

# Volunteer Orientation Manual



**HIGH & MIGHTY™**

THERAPEUTIC RIDING AND DRIVING CENTER INC.  
501 (c)(3)



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# About High & Mighty

High & Mighty offers several different therapeutic riding, driving, and unmounted programs geared toward providing physical, emotional, and spiritual benefits to students of all abilities (ages four and older). As a Professional Association for Therapeutic Horsemanship, Intl. (PATH) center, we also hold ourselves to the standards set forth by PATH to ensure the safety of our participants, horses, volunteers, staff, and visitors. All of our equine assisted activities are supervised by PATH Intl. Certified Therapeutic Riding and/or Driving Instructors.

High & Mighty is located on over 50 acres in Ghent, NY (Columbia County). Our barn is home to many happy horses and people. In addition to our outdoor arena, we have an indoor arena which has excellent footing and heated viewing rooms. Our horses enjoy daily turnout (weather permitting) in beautiful pastures with run in sheds. In addition, we have paddocks for those horses who require less grass. We also have miles of trails, which include interactive sensory exploration, camping areas and outdoor corrals.

## Our Team at High & Mighty

High & Mighty was founded by Laura Corsun, who has combined her background as an elementary teacher, a dance performer/choreographer, and her experience with horses to create an equine-assisted activities program designed for children and adults with special needs. At High & Mighty, our instruction staff believe that learning is a journey full of growth, challenge, joy, and change. Though we establish goals for each of our participants, we value every step of the process as an opportunity for our participants, volunteers, and staff to learn about themselves, each other, and the horses. Here at High & Mighty, we believe in dreams.

## Why Equine-Assisted Activities?

At High & Mighty, we believe horses provide an opportunity to travel to new places physically, emotionally and spiritually. Riding, driving, and other equine-assisted activities offer many benefits. These benefits may include:

- Improving strength, balance, range of motion and coordination
- Increasing the ability to listen, learn and communicate
- Promoting independence and pride by accomplishing new skills
- Providing an opportunity to make new friends
- Developing an appreciation for nature and our environment

## Our Mission of Sustainability

High & Mighty is a socially responsible organization. We support universal human rights, protecting the environment, and benefiting the community in which we work. As part of this mission, we ask that you utilize reusable containers when bringing food and drink to the property. We are fortunate to have a heated viewing room and classroom, so please turn off your cars and come inside to warm up with us in the colder weather.

## Our Horsemanship Philosophy

Our goal in working and caring for our horses is to foster horse-human relationships based on trust, respect, and communication. Safety is always our top priority, and we work toward this priority by engaging in ongoing training and behavioral correction with all of our horses. We ask that volunteers take a moment to check in with themselves before starting their day at High & Mighty to center themselves mentally and emotionally. Horses are sensitive and intuitive, and we want to foster an environment full of positive, grounded energy. If you have any questions about our methods of training or correcting behaviors, please feel free to ask.

# Volunteer Program Information

## Volunteer Opportunities and Positions

Our three main volunteer positions are horse handler/leader, sidewalker, and barn volunteer. However, we have several other positions (listed below) that we offer as volunteer opportunities:

- Facility repairs
- Horse show volunteer
- Horseplay camp
- Fundraising
- Yearly events
- Public relations
- Newsletter
- Grant writing
- Office tasks
- Volunteer recruitment
- Photos/video
- Future planning

### ***Horse Handler/Leader***

The horse handler's primary responsibility is the safety and wellbeing of the horse; they are directly responsible for their assigned horse during program. The horse handler will sometimes tack the horse and bring them to the arena, other times they will assist the participant in grooming and tacking the horse. While the participant is mounted, the horse handler will lead or "spot" the horse (per the instructor's direction), allowing the rider to be as independent as possible while still maintaining a safe environment for horse, rider, and all personnel in the arena.

### ***Sidewalker***

The sidewalker's primary responsibility is the safety and wellbeing of the participant. The sidewalker assists the participant in understanding the directions from the instructor, as well as providing support and encouragement throughout the lesson. Sidewalkers' involvement ranges from verbal reminders to performing physical "holds" that help secure and maintain the participant's position safely on the horse.

### ***Barn Volunteer***

The responsibilities of a barn volunteer may include cleaning stalls, sweeping, feeding, turning out/bringing in horses, cleaning fields, grooming, and more. This is an excellent area for volunteers who may not wish to participate directly in program

but want to be around the horses. Barn volunteers are incredibly important to the program as they ensure the schedule is running smoothly while program is in session. Some of the barn volunteer's responsibilities may include the following:

- Bringing in horses that are needed for upcoming lessons.
- Grooming and/or tacking up horses for upcoming lessons. Please note that you must have had High & Mighty training and instructor's approval before tacking.
- Keeping the aisle clear of dirt, debris and other obstacles.
- Aid High & Mighty staff in feeding and filling water buckets for morning/afternoon/evening meals.
- Assist with keeping stalls and fields clean.
- Aid High & Mighty staff in keeping the tack room clean and organized, this includes making sure all tack is returned to its appropriate place and cleaning and maintaining tack.

## Volunteer Benefits

As a volunteer you will:

- Assist participants and horses in reaching their goals.
- Build relationships with participants by providing them with individualized attention.
- Develop an understanding of and contribute to those with special needs.
- Grow in your understanding about our equine partners.
- Learn new skills related to horses.
- Share your knowledge, skills, experience, and interests with others.
- Make friends while giving back to others.
- Give the gift of your time.
- Be part of the High & Mighty community.
- Receive educational opportunities.

## Policies and Procedures

### Basic Rules

- Upon arrival, please sign in on your volunteer sign in page in the volunteer binder [located in the tack room]. Before leaving, remember to sign out.
- **Always check-in with an instructor or staff member before starting your volunteer hours.**
- Please arrive 15 minutes prior to the start of a class if you are volunteering for a lesson.
- Remember to dress appropriately
  - Wear comfortable walking shoes (boots are preferred).
  - Wear comfortable, appropriate clothing (remember non-offensive graphics/language on clothing).
  - No tank tops or shorts.
  - Be mindful of jewelry, hair, and perfumes.
  - SAFETY & COMFORT for all comes first.
- Take care of yourself

- Baseball hats, sunscreen, bug spray, and long pants are all recommended in the summer.
- Hats, gloves, and layered clothing are all recommended in the winter.
- DO NOT use cell phones during program unless during an emergency situation. All cell phones must be on silent.
- Prior to riding sessions, please notify the riding instructor of any limitations or changes in your physical capabilities or pertinent medical conditions.
- There is absolutely NO SMOKING on the farm premises.
- Refrain from use of drugs or alcohol prior to and during Program activities.

### **Responsibilities**

- Always respect the confidentiality of all participants.
- Remember to be responsible to self, others, and the horses.
- Please maintain up to date records of your volunteer hours.
- Any thoughts/ideas/concerns that may arise should be discussed with instructor.

### **Age Limitation**

The minimum age for volunteering as a side walker or horse handler is 14. However, there are other jobs for those under 14.

### **Accessibility**

High & Mighty complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Please inform us if you have any special requirements.

### **Equal Opportunity**

High & Mighty Therapeutic Riding and Driving Center, Inc. does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability or age in its programs and activities.

### **Anti-Harassment and Discrimination**

High & Mighty is committed to providing an environment free of sexual or any form of unlawful harassment or discrimination. Harassment or unlawful discrimination against individuals on the basis of race, religion, creed, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ancestry, physical or mental disability, genetic information, marital status, or any other classification protected by local, state, or federal laws is illegal and prohibited by company policy.

Such conduct by or towards any volunteer, participant, family member, or staff person at High & Mighty will not be tolerated. Anyone who violates this policy will be asked to leave their volunteering position.

### **Prohibited Conduct:**

Prohibited harassment or discrimination includes any verbal, physical, or visual conduct based on sex, race, age, national origin, disability or any other legally protected basis if:

- a. submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or engagement;
- b. submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for decisions concerning that individual's employment or engagement; or
- c. it creates a hostile or offensive work environment.

Prohibited harassment includes (but is not limited to) unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and lewd, vulgar, or obscene remarks, jokes, posters or cartoons, and any unwelcome touching, pinching, or other physical contact. Other forms of unlawful harassment or discrimination may include racial epithets, slurs, and derogatory remarks, stereotypes, jokes, posters or cartoons based on race, national origin, age, disability, marital status, or other legally protected categories. Prohibited harassment might also be transmitted using the Company's electronic communications system, or through other on-line conduct.

### **Complaint Procedure:**

Anyone who feels that they have been harassed or discriminated against, or who witness any harassment or discrimination by an employee, contract worker, customer, vendor, another volunteer, or anyone else who does business with High & Mighty, should immediately report such conduct to their supervisor or any other member of management.

Do not allow an inappropriate situation to continue by not reporting it, regardless of who is creating the situation. No employee, contract worker, customer, vendor, volunteer, or other person who does business with this organization is exempt from the prohibitions in this policy. In response to every complaint, High & Mighty will conduct an investigation which may involve interviewing witnesses if warranted and, if improper conduct is found, take appropriate corrective action.

To the extent that an employee or contract worker is not satisfied with High & Mighty's handling of a harassment or discrimination complaint, they may also contact the appropriate state or federal enforcement agency for legal relief.

### **Issues with Volunteer Performance/Behavior**

The safety of the High & Mighty participants, volunteers, and horses must be maintained at all times. If a volunteer or guest's behavior jeopardizes the safety of self or others, the volunteer or guest will receive a verbal and a written warning. If unsafe behavior continues, the volunteer or guest may be asked to leave the program. Behaviors that warrant termination:

- Failure to provide safety measures
- Verbal, physical or emotional misconduct

- Discriminatory behaviors/language
- Possession/sale/use of illegal drugs and/or alcohol during program or on program premises
- Lack of attendance or repeated tardiness

*We are role models to our participants. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the language that we use. Please use positive language, which is sensitive to the values, beliefs, abilities, and lifestyles of others and are in accordance with the philosophy of High & Mighty.*

## **Volunteer Training**

### **Initial Training**

All volunteers must attend a volunteer training session, which will include a brief orientation, a tour of the facility, and a leader/sidewalker training (which will include emergency dismounts).

Once you have attended a training session, new volunteers are paired with a current volunteer who will act as a mentor. The length of time a new volunteer requires mentoring is specific to each person. Once a new volunteer is comfortable being on their own, they will be scheduled into a regular program volunteer slot. Additional on-the-job training/education is continually provided after the initial training period.

### **Ongoing Training and Educational Opportunities**

We offer continuing education opportunities for all our volunteers on topics like emergency dismounts, leading, horse handling, and other areas that we feel are always good to practice. There are also additional educational opportunities on various topics, such as mental health and therapeutic riding, equine facilitated psychotherapy, the physical benefits of riding, and other topics in which you may be interested. Literature regarding the population groups we serve is also available to borrow or discuss.

### ***Equine Enrichment Program***

Our horses at High & Mighty work hard with our participants, and we want to keep them happy and healthy. The goal of our Equine Enrichment Program is to incorporate our volunteers into the fitness and wellbeing regimen of each of our horses. If you are interested in becoming involved with this program, let us know.

## **Risk Management**

High & Mighty requires that all volunteers read and understand the safety risks, regulations and rules that are detailed in this manual. There is an inherent risk in working with horses. With that in mind, your complete cooperation in all safety protocols is of utmost importance to keep you, our participants, our staff, and our horses safe.



As a volunteer, you are responsible for:

- Knowing and following safety rules.
- Ensuring you support a safe working environment.
- Using safety equipment and techniques.
- Reporting any safety concerns regarding equipment or behaviors.
- Reporting any and all injuries or other incidents involving you, a participant, or the horses.
- Knowing the emergency plans, locations of first aid kits, fire extinguishers and emergency exits.

## **Barn Safety Rules**

All rules are to be followed by all volunteers, participants, families, visitors and staff. If you witness any persons not following the rules, please notify the person and/or inform the instructor.

- We are a smoke-free property. Similarly, alcohol and drugs are not allowed on the property.
- All staff, volunteers, and participants are expected to use walking feet (no running) and quiet voices (no yelling) around the barn, arena, and paddock areas.
- Only feed horses with permission from the instructor.
- Please receive permission from the instructor before entering a horse's stall or a paddock.
- Please refrain from putting fingers/hands through the stall bars or doors.
- The barn aisles should be kept clear. Please put all grooming boxes, tools, and tack in its proper place. Good rule of thumb: Always leave the barn as you found it, if not cleaner.

## **First Aid/Injuries/Handling of Bodily Fluids**

It is essential that you report any concerns, incidents, injuries, and/or safety issues to the instructor. There is a human first aid kit located in the viewing room of the indoor arena, as well as in the tack room of the barn. Please know the location of both so you may utilize them in the event of a situation requiring first aid.

In most cases, the instructor will provide any first aid that is required. However, if you will be exposed to bodily fluids while providing assistance always use gloves and/or other disposable equipment. Remember to wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water after providing any first aid assistance for horses or humans. It is important to follow precautionary measures regarding exposure to bodily fluids, which includes blood, secretions from cuts/scrapes, urine, vomit, saliva and respiratory secretions. Follow safe and thorough hygiene practices when tending to injuries involving you, another volunteer, or a participant.

## **Fire & Emergency Procedures**

Remember, at High & Mighty the safety of our participants, volunteers, and horses is our first priority.

### **If emergency personnel must be called...**

- Instructor- Ask one volunteer to go to the phone and call emergency personnel.
- Dial 911:
  - location of emergency
  - 71 County Route 21C, Ghent NY
  - telephone number of the phone being used
  - caller's name
  - what happened
  - number of victims
  - condition of victims
  - help being given
  - NO SIRENS close to barn
  - stay on the line for further instructions
- One volunteer will be asked to go to the bottom of the driveway to direct the ambulance where to go once they arrive.
- Contact the executive director.

### **Fire & Emergency Drill Procedures**

Emergency drills are designed for the safety of all of those involved. It is better for everyone to be prepared in the event of emergency and know the appropriate steps required to get everyone to safety in the calmest and most efficient way possible.

#### **When Practicing Drills:**

- Instructor discusses the purpose of emergency drills.
- The instructor indicates the designated area to go after the dismount.
- Following the explanation of the drill, the instructor announces the practice drill.
- Upon completion of the drill, the instructor resumes class.

#### **Emergency Meet-up Locations:**

- In the event of a fire or other emergency in the barn or the indoor arena, evacuate immediately and follow instructor or staff directions.
- If an emergency occurs at a different location of the property, please follow the direction of the instructor on where to meet.
- Under no circumstances is any staff member, volunteer, participant, or visitor to return to a burning building for any reason. This includes:
  - Retrieving personal belongings
  - Assisting those still in the building
  - Assisting animals still in the building

## Horse Safety Rules

- SAFETY FIRST, ALWAYS.
- If at any point you are uncomfortable with horse handling, sidewalking, or any of your other volunteering duties, please let an instructor know!
- Hold the lead rope with both hands when leading.
- Never wrap a lead rope around your hand(s) or body.
- Speak to a horse before approaching them. This will help prevent them from being startled. When horses are startled they may jump or kick.
- Pat a horse on their shoulder, not their nose.
- Walk between a horse's shoulder and head-not in front of or behind them.
- Approach the horse from the side, versus head on. The location of their eyes makes it easier to see you coming from the side.
- Walk around a horse to the front. Do not go under the horse's neck or go behind them. If you must go behind, place a hand on his rump and walk close to the hind end.
- Horses are affectionate and in the wild horse play involves nipping and biting. Keep hands and fingers away from their mouths.
- When leading a horse into the stall, turn them and yourself to face the opening. Close the stall guard/door before removing the halter.
- Never remove a halter before the horse is completely in the stall or pen with the door/gate closed behind you.
- Do not leave a horse in the aisle without using the cross ties or holding them with a lead rope or reins.
- When securing a horse with the cross ties, always clip the cross tie to the halter or grooming halter.
- Never tie a horse by its bridle/bit.
- When tying a horse using a lead rope, always use a safety knot.
- Keep reins and lead ropes off the ground. No tack should be placed on the ground.
- Grooming boxes should be placed along the wall when in use.
- Call out "hello" before entering front of arena or barn.
- Call out "coming up" or "coming in" when entering the arena from the barn chute.
- Use quiet voices in the barn and on the property. Loud voices may startle horses and/or people.
- Ask permission from the instructor before feeding any horses.
- When the participants are not mounted (i.e. grooming, horse handling, visiting) safety is still of utmost importance.
- Participants must always wear ASTM-SEI approved helmets when riding, driving or otherwise performing activities involving the horse.
- When working around the horse, stay near the shoulder. When working near the hindquarters, stay close and keep one hand on the horse.
- When horses feet move, yours and the participant's feet should move.
- Always let a horse know what you intend to do with your body and verbal language.
- When the horses are lined up waiting for class to begin, give them space. Please do not play with their faces. They are getting ready to work.
- If a horse spooks or gets agitated at any point, talk to them calmly and ask for help.
- Stay alert and be aware of other activity happening in the arena (snow falling off roof, parents coming in from viewing room, noises outside, wind, etc). This may affect how your horse/participant is acting in class.

## And last but not least...thank you!!!

High & Mighty sincerely thanks all our volunteers for their participation in our equine assisted activities. You are an essential component to our program and have enormous impact on the participants, horses, and each other. We rely on your time, energy, and talents to make this program successful. We are excited for you to join our herd!



# High & Mighty Volunteer Confidentiality Policy

## Participant Confidentiality

All staff, independent contractors, temporary employees, **volunteers**, and board members shall keep all medical, social, referral, personal, and financial information regarding a participant and their family/caregivers confidential. Failure to follow this confidentiality policy will result in verbal warning and/or dismissal.

## Volunteer Confidentiality

Volunteer paperwork is kept in the office and is accessed only by instruction and office staff as necessary. Outdated volunteer paperwork is destroyed and recycled when new volunteer paperwork replaces it. Volunteer paperwork for those no longer volunteering at High & Mighty is filed in case they return, and is destroyed after 5 years. Volunteer and staff names, phone numbers, and emergency contacts are kept near the arenas and in the tack room in the event of an emergency and/or in the event of lesson cancellation.

**“I have read and agree to ALL policies and procedures in the Volunteer Orientation Manual, including the High & Mighty Volunteer Confidentiality Policy. I also agree to ALL policies and procedures in the Lesson Volunteer Manual AND/OR the Driving Volunteer Manual.”**

\_\_\_\_\_

Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date