



# CLOUD DANCERS

T H E R A P E U T I C   H O R S E M A N S H I P

## Rider Handbook

March 2020



## Welcome!

Cloud Dancers is a 501C3 non-profit organization that does not receive any city, state or federal funding. We are responsible for earning or raising 100% of our operating budget through donations from individuals and businesses, fund raising events and grants.

Cloud Dancers is a member center of **PATH International** (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International). As such, Cloud Dancers complies with PATH Int'l standards for safety, precautions, and contraindications. Our instructors are PATH certified. For more information on PATH visit **PATHintl.org**.

## Staff/Volunteers

- Karen Molony, Equine & Facilities Manager and Head Instructor
- Louisa Roberts, Program Coordinator
- Amanda Ruffin, Instructor
- Sandy LaBarbera, Volunteer Coordinator



For the safety of all riders, trained volunteers, under the guidance of PATH certified instructors, work as Horse Leaders and Side Walkers in all lessons. If parents are interested in becoming volunteers, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Sandy LaBarbera. More information about our Staff and Board can be found on our web site.

## Web/Facebook/Instagram

You can find the application packet, program calendar, and other helpful information on our website, [www.clouddancersthp.org](http://www.clouddancersthp.org). Find us on Facebook for regular updates, related media, and pictures of our students and families. Fun pictures can also be seen on our Instagram site.

## What is Therapeutic Riding?

Therapeutic riding uses activities with horses for the purpose of contributing positively to the cognitive, physical, emotional and social well-being of individuals with disabilities. There are four therapeutic riding classifications—therapy, education, sport, and recreation & leisure.

Currently Cloud Dancers practices in three of these areas with plans to incorporate therapy by licensed health professionals, such as Occupational and Physical therapists at a later date. Currently our PATH certified instructors design and implement activities with horses that address cognitive, behavioral, psychological and physical goals, as well as teach skills in riding, vaulting or ground work. Personal pride and improved self-esteem come from accomplishing new tasks and learning new skills. The pure enjoyment of the horse-human bond brings joy and pleasure along with new friendships and relationships.



Individuals with disabilities that may respond positively to therapeutic riding include people with Down Syndrome, Autism, MS, paralysis, amputations, ADD, ADHD, developmental delays, Cerebral Palsy, brain injuries, strokes, drug or alcohol abuse, depression, hearing and vision impairments and other disabilities.

## Riding

Cloud Dancers adapts safe and fun riding techniques to individuals with a variety of disabilities. Certified Instructors develop goals, with input of riders and/or parents/guardians that meet needs for developing core and muscle strength, increasing physical flexibility and balance, improving fine motor skills, enhancing communication and listening skills and more. Fun, beneficial activities on a horse could include retrieving stuffed zoo animals from corral fences and barrels and taking them back to the zoo in the center of arena. Games with colors and shapes may enhance communication and listening skills. Playing red light, green light on horseback focuses on following directions. Flexibility, balance and core strength may show improvement from the rhythmic gait of a horse being similar to the human gait. Guiding a horse requires good posture with heads up and eyes in the direction you want to go. During lessons riders also learn about horse care and anatomy, grooming and tacking.

## Interactive Vaulting

Vaulting is currently not offered due to fact that our vaulting instructor moved out of state. We are currently recruiting for a new PATH certified vaulting instructor.



Vaulting is an equestrian discipline of gymnastic movement on the back of a moving horse. Therapeutically, vaulting lends itself well to participants with a broad range of abilities and goals—from simply feeling the movement of the horse to more advanced gymnastic exercises. Unlike other mounted disciplines, vaulting allows the rider to move freely into different positions on the horse while it is kept on a circle with a lead-line by a person on the ground.

Vaulting lays a great foundation for all kinds of riding because it encourages balance and core strength. Vaulting also promotes focus and teamwork as it most often requires participants to work together for success. At Cloud Dancers, we offer both group and private lessons in vaulting.

*Both **Therapeutic Riding** and **Vaulting** often include unmounted activities*

## Eligibility

Riders must be at least five (5) years of age and under 185 lbs. Due to the nature of riding and other equine-related activities, there may be individuals for whom our program is deemed inappropriate or contraindicated according to PATH Standards. Our staff provides initial and ongoing evaluations for prospective and active riders and reserves the right to determine that continuance in the program for a given individual is inappropriate.



## Registration

- New riders must complete the online Application Packet, including physician's statements, along with a \$25 non-refundable Evaluation Fee. Physician statements expire one year from the date signed. Prior to a rider's annual anniversary updated physician statements are required.
- Prospective riders will receive an interview and evaluation with our Program Coordinator and an instructor to determine eligibility and best placement.
- Riders will have the opportunity to sign up for specific sessions throughout the year.
- If a rider registers for a session that has already begun, the cost will be pro-rated.
- Schedule preferences are taken into consideration, but our primary goal is to group riders of similar ability or skill level to allow for more quality instruction.

## Guidelines for being on Vista Hermosa Property

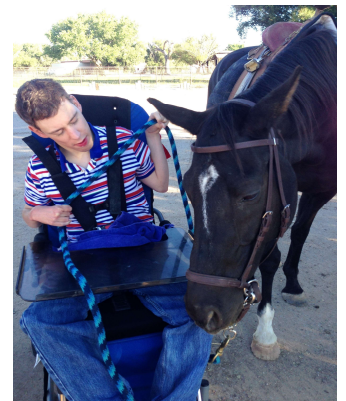
- Please honor the 15mph speed limit.
- Parking is in the lot south of Cloud Dancers barn.
- Parking next to the Barn is reserved for students with limited mobility.
- Remain within the Cloud Dancers designated areas of operation unless otherwise directed by an instructor.
- Smoking is not permitted unless you are inside your vehicle.
- Please do not bring dogs or other pets onto the property.
- Refrain from touching or interacting with horses other than those belonging to Cloud Dancers.

## Safety Guidelines

- Respect ALL people and animals.
- Be gentle when mounted or in the vicinity of horses.
- Do not hand feed the horses as this encourages undesirable behavior.
- Yelling, abusive language, or aggressive actions will not be tolerated.

## Lesson Etiquette

- Participants are encouraged to arrive for each lesson in a timely manner to receive the greatest benefit from their lesson time.
- If you are unable to attend your lesson at the last-minute call your instructor's cell phone. Please be respectful of instructors' and volunteers' time as they are scheduled around lesson times.



## Riding Attire/What to Bring to Lessons

- Bring a water bottle and appropriate environmental protection such as sunscreen, bug repellent, coat, or gloves depending on weather.
- All participants are required to wear an ASTM/SEI approved riding helmet with the chin strap secured when working with or around horses. Participants may bring their own ASTM/SEI approved helmet or use one provided by Cloud Dancers.
- For riding: long pants (i.e. jeans or riding breeches) and closed-toe shoes, heels preferred (i.e. boots).

- For vaulting: comfortable clothing (i.e. stretchy/sweat pants); soft shoes (i.e. tennis shoes or dance shoes). Ask your instructor about ordering vaulting shoes.

## Lesson Cancellation Policy

- Lessons are normally held rain or shine.
- If cancellation is initiated by Cloud Dancers, we will do our best to schedule a makeup lesson or, when necessary, refund the cost for the cancelled lesson.
- If you need to miss a lesson, please give at least 24 hours' notice to the Program Coordinator.
- Last minute notice of cancellation should be given directly to your instructor at the cell phone number they provide you.
- Refunds are not given for missed/unused lessons.



## New Mexico Equine Liability Act

All participants or guardians must sign Cloud Dancers' liability release before participating in any equine- related activities. As stated in Section 2 of the New Mexico Equine Liability Act "The legislature recognizes that any persons who participate in or observe equine activities may incur injuries as a result of the numerous inherent risks involved in such activities" and in section 4A "No person, corporation, or partnership is liable for personal injuries to or for the death of a rider that may occur as the result of the behavior of equine animals while engaged in any equine activities."

## Billing/Payment

Full payment for lesson sessions is due before or by the first day of class, unless funding is from a third party. If payment is not received by the first lesson day or special arrangements have not been made with the Program Coordinator or Board Treasurer, your participation may be suspended until payment is received. If you are having difficulty with payment, please discuss with our Program Coordinator or Treasurer as soon as possible.

There are no refunds of missed/unused lessons. Normally, riders are registered for entire Sessions. If a rider is approved to start mid-session, fees will be pro-rated.

If you receive funding from an outside third-party source (i.e. Carrie Tingley Hospital Foundation, Centennial Care, Mi Via, etc.), it is your responsibility to request payment from the funding source in a timely manner (prior to the beginning of a session). Failure to provide written verification of funding sources, budget amounts and periods, and applicable codes to Cloud Dancers could result in discontinuance of services.





## Financial Assistance - Scholarships

Cloud Dancers offers scholarships (when funds are available) to families who are income eligible. Income and eligibility requirements are outlined on our web site. If you feel you qualify, please complete the online application, gather income verification materials and contact our Program Coordinator for an interview.

## Change of Information, Health or Medication

Participants must inform Cloud Dancers immediately of any changes in health status, conditions or medications. This includes, but is not limited to, changes in weight, medications and dosages, revised diagnoses, medical interventions, surgeries, etc. In case of accident or injury, Cloud Dancers will follow your directives in your registration materials. Please notify us immediately of any changes to that information.

## Confidentiality

Staff and volunteers are responsible for maintaining confidentiality of any information pertaining to Cloud Dancers students.

## Communications

Our Program Coordinator or Instructors will communicate with students or parents/guardian on a regular basis about progress or issues that may arise during lessons. If you have any concerns, questions or issues, please contact your instructor or Program Coordinator immediately. Students or parents who feel their concerns are not being addressed may contact our Lead Instructor, Karen Molony at (505) 235-8358.

## More Questions?

Contact Louisa Roberts, Program Coordinator at (505) 926-1426  
or [programs@clouddancersthp.org](mailto:programs@clouddancersthp.org)



**Have fun and enjoy your time with Cloud Dancers!**

**Thank you for your interest in our programs.**

