

Saving Grace Farm

# Volunteer Handbook

2021/2022

**725 Jackson Road  
Salisbury, NC 28146  
704-209-6577  
[www.savinggracefarm.com](http://www.savinggracefarm.com)**

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7/28/2021

# Volunteer Handbook

Dear Saving Grace Farm Volunteer,

When you decided to volunteer at Saving Grace Farm, you became a very important part of a team. Our programs here at Saving Grace Farm could not operate without the assistance of dedicated volunteers. Taking that into consideration, please remember that we and the students are relying on YOU. If a volunteer doesn't show up occasionally, or if they agree to help and then suddenly change their mind, it makes a huge difference out here. We cannot provide these wonderful opportunities to people who need them, if we don't have help from people like you.

There are many volunteer opportunities at Saving Grace Farm: as a leader or sidewalker during lessons, helping with fundraisers, assisting with special events, helping with horse care, etc. There are always opportunities for helping out around the farm.

As part of the Saving Grace Farm team, you help provide our riders with the many benefits of or therapeutic equine assisted activities. You make a difference in the lives of persons with disabilities, and you are giving back to your hometown community.

All volunteers are required to complete their paperwork and attend an introductory training session before helping in a riding lesson. Assisting students in a lesson requires maturity and responsibility by the volunteer. Volunteers may be asked to help in other areas if they, or the instructor feel they would be better suited to assisting outside of lessons. Additional training is available for volunteers who want to learn more or take more responsibility. This handbook outlines what is expected of volunteers as well as general information concerning the program. *In order to help you perform your job better, please read and study the information in the handbook.*

WELCOME!!! and thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,



Janna Griggs  
Executive Director

## **Volunteering at Saving Grace Farm**

### **Volunteer Training**

Typically, lesson volunteers should be at least 14 years old to assist riders, but occasionally we make exceptions for younger individuals. Please have respect for these younger volunteers as they are well trained and possibly have more experience with horses than some adults. All volunteers who work with the riders, as leaders or sidewalkers, must be mature enough to handle the responsibility of assisting and protecting the student, and physically fit to walk up to two hours and jog occasionally. Saving Grace Farm reserves the right to determine if a volunteer is not yet ready to take on the responsibility of assisting in lessons, or working independently with the horses. Horses are large animals and it is a big responsibility to assist with these animals and the students with disabilities. Volunteers are required to attend the orientation training session and two safety trainings a year. It is recommended that volunteers attempt to attend most other trainings to stay current on new techniques and safety procedures. It is imperative that we offer our students the safest environment possible. By training our volunteers to know how to handle certain situations and practicing on a regular basis, we are able to react to emergencies in a safer and more orderly fashion.

### **Volunteer Paperwork**

Volunteer paperwork must be complete prior to volunteering at Saving Grace Farm (SGF). If you plan to volunteer with us for a while, please understand that paperwork will need to be **updated annually**.

### **Volunteer Sign-In**

It is important for you to sign in when you come to SGF. Maintaining records of volunteer hours is a requirement of accreditation, helps with fundraising, and provides an accurate record for those who need verification of hours. REMEMBER—sign in EVERY TIME you volunteer. Please ask where to sign in at your training.

### **Arrival and Departure Times**

Please plan to arrive at least 15 minutes prior to lesson time and plan to stay 15 minutes after the conclusion of the lesson. We may need help bringing horses in, tacking them up, etc.

### **Volunteer Information**

We want to keep you informed of everything that happens at SGF. To do so, we post information on our Facebook page as well as on the office wall/windows. We also send emails so please let us know if your information changes.

### **Absences**

In order for the program to be consistent and successful, volunteers are suggested to commit for a specific lesson time (such as every Tuesday from 9-10:30 for the entire session). We realize that emergencies and illness can occur but please try to let us know well in advance so that we can find someone to fill in.

### **Cancellations**

At times it may be necessary to cancel a lesson due to severe weather. If you have any questions, please call the Director at 704-798-5955 or the instructor for the class.

### **Rest Room**

The rest room is located beside the office.

### **Parking**

Volunteer parking is beside the front pasture, on the right side of the driveway **before** the curve. This area is gravel for that reason. Please do not park past the handicapped space at the corner of the fence next to the walkway.

### **Feedback**

As a Saving Grace Farm (SGF) volunteer, your feedback is a valuable resource. Your ideas, comments, suggestions, etc. help us to constantly improve the program. However, we request that you speak to the instructor or director before or after a lesson in private.

### **When you can no longer volunteer**

Please let us know as soon as possible of your plans to leave your volunteer position at SGF. If possible, please find a replacement that is as dependable, enthusiastic, and dedicated as you.

### **When you meet a person with a disability...**

Have fun! Talk about the same things you would with any other person. A disability does not limit or dampen a person's sense of humor.

Remember that a person with a disability is a person like everyone else.

Be yourself! Don't be sickly sweet... DO NOT offer pity or charity. Be honest and genuine at all times. Never talk down to a rider... they are not babies.

Don't make up your mind about the person ahead of time. You may be surprised at how wrong you are at prejudging the person.

Avoid asking embarrassing questions. If a rider wants to tell you about his disability, he will bring up the subject himself.

HELP only when requested by the instructor or rider. When in doubt ask "May I help you?"

Don't separate the rider from his wheelchair or crutches unless asked to do so.

Be patient, let the rider set his own pace in walking and talking.

Self-satisfaction is important for the rider. Use help sparingly because it is important that the individual experience the satisfaction of accomplishing the task himself.

Respect the confidentiality rights, dignity, and privacy of the rider.

Be optimistic about life in general and the rider's outlooks in particular, however, don't encourage unrealistic goals or attitudes. (Our riders won't be galloping, but we can work towards trotting.)

Be supportive and encouraging.

### **Water**

During lessons you may need to bring your own water with you to the barn as we do not typically have drinking water readily available. There is a refrigerator in the barn if you would like to keep your beverage cold. If you forget to bring a drink, the water from the garden hose is safe to drink.

### **In case of an Emergency**

Please inform us of any accident, no matter how minor it may seem to you. First Aid supplies are located in the cabinet beside the arena AND in the wooden cabinet in the barn. If you are asked to call for assistance, dial 911 from the Emergency Phone located in the orange box on the side of the office. The directions and emergency procedures are posted inside the box.

### **Horse and Rider Hints**

- NO SMOKING in the barn or arena, if you must smoke please do so in the gravel parking area. Please do not leave butts/trash lying around, and be aware of dry conditions which could cause brushfires.
- Please make sure all gates are securely latched. Do not hit the horse entering or exiting a gate.
- Horses may be tied only as directed by the instructor. Never tie a horse by his bridle or to a fence board. Remember that a horse cannot see directly behind him, so talk to him as you approach. Try to never approach from behind, always from the side or front. It is best to walk up to the neck/shoulder.
- When walking around a tied or held horse, do not walk under or over the lead rope or directly under the horse's neck!
- Do not kneel or squat around a horse.
- When petting a horse stroke him or pat him gently, do not poke him.
- When turning a horse loose in a paddock or pasture, lead him in and turn him completely around so his head faces the gate before letting him loose so that you can easily escape without walking behind him.
- Do not let horses sniff noses, they are apt to squeal and misbehave.
- **An appropriately fitted ASTM/SEI Approved Equestrian Helmet MUST always be worn with harness snapped by anyone who rides on the premises of Saving Grace Farm.**
- About attire: wear safe, comfortable shoes (NO SANDALS). Dangling, jingling jewelry or keys can upset a horse or be pulled by a rider. Perfume can attract insects and some students may be allergic.
- Cell phones should either not be carried, silenced, or turned off, during lessons. PLEASE DO NOT ANSWER A CALL WHILE SIDEWALKING OR LEADING. It is important that you keep your attention on the student or horse for which you are responsible. This is for your safety and the safety of the rider.
- It is important to remember that the horse is held, not led. The rider is taught to ride, not just taken for a ride. If at all possible, the rider grooms and completes the various tasks associated with the horse. The rider learns a skill and begins to participate in a sport. The benefits are great.

- When working with a student, make sure directions and explanations are clear and broken down into several steps. Use demonstration when possible. Be consistent. Directions may need to be repeated several times and possibly in several different ways. Be positive and praise success.
- Do not feed the horses treats by hand. All treats must be put in the treat bowl. Horses learn too quickly to bite if they are given treats by hand.

## Lesson Volunteer Positions

Many students need assistance to ride a horse. There may be as many as three volunteers with each student. During mounted instruction there are several volunteer positions: Leader, sidewalker, spotter, and offsider.

### The Leader

A leader's main concern is the proper control of the horse. This control is not a mastering of the horse but a feat of partnership and communication. Leading can be done from either side—the inside is toward the center of the arena and the outside is on the side nearest the fence. Usually the leader is on the left of the horse but it can be wise to alternate sides for safety reasons.

It is the leader's responsibility to position the horse during mounting. Mounting occurs in the arena or at a mounting block/ramp. When mounting, the leader must place the horse as close to the block as possible. The leader must keep the horse as quiet and still as possible. Stand directly in front of the horse, keeping him out of your space. Once the horse has stopped and is standing quietly, signal the instructor that you are ready for the rider. Do not hold the halter or push at the horse's face as this will start a pushing war with the horse.

After mounting, the leader will move the horse from the ramp or block under the direction of the rider and/or instructor. ALWAYS ask the rider if they are ready or have them say "walk on" before the horse takes a step. It is the leader who must help in guiding, stopping, and starting without making the rider feel that he is simply a passenger. The rider must be allowed to do as much as possible with the leader helping only when necessary. Sometimes it may be appropriate to let them walk into a corner and let the rider figure out what to do.

The leader should walk beside the horse at the point between the horse's head and the point of his shoulder, holding the lead rope about 12-16" from his head. Excess rope should be folded and placed in the other hand (never loop the rope as it could tighten around your hand if the horse were to spook). DO NOT walk ahead of the horse dragging him behind you, or be so far back that you're in the way of the sidewalker or at the rider's knee. Any incorrect position can reduce your ability to control your horse.

Remember that there is often a sidewalker on the off side of the horse. It is sometimes easy to forget and lead the horse too close to the rail. Please allow enough room for your offside sidewalker/spotter. The leader must maintain a safe distance from all objects in the arena. And sharp turns that could compromise the rider's balance should be kept to a minimum.

Riders are often asked to trot during a lesson. The instructor will give directions concerning the trot. Remember trotting should not be a race. Keep the horse at a slow, steady pace. Use short tugs to go forward or to slow the horse down. Do not get in front, as you will lose control. When coming back to a walk/halt, do it in a straight line so as not to throw the rider off balance.

Avoid the temptation to talk to the rider or sidewalkers too much. A rider may get confused by too much input and not know who is in charge.

## **Sidewalker/Spotter**

A sidewalker or spotter job is just as important as the leader job, but for different reasons. Some riders have very poor balance, some are very nervous, some have very little or no muscle tone, some simply require the mental support of having someone close by “just in case”, or as an extension of the instructor’s requests. Sidewalkers and spotters walk beside the horse and rider, ready to steady the rider if necessary. They position themselves just behind the body line of the rider, taking care to avoid putting pressure on the horse or rider. Sidewalkers usually hold on to the rider gently, not tugging or applying pressure, just making sure the rider stays balanced. When sidewalkers are needed, there are always two *sidewalkers* with a child. Spotters only walk next to the rider, assisting with activities and reinforcing the instructor’s directions with guidance and sometimes hand-over-hand assistance. When a spotter is needed, there is typically only one *spotter* with a child. In fact, a spotter may be the only person with a child in which case, they must also understand leader duties.

Sidewalkers and spotters should be aware of the rider’s likes and dislikes. If you are unsure of how to handle a situation with a rider, please ask. It is better to be sure. It is encouraged to get to know your rider, but be sure you do not distract from the lesson. Too much talking can get in the way of learning. Also, you want to communicate with your leader in case your child needs to stop or you need to discuss something. However, too much talking with another volunteer can also distract from the lesson.

It is important to remember that we want the rider to be successful. Giving them the answer does not allow them to be successful. It is very important to prompt the rider. For example, instead of saying “tell the horse to walk on”, try saying “what do you tell your horse to get him to go”. There are many different levels of prompting. To encourage the child to say walk on you would start by saying “what do you say”, then “what do you tell your horse”, follow with “what do you tell the horse to get him to go”, and if you still have no response you would say “tell your horse to walk on”. Sometimes it may be necessary to have the child perform sign-language if they do not speak.

Sidewalker/Spotter positions are further explained in training.

## **NON-Lesson Volunteers**

### **The Barn Helper**

Occasionally due to age, ability, or interest Saving Grace Farm may permit volunteers to participate in farm chores and horse care. These volunteers must be at least 12 and attend an orientation and tour of the facility before coming to assist on the farm. Then they must be accompanied by an experienced staff member or volunteer during chores until they learn the routine and the staff is confident they can do farm chores in a safe and responsible manner. Due to the changing nature of the feed routine, this task is trained "on the job" and will consist of learning to feed, handle, care for, and clean up after the horses in the program. Volunteers interested in exercising horses must actively be taking riding lessons and be able to walk/trot/canter independently or must have prior experience riding at walk/trot/canter, and must pass a riding test with one of our instructors before riding the horses. Volunteers in the barn helper position may want to wear clothes and boots/shoes that can get dirty and dress appropriately for the weather.

### **Volunteer Job Checklist**

The volunteer job checklists are meant to help volunteers determine the mastery of all the elements of a particular job.

Please let us know if you would like to be trained for any of these jobs.

## **Sidewalker**

1. Demonstrate paying attention to the rider.
2. Demonstrate staying close to the student for assistance if needed.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of amount of physical assistance the rider needs to maintain balance.
4. Know consequences of pushing on the rider's back or holding their waistband.
5. Demonstrate how to let the rider be as independent as possible.
6. Direct rider attention to the instructor.
7. Does not carry on disruptive conversation during a lesson.

## **Spotter**

1. Demonstrate offsider, sidewalker, and sometimes leader duties
2. Demonstrate how to assist a rider that does not need balance assistance from two sidewalkers.
3. Know why the rider needs a spotter.
4. Demonstrate proper body position and movement around a horse that is not secured.

## **Offsider**

1. Demonstrate spotter and sidewalker duties.
2. Demonstrate proper way to assist on the off side of a horse during mounting and dismounting including:
  - a. Hand position
  - b. Holding of stirrup if necessary
3. Know the way the student mounts or dismounts.

## **Leader**

1. Demonstrate sidewalker, offsider, and spotter duties
2. Demonstrate proper distance from rail and arena objects
3. Demonstrate how to maintain horse speed appropriate to disability.
4. Demonstrate what to do if a horse bites
5. Demonstrate what to do if a rider steers too close to another horse
6. Demonstrate how to allow the rider to control the horse-knows when appropriate/inappropriate to help
7. Demonstrate how to reinforce the rider when the rider attempts to control the horse and the horse doesn't respond.
8. Demonstrate how to assist a rider that is independent but still needs a person near by.
9. Demonstrate how to properly hold the lead rope
10. Demonstrate proper safety procedures for leading a horse

## **Barn Helper**

1. Be at least 12 years of age.
2. Know where to find barn supplies, feed info, chore tools, etc.
3. Be able to lift and move hay bags weighing 10-20+ lbs.
4. Understand the feeding and chore routines
5. Know basic safety rules of interacting with and moving around the horses during feeding/chore times.
6. Can follow directions implicitly in order to stay safe and for the safety and health of the horses. **Mistakes can cause injuries or make a horse very sick. So PLEASE follow directions.**

# **Saving Grace Farm Risk Management Plan**

## **Hazards Specific to the use of equines.**

### **Mounted emergency/Fall plan:**

If there is an emergency while the lesson is in session...

1. all horses should be halted



2. all leaders should position themselves in front of the horse's head
3. all side walkers will stabilize their riders and be prepared for emergency dismount
4. volunteers are to stay with their horse and rider unless otherwise directed by the instructor
5. if the riders need to dismount, the instructor advises the volunteers and gives directions on how to proceed
6. if circumstances call for the arena to be evacuated, the riders will be escorted out first and the horses will then be removed by their leaders
7. volunteers keep alert for directions from the instructor

If an emergency dismount is required:

Emergency dismounts should be conducted quickly, efficiently, and safely. The purpose of an emergency dismount is to get the rider off and away from the horse and away from any other danger that may exist.

The rider will be dismounted by the sidewalker ( SW) or spotter (if one spotter, the dismount occurs from either side, if two SW's then the SW on the inside, away from fence, dismounts). If there are two SW's, the other SW will ensure the rider's foot is out of the stirrup and help the rider off by aiding getting the leg over.

The SW/spotter will firmly grip the rider and pull the rider off the horse towards the SW. The SW turns the rider away from the horse and places himself between the horse and rider. The rider is then escorted or carried to a safe place.

If the rider is injured:

1. The instructor will assess the need for first aid or emergency medical treatment.
2. If the EMS is required, the instructor will designate someone to call 911
3. The person designated will go to the phone in the orange phone box at the office and follow procedures posted
4. The instructor will consult the client form and have the form available for EMT's when they arrive.
5. The instructor will complete the occurrence report and provide follow up with rider and or parent.

Bodily fluids: Follow precautions concerned with blood borne pathogens. Never handle blood or other body fluids from any source without gloves. Gloves are in the first aid kit.

### **IN AN EMERGENCY**

1. The instructor will give the command to halt all horses, "Emergency Halt!"
2. Volunteers and students respond immediately, ride halts.
3. Horse leader to assume halt position in front of horse's head, on hearing "Emergency Halt" command.
4. SW's/spotter are to stand beside their rider with hands in place for an emergency dismount.
5. If situation warrants emergency dismount, instructor will give the command "Emergency Dismount!"
6. Volunteers are not to leave their assigned rider and horse for any reason, except under instructor's direction.
7. All volunteers keep one eye on the rider and horse, and the other on the emergency situation.
8. All volunteers keep ears open for any instructor directives.
9. Volunteers try to involve rider in some attention-getting activity. Ex: name parts of horse, stretching, etc.
10. Return to normal riding activities when the instructor gives directive "Ride Resume"
11. Try to assess any effect the emergency situation may have had on the rider and/or horse.  
\*\*\*Inform the instructor if the effect is significant!

An emergency dismount must be done quickly and efficiently. The purpose of the emergency dismount is to get the rider off the horse and away from the horse and any other danger that may exist at that moment.

Procedure when there is only one spotter: The spotter will disengage the rider's closest foot from the stirrup and get a firm grip on the rider (not the rider's clothes), and pull the rider off the mount toward the spotter. Walk or carry the rider a safe distance away from the horse and/or the danger. This dismount will be toward the spotter regardless of the side the helper is on at that moment.

Procedure when there are two sidewalkers: The sidewalker on the inside (away from fence) will catch the rider in an embrace and pull or lift the rider from the horse. If possible, dismount to the left side of the horse. The sidewalker on the outside (near the fence) will assist by disengaging the rider's foot from the stirrup, and moving the rider (in mid-body area) into the near sidewalker's embrace. The sidewalker with the rider should turn away from the horse, so that he/she is between the rider and horse. Then, walk or carry the rider a safe distance from the horse and/or danger. If the horse is next to the fence, dismount the student to the inside of the arena (away from the fence), even if that is the right side of the horse. Try not to dismount toward objects or obstacles in the arena.

Bottom line: The emergency dismount cannot be defined in a simple format. This process depends on the ability of the rider, and the severity of the situation. The process outlined above may also be reversed, dismounting to the far side, should the rider's disability warrant that solution.

Note: The emergency dismount should be practiced on a regular basis with volunteers in training sessions until, like a fire drill, it is automatic and smooth.

## Loose Horse

- If a horse gets loose, please do not panic. Our horses are not likely to leave their herd. Ask a staff member to help you retrieve the animal. If no staff member is around, simply get a bucket with a small amount of feed in it and a halter with lead rope attached. Approach the horse slowly from the FRONT enticing it with the feed and as the horse tries to eat the feed slip the lead rope around its neck so the horse cannot easily evade you. Then slip the halter on its head and lead it slowly back to where it should be.
- If the horse gets loose in a lesson, due to a fall or any other reason, stop the lesson and have everyone remain standing until the horse is caught. If the situation becomes dangerous for any students or volunteers consult the instructor for further direction.

## Kicking/Biting/Aggressive Behavior

- If a horse is acting aggressively in any way please note the surroundings and your own personal body language first to see if you can find a cause for the problem. Our horses are not prone to aggression unless provoked or afraid. Horses mirror emotions and if you are angry or aggressive you may be causing the horse's behavior. If you are unsure of the cause, please discontinue your interaction with the equine and find a staff member to help you.
- If the aggressive behavior occurs during a lesson the equine may need to be removed from the lesson. Please ask the instructor what you should do in that specific situation at that time. If you feel that the situation calls for immediate response, move the equine away from the others in the arena and have someone perform an emergency dismount with the student, then take the animal back to the barn or paddock and untack the animal. Aggressive behavior should be reported to the Equine Specialist.
- If an animal bites or attempts to bite during a lesson, grab the side of the halter and hold the horse's head an arm's length away from you. Inform the instructor that the horse has bitten you. The animal may need to be excused from the lesson.

## Horse Health Emergencies

- If a horse is injured, limping, or not acting normally, please notify a staff member immediately. If you can not find a staff person, then call Janna Griggs at 704-798-5955 and leave a message. If she is unreachable you may call Amber Hardeman at 704-224-4659 and leave a message. If they are unavailable then call Kelly Cagle at 940-542-6195. If you feel it is an emergency or you are unsure and you cannot reach any of the above contacts, you may call the Veterinarian, Large Animal Medicine and Surgery. Their number is (704) 637-0546, if after hours their emergency number is on the voicemail. Calmly describe the problem and seek the vet's advice as to whether it is an emergency situation or not. If it is an emergency, please have him/her come to the farm.
- **Anything that is beyond your realm of knowledge needs to be dealt with by a professional. So, if you are unsure what to do or don't have horse experience, please contact a staff member on the premises or at one of the numbers above or call the veterinarian.**
- **If you have the necessary skill, below is advice for certain circumstances, call for help and then:**
  - If a horse is in a paddock or pasture in discomfort, the horse may be colicing. Halter and lead the horse quietly until help arrives. You may allow the horse to lie down if it wants, however, try to keep it from rolling by standing it back up if it attempts to roll.
  - If the horse has sustained serious injury and cannot move, try to keep him quiet and covered to help prevent shock. Horse blankets can be found in the wooden trunk in the barn by the loft ladder.
  - If the horse is bleeding constantly and seriously, have someone hold him while you apply pressure to the wound with a clean dressing or towel. You may try to stop the bleeding by applying a pressure wrap if you have the necessary skill.

### **Unauthorized Entrance into barn/pastures/paddocks**

- Volunteers, participants, teachers, and parents are all made aware during orientation that they and the students are not to enter the barn, paddocks, or pastures unless authorized by a staff member.
- Horses can be unpredictable like any other animal and in order to ensure safety, only authorized personnel should enter areas where horses are kept. Authorized personnel include staff, volunteers with staff permission, and students with staff permission. NO ONE ELSE is allowed in the above stated areas.

### **Natural Hazards to the site**

- The following stinging insects and poisonous snakes are identified as possible hazards to the persons on the premises of Saving Grace Farm: fire ants, yellow jackets, hornets, wasps, bees, Copperhead snakes, Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnakes, and Water Moccasins, also known as “Cottonmouths”.

#### **Fire Ant Information:**

Fire ants are small ants found only in the SE states. They can usually be located by small ant mounds. They are often found around fence posts. They can sting several times and the sting will eventually welt and start to itch. In a matter of a few hours a pustule will develop and if it breaks it can become infected. The reaction can be more serious if the person is allergic to the sting. Horses can be stung by fire ants as well.

#### **Yellow Jackets, Hornets, Wasps, and Bee Information:**

Bee type stinging insects can be found at barns. Bees that are aggravated are more likely to attack and sting. Aggravation can occur when a person passes too close to a nest, or the person panics and flails at the bee when it comes near. Yellow jackets, wasps and hornets can sting repeatedly and stings are very painful.

#### **Stinging Insect Mitigation:**

If stinging insects are located on the premises insecticide is applied to kill the insects. Mounting areas and blocks are inspected for nests. People are instructed not to wear perfumes or hair sprays as this will attract bees. People should be aware of the possibility of fire ants, yellow jackets, bees, wasps, and hornets. If ants are on a person quick action must be taken to remove them. Clothes and shoes may need to be removed to ensure all ants are found. An anti-itching cream (for ant stings) or bee sting gel can be applied to ease the sting. If a person is stung by a bee or ant, determine immediately if they are allergic to bee or ant stings. An allergic reaction requires immediate medical attention. A person who is allergic to bees often carries a bee allergy kit. If so, check the emergency information and respond accordingly. If the person stung is a student, the appropriate caretaker is advised of the sting so that the person can be monitored. An incident report is completed. If a horse is stung, Azium may be given orally.

#### **Copperheads, Rattlesnakes, and Cottonmouth Information:**

Copperheads are a copper or orange colored snake with a triangular head and a patterned skin. Rattlesnakes are gray/brown and black and typically have a triangular head with a diamond pattern on their skin. Cottonmouths are a brown colored snake usually found around water. Most snakes are usually found under rocks or in heavy foliage. Typically found on trails in the woods or near ponds. They can be under hay or hiding in a stall under shavings.

#### **Poisonous Snake Mitigation:**

Care is taken to ensure that grasses and underbrush do not get too tall around the arenas, barn, and trails as this would attract more snakes. Also, since a high rodent population would attract snakes, SGF has barn cats that help to control the rodent issue, thus attracting fewer snakes. If anyone comes into contact and is bitten

by a snake they would be immediately taken to the hospital to treat the bite. If a horse is bitten the veterinarian should be called immediately.

## **Disasters**

### **Inclement Weather: Severe winds, hurricanes, ice/snowstorms, tornado and thunderstorms**

- If a storm is approaching and there are high winds and/or thunder and lightning, or it is sleeting/snowing/freezing rain and there is a possibility of slick roads, upcoming lessons should be canceled, dismount any students immediately and return horses to the pastures. If the students are on the premises when it begins to storm/sleet/snow/freezing rain they should return to school or home.
- Personnel will untack all horses in case of high winds or thunderstorm and turn them out in the pastures. Students, volunteers, and staff are not to be in barn during a storm.
- If severe weather includes high winds and possibility of tornado, ALL LESSONS SHOULD BE CANCELED. If storm is sudden onset anyone on site should go into the house, staying away from windows and sitting Indian style on the floor. If they cannot get into the house they should go to a neighboring house for shelter.
- In the case of ice/snow, lessons should be canceled and rescheduled.

### **Hurricanes:**

- Monitor the track of a hurricane.
- If the hurricane is headed for Saving Grace Farm, the following preparations will occur:
  - Fill all available water buckets, troughs, muck buckets in anticipation of an extended power outage.
  - Secure anything that could possibly fly around such as garbage cans, rakes, shovels, wheelbarrows, poles, standards, etc.
  - The horses may be left outside in pasture, as the pastures may be the safest place for them. Write the farm's contact info on the horses with the emergency markers in the first aid kit.
- Following the storm, survey the area. Look for:
  - Possible injuries to the horses
  - Possible downed power lines
  - Damage to the building and potential unsafe situations

### **Fire**

- Remove all riders, volunteers, and staff from danger, Report the Fire!, release the horses if they are in the barn paddock.
- If a class is in session, the instructor will be responsible for dismounting the riders and direct everyone to a safe area. Riders may return to their vehicles.
- Designate someone to call the fire department at 911. Stay on line and give directions as outlined on the list in the box with the phone on the office wall. If you delay this step, the fire may consume the whole stable before the fire department arrives.

- If a horse does not want to leave its paddock, talk quietly to reassure the horse. It may be necessary to cover the horse's eyes with a shirt/cloth/jacket. If possible release the horse into the adjacent pasture through the paddock gate rather than opening the gate to freedom.
- If the horse is unmanageable and you are unable to get the horse out of the stall, leave the gate to the pasture open and move to the next horse.
- Be aware that once the horse is outside of the paddock, he may want to run back into it for security. Shut gates once horses are out if safely possible.
- Loose horses can pose a safety hazard for arriving emergency equipment so try to contain them if possible.
- If by chance we are involved with a forest fire the safest place to put the horses is into a dirt paddock or arena as there will be nothing for the fire to burn there. The arena would likely be the best place. Or consider writing our contact on them and turning them loose. Markers are in first aid kit.

#### Aid the Fire Department's Arrival

- Clear roads for easy access
- Make sure parked cars are not in the way of the fire trucks.
- Ask them to turn off sirens at the end of the road!

#### Control the Fire

- Use fire extinguisher located in the hallway or isle of the barn. Water buckets can also be used.

##### Simple guidelines for the use of fire extinguishers:

1. Pull the ring pin to free the release handle
  2. Stand at least 5 feet from the fire
  3. Squeeze the release handle, aiming the discharge at the base of the flames
  4. If the burning material splatters, back away from the fire and sweep the stream of the extinguisher from side to side
- Wet blankets and sand can be used to try to smother a fire.
  - DO NOT use water on an electrical fire!!

#### Expect where the Fire Department will come:

Have someone meet the fire department at the end of the driveway, and direct them to the fire.

**\*\*Remember: NO ONE should endanger themselves in order to attempt to put out the fire or to remove horses from a burning paddock.**

#### Fire Mitigation

To help prevent the possibility of fire, the following preventative measures should be taken:

- Remove cobwebs
- Check wiring for indication of wear or rodent damage
- Rodent control program-cats
- Check lighting fixtures
- Leadropes and halters kept handy
- Training and practice for personnel and volunteers
- Maintenance of fire extinguishers
- No smoking signs posted
- Interact with fire department

- Turn off all lights and heating/cooling units when not in use

## **Operation of Facilities and/or Equipment**

### **Power Outage**

- When the power fails, the well goes out and the barn is without water. The pastures have large water troughs that can be a source of water for the horses until the power is restored. Water can also be drawn from the pond nearby in buckets for the horses.

### **Collapse**

- In the case of a barn/shelter collapse everyone should be cleared of the area and moved to a safe location. If animals are trapped inside then rescue teams should be called to get the animals out, not center staff or volunteers. Getting involved too soon or before assessing the situation for safety will just cause more injuries.
- Typically before a collapse loud creaking noises are heard. These noises give warning that the building may be coming apart. If these sounds are heard in either building, the building should be evacuated of people immediately. DO NOT try to reenter a collapsed building until professional rescue teams arrive and tell you what to do.

### **Equipment**

- Power equipment (such as the tractor, lawn mower, Dingo, four-wheeler, etc.) must only be used by trained personnel. Volunteers, students, and staff may not climb, play, ride, or engage in the use of these items unless authorized by center staff to do so.

### **Injuries to participants, volunteers, visitors**

- If anyone is injured while on the premises of Saving Grace Farm, appropriate medical action will be carried out (see emergency info section concerned with rider falls). Occurrence reports are filled out for any injury or near injury.

### **Dangerous Items:**

Potentially dangerous items include: medicine, poisons, needles and syringes, cleaners, gas, etc. Only authorized personnel have access to most of these items. In order to insure safety, all of these items are kept in the following areas.

- Medicines and syringes are kept in the first aid kits, in the barn or cabinet by the office.
- Poisons, paints, gas, cleaners, etc. are kept in the tractor storage area behind the barn or in the barn out of reach of most participants.
- **All areas of the hay storage, barn loft, tractor storage and office are off-limits to the participants of the Saving Grace Farm programs unless otherwise determined by staff.**

## **Man-made Hazards**

### **Barn Loft, Hay Storage, Tractor Storage, Farm Equipment**

The **Barn Loft, Hay Storage, Tractor Storage, Farm Equipment** are all areas that contain either hazardous materials, or hazardous equipment. Children playing in the loft, hay area, or tractor storage areas could be injured by falling or moving objects or by falling from objects. The tractor storage area also contains supplies such as gas, paint, cleaners, etc. which are considered poisonous and dangerous.

### **Barn Loft, Hay Storage, Tractor Storage, Farm Equipment**

Volunteers and staff are all made aware of these locations and are asked to make sure students are not allowed in these areas. These areas are marked but not secured, so close attention should be paid to students near those areas. The tractor shed area is far away from riding lessons and most other center activities. Students of the program should not be left unattended in the barn area.

## **Conduct of Personnel and Participants**

- Each individual involved with Saving Grace Farm is expected to show respect for the rights and person of all participants both human and equine. If you witness an act of abuse either physically or verbally, please report the incident and the circumstances to the Instructor/Director.
- The possession or use of drugs or unauthorized alcohol on the premises of Saving Grace Farm is strictly prohibited. Anyone found on the premises in possession of or using any illegal substance will be asked to leave the premises immediately and may be barred from center activities pending a hearing with the Board of Directors. (Alcohol may be served during fundraisers or events, per staff approval.)
- All personnel and participants are expected to follow Saving Grace Farm safety procedures. Failure to do so can result in the loss of riding privileges for participants. Any volunteer or paid personnel not in compliance with safety procedures will meet with the Board of Directors before being allowed to continue with the program. If you observe an instance of unsafe practice, please inform the Director.
- All volunteers will sign a confidentiality agreement concerning divulging any information pertaining to a participant. Personnel shall keep participant information contained and confidential and will only provide relevant information to the volunteers.
- Saving Grace Farm staff retain the right to dismiss any individual or group from center activities and/or the premises at any time due to distracting behavior or behavior that could result in unsafe conditions for participants, staff, guests, or volunteers.

### Confidentiality Policy

All medical and personal information concerning students and personnel is confidential and kept in a locked area. It is expected that all persons affiliated with Saving Grace Farm will respect the confidentiality rights of students and personnel. All volunteers will sign a confidentiality statement.

Volunteers are made aware of confidentiality issues in the following manner:

- Confidentiality issues are reviewed with volunteers during volunteer training.
- The volunteer training manual states: “Respect the rights, dignity, and privacy of the rider.”
- All Volunteers are required to sign a confidentiality statement. The requirement of signing a confidentiality statement illustrates the seriousness of the issue to the volunteers.
- Volunteers do not have access to student files and only pertinent information is shared with volunteers—(information that is necessary for volunteers to perform their duties effectively.)

Students and guardians are made aware that information about their disability may be provided to volunteers. The student forms include the following statement:

“I understand that for the purpose of assisting volunteers in providing safe and responsible services to students, Saving Grace Farm will release information pertaining to the student’s disability only as deemed necessary by center staff.”