

GENERAL INFORMATION

PURPOSE: Therapeutic riding is widely recognized as one of the most beneficial forms of recreational therapy for people with physical, mental and emotional disabilities. Horseback riding develops self-awareness, builds self-confidence and improves concentration and self-discipline. Riding also strengthens and relaxes muscles, improves posture, balance, coordination, and increases joint mobility. Other goals include improving self-image, attitude, and social skills through interaction with the staff, volunteers and the horse.

HISTORY: Horseback riding has been used as a formal therapy since 1954 when a program was started in England. Therapeutic riding came to the United States in the 1970's when the Cheff Center for the Handicapped opened in Michigan. It was instrumental in coordinating training for instructors and developing additional equine related therapies. The need to further coordinate the efforts of those working in the field led to the founding of the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association. NARHA, a non-profit, tax exempt service organization, functions as an advisory and regulatory body dedicated to promoting horseback riding as therapy. The Loudoun Therapeutic Riding Foundation, Inc. began in 1974 and was designed as a pilot program for Virginia. It is a fully accredited NARHA Premier Center and currently serves approximately 100 riders per year in Northern Virginia.

MECHANICS: The program is a non-profit Virginia corporation and is run by a 10 member Board of Directors. LTRF, Inc. employs an Executive Director, Assistant Program Director, and four instructors. LTRF, Inc. relies solely on contributions and lesson fees for funding.

VOLUNTEERS: Volunteers are the backbone of the program and act as pony handlers, side-walkers, and grooms. Volunteers also assist in many other ways including fundraising efforts. Three volunteer orientation sessions are held each year to ensure well-trained and efficient volunteer staff as safety is a primary consideration. Up to three volunteers may be used for one rider. Parents of riders often contribute time as volunteers. Our horses and ponies are carefully screened and trained to assure suitability. Special equipment is used if necessary for a rider to safely participate, and a NARHA certified instructor is present for all activities involving riders.

FORMS: All participants must complete a medical history, application, liability release, and physician's release prior to the start of a riding session.

CONTACT US: Your questions and comments are welcome! Please see our website at www.ltrf.org for contact information. Our phone number is 703-771-2689.