Alatheia

THERAPEUTIC RIDING CENTER

Volunteer Handbook

V.2023

Introduction

Welcome to Alatheia Riding Center! ARC is a non-profit, volunteer-based organization that uses adaptive horsemanship to serve children and adults with special needs. We are thrilled that you are interested in helping us to serve our participants.

Equine assisted services have come to be recognized as one of the most beneficial services available to persons with disabilities. Alatheia is a member center of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH) Int'l. This organization sets forth standards and regulations for our industry; our partnership with PATH allows us to safely serve participants with a unique range of disabilities.

At Alatheia Riding Center, we serve upwards of 100 riders per week. All of our participants have either been diagnosed with a physical, intellectual or emotional disability, or have served our country and are part of our Warriors and Horses program. Given the high number of participants and their diverse needs, Alatheia simply could not function without our dedicated volunteers.

Our family of volunteers range in age from 13 to 70+ and come from all walks of life. Horse experience and special needs community experience are NOT a requirement to volunteer at Alatheia; we will provide you with all the skills and knowledge you need to be successful.

Our Mission:

Changing Lives with the Healing Power of Horses

Meet the Staff

Nancy Grette, Co-Founder & Executive Director

Nancy grew up with horses riding through the hills of western Washington. That love continued while raising her own family with husband Glenn. The Grette's spent many summers riding and packing in the backcountry of Eastern Washington on their herd of horses that included 3 fjords. In June of 2010 the Grette's lives were forever changed when they gave a ride to a ten-year-old girl with special needs. The magic between the horse and rider was unmistakable and the vision for Alatheia was born.

A year later Alatheia opened its doors to 12 riders with special needs using 3 incredibly special fjord horses and 20 dedicated volunteers. Nancy is a certified instructor through PATH, Int'l. Teaching, interacting with our special family of riders and volunteers, and loving on our herd of horses is the greatest pleasure of her life.

Anna Speer, Program Director & Instructor

Anna was raised riding horses in the Cascade Mountains, and then went on to study Equine Science at Montana State University. After receiving her BS Animal Science in 2009, she studied dressage overseas and spent 4 years teaching in North Mississippi. Anna joined Alatheia in 2018 as an instructor. She achieved her PATH certification in 2021.

Anna's first exposure to adaptive riding came through her mother, who is a stroke survivor. The classical training Anna received during her years in dressage lends itself well to adaptive riding, and Anna gets excited when those worlds meet.

Jill Allemandi, Instructor

Jill came to volunteer at Alatheia in 2016 after local horse therapy center closed its doors. She is now an Alatheia part-time riding instructor.

Jill says “Just as many others have found, I receive so much more than I give. The riders their families have taught me so much about patience, acceptance to life’s ups and downs, compassion and unconditional love. The staff and volunteers have become my extended family.”

Leanna Shannon, Volunteer Coordinator & Instructor

Leanna joined Alatheia Riding Center in May 2021, fresh off the boat from graduation at Washington State University, where she studied Animal Science. Already a seasoned therapeutic riding instructor; she achieved PATH certification after only a few short months at Alatheia.

Leanna adores her students and excels at bringing contagious smiles to all her lessons. In her free time, you’ll find her rock climbing, hiking, fly fishing, or creating wood-burn art.

Laura Turner, Caretaker/Facility Manager

Laura’s first visit to Alatheia was as a caretaker for a participant in 2017. She returned in 2021as a volunteer and came on staff in 2022. As the daughter of a special education teacher and cousin to John-O, an adult with Down Syndrome, her experience working with people with special needs is extensive. Laura is responsible for maintaining the grounds, facility, and the feed and care of the Alatheia herd.

Annie Christensen, Instructor

Annie grew up on a small rescue farm and has been riding since age four. An avid FFA and 4-H member through high school she went on to study Sports medicine at the University of Idaho where she ran an equestrian vaulting club. Annie is now becoming certified in equine structural integration and fascial release. Annie participated in an instructor internship at Alatheia and came on staff as a therapeutic riding instructor in June 2022.

Melissa Sigler, Substitute Instructor

Melissa Ortega started with Alatheia as a volunteer in the fall of 2013. Her deep passion and interest in therapeutic riding led her to begin instructing in spring of 2015. With a master's in Applied Behavior Science, Melissa is well-suited for her instructor responsibilities.

Outside of Alatheia she owns her own business of a line she created herself for luxury leisure items and has just launched an exclusive t-shirt line. Alatheia fills her heart with joy; the smiles and laughs created here are just contagious!

Bonnie Grant, Alatheia Ambassador and Instructor

Bonnie feels that it's an honor and privilege to be part of the team at Alatheia Riding Center. She is a life-long horse lover and has had amazing equines in her life. She has enjoyed learning many aspects of Natural Horsemanship. She discovered Alatheia as she was about to retire from a 30 year career with the Eastmont School District: it was a perfect fit. She loves the connections with her community, the riders and their families, and the staff and volunteers. She looks forward to her day as she drives to the riding center, knowing that she'll be supported and be able to lend a helping hand.

Jo Belanger, PT Instructor
Linda Anderson, Development Associate
Daria Land, Marketing & Communications
Jim Cook, Veteran Coordinator

Volunteer Programs, Policies and Procedures

Age and Physical Ability:

Alatheia Riding Center requires that anyone working directly with horses and participants during session hours be over the age of 13. The work we do can be labor intensive; please notify staff of any physical concerns or limitations you may have and we will happily accommodate them.

Scheduling:

Alatheia currently operates 3 sessions per year: Spring, Summer and Fall. Each session is approximately 9-11 weeks long, with a 1 week break every 5 weeks. It is *vital* to our program that, as a volunteer, *you commit to attend at least 80% of your lessons you sign up for* during a session. Our riders require consistency and they are best served when we can provide them with the same team week to week. If you are not able to make that commitment, we have another option to be a part of our sub list.

We understand that emergencies happen. **If you need to cancel**, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator or Program Director via text, call or email as quickly as possible.

Volunteer Phone: 509-630-4777 Volunteer Email: volunteers@alatheiaridingcenter.com

If you cannot commit to regular lessons but still want to be involved, please consider joining our list of substitute volunteers. These amazing people are trained and ready to jump in when a volunteer role needs to be filled, but are not commonly on the regular schedule. They, too, are vital to our success.

Program Cancellations:

Classes at Alatheia are rarely cancelled. In the event of inclement weather (smoke, wind, extreme heat or cold) or participant cancellation, the Volunteer Coordinator or Program Director will send out notifications as quickly as possible.

Dress Code:

For safety and comfort, volunteers should dress in weather appropriate clothing. Please bear in mind that our location can mean quickly changing weather. Alatheia t-shirts are provided each year and we encourage volunteers to wear them. Close-toed shoes are required at all times, with boots being strongly advised. Please stay away from inappropriately printed shirts, crop tops, low cut tops, short shorts, and dangly jewelry.

Arriving and Parking:

Alatheia is located at 2170 Sleepy Hollow Heights in Wenatchee, WA. From Highway 2, turn onto Lower Sunny Slope Rd, then take a right onto Sleepy Hollow Rd. Cross the Sleepy Hollow Bridge and continue around the hairpin turn and up the hill. Take a left onto Sleepy Hollow

Heights and follow up and around until you see Alatheia Riding Center on your right. You will know us by our unmistakable herd of tan fjord horses and our outdoor riding arena.

When possible, please enter through the lower gate and park on the right side of the gravel driveway in the grass. If this is not possible due to high traffic or a low clearance vehicle, please park on the left side of the Grette Residence driveway. Out of respect for our neighbors, please do not park on the road.

Please be respectful of the Grette Residence: the house and porch are private property.

Daily Volunteer Routine:

Arrive 15 minutes before your rider's scheduled start time and make your way to the Tack-Up Area (Beehive). Locate any of the QR codes and scan with your smartphone's camera to log in. Once the screen pops up, type the last 4 digits of your phone number and press sign in. If your last digits begin is zero, forgo the zero and sign in with your other 3 numbers. Note: you will be automatically logged out every 2hrs, so if you are staying with us for a full day please remember to log back in.

Use the printed daily schedule to learn your assignment for the hour and rendezvous with your instructor and team near the Beehive. Your instructor will give you a rundown of how the lesson will proceed and your team will make its way up to the arena to serve the rider.

After your lesson is over, stay with your team and help return the horse and tack. Repeat these routines as needed for as many lessons as you are assigned to, remembering to speak up when you need a break. When you are done for the day, please sign out by scanning the QR code. Remember: volunteer hours help us raise funds, so we need your hours logged!

Volunteer Positions

Sidewalker:
The Side Walker's responsibility is to provide support to the rider by walking alongside the horse during the lesson. The SW must never leave the rider's side. They are positioned forward facing at the rider's hip. The SW may assist the rider by reiterating the instructor's commands but should avoid talking over the instructor or distracting the rider. Some lessons require physical "holds" to secure the rider on the horse; others require support without contact. Holds are performed with the SW's 'near hand/arm' to maintain correct positioning. Holds are often progressive and may change during the lesson; your instructor will advise you when this is needed.

1. Full Support Hold: the SW uses one forearm across the rider's thigh and applies pressure while using the other arm to provide support at the rider's waist or trunk. A gait belt, harness or vest may be used.

2. Secure Thigh Hold: the SW uses one forearm across the rider's thigh and grabs either the saddle or the pad to secure the hold. Steady pressure is then applied to the rider's thigh.

3. Thigh Hold: the SW places a flat, open hand over the rider's thigh with the thumb down and applies pressure toward the horse.

4. Knee Hold: the SW places a flat open hand over the outside of the rider's knee with the thumb down and applies pressure toward the horse.
5. Ankle Hold: the SW grips the rider's foot at the back of the ankle with the hand nearest to the horse and applies light downward pressure.
6. Heel Hold: the SW grabs the rider's heel with a cupped hand to ensure the rider's foot stays in the saddle.

Always be mindful of where your hands are located on the rider's body and maintain a flat, open hand whenever possible.

Tack Assistant:

The tack assistant's responsibility is to make sure the tack is set out before the lesson, as well as put away once the lesson is over. They also ensure that the horses are tied up in the beehive and ready to be brushed and tack. If volunteers are not there in a timely manner to tack their horse, the tack assistant helps the staff member tack up the horse(s).

Barn Helper:

If you are wanting to help around the facility by mucking stalls, topping off waters, moving horses, or other facility needs, you may be interested in being a barn helper. These helpers responsibilities are in the mornings or mid afternoons. If you are interested, reach out to the Volunteer Coordinator and she will get you connected with the Caretaker.

Lead-walker:

The Lead-Walker's responsibility is horse management. The LW will not typically be very engaged with the rider during the lesson, but must actively listen for cues from the instructor to guide the horse and help the rider succeed. The instructor and LW often work together to direct and cue the horse when the rider is physically unable to do so. As riders progress in skill, the LW role diminishes from active to supportive/spotting. Alatheia Riding Center encourages volunteers interested in handling the horses to participate and certify in Lead Walker Training, which is offered regularly.

Mounting and Dismounting:

The mount and dismount often carry the most risk of any part of the lesson, and so teams must strive to minimize the time spent in the mounting ramp. All volunteers should actively listen for cues from the instructor to maintain safety and optimize time management.

1. Croup Mount: a traditional mount wherein the rider swings their right leg over the horse's croup (rear end) and lowers onto the saddle. This can be done from the ramp or the mounting block.

2. Crest Mount: the rider sits on the saddle, leans back and lifts the right leg over the horse's neck. This is done from the ramp.
3. Lift Mount: a special sling is used to mechanically lift the rider into the air above the horse. The rider is lowered onto the saddle and the sling is removed. This is done from the ramp.
4. Croup Dismount: a traditional dismount wherein the rider swings their right leg over the horse's croup and lowers to the ramp or ground.
5. Crest Dismount: the rider leans back in the saddle and lifts the right leg over the horse's neck, then steps onto the ramp.
6. Lift Dismount: a special sling is used to lift the rider off the horse and onto the ramp.

Changing Position:

If, during the lesson, you need to change positions or take a break, please inform your instructor. Common reasons for changing position include sore arms/backs, feeling uncomfortable due to rider behavior, challenging horse behavior or difficulty hearing the instructor. We will happily accommodate your needs.

Volunteer Captains:

Sometimes a volunteer becomes passionate about what we do and wants to learn to take on more responsibilities and complex tasks. Those individuals may have the opportunity to attend additional trainings, demonstrate skill mastery and earn the designation of Volunteer Captain. Examples of tasks that Volunteer Captains are called on to perform are:

- Cleaning horses' hooves
- Assisting in moving horses in groups
- Lead walking in high pressure lessons
- Assisting in training new volunteers

If you are interested in becoming a Volunteer Captain, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator for guidance on the designation process.

Odd Jobs:

If you want to be a part of the Alatheia team but are not interested in or comfortable working in the lesson environment, there is always a need for additional help around the barn. Here is a brief example list of help we often need:

1. Grooming/tacking specialist
2. Tack cleaning and tack room organization
3. Arena and equipment cleaning
4. Mucking stalls and grounds
5. Bathing horses, trimming manes
6. Administrative work: scanning, updating, etc

7. Special events work: floral décor, set up/tear down, etc

If you have a special skill to share with our volunteer team, please let us know. We are overjoyed to have you!

Horse Handling Philosophy:

Alatheia Riding Center is fortunate to benefit from the involvement of horsemen and –women from all walks of life. While ARC acknowledges that different individuals were trained to handle horses differently, we ask all volunteers to learn and adhere to the handling practices Alatheia has determined to be the best for our unique horses and their riders. If you have any questions regarding our philosophies, please ask your instructor for clarity.

Volunteer handling of horses should only occur with staff supervision. Exercise caution when giving affection to horses; shoulder rubs are safest. Please avoid their mouth and muzzle area.

Please allow staff and Volunteer Captains to clean horse's feet and put on bridles. This is for the safety of our volunteers and the comfort and training of our horses.

Arena and Grounds Etiquette:

Please walk while on property.

Please remember to shut all gates as you come through them.

Please silence your cell phones when assisting in a lesson to minimize distractions.

Please keep talking to a minimum while the instructor is speaking to allow the rider to focus. Socialization is encouraged on the trail ride and after dismounting.

Please ensure that all children are supervised at all times and guests abide by the facility rules.

Please use buckets or grain pans to feed treats to avoid accidental finger bites, and feed horses only with permission and supervision from staff. Treats should never be taken into paddocks or pastures.

Emergency Procedures:

In the unlikely event of an emergency, it is the side-walker's duty to stay with the rider and the lead-walker's duty to stay with the horse. All volunteers will be trained in how to perform an emergency dismount; this will be performed by a SW or the instructor during an emergency. Once the rider is safely on the ground, the LW will remove the horse and the instructor will determine the next steps. Additional emergency training will be provided throughout the year.

All accidents, incidents and emergencies will be documented by the Alatheia instructor present at the time and will be witnessed by volunteers. Emergency procedures and 911 call script is located on the volunteer table in the Indoor Arena.

Liability Release:

Working with or around horses is inherently dangerous. Alatheia requires every participant (rider, volunteer, staff, visitor, guest) fill out a liability release before engaging in any on-site activity. Participants under the age of 18 must have a parent or legal guardian sign for them. Liability releases must be updated annually. These releases can be found in the Tack Room, in the Indoor Arena and online via our website.

Confidentiality Agreement:

It is only natural to leave Alatheia filled with excitement about what your rider accomplished in their lesson. While we encourage the sharing of these stories, we must insist on protecting the privacy of our riders. Please **use first names only**, and refrain from posting pictures online without checking to see if the rider has signed a photo release. Your instructor can provide you with this information.

Dismissal Policy

It is Alatheia's goal to foster a safe, warm, welcoming community between our staff, volunteers, riders and families. While on the property, all personnel, staff, volunteers, participants, families, and guests are asked to abide by the rules and policies of ARC. In the unlikely event that any individual shows behavior deemed unacceptable, the staff member present will dismiss the individual for the remainder of the day and the issue will be taken up with the Executive Director. ARC maintains the right to ask any individual to discontinue their service to the program or to dismiss any individual from our program who is not following the rules and policies.

Thank you for taking the time to read Alatheia's Volunteer Handbook. We are grateful for your interest in serving our participants and we look forward to working with you!