



NEW VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

Our Mission

OUR MISSION IS TO CONNECT HUMANS AND HORSES TO TRANSFORM THE LIVES OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AND MEET THE EVOLVING NEEDS OF OUR GREATER COMMUNITY.

Therapy, sport, recreation and social interactions are achieved in a safe and educational environment with specially selected and trained horses. We Can Ride (WCR) operates under the guidance of credentialed Physical and Occupational Therapists and nationally certified therapeutic riding instructors. All programming is assisted by trained and dedicated volunteers.

WCR prides itself on maintaining a safe and stimulating environment for everyone involved in it's programs. We accept and currently serve individuals of any gender, sexual orientation or ethnic origin.



Location & Contact

- 4301 County Rd. 24, Medina MN 55359
- Class Cancellation Number 612-268-2735
- Volunteer Coordinator: angelm@wecanride.org

We Can Ride Details

- 501C3 NON-PROFIT
- PATH INTL. PREMIER ACCREDITED CENTER
- FOUNDED IN 1982
- SERVES 150 CLIENTS A YEAR, AGES 2 & UP
- FUNDED BY FUNDRAISING EVENTS, DONATIONS, GRANTS, REGISTRATION & LESSON FEES



HISTORY OF WE CAN RIDE

We Can Ride began serving the Twin cities area in 1982 with only six clients. Today we serve hundreds each year. We Can Ride is a PATH Premier Accredited Center and is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. The Board of Directors includes parents of clients, program volunteers, and professionals in the areas of health care, education, and business.

• 4301 County Rd. 24, Medina
MN 55359

PATH International: www.pathintl.org

PATH International (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship) is a non-profit organization that:

- Promotes the well-being of people with disabilities using equine facilitated activities
- Investigates the effects of therapeutic riding
- Provides training and certification for instructors
- Sets national standards and accredits programs
- Sponsors regional and national workshops for instructors, administrators, therapists, and volunteers.

Volunteer Coordinator:
volunteers@wecanride.org

FUNDING SOURCES FOR WE CAN RIDE

We Can Ride is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit and raises funds to ensure that client fees remain low. Client fees only cover 30% of our costs. Our methods of financial support include:

- Annual fundraising events
- Contributions from individuals, groups, corporations, and foundations
- Lesson fees

Sponsorship Opportunities

As a We Can Ride sponsor, you will play an integral role in making our programs possible. You will enjoy many sponsor benefits and help make a difference in the lives of individuals living with disabilities. Call the We Can Ride office, visit our website, or contact the Volunteer Coordinator for more information.



Therapeutic Riding

As defined by PATH International, Therapeutic Riding uses equine-assisted activities for the purpose of contributing positively to the cognitive, physical, emotional, and social well-being of people with disabilities. Therapeutic riding provides benefits in the areas of health, education, sport and recreation, and leisure. Throughout the world, there are thousands of individuals with special needs who experience the rewarding benefits of horseback riding. A disability does not have to limit a person from riding horses. In fact, experiencing the motion of a horse can be very therapeutic. Because horseback riding rhythmically moves the rider's body in a manner similar to a human gait, riders with physical disabilities often show improvement in flexibility, balance, and muscle strength. In addition to the therapeutic benefits, horseback riding also provides recreational opportunities for individuals to enjoy the outdoors.

At We Can Ride, equine-assisted Therapeutic Riding is for individuals ages 2 and up. These classes are taught by PATH International Certified Riding Instructors (CTRIs). Along with the many therapeutic benefits derived from riding, our goal is to teach horsemanship skills. Clients may also learn to groom, lead, and saddle horses. Class size varies from one to four clients and includes the use of one to three volunteers.



Hippotherapy

The American Hippotherapy Association, Inc. defines hippotherapy as a physical, occupational, or speech and language treatment strategy that utilizes equine movement. This strategy has evolved over 30 years. Through education and clinical experience, therapists continue to refine the use of hippotherapy as part of an integrated therapy approach. Using movement of the horse as the strategy of choice has resulted in improved functional outcomes for a wide variety of clients. These positive results ensure that hippotherapy will continue to be used in treatment for many years to come.

We Can Ride's hippotherapy program involves a credentialed and licensed therapists working one-on-one with the client to reach traditional therapy goals without teaching specific riding skills. The therapist works with a certified instructor to create the type of movements from the horse to meet the specific treatment goals. Trained volunteers also help with balance and postural corrections.





Equine Assisted Learning (EAL)

Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) is an experiential learning process that uses therapy horses to meet the goals of different community groups.

Since horses communicate non-verbally, they are wonderful teachers of how our non-verbal communication might impact others. The horses respond quickly to changes in our behavior, offering constant feedback and timely rewards or consequences for our actions. EAL allows individuals to grow in communication, awareness, observation, focus, work ethic, self-esteem and self-confidence. All activities are done on the ground with the supervision of a CTRI, assisted by volunteers, working to meet goals using various activities such as grooming, longeing, leading and much more.

We Can Ride offers EAL to groups of ten or less. Our clients come from schools, scout programs, adult and elder care, religious organizations, group homes, sports teams, summer camps and more. Sessions run for one to two hours at a time and can be scheduled individually or in a package of multiple weeks.



Equine Connections

Equine Connections was developed in conjunction with professional first responders to introduce more people in those professions to the equine world – a place where one can step back from the stresses of life and focus on a relationship with an equine partner.

Through this unique connection, first responders can find peace and decompression after long shifts on the streets. Many approaches can serve this purpose, but none quite like bonding with a herd of horses.

Lessons may be ground-based (Foundations) or mounted (Riding) depending on experience level and interest. Volunteers may or may not be needed for this program.





Herd Dynamics

Herd Dynamics uses Equine Assisted Learning to foster personal and professional growth for participants. This approach does not require horsemanship or riding skills but rather creates a partnership between participants, horses, and coaches. Through activities, observation and reflection, groups enjoy an experiential opportunity to see challenges in a different way. Herd Dynamics builds teamwork, confidence, and creativity!



Patti's Pony Connection

Patti's Pony Connection is an innovative program designed for seniors experiencing memory loss along and their caregivers. This experiential and sensory-based program is facilitated by PATH certified staff as well as specially trained volunteers. Benefits include reduced anxiety, depression and agitation, as well as physical benefits including enhanced balance, mobility, and coordination. It is also an opportunity for seniors and their caregivers to bond in a unique environment.





POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

CONFIDENTIALITY

All staff and volunteers must adhere to We Can Ride's confidentiality policy, which forbids the discussion of any client, his/her health condition, or family situation outside the boundaries of We Can Ride. If there is a breach of this policy by an individual, he/she will be dismissed from volunteering at We Can Ride.

PHOTOS

Those wishing to take photographs of clients and other volunteers should ask the instructor before doing so as some clients and volunteers do not consent to having photos taken.

PERSON-FIRST LANGUAGE

Person-first language is used at We Can Ride when communicating with others. The basic idea is to impose a sentence structure that names the person first and the condition second. For example: "people with disabilities" rather than "disabled people." This emphasizes that they are "people first."

More examples:

- "Child with a disability" rather than "Disabled/handicapped child"
- "Developmental delay" rather than "Slow"
- "Without speech" or "nonverbal" rather than "Mute"

CLASS CANCELLATIONS

The health and safety of volunteers, clients, and horses are the priority of We Can Ride. The guidelines for classes to be cancelled are as follows:

- **Temperature Extremes:** extreme temperatures or wind chills that would make travel dangerous, or temperatures above 98 degrees and/or high humidity
- **Severe Weather:** Heavy thunderstorms with lightening, tornado warnings, or snow and ice storms for the immediate area
- **Report of Infectious Disease:** We may send participants home or cancel a future class depending on the likelihood of the spread of an infectious disease, such as COVID-19.

If these situations arise, every attempt will be made to contact all volunteers by telephone and/or email to cancel class; however, please feel free to call the We Can Ride office at 952-934-0057 to check for cancellations. If a weekly lesson is cancelled due to inclement weather, we will try to reschedule. Remember these are guidelines, not rules.

United States Volunteer Protection Act of 1977

President Clinton signed the "Volunteer Protection Act of 1997" in June, 1997. The law grants immunity from personal civil liability to volunteers working on behalf of non-profit organizations. The law provides that volunteers of non-profit organizations cannot be held liable for harm caused by an act of omission of the volunteer provided the volunteer is acting within the scope of his or her responsibilities, is properly licensed or certified by the appropriate authorities, and the harm is not caused by willful misconduct.





BARN SAFETY:

- All volunteers must have a completed liability and emergency form on file with We Can Ride to be in the arenas, barn, and paddocks. This includes parents/siblings/PCA if they assist in class.
- Volunteers are required to stay in the designated areas before, during, and after class.
- Clients must have their sidewalkers with them upon entering the arena.
- Please do not feed treats to the horses. This includes placing treats in the stall feed bins, buckets, feeding or by hand.
- Clients and other children must be supervised at all times by an adult. If this is not possible, we kindly ask parents and caregivers not to bring other children to class.
- Running near the horses or in the barn is not allowed. Sudden movements can easily spook or upset the horses.
- Climbing on anything - including gates and hay - is prohibited.
- No pets are allowed except companion or helper animals. We ask that prior consent be given before bringing an animal onsite, as some horses may become excited.
- Clients, families, caregivers, and volunteers not directly involved in a class are required to remain on property during class times.
- Clients, families, and volunteers may not visit the site during non-class times without the approval of the We Can Ride staff. Please remember that we do not own our barn site.
- We Can Ride is a tobacco, drug, and alcohol free facility.





Volunteer Schedules

CANCELLATIONS

- If you have to cancel last minute, please call the instructor phone line at (612) 268-2735 and leave a message.
- If you know ahead of time that you will be unable to volunteer, please email the Volunteer Coordinator with as much advance notice as possible to allow time to find a substitute volunteer.

VOLUNTEER MILEAGE to and from a volunteer job may be tax-deductible. Volunteers are responsible for keeping track of their mileage for this purpose.

Emergency Plan

The following guidelines should be followed in the event of an emergency:

FIRE

Clients will be dismounted if they are riding in the indoor arena if there is a fire in the barn. The instructor will direct you to a safe area outside the barn.

SEVERE WEATHER

In the event of severe weather, clients will be dismounted and everyone will seek shelter in the tack room or men's/women's bathrooms.

CLIENT FALLS

The teaching assistant stays with the group while the instructor checks on the fallen client. Should the client need medical assistance, the instructor will call for help or instruct the nearest volunteer on the emergency procedure.

SEIZURES

If the client has a seizure when on the horse, the leader will keep the horse calm and the sidewalkers will make sure the client is safe on the horse. An emergency dismount will be performed by the instructor or teaching assistant and sidewalkers if the client needs to be dismounted.

Volunteer Dress Code

- Sturdy, closed-toe shoes or boots; sturdy athletic shoes are OK. NO crocs, boat shoes, canvas shoes or sandals are allowed.
- Dress for the weather
- No dangling jewelry, sunglasses, or other items that could get tangled up with the horse's gear.
- No perfumes
- No short shorts, low-cut tops or those with spaghetti straps, no T-shirts with inappropriate logos or slogans





Volunteer Requirements

- Volunteers must be at least 14 years old to participate in classes and at least 18 years old to join the feeder team
- A class volunteer should be able to walk for at least one hour without fatiguing, be able to jog for very short distances, be able to walk with his/her arm (one at a time) above shoulder height and be able to support a modest amount of weight.
- Volunteers do not need prior horse experience or experience working with people with special needs or disabilities to volunteer at We Can Ride.
- We generally ask volunteers to commit to one full session. Sessions are five to ten weeks in length, with a break week during the longer sessions. Consistent volunteer attendance helps the client and instructor to focus on therapies and reach their goals more quickly.
- If you are unable to commit to volunteering every week, we encourage you to consider volunteering as a substitute. Substitute volunteers can choose available shifts that fit their schedules. This is a great option for those with fluctuating schedules.
- New volunteers are provided with an orientation and sidewalker training. All volunteers must complete a full session of sidewalking to be invited to train as a leader or barn aide.
- We Can Ride can't operate our classes without our volunteers, so please communicate any absences with as much advance notice as possible to the Volunteer Coordinator.
- Volunteers may be dismissed if they are not able to provide appropriate support to the client, demonstrate unsafe behavior in the barn or in classes, or if they continually fail to show up for their assigned times.

When You Arrive

- Volunteers should arrive at the barn at least 15 minutes before class begins.
- When you arrive, please sign in and check the barn sheet on the tack room door.
- The instructor will provide you with information about your volunteer tasks for class.
- If you have questions, concerns, new ideas, or thoughts about your client, please do not hesitate to talk with the instructor. Communication between volunteers and the instructor is not only encouraged, it is vital.





Sidewalker Duties

From the time the client arrives in the arena until he or she leaves, the sidewalker is responsible for the client and for the client's safety.

- Greet your client when he/she arrives.
- Watch your client carefully when working around the horse. Always lead your client around the front of the horse; do not allow the client to pass behind the horse.
- Assist the instructor ONLY if asked during the mounting or dismounting.
- The instructor or teaching assistant will check the tack and adjust the length of the client's stirrups before and during the lesson.
- Assist the client during class as directed by the instructor.
- The instructor will inform you if your client has a seizure disorder and what to do in the event that a seizure occurs.
- Encourage clients to complete each task. If you have questions about the client's riding goals, ask the instructor.
- When there are two sidewalkers, one will be designated as the coach. Too much input from volunteers can be confusing to some clients.
- Talking to other volunteers during classes can be very distracting to some clients. Please converse with others before and after classes.
- Be aware of the client at all times. Anticipate balance problems and be prepared to assist your client. Provide enough assistance to maintain safety, but don't take the challenge out of the lesson for your client. When in doubt, always consult the instructor.
- Help the client understand the instructor's directions and praise his or her good work and effort.
- Keep in mind that the client is present when you are talking with others, even if he/she does not seem engaged.





Leader

- Warm up the horse in the arena before class
- Maintain control of the horse for the client to mount and dismount
- Keep the horse quiet and focused during the class

Barn Aide (BA)

- Arrive one hour or more prior to class
- Bring horses in from paddocks or pasture
- Groom & tack horses
- Stay after class to clean up and put tack away

Teaching Assistant (TA)

- Assist instructor during class
- Learn more about various disabilities
- Assist with client mounts and dismounts
- Teach a portion of the lesson as necessary

Feeder

- Set up feed and hay for the horses
- Lead horses in and out of the barn for feeding
- Muck out paddocks and stalls

... And More!

We Can Ride offers other volunteer opportunities that don't require the completion of a full session:

- Office Volunteers
- Fundraising
- Barn Maintenance
- Special Projects
- Tack Cleaning

Special Events

- Annual Gala
- Harvest Horse Show
- Trick or Trot
- And More!

Be a We Can Ride Ambassador!
We welcome your smile and extra hands on deck as we spread the word about We Can Ride!





Volunteer Tips

DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL NEEDS

Disabilities and special needs are not always apparent, making the job of giving directions and taking precautions somewhat more complex. Please ask the instructor or therapist if you have any questions about how to best help your client reach his or her goals. Be sure to let the instructor know if you feel uncomfortable with the job you've been assigned.

Volunteers help facilitate improvement in the following areas:

Attention span	Normalizing tone
Auditory learning	Posture
Balance	Self control
Cooperation dexterity	Self esteem
Directionality	Sensory integration
Gait	Spatial relationships
Memory	Speech development
Mobility	Strengthening muscles
Motor skills	Visual Learning

HOW TO HELP EFFECTIVELY

- Treat adults as adults
- Respect personal space. Do not "pat" people with disabilities on the head, shoulder, or any part of their body.
- Only help a person with a disability if they ask for assistance unless they are nonverbal or in danger.
- Always address the person with a disability directly.
- When assisting a person with a disability, always ask "how" you can help.
- Do not shout. Don't assume that because a person is nonverbal that they also have hearing issues.
- Some people with disabilities need more time to process information so give them time to respond.
- If a person has difficulty speaking, allow them to finish their sentence.
- Do not make assumptions about what a person can or can't do.
- Allow the person to try to do things before helping them out.

If you have questions about a client's disability or how you can best assist them, please ask the instructor.