

Welcome New Volunteer!



Thank you for your interest in volunteering at HOPE – HOorses helping PEople, Inc. My name is Kristen Shimeall and I am the Executive Director and also the volunteer coordinator. I am always available to answer any questions or concerns you have about our program. HOPE depends on our volunteers to make equine-assisted activities available for individuals with disabilities.

In order to begin volunteering at HOPE, please complete the following steps:

- Read this handbook completely and decide which areas of HOPE you are most interested in helping with.
- Contact me regarding your area of interest and availability and I will put you in touch with one of our therapists or farm managers.
- Fill out the volunteer packet forms and releases and bring the completed paperwork with you on your first day. Please give the completed paperwork to the therapists or farm manager that you will be working with.

Please feel free to ask me any questions you may have after reading this handbook. We're looking forward to having you join our team of dedicated staff, volunteers, and horses whose mission is to enrich the lives and experiences of individuals with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Kristen Shimeall

Frequently Asked Questions

Who can volunteer?

Anyone can volunteer with HOPE after completing the volunteer forms. We ask that our volunteers be at least 14 years old but under special circumstances we will allow younger volunteers. Therapy sessions require a lot of walking and even some jogging, so please let us know if you have an issue that prevents you from being able to walk long distances. If you are unsure of what volunteer area is the best fit for you then let us know, we'll help you find a role that suits your needs.

How often do I need to volunteer?

We ask that our volunteers donate at least 1-hour a week for one semester. Of course, we hope that you'll choose to stay with us for longer. Our riders get attached to our volunteers so having a volunteer suddenly stop attending sessions is disappointing. We understand that schedules can change but please give us proper notice of a schedule change so we can find someone to take your place.

Please be prompt. Plan to arrive about 15 minutes before lessons begin. Sign in on the volunteer sheet, which is located in the tack room.

Please notify us as soon as possible if you cannot assist in your scheduled session. We depend on our volunteers for every session at HOPE, so if you aren't able to make it we will need to find someone to fill your vacancy.

Do I need horse experience?

You do not need horse experience to volunteer at HOPE though we do recommend that you are at least comfortable working around horses if you are going to participate in sessions. There are some volunteer areas where we do require horse experience, such as being a horse leader or exercise rider. If you are nervous working around horses but still want to get involved with HOPE then let us know, we have many other volunteer opportunities that don't involve working around horses.

What volunteer opportunities does HOPE offer?

There are numerous ways you can get involved with HOPE. Volunteers that are interested in working around riders, other volunteers, and horses can volunteer during therapy sessions. The facility needs constant upkeep so we offer opportunities for volunteers to work with our farm manager on barn chores. We also always have a need for those of you who don't like to get dirty doing paperwork, thank you letters, fundraiser planning, office work, etc. Let us know what your goals of volunteering are and we will make sure you meet those goals.

When is HOPE open?

Horses require attention 24 hours a day, 7 days a week even on holidays so HOPE is technically always open but we do ask that you contact a HOPE representative before coming out to the farm. The barn is closed for private sessions on Thursday. If a private session is going on, there will be a sign outside of the barn stating that the barn is closed.

When are sessions held?

Regular sessions are currently held on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesdays. During times when Alachua county schools are in session, we have our sessions scheduled for the afternoons. In the summer we move our sessions to morning to beat the heat. Please contact Cathi or Kristen for exact times.

Where do I park?

The driveway directly in front of the barn is reserved for HOPE's riders and therapists. Please park in the wooded area directly past the barn on the right. Please remember to not play loud music in your car, this could potentially spook a horse. Also, please drive slowly on the drive way coming into HOPE.

What do I need to bring to a session?

- Appropriate clothing.
- Drinks and snacks for yourself.
- Volunteer paperwork if it is your first day.
- A positive attitude!

Can I bring my cell phone?

HOPE doesn't mind if you carry your cell phone but please make sure that you have it on silent in a safe place. Ring tones and vibrating phones can easily scare a horse. We also ask that you don't talk on the phone during a session.

How do I know if a session has been canceled?

We try not to cancel sessions but there are times that inclement weather makes it impossible for HOPE to hold sessions. We will make every effort possible to contact you in the event of a session being canceled. Please don't just assume that a session is canceled because it is raining where you are. Feel free to contact a HOPE representative if you have any questions.

What is the dress code?

Wear outdoor clothes suitable for the season. Wear comfortable close toed waterproof footwear, such as boots or sneakers, no sandals in the barn area! Because of temperature variations, layering of clothing is a reasonably sure way of being comfortable. Wear clothes and shoes that can get dirty. You will be in the sun, so bring a hat if you wish. Please understand that even though this is a barn, it is still a place of business so no low cut tops, short shorts, clothes with inappropriate wording or symbols, shirts that show your midriff, etc. We also recommend that you don't wear jewelry but if you do make sure that it isn't something that a horse or rider can easily grab.

What am I allowed to talk about in front of the riders?

Volunteers are allowed to engage in conversation among themselves and the riders. Our riders enjoy interacting with our volunteers so make sure you choose appropriate topics that they can discuss with you. There is absolutely no foul language allowed when you're at HOPE. Feel free to talk to the instructor after the lesson about any questions you have regarding the rider or lesson. Always listen to the instructor and follow directions that are given.

Can I ride the horses?

We do need experienced riders to exercise our horses. In order to get clearance to ride the horses you have to get approved by one of HOPE's representatives. We also ask that you volunteer for at least 10 hours to familiarize yourself with the facility and horses. Helmets must be worn at all times when mounted. If you are interested in becoming an exercise rider for HOPE, please let us know and we will discuss it with you.

How do I terminate my volunteer position?

We understand that all good things must come to an end so in the event that you decide to leave your role of being a volunteer please give us advanced notice so that we can find someone to fill your spot. If you are only volunteering to earn a certain number of volunteer hours, please let us know when you begin so we can make a schedule that works for both you and us. No longer volunteering without first consulting us causes problems for everyone involved with HOPE, so please give us some type of notice when you decide to terminate your volunteer role. If you feel that you aren't comfortable or happy in the volunteer position you have, let us know and we'll move you to a more suitable place within HOPE.

General Information

We ask that our volunteers donate at least 1-hour a week for one semester. Of course, we hope that you'll choose to stay with us for longer.

Please be prompt. Plan to arrive about 15 minutes before lessons begin. Sign in on the volunteer sheet, which is located in the tack room.

Please notify us as soon as possible if you cannot assist in your scheduled session. We depend on our volunteers for every session at HOPE, so if you aren't able to make it we will need to find someone to fill your vacancy.

Wear outdoor clothes suitable for the season, including comfortable close toed waterproof footwear, such as boots or sneakers, no sandals. Hats assist in sun protection. Because of temperature variations, layering of clothing is a reasonably sure way of being comfortable.

Prior to lessons, while riders are warming up, volunteers may hold conversations, but are urged to:

- Remain aware of the rider's safety at all times.
- Include the rider in conversations.
- Choose appropriate topics, keeping the rider's interest in mind.

We value the observations of volunteers participating in lessons. Feel free to talk to the instructor after the lesson about the rider's progress. Through these observations, we can learn more about the rider. During lessons, always listen to the instructor!

Contact Information:

Kristen Shimeall:
KCShimeall@gmail.com
352.214.8715

Cathi Brown
cathibrown@ot.gmail.com
352.365.2788

Thanks becoming a part of our team, I look forward to seeing you
around the barn!