



Kent Association of Riding Therapy, Inc.
(KART)

Volunteer Handbook
2020

KART's mission is to help children and adults with special needs enhance their social and developmental growth. KART uses a multi-faceted program involving therapeutic horseback riding, grooming and caring for the horse, and comprehensive classroom instruction.

KART: P.O. Box 126: Worton, MD 21678: www.kentridingtherapy.org

WELCOME TO KART

Thank you for becoming a volunteer at KART. We are thankful for your interest.

Volunteers are critical to our success. We could not provide a high quality program without volunteers and we rely on you to operate as safely as possible.

We hope your volunteer experience will bring you satisfaction, personal growth and fulfillment. Your volunteerism is a valuable asset and "thank you" is not enough to express our appreciation.

Please do not hesitate to share your opinions and questions with KART to improve our volunteer experience.

KART – A BRIEF HISTORY

Kent Association of Riding Therapy, Inc. was formed in 1984, offering participants activities which benefit their bodies, minds and spirits. KART is located at Worthmore Equestrian Center in Kent County, MD, near Chestertown, MD on the Eastern Shore. KART uses a multi-faceted program that involves therapeutic horseback riding, grooming and caring for the horse and comprehensive classroom instruction. Everyone rides a horse, but they also have "hands on" experience in the stable management program as well as classroom experiences to enhance their developmental growth. Children, youth and adults with a wide range of abilities participate. From pre-school aged students to adults attending the Easter Seals' Camp Fairlee, Kent Center, and local veterans, our riders are diverse.

KART is designated as a Premier Accredited Center of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.). As a Premier Center, KART adheres to PATH standards.

Examples of special needs the KART program benefits include autism, attention deficit disorder, emotional and behavioral limitations, brain injury, cerebral palsy, and more.

Riding therapy results in broad benefits:

Self-esteem and Self-confidence: Many of the riders benefitting from the program are the ones that for whatever reason (hyperactivity, high impulsivity, poor muscle tone, low attention span) cannot participate in any organized after school sport. This provides the opportunity to participate in a "sport" and suddenly, they are also in charge of a 1,000 lb. or more horse resulting in a feeling of empowerment.

Coordination and Balance: This includes learning left from right. Pulling color coded reins they learn how to give directions and have the horse following what they ask, resulting in a strong "cause and effect" benefit.

Focus: A part of focusing is learning to wait their turn and to follow directions. Here again a large and caring animal is waiting for and listening to their directions.

Physical: Physical benefits are considered more immediate. Riding increases core strength and balance, including leg strength. Riding provide hip movement similar to walking which in turn strengthens the legs; especially beneficial for riders in wheel chairs. There are some studies noting the movement of the horse mimics the rocking movement of a mother to an infant.

WHAT WE HOPE STUDENTS WILL GAIN FROM KART INVOLVEMENT

1. Learn to ride horses to the best of their ability
2. Raise self esteem
3. Improve ability to follow directions
4. Increase attention span
5. Create better muscle tone and relax tight muscles
6. Improve coordination
7. Improve balance
8. Improve behavior problems
9. General exercise
10. Increase socialization
11. Learn about horses
12. Sense of accomplishment
13. Increase empathy through connecting with animals
14. Increase communication skills

GENERAL VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

1. Due to insurance regulations and our PATH center accreditation standards, all volunteers must be at least 14 years old. Exceptions are made ONLY by the KART Board and on a case-by-case basis.
2. Volunteer application and release forms must be completed and returned to KART prior to volunteering.
3. Due to the nature of the service provided, KART reserves the right to make the final determination as to the appropriateness of volunteers for our organization.
4. Arrive 15 minutes early to ensure the program runs smoothly. Once on Worthmore Equestrian Center (Worthmore) property/driveway, limit speed to 10mph. Speeding cars can upset horses and cause dust.
5. Check in/sign in at the tack room by signing the attendance booklet. After signing, please wait outside of the barn area. This information is used to identify the number of volunteer hours required to successfully maintain the KART program.
6. Worthmore is a working farm and private home. Volunteers should be in the classroom, arena, or the area outside of these. Enter the barn only if necessary or asked to do so. Please respect posted off-limit areas. Volunteers are only on the property when KART is in session.
7. If you are watching a session, remember to keep your voice down so you are not a distraction.
8. If you have questions, concerns or complaints please discuss these with the Instructor, a Board member, or the Executive Director after the riding session.
9. Dress appropriately; sensible, sturdy shoes, no sandals, open toes or slides, comfortable, old clothes. Do not wear dangling jewelry or perfume. No tank tops, tube tops, or halter tops. Shorts must be of a modest length. No clothing shall have obscene, drug or alcohol related logos.
10. When you meet a special needs person, treat them like anyone else. Help only when it is needed. Enjoy the interaction.

WEATHER CANCELLATION POLICY

KART meets rain or shine. However, in some cases of extreme weather (too hot/high humidity or extreme cold), the Instructor and farm owner will determine if cancellation is warranted.

In the event Worthmore Equestrian Center must close due to inclement weather, KART will make every attempt to notify volunteers via email 2 hours prior to the start time of the program. Any factor or situation considered by Worthmore staff to be a threat to the safety of people or horses is reason for cancellation.

Winter: On the day of program, if the forecasted high is not at least 32 degrees or the wind chill is less than 25 degrees, program will be cancelled.

Summer: On the day of program, if the high temperature or heat index is 90 degrees or above, program will be cancelled.

Cancellations due to weather will also be made if Worthmore staff determines that the following conditions exist one hour prior to class: ~ Winds exceeding 25 MPH. ~ Tornado warnings, severe rain, hail, snow or thunderstorms. ~ Hazardous driving conditions - Kent County Schools are closed

FACILITY GUIDELINES

Cell phones and car alarms must be turned off

The consumption of alcohol or illegal substances prior to and/or while volunteering is strictly prohibited.

No smoking on the premises.

Excessive noise or commotion in and around the stable or riding area is not permitted.

No dogs anywhere on the property, especially left unattended in cars.

Park in designated areas only. Follow the lane past the house and to the furthest area where the lane ends. Driveways must be kept clear to accommodate emergency vehicles.

Individuals should call "gate" prior to approaching the riding arena so as not to startle riders and/or horses in the arena.

BASIC SAFETY RULES FOR WORKING WITH HORSES

Always speak to a horse when approaching it and before touching it. Never approach a horse directly from the rear.

Pet a horse by putting your hand on its neck, not its face, nose, or mouth. Do not pet horses that you don't know.

Do not feed any of the horses. This is extremely important. Some horses are on a special diet. Handfeeding also creates some bad habits.

Never be loud or noisy around the horses.

Walk; don't run.

If you see an injury, please notify a member of the horse committee, barn management team, farm owner, or KART staff member (Instructor, Executive Director)

EMERGENCY PLAN

IN CASE OF A FALL TO A RIDER OR INJURY TO A PERSON WHILE AT THE KART FACILITY, THE FOLLOWING ACTION IS TO BE TAKEN.

Stay calm.

If the accident occurs during a mounted session, the Instructor will assess the situation and take charge. **Stop your horse and stay with horse and rider** until you are instructed otherwise.

If emergency services are needed, someone will be designated to call 911. That person will stay on the phone until the respondent clears all directions to Worthmore Equestrian Center.

If dismounting all riders is indicated, sidewalkers take the riders to the designated area (outside riding arena) and keep them calm. You will be apprised of the situation as soon as possible.

Horses will be taken by leaders to the stalls. Leaders will remain with the horses until notified to do otherwise.

A designated Board member, Executive Director, farm owner, or Instructor, will be responsible for keeping accident area clear of unnecessary persons.

FIRST AID KIT is in the KART tack room cupboard and clearly marked as such.

Volunteer Records

Volunteers are required to complete three forms: Confidentiality, Registration Medical, and Release. Included in these forms is a background release request, stating:

I, _____ (Volunteer/Staff), authorize KART to receive information from any law enforcement agency, including police departments and sheriff's departments, of this state or any other state or federal government, to the extent permitted by state and federal law, pertaining to any convictions I may have had for violations of state or federal criminal laws, including but not limited to convictions for crimes committed upon children or animals.

I understand that such access is for the purpose of considering my application as an employee/volunteer, and I expressly **DO NOT** authorize the PATH Intl. Center, its directors, officers, employees or other volunteers to disseminate this information in any way to any other individual, group, agency, organization or corporation.

All forms must be completed in full prior to KART accepting a person as a volunteer.

Volunteer Attire Policy

For the safety of the volunteers, KART implemented the following policy regarding volunteer attire.

All volunteers must dress appropriately. This includes:

- Wearing sensible, sturdy shoes; no sandals, open toes, or slides
- Wearing comfortable clothing that allows unrestricted movement
- No tank tops, tube tops, or halter tops. Shorts must be of a modest length. No clothing shall have obscene, drug or alcohol related logos.
- No dangling jewelry
- No perfumes
- Ability to clip hair to avoid participant grabbing/pulling hair

Addressing Hazards; Natural and Manmade

1. Natural hazards specific to the site

Bees and Other Biting Insects

- If a rider and/or volunteer is stung by an insect, first ask if they are allergic to bees and/or other insect stings. A topical treatment and first aid manual are available in the First Aid Kit located in the KART tack room.
- Take the person to the office to be sure there is no reaction to the bite.
- If the person stung/bitten is known to have an allergy or appears to be having a reaction, call 911 and the person's emergency contact. If the person's emergency contact so desires, the doctor designated on the participation/volunteer information form will be called.
- A determination will be made with the emergency contact how transportation will be arranged.
- An Occurrence Report shall be completed.

2. Manmade hazards specific to the site

Hazard: Tool Shed

The tool shed is locked and posted "Off Limits" to volunteers and participants.

Hazard: Equipment (Utility Shed)

The equipment shed is posted "Off Limits" to volunteers and participants.

Hazard: Concrete Cistern

The pipe is covered with a grate. The cistern is posted "Off Limits" to volunteers and participants.

Hazard: Barns

Barn areas, other than the office and KART area, are "Off Limits" to participants unless accompanied by a volunteer or other designated personnel, such as an instructor, aide, or teacher.

3. Operation of facilities and/or equipment

Hazard: Farm Equipment and Chemicals

All farm equipment is stored in an area posted "Off Limits". In addition, while KART is in session, no mechanical equipment or chemical treatments will be in use on the farm.

Hazard: Domestic Animals

Cats are located/living on the premises (rodent control). They are not allowed in the classroom/observation room due to potential allergies.

4. Disasters such as fire, flood, etc

Hazard: Fire

In the case of fire on or near the farm, remain calm.

In the ring:

Leaders retain control of their horses. Sidewalkers stay with riders. The riding instructor will tell the volunteers and riders in what order they are to dismount, which exit to use, and where to go.

In the classroom:

The classroom instructor will lead the participants to designated safe areas through the door furthest from the fire.

In the stable:

The stable management instructor will lead participants to a designated safe area.

Hazard: Weather

- In case of thunderstorms, flooding, hurricanes, and/or tornadoes reported in the area, KART sessions will be cancelled.
- If an unexpected event occurs during a session, the session will be stopped and the riders dismounted per instructions of the riding instructor.
- In the event of a thunderstorm, stable management and classroom sessions will continue.
- In the event of a hurricane or tornado, all persons will go directly to the red brick house.

In general, the meeting place/safe area is the outdoor arena (this will be based on the type of emergency and location of the emergency)

5. Hazards specific to the use of equines

Hazard: Horses

Policy: The riding instructor is responsible for determining the specific action to be taken in the event that something happens to a horse, rider, or volunteer during a lesson. As in other emergencies, the leader stays with their horse and maintains control. The sidewalkers keep the rider safe and wait for the instructor to give direction.

Specific situations may include but are not limited to the following:

Rider of Out Control:

Leaders stop their horses and stay with their horses. Sidewalkers stay with their riders. The instructor must pay special attention to the rider in trouble so leaders and sidewalkers must pay extra attention to their charges.

Falling:

If a horse stumbles or falls, everyone stops. The sidewalkers will have the best chance to readjust or remove the rider. Depending on the situation, wait for help from the riding instructor.

If a rider falls, everyone stops their horses and stay with their own horse and rider. The leader of the horse from which the rider has fallen stays with the horse and moves the horse only if it is safe to do so. The riding instructor will assist the fallen rider with the help of the sidewalker (s).

Loose Horse:

If there is a loose horse in the ring, everyone stops and stays with their own horse and rider. The riding instructor is responsible for getting the horse under control.

Bee Stings:

If a horse is stung by a bee before the lesson, the lead groom will inform the riding instructor in order to switch designated mounts. If a horse is stung by a bee while in the ring, the horse will be removed from the lesson, placed in a stall, and observed for any allergic reaction.

6. Conduct of personnel, participants, and guests

Abusive and/or aggressive behavior towards another person or animal

Policy: The appropriate instructor or Executive Director will request a change in behavior. If the behavior does not stop, the person will be removed from the session and put in the care of the attending school teacher and/or aide. If the behavior continues, the individual will be removed from the program. If a visitor or volunteer exhibits such behavior, they will be asked to leave and will not be allowed to return.

Failure to follow safety procedures

Policy: Any person not following established safety procedures or intentionally placing other persons or animals at risk will be suspended from that day's session. Based on the judgments of the Instructor involved and/or the Executive Director and/or school teacher, that person may be suspended from the program for a set number of sessions or permanently. This also applies to volunteers and visitors.

Drugs and/or alcohol

Policy: Any instructor, volunteer or rider who is determined to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol will be asked to leave the Center. If there is a second incident, the person will be barred from participating for the remainder of the sessions and, if the session is during the school day, it will be reported to proper authorities. The same applies for anyone found carrying drugs and/or alcohol.

Mistreatment of animals

Policy: Any person caught mistreating any animals at the Center will be suspended from participating indefinitely. Any medical bills will be sent to the person causing the mistreatment.

LEADERS (VOLUNTEER) – JOB DESCRIPTION

The primary responsibility of the leader is the management of the horse. Before a volunteer can become a leader, he/she must:

1. Exhibit knowledge of horses and horsemanship.
2. Observe experienced leaders during a session, including using the mounting ramp.
3. Attend at least one orientation session.
4. Become familiar with the KART horses and their characteristics.

Responsibilities

1. Maintain control of the horse but be aware of the rider.
2. Reinforce the rider's attempts to control the horse, including starting, steering and stopping.
3. Avoid unnecessary talking.
4. Stay alert to what is happening in the ring.
5. Stand in front of the horse when stopped.
6. In the event of an emergency, STAY with the horse.

How to Lead

At the mounting ramp

If you are assisting a rider who mounts from the ramp, the instructor will tell you where to position the horse at the ramp. It is the leader's responsibility to keep the mount from moving forward or backward and as quiet as possible while the rider is mounting.

Approach the ramp from the platform end and position the mount as directed and as close as possible to the side of the ramp from which the rider will be mounting.

Stand directly in front of the horse as you normally would at the halt. STAY ALERT. Keep both hands on the lead.

When the rider is mounted, the instructor will ask you to move the horse out of the ramps. Once you are clear of the ramps, halt immediately so the stirrups can be adjusted.

When the necessary adjustments have been made, the instructor will ask you to assume the proper leading position and assist the rider to guide the horse to the riding area.

Mounting from the ground

If you are assisting a rider who mounts from the ground, the instructor will tell you where to position the horse. In some cases, the rider will be asked to lead the horse to the proper position with your assistance.

Stand directly in front of the horse with both hands on the lead. STAY ALERT.

It is the responsibility of the instructor or a trained volunteer to assist the rider with mounting. The rider must wait for this help. The leader should not allow or assist the rider to mount without the instructor's directions.

Riders waiting to mount should stand with the leader or a sidewalker, if available.

The leader should know his/her rider's name in order to be able to follow instructions given to that rider.

At the halt

Be sure that there is adequate space between mounts as you prepare to halt. Then step directly in front of the horse and keep it from moving forward or backward until the rider is directed to proceed,

Encourage the mount to remain calm and relaxed, stroking it on the neck if necessary. **Do not rub the horse's head or allow it to rub its head on you.**

At the walk

Working from the correct position, help the rider guide and control the horse as directed by the instructor.

When there are one or two sidewalkers present to help the rider maintain his/her balance, be sure to allow enough space for them to work without bumping into the sides of the arena or obstacles being used for the lesson.

Avoid sudden stops and/or sharp turns.

Maintain adequate space between mounts if the rider fails to do so.

At the trot

The rider should ask the horse to trot only when directed to do so by the instructor. Once the rider is prepared to trot and gives the "trot" command to the mount, the leader should increase the pace slightly and encourage the mount to move by repeating the "trot" command. Do not run or jog in front of the mount or attempt to pull it forward with the lead line.

As at the walk, the leader needs to help the rider avoid sudden stops and sharp turns and maintain adequate space between the mounts.

If you are unable to assist with the trot, inform the Instructor so that another volunteer can take your place.

During exercises and games

When exercises are done at the halt, the leader should stand in front of the mount's head as described under at the halt.

When exercises are done at the walk or trot, the leader controls the horse and maintains a steady pace.

Games are included in the lessons so the riders can have fun while using the skills they have learned. Leaders as well as riders need to listen to the rules given by the instructor.

Enthusiasm is catching, so encourage the rider to play well and allow him/her to participate as independently as possible within the limits of safe riding.

Dismounting

The Instructor or a trained volunteer is responsible for dismounting all riders and will give directions for the positioning of the mounts before dismounting riders.

The leader is responsible for positioning the horse and then standing in front of it just as during mounting to keep it from moving and as quiet as possible.

Do not allow or assist rider to dismount without directions from the instructor.

In case of emergency

Occasionally a rider will fall off a horse or have a problem that requires immediate special attention. If such an emergency occurs, step immediately in front of the mount you are leading and hold it at the halt. Remain calm and keep the mount as quiet as possible.

DO NOT LET GO OF THE LEAD LINE!

SIDEWALKER (VOLUNTEER) – JOB DESCRIPTION

The primary responsibility of the sidewalker is for the safety of the rider. Before a volunteer can work as a sidewalker, he/she must:

1. Observe experienced sidewalkers during a session.
2. Attend at least one orientation session.
3. Initially work with an experienced sidewalker.

Responsibilities

1. Help student focus attention on the instructor.
2. Avoid unnecessary talking.
3. When two sidewalkers are working together one should be the “designated” talker
4. Allow rider ample time to respond to the instructor’s request before giving assistance.
5. Use the designated manner when you assist the rider, e.g., putting your hand over the rider’s to help him/her turn rather than just pulling the rein.
6. Maintain position by the rider’s knee.
7. Properly support rider at the knee or thigh when requested to do so by the instructor.
8. If you become tired, wait until there is a break in the lesson to switch sides or request a substitute sidewalker.
9. Stay alert to the rider to prevent accidents, i.e., rider slipping to one side.
10. Help challenge the rider to perform to the best of his abilities.
11. You may be asked by the Instructor to escort a rider to and/or from their horse.

How to Sidewalk

At the mounting ramp

If you are assisting a rider who mounts from the ramp, the instructor will give you specific directions on how to help with the mounting of that particular rider.

Mounting from the ground

If you are assisting a rider who mounts from the ground, the instructor may ask you to counterweight the saddle on the off-side as the rider mounts, in order to keep it from slipping when the rider places his/her weight in the stirrup to mount.

It is the instructor’s responsibility to assist the rider with mounting. **Do not allow** the rider to try to mount without the supervision of the instructor unless specifically directed to do so.

Once the rider is mounted, the instructor will tell you what kind of assistance he/she will most probably need (e.g. constant support, occasional support, or reinforced directions). Riders have various physical limitations. Therefore, the **sidewalker should not handle the rider** (as in attempting to change the position of his/her hand, arm, leg etc.) unless specifically asked to do so by the instructor.

At the halt

Remain in position next to the rider and listen for directions from the instructor.

Be especially alert for balance changes as the mount starts and stops.

At the walk

Remain in position next to the rider and listen for directions from the instructor. The sidewalker may need to reinforce the directions when the rider does not hear or understand them.

If the rider needs special attention (such as repositioning in the saddle or having his/her foot replaced in the stirrup), alert the instructor and the leader working with the horse. It is usually best to go to the center of the ring to make any necessary adjustment in order to avoid interrupting the rest of the class.

At the trot

The rider should ask the horse to trot only when directed to do so by the instructor and only after he/she is fully prepared (holding the reins, seat deep in the saddle, etc.)

The instructor may take the sidewalker's place for a short time when asking the rider to trot in order to work with him/her on a one-to-one basis to develop the skill.

When assisting the rider at the trot, be especially alert for changes in balance caused by both the upward and downward transition.

If you are unable to assist with the trot, inform the Instructor so that another volunteer can take your place.

Dismounting

The instructor is responsible for dismounting all riders.

Remain next to the rider until the instructor is ready to help him/her dismount.

Do not dismount the rider without the instructor.

Working with a leader

Riders who require the assistance of one or more sidewalkers most often need a leader to assist them in guiding and controlling the horse. The leader is responsible for the horse and sidewalker for the rider. Working together, they allow the rider to learn riding skills in safety. Riders often progress from needing three helpers to needing none.

Sidewalkers need to keep the leader informed of any special needs the rider may have. However, casual conversation between the leaders and sidewalkers only serves to distract everyone's attention from the lesson and should not take place.

In case of emergency

Occasionally a rider will fall off the horse or have a problem that requires special attention. If any such emergency occurs, the leader will stop the horse immediately and instructor will take care of the rider involved.

All other riders in the class will halt and sidewalkers will remain in position until the problem is solved and the lesson can continue.

Sidewalkers should remain calm and keep their riders from becoming overly excited while waiting for directions from the instructor.

LEAD GROOM (VOLUNTEER) – JOB DESCRIPTION

Oversight Responsibilities

1. Organize and supervise the team of volunteers who groom the horse.
2. Schedule volunteer grooming sessions.
3. Check each horse before each session or on a scheduled basis between sessions for general good health and soundness. Report any problems to the Instructor, Horse Committee member, Executive Director, or farm owner. Take appropriate action for the horses care.
4. Monitor tack repair and cleaning to ensure all tack is in good order. Arrange for tack repair as required and set a schedule for cleaning.
5. Schedule regular cleaning of blankets, pads, girths and barn towels
6. Train new grooming volunteers.

Tasks

1. Curry comb and brush each horse.
2. Clean hooves.
3. Attend to any small injuries.
4. Report and/or get help for any major injuries and/or soundness problems.
5. Tack up horses.
6. Lead horses from barn to riding ring or designate volunteers to do so.
7. Be readily available to exchange horses between barn and ring as needed for each session.
8. Remove tack after each session, wiping down and storing it appropriately.
9. Cool down horses as necessary.
10. Turn horses out to pasture after session if instructed to by the farm owner.

GROOM (VOLUNTEER) – JOB DESCRIPTION

General Responsibilities

1. Receive training and/or orientation on grooming procedures from Lead Groom.
2. Perform grooming tasks.
3. Report any concerns to Lead Groom.

Tasks

1. Curry and brush each horse.
2. Clean hooves.
3. Report any visible equine injuries or anomalies to Lead Groom.
4. Tack up horses.
5. Be readily available to exchange horses between barn and ring as needed for each session.
6. Remove tack after each session, wiping down and storing it appropriately.
7. Cool out horses as necessary.
8. Turn horses out to pasture after session if instructed by farm owner.

Classroom Teacher - Job Description

The classroom teacher shall be responsible for the following:

- Creating a curriculum for the fall and spring sessions with input from KART instructors, barn manager, Executive Director, Board President, and farm owner concerning activities and resources to successfully execute the curriculum
- Preparing lesson plans for the fall and spring sessions using the above directives
- Conferring with other KART members (Executive Director, Board members, Stable Management, Riding Instructors) at the end of sessions to review the curriculum and suggest changes for future session
- Maintaining appropriate classroom behavior
- Purchasing and/or maintaining classroom supplies; costs of which will be reimbursed for purchases upon receiving receipts