



Volunteer Handbook



Contents

Xenophon Therapeutic Riding Center 1

History and Benefits of Equine-Assisted Activities and Therapies..... 2

General Volunteer Information 4

Volunteer Attire 4

Volunteers Will Need To..... 4

Roles & Responsibilities during vLessons and Therapy Sessions..... 5

Guidelines for Working with Participants..... 5

Xenophon Barn Rules.....7

Volunteer FAQs..... 8

Disability Information 11

Confidentiality.....13

Dismissal Policy 13

Volunteer Handbook

Revised, January, 2021

Xenophon Therapeutic Riding Center



Welcome to Xenophon Therapeutic Riding Center! This booklet will explain many things that will help you in your role as a volunteer.

Many people ask why the name “Xenophon” (pronounced ZEN-o-phon) was chosen for our center. Xenophon was born in Greece in 586 B.C. He was a soldier, and started his military career in the army of the King of Sparta. He was a friend and follower of Socrates. Most importantly for our purposes, he was a noted horseman and teacher of horsemanship. His book *The Art of Horsemanship* is the first of its kind in recorded history.



Xenophon.

Xenophon’s theories of training the horse and rider are used to this day. Many of the principles of dressage are based on his teachings. First and foremost, he stressed kindness, caring, and patience in working with horse and rider, and showed that this approach can be very successful. This is also a primary goal for our center as we provide a caring, joyful, and rewarding environment for participants in all our programs.

Judy Lazarus founded Xenophon Therapeutic Riding Center in August of 1993 with two students and one horse. As a horseback rider since childhood, she knew the benefits horses held for both able-bodied and disabled people; and as a mother of an autistic son, she felt the need for a therapeutic riding center in the area. We have grown consistently since that time and continuously strive to improve and enhance our programs.

Xenophon offers a variety of programs. For children and teens up to 18 years of age, we offer **pediatric therapy services** and **therapeutic riding**.

In **pediatric therapy services** sessions, a licensed Physical, Occupational, or Speech-Language Therapist performs treatment using the horse's movement as a therapy tool, called hippotherapy. The therapy has been prescribed by a doctor, and the child is working to meet functional goals in activities of daily living, such as improving trunk and head control, range of motion, balance, posture, and muscle strength. Once the child has met their goals, they may be transitioned to therapeutic riding or other adaptive and recreational sports activities.

Therapeutic riding, also called adaptive riding, involves teaching riding skills and horsemanship, while the special needs of the student are met by adaptive equipment and teaching methods.

In both of these programs, individual goals are set for each child and evaluated throughout the year.

In addition, we currently have three programs for adults. Partnering with other non-profits, **Bridle Path to Success** serves adults with disabilities in our community, providing an unmounted equine-assisted learning program that teaches life skills, horse husbandry and builds self-confidence. **Connected Horse**, our program for patients with dementia and their care partners, is the first of its kind offering a new shared experience. And **Operation Hooves on the Ground** benefits our veterans, with life-changing improvement in their physical, social, and mental health.

History and Benefits of Equine-Assisted Activities and Therapies

Lis Hartel of Denmark won a Silver medal in the Olympic Games in Helsinki in 1952. Her remarkable feat was even more notable since she had polio. She was already an accomplished rider, but the disease left her unable to use her legs. Through riding, she was able to re-gain enough strength to leave her wheelchair and compete again. Her success was the inspiration for the first therapeutic riding centers.

The first centers were in England, and the trend crossed the ocean to the United States. The first program started here in 1960, at the Cheff Center in Michigan. The value of equine-assisted activities and therapies is now widely

recognized, and the number of centers in the United States has grown exponentially over the last 15 years.

The benefits of Xenophon's programs are far-reaching. In pediatric therapy services sessions and therapeutic riding lessons, the multidimensional movement of the horse has great positive effects on the physical, psychological, and behavioral functioning of the student. Horses are also very social,

so in all of our programs the deep bond that forms between human and horse provides tremendous motivation, growth, enthusiasm, and learning for participants. A horse will respond to you without judging you for your appearance or abilities, and will want to be with you simply because you are kind; this is a special and rewarding experience.

Horses are also large and powerful animals, and as participants learn to communicate with and direct the horse, working in partnership, they gain self-confidence and self-esteem. Motivated by their equine partner, the achievements they experience here carry over into their everyday lives.

It has been documented that positive emotions and laughter have a healing effect on the human body. Please keep this in mind as you work with our participants. If they have a good time, the lasting benefits of the equine-assisted activities and therapies will follow.

This is just a small overview of what we offer at Xenophon. If you would like more information, please ask. Our staff are very experienced and love to share their knowledge, and we also have written materials that can be a good resource if you'd like to learn more. We hope you will find volunteering at Xenophon most rewarding. Our volunteers are an integral part of what we do.



Lis Hartel, Silver Medalist, Helsinki, 1952.

Thank you so much for your help and support.

General Volunteer Information

- You need to be at least 14 years old, and while horse experience is not required, it helps if you already feel comfortable being around them.
- You should be physically fit and able to trot along with a student in a session/lesson.
- Keep your tetanus shots up to date. Please consult your doctor about how often you need a booster shot.
- You will receive orientation and training to explain the safety and procedural rules of the programs, before shadowing volunteers in the arena.
- You will need to fill out an application form and an emergency medical form, and pass a basic background check, before you begin volunteering at Xenophon.

Volunteer Attire

- T-shirts, long pants, or modest shorts, are the most comfortable and appropriate attire for your work at Xenophon. They should be clean, modest, and with no holes. Tank tops are not appropriate. Remember you are acting as a representative of Xenophon. Parents, donors, and community leaders frequently visit the center.
- Shoes must be closed-toe tennis shoes or boots.
- Please do not wear dangling jewelry.

Volunteers Will Need To...

- Work cooperatively with staff, instructors, therapists, and other volunteers.
- Arrive on time or give advance notice if you are unable to make your scheduled time.
- Accept full responsibility for any task you undertake and follow it through to its conclusion.
- Grow, learn and HAVE FUN!

- We would like our volunteers to look at their involvement with Xenophon as a professional responsibility. We are interested in your opinions, comments, and input. We want this to be a collaborative effort, as you are a very important part of Xenophon.
- Be honest about your feelings and sensitive to others' feelings. Above all, be yourself.

Roles & Responsibilities during Lessons and Therapy Sessions

Therapist or Instructor: The therapist/instructor is in charge of the session/lesson. They decide the treatment/lesson plan, the equipment and the arena layout, which horse the student rides, and the allocation of volunteers for each session/lesson. They are responsible for the entire team. Any questions should be raised with them, preferably after the session/lesson. Suggestions are always welcome; however, unless it is an emergency, try not to disturb the session/lesson.

Horse Handler: Horse handlers are responsible for preparing and handling the horse prior to, during, and following a session/lesson. They respond to directions given by the therapist/instructor, and monitor the safety and well-being of the horse at all times.

Sidewalker: Sidewalkers provide physical support to the student and act as bridges between the student and therapist/instructor, reinforcing what the therapist/instructor is teaching and providing comfort and reassurance. They are responsible for the safety of the student at all times.

Guidelines for Working with Participants

- Be mindful of safety and do not hesitate to ask for help at any time.
- If you feel that there may be something amiss with the participant or horse, tell the therapist/instructor immediately. You are often the first person to become aware of a problem.
- Help the participant you're working with if they need it, but give them

plenty of time to perform independently. Take your cues from the therapist/instructor, and allow participants to perform at their own pace.

- Students are mounted and dismounted under direction of the therapist/instructor.
- The student should be focused on the therapist/instructor during therapy sessions and riding lessons, so please keep your verbal interaction with them to a minimum. Be friendly and answer direct questions from the student but keep your primary attention on the therapist/instructor. This helps the student focus on the task at hand.
- The therapist/instructor will let you know the degree of help required for each of their students. Follow their directions, which will keep everyone safe.
- If another participant has a problem or a fall, do not rush to assist. Stay with the participant you've been assigned to and follow any instructions that the therapist/instructor provides.
- When taking a wheelchair down a slope, always walk backwards with the wheelchair in front of you. This prevents runaway wheelchairs and avoids injuries.
- Students who use braces can stand independently and probably walk without assistance. Be alert to any obstruction in their path. Do not attempt to stop a student from falling. You could interfere with their protective reaction and increase the chance of injury. Assist the person after a fall if necessary, but always ask first.
- Two volunteers must accompany students anywhere around the property, including parking area, bathroom, and barn.
- If for any reason you are uncomfortable working with a participant, let the therapist/instructor know. We can discuss the situation and make the appropriate changes.
- Know the location of the nearest phone and first aid kit.
- Do not pet or lean on our horses during sessions/lessons. They are working hard and need to listen to their handler and the participant and should not be distracted. Respect their space and do not crowd their faces.

- Horse handlers should wait for the participant to give commands to the horse. Always let participants do as much on their own as possible.
- Treat our horses gently. If a horse misbehaves, tell the therapist/instructor. Retraining and reprimands are generally done during schooling, not during sessions/lessons.

Xenophon Barn Rules

- All children must be attended by an adult at all times.
- No dogs are allowed other than service or specially trained staff dogs.
- Only authorized personnel are allowed in the stalls and paddocks.
- Only staff, therapists/instructors, volunteers, and students are allowed in the mounting area.
- Be alert and vigilant at all times.
- Do not approach the horses between lessons or during their breaks, unless you are the groom or horse handler. The horses need time to rest and recharge when they're not working in a session/lesson, and too much activity or attention can cause undue stress.
- Permission must be granted and a staff member present before feeding horse treats. Do not feed horses from your hand – use a pan instead.
- Parents are requested to observe students from the deck or lounge, bleachers, or deck near the lower arena.
- Please turn cell phones off during lessons.
- Do not run on the property.
- No smoking anywhere on property.

Volunteer FAQs

What does a volunteer do?

Most of our volunteers help in our pediatric therapy services sessions and therapeutic riding lessons, as either a sidewalker or horse handler, and they also assist with barn chores. All volunteers start as sidewalkers, and then after a while they may have the chance to help with Xenophon's other programs for adults, and/or learn how to become grooms and horse handlers. Advancement to the job of groom, and then horse handler, is determined at the discretion of Barn Management, as it requires a certain level of skill, responsibility, and additional specialized training to work directly with the horses. Some of our students don't need sidewalkers, in which case the volunteers get a break and perform other work around the barn. At the end of the session/lesson, volunteers help break down the arena and put everything away. Volunteers also have the opportunity to help at events, such as the annual gala or the horse show.

What's the time commitment for volunteering?

Volunteers assisting with any program can expect to work about 3 or 4 hours on their scheduled day. It works best for participants, therapists, instructors, and horses if you can commit to volunteering on the same day every week, and for at least one session block of six to eight weeks (there are five session blocks per year). Some of our volunteers come more than once a week, depending on their availability. When changes arise, please communicate with the Volunteer Coordinator.

Do I need to have experience with horses?

It's helpful, but not necessary. Since you will start as a sidewalker, you will learn how to be around the horses and become comfortable with them over time. If you do have experience with horses already, we will still need to introduce you to the way we do things at Xenophon, to ensure safety and consistency for our horses and everyone involved in sessions/lessons.

If I don't want to work with the horses, is there anything else I could do?

Yes, there are plenty of other opportunities to help out. Volunteers can help with assembling mailings, organizing and working at events, social media outreach, or doing landscaping and property maintenance at the center. Please ask if you're interested in anything specific.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

In case of an accident (a fall, a seizure, etc.):

- All riding stops until further notice is given by the therapist/instructor.
- Sidewalkers are to stay with their student, and horse handlers are to stand with the horse in a halt position. Everyone should stay where they are unless otherwise directed by the therapist/instructor.
- No parents or additional volunteers should enter the arena unless directed to do so.
- The therapist/instructor is in charge of any emergencies during a session/lesson.
- Do not talk while the situation is being resolved. Sidewalkers may quietly reassure their student, but should keep their attention on the therapist/instructor.
- When removing a horse from an accident scene, back the horse away. DO NOT lead the horse forward or turn sideways. The horse could become nervous, bolt forward, jump or kick, causing further mishap or injury.
- All accidents are recorded on an incident report form in the office.

Handling Specific Scenarios

Loose horse: An experienced person will calmly catch the horse and return the horse to its stall or paddock. One volunteer will be sent to close the lower gate until the horse is secured. All other volunteers are to remain still and in one place.

Fire: Call 911 from the office if the fire is outside. If the fire is inside the office, call from a cellphone or a neighbor's house. Staff will provide direction to evacuate all participants to a safe area. Remove horses from the fire area to a safe location (upper or lower arena).

Earthquake: Horses can remain in paddocks during an earthquake. Anyone in the office should leave and not return until tremors cease. Go to the designated safe area away from power lines. Avoid driving anywhere until aftershocks have stopped.



Phone in blue bucket



Human first aid kit in toy shed



Equine first aid in tack room



Lounge Fire Extinguisher



Fire extinguisher in tack room



Fire extinguisher in hay barn



She-Shed Fire Extinguisher



Designated Safe Area

Important information for dealing with emergencies

- A **telephone** is located in a **blue bucket** below daily schedule during lesson hours and in the office at other times.
- **Human First Aid Kit** is located in the **toy shed**.
- **Equine First Aid Kit** is located in the **tack room**.
- **Fire Extinguishers** are located inside to the **right of the lounge door, inside to the right of the tack room door, inside to the right of the hay barn door, and left of the she-shed door**.
- **Emergency numbers and Directions to Xenophon** are on a clipboard under lesson schedule or **inside the door of the office, hanging on the wall**.

Please familiarize yourself with the location all of these items.

Disability Information

Xenophon works with individuals with a variety of disabilities. Manifestations of symptoms can vary greatly within any disability, with each individual facing unique learning and processing challenges. Thus, there is no standard approach to working with participants. Here are some of the more common disabilities you will see and the general issues that accompany them.

Autism: A neurological disorder that may produce any or all of the following characteristics:

- Preoccupation with self; may not relate to people.
- Avoids eye contact, has delayed or no social smile.
- Communication dysfunction; lack of speech or unusual speech patterns.
- Perseveration: tends to get “stuck” in an action, becomes obsessed with something such as a possession, rocking, spinning an object, etc.
- Echolalia: repeating words or phrases which have just been heard.
- Can be very adept at specific skills.
- Function can vary from hour to hour.
- These conditions can exist in conjunction with other problems created by organic brain disorders.

Blind or partially sighted: Blindness may be the result of birth defects, disease, or injury. The blind can have extra strong senses of hearing, smell, touch, and taste.

Cerebral palsy: A nonaggressive disorder of movement or posture beginning in

childhood. The cause of this malfunction or damage to the brain usually results from problems occurring during pregnancy or at the time of birth. Every effort should be made to improve muscle movement, as this helps to prevent the wasting away of muscle tissue.

Types of cerebral palsy:

- **Spastic:** Limb muscles are tight, making smooth movements difficult. The person cannot regulate the amount of movement or tension the arm or leg produces.
- **Rigid:** The person displays extreme muscle stiffness, with little ability to move or bend.
- **Ataxia:** A lack of balance, sense of position in space, and uncoordinated movement.

Deaf or hard of hearing: Deafness may be the result of birth defects, disease, or injury.

Communication with deaf students occurs through signing or lip reading.

Down syndrome: A genetic disorder caused when abnormal cell division results in extra genetic material from chromosome 21. Down syndrome causes a distinct facial appearance, cognitive deficit, and developmental delays.

Epilepsy: A brain disorder that causes seizures. Generally, seizures can be controlled with medication. The two most common forms are:

- **Grand mal:** The person may exhibit rapid and repeated motor activity or jerking. The jerking can involve the whole body or just one limb. These can be with or without losing consciousness. Incontinence may occur.
- **Petit mal:** These attacks usually only last several seconds and can frequently be overlooked initially as it may seem the person is daydreaming. The eyes may stare and a slight twitching of the face may occur.

Learning disability: Dysfunction of the brain caused by interference with the normal process of storing, processing, and producing information.

Cognitive impairment: A disorder due to brain damage or genetic malfunction.

Difficulties that result can be seen in mobility, vision, hearing, speech, understanding, judgment and behavior.

Muscular dystrophy: A genetic disease marked by progressive weakening of the muscles.

Multiple sclerosis: A progressive disease of the nervous system, caused by lesions in the myelin sheaths of the nerves in the brain and spinal cord. This can cause unsteadiness, dizziness, spasticity of the arms and legs. Speech can become slurred and vision impaired.

Noonan's syndrome: A genetic condition that can affect the heart, growth, and mental and physical development. People with this condition may have behavior problems or learning difficulties.

Spina bifida: A congenital defect in the structure of the vertebrae. Primary problems associated with Spina Bifida are trunk and/or lower extremity paralysis and loss of sensation.

Stroke (CVA): A cerebrovascular accident is caused by an interruption of the brain blood supply, generally effecting one side of the brain, which causes impairment to the opposite side of the body.

These are very brief descriptions of some of the conditions you may observe in our students. In addition to this list, participants in our adult programs may suffer from PTS; Alzheimer's and dementia symptoms; anxiety; and sleep disorders.

Confidentiality

Xenophon takes the confidentiality of our participants very seriously. We expect you to be very careful about the confidential nature of many things in our program. Never discuss our students' disabilities with outsiders. Please be considerate and do not talk about a student's lessons in front of other parents and volunteers. Our instructors welcome questions and will happily speak to you after the day's lessons have finished.

Dismissal Policy

All volunteers and guests must obey the rules and regulations of the riding center. Instructors and staff enforce these regulations. Guests who violate Xenophon's rules or who pose a safety hazard to students, staff or horses will be asked to leave. If a volunteer is not able to perform his/her task safely and appropriately the instructor will talk to the volunteer to try to ascertain the scope of the problem. If it cannot be solved at this level the Program Director will be called, then the Executive Director. We will try to redirect the volunteer to a different job where they will be successful, but if that does not work, he/she will be asked to leave the program. **Xenophon has a policy of mutual respect for all individuals and animals and zero tolerance for disrespectful behavior towards others. Such behavior will result in immediate dismissal.**

Xenophon Staff

Executive Director	Jean Johnstone
Program Director	Danielle Coburn
Volunteer & Admin Manager	Rachel Bloom
Barn & Facilities Manager	Linda Parsons

Instructors

Jan Bindas, Laura Fend, Lindsay Hendricks, Misha Jacobs, Myke Judd, Heidi Koch, Haley Mathews, Wanda Sayuk, Hillary Werhane, Jennifer Wineman

Therapists

Janet Alexander O.T., Celeste Duncan O.T., Tineke Jacobsen P.T., Melissa Maker P.T.A., Kristin Muzzy O.T.



To our dedicated volunteers, a heartfelt

THANK YOU!

Xenophon Therapeutic Riding
P.O. Box 16, Orinda, CA 94563
925-377-0871
www.xenophontrc.org