

# Kent Special Riding Program Volunteer Handbook



Revised 2011

## A COWBOY MOST OF ALL WORDS AND MUSIC BY Bonnie Harris

A little boy lay sleeping  
As his mother tucked him in.  
And she wondered as she often did  
What would become of him.

Not quite right was what the doctor said  
When they laid him in her arms.  
But she thought him perfect anyway  
And he grew up full of charm.

Now a mother wants the best there is  
For her child we all know.  
And this mother tried with all she had  
To find a way to show....

Her son he could be whatever  
His heart told him to be.  
There just had to be a way for her  
To help him to believe.

(Chorus)

**Because he wants to be an astronaut  
He told her just today.  
And he'd like to be a sailor  
So that he can sail away.  
Yes he wants to be a farmer  
He'll reap his fields in the fall.  
But he wants to be a cowboy  
Most of all.**

How can she teach this special child  
The things he needs to know  
She wants to give it all to him  
But she doesn't know where to go.

Well, there's a group of people full of love  
Who'll teach him how to ride.  
He'll sit tall in the saddle and  
His eyes will shine with pride. (Repeat chorus)



# INTRODUCTION

The Kent Special Riding Program is a therapeutic and recreational horseback riding program for mentally, physically and emotionally impaired riders. We are affiliated with the Cooperative Extension Service (4-H) and our instructors are PEP (4-H's Proud Equestrian Program) and NARHA (North American Riding for the Handicapped Association) certified.

Handicapped individuals not only learn how to ride, they improve their balance, posture and coordination while doing so. Gains are also made in terms of psychological development because...face it...riding is FUN!

## KSRP VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

This handbook is intended as a resource tool to answer some questions you may have and to reinforce the information provided in our volunteer video. We highly recommend that you take the time to view our video. Although it portrays a "perfect" class which we have yet to see, it provides much needed hands-on instructions that will help you during your own volunteer times. THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST AND YOUR TIME!

If you are unable to attend at your scheduled class time, please contact the volunteer coordinator so that a replacement/sub can be found. Riders really enjoy seeing familiar faces and when we do not have enough volunteers, classes sometimes need to be split. This means less individual time for each rider and means more work for everybody.

**Volunteer Coordinator – Connie VanBelkum @ 891-8243** [convb@iserv.net](mailto:convb@iserv.net)

**Program Coordinator – Lynn Schumacher @ 891-8066** [ksrp@voyager.net](mailto:ksrp@voyager.net)

**KSRP Barn – Schumacher Farm @ 891-0057**

## LEADERS AND SIDEWALKERS

### The Leader

Hopefully, if you have volunteered as a leader, you have some previous experience with horses. However, this is not a requirement because you will get the benefit of all the lessons being taught to the riders. If there is a reason that you cannot or do not want to be a leader, make sure the instructor or aide know so they can place you in a position you are comfortable in.

As a leader, you are responsible for the horse in an emergency situation. Keeping control of the horse is a task the rider is constantly working on, but as a leader, you will need to be attentive to the possibility of trouble.

1. The leader should walk next to the horse's head, staying in front of their shoulder. Your hand should be about eight (8) inches away from the halter on the leadrope with the lead slack or loose if possible. The remaining lead should be folded in your left hand. NEVER wrap it around your hand. NEVER LET GO OF YOUR MOUNT unless directed by the instructor.
2. Since the riders are here to learn to control their mount, the leader must allow the rider time to attempt the task. The instructor or aide will let you know if the rider needs assistance.
3. Be advised that each horse is different and may require different handling techniques. The instructor or aide will tell you any special circumstances that you may need to be aware of. We rely on you as our eyes and ears to see what is happening around you. We cannot be everywhere, so we ask you to use COMMON SENSE.
4. Classes are informal – SAFETY COMES FIRST! If you do not understand the instruction or what to do ... please ask. Everything goes smoother if we all work together.
5. Horses need to be kept AT LEAST a horse length apart unless otherwise instructed (ex. during a game). If the rider falls still keep a horse length apart from other horses. The Sidewalker should assist the rider.
6. When the horse is at a halt ("whoa", waiting, mounting, etc.) Leaders are asked to stand directly in front of the horse. Although this puts you in a rather questionable spot, we need you to be there to reinforce the halt and to take advantage of the "best view of the horse." At this time you can keep an eye on the rider's position and balance (are his feet in the stirrups etc.) and let the instructor or aide know if you need any help.
7. Never try to help the student mount or dismount by yourself. Most students have some physical limitations and the staff has been trained to compensate for each student. You may be asked to assist in a certain way such as in the mounting ramp or the block but please wait for instructions.
8. As a Leader, you are part of the team working together with the rider. You may also have a Sidewalker (or two) as part of your immediate team. If so, remember that you are responsible for the horse, and the Sidewalker is responsible for the rider. Make sure that you help to compensate for the extra room needed for all

the members of your “team” when trotting, turning etc. Conversation should be kept to a minimum to avoid distracting the rider.

9. Be sure that you know the name of your rider because all instructions will be given to the rider by name. If there is no Sidewalker with you working with the student you may need to help re-direct the rider to listen to the instructor.
10. Your job is to assist the rider when needed or when instructed. Be friendly and encouraging but take care not to take the attention of the rider away from the instructor. On top of all this, be sure to have fun. It sounds like a lot of work and it is but you will get as much out of it as you put into it!



## LEADERS AND SIDEWALKERS

Actual class time is run as a group. Students are encouraged to do all they can while grooming, tacking and handling their horses. Some students will need help with some or all of these tasks. Everyone needs to try to be flexible and supportive so we can work together for the good of the students.

### **The Sidewalker**

The job of the Sidewalker is to help maintain the balance of the rider when they cannot maintain it by themselves. Some riders may actually need an aide as a back-rider behind them

to help support them. In either case, the volunteer acting as a side walker has an important job. Overall safety of the rider is a direct reflection on you! Please be sure to let the Instructor or Aide know if you are unable or do not want to act as a Sidewalker.

When assigned as a Sidewalker, you need to stay within the area of the horse's shoulder and the back of the saddle (also known as the cantle). You may have to actually hold the student (you will be shown how to do this) or simply be observant to the overall balance and attention of the rider. Quite often, you are asked to be a "Coach" to the rider and reinforce the instructions given. However, care should be given to keep conversation to a minimum to avoid distracting the rider from the task at hand. They need to be able to focus on the instructor.

Some students, especially in the beginning lessons, will need volunteers assigned to them on the ground as well as on the horse. Depending on the degree of need, one or two people will be assigned to the students. The instructor or aide will inform you as to the requirements of the particular students. They are encouraged to do as much as they can independently during grooming, tacking and handling their mounts as long as they can do it safely. Safety ALWAYS comes first.

If assigned to a student on the ground, your job is to make sure that the student observes safety around the horses:

1. Be sure that they walk way around the backend of the horse when they need to go to the other side.
2. Avoid going under (or letting the students go under) the horses body or head while the animal is tied in the barn
3. Make sure that the riders are using the proper techniques such as brushing the way the hair grows (horses tend to become impatient when irritated or tickled).
4. There should be NO RUNNING IN THE BARN as it tends to startle or "spook" the horses. It is a good idea to talk to the horses whenever you approach them. It's also a good time to learn about the animal you are going to work with. Since each animal is unique in its own way, we need to keep attentive at all times.
5. Never try to help the student mount or dismount by yourself. Since most students have some physical limitations, the staff has been trained to compensate for each student. You may be asked to assist in a certain way such as in the mounting ramp or the block but please wait for instructions.

If assigned to a mounted rider, the safety of the rider is your responsibility. Falls are very rare but they can happen. If your rider falls, your only concern is to keep the scene safe so the instructor or aide can do their job. If you are working as a "coach" with the rider and there is no leader, you would help maintain control of the situation by keeping the rider quiet until help comes. Falls usually happen quickly but if possible, you should try to help the rider land as gently as possible. DO NOT PANIC as panic will spread.

We need you as volunteers, to help us build vision for our riders, to give them a chance to do something challenging, something therapeutic and most importantly to them, something fun! We want it to be fun for you too. If you have any suggestions or comments, please feel free to talk to our staff after class. Thank you for your time and talent!



## BARN RULES

1. Do not go in white barns, horse pastures or paddocks, or pet the horses in those areas without permission from the instructor.
2. Only the instructor or aide should be in paddock or pasture areas to catch horses (unless otherwise directed by instructor).
3. Do not walk up to the house on the hill; that is private property.
4. Do not feed horses.
5. No Smoking on the premises of KSRP; this is a smoke free area.
6. Watch very carefully when arriving and leaving, since there are many young children each day.
7. Do not visit KSRP on your own when no one is here.
8. Instructors, aides and volunteers must turn off cell phones and are prohibited from using cell phones during class times.
9. Volunteers and riders should report to instructor and remain with the class.
10. Volunteers are to notify Connie Van Belkum (891-8243), or the instructor, or leave a message at the barn (891-0057) if they are not coming to class.
11. Anyone near a horse must wear closed-toe shoes to protect their feet.
12. All students and volunteers working with a horse, should remain on the same side of the horse while grooming and tacking.
13. Do not crawl underneath the belly of a horse, and do not go under the neck of a horse when it is tied.
14. Always keep out of kicking range when walking behind a horse.
15. Do not wrap the lead rope around any body part.
16. Never tie a horse when a rider is on it.
17. The instructor or aide will bridle the horses, unless otherwise directed.
18. **Let the instructor or aide know** if you see any questionable activity or if there is a safety violation of the rules given.

We are a team- Welcome to team KSRP!!!!

Be careful -we will grow on you!





## **2011 KSRP Schedule**

**April 9:** Work Day

**April 11:** Volunteer Training, 7 pm

**April 18 – May 28:** Spring Riding Session

**June 20:** Volunteer Training, 7 pm

**June 27 – Aug. 6:** Summer Riding Session

**September 6:** Volunteer Training, 7 pm

**Sept. 10 – Oct. 22:** Fall Riding Session

**October 1:** Ride-a-Thon

