



LoveWay  
Equine Assisted Services

# Volunteer Manual

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## **Welcome to LoveWay!**

We are extremely grateful for your help and hope that you enjoy your time with us. Without our dedicated and kind-hearted team of volunteers, we truly could not do what we do. Thank you for being a part of our volunteer team! We are so blessed!

## **LoveWay's History**

LoveWay was founded in 1973 by Gary and Sandy Weatherwax in memory of their daughter, Laurie, and was one of the first therapeutic riding centers in the country. Gary and Sandy began giving lessons at their own home with the help of specially selected horses and volunteers. Since that time, LoveWay has grown to serve 15 schools a year with the help of more than 150 volunteers.



# Equine Assisted Services offered by LoveWay:

## **ADAPTIVE RIDING PROGRAM:**

This program teaches Horsemanship and Adaptive Riding skills to participants with disabilities to positively impact their development physically, cognitively, emotionally and socially. Participants often see improvements in flexibility, balance, core strength, communication, focus and attention span. The goal of this program is to engage individuals with disabilities for increased physical, cognitive, emotional and social development.

## **ADVANCED HORSEMANSHIP PROGRAM:**

This program combines equine assisted experiences along with an experienced-based curriculum to promote the development of life skills and employability skills for individuals at the middle school age and up to prepare them for their future. The goal of this program is to empower participants for their future by providing the essential building blocks needed for future employment and independent living through experiences with their horses. Employment for individuals with disabilities is a critical part of community inclusion. Securing and maintaining employment requires life, social and employment skillsets to be in place. These skills are all essential for future independence and are seen as essential to the empowerment of individuals with disabilities.

## **BARN BUDDIES PROGRAM:**

This educational video-based program supports all children desiring the opportunity to participate in equine learning at home or in the classroom. Video sessions consist of a physical warm-up and lesson taught by a LoveWay instructor. The sessions also include interactive resources to reinforce the theme of each lesson.

## **NOSEY NEIGHBOR PROGRAM:**

This program is designed to serve those in our community whose disability limits them from participating at LoveWay. The goal of this program is to engage individuals with disabilities for increased socialization, emotional connection and education in their own environment.

# Volunteer Guidelines & Requirements

Volunteers must be at least 16 years old, able to pass a background check, and able to meet certain safety requirements.

Those interested in volunteering must complete the following steps:

1. Submit an application and background check consent (yearly renewal required)
2. Participate in an Orientation/Interest Session
3. Participate in New Volunteer Training, when applicable

**VOLUNTEER CONDUCT:** All volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a respectful, professional and kind manner towards people and animals at all times while on the LoveWay property or as a representative of LoveWay if off-site.

**VOLUNTEER CRIMINAL HISTORY POLICY:** LoveWay staff has the right to decline a volunteer applicant due to criminal history. This is including, but not limited to, any crime committed to a child or animal, possession of drugs, or any major criminal convictions.

**OTHER GUIDELINES:** All volunteers must abide by all LoveWay guidelines including, but not limited to, confidentiality agreements and safety regulations. LoveWay is a non-smoking facility. Discarded tobacco products including e-cigarettes are hazardous to our horses; please refrain from smoking on LoveWay property. Any volunteer suspected of serving under the influence of alcohol or other potentially harmful drugs (prescription or otherwise) will be asked to leave and may be dismissed from service.

**THERE ARE NO WEAPONS PERMITTED ON THE PROPERTY AT ANY TIME.**

**DUTIES & TIMES:** Volunteers assisting in an equine assisted programming class are expected to arrive at least 15-20 minutes beforehand to prepare for the participants. Staying after to help clean-up is welcomed. Class volunteers should perform only the duties agreed upon with the instructor or supervisor. Training and staff approval are required for the operation of certain equipment, such as mowers, tractors, carts, chainsaws, and other powered equipment and tools. The hours that volunteers are scheduled varies and depends upon staff availability. For oversight and safety considerations, a minimum of one staff member must be present when a volunteer is working at LoveWay outside of typical office hours.

## CELL PHONES & SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY:

All volunteers are expected to have their cell phones turned off or silenced while they are at LoveWay. **Programming volunteers are not permitted to use their cell phones while actively involved in a class session, either in the barn, arena, or outside.** As noted elsewhere, the confidentiality and privacy of everyone involved in LoveWay programming is extremely important. **Photos showing our participants are not permitted.** Photos that would include other volunteers should not be taken unless permission is received by those volunteers.

## DRESS CODE POLICY:

All volunteers are encouraged to dress for the weather. Layered clothing that you are not afraid to get dirty is suggested. **Closed toe shoes are required.** The following are not permitted:

- Torn, ripped or frayed clothing
- Bare midriff or off-the-shoulder clothing
- Tight, transparent or revealing clothing
- Spaghetti strap, sleeveless or strapless tops
- Open toed shoes or sandals (not permitted in the barn or around the horses)
- Shorts that are not at least knee-length
- Clothing that has an inappropriate message

**DECLINING AN APPLICANT, REMOVAL AND GRIEVANCES:** Volunteering at LoveWay is not an appropriate activity for everyone. LoveWay reserves the right to decline or discontinue the volunteer services of any person for whom it has been determined that volunteering at LoveWay is not appropriate. This determination may include, but is not limited to, consideration of availability, attendance, health, betrayal of confidential information, unsafe behavior, criminal record, misuse of center property, disrespect of participants, volunteers, staff or horses, or otherwise not following and respecting LoveWay guidelines and policies. If a volunteer feels that he or she has been removed unjustly, a grievance may be submitted to the LoveWay Board of Directors.

# Confidentiality Policy

All persons participating in LoveWay programs — including board members, staff, participants and volunteers — will not disclose any information about a participant unless it is necessary for service to that participant. Staff, board and volunteers will only discuss information about participants for LoveWay related purposes. Volunteers are not allowed to discuss or try to contact participants outside of the LoveWay environment. Our confidentiality policy is intended to protect the privacy of our participants.

LoveWay instructors will educate and alert their volunteers to be aware of any participant limitations that could be present while at LoveWay.

When information is shared by participants that may be a factor in their safety and well-being, a volunteer should report this to LoveWay staff as soon as possible.

## Class Volunteer Roles

Side Walker (SW):

- Assists with the participant/rider and walks (sometimes jogs) alongside the horse when rider is mounted
- More details found on page 16

Coach (C):

- Assists with the participant/rider and walks (sometimes jogs) alongside the horse when rider is mounted
- More details found on page 16

Horse Leaders (HL):

- Assists with the horse and leads before, during and after class
- More details found on page 17

LoveWay emphasizes the opportunity to form bonds between its participants, volunteers, and horses. New class volunteers start out as Side Walkers, where creating the bond with their participant is highly encouraged. Many of the participants can find it difficult to form bonds with others in their life, but in an equine setting, it can be easier.

# Important Information

**ATTENDANCE POLICY:** All volunteers are expected to be at LoveWay for their scheduled volunteering time, especially class volunteers as our participants rely on you!

For **planned absences**, it is your responsibility to mark your absence in the Volunteer Calendar.

For **last-minute absences**, please notify the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible via phone call or text to allow adequate time to find someone to fill your spot.

Without enough volunteers, our participants may not be able to participate. Extensive absences is one criterion for being removed from volunteer service.

**If you are feeling sick please give us a call or text to see if your scheduled time should be canceled.** Some of our participants have compromised immune systems and we want to protect them as much as possible.

**BEHAVIOR ISSUES:** Notify the instructor of any issues you are having or observing with horses, other volunteers or participants. We may be unaware of the problem and cannot fix it unless it is brought to our attention.

**IF YOU FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE:** Talk to the instructor or Volunteer Coordinator if you are not comfortable with the horse, participant, class, etc. with which you are working. We will do our best to accommodate you!

**FEEDBACK & SUGGESTIONS:** Our instructor's cannot see everything that happens with our participants, so please let them know of anything you may notice! We also want to know what you enjoy about our center and also how we can improve. Do not be afraid to share any problems, concerns, suggestions, or questions you may have.



# Volunteer Opportunities

**EQUINE ASSISTED SERVICES PROGRAMMING:** Assist the LoveWay instructors in either of our Adaptive Riding or Advanced Horsemanship classes with our participants, all in a safe, empowering and educational environment. More information included on page 16 and 17.

**MAINTENANCE & GROUNDS:** Help with maintenance and upkeep of the pastures, grounds, stable and buildings with areas such as string trimming, weeding, manure removal, etc.

**SUBSTITUTE:** We love having substitutes to check with, for whichever volunteer opportunity interests you! Let us know if you would like to be a sub.

**SPECIAL EVENTS:** Help prepare for or help on the day of a LoveWay special event such as Derby Day or Ride-A-Thon!

**WORK GROUPS:** Whether you are a part of a major corporation, smaller family-owned business, church, or educational organization, LoveWay may have volunteer opportunities for you! As part of a work group, depending on the season and need, you would be able to assist in barn activities outside and trail activities, or assistance that is needed in our arena! Work group sizes may vary. Minimum age requirement is 12 years old. (Anyone 15 years old or younger must have parental/guardian supervision at all times.)

**INTERNSHIPS:** We are proud to offer internship opportunities for high school and college students. These opportunities range greatly in nature and time frame. Apply online at [www.lovewayinc.org](http://www.lovewayinc.org). Accepted interns will be required to register as a volunteer. Minimum age requirement is 16 years old.

# Emergency Information

## **IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY:**

The nearest LoveWay staff person is in charge. All instructors are CPR, AED, and First Aid certified and will assess the situation. Staff will designate:

- Appropriate action to take based on the situation
- Who will phone for help/call 911
- Who will stay with the injured party
- Who will get the first aid kit/AED
- Who is responsible for student/volunteers
- Who is responsible for horses

**PERSON/HORSE INJURY:** In the event of a person or horse injury: Immediately notify the closest available staff person. Staff will secure additional help and first aid. Class may be cancelled or adapted to meet the needs of the situation.

## **HORSE EMERGENCY:**

- Contact Director of Equine Development or Executive Director
- Equine emergencies involving injury: contact veterinarians listed on HORSE CONTACT info portion of STAFF CONTACT INFO sheet posted above all office desks.
- Director of Equine Development or Executive Director will contact owner If horse is a leased horse, refer to first aide kit for owner's information.

**POWER OUTAGE:** Classes will be cancelled in the event of a power outage.

**FIRST AID KIT:** Located on the counter under the helmet cabinets in the common room.

**AED (Automated External Defibrillator):** Located in the top right cabinet in the helmet area. This should only be operated by those that are trained to do so.

**INJURIES/ACCIDENTS:** All injuries/accidents, even minor ones, must be reported to a staff person. A center occurrence report must be filled out.

**BODILY FLUID SPILLS:** Staff must be informed of occurrence immediately. Wear gloves and follow instructed procedures for cleanup and disposal. Do not handle blood unless you are properly trained.

**PHONES:** Located in offices, commons room, kitchen, feed room, and hay barn office.

# Emergency Procedures & Weather Policies

## IN THE EVENT OF A FIRE:

- Alert everyone at the facility verbally
  - Fire alarms are inside office area
  - Instructor in barn will alert all in barn area
- Call 911
- Evacuate the building and barn of all people
  - Meeting spot is by white fence in parking lot
- Staff will determine if/when horses should be moved
- Fire extinguishers are located on the wall across from helmet cabinet, on wall in kitchen, in the indoor arena, 2 in barn aisle, and in the hay barn

**ADVERSE WEATHER:** The weather alert radio is in the instructor office.

## TORNADO WATCH OR WARNING:

- If watch occurs during class, the horses will be taken to stalls by volunteers. If safe, staff will untack and take to their pastures. Participants and volunteers will be asked to go home.
- If warning occurs during class, side walkers and participants will exit arena, at the time of the warning. Once all participants have exited arena, horse leaders will let horses go. Everyone will seek shelter in the tornado shelter (men's bathroom).

**SEVERE WEATHER WATCH OR WARNING:** Cancellations will be determined by staff and will take into account the safety of riders, volunteers, staff and horses. This applies from wind chill to heat index as well as air quality. Cancellations will be posted on Facebook, as well as WSBT and WNDU. Staff members will also call volunteers and participants.

**SEVERE WINTER WEATHER:** The ultimate decision is that of our Executive Director. Cancellations will be posted on Facebook, as well as WSBT and WNDU.

**EVACUATION PLAN:** In the case of needing to do an emergency evacuation:

- Immediately find the nearest exit and exit calmly
- Meet by the white fence in the parking lot next to the emergency meeting spot sign
- If class is in session, instructor in charge of class will keep a listing of all participants
- All other persons on premises must be accounted for
- Volunteer attendance is on Better Impact

# Working with Individuals with Disabilities

While volunteering at LoveWay, you may assist with individuals that have either a physical, emotional, or cognitive disability. Though it is not possible for us to describe every disability you may encounter at LoveWay, we will give you the information you need to effectively and safely work with each participant you are assigned. You will learn more about our participants as you continue to work with them on a regular basis.

**HOW TO ACT? WHAT TO SAY?** You may feel insecure about how to act or react to people who may look, sound, move or behave differently from what you would expect. It can also be unsettling to meet a person whom you know has a terminal illness, or a parent of a teenage child who has cognitive limitations.

- What do you say?
- What do you not say?
- How should you react?
- What's the best way to help?

These questions and the feelings of uncertainty they bring with them are perfectly normal and you need not be embarrassed about them.

One important thing to remember is that although all of our participants have a disability, they are still people who are each unique and deserve the same respect as anyone else. Focus on what the participant CAN do and not what they are unable to do.

**RELAX AND RELATE.** Don't worry about making mistakes when meeting and communicating with a person who has a disability. Relax and let the person with the disability put you at ease. With experience and time you will find ways of relating to individuals with disabilities. You will come to know them as individuals and reach the point where you will see them as friends and people first, without dwelling on differences or worrying about what to say or how to act.

# Our Participants and You

## SUGGESTIONS ON RELATING TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

### TREAT THE PERSON WITH RESPECT

- A person with a disability is an individual first and is entitled to the same dignity, respect and considerations expected by anyone.
- When speaking to a person with a disability who uses a wheelchair, find yourself a chair or crouch down at a comfortable distance so that you can converse on the same level.
- Do not make assumptions. A person with a disability is the best judge of what they can do unless they are substantially cognitively impaired.
- Treat adults as adults. Only call an adult person with a disability by his or her first name after asking for the privilege.
- Do not “pat” people with disabilities on the head, shoulder or other part of their body.

### ADDRESS THE PERSON DIRECTLY

- Always directly address the person with a disability. Do not speak “about” them as if they were not present.
- When an assistant accompanies someone with a disability, address the person with the disability directly, unless you are asked to do otherwise.
- When meeting a person with a visual impairment, always identify yourself. Tell them you are leaving before you walk away.

### ASK IF/HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Only help a person with a disability if they ask for assistance. You may offer assistance, but if it is declined, do not be offended.
- When assisting an individual with a disability, always ask “how” you can help. Do not take over.
- Do not shout. Hearing aids make noises louder, not clearer. Blindness does not affect a person’s hearing.
- Do not push a person’s wheelchair, grab their arm, or try to help without first asking.
- Never move someone’s crutches, walker, cane, service animal or other mobility aid without permission.

### BE PATIENT

- If a person has difficulty speaking, allow them to finish their sentence. If you do not understand what they are saying, tell them so. Do not pretend you understood if you did not.
- Respect personal space and response time; but when a person with a disability asks you for help, they may direct you to hold, lift or otherwise assist them in a very specific way.

## Safety Rules for the Barn

- The instructor is in charge at all times.
- Closed-toed shoes must be worn in the barn and arena.
- Always walk—no running.
- Participants must always wear a helmet and be accompanied by a volunteer or staff
- Speak in respectful tones—no yelling.
- Only do tasks that are assigned to you for safety reasons.
- When working around one of our horses, always bend at the waist in the stall or aisle, never kneel.
- Put things away when finished with them.
- Close all gates behind you.
- Always be aware of your surroundings.
- Keep a positive attitude and HAVE FUN!

## Horse Information

Working at LoveWay is not always physically demanding for our horses, but they can become mentally or emotionally overwhelmed. Here are a few tips to keep them at ease:

- Always speak in a calm voice.
- Horses should always be connected to the cross-ties when in the barn aisle or stall (depending on the instructor's preference) when they are being groomed and tacked; and **remain connected once tack is placed on**.
- Always make sure lead ropes and reins are kept off the ground.
- Always walk behind your horse in the stall and in front when in the arena or cross-ties (in the barn aisle).
- If leading, always use a loose lead to allow for the horse's natural head movement. Do not wrap the lead rope around your hand or allow participants to do so.
- If a horse is behaving badly, it is not ok for volunteers to discipline the horse in any way. You may make corrections discreetly **ONLY** if you've been through specific training with staff. Concerns may be brought to your instructor's attention or the Director of Equine Development.
- Only give horses treats when approved by staff as some horses are on special diets! And always use the feed buckets in the stalls, **never feed treats by hand!**
- You may pet the horses during the 15 minutes before class but **please refrain from touching/leaning on them during class** – this can be very distracting and they need to be focusing while their participant is present.

# Grooming at LoveWay

- Grooming must be done each time a horse is ridden to prevent saddle sores.
- Always groom the horse from front to back and top to bottom.
- Grooming buckets contain two sets of brushes so that you may work alone or with the participant.
- Always use the correct sequence when grooming to provide consistency for horses and participants.

## 1. CURRY COMB

- Hard rubber or plastic with nubs or teeth
- Use in a circular motion from front to back
- Loosens dirt and hair
- Stimulates a horse's skin
- Not to be used on the head or legs



## 2. BODY BRUSH

- Smooths hair
- Use in the direction of hair growth
- Flicks dirt/hair off the horse
- May use on face and legs (though not on the face if participant is present)



## 3. MANE/TAIL COMB OR BRUSH

- Untangles hair
- Use on mane, tail, and forelock
- Start at the bottom of hair and work to top



## 4. HOOF PICK

- Cleans dirt/debris out of hoof
- Avoid the horse's frog (part of the underside of a horse's hoof, triangular or V-shaped, midway from the heel toward the toe)
- Pick away from the body



# Tacking at LoveWay

- Tack should be put on in the same order each time. This helps our riders with sequencing and provides consistency for the horses.

## 1. SADDLE PAD

- Goes in the center of the horse's back
- Put high on withers and slide back to smooth the hair



## 2. ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT (if applicable)

- Goes on top of the saddle pad. Includes either a rear riser, front riser, gel pad, Ogilvy or ThinLine.



## 3. SADDLE

- Goes on top of the saddle pad/adaptive equipment
- Sits just behind the horse's shoulder
- Place in the center of the horse's back



## 4. GIRTH OR CYNCH

- Attach to the right side of the saddle first
- Use the 1st and 3rd billets
- Keep the girth tight enough to keep saddle from slipping when horse is in motion, but not so tight to make it uncomfortable



## 5. REINS

- Clip to each side of the halter
- Some are black and white (white on the right, black on the left) or solid colored in a variety of colors
- Place the clip side away from the horse's face



## 6. LEAD ROPE

- Clip to the ring under the halter





# Side Walker & Coach Responsibilities

## BEFORE CLASS

Arrive 15-20 minutes prior to start of class to prepare for participants.

## DURING THE LESSON: The COACH

Focus: Main liaison between participant and instructor as well as participant's safety.

- Listen to the instructor's directions & assist participant in following them.
- If needed, repeat directions to the participant but please allow for processing time.
- If participant doesn't respond to instructions, using the hand-over-hand method may be advised by the instructor.
- Always know what the participant is doing for safety purposes.
- Keep an eye on and maintain the rider's balance upon instructor's direction.
- Be able to physically assist the rider off of their horse in the case of an emergency or unexpected situation.
- Be able to jog or "trot" next to the horse and provide physical assistance if needed.
- Walks on the RIGHT side of the horse

## DURING THE LESSON: The Side Walker (AKA the "Quiet Helper")

Focus: Participant's safety.

- Always know what the participant is doing for safety purposes.
- Keep an eye on and maintain the rider's balance upon instructor's direction.
- Be able to physically assist the rider off of their horse in the case of an emergency or unexpected situation.
- Be able to jog or "trot" next to the horse and provide physical assistance if needed.
- Walks on the LEFT side of the horse

## AFTER THE LESSON/CLASS

- Escort the participant back to the lobby/commons area and assist them with taking their helmet off.
- Encourage and/or assist participants with washing their hands.
- Assist with post-class cleanup.
- Communicate with instructor(s) regarding any concerns, issues or praises.

# Horse Leader Responsibilities

Focus: The equine (horse)

## BEFORE CLASS

- Arrive 20-30 minutes prior to start of class to help prepare horses unless told otherwise by the instructor or volunteer coordinator.

## DURING THE LESSON

- Always listen to the instructor's directions on how to best assist the participant with their horse before, during or after the lesson.
- Monitor the horse at all times to ensure it is behaving safely and is following directions. It is natural for the horse to move occasionally to get comfortable.
- Assist the participant with leading their horse during the entirety of the lesson, unless otherwise told by the instructor.
- Always have a firm hold on the horse's lead rope and allow about 1 foot of slack from the clip. Hold excess of rope in your left hand, folded not wrapped.
- Always lead on the left side of the horse unless told otherwise.
- Position yourself to face the horse, just off the left shoulder when the rider is halted.
- Position yourself between the horse's head and shoulder while walking or trotting.
- Always allow and monitor for safe spacing from other horses.
- Refrain from petting the horse when class has begun-this can be distracting.
- Always be conscious of side walkers and allow for enough space when walking or trotting alongside the wall or around objects.
- Wait for rider to give cues before directing the horse.
- Speak calmly if horse spooks and continue on so the rider does not get scared unless told otherwise.
- Refrain from conversing with the participant & other volunteers unless it's needed. It is the right side walker's responsibility to converse with the participant as needed. All volunteers and the participant need to be able to hear the instructor.

## AFTER THE LESSON/CLASS

- Assist participant with leading their horse back to its stall unless told otherwise.
- Assist with returning tack to the tack room.
- Turn horses out to pasture unless the instructor or Director of Equine Development says otherwise (using the buddy system especially at nighttime and on Saturdays).
- Assist with post-class cleanup in the barn and arena.
- Communicate with instructor(s) or the Director of Equine Development regarding any concerns, issues or praises.

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## LoveWay Office Information

Office Hours: Monday-Friday 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM

Office Phone: 574-825-5666

Office Fax: 574-825-8117

Address: 54151 CR 33, Middlebury, IN 46540

Email: [info@lovewayinc.org](mailto:info@lovewayinc.org)

Website: [www.lovewayinc.org](http://www.lovewayinc.org)

We do encourage and appreciate everyone to like our  
Facebook page and follow us on Instagram!

**Scan the QR codes below for quick access!**





## **Our Mission**

Empower individuals with disabilities through  
compassionate equine assisted service

## **Our Vision**

Empower our participants.  
Impact our community.  
One hoofbeat at a time.

## **Our Values**

Compassion. Empowerment.  
Connection. Growth.