



Special Equestrians, Inc.

**A Premier Accredited
Therapeutic Riding Center**

Parent/Caregiver/Participant Handbook



PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK
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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

ABOUT SPECIAL EQUESTRIANS

Welcome to Special Equestrians!

We are a nonprofit organization providing therapeutic horseback riding and equine assisted activities to children and adults with disabilities in Lee, Hendry, Charlotte, and Glades counties since 1987. Special Equestrians has been a United Way Partner Agency since 2003. Special Equestrians is a volunteer run organization which is affiliated with the PATH, Intl. (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship). The association's therapeutic teaching techniques and safety standards are adhered to in every aspect of our programs and services. Our instructors have extensive backgrounds in horsemanship and are certified by PATH, INTL.

Therapeutic horseback riding

Therapeutic riding and equine assisted activities are designed to improve both mental and physical abilities. This improvement is accomplished with exercises that improve the rider's automatic balance, stimulates, and stretches muscles, flexes joints, and strengthens postural responses. Eye and hand coordination is improved in learning to guide the horse, while the natural movement of the horse replicates human walking. The program also offers riders social, educational, and recreational experiences. Some of our participants reach the level of achievement where they are riding a horse independently. For other participants, simply holding the reins is a significant goal. Some participants may be taking part in our un-mounted program, where they learn about the nature of horses, how to care for them and how to understand them, which in turn leads to self-awareness and confidence. All successes, whether big or small, are important milestones in our participants' lives.

Our Horses

Special Equestrians owns the horses who work at our center. Our horses are selected for their condition, gentleness, and suitability for our therapeutic riding program and equine assisted activities. Each horse receives training and conditioning by the staff, instructors, and a select group of volunteers.

Volunteers

Volunteers participate in every aspect of the program. They lead horses, support riders as side-walkers during the lessons, care and feed the horses, maintain the barn, serve on the board of directors, and assist in fundraising activities. The program is always in need of new volunteers.

Fees

The therapeutic riding program is divided into six-week sessions. For our therapeutic riding classes, there are eight consecutive sessions with a month off in the summer. A fee of one hundred twenty (\$120.00) a session is charged per rider, rain, or shine. Invoices will be sent after the first week of the session and are due upon receipt. For private lessons and other equine assisted activities, there will be a different fee structure. Please ask your instructor for this information.

Completion of Forms

The forms in the participants packet must be completed before someone can be considered for one of Special Equestrians' programs. The application packet is on our website at: <http://www.specialequestrians.net>.

Participants will fill out an information update form annually. Medical history and physician release will be filled out every two years, except for participants with Down syndrome. Persons with Down syndrome must get the medical forms completed annually. New medical forms may also be requested at the discretion of the head instructor.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

1. Please **check in** when you arrive.
2. We send out lots of emails with information and class cancellation. Please make sure we have your email address. Send it to spequestrians@gmail.com. If you do not have email, let us know and we will put you on the “always call” list.
3. **All absences must be notified at least 24 hours before your scheduled lesson time. Please call, email, or text Special Equestrians or your instructor.** Our instructors, volunteers, and horses are scheduled around each lesson. Any participant who has 2 “No call – no Show” days in a session will be dropped from our program. Calling after the lesson has been taught is considered a “No call – No show.”
4. **Any participant having three absences in one session may be removed from the schedule and their time slot will be replaced with a participant from our long waiting list, at the discretion of the instructor.**
5. **Any scholarship participant having two absences in one session may have their scholarship revoked.**
6. Riders that will not be able to come back right away for the September session but are planning to come before on at the second session will be liable for payment for holding their spot.
7. You will receive an invoice for tuition payment. Payments are due at the beginning of a 6-week upon receipt.
8. The attire for riders is:
 - Sturdy closed toed shoes or boots
 - **Long** pants (not slick)
 - An ASTM/SEI Equestrian Riding Helmet.
 - Jewelry should not be worn during the class
9. No gum chewing or cell phone use during classes.
10. Special Equestrians has a weight limit of 180 lbs. Weight limitations may differ for persons requiring a full weight transfer and will be at the discretion of the instructor. If a person is above the weight limit, therapeutic carriage driving, or ground activities may be a good choice for equine assisted activities.
11. Horseback riding may not be a suitable recreational activity for certain individuals and therefore it is necessary for you to have your physician complete and sign the Physicians release/Rider medical history form. Should the physical condition of the rider change at any time, Special Equestrians is to be notified immediately and a new Physicians release form must be completed and filed with the office. After the physician’s release form is received by the office, Special Equestrians will determine if the applicant can safely participate in program activities.
12. A student arriving more than fifteen minutes late after class is scheduled to begin, or if the arena gate is already closed and mounted activities have started, will not be able to participate in the lesson. If there are extenuating circumstances for your tardiness, it is the instructor’s discretion if you will be allowed to participate in the lesson that day.

Your Special Equestrians' Riding Instructors,



Dee Hollander
239-470-2378

Pamela Newton
202-302-0162

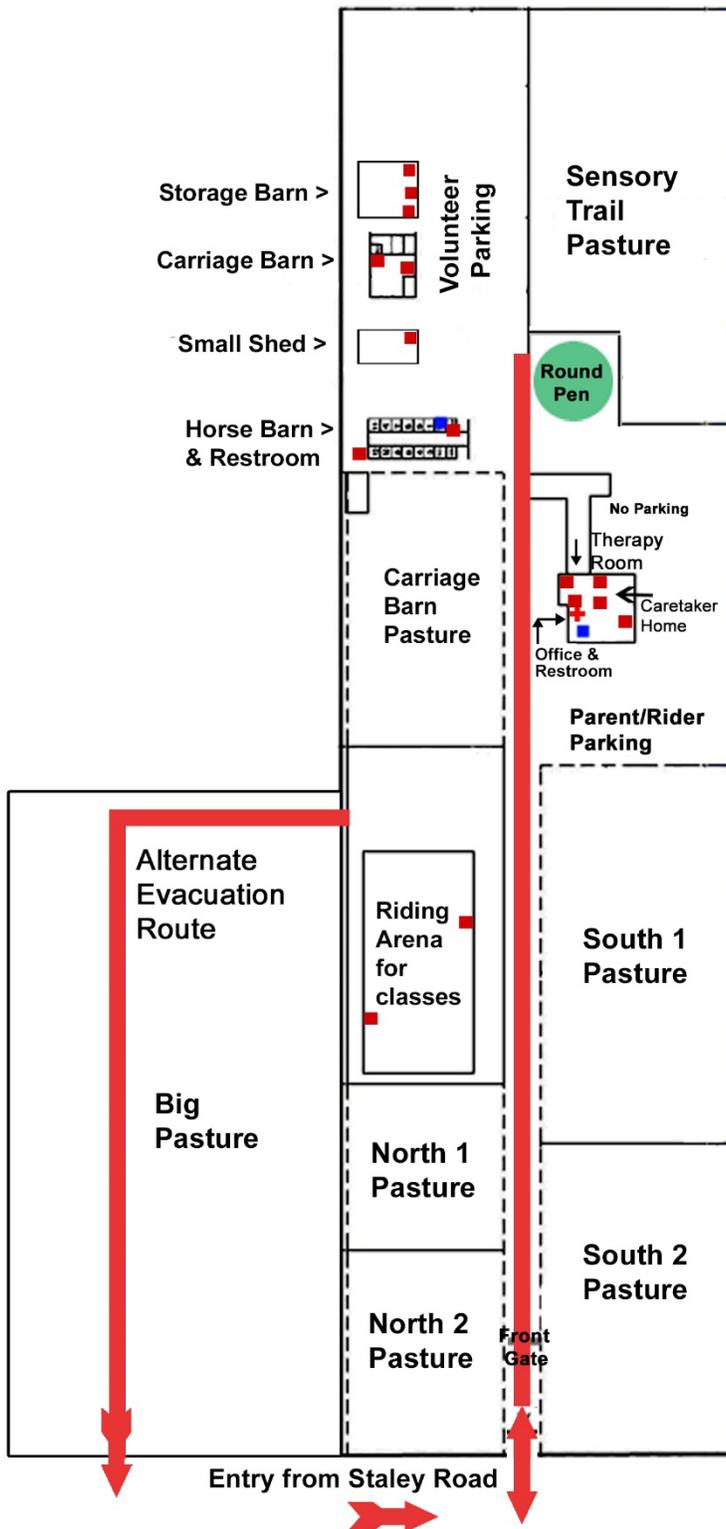
Amy Oxendine
239-940-1602

Diane Shaw
612-306-7618

Mike Freeman
239-671-8743

Special Equestrians - Map & Evacuation Routes

5121 Staley Road, Ft. Myers, FL 33905
239-226-1221



Please drive very slowly as you enter the Special Equestrians property.

Volunteers park in the area in front of the carriage barn and in the part of the parent parking farthest from the road. Do not block the front of the storage barn or the carriage barn. Parking close to the arena is reserved for our participants.

If you have walking difficulties, you may park close to the barn or the house, but please don't block anyone in.

The office is on the side of the house next the parent/rider parking. Please enter our office from the front of the house. Our Farm Caretaker lives in the other side of the house. The garage door is for our Caretaker's entry.

There is a door leading to the **ADA Restroom** on the west side of the house, next to parent and rider parking.

The main evacuation route is the paved road that runs down the center of the property.

Fire Extinguishers are located in 15 places & are marked with a red square symbol.

- + First Aid & AED Machine
- Fire Extinguisher Symbol
- | Evacuation Route Symbol
- Restroom Symbol

SPECIAL EQUESTRIANS SAFETY RULES & REGULATIONS

For Special Equestrians to protect its participants and visitors, as well as for insurance purposes, we request that you follow this set of rules. These rules are designed to ensure the **safety** of our participants, parents, caregivers, visitors, volunteers, and staff. Thank you for your cooperation.

1. Please drive very slowly as you drive down the road into Special Equestrians. There are humans and horses walking on and beside the road.
2. The instructor requires your complete attention at all times. In case of emergency, everyone will follow the directions given by the Instructor.
3. Participants must stay with their instructor and their group.
4. **DO NOT WALK BEHIND THE HORSES**
5. Participants and parents may not enter the stable area unless they are accompanied by a designated volunteer or staff member.
6. Participants must be accompanied by a parent or caregiver when they go to the restroom.
7. Participants must wear ASTM equestrian helmets, long pants (jeans or riding breeches) and closed-toe hard-soled shoes or boots with a heel (no gym shoes or fashion boots). Yoga pants or exercise pants are not allowed. These pants are slick and will cause the rider to slip in the saddle.
8. Helmets must also be worn when riding, during un-mounted activities, and in the barn.
9. Remember, this is Florida. Riders should be properly hydrated and protected from the elements. Cool wrap bands, sunglasses, jackets, etc. can be worn by the rider if they do not prevent lesson activities.
10. Any bleeding or open sores must be covered with a bandage, or the rider cannot attend that lesson.
11. Please be sure to advise the instructor of any medical changes such as recent seizures or illnesses that may affect their riding abilities.
12. Please refrain from coaching or speaking with your rider from the sidelines. It is important that their focus remain on the instructor and the assisting volunteers.
13. Do not feed the horses grass, carrots, apples, etc. unless you have permission from the instructor.
14. Children are not allowed to play on the fence, mounting ramp, mounting blocks, gates, or in the ditches.
15. Running, shouting and/or horseplay are not allowed.
16. Do not touch the pasture fence tape or wire. It is electric and it will give you a shock.
17. No chewing of gum when riding horses.
18. Riders will stay in the viewing area until it is their time to ride. They will be taken up the ramp for mounting by the Instructor or trained Staff.
19. All participants are to be supervised by their caregivers, guardians or parents, until the instructor begins the class.
20. **NO PETS ARE ALLOWED ON THE SPECIAL EQUESTRIANS PROPERTY.**
21. The swimming pool area is OFF LIMITS.
22. Special Equestrians is a Smoke-Free Facility. No smoking of any kind is allowed on our property.
23. Abusive behavior, lack of respect for volunteers, staff or horses, or any violation of Special Equestrians rules will result in immediate dismissal from our property.

**Thank you for following our safety rules.
Safety is our number one priority!**

Parent/Caregiver/Participant Handbook Signature Page

This page must be signed and received by our office, in order for the participant to begin the programs and/or services offered by Special Equestrians, Inc.

Name of participant _____

I have read this Parent/Caregiver/Participant Handbook. I agree to follow these policies and safety rules during my, or my child's participation in therapeutic riding or any other equine assisted activity at Special Equestrians.

Adult/Parent/Guardian Name (Print)

Adult/Parent/Guardian Signature

Executed this _____ day of _____, 20____.

Please make a copy of this page for us to keep in your file at Special Equestrians.

Note: Signature of Parent/Guardian is REQUIRED if Participant is UNDER THE AGE OF 18 or is AN ADULT AND UNDER GUARDIANSHIP.