

Hoofbeats Therapeutic Riding Center, Inc.

At the Virginia Horse Center

P.O. Box 979, Lexington, VA 24450

Ph: (540) 464-3337 E-mail: hoofbeats@rockbridge.net

Website: www.hoof-beats.com

February, 2010

Letter from the Program Director with important information for all program participants

Dear Parents, Guardians, Riders, and Prospective Clients of Hoofbeats:

We at Hoofbeats are presently finalizing plans and schedule for our 2010 riding season, and weather permitting, we expect to begin Session I classes on April 1. For a look at the preliminary calendar for Hoofbeats class sessions and events, go online to the Hoofbeats website (www.hoof-beats.com) and click on "Calendar." You will see that this promises to be another exciting year!

DIRECTIONS TO HOOFBEATS:

From U.S. Route 11, turn west onto Maury River Road (Rt. 39), and proceed approximately a mile. The Virginia Horse Center is on the left, and is well marked. Turn into the Virginia Horse Center grounds, and follow the signs to the Hoofbeats barn.

HOURS OF OPERATION:

As in prior years, lessons will be offered Tuesday – Saturday. **Hoofbeats is CLOSED on Sundays and Mondays.** Note as well that NO LESSONS will be scheduled on special event days, or on the day before a major event. Hours for lessons are generally 10:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (please note that Hoofbeats cannot operate after dark, and afternoon lessons during the fall session must be scheduled with that in mind.)

LESSON POLICIES:

Clients should report to the barn for their lessons each week, according to the schedule agreed upon with the instructor. In the event of inclement weather, Carol and Maria will be using the Center's classroom for un-mounted instruction. There is a lot to learn about horses besides riding! **Please note: in the event that you must cancel a lesson, there can be no guarantee of a make-up.** Because we serve so many students, our schedule is extremely tight. Please note as well that Hoofbeats cannot reimburse clients for lost lesson time. Lesson fees are calculated to cover the cost of maintaining our horses for the season; the horses still eat, whether students come to ride or not.

ESPECIALLY FOR NEW CLIENTS (but also for returning clients whose condition has altered):

Perspective clients are encouraged to contact the Program Director and Head Instructor, Carol Branscome, at the Hoofbeats office (540 464-3337) to arrange an interview, and a tour of the facilities. The interview allows Carol to present the program, explain staff qualifications, introduce our "equine staff," and thoroughly answer any questions. It also provides Carol the opportunity to formulate a preliminary assessment of the student's needs, and to discuss fees, and mutually agreeable options for the lesson schedule. Depending on the type of disability and/or degree of impairment, Carol may feel it important to obtain input from doctors, teachers, and/or therapists, in order to establish realistic goals and lesson plans that will best meet the client's needs. It is for these reasons that **clients are encouraged to contact Hoofbeats well ahead of the start of the riding season.** An early start also allows the formal registration process (especially the filling out of required forms, and payment of fees), to be completed in a timely manner.

IMPORTANT FOR EVERYONE:

No clients, new or returning, will be scheduled to ride until all required registration forms have been completed and turned in to the Hoofbeats office (see list of required forms below), **and arrangement for payment of fees has been made** (see attached Fee Schedule listing and details, and check with the Hoofbeats office if you have questions.)

Reminder to our returning clients and volunteers: **Hoofbeats requires a new registration packet of completed forms ANNUALLY**. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact the Hoofbeats office. **Once again, the required forms MUST be filled out completely, signed and dated appropriately in all designated places, and turned in to Hoofbeats before your lessons will be scheduled.**

You can obtain your forms by:

calling the Hoofbeats office at 540 464-3337 and arranging to pick them up, or to have them mailed to you, or

going online to the Hoofbeats website (www.hoof-beats.com) and clicking on "Forms." The forms, in PDF format, can be downloaded for your use.

REQUIRED FORMS:

ALL RIDERS must complete the following: Form no. 1: *Participant Registration and Media Release*; Form no. 2: *Liability and Hold Harmless Agreement*; Form no. 3: *Authorization for Emergency Medical Treatment*; Form no. 4: *Medical History: Physician* (to be completed by client's primary care physician); and Form no. 5: *Consent for Release of Information*. Hoofbeats may also request that clients submit Form no. 6: *Medical History: Therapist*.

VOLUNTEERS must complete the following: Form no. 7: *Volunteer/Staff Info*; Form no. 2: *Liability and Hold Harmless Agreement*; and Form no. 3: *Authorization for Emergency Medical Treatment*.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT FORMS:

Be sure to note that the Medical History forms for Physician and for Therapist, nos. 4 and 6 respectively, are to be filled out by the client's medical professionals or educators. It will be the client's responsibility to provide the appropriate medical or educational professionals with these forms in a timely manner. The forms must be back to Hoofbeats before the client's first lesson. Note also that Form no. 5, the Consent for Release of Information, is the document that allows our instructors to consult with those therapists, teachers or counselors that you have indicated could provide Hoofbeats with valuable input on your behalf. On the blanks the form provides, fill in the name of each professional, his or her field (e.g. M.D., P.T., O.T., Spec. Ed., etc.), and the contact information (address and phone.) Be sure to sign and return the form to Hoofbeats promptly, so our instructors can proceed to contact those professionals.

Forms for SPECIAL OLYMPICS REGIONAL SHOW, JUNE 28, AT THE VIRGINIA HORSE CENTER, and STATE SPECIAL OLYMPICS EQUESTRIAN GAMES, NOVEMBER 7-8, AT VIRGINIA BEACH:

Riders who qualify for these Special Olympics competitions can expect very soon to receive packets of registration forms and information. The forms should be filled out and returned to the Hoofbeats office as promptly as possible. Regional Special Olympics in June will be upon us before you know it, so do not delay!

Be assured that all forms required by Hoofbeats are considered highly confidential, are kept in files accessed only by our staff, and are consulted solely on a "need-to-know" basis. Hoofbeats operates in the same manner as any other health professional, in insuring clients their right to privacy.

KEEP HOOFBEATS INFORMED:

Throughout the year it is vitally important to appraise Hoofbeats of any changes in a client's condition that could impact his or her ability to ride safely. Changes in physical or mental condition, or changes in medications can have unfortunate consequences for a rider, potentially affecting balance, coordination,

stamina, vision, or ability to hear well. Hoofbeats needs to know if a client has experienced an onset of episodic dizziness, headache, asthma, or abnormal blood pressure. An unexpected severe emotional upset in a client's life could lead to behavioral problems. It is the responsibility of the adult client, or the parent or guardian of a minor in our program, to keep Hoofbeats currently informed on any such issues.

VOLUNTEERS (NEW AND RETURNING):

Each year every volunteer MUST complete a registration packet of forms, and MUST arrange to attend an orientation and training session. Volunteer forms are listed under **REQUIRED FORMS** on the previous page. Be sure to check with Hoofbeats for this year's volunteer training schedule.

HOOFBEATS POLICIES AND BARN RULES: All clients and volunteers will receive a copy of the *Hoofbeats Policies and Barn Rules*. **These policies and barn rules are extremely important for the safety and wellbeing of all program participants and visitors. Read them over carefully, and be sure to communicate them to anyone who may accompany you to the barn. EVERYONE will be expected to follow these rules and guidelines. PLEASE KEEP YOUR COPY FOR FUTURE REFERENCE.**

In addition, Hoofbeats' clients must be alert to requirements of the Virginia Horse Center. When driving to the Hoofbeats barn, **you must obey the Virginia Horse Center posted speed limits.** Be mindful of the fact that there is often a great deal of activity (people, animals, and vehicles) around the VHC barns that you must pass on your way to Hoofbeats. **Drive the approach to the Hoofbeats barn with special care**, ever mindful that you could encounter people who are blind or deaf or have mobility problems. Pedestrians, horses, cats, and small children have the right of way at all times.

Last fall now seems a long time ago and we've missed everybody! We're looking forward to welcoming you back to another TERRIFIC year! All the Hoofbeats horses are looking forward to the extra attention and treats!

Sincerely,

Carol Branscome
Program Director