

LoveWay looking for new volunteers to help with spring riding semester

LoveWay Inc., is currently in need of volunteers to help with its upcoming spring semester, which begins Feb. 3. No experience needed.

LoveWay uses recreational therapeutic riding classes to assist in benefitting individuals with special needs within the community. In these classes, volunteers and riders partner with LoveWay's specially trained horses to stimulate parts of the brain and body that are not always reached by other methods.

LoveWay is also a Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International accredited organization, whose "research shows that individuals of all ages who participate in equine-assisted activities and therapies can experience both physical and emotional rewards." Riders at LoveWay are coached by a PATH certified instructor in horseback riding lessons that can lead to benefits such as memory skills as

well as improving fine and gross motor skills by grooming and tacking their horse. While in the arena, riders learn riding skills including maintaining balance and strengthening core muscles and muscle tone. Experiencing the rhythmic motions of a horse can be very beneficial, as the rider's body on a horse moves similarly to a human gait or walk. Riders with physical needs often show improvement in balance, muscle strength and flexibility.

LoveWay classes emphasizes the opportunity to form bonds between the riders, volunteers and their horses. New volunteers start out by being sidewalkers, where creating the bond with their rider is highly encouraged. Many of the riders can find it difficult to form bonds with others in their life but in the therapeutic riding setting it comes naturally. As a sidewalker, the volunteer will assist their rider by first grooming and tacking their

horse, then by walking alongside the horse in the arena to support the rider physically, emotionally, socially and cognitively. Minimum age requirement to become a volunteer in the therapeutic riding classes is 16. Individuals under the age of 18 must have parent or guardian approval.

LoveWay also enjoys having volunteers for other needs such as grounds maintenance, and assisting with special events. School and work groups are welcomed to help with larger tasks. If interested, LoveWay provides opportunities for internships as well.

The next new volunteer training will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 29. Call now to reserve a spot.

If you'd like to learn more about LoveWay, contact the volunteer coordinator at (574) 825-5666, email at volunteer@lovewayinc.org or visit www.lovewayinc.org



ALL SMILES — Melody Santiago, aboard Sunny, one of LoveWay's therapy horses, is all smiles as she works with side walkers Stacy Quarandillo, left, and Ned Kauffman. LoveWay is currently looking for volunteers to help in classes for its spring semesters. No experience with horses is necessary. (Photo provided)