



Lonesome Dove Equestrian Center

Volunteer Information Packet

Welcome To *Lonesome Dove Equestrian Center*

History

Founded by Clint Arrington, Lonesome Dove Equestrian Center was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation in 2008 to serve the Veterans in Central Virginia.

The center currently has two certified PATH Intl. instructors, and a Board of Directors. We also rely on a dedicated volunteer staff to help with many different needs such as side-walking and leading horses during lessons, grooming and tacking up horses, cleaning stalls, fund raising and helping with administrative tasks. We depend greatly on our volunteers – they are the lifeblood of our program. As a non-profit organization, we could not possibly pay all the staff we need to work with our riders and horses. When you volunteer at *Lonesome Dove*, please know your efforts are very much appreciated by all our staff.

We could not do what we do without you.

Funding

Committed to offering therapeutic riding at no cost to our clients, we greatly rely on outside funds to make this possible. The costs of a therapeutic riding program are substantial, even though much work is done by volunteers.

Our funding comes from individual and corporate donations and fundraisers. All our horses are donated to the center. Donors may help cover the costs of feed, hay, vet and farrier care, tack and equipment by “adopting” a favorite horse for a year.

Mission Statement

Lonesome Dove Equestrian Center is dedicated to servicing the mental, physical and emotional challenges for the special needs of Veterans in Central Virginia through Therapeutic Riding. We provide a program of recreational riding and horsemanship, at no charge to the Veterans, which will increase the quality of life for the participants through activities that are positive to the COGNITIVE, PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL, and SOCIAL WELL-BEING of each Veteran.

Introduction to Volunteering at Lonesome Dove

Who may volunteer?

Volunteers are the heart and soul of a therapeutic riding program. Anyone who has the desire to help is welcome; however, you must be at least 14 years old.

Some of our volunteers may have disabilities, some may be retired, some may be students and others are working people looking to make a difference. No previous experience is required: our instructors will teach you everything you need to know and ensure you feel comfortable with the responsibilities of the job. Volunteers must also attend a volunteer orientation and training.

What kind of paperwork do I need to fill out?

Volunteers are required to read, sign and understand our policy and procedures, liability, medical and media release, registration and health form, as well as our confidentiality agreement. The media release allows us to use pictures/video in public relations materials and newsletters. Additionally, volunteers must be willing to submit to a criminal history background check.

When can I volunteer?

Sessions are held weekly during the day. Barn volunteers, fund-raising volunteers, and office volunteers are also needed to help with the daily operations of the center. Please contact Sherry Newark at (804) 986-2537 to learn more about the center's needs and to arrange times.

What do I wear?

Attire depends on the weather, but neat jeans, long pants, or modest shorts are acceptable. Shoes must be comfortable with closed toes – no sandals or flip-flops. Please avoid tube tops, halter tops, and any spaghetti straps or shirts with profanity. Dangling earrings, necklaces, and bracelets should be left at home to avoid distracting the riders. We also ask that you not wear *heavy* perfumes, colognes, hairsprays, or deodorants that might attract stinging insects or aggravate allergies. Please wear comfortable clothes, full T-shirts (not tanks), and appropriate clothing for the season.

Things to remember

1. Please sign in each time on the Volunteer Sign-In Sheet so we can keep track of your hours.
2. Also, in case of inclement weather, please call the riding center to find out if we have cancelled classes. Often it may be raining in your neighborhood but clear and sunny at the farm. The best rule of thumb is that when in doubt, call ahead. Cancellations may also be posted on Facebook.

Becoming an effective *Lonesome Dove* volunteer is an on-going process. Whether you have horse experience or not, some questions will come up. Please do not hesitate to ask if you are unsure about something. *Safety is our number one priority.* Again, thank you for volunteering. Welcome to *Lonesome Dove*!

Volunteers Are Vitally Important

There are many riders who need assistance in riding horses. The volunteer plays a crucial role and takes an active part in making the program work. Many *Lonesome Dove* riders, especially in the beginning stages of riding, simply could not ride without the assistance of volunteers. Some of the riders need as many as three volunteers all working together, so you can begin to understand how valuable your volunteer time is to us.

A Volunteer ...

- Is the SAFETY MONITOR and the extra set of hands for the instructor.
- Should be attentive to surroundings always.
- Should know the responsibilities and expectations of a leader and a side walker.
- Should be familiar with the *Lonesome Dove* Emergency Procedures.
- Should try to volunteer on a regular basis to experience the benefits of the program. One of these benefits is the special bond made with riders and other volunteers.
- Must be at least 14 years old and physically fit to walk approximately one hour and jog occasionally. He/she must be able to hold arms up at shoulder height to support a rider when necessary.
- Is covered by insurance while on the premises. Please inform us of any accidents or incidents, no matter how minor so we can fill out incident reports.
- Should NOT physically reposition the rider unless given specific instructions by the instructor or therapist. Repositioning a rider without knowledge of his/her disability could be harmful to the individual.
- Should be prompt and dependable. The rider depends on you to ride.

Horse Safety Do's And Don'ts

- Always speak to a horse before approaching or touching him. Horses are more likely to kick if you surprise them.
- Never wrap a lead rope or reins around your hand, wrist, or body.
- You cannot out-pull a horse. If a horse pulls back, step with him rather than pulling against him.
- Avoid disciplining a horse with a rider on his back.
- Pet a horse by placing your hand on his shoulder or neck. DON'T dab at the end of his nose. It's rude, plus he may mistake your fingers for carrots.
- Always walk around the front of the horse and the lead rope, never under the rope.
- Stand with your feet well back in the clear and reach forward when saddling a horse.
- Keep reins, halters, and lead rope off the ground so the horse won't step on them.
- When leading a horse into a stall, turn the horse so that he faces the door. Close the door leaving enough space for yourself, but not the horse, to get out. Then release the lead rope and take off the halter.
- When turning a horse out into a paddock, turn the horse so that he faces the gate. Make sure the gate is closed, and then take off the halter.

People Safety Do's And Don'ts

I should ...

- Listen to the instructor. Instructions may change. You should also listen for your rider's instructions.
- Wear proper clothing. Closed-toe shoes or boots and comfortable walking/jogging attire are recommended. No dangling jewelry, large hats, or pony tails within grabbing distance. Please, no cropped T-shirts or camisole tank tops.
- Wear a helmet when riding. Also, be sure your rider has a helmet.
- Have fun!! But remember, safety is our priority.
- Use a telephone voice. You don't shout or whisper on the phone, you speak in a normal talking voice. Horses have big, sensitive ears and can hear better than us.
- Be aware of hazards in the Lonesome Dove environment.
 - There are mosquitoes, huge horse flies, and a variety of bees, hornets, and wasps that may nest along the fences and the roof eaves. If you find a hornet's nest, leave it alone and notify a staff member. Notify a staff member immediately of any snake bite or insect sting.

I should not ...

- Leave equipment out after using it. There are many people handling our equipment each week. It's important to put things away where the next person can find it. Equipment left lying around can also be a safety hazard.
- Run or move quickly around the horses. Quick, sudden movements may frighten an unsuspecting horse.
- Climb on the fences and gates.
- Use cell phone during classes. Cell phones must be on silent.

Emergency Medical Procedures

ALWAYS USE UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS WHEN ADMINISTERING FIRST AID TO ANYONE, ANYWHERE. Use gloves and wash hands thoroughly after encountering bodily fluids, even when wearing gloves.

Major injury

1. The instructor will designate someone to:
 - a) Telephone the emergency number and give the center's location.
 - b) Remain in the barn area to direct emergency vehicles and reassure people in the area.
 - c) Get the rider's Authorization for Emergency Treatment form from the office files and the Human First Aid Kit.
2. The instructor will designate someone to:
 - a) Go to the road and wait for the emergency vehicle to arrive.
 - b) Stop driver and have lights and sirens turned off so the horses will not be frightened.
3. The instructor will designate who will remain with the grounded rider and who will take the class to the safest confined area away from the accident.
4. The class will continue in an orderly manner or, if lack of personnel prevents the class continuing, all riders will return to the barn.

Minor injury

1. The instructor will assess the individual's situation (minor abrasion, minor contusion, heat exhaustion) and designate someone to get the First Aid Kit and the individual's Authorization for Emergency Medical Treatment form.
2. If a rider is injured, the instructor will designate someone to take the horse back to the barn and put in in the stall.
3. If the injured individual should not walk, the instructor will have a car driven as close to the area of the accident as possible.
4. If possible, the rest of the class will continue in an orderly manner. If lack of personnel prevents the class continuing, all riders will return to the barn.



Emergency Procedures

Falls during a lesson

1. The instructor will stop the class and all horses will be halted. Leaders will position themselves in front of the horses. Side walkers will stabilize their rider. If the class has independent riders, these riders will dismount and hold their horses.
2. The instructor will supervise the dismounting procedures verbally or personally.
3. If circumstances call for the arena to be evacuated, the riders will be escorted out first by their volunteers (if used) and the horses will be removed by their leaders to the barn, after the riders are out of danger.
4. The instructor will go to the aid of the fallen rider. Keep the rider down and still until he/she can be checked for signs of injury. DO NOT let the rider remount immediately. If signs of serious injury are present, the instructor will designate a volunteer or assistant to call for emergency assistance (911) while s/he remains with the rider. An assistant should also be sent to retrieve the rider's Authorization for Emergency Treatment form from the files and the First Aid Kit.
5. Signs of serious injury include:
 - a) Unconsciousness (even for a moment).
 - b) Bleeding or fluid draining from the mouth, nose, or ears.
 - c) Serious bleeding (apply direct pressure).
 - d) Limb at unnatural angle or pain when applying pressure or with movement.
 - e) Pupils contracting unevenly.
 - f) Signs of shock (paleness, mottled color, sweating, nausea, fainting).
6. Consider the possibility of head injury and/or spinal injury in ANY fall. If either is suspected, keep the rider absolutely still.
7. If the rider is uninjured, reassure him/her and explain what caused the fall (get him/her to tell you what he/she thinks happened). Give the rider (or the volunteers) further instructions to prevent a recurrence.
8. When the situation is under control, reassure the rest of the class and explain what happened.
9. Complete a Center Occurrence Report and have all witnesses sign it before leaving the riding center.

Incidents occurring in the barn area

These may include anything such as being stepped on or bitten by a horse, seizure, snake bite, bee sting, etc. In all cases, the incident should be reported to the instructor-on-duty. As a volunteer, it is your responsibility to try to keep the individual calm. Move them away from the horse, except in cases of seizure where you move the horse away. The instructor will assess the situation, attend to the individual, and complete a Center Occurrence Report. All witnesses are to sign the report before leaving the riding center.

Runaway horses

Immediately stop the class. Call out simple quick instructions to the rider, such as “Sit up! Pull back!” Don’t step in front of the runaway horse as this may make him dodge and dislodge the rider.

Severe weather (tornado)

1. Tornadoes rarely occur in this area but in the event a warning is issued, all riders and volunteers will gather in the barn. Riders will keep their helmets on for safety. If time permits, tack will be removed from the horses. Horses will be turned out into the front pasture. If there is not time enough to turn them out, remove any bridles and leave the horses in the arena.
2. After the winds have stopped, staff will inspect the area for downed power lines before volunteers and riders are allowed to leave.

Fire

1. If there is a fire during the class, halt all riders and dismount them CALMLY. The instructor will escort the riders out of the arena as quickly as possible. Volunteers will assist with the dismounts and then tend to the horses. If time permits take the horses out of the arena and turn them out into the front pasture. Remove all tack if possible. If there is not enough time to get the horses out safely, then simply remove any bridles and exit out of the arena as quickly as possible. Everyone should report to the picnic pavilion so that a headcount can be taken to be sure that everyone is safely away from the building.
2. Call the fire department (911). Give your name, *Lonesome Dove* name and location (6137 Old Buckingham Road, Powhatan, VA 23139). Do not hang up until you are sure the information has been understood.
3. Evacuate horses if possible:
 - a) Get a halter and lead rope for each horse. Lead them out to the front pasture.
 - b) If a horse won’t lead, blindfold it with a towel or coat. If possible, wet the blindfold in the horse’s water bucket before putting it on the horse’s head.
4. Use fire extinguishers if safe to do so.
5. Once help arrives, immediately check the horses for injuries. Call a vet if horses are burned or have inhaled a lot of smoke.
6. NO ONE SHOULD PUT HIS/HER SAFETY AT RISK.

The Horse Leader

The horse Leader's responsibility is the HORSE.

Mounting

- DO NOT ATTEMPT TO MOUNT THE RIDER YOURSELF. The instructor will mount all riders unless he/she gives you different instructions.
- When you bring your horse to the mounting area, position yourself in front of the horse's head and get the horse as close as possible to mounting area. There will be an off-side spotter to help guide the horse in.
- While the rider is mounting...
 - Pay close attention to your horse.
 - Your responsibility is to keep the horse as quiet as possible. Stand directly in front of the horse when at a stop.
 - Do not stroke or pet the horse unless he becomes restless and you need to calm him down.
 - After the rider has been mounted and *before* the stirrups are adjusted, the instructor will ask you to move the horse forward a few steps out of the ramp and will tell you when to stop.
 - When leaving the ramp, lead the horse straight. Keep the horse close to the ramp to enable the instructor or side walkers to walk down the ramp with the rider.
 - After stopping, the instructor will adjust the stirrups and check the girth. The instructor will then give further instructions.

Dismounting

Unless otherwise directed, the instructor will dismount the student. The instructor will provide instructions as to where to bring your horse and rider. You will be asked to come to the ramp, or to line up in the arena. Remember to stand in front of the horse and wait quietly.

How to lead a horse

- The proper position for the horse leader is to walk with the horse on his/her right side opposite the horse's head and shoulder. DO NOT DRAG THE HORSE or let the horse drag you.
- With the right hand, hold the lead rope about six inches from the horse's mouth. Hold the extra part of the lead in your left hand, fold it, and hold it lightly.
- NEVER WRAP THE LEAD ROPE AROUND YOUR HAND, as rope burns or broken fingers could result.
- The lead rope should NEVER touch the ground.
- The horse size varies, and so does their pace of going. Adjust your step to that of the horse so you are not pulling the horse forward or holding it back.
- The lead rope should be SLACK. A quick pull followed by a release is the most effective way to get a horse to cooperate.
- REMEMBER to allow the RIDER to do as much as possible.

What to know about lessons

- Before session the instructor will tell you where she/he wants you to be.
- Be sure the horses are a safe distance apart from each other (at least two horse lengths apart). If you get too close, either circle the horse, stop, or ask permission to move to another position.
- Instruction will be given directly to your rider. The horse leader should not be talking to the rider when instructions are being given so the rider may focus on the instructor.
- When at a stop, stand in front of the horse to keep it from moving. If the horse should get restless, try rubbing its neck to calm it. Remember that this is a breather for the horse. Don't hold the lead rope too tightly.
- Make sure to watch spacing so you don't squish your side walkers along the wall or into obstacles.

Trotting

- During a lesson, the rider may be asked to trot. Trotting is faster than walking, so the horse leader must be more alert.
- The instructor will check the girth before trotting. If he/she should forget, a gentle reminder would be good.
- **Make sure the rider is ready before starting to trot.** All riders with horse leaders should grasp the handhold/horn/pommel with both hands when trotting.
- If the horse is reluctant to trot, and you have a side walker, ask him/her to give the horse a light tap on the stomach. Try to avoid pulling on the lead rope, as this only makes the horse mad and he will fight it.
- Start to jog and say "trot." Most of our horses know voice commands. Stay with the horse when trotting and, when asked to stop, do so smoothly and in a straight line so as not to unseat the rider.
- KEEP THE TROT SLOW AND CONSISTENT, as this is also important to keep the rider in position.
- Make transitions as smooth as possible.

The Side Walker

The Side Walker's responsibility is the rider.

Side walkers are very important, as they must be constantly aware of the rider and what he/she is doing. The safety of the rider depends on his/her side walker(s). Some riders, especially in the beginning, have trouble adjusting their balance. Depending upon the degree of balancing difficulty, there will be either one or two side walkers assigned to a rider. The instructor will inform you of your rider's requirements.

Side walkers:

Should keep their bodies next to the rider.

Use the appropriate hold (thigh, heel, etc.) as indicated by instructor

Avoid falling behind the saddle.

Never put their hands in their pockets.

If your rider starts to slip, place your hands on both hips and pull him/her back into the correct position. Avoid pulling arms, legs, or clothing when adjusting the rider. Also, remember that it is safer to pull the rider toward you than to push him/her away. If there is a second side walker, have him/her pull the rider when necessary to avoid pushing the rider *too* far. If there is not a second side walker, ask the instructor for assistance.

As a side walker, you are always close to the rider and often he/she will want to talk to you. Do not ignore direct questions concerning the lesson, but try to redirect the rider's attention to the instructor. If your rider is not paying attention or does not hear the instructor, you can help to reinforce the directions by repeating them to the rider.

One of the worse distractions during a lesson is excessive talking. Please keep your conversation directed to what is going on in lesson only.

Lessons:

- Listen carefully when the instructor explains what riding task we are working on. The side walker on the inside closest to the instructor will be the one to help reiterate task to rider.
- Please remember to allow rider time to process task asked of them as we want the rider to do as much of it on their own as possible.

When You Meet Someone With A Disability

First of all, remember that persons with disabilities are people. They are just people like you, with their own individual goals, limits, capabilities, attitudes, experiences, etc.

- Be yourself when you meet them.
- Talk about the same things you would with anyone else.
- Help only when it is needed. Use your own judgment! Resist the temptation to constantly assist riders who need to develop more independence.
- Be patient. It is often more difficult to wait for an inexperienced person to do something than to do it yourself. As you know, when you do things yourself you learn faster AND gain confidence!
- Don't be over-protective or over-solicitous. Don't shower the rider with kindness or be overly sympathetic.
- Enjoy your friendships with the riders. Their good humor and achievements will amaze you.

Lonesome Dove Farm Rules and Information

- Please obey all rules and posted signs. *Failure to do so may prohibit you from participating in Lonesome Dove activities.*
- Smoking is prohibited around the barn, farm, and horses.
- **PARENTS MUST SUPERVISE THEIR CHILDREN AT ALL TIMES.** There are many potential dangers for unsupervised children in a horse facility.
- Foul or offensive language and/or abusive or aggressive behavior are grounds for dismissal from the property.
- NO running or roughhousing around the barn or horses. Horses startle easily and could harm the riders, people around them, or themselves when frightened.
- Everyone **MUST** wear a helmet when on horseback. Riders must wear long pants; no open-toed shoes.
- Except in an emergency, please **DO NOT** interrupt the instructors, volunteers, or assistants while lessons are being conducted either in the arena or in the barn area.
- You are welcome to bring snacks to the farm. Please do not bring glass containers and please clean up after yourself!
- NO climbing on fences, gates, mounting ramps, or mounting blocks. Some of our fences have electric wire. Please help us keep everyone safe.
- **WHEN YOU OPEN A GATE, CLOSE IT IMMEDIATELY BEHIND YOU.**
- *Lonesome Dove* reserves the right to remove any disruptive individual from the property.