

Westwind 4-H Volunteer Roles and Responsibilities

Riding classes are held on Mondays and Thursdays from 4–5pm at the Los Altos Hills Westwind Community Barn. You can volunteer for the Monday or Thursday class, or both. We also offer a summer session in July on Mondays at 7pm. All volunteers are required to take an annual training class that includes emergency procedures.

Because you play a vital role in our program, we expect regular attendance.

- Please be on time for class. If you are unable to come on a scheduled class day, please provide at least 24-hours notice. You can make a note on the sign-in sheet, or call (650) 947-8680 and leave a message.
- Make sure your cell phone is set to silent before class.
- Always wear sturdy, closed-toe shoes for your safety. You should dress according to the weather conditions on class day. During hot weather, shorts and sunglasses are fine.
- Check in with the program coordinator before starting any task. Never handle a horse without permission.
- Never approach a horse from behind; horses cannot see directly behind or in front of them. Always approach from the side.
- DO NOT hand feed horses. Please check with the horse leader before offering treats. If allowed, treats should be given in a treat bucket located in the 4-H barn.
- Listen carefully to the instructor. If you have questions, don't hesitate to ask.
- Remember, safety comes first. If you are uncomfortable with completing an assigned task, please consult with the horse leader or program coordinator.

Horse Safety

Please follow these guidelines to help ensure the safety of our volunteers and riders.

1. Move quietly, but purposefully around horses. Avoid running, shouting, jumping, or otherwise unruly behavior. Although our horses are calm and patient, even the best-behaved horse can get startled, which could put a rider in danger of falling off or someone on the ground may get stepped on.
2. Always approach a horse from the side, never from behind. Horses can't see directly in front or behind them. Walk around a horse to get to the other side; do not duck under the horse's head.
3. Never tie a horse with the reigns. Always use the lead rope.
4. Be observant and take action if you see any dangerous situations, such as children standing too close behind a horse.

5. In the unlikely event that your horse spooks, the horse leader is responsible for the horse and sidewalkers stay with the rider. For more information, see Emergency Procedures.

Sidewalkers

Sidewalkers are responsible for the rider. They walk next to the mounted rider during class, assisting as necessary. They also help the rider focus on the instructor's directions. The lead sidewalker (left side) will help the rider dismount in an emergency situation if the instructor is unable to do so.

Before class

1. Arrive 15 minutes before class begins. If you will be absent, make sure to leave a note on the sign-in sheet or call WRI at 650-947-8680.
Class may be cancelled on rainy or very hot days. Call WRI after 2pm on the day of the program to check the status.
2. You will be assigned a horse-and-rider team by the program coordinator. If you'd like to learn about grooming and tacking up your assigned horse, let your horse leader know.
3. Make sure the rider is wearing a properly fitted helmet and safety belt. The instructor will check the fit of the helmet.
If a rider approaches the horse when it is being tacked up before or after class, instruct the rider to ask permission from the horse leader first before petting the horse.
4. When the horse leader is instructed to go to the mounting block, accompany your assigned horse. The instructor helps the rider mount the horse. The sidewalker on the left stays close to the horse leader and joins the rider when the horse leaves the mounting area.
5. When your rider is safely mounted, the horse leader will lead the horse to the arena. Walk next to your rider from the mounting ramp to the arena.
6. Before class begins, the horse leader or instructor will check the girth and stirrups to make sure they are adjusted properly.

During class

1. Walk at the horse's girth, next to the rider's leg. Do not walk further back close to the horse's flank.
2. Never put your hand through the loop of the safety belt. If you were to trip or fall, you could pull the rider off the horse.
3. Provide continuous support to maintain the balance of your rider. For example, if the arena is wet, don't let go to walk around a puddle; you need to walk through it.
4. Watch your rider at all times. Make sure the rider's body is centered in the saddle, not leaning to one side. Some riders may need more support, especially when trotting. The rider's feet should be in the stirrups with the heels down.
5. Smile and provide positive comments to your rider. Talk directly to your rider, not across him or her. You are encouraged to chat a bit before class to get to know your rider.

Once class begins, assist your rider to follow the instructor's directions. Please do not have personal conversations with the other sidewalker or horse leader.

6. If the rider's behavior is causing the horse discomfort, ask the horse leader to halt your horse. Then say to your rider, "Your actions are upsetting the horse. If you want to continue in class, you'll need to stop doing that." Inappropriate behavior includes bouncing up and down, tugging on the reins, yelling, or hitting the horse.
7. If your rider seems distressed, but is unable to articulate problem, request assistance from your horse leader or instructor.

After class

1. Accompany your horse to the mounting block, continuing to assist your rider, as necessary.
2. Assist your rider in dismounting the horse. The instructor helps the rider dismount. The right sidewalker may need to help remove the rider's right foot from the stirrup. The lead sidewalker (left side) walks the rider safely down the ramp to the parent or guardian.
3. Remind children to walk, not run, when they leave the ramp or horse area. Also remind them to return their helmets and safety belts to the equipment box.
4. Help your horse leader untack the horse. Wipe the bit and lightly clean the bridle. Return the saddle and bridles to the tack room, and assist with lightly grooming your horse. The horse leader returns the horse to its stall.
5. Please limit horse treats. Too many goodies can make horses nippy, or upset the horse next to them. Always have the rider or parent ask for permission first.

Horse Leaders

Horse leaders are responsible for leading their assigned horse in class. They should be knowledgeable of their role in a typical class or group trail ride, and various emergency procedures. The leader is also responsible for grooming and tacking the horse prior to class.

As a horse leader, your first responsibility is to safely handle the horse before, during, and after class. You also need to communicate with your sidewalkers to ensure the safety of your rider.

Before class

1. Arrive a half hour before class begins. Bring tack boxes and tack out to the tie rack.
2. About 20 minutes before class, bring your horse to the tie rack. Stay with your horse at all times. If you need to leave briefly, ask another horse leader to watch your horse.
3. Groom and tack up your horse. Ask the program coordinator which rider will be assigned to your horse, so you can adjust the stirrups accordingly.
Reminder: Put the bridle on over the halter.
4. Assist new volunteers who want to learn to groom and tack. Make sure to check all work done by new volunteers before mounting the rider.

Sometimes riders approach our horses to pet them when they're being tacked up before or after class. Riders shouldn't approach horses when they're tied at the tie racks. If a rider would like to pet a horse, the parent should ask permission from the horse leader.

5. Make sure the rider is wearing a properly fitted helmet and safety belt. The instructor will check the fit of the helmet.
6. When the program coordinator or instructor tells you, lead your horse to the mounting block, accompanied by the sidewalkers. Keep your horse still while the instructor assists the rider in mounting.
7. When your rider is safely mounted, lead your horse to the arena. Make sure no horses or riders are in your path. You should have one sidewalker on each side to assist the rider.

During class

1. In the arena, before class begins, the instructor checks to make sure the girth is snug, and the helmet and stirrups are properly adjusted for the rider. If adjustments are needed, go to the center of the arena.
2. Begin by walking your horse around the arena on the rail until the instructor is ready to start the class.
Walk to the left of the horse between the head and shoulder. Hold the lead line in your right hand, 6 to 8 inches from the ring. Hold the excess lead line in your left hand in a figure-eight loop; it should not drag on the ground. *Never wrap excess lead line around your hand.*
3. Be aware of other horses at all times—keep a full horse length behind the horse in front of you.
4. Be aware of your horse's attitude. Horses may put their ears back if they're angry, or forward and head up if they're frightened.
5. Allow more able riders to do as much horse control as they are safely able to manage. If you have questions, contact the instructor.
6. If your rider or horse is having problems, move to the center of the arena and halt. Ask the instructor for assistance.

After class

1. When class is over, return to the mounting ramp with your rider and sidewalkers. Wait until it is your turn, then walk your horse to the mounting ramp and hold your horse quietly while the instructor helps the rider safely dismount. The lead sidewalker (left side) walks the rider down the ramp to the parent or guardian.
2. Walk your horse to the tie rack, being aware of other horses and riders. With the assistance of sidewalkers, remove the tack, pick the feet, and lightly brush the horse.
3. Return the horse to the stall, remove the halter, and make sure all clips are on the gates and the stall guard is attached.

4. Make sure all tack and tack boxes have been put away in the 4-H tack room.

Volunteer Acknowledgment

I have read the Westwind 4-H Volunteer Roles and Responsibilities handout.

Volunteer's Signature and Date Signed

Volunteer's Name (printed)

Please bring the signed form to the volunteer training class.