**

Halleck Creek Ranch is a not-for-profit organization governed by a Board of Directors which oversees mission and policy matters for the organization. The Board is responsible for the appointment of a President, Secretary and Treasurer, as well as the Executive Director.

The Halleck Creek staff is comprised of the following individuals:

Molly Scannell, Executive Director  
Brenda Falco, Program Director  
Sandy Klein, Development and Communications Manager  
Kayla Andersen, Volunteer Coordinator  
David Petrie, Ranch Caretaker  
Maya Stessin, Director of Administration and Operations  
Saga McIsaac, Instructor  
Robyn Moyer, Instructor  
Lucy Viscardi, Instructor

## **HOURS OF EAS PROGRAM OPERATION**

Halleck Creek Ranch runs its EAS program during the following days and times:

Tuesdays 10:00am-5:00pm  
Wednesdays 10:00am-5:00pm  
Thursdays 10:00am-5:00pm  
Fridays 10:00am-5:00pm  
Saturdays 9:00am-3:00pm

Breaks in the schedule occur for administration days, staff development, volunteer enrichment,

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and holidays. These dates can be found on our website: [www.halleckcreekkranch.org](http://www.halleckcreekkranch.org).

## **SCHEDULING**

Volunteer shifts will *always* be scheduled in advance. Consistent volunteers are key for the successful progress for our participants, as well as the development of our Volunteer Team. Because of this, we schedule volunteers in advance on a per-session basis. Volunteers interested in signing up for a regular shift should contact the Volunteer Coordinator directly to get scheduled.

## **ATTENDANCE AND COMMITMENT**

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining their commitment contract and agreement with our organization. We require volunteers to sign up for a Session at a time as their ongoing attendance greatly benefits the overall effectiveness of our program, creating an environment where friendships, bonds, and trust can develop between participant and volunteer. (It's as rewarding of an experience from either side of the coin - we assure you!)

The help of our volunteers provides safe and effective programming. If a volunteer is going to be late for their duties, or an emergency arises, they are expected to contact the Volunteer Coordinator by phone and/or email *as soon as possible*.

Volunteers should understand the importance of keeping staff notified; repeated instances of absence without notification of staff when a volunteer is scheduled to work will be considered abandonment of the job.

## **CANCELLATION POLICY**

Halleck Creek Ranch reserves the right to cancel a program at any time for safety reasons. Reasons may include but are not limited to excessive wind, rain, power outages, red flag warnings, unhealthy air quality, or heat above 95 degrees.

If programs are canceled, we do our best to make the cancellation decision the day prior and will notify volunteers by email when the decision is made. If rides are unexpectedly canceled the day-of, we will reach out to the volunteers by email and phone to let you know. If you have not heard from us via email the day before your shift, and have not received an email, call, or voicemail the day-of your shift, you can assume programs are running as usual.

## **DRESS AND APPEARANCE REQUIREMENTS**

Halleck Creek Ranch relies heavily on public support for our continued existence; therefore we expect volunteers and staff to present an image that projects pride in our organization, as well as an awareness of safety and the importance of our public image. Our standard of dress focuses on

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being casual, yet safe and appropriate.

All volunteers must wear long pants, and must wear closed-toe sturdy shoes or boots at all times. Loose clothing and jewelry may be unsafe and should not be worn. Perfumes should not be worn as they can attract stinging insects, and may affect people with allergies.

### **NAME TAGS**

Each volunteer will be provided an official name tag to wear upon completion of their training. Volunteers may take their tags home with them or keep them at the ranch in the Volunteer Clubhouse, but are *required* to wear the tags while volunteering at the ranch. If a volunteer misplaces their tag, they are to wear a temporary tag, and notify the Volunteer Coordinator.

### **PROHIBITED USE OF CELL PHONES**

Under no circumstances should a volunteer place or take a phone call while working with the horses and/or the riders. Doing so may present an unsafe and distracting situation, and will not be tolerated. Volunteers are asked to keep their cell phones on silent or vibrate, and are welcome to use the office phone to make short and necessary calls with the permission of staff.

### **KEEPING ENROLLMENT CURRENT**

Each year, all enrolled members go through a re-enrollment process, during which they update their forms. This is a requirement to volunteer, and failing to do so by announced due dates will be considered abandonment of their position as a volunteer at Halleck Creek Ranch. Forms will include, but are not limited to, a waiver, medical release, medical history, code of conduct, photo release and confidentiality agreement.

### **COMMUNICATING WITH RANCH STAFF**

Halleck Creek Ranch strives to create a positive environment of mutual respect among staff and volunteers by requiring honest and respectful communication to be used at all times. Volunteers are welcome to call the office anytime (415-662-2488) to leave a message for ranch staff or to send them an email. Email addresses can be found on our website: [www.halleckcreekranch.org](http://www.halleckcreekranch.org).

For all matters involving the volunteer program, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator. For matters involving the EAS program, please contact the Program Director.

### **SAFETY AND EMERGENCIES**

Safety is our first priority and is everyone's responsibility! If you notice an unsafe condition or act, please notify a staff member immediately.

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If at any time you see something that needs fixing or repair, please notify an HCR staff member prior to proceeding on your own. It is important that all volunteer activities and projects are cleared through HCR staff..

All volunteers who plan to work with participants and horses are required to attend training before they can participate. Participation in training is extremely important, as it will identify potential dangers and hazards in relation to both the horses and our participants. Horses are powerful, easily frightened, unpredictable, and potentially uncontrollable animals. Our participants may also respond and behave in unexpected and unpredictable ways, and participation in training allows one to learn how to safely and appropriately handle situations such as these.

People who are knowledgeable about horses find that there are many different ways to do things. As part of our training program, we try to avoid any confusion regarding different methods used by identifying “The Halleck Creek Way” as the way we will do things at this program. We ask your cooperation to follow “The Halleck Creek Way” in order to maximize safety for all of our horses, participants, staff, and volunteers. If at any time you have a question about the best or appropriate way to do something here, please ask a Volunteer Team Leader or HCR staff member to demonstrate or help to clarify.

In the event of an emergency, please note the following:

**Dial 911:**

In the event of an emergency, dial 911, and stay on the line with the operator until directed otherwise. There is one cordless land-line phone (phone number 415-662-2488) located in the main office, one in the Executive Director’s office trailer, and one in the Volunteer Coordinator’s office. Posted above each phone is the ranch location, contact information and directions.

**Evacuation:**

In the event of an emergency requiring evacuation, such as fire or earthquake, all participants will be directed to “shelter in place” and await further instructions from staff and/or emergency personnel. All participants will gather in the “courtyard” area between the office and the arena. –Staff and/or emergency personnel will determine the areas to be evacuated and escape routes to use depending upon potential hazards.

If directed to evacuate the area, participants will be asked to load into the least number of vehicles as possible (carpool), and drive at a safe speed with their headlights on. All vehicles are

asked to meet at the pre-designated rendezvous point, the Nicasio Square.

### **Earthquake:**

In the event of an earthquake, all participants will be dismounted with the help of their volunteer and instructor. Staff, volunteers, participants, and guests are asked to gather in the field near the arena for further instructions from HCR staff.

### **Fire:**

Fire extinguishers are located in the following areas: The main office (one), the volunteer club house (one), the Volunteer Coordinator's office (one), the Executive Director's office trailer (one), in the outdoor alcove between the bathrooms (one), and in the hay barn (two). To operate a fire extinguisher, remember: "Pull, aim, squeeze, and sweep." Pull the pin, aim the nozzle at the base of the fire, squeeze the handle, and sweep back and forth across the width of the fire.

### **Automated External Defibrillator (AED)**

An automated external defibrillator (AED) is mounted on the wall inside the main office. All ranch lessons are overseen by at least one PATH certified instructor who is CPR, First Aid, and AED trained and certified.

### **First Aid:**

There are two human first aid kits located at the ranch, one of which is located in the tall white cabinet in the right-hand bathroom, and the other is a gray fanny pack which can be found either inside the same cabinet, or with staff while out on the trail. All lessons are overseen by at least one PATH certified instructor who is CPR, First Aid, and AED trained and certified.

Feel free to use items in the kits as needed (band aids, anti-histamines, etc.), however, please let staff know when you do so we're sure to replenish the supplies.

### **Riding Helmets**

On rare occasions, HCR staff may ask an experienced volunteer to mount and ride a horse under direct supervision. While mounted, all volunteers are required to wear a helmet certified by the American Society for Testing and Materials - Safety Equipment Institute (ASTM-SEI) or an international equivalent helmet for equestrian use.

### **OFF-LIMITS AREAS**

For safety and privacy reasons, volunteers and guests are to remain out of the following areas, unless given explicit permission to enter for a specific task:

- Ranch offices when staff are not present
- Hay barn and haystack

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- Ranch Caretaker's house and yard areas
- Horse paddocks
- Owners of the adjacent lands where HCR has a trail-riding easement have a road access agreement across HCR to access their properties. Volunteers are asked to be courteous and aware of other vehicles that may be passing through HCR lands.
- HCR easement areas on neighboring land, the use of which is limited to the therapeutic riding program during specified days and times. No other uses are allowed, and failure to comply will be considered trespassing.

HCR's easement on neighboring lands starts immediately after passing through the neighbor's gate at the end of the road leading east towards the riding trail. The easement allows HCR staff, volunteers and participants to have access to and use the easement lands for our therapeutic riding program only. When we are on the easement lands, we need to work cooperatively with the land owner to respect his ownership and right to use the land for his purposes. The owner may have third party contractors, employees, and/or guests on the easement lands and it is important to be alert for potential overlapping uses that might require mutual accommodation.

Volunteers and guests are also asked to help maintain safety and neighbor relations by staying on HCR property while at the ranch. Our property lines are not clearly marked, but fall within the general areas of the neighbor's gate on the trail (marked No Trespassing), the centerline of the creek, and the gate at the entrance to the ranch.

### **QUAD AND TRACTOR USE**

For safety reasons, volunteers and guests are prohibited from use of the tractor without explicit permission from the Executive Director. Volunteers and guests interested in using the quads and trailer can do so if they possess a valid driver's license and are trained and approved by staff. At no times should anyone ever operate the quad with a person in the trailer.

### **VISITORS**

Visitors, guests, program participants, and volunteers are welcome during times when programs and training sessions are in progress. At all other times access is restricted to authorized persons. All other persons must obtain permission before entering the ranch.

Unless specifically invited and authorized by the Executive Director or other authorized personnel, all areas in which horses are housed, tied, resting or being ridden are off-limits to visitors and guests. Depending on the circumstances for the visit, waivers may be required.

### **SPECIAL PROJECTS**

Special projects, including volunteer projects, must be approved by the Executive Director. Any

work to be performed shall require proper paperwork on file for each participant in the project. Proposals for any site work shall be submitted to the Ranch Caretaker who will vet before choosing whether or not to pass along to the Executive Director for approval. All special project proposals for site work shall contain a statement regarding safety procedures.

### **PET POLICY**

For the health and safety of our volunteers, riders and their families, Halleck Creek Ranch has a No-Pets policy.

This No-Pets policy applies to:

- Pets or companion animals of any kind
- Emotional support animals
- Comfort animals
- Therapy animals

HCR complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) allowing access for all individuals to public places; therefore, we do allow working service dogs to accompany our participants to the ranch, but for the safety of the participants, the horses and, and their dog, we cannot allow them around the horses at any time. Service Animals are required to be leashed or harnessed except when performing work or tasks where such tethering would interfere with the animal's ability to perform the work or tasks.

Pets whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA. Under ADA regulations that became effective on March 15, 2011, there are no protections for emotional support animals in terms of access to public accommodations and public entities. The Department of Justice has stated that emotional support animals are not protected as service animals under these regulations.

Should you arrive at the ranch with a pet that is not a service animal, you will be asked to remove the animal from our facility. To avoid any disruption or inconvenience, we ask that you please leave your pet at home.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT**

All participating volunteers are required to agree to and sign off on a confidentiality agreement. Volunteers are responsible for safeguarding confidential information they obtain while acting as a volunteer at HCR. In the course of your volunteering, you may have access to proprietary and confidential information including but not limited to participants' health information, donor information, etc.. It is your responsibility not to reveal any such information unless the performance of your duties requires it. Access to confidential information is on a "need-to-know" basis and may not be casually shared with others. Any breach of this policy will not be tolerated,

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and legal action may be taken by HCR. The confidentiality agreement applies throughout the course of and subsequent to your volunteering with HCR.

### **DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

Halleck Creek Ranch's Policy prohibits unlawful discrimination based on race, creed, color, religion, gender, national origin or ancestry, age, medical condition, including genetic characteristics, physical or mental disability, veteran status, marital status, registered domestic partner status, sexual orientation, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state, or local laws. Discrimination based on a perception that anyone has any of those characteristics, or is associated with a person who has or is perceived as having any of those characteristics, is also prohibited. All such discrimination is unlawful.

### **OPEN DOOR POLICY**

An open channel for the expression of volunteers' suggestions and complaints is a fundamental principle of sound volunteer relations. Each volunteer is encouraged to talk with staff on any problem, complaint or suggestion that might arise in the course of work. We suggest the following approach: The best way to begin is to talk over the problem, complaint or suggestion with staff and give that person the first opportunity to act on the suggestion or settle any complaints. If you are not satisfied with the staff's decision or there is any uncertainty in your mind that the staff member is the proper person to talk with concerning the situation, you may discuss the subject with the Executive Director.

Every volunteer has the equal availability of the office of the Executive Director to assist in any grievance matter. When appropriate, the Executive Director will assist in resolving the situation. No volunteer shall be penalized or retaliated against for seeking problem resolution through this procedure or seeking assistance from the Executive Director or his or her designee.

### **SEXUAL AND OTHER UNLAWFUL HARASSMENT**

HCR policy prohibits harassment, and we are committed to providing a safe environment free of sexual harassment or other unlawful harassment based on the following characteristics, or the perception of these characteristics: pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, race, religious creed, color, gender, national origin or ancestry, physical or mental disability, medical condition, marital or registered domestic partner status, age, sexual orientation. This anti-harassment policy applies to all persons involved in the operation of HCR, including volunteers, guests, students, supervisors, and persons doing business with or for us. Prohibited unlawful harassment includes, but is not limited to, the following behavior:

Verbal conduct such as epithets, derogatory jokes or comments, slurs or unwanted sexual advances, invitations or comments;

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Visual displays such as derogatory and/or sexually oriented posters, photography, cartoons, drawings or gestures;

Physical conduct including unwanted touching, assault, intentionally blocking normal movement or interfering with work because of gender, race, or any other protected basis; threats and demands to submit to sexual requests as a condition of continued employment, or to avoid some other loss, and offers of employment benefits in return for sexual favors;

Retaliation for reporting or threatening to report harassment.

If you believe that you have been unlawfully harassed, submit a verbal or written complaint to a staff member. Volunteers are strongly encouraged to report any incidents of harassment immediately so that complaints can be quickly and fairly resolved. All complaints will be promptly investigated and appropriate action will be taken. Individuals who unlawfully harass others will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

## **ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE**

HCR will not tolerate or condone the use, possession, sale, or solicitation of alcohol, marijuana, illegal drugs or controlled substances during working hours, nor will HCR tolerate volunteers who report to work under the influence of these substances. In addition to not tolerating violations, HCR may also bring such matters to the attention of law enforcement authorities.

Any volunteer who is legally using prescription or over-the-counter drugs that may impair their ability to safely perform their job must notify a supervisor of such use immediately before starting or resuming their duties.

## **STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**

Employees, guests, participants, and volunteers are expected to maintain certain standards of conduct to ensure that HCR's mission and activities are carried out safely and successfully. Conduct which is unsafe, unethical, illegal, or disrupts the safe and orderly operation of our organization is considered inappropriate and will not be tolerated.

Conduct which could constitute grounds for immediate dismissal may include but is not limited to: physical violence; illegal acts such as theft, use or possession of illegal drugs or weapons; sexual activity; and inhumane treatment of a person or an animal.

Misconduct that will lead to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal may include but is

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not limited to:

- Excessive absences or tardiness
- Failure to adhere to safety policies and procedures
- Harassment or retaliation in any form
- Breach of the confidentiality agreement
- Falsification of records or other documents, including timesheets
- Animal abuse
- Involvement in or the encouragement of illegal activities
- Failure to adhere to other policies contained in the Volunteer Handbook, volunteer agreements, or other policies and procedures of Halleck Creek Ranch