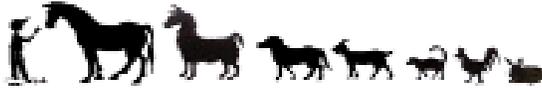


ANIMALS AS NATURAL THERAPY

## **Volunteer Handbook**



## **Welcome to the ANT Team!**

Dear Volunteers,

Animals as Natural Therapy would like to welcome you to our team. You are a very important asset to our organization! We depend on each volunteer to move our mission forward and allow us to continue changing lives and building a culture of compassion in Whatcom County by offering animal-guided mental and behavioral health services.

Under the direction and vision of Co-founder Sonja Wingard in partnership with Catholic Community Services, the human-animal interactions at Windy Acres Farm began in 1999 and ANT has since developed into a highly sought-after and well-respected stand-alone therapeutic program. We now serve over 400 youth per year at our facility on Kline Rd, 6+ veterans annually, and have reached thousands more through our Mobile and Intergenerational programs.

We are grateful to have you as part of our team and look forward to working in partnership to achieve your personal and professional goals, as well as ours. Welcome!

Sincerely,

Jaime Arnett  
Executive Director  
Animals as Natural Therapy



## **Mission, Vision, Goals, and Culture**

### **Our Mission**

Improving mental and behavioral health through animal-guided programs and mentorship with special attention to youth and veterans in Northwest Washington.

### **Our Vision**

We envision a community...

- Of hopeful, resilient individuals equipped with the life skills needed to thrive and be fulfilled in their lives and relationships.
- A community where animals are recognized for their intuitive gifts and valued as therapeutic partners and healers.
- Rooted in a culture of compassion for the benefit of all beings.

### **Our Goals**

1. To guide participants to develop confidence and a belief in their own ability to heal, grow, and change the course of their lives.
2. To cultivate connection through mentorship, intergenerational programming, and community development.
3. To make programs accessible by providing financial assistance and mobile services.
4. To strengthen our community and program offerings and extend our reach by creating partnerships with diverse community-based organizations.
5. To build an inclusive culture that enables all participants, staff, and volunteers to bring their full selves to ANT and engage in a culture of compassion and inclusion that empowers all to connect, belong, and grow.

### **The Culture of ANT**

The ANT Team Contract is an integral part of our programs; all participants, volunteers and staff agree to be in alignment with this and sign the contract. We all need to be always aware of the ANT Team Contract in all circumstances. These are the three elements:

- Keep myself and others physically and emotionally safe.
- Give and receive respectful feedback.
- Work as a team.



## Introduction and Orientation

Our staff at ANT will help you become oriented to the farm and ensure you are comfortable and knowledgeable about your surroundings.

Please read the information in this handbook and be sure to understand the policies and procedures of working with our participants prior to starting your volunteering.

- I understand my roles and responsibilities as a volunteer.
- I understand ANT's rules for participants and adults.
- I understand the ANT's safety protocols and procedures.
- I understand ANT's policies regarding harassment, discrimination, and confidentiality.
- I understand that ANT has the right to dismiss a volunteer if they are not the right fit for programming.

## Staff Contact List

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## **Volunteer Expectations**

This section outlines the guidelines and expectations that volunteers must follow to create a safe and welcoming environment for participants, staff and volunteers.

### **All volunteer positions require:**

- At least a 9 month commitment
- High communication between you and staff regarding availability/absences
- Good health (both physically and emotionally)
- Available weekdays in the afternoons (for program mentoring)
- Ability to be in the cold or heat for up to 2 hours
- Ability to handle your emotions as they come up
- Ability to hold space with others and not try to correct or fix

### **Dress Code**

ANT understands that a volunteer's role will inform how they should dress. Our office is business casual and our barnyard is barn casual, unless the job dictates otherwise. We expect you to be well-groomed and avoid wearing clothing that is not appropriate for being on the farm. When at the farm, please wear sturdy shoes or boots. Please do not wear open-toed or slip-on shoes near the horses. Please also avoid wearing any large dangling earrings or jewelry that could catch on horse or saddle parts. We also respect and permit grooming styles, clothing and accessories that are dictated by religious beliefs, ethnicity, or disability.

### **Smoke-Free Workplace**

Animals as Natural Therapy is a smoke-free workplace. Smoking is strictly prohibited on ANT premises.

### **Privacy Policy**

There is a private residence on the property of Animals as Natural Therapy. ANT is closed most weekends. Please only come to the farm when you have been scheduled to volunteer. If you would like to come to the farm, please reach out to a staff member to arrange a time if you aren't already scheduled to come.

### **Role Modeling for Youth**

As a volunteer at ANT, you will often be asked to engage in a mentorship role with young participants. Please behave in a way that honors this responsibility by taking care of yourself, always being respectful, and communicating clearly with everyone on the ANT Team. We expect all volunteers to follow the ANT Team Contract. Please also focus



on staying attuned to the needs of our clients and animals during your time with us. We want our participants to get the most out of our programs.

### **Confidentiality**

The privacy of the personal information of the participants we work with is of utmost importance. We need to protect their privacy at all times. Volunteers are required by law to keep all participant information confidential. Participant information includes all disclosed medical and personal information. In addition, volunteers cannot take photos of participants without the written permission of their parent/guardian.

### **Exceptions to Confidentiality**

Animals as Natural Therapy is compliant with current Federal and State of Washington laws which limit confidentiality in certain circumstances. Because ANT staff are mandated reporters, we may use or disclose the personal health information of participants when required or permitted to do so by law. Although volunteers at ANT are not mandated reporters, they are required to share any concerns they have regarding participants or their safety with ANT staff only. Volunteers are required to consult ANT staff in the following situations:

- a) Duty to warn:** Participant's personal health information may be disclosed if we determine a need to alert an intended victim of a serious threat to their health or safety. For example, this may occur if participants reveal intentions to kill or harm another person. ANT is obligated to take necessary action to avert a serious threat to the health and safety of others.
- b) Danger to participant:** Participant's personal health information may be disclosed if ANT determines that participants may kill or seriously harm themselves. For example, this may occur if participants reveal that they are planning to attempt suicide. ANT is obligated to take necessary action to avert a serious threat to their health or safety.
- c) Child or elder abuse or neglect:** Participant's personal health information may be disclosed if they report or ANT reasonably suspects any child or elder abuse or neglect. For example, if participants reveal that they have physically harmed a child then ANT will need to notify Child Protective Services (CPS).
- d) Court order:** Participant's personal health information may be disclosed if ANT is presented with a court order to do so. For example, this may occur if participants have legal involvement, and a judge or law enforcement agency has called ANT to testify or release records.
- e) Crime against ANT or office premises:** participant's personal health information may be disclosed if they commit or threaten to commit a crime against ANT or within office premises. This includes damage to property.
- f) Other disclosures:** participant's personal health information may be disclosed for research when approved by an institutional review board, to military or national security agencies, coroner, medical examiners, and correctional institutions or



otherwise as authorized by law. Participant's personal health information may be disclosed to necessary parties involved if you file a legal or administrative claim against me or my business. Your identifying information may be disclosed to debt collection agency personnel if you fail to pay for my professional services by our agreed upon time period.

## **Volunteer Procedures**

### **Arrival at ANT**

Please arrive at the farm on time. If you are mentoring, please arrive 15 to 30 minutes before programming begins. If you are volunteering with Mobile ANT, check in with staff about what time to arrive and where to meet (i.e. on the farm or at the site). If you are volunteering as a feeding assistant, please check in with staff about what time to arrive.

### **Parking**

Please keep your speed down to 5 miles per hour when entering the property. Please park closely together along the fencing of the barnyard to allow room for other farm visitors.

### **Recording Hours**

Please be sure to record your volunteer hours on the printed spreadsheet that is hanging outside of the program stall in the main barn.

### **Communication**

Please be sure to contact the appropriate ANT staff member as soon as possible if you are unable to come to a volunteer shift.



## **Volunteer Opportunities**

### **After-school Youth Mentor**

After-school program mentors generally work one-on-one with youth participants who have behavioral and emotional challenges. They are there to ensure the safety of participants and animals, to support participant learning by asking questions rather than telling them what to do, and to point out animal behaviors as metaphors for life. They assist participants in animal care, particularly for the horses with grooming and saddling. These volunteers work with youth ages 8-18.

Training for after-school program mentors includes a generalized ANT volunteer orientation training which can be watched virtually, and in-person horse-handling training and mentoring training. Each training is a three-hour hands-on learning experience. We do ask these volunteers to commit to helping out at least one session per week for at least nine months. After-school sessions follow the schedule of schools in Whatcom County, starting in September and ending in June with breaks in between quarters. Volunteers need to be present for a total of 2.5 to 3 hours per session, and the sessions are held in the afternoons after school release times. Each session is 1.5 hours in length.

#### **Typical Mentoring Experience**

- Arrive 15 minutes early to discuss and plan session's activities
- Physical & emotional check in with clients: How does your body feel? How do your emotions feel?
- Discuss the focus for the day with participants (ie. trust, leadership, clear communication, etc.)
- Greet horse with participant, spend time grooming or doing another ground work activity with them
- Assist participant in the exercise or lesson for the day
- Closing Circle: What? So What? Now What? What is your take-away?
- Debrief with fellow mentors and staff for 15 to 30 minutes - This is an important time to address any issues and challenges that may arise during sessions and give and receive support with ANT staff/mentor team.

### **Summer Camp Youth Mentor**

Summer camp mentors also work one-on-one with youth who are struggling behaviorally or emotionally. As our summer camps attract a more general population of youth from Whatcom County than our after-school programs, the activities we design for them tend to be more general as well. For example, we offer arts & crafts and play many games typical of summer camps elsewhere. Similar to the role after-school program mentors play, summer camp mentors help ensure the safety of participants



and animals and support participant learning. These volunteers work with youth ages 6-18.

Training for summer camp mentoring includes a generalized ANT volunteer orientation training which can be watched virtually, along with in-person horse-handling training and a mentoring training. We ask these volunteers to commit to helping with at least one week of summer camp, and then to continue mentoring in after-school programs when the school year begins. Summer camps generally run from the end of June to the beginning of August. We prefer if summer camp mentors can be present for 6 hours each day of the week for full-day camps and for 4 hours each day of the week for half-day camps.

### **Mobile ANT Volunteer**

Mobile ANT volunteers assist barn staff in preparing the animals for intergenerational visits to eldercare facilities with youth. They clean and brush the small animals (rabbits, chickens, mini horses, goats, dogs), clean their travel cages and arrange them in the van. Once on site, they assist the youth in teaching the elders how to handle the animals and interact with them. At the end of the visit, they help with any cleanup necessary and reload the animals into the van. Some Mobile ANT visits happen every week and others happen sporadically throughout the year. Most of them occur during weekdays between 9 am and 5 pm.

Training for small animal care is done as needed and takes about 1.5-2 hours giving the volunteer ample time with handling the animals. If Mobile ANT volunteers wish to help lead the mini horse, mini mule, or any large horse, they need to also attend a horse-handling training. A generalized ANT volunteer orientation training is also provided for Mobile ANT volunteers, which can be watched virtually.

### **Barn Assistant/Chore Volunteer**

Barn assistants and chore volunteers help with cleaning pens and coops, mucking stables, and, occasionally, bucking hay. Volunteers may also help with feeding the animals, which takes place daily at 7:00 am and 5:00 pm. It generally takes about 1.5 to 2 hours. Since the animals need to be fed regardless of weather conditions, feeding helpers are expected to be there through rain, sleet, snow or sunshine. If, for some reason, they are unable to come, they must let their staff feeder know ahead of time. The training for feeding helpers takes place on the job. Scheduling for these shifts will vary based on when we need extra help. Because it is hard on the animals and the barn staff to constantly be training new feeding assistants, we do ask for at least a one year commitment and turn over for these volunteer opportunities tends to be slow.

### **Spa Day Volunteer**

Spa Days occur every Friday afternoon and provide an opportunity for volunteers to help us give back to our animals. On these days, volunteers help



groom and care for our animals in the ways they like best. Training for this role is similar to the one for more general chore volunteers.

### **Board Member**

Our Board is a Governing/Fundraising Board with fiduciary responsibilities. We welcome new Board members who bring their skills, talents, connections and fresh ideas to ensure the ongoing and growing success of our programs. As ambassadors to the community, Board members are asked to commit in the following ways:

1. Regularly attend board meetings (75%) and important related meetings, unless excused for special circumstances.
2. Actively participate on at least one committee.
3. Volunteer for and willingly accept assignments and complete them thoroughly and on time.
4. Stay informed about Board matters; prepare for meetings and review and comment on minutes, financials and other reports. (ie: Events)
5. Get to know other Board members and build a collegial working relationship that contributes to consensus.
6. Be willing to invite friends, family and colleagues to lend their financial and volunteer support to current ANT projects.
7. Actively participate in fundraising for the organization including participating in the organization's major donor campaign.
8. Personally contribute financially to ANT's programming an amount that is significant for you (minimum of \$100/year).

*\*\*To learn more about becoming a board member, please reach out to the Executive Director.*

### **Intern**

We offer internships to volunteers who are interested in growing their professional experience with ANT. These positions can be arranged with ANT Staff and will look different for each individual applying.

### **Events Volunteer**

Throughout the year, there are a number of fundraising and community events that require many hands for planning, gathering materials and supplies, and setting up and tearing down. This requires no specialized training, just a willingness and energy to do what needs to be done with a smile. Previous experience in organizing and hosting events is appreciated.

### **Administrative and Marketing Volunteer**

Although we have a small office, we do sometimes need help with graphic design, PR and marketing, fundraising, web design, and social media management. No one



person is expected to do all of this, but there is something for everyone. The time commitment for office helpers depends on their availability and the type of task they wish to help with.

## **ANT Personnel Policies**

### **Nondiscrimination/Anti-Harassment Policy and Complaint Procedure**

Animals as Natural Therapy is committed to a work and volunteer environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Each individual has the right to work and volunteer in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal employment opportunities and prohibits unlawful discriminatory practices, including harassment. Therefore, ANT expects that all relationships among persons in the office and on the farm will be business-like and free of explicit bias, prejudice and harassment.

ANT has developed this policy to ensure that all its employees and volunteers can be in an environment free from unlawful harassment, discrimination and retaliation. ANT will make every reasonable effort to ensure that all concerned are familiar with these policies and are aware that any complaint in violation of such policies will be investigated and resolved appropriately.

Any employee or volunteer who has questions or concerns about these policies should talk with the Director or their immediate supervisor.

These policies should not, and may not, be used as a basis for excluding or separating individuals of a particular gender, or any other protected characteristic, from participating in business or work-related social activities or discussions. In other words, no one should make the mistake of engaging in discrimination or exclusion to avoid allegations of harassment. The law and the policies of Animals as Natural Therapy prohibit disparate treatment on the basis of sex or any other protected characteristic, with regard to terms, conditions, privileges and perquisites of employment. The prohibitions against harassment, discrimination and retaliation are intended to complement and further those policies, not to form the basis of an exception to them.

### **Retaliation**

Animals as Natural Therapy encourages reporting of all perceived incidents of discrimination or harassment. It is the policy of ANT to promptly and thoroughly investigate such reports. ANT prohibits retaliation against any individual who reports discrimination or harassment or participates in an investigation of such reports.

### **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment constitutes discrimination and is illegal under federal, state and local laws. For the purposes of this policy, “sexual harassment” is defined, as in the



Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Guidelines, as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when, for example: a) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, b) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or c) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 recognizes two types of sexual harassment: a) quid pro quo and b) hostile work environment. Sexual harassment may include a range of subtle and not-so-subtle behaviors and may involve individuals of the same or different gender. Depending on the circumstances, these behaviors may include unwanted sexual advances or requests for sexual favors; sexual jokes and innuendo; verbal abuse of a sexual nature; commentary about an individual's body, sexual prowess or sexual deficiencies; leering, whistling or touching; insulting or obscene comments or gestures; display in the workplace of sexually suggestive objects or pictures; and other physical, verbal or visual conduct of a sexual nature.

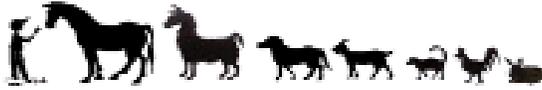
### **Harassment**

Harassment on the basis of any other protected characteristic is also strictly prohibited. Under this policy, harassment is verbal, written or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of their race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, disability, marital status, citizenship, genetic information, or any other characteristic protected by law, or that of their relatives, friends or associates, and that: a) has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment, b) has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance, or c) otherwise adversely affects an individual's employment opportunities.

Harassing conduct includes epithets, slurs or negative stereotyping; threatening, intimidating or hostile acts; denigrating jokes; and written or graphic material that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group that is placed on walls or elsewhere on the employer's premises or circulated in the workplace, on company time or using company equipment by email, phone (including voice messages), text messages, social networking sites or other means.

### **Individuals and Conduct Covered**

These policies apply to all applicants, employees, and volunteers, whether related to conduct engaged in by fellow employees or volunteers or by someone not directly



connected to Animals as Natural Therapy (e.g., an outside vendor, consultant or customer).

Conduct prohibited by these policies is unacceptable in the workplace and in any work-related setting outside the workplace, such as during business trips, business meetings and business-related social events.

### **Reporting an Incident of Harassment, Discrimination or Retaliation**

Animals as Natural Therapy encourages reporting of all perceived incidents of discrimination, harassment or retaliation, regardless of the offender's identity or position. Individuals who believe that they have been the victim of such conduct should discuss their concerns with their immediate supervisor, Executive Director, or Board Governance Committee. See the complaint procedure described below.

In addition, ANT encourages individuals who believe they are being subjected to such conduct to promptly advise the offender that their behavior is unwelcome and to request that it be discontinued. Often this action alone will resolve the problem. ANT recognizes, however, that an individual may prefer to pursue the matter through complaint procedures.

### **Complaint Procedure**

Individuals who believe they have been the victims of conduct prohibited by this policy or believe they have witnessed such conduct should discuss their concerns with their immediate supervisor, Executive Director, or Board Governance Committee.

Animals as Natural Therapy encourages prompt reporting of complaints or concerns so that rapid and constructive action can be taken before relationships become irreparably strained. Therefore, while no fixed reporting period has been established, early reporting and intervention have proven to be the most effective method of resolving actual or perceived incidents of harassment.

Any reported allegations of harassment, discrimination or retaliation will be investigated promptly. The investigation may include individual interviews with the parties involved and, where necessary, with individuals who may have observed the alleged conduct or may have other relevant knowledge.

Animals as Natural Therapy will maintain confidentiality throughout the investigatory process to the extent consistent with adequate investigation and appropriate corrective action.

Retaliation against an individual for reporting harassment or discrimination or for participating in an investigation of a claim of harassment or discrimination is a serious violation of this policy and, like harassment or discrimination itself, will be



subject to disciplinary action. Acts of retaliation should be reported immediately and will be promptly investigated and addressed.

Misconduct constituting harassment, discrimination or retaliation will be dealt with appropriately. Responsive action may include, for example, training, referral to counseling or disciplinary action such as a warning, reprimand, withholding of a promotion or pay increase, reassignment, temporary suspension without pay, or termination, as ANT believes appropriate under the circumstances.

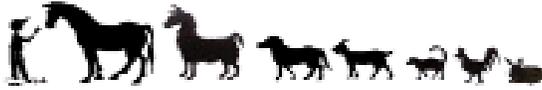
If a party to a complaint does not agree with its resolution, that party may appeal to Animals as Natural Therapy's executive director.

False and malicious complaints of harassment, discrimination, or retaliation (as opposed to complaints that, even if erroneous, are made in good faith) may be the subject of appropriate disciplinary action.

### **Drug and Alcohol Policy**

Animals as Natural Therapy (ANT) is committed to providing a safe work environment and to fostering the well-being and health of its staff, volunteers and clients. That commitment is jeopardized when any ANT staff, volunteer or client uses illegal drugs or alcohol while performing duties for ANT, comes to the farm with these substances present in their body, or possesses, distributes, or sells drugs on the premises. ANT has established the following policy with regard to alcohol and other drugs to ensure that we can meet our obligations to our staff, volunteers and clients.

1. It is a violation of our policy for any staff, volunteer or client to possess, sell, trade or offer for sale illegal drugs or otherwise engage in the use of illegal drugs or alcohol while performing ANT program duties or participating in ANT programming.
2. It is a violation of our policy for anyone to report to ANT under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol.
3. It is a violation of our policy for anyone to use prescription drugs illegally. (If one legally uses prescribed controlled substances/narcotics, they must notify their supervisor. As long as it does not affect one's performance and judgment at ANT, it may be allowed.)
4. Anyone coming to ANT under the influence of alcohol, illicit drugs or prescribed drugs that are affecting one's judgment will be asked to leave the premises. If this occurs one will be put on probation and may be asked to give up one's volunteer or participant position.
5. If it is suspected that a staff member, volunteer or client is attending programming under the influence of any of the above substances, they will be spoken to privately by the supervisor, given local resources that are available for getting help, and may be asked to undergo drug screening. If it is found that the



person has been dishonest with their supervisor, they will be removed from the ANT program.

6. If indicated, the staff person, volunteer or client is responsible to seek and receive treatment and to comply with treatment and aftercare plans as prescribed.

The goal of this policy is to balance our respect for individuals with the need to maintain a safe, productive and Substance-Free environment. The intent of this policy is to offer a helping hand to those who need it, while sending a clear message that substance use is incompatible with working at ANT.

### **Volunteer Dismissal**

ANT has the right to dismiss a volunteer if they do not comply with organizational policies or respect the ANT Team Contract. The services we provide at ANT require that volunteers and staff work together cohesively as a team. If a volunteer is not a good fit for our programming, we have the right to let them go.



## Safety Protocols and Procedures

### Facility Safety Basics

- First Aid Kits:
  - Horse/Animal Location: in feed room; small kits in trailer and Mobile ANT van
  - Human Location: in meeting room
- Fire extinguishers: inside main barn south, east, and west entrances; in the feed room; inside the shop between the two main doors; in the program office (attached to the shop); in Mobile ANT van (driver's side door); at main entrance to lower barn (Richard's); inside the main ANT office.
- Emergency phone next to power breaker box in tack lockers in the main barn

### Dogs at Animals as Natural Therapy

To ensure the safety and well-being of resident animals and all visitors to ANT's farm, the following rules have been established in respect to program and non-program (volunteers') dogs:

- During business hours, Resident / Program Dogs may be loose around the facility if under supervision. If necessary, for a participant's safety, the resident dogs will be enclosed in the house.
- Non-Resident Dogs will be enclosed in owners' automobiles (weather permitting) at all times. It is preferable that they are not brought to the farm at all. When on any ANT property, Non-resident Dogs must be on leash at all times with an attendant present.
- Only Resident Dogs or dogs given permission by ANT staff are allowed in the barnyard.
- Anyone with a dog on ANT farm MUST clean up after their dog immediately.

### General Safety Requirements and Legal Responsibilities

In case an accident occurs and leads to litigation, the riding program and these standards and practices that follow will be scrutinized according to the standard practices within the industry, probably by an expert witness who is an established equestrian. If the program meets the standards there is less likelihood of negligence leading to an accident, and a better chance of defending the program if a lawsuit should occur.

- Liability insurance at ANT is provided for:
  - Clients/participants
  - Instructors
  - Volunteers who are background checked through Sterling Volunteers



- Riding is allowed in the barnyard, round pen, arena, and around the property as well as parts of the neighbor Richard's property only under supervision of a PATH Intl. CTRI instructor.
- Mounting in the barnyard, round pen, or arena only.
- Minimum number of staff required per student: one staff/volunteer for up to four students.
- Rule of 3 - Minimum of 2 other people should always be with a student. In other words, there should never be an adult alone with a child for liability purposes. If you need to move out of sight of an instructor for some reason, please notify them first.
- The instructor and mental health professional are required to carry their cell phones when working with participants.
- The farm feeder and horse trainer are required to carry a cell phone when working alone.
- Safety rules are posted in the barn.
- Incident/Accident reports will be reviewed at least annually to assess if changes need to be made in practice.

### **Guidelines for Rider Safety**

- All riding sessions must be supervised by a PATH Intl. CTRI.
- Hair should always be out of the rider or horse handler's eyes. Tie it back or put it under a hat/helmet if possible.
- Do not allow participants to chew gum while riding, it can be accidentally inhaled causing the participant to choke.
- Gloves are advisable for warmth and protection up to an individual's discretion.

### **Equipment/Attire for Riding**

- All students, mentors, interns, and staff will wear an ASTM-SEI-approved fitted helmet when riding or driving a horse.
  - Helmets must fit the rider's head snugly and have a strong, secure chin strap to stay in place during a fall. Chin strap is to be snug enough so that it cannot slip over the chin.
  - Helmets should have adequate padding and/or suspension type headband to protect the head in case of a fall.
  - Helmets are to fit onto the participant's head with two inches of space above eyebrows.
  - Instructors are to double-check the fit of every participant's helmet.
- Riding attire should include long pants and boots with a heel. Shirts with sleeves are recommended. Avoid excessively baggy clothes that may cause accidents.



Layer clothes for more extreme temperatures. Avoid loose jackets and coats that can catch on the saddle horn.

- Wear boots or sturdy walking shoes while working around the horses. No open-toed shoes or sandals permitted while working around horses or riding.
- If possible, leave dangling or bulky jewelry at home as it can interfere with horse handling/riding and could get lost easily if it falls off at the farm.
- A student will always wear boots with smooth soles and heels when riding with stirrups. If they are unable to wear boots with heels, then Devonshire stirrups must be used.
- Saddles: Horses are to be re-fitted for saddles at least twice yearly by staff and their saddle charts updated accordingly. Staff will determine that the saddle fits the horse's back without creating painful pressure points on the spine or back muscles.

### **Instructor Duties at the Beginning of the Riding Session:**

- Instructors will ascertain a rider's level of experience and may need to change that participant's choice of horse or limit the mounted activities of that participant according to their riding ability and confidence level.
- Check equipment to be sure that it is appropriate for the activity, in safe condition, and adjusted properly to the horse and rider before each ride.
- Check the tightness of the cinch before mounting and again before advancing to a trot. The front cinch must be fastened securely before the back cinch or breast collar and removed last when un-tacking.
- Western back cinches must be attached to the front cinch by a strap to prevent slipping back and flanking the horse which can cause bucking.
- Adjust stirrups with help of volunteers.
- Stay beside the student when they mount, assuring the horse is controlled and to facilitate ease and comfort in the mounting process. Encourage their independence and for them to ask for help when needed.
- Recheck cinch and stirrups for security and comfort after the mounting process.
- Do a communications check to ensure the student's ability to control the horse (i.e. walk, halt, turning).

### **Emergency Procedures for Riding Instructors and Volunteers**

#### **Runaway horse/Rider out of control:**

- If this occurs in the arena= Halt all horses. Mentors hold onto reins or lead ropes of all horses even if their participant was previously riding independently. Instructor(s) move to calm the horse that is out of control but do not step directly in front of them, as this could make them turn quickly and cause the rider to fall.



The horse will likely stop at the gate. Instructor is to call quick, simple calm instructions like, "Sit deep," "Whoa," "Pull back," "Hold onto the horn."

- If this occurs on the trail= Halt all horses. Mentors hold onto lead ropes while all other riders remain on their horses. If one of their horses wants to bolt to follow the running horse, one instructor will come to them and help them dismount while the other instructor heads toward the runaway horse and rider. If a runaway horse continues to run and does not stop, then one instructor will continue to dismount other riders. In most situations, youth who go on trail rides as part of a riding lesson will have volunteers at the head of their horse to prevent runaway situations.

### **Falls:**

If a rider falls off their horse, the following procedure should be followed:

- Instructors should calmly but quickly stop the class. All mentors should take charge of horses immediately. All horses are to move away from the fallen rider and halt.
- The volunteer mentor working with the fallen rider should immediately lead the horse away from the rider.
- One instructor attends to the fallen rider. Second instructor attends to other participants in the class. Other riders are to remain on horses unless the fallen rider is badly injured - if 911 needs to be called - or if remaining riders request to dismount or if the fall caused horses to become unsettled to the point of being unsafe.
- Keep the rider on the ground and ask them to stay still until they can be checked for signs of injury. Instructor will ask them questions about where they are hurting and the severity of their injury. Often after a fall, it takes several minutes for the initial shock and pain to subside and for the rider and staff to determine the severity of the injury.
- All ANT instructors are CPR/1st aid certified and will apply their training to assess the severity of injury and provide first aid to the fallen rider.
- Signs of injury that require immediate call of 911 include:
  - Unconsciousness. Check the airway immediately.
  - Bleeding or fluid draining from the mouth, nose or ears.
  - Serious bleeding—apply direct pressure.
  - Limb at an unnatural angle or pain on pressure, pain on movement. **DO NOT MOVE THEM**
  - Pupils contract unevenly.
  - Signs of shock (paleness, mottled color, sweating, nausea, fainting)
  - If you suspect either the possibility of head or spinal injury, keep the person absolutely still until 911 is called and skilled EMTs arrive.
- Signs of injury that do not require immediate call of 911 include:



- Soreness or stiffness where they landed.
- Rider can communicate clearly and coherently about what part of their body is hurting.
- Mild abrasions and bruising.
- If the rider is uninjured, reassure them and help them process potential causes of the fall. Instructors will give further instruction to prevent recurrence.
- When a rider remounts, give them time to rebuild their confidence with easy riding before they are asked to try a more difficult task.
- Be sure the rest of the class understands what happened. Often those who watched a fall are more frightened than the one who experienced it.
- Staff will fill out an incident report, send it to the insurance company and keep a copy on file. Fill out an abbreviated incident report to give to guardian(s) when they arrive at the farm.

### **Runaway Participant:**

If a participant runs away from the facility, staff will immediately call the participant's agency, family, and only 911 if the family cannot be reached. Every effort should be made to prevent this event before it occurs.

### **Participant Out of Control:**

If a participant gets violent or verbally abusive, they will be asked to step away from the group with an ANT staff member, the youth's mentor, and a staff member from their agency if present. Once the participant has been separated from the group, ANT staff will practice de-escalation skills. When their behavior is under control they will be allowed to return to the group. If the participant and/or ANT staff ultimately decides that the participant will be unable to uphold the ANT team contract moving forward, then youth's caretakers will be contacted to pick them up from the farm.

### **Earthquake:**

These procedures should be followed in the case of an earthquake:

- If participants are riding in the arena, trained staff and volunteers should help all youth dismount from horses immediately, and one instructor (or therapist if they are present) should take the youth out of the arena and into the driveway. The other instructor should direct mentors to lead horses to pasture A and remove lead ropes after closing the gate.
- If participants are in the meeting room, barnyard, or main barn, instructors should remove all youth to the center of the driveway, away from all buildings, trees, animals, and power poles. Participants should be kept together until instructors are certain all after-shocks have stopped. Practice deep breathing with the group and keep calm. Staff perform roll call.



- One staff member will call parents and report on the status of the youth. Instructors will determine whether to finish the session or send youth home.

### **Fire:**

- If a fire is occurring in the **main barn, feed room, shop, office, or Mike's house**, one instructor + at least one mentor takes all participants to Richard's driveway. This instructor will call or assign someone to call 911 and give the address: 284 Kline Road, Bellingham. Then notify parents ASAP for youth pickup.
- If a fire is occurring at the **lower barn (Richard's barn)**, the procedures are the same as above except that the participants/mentors/instructors are to gather in the main ANT driveway rather than Richard's driveway.
- The second instructor and the other mentors will put horses into the pasture(s) farthest from the fire. Halters can be left on but lead ropes unclipped. After horses are let loose, this instructor and any available mentors should use their discretion to decide whether to activate the fire extinguishers and fight the fire. If the fire is already out of control and the small animals are in danger, they should let the goats and chickens loose and load the rabbits into the crate next to their condo and remove them from the danger area. If the fire is contained, they should activate the fire extinguishers, spraying at the base of the fire, not the flames.

### **How to Use a Fire Extinguisher**

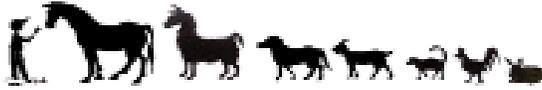
There is a simple acronym to remember to operate most fire extinguishers – PASS, which stands for Pull, Aim, Squeeze and Sweep.

1. Pull the pin at the top of the cylinder. Some units require the releasing of a lock latch or pressing a puncture lever.
2. Aim the nozzle at the base of the fire.
3. Squeeze or press the handle.
4. Sweep the contents from side to side at the base of the fire until it goes out.
5. Shut off the extinguisher and then watch carefully for a rekindling of the fire.

### **When to Fight a Fire with and extinguisher:**

You should fight a fire with a fire extinguisher only when all the following are true:

- The fire department is being or has been called. (9-1-1)
- The building is being evacuated.
- The fire is small and confined to the immediate areas where it started such as in a wastebasket, cushion, small appliance, stove, etc.
- You can fight the fire with your back to a safe exit / escape route.



- Your extinguisher is rated for the type of fire you are fighting, is in good working order and you already know how to operate it. Fire extinguishers on the farm are tested and serviced regularly.
- You have had training in use of the extinguisher and are confident that you can operate it effectively.



## Horse Handling Required Readings

The following required readings are meant to supplement the horse handling training that all volunteers at ANT receive. The included resources outline the guidelines and expectations we have for volunteers who will be handling horses. Please familiarize yourself with the content and review it as you need. If you are ever in need of additional support with horse handling, please communicate with ANT staff. We will be happy to supply you with additional resources and training as need be.

- ANT Volunteer Guidelines for Handling Horses
- Equus Magazine Horse Body Language Chart
- ANT Horse Profiles

### ANT Volunteer Guidelines for Handling Horses

In this reading, we will cover horse herd safety, approaching, haltering, leading, and grooming. This is by no means an exhaustive information packet on horse handling or equine behavior. If you would like additional resources, we are happy to point you to a variety of articles and books that could be helpful to you. Learning about horses is a lifelong journey for everyone, and we are here to support you!

#### Horse Herd Safety

Some things we need to know about horses to maintain safety around them:

- The Herd Hierarchy – It is important to get to know the herd and its order of dominance. This will help your horse feel physically and emotionally safe around you. The more dominant horses in the herd will ‘push’ the less dominant horses around by making them move their feet. Horses move each other by their body language (ex: ears pinned back, teeth bared, hard eyes and wrinkled nose, posturing, etc). Because of this, it is always important to be fully aware when leading horses near another’s personal space. They may try to scoot away from the other horse in an attempt to avoid getting ‘pushed’ by that horse. In the process, they may be unaware of where you are standing and run into you by accident.
- Horse Communication styles: Horses communicate with an array of body postures, gestures, and expressions. They use their eyes, ears, tail, feet, nostrils, lips, and voice to communicate.
- Horses generally move away from pressure. Whether that is pressure that humans put on them or pressure from another horse or a stressor or perceived threat. This is an important part of equine behavior that applies in



- many areas of horse handling. Pressure to a horse does not have to be in a physical sense. It can be a facial expression, a noise, or an energetic pressure.
- Each horse has their individual traits and personality. As you work with each horse, you will become familiar with their unique needs and preferences and how they react or respond to different situations or activities.
  - Horses are prey animals. We can give them confidence through our calm leadership and deep breathing. When horses perceive a threat, they will either ‘fight, flight, or freeze’ (but they often choose flight). Horses always need an ‘out.’ In other words, they may feel claustrophobic when they feel trapped between two things without a way out. Be aware of that when leading or handling them in tight spaces.

**Animals as Natural Therapy’s philosophy of human/horse interaction:**

- We honor the horse as facilitators at ANT. We rely on their feedback often to lead the lesson and lead conversations to participants. At ANT we respectfully ask horses to cooperate with us out of teamwork rather than force or pain. The human may ask to lead the dance using gentle but clear direction or redirection rather than harsh discipline. Only well-timed and necessary discipline and correction should be used when we need to set our own boundaries, communicate expectations of their behaviors towards humans, and reiterate our need for them to keep us and participants safe. Horses seek a knowledgeable fair herd leader who will balance clear communication, confidence, coordination, awareness, safety, firmness, cooperation, listening skills, consistency yet flexibility, mutual respect, and humility.
- Animals see us as vibrational beings. When different emotions change our vibrations, our animals may feel the difference. Learning to be present and accountable is a daily practice. Humans are advised to tune into our own emotional state before entering the horses’ space. Later, if something comes up for us, we take a moment to acknowledge it with the horse. They sense and trust congruency between our internal state and how we present on the outside. The horse values congruency and picks up on us ‘faking it.’ They will be okay if we just acknowledge our feelings, but don’t necessarily require us to “fix” them.

**Contract with our horses:** Every time we work with our horses, we make a promise to them. We make sure we are looking at them softly in the eye as we tell them:

*“I need you to take good care of me, and I promise to take good care of you. If I make a mistake, I need you to forgive me. If you make a mistake, I promise to forgive you.”*



- Notice that in this contract, there are no conditions. It does not say “I’ll take care of you *if* you take care of me.” You promise to take care and forgive no matter what and ask them to do the same.
- Even though they may not understand the words we are saying, they can sense a genuine intention and energy behind the words that we say. They are receptive to this promise, and you may even notice that they give you feedback while you or their participant is making the promise (ex: they may lick and chew, soften their eyes, lower their head).
- Each person has their own unique ‘horse’ background and various degree/level of horse experience. We ask that everyone handle the horses in the same manner, using the same cues. These may be slightly or even largely different from the way you were taught to handle horses. However, we ask this of everyone in order to prevent horse burnout. Our horses have multiple people handling them weekly and even daily. Their well-being and longevity here are of utmost importance. Therefore, it is crucial that every person handles them in a similar manner so they do not get confused or frustrated by people using different cues they are not used to.

### **Entering a horse’s space/Haltering:**

- Approach always with an attitude of asking for permission. We wait to be invited into the horse’s space. Speak the horse’s name before entering his/her personal space (20 feet), walk toward the left shoulder. Wait until the horse invites you closer to them. This may look like turning their head towards you, pointing their left ear towards you, or even a more subtle invitation. If a horse is grazing, they may be too distracted by grass. You can just stand next to them and let them get used to you in their space before attempting to halter them.
- After you’ve approached the horse, let them sniff the back of your hand. Put the lead line over their neck. This signifies to them that you will next ask them to put their head into the halter. Facing forward, holding the halter buckle in left hand and strap in right hand, hold halter below their nose and ask them to drop their nose into the halter. Even if they lower their head slightly, this is an indication they are ready for the halter. Gently slide it onto their nose and gently toss the strap over the poll of the horse toward yourself. Buckle. Since we usually use nylon halters that do not break, we ask that for safety purposes you do not tuck the long end of the strap into the buckle. This way, we can quickly release the halter in an emergency situation.
- Be aware that just being in their space can feel invasive to some horses. Notice and understand if your presence is causing them stress. Notice physical and



emotional signs of stress or changes in behavior. Be sure to be present in mind and body before you enter a horse's space.

### **Leading a horse:**

- We keep horses safe by keeping a 15–20-foot distance (or about 2 horse lengths) between them and other horses at all times.
- Verbal cues we use with our horses:
  - “click” = to ask them to move forward.
  - “easy” = to ask them to slow down
  - “woah” = to ask them to stop.
  - “back” = to ask them to move backwards
  - “over” = to ask them to move sideways (can apply if you're asking their hind end or shoulders to move to the side)
  - “Psssst!!” = to set a boundary with them and ask them to get out of your space if they are crowding or nipping. This cue can be used as a discipline and should not be overused.
- When giving cues to the horse, remember the order of ‘ask --> respond --> release.’ First, you ask with the slightest pressure possible (we call it ‘asking in the nicest way possible’). Then, when the horse responds, you immediately release the pressure/stop the cue. For example, if you ‘click’ and walk forward and the horse starts walking with you, you release the pressure by discontinuing the ‘click’ and making sure you are not pulling on the lead rope.
- We lead from a position directly across from the horse's neck, which we call the ‘friendship zone,’ and more specifically is the area between their jaw and shoulder. We lead with the right hand on the lead rope about 2-3 feet from the snap, and the left hand holding the long ‘byte’ portion of the rope in loops (not coils). For everyone's safety, make sure the lead rope never touches the ground while leading a horse. Lead with your eyes and shoulders pointed in the direction you are planning on going.
- To ask the horse to go: “Click,” keep your eyes up in the direction you are heading, and begin walking forward with your own feet. Make sure to keep your eyes looking in the direction that you want to go.
- To ask the horse to stop: Say “Woah” in a low, slow voice and at the end of your “woah,” stop your own feet. This gives the horse time to respond without having to stop on a dime (their big bodies can take a bit longer to stop than ours do!)
- To ask the horse to back up: Turn to face the tail of the horse. Switch the lead rope in your hands so your left hand is now the hand that's the closest to the lead rope snap and the right hand holds the looped byte of the rope. Say, “back” in a low slow voice while gently pulling directly into the middle of the



horse's chest. Pulling to the side will turn their head towards you and cause them to be off-balanced and possibly to step on you while attempting to back. Every time the horse takes one step backwards, release the pressure before asking again. Remember: Ask --> respond --> release.

- Helpful leading tip: Sometimes people tend to lead with their right arm tense and 'retracted' into their torso. By walking this way, they are inadvertently pulling the horse's head and subsequently their front feet into the person's space. If you notice this happening while leading, relax your right arm down at your side or even down and slightly away from your body. This adjustment protects your space and asks the horse to walk next to you rather than on top of you.

### **Grooming a horse:**

- This is a great way to connect with the horse you are working with, as well as check for any cuts, swellings, skin issues, or other injuries. If you notice anything out-of-the-ordinary, (ex: cuts, abrasions, swellings) please alert ANT staff so they can treat the horse. Always be aware of the horse. Keep one hand on horse when beside them so you can sense movement and be prepared to move with them. Also, keep your awareness towards their head so you can pick up on their facial expressions and their body language more effectively.
- Groom thoroughly before riding, especially in areas where the saddle/girth will go. Run a bare hand over the entire saddle and girth area before saddling to double-check for caked mud and other debris.
- While grooming, keep two hands on the horse, one holding the tool and the other touching the horse. The purpose of this is to have more connection points with the horse, and also if they swing into you, you can push off of them with one hand and get a safe distance away.
- Use a rubber curry comb first in circles to loosen dirt. Start at the top of their neck, work back toward the tail. Then use a firmer body brush on their body and legs - brushing in the direction of the hair growth - and finally soft brush (face). Be aware that the face and lower half of legs are mostly bone and tendons/ligaments, so they are sensitive to harder brushes and extra caution should be taken while brushing them in these areas.
- Brush/comb out mane and tail. When brushing the tail, stand to the side of the horse's back leg, take tail in one hand, start at the bottom of tail removing snarls as you move upward. Work on sections until the tail is completely brushed out. When brushing mane, grab a section tightly with one hand and brush that section from the bottom towards your hand. This way, you pull against your hand when brushing the hair instead of pulling at the hair follicles on the horse's neck.



- Untie the quick-release knot before brushing face and only brush with permission. Honor the horse's boundaries; if they are reacting to grooming, step back and ask, 'why are they responding in a negative way, what are they afraid of? What could be causing them discomfort?'
- Never fly spray a horse without untying them first. Always ask a staff member first. Some horses are very sensitive to sprays and should be sprayed only by staff members.
- You may need to swing their hips away from you to reposition them so you can groom the other side. If you need to move a horse's hips away from you, place hand on side of horse (with on the hind third of their belly with an exception to their flank area, or on their hip) and saying "OVER" and use pressure until horse moves, increasing as needed, releasing immediately when you get the slightest response. If you are getting no response, you may slowly increase pressure as needed but release the pressure when they move in the desired direction.
- **Picking hooves:** Please only pick hooves with an ANT staff member present. A staff member will demonstrate picking up hooves and putting them down. Horses' hooves get picked regularly by staff.
- **Massage:**
- Ask a staff member to demonstrate some facial, ear, and body massage techniques. Massages are only done by permission of the horse and please untie the quick-release knot before beginning any massages on the face. The Furizzy tool can be used to scratch horses under their midline to scratch and lift their belly. Repeat 3x. Body massages can be used to work out stiffness and sore muscles.

### **Leading through Gates:**

- When leading through gates, it's important to swing the gate away from the horse as you go through it. If you walk through a gate that is opened towards the horse, they can bump it as they go by causing it to swing closed onto their body and potentially cause 'gate squeeze' where the more the horse tries to walk forward through the gate, the harder it squeezes them, and they can become stuck and panicked.
- Ask a staff member to demonstrate different ways to go through a gate with a horse if you are unsure. We have a combination of electric wire gates and solid metal gates that we can go through in different ways. You can always put your lead rope in one hand and send the horse through the gate – then ask them to turn back around and face the gate as you close and latch it.

**Grain/treats fed to horses with permission of ANT staff only.**



- Keep all grain in the feed room and out of the barnyard.
- Treats should only be fed to animals with prior approval by ANT staff. Treats should be fed with a flat hand and thumb laying flat next to their index finger.

### **Horse Safety, Spacing and Visibility During Programming**

- There will be no more than 7 horses being led or ridden in the arena and no more than 3 standard sized horses (or 4 miniature horses) being led or ridden in the round pen during a group session. This does NOT include EAGALA-type activities in which horses are loose in the arena and/or round pen. For activities with loose horses, instructors can increase the maximum number of horses in the space depending on the activity while maintaining the safety of humans and equines.
- Please warn participants of any habits the horse may have. This is to be done in a reassuring way with instructions on how the participant can help the horse to not elicit the fear response. Teach the participant to read the horse's body language and know when they are getting irritated. Teach what may irritate the horse, so they can be thinking one step ahead when an event occurs that could alarm the horse. Reminders are continually needed, depending on the participant's age and abilities.
- Do not work with horses with dangerous habits like rearing, running away with a participant or attacking other horses.
- Do not work with horses with physical disabilities which could cause them to stumble, fall, or act up with a rider, even if this possibility seems unlikely.

### **Other Safety Tips:**

- When tying a horse to twine, never tie with the rope long enough for the horse to be able to step on the rope if they put their head down to try to eat grass. When some horses step on their ropes, they can become severely panicked and cause unintentional injury to themselves and people around them.

## **ANT Horse Profiles**

### **Abby (Abacadabra)**

Born: 2002

Color: Chestnut/sorrel

Breed: Quarter Horse x Dutch Warmblood, Mare

Health: Easy keeper, needs grazing muzzle when turned out on pasture usually. Past problems with feet as they were not given proper care before she came to us. Has had issues with her pelvis and ilio-sacral joint. Pelvis gets out of alignment sometimes and



needs regular body work. She is developing arthritis as she ages. Be careful when picking hind feet – she can experience some popping in her fetlock joint when flexing it. Work experience: Good with leading, good with seven teens grooming her. Started under saddle 2018. Needs emotional honesty from anyone who is going to ride her. Other information: Abby gets very panicked if she steps on her lead rope or reins and feels the pressure on her poll. Please be extra careful when leading or tying her that her rope never is dragging on the ground. If you see her step on her rope, back away from her immediately.

### **Angel**

Born: 2006

Color: Dark bay

Breed: Thoroughbred, mare

Health: Overall healthy. She has a couple of sarcomas on her side.

Work Experience: She has been trained mostly in an English saddle, but has not had consistent training. Does not take a bit currently.

Other Information: She likes children

### **Coco**

Born: 2015

Color: Chocolate with flaxen mane and tail

Breed: Rocky Mountain Horse x Friesian, Mare

Health: Great Health

Work Experience: Still somewhat green under saddle but is confident with beginner riders at the walk. Needs more experienced riders at the trot and canter.

Other Information: Leased to ANT from Jill Whitman

### **Cotton**

Born: 2005 or 2006 (exact age unknown)

Color: Gray

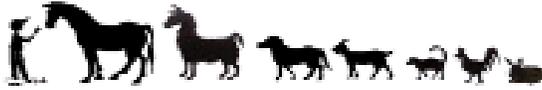
Breed: Quarter Horse, Gelding

Health: Cotton has Navicular disease in front feet and therefore gets tender and sore.

Exercise to be kept at a walk and only trot if he's not sore. He is given Equioxx daily for long-term pain management. He gets intermittent muscle/joint soreness in his hindquarters also.

Work Experience: Has been trained for barrel racing and roping in the past. He is very sensitive to leg aids.

Other Information:



### **Buttercup**

Born: 2008-2009 (exact age unknown)

Color: Palomino Roan

Breed: Miniature horse, mare

Health: Healthy. She is an easy keeper and treats should be fed in moderation. She also needs a grazing muzzle while she is turned out on grass.

Work Experience: Little known about her history before coming to ANT. Requires a firm boundary at beginning of leading, asking her to stay in the friendship zone. Can be pushy at first.

Other Information:

### **Ellie**

Born: 2015

Color: Gray

Breed: Canadian Warmblood, Mare

Health: Recovering from suspensory ligament injury on right front leg.

Work Experience: Has been a competitive eventing horse, evented up to preliminary level. Retired from eventing due to soundness issues.

Other Information: Had a foal a few years ago.

### **Jackson**

Born: 2008-2009 (exact age unknown)

Color: Bay

Breed: Miniature mule (donkey sire x pony dam), Gelding

Health: Jackson is very healthy and has no soundness issues. He is an easy keeper and gets cresty in his neck so treats are to be fed sparingly and he needs a grazing muzzle while turned out to graze.

Work Experience: His early history is not well known but has not done many 'human things' in the past several years. His previous owner did know that the person who had him before her used a heavy hand when leading him, so we are currently working on showing him to communicate and respond with soft cues from his handler.

Other Information:

### **Kip**

Born: 1997 or 1998

Color: Chestnut/sorrel

Breed: Quarter horse, Gelding



**Health:** Kip has some physical challenges and therefore is retired from having riders on him. He has ringbone and is on Equioxx for long-term pain management. He has a roach back and stiff joints, most likely due to arthritis.

**Work Experience:** Unknown specifics of his early work experiences, other than that he showed in western events (pleasure, horsemanship events most likely) at a young age but has done mostly light arena work and trail riding for most of his years.

**Other Information:** He can get pushy while leading sometimes, so his handler may need to set firm boundaries with him.

### **Sally:**

**Born:** 2004-2005 (Exact age unknown)

**Color:** Chestnut/Sorrel with flaxen mane and tail

**Breed:** Haflinger x Quarter Horse, Mare

**Health:** Very healthy and sound. No health concerns or issues. Very easy keeper so treats need to be fed sparingly and she always needs a grazing muzzle when turned out on grass.

**Work Experience:** Sally has more experience in draft horse training than training with a rider. She is gaining a lot of riding experience at ANT.

**Other Information:** Sally is dominant with other horses, and her leader needs to be extra aware when leading her around other horses. She needs a large space, especially from geldings. She can be very pushy and needs a handler with strong boundaries.

### **Scotty:**

**Born:** 1997

**Color:** Varnish Roan

**Breed:** Appaloosa, Gelding

**Health:** He has moon blindness, and his eyesight may be slowly getting worse. Has a hard time transitioning from light to shadows. As he ages, his back is getting weaker and is no longer suitable for riding bareback – even with a bareback pad.

**Work Experience:** Scotty has had rounded training and experience in a western saddle. He has done cow sortings and is very cowy. He has been on the trails and has done arena work also.

**Other Information:** Cinch Scotty gradually. He can be cinchy and feel panicked when cinching. Always allow him to wiggle if he needs to but be sure to take your time. After tightening the cinch, allow him to walk around for a lap around the arena before mounting a rider on him.



## **Shakkar**

Born: 1995

Color: Chestnut/sorrel

Breed: Thoroughbred, Gelding

Health: He has Cushing's disease. No treats please except low carbohydrate treats. He is missing his top incisors.

Work Experience: He started his career on the track as a racehorse and has been a dressage horse since Andrea bought him at age 4.

Other Information: He is very vocal around other horses and has 'stallion tendencies' (although he is not a stallion). He is also quite pushy and needs very firm boundaries from his handler.

## **Sir**

Born: 1993

Color: Chestnut/Sorrel with flaxen mane and tail

Breed: Tennessee Walker, Gelding

Health: Came to ANT having been neglected and under-weight. He has residual fixation on food from his past. Sir's teeth are becoming more compromised as he ages, and he has choked in the past. He needs all treats given in small pieces so as not to cause choke.

Work Experience: Show and trails.

Other information: Sir was a stallion until age 17. He lived alone as a stallion and is very cautious and sometimes fearful around other horses, so be mindful when leading other horses around him or when turning him out in groups of horses.



## **ANT Mentor Guidelines**

Reading the following ANT Mentor Guidelines is required for all volunteers who are interested in mentoring at ANT. This section will supplement the mentor training and provide additional information about the role that mentors play in our animal-assisted programming.

Mentors play a key role in the therapeutic services we provide at Animals as Natural Therapy. They are the main people that after-school program participants engage with during their sessions. By providing one-on-one support to participants, mentors help the instructors set the tone and work towards fulfilling the goals of each session. Their responsibilities are centered around helping the participant develop a relationship with their horse by bringing their attention to the horse's body language. They allow the horse to be the guide for the sessions and use metaphors based on the horse's body language to support the participant in their growth. They may also use metaphors that relate to the participant's experience more generally while they are on the farm.

### **Creating a Therapeutic Space**

Because mentors are so important to the work we do at ANT, it is especially important that they understand the limits to the services we can provide when our psychotherapist is not present. The role of the instructors and mentors during group therapy sessions is to create a therapeutic environment while the role of our psychotherapist (when present) is to provide therapy to our participants. The difference between creating a therapeutic environment and providing therapy can be confusing. We ask that all mentors ask for assistance from an instructor and/or our psychotherapist if they are concerned about how to navigate this line with a participant.

Helpful tips for creating a therapeutic environment:

- Always center the participant and their needs before your own.
- Stay in the present and the future in your conversations with the participant. If the participant wants to discuss something from their past, acknowledge the comment and try to re-center the conversation to the present or future. If they get stuck in the past or you feel uncomfortable, call an instructor over to support the participant. If our psychotherapist is present, they can step in and offer the participant support in navigating their past.
- Avoid any questions or comments that move the youth into past abuses, abusive people or toxic situations.
- Remind the participant that “there's only one thing you have to do right now, and that is what you are doing right now (brush the horse, hold the halter, breath)”



and “there’s only one place you have to be right now and that is where you are right now.”

- Hold space for the participant. Sometimes the most important thing you can offer a participant is a listening ear. You don’t have to be prepared to respond to them in any particular way. If you are curious to learn more about holding space, consider reading the article by Heather Plett in the additional resources section.
- Maintain “guard rails” with your participant, not walls. Avoid creating confrontation or offering resistance with the participant. Instead of saying “no” if they are pushing one of your boundaries, try asking them a question about it or making a suggestion to help keep them safe and enjoying themselves. In instances of a youth doing something that is unsafe, then a firm “no” is sometimes required with an accompanying explanation as to why that is a safety concern.
- Practice self care and grounding when you need to! Remember that your participant will be looking to you as a role model. Take deep breaths if challenges arise for the participant.
- If you ever feel uncomfortable working with a specific participant, please notify the instructors in your session. They will help reassign you to mentor a participant you work well with.
- After each session, practice releasing all of the energies in your body and thoughts in your mind that are not for your highest good. You can also help the horses do this as well by reminding them to let go. Sometimes it is hard not to ‘take on’ others’ emotional struggles, so we encourage this conscious release at the end of the sessions to staff, mentors, and animals.

## **Who We Work With**

The participants we work with in our after-school and summer programming are youth from Northwest Washington who are between the ages of 8 and 18 years old. Most of them are referred to us by their school counselor, personal therapist, or a case worker from a social services agency in the area. Some participants find ANT on their own or with their families and reach out in a time of need. Our participants are often struggling with their mental, emotional, and behavioral health. Many of them are receiving additional care and support outside of ANT as well.

## **Confidentiality and Reporting**

Our programming staff will often share useful details about a participant’s background with their mentor when appropriate. Mentors are not privy to all of the information that is shared with ANT staff during participant intakes due to confidentiality. If mentors ever have questions or concerns regarding the needs of a participant, they should share them with the instructors of their session.



The instructors and psychotherapists at ANT are mandated reporters. This means that we are required to report any concerns of abuse, suicidal ideations/plans, or self harm if they arise. If a participant discloses any concerning information to a mentor, the mentor should notify an instructor or the psychotherapist when appropriate. If the mentor is concerned for the immediate safety of a participant, they should notify an instructor as soon as possible. If a participant discloses information about an incident from the past, the mentor should call over an instructor to support the participant. The mentor should share the information they hear with an instructor as soon as possible.

### **Typical Mentoring Experience**

Generally, we ask that mentors arrive 15 to 30 minutes before the start of an after-school group therapy session and 30 minutes before day camp begins in the summer. We use the time before the participants arrive to review our plan for the session and share any reminders we have with mentors. Mentors can also use this time to check in with the herd if they want to ground themselves before a session.

After-school group therapy sessions are 1.5 hours long. Instructors and mentors will work together to decide on the theme and activities for the session. Some common themes we cover are leadership, trust, friendship, boundary setting, and self care. The session will begin with an opening circle where everyone will introduce themselves, do a physical and emotional check-in, and answer a question of the day. During introductions, we offer everyone an opportunity to share their personal pronouns if they would like to. This is an important step to opening the space for everyone to share how they would like to be identified. (If you have any questions about this or would like more clarification, please ask for additional resources.)

The physical and emotional check-in is another important step in the beginning of our sessions because it helps everyone bring self awareness to the session. Practicing self-awareness is a key skill that we work on developing with our participants. It is also helpful to the animals at the farm because they often pick up the energies that we bring into their space. Acknowledging how our bodies and hearts are feeling with them can help them feel safe and comfortable working with us.

After the opening circle, the group will move into the activities planned for the session. The instructors and psychotherapist will explain the activities and often lead the group through a grounding exercise before we go greet the horses. Once they have explained the activities, mentors will begin working one-on-one with the participant they are partnered with. Before they begin the activities with their horse, the participant will say the Horse Contract to their horse with the help of the mentor.

*The Horse Contract: I promise to take care of you, and I need you to take care of me. I promise to forgive you if you make a mistake, and I need you to forgive me if I make a mistake.*



For the rest of the session, the mentor will support the participant in working with their horse and following the animal as a guide in the activity. They will engage with them in conversation about the theme of the session and ask them questions about how the horse responds to their words and actions.

When the participants are finished with the activities of the session, we will have a closing circle. This is an opportunity for the participants to share about what they have learned during their session. We often use an experiential learning tool called “What? So what? Now what?” to facilitate the closing circle. Participants will share about a challenge they encountered with their horse or an experience that impacted them during their time here, what they thought, felt, or did about that challenge or experience, and how they can apply what they learned in other places in their lives.

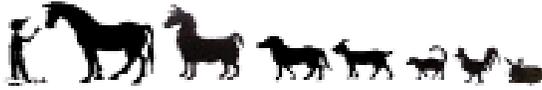
After the closing circle, mentors, instructors, and the psychotherapist will debrief together. This time is used to discuss how the session went and come up with a plan for the next session. Mentors are also encouraged to bring up any concerns or questions they have during debrief.

### **Appropriate Conversation Topics**

- How was your day? How was your week?
- What stayed with you from our last session? Did you learn something new about what we covered?
- What’s your favorite part of school?
- How do you like to take care of yourself?
- Is there someone in your life who you look up to as a leader?
- What do you look for in a good friend?
- Do you have any siblings? What are they like?
- How do you like to spend your free time? Do you have any hobbies?
- When you’re feeling upset, how do you help yourself calm down?
- If you share a common experience with a participant, you might tell them about how you felt or what you did when you had that experience. This can give them some comfort in knowing that they are not alone in their experience. If there is an opportunity to do this, be careful not to divert the conversation away from the participant’s feelings and needs.

### **Experiential Learning at ANT**

At ANT, we facilitate learning through the experiences participants have with our animals. This helps them build their social and emotional intelligence. By asking questions about the animals’ body language and communication, mentors support participants in their experiential learning process. For example, if a horse is nipping at a participant, you might ask them what they think the horse is trying to communicate with



them or whether they ever feel like they need to figuratively ‘nip’ at someone. Remember to always stay curious and avoid judging the participant or their horse.

Questions that can help facilitate experiential learning:

- Where else in your life does this present itself/apply?
- Who else in your life treats you like this? Do you treat yourself like this?
- What do you think that behavior means? What is the animal communicating by doing that?
- What do you need? What do you think the animal needs?
- How are you feeling right now? How is your heart? How is your body?
- What did you notice about the animal when you \_\_\_\_\_ ?

### **Mentor Positions**

Occasionally, mentors will be asked to assist participants who need extra support to ride by being a side-walker, horse leader, or spotter. We will use these positions with participants who are young or who have physical limitations.

Side-Walkers:

Side-walkers are responsible for the comfort and safety of the rider while they are on the horse. It is important that side-walkers are alert to the participant and the guidance of the instructor at all times. The side-walker will be responsible for helping maintain the student’s balance and leg/hand position by maintaining a “thigh hold.” This position is when you place your forearm closest to the rider across the rider’s thigh and hold on to the front of the saddle or pad with your fingers. If you push down with your wrist, keep the rider’s thigh tight against the horse, this allows firm support and keeps you in the correct position next to the rider’s leg. Another position a side-walker may be asked to support the rider is at the hip. This involves holding the hand and wrist cupped around the rider’s hip. This allows for more support of the rider’s pelvis and spine. It is important in this position that the side-walker does not rest on the horse’s back. The horse needs to carry the rider and can get uncomfortable if it needs to carry the weight of the side-walker as well. Should the student start to slip, resist the urge to grab them. Instead, gently push them back into the proper position with their permission to touch. Volunteers will only be asked to perform the role of side-walker if their shoulder mobility allows for them to safely and comfortably (without pain) aid a rider while holding their arm at or above shoulder height for extended periods of time.

Horse Leaders:

While the side-walker is mainly responsible for the student, the leader is responsible for the horse. They are responsible for helping the participant and the instructor groom and tack the horse. Their responsibility during the lesson is to guide the horse throughout the lesson. Should a problem arise during a lesson, all leaders should quietly bring their



horses to a halt. They will remain in this position until the instructor directs them to do otherwise. Please be aware the horse is a professional, and needs to be treated as such. This is their job. While at work, please do not play with the horse's head, or distract their attention away from the rider and class.

#### Spotters:

The spotter is occasionally used with independent riders that can safely balance and guide by themselves. The spotter will be assigned a rider and will help that rider from the time they arrive to the time they leave. During the lesson, the spotter will be positioned by the instructor in a certain spot of the arena. They will be available to assist the rider whenever necessary. Mentors often become spotters as their students become more independent.

#### **Additional Resources**

- “What it means to ‘hold space’ for other people and how to do it well” by Heather Plett <https://heatherplett.com/2015/03/hold-space/>
- “Don't Get Swept Away By the River” [https://animalsasnaturaltherapy-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/program\\_animalsasnaturaltherapy\\_org/Efl4q4knaM5Dl2CSbTuYcYsBuPjTwxMdMd5O8SxtPpobnA?e=4cazET](https://animalsasnaturaltherapy-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/program_animalsasnaturaltherapy_org/Efl4q4knaM5Dl2CSbTuYcYsBuPjTwxMdMd5O8SxtPpobnA?e=4cazET)