

## Participant Handbook

Welcome to Sprout Therapeutic Riding & Education Center, a non-profit 501(c)3 program that provides equine assisted activities and therapies. We teach equestrian and horsemanship skills and provide therapeutic services to riders of all ages with special needs. At Sprout, we are built on the conviction that we are not bound by our limitations. Our programs are designed to benefit our riders physically, socially, and emotionally by using horses and volunteers who are trained to work with individuals of varying abilities. The purpose of this handbook is to share our policies and procedures so that Sprout can give you the most effective therapeutic riding lessons possible and make your experience with us the best it can be. By reading this handbook and being an active participant in your lessons you will get the most out of your therapeutic riding experience. We look forward to working with you.

### Our History:

The roots of Sprout go back to 1944, when Richard Bacas contracted polio while vacationing with family at the Eastern Shore in Maryland. While polio left him paralyzed, Mr. Bacas was a leader and entrepreneur, and upon his passing in 2005, his family chose to honor his memory by creating a facility that would serve those with special needs. The land on which Sprout resides was purchased in 2009 and the organization began operations in the fall of 2011.

### Our Affiliations:

Sprout is a member center of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship Intl (PATH Intl.). PATH promotes safety and optimal outcomes in equine-assisted activities and therapies for individuals with special needs. PATH Intl.) is the global authority, resource and advocate for equine-assisted activities and therapies and the equines in this work that inspire and enrich the human spirit. All Sprout instructors are certified through PATH Intl. (through rigorous standards) before teaching at Sprout. Sprout is also a member center of the Therapeutic Riding Association of Virginia (TRAV). TRAV is a non-profit organization formed to foster equine-assisted activities by offering educational and networking opportunities to operating centers and to raise public awareness of the benefits of these activities to individuals with disabilities.

### Our Programming:

#### 1. Therapeutic Riding/Carriage Driving Lessons

Riding/Driving lessons are designed to improve the physical, cognitive, psychological and social skills of participants with special needs. Objective-based lessons challenge participants to meet and achieve individual goals. Regardless of individual ability, horses motivate each participant to reach their personal potential.

#### 2. Equine Movement Therapy

Equine Movement Therapy utilizes the movement of the horse as a treatment strategy by a physical therapist to address functional limitations in patients with disabilities. Equine Movement Therapy is an integrated treatment approach to reaching functional goals

### 3. Community Groups

Participants in the CBI program work on a skill building activities that incorporate both job and life skills. It is our intent to correlate these skill-building activities with Individualized Education Plan and goals and objectives. Examples of these skill building activities may include: assisting with feed preparation, laundering chores, general cleaning, assisting with material preparation and set-up for lessons and events, cleaning tack, etc.

### 4. Equine Facilitated Learning

Equine Facilitated Learning is a hands-on educational model that uses the interactions and relationships between horses and humans in an environment of learning and self-discovery. It is designed to promote personal growth and the development of positive social/life skills in a fun and supportive environment. Through a curriculum of activities designed to address individual goals and needs, each equine interaction is framed to help students learn and grow.

## Rider Limitations:

Sprout has a weight limit of 200 lbs. Weight limitations may differ for persons requiring a full transfer and will be at the discretion of the instructor. Horseback riding may not be a suitable recreational activity for certain individuals and therefore it is necessary for you to have your physician complete and sign the Physician Release/Rider Medical History Form. Should the physical condition of the rider change at any time, Sprout is to be notified immediately and a new Physician Release form must be completed and filed with the office. Certain conditions require additional precautions to be taken when on or around horses and some conditions are contraindications to riding. Most activities have some type of precautions and guidelines for participation and horse riding is no exception. For example: Individuals who have spinal curvatures that are unable to accommodate the movement of the horse, or those who lack neck and trunk control may not be suitable rider participants.

## Rider Scheduling:

Scheduling starts 1 month before the beginning of the session. All scheduling is completed through an online survey system. Students and caregivers are required to complete the scheduling survey in its entirety to ensure accurate scheduling.

## Rider Payments:

All riders will be invoiced at the beginning of the session for their balance. Riders that fail to pay their invoice within 30 days (ore create a payment plan with the Office Manager), will not be eligible to ride in the fall/spring horse show and may be ineligible to continue riding in subsequent sessions.

## Riderships:

It is the policy of Sprout to provide financial assistance to students in an objective, fair and responsible manner. Sprout is committed to providing this type of financial assistance to students who would not be able to participate without monetary support. Prospective students and their families are expected to investigate other options of financial support, in addition to filing a ridership application.

Ridership applications received after the application deadline will not be considered. If a student receiving a ridership misses more than 30% of their lessons, and they will not be eligible to re-apply for another ridership.

Ridership awards are based on the following criteria and with the following guidelines in mind:

1. Availability of funds at the time of ridership application
2. Profile and need of the rider
3. Student's commitment to the riding session, as well as commitment to cover a portion of the cost (Sprout does not offer full riderships)
4. Previous Awards. We reserve the right to limit the number of awards/riderships given to the same rider, because our goal is to serve as many riders as possible.
5. Student's engagement with the program through attending events, fundraisers and spreading awareness.

## Clothing:

For both evaluations and lessons, riders should wear long pants such as riding breeches, jeans or leggings to prevent leg chafing. Girls may NOT wear skirts during their lesson at any time as they may get caught in equipment. Athletic shoes with a closed toe and heel are acceptable or boots with a rounded, closed toe and a small heel are the safest form of footwear. It is recommended that riders learning advanced skills and participating in more independent activities wear paddock boots or tall boots. Riders should avoid wearing jewelry, long dangling necklaces and earrings will not be allowed during lesson activities. Safety helmets that meet ASTM-SEI requirements are to be worn in both groundwork and mounted activities by all participants. Participants may borrow a helmet for their first lesson session but it is highly recommended that for continuing sessions to acquire a properly fitted helmet.

## Rider Paperwork:

All rider paperwork must be up-to-date and the medical release form must be updated annually. Sprout asks all current riders to complete an annual update at the beginning of each calendar year (January 1) regardless of their registration dates. No student will be allowed to ride without these forms properly completed, with original signatures, and turned in prior to class. Medical release forms must be completed in full with rider height, weight, diagnosis, doctor **signature**, and dated. Incomplete forms will be returned to the rider and the lesson slot will be held until completed forms are returned (for 1 week).

## **Attendance/Tardiness:**

Your commitment to attend all scheduled lessons is vital to our program. Schedules of instructors, volunteers and horses are all impacted by absences and tardiness. Please arrive on time or a few minutes early for your scheduled lesson time. Getting helmets, clothing changes, and bathroom breaks need to be handled prior to your lesson start time. Sprout will honor the time block for all lessons and horses will remain in the arena for their scheduled lessons slot. If the student arrives late, they will have the ability to ride for the remainder of their block, or take an unexcused absence for the day. Excessive tardiness may result in the rider being removed from the schedule for the session.

## **Inclement Weather Policy:**

1. Sprout lessons will be cancelled if:  
The temperature drops below 25 degrees for the lesson times of the day or the heat index (heat & humidity, not only temperature) reaches 110.
2. Cancellations due to weather events (ex. ice, snow) will be made at 9:00 am. Please check your e-mail to keep up to date with potential cancellations.
3. If Loudoun County Public Schools are closed due to weather conditions, Sprout will also cancel lessons.

## **Lesson Cancellations by the Student:**

Sprout employs a “use it or lose it” policy for all lessons. Excessive absences (3 or more) or no-shows (more than 1) will disqualify the rider from the remainder of the session and the rider will be placed on the waiting list for the next available session.

Riders who are receiving riderships and have more than 1 no-show will be subject to forfeiting the ridership and becoming ineligible for future riderships

## **Lesson Cancellations by Sprout:**

Sprout will notify all students of cancellations due to weather or extraneous circumstances by 9am by email. All Sprout lessons that are cancelled will be credited to future sessions by Sprout.

PLEASE don't be a “No-show, No-call”- this results in:  
Unnecessary tacking and untacking of our horses  
Inefficient use of staff and volunteers  
Excessive absences take up a time slot that could be used by another rider

Dedicated to providing equine assisted activities and therapies

## Lessons

The gate to ring must be closed if a horse is in the ring. Please do not interrupt the instructor during a lesson. No one should enter the ring without instructor permission.

Students must have helmets on when riding or working around the horses (to include: feeding treats and grooming horses).

Please encourage all siblings and family members to abide by the QUIET ZONE signs near the arena – distractions near the arena cause safety and instructional issues.

Students may stay 30 minutes before and after their lessons for transition time but should not extend their stay past this allotted amount, as parking and seating becomes an issue.

## Property

Please schedule visits and barn tours for family and friends by emailing [info@sproutcenter.org](mailto:info@sproutcenter.org).

Guests are not allowed in the paddock area/feed rooms/tack rooms/stalls unaccompanied.

## Barn

Guests must be accompanied by Sprout staff or volunteers when in the stable area. Please do not go into the horse prep. Siblings of riders should remain with their parents at all times.

Young children must be supervised when in the classroom and the viewing deck.

## Horses

It is important that a minimum number of people (2) are in the vicinity when horses are being prepped for a lesson. This allows them to get into the working mindset. Too many people are stressful for the horses as they are being prepped for a lesson. Please do not go into the horse prep area to observe

Aisle ways must be clear before moving horses. Horse Leaders will call ALL CLEAR. Other volunteers assist in clearing personnel from pathway. Please follow directions to ensure you are out of the area where the horse is being moved. Students (and siblings) should not be in aisle ways when horses are moving unless the student is helping lead (only if authorized by the instructor).

Treats are only given with permission from a staff member. Horses may be on a special diet and treats should be given on a limited basis. No hand feeding horses. All treats should be given in a feed bucket or other appropriate container. Only approved staff should put their hands in a horse's mouth. Horses should not be allowed to lick people.

## Occurrences

All accidents, injuries or hazardous conditions must be reported to a staff member as soon as possible. Sprout will file necessary insurance information and remedy situations in a timely manner.

## Who to Contact:

Issue	Contact	Email/Phone
Session Scheduling	Brooke Waldron	<a href="mailto:Brooke.Waldron@sproutcenter.org">Brooke.Waldron@sproutcenter.org</a>
Absences/Tardies	Your Instructor	Check session email
Invoices and Payments		<a href="mailto:info@sproutcenter.org">info@sproutcenter.org</a>
Scholarships	Brooke Waldron/Mike Pratt	<a href="mailto:Mike.Pratt@sproutcenter.org">Mike.Pratt@sproutcenter.org</a>
Parent Support	Lisa Glasgow	<a href="mailto:Lisa.Glasgow@sproutcenter.org">Lisa.Glasgow@sproutcenter.org</a>
Events	Mike Pratt	<a href="mailto:Mike.Pratt@sproutcenter.org">Mike.Pratt@sproutcenter.org</a>
Volunteer Issues/Requests	Nancy Davidson	<a href="mailto:Nancy.Davidson@sproutcenter.org">Nancy.Davidson@sproutcenter.org</a>
Programming/Horse Issues	Brooke Waldron	<a href="mailto:Brooke.Waldron@sproutcenter.org">Brooke.Waldron@sproutcenter.org</a>
Website/FB		<a href="mailto:info@sproutcenter.org">info@sproutcenter.org</a>