



Helping children and their families  
one hoof beat at a time!



Building character  
Restoring hope  
Empowering relationships

## New Rider Information Packet

Revised: 2016Jul-16

Since 2008, the leadership at Valley Trotters Youth Ranch has focused on molding and shaping the lives of youth. In everything we do, it's our mission to be leaders in:

**Building Character... Restoring Hope... Empower Relationships...**

The vision that keeps us laser focused on our mission:

**Making a difference in the lives of valley youth, connecting the needs of equine (horses) with the undiscovered potential in every child & youth.**

## Welcome to the VTYR family

We want your experience to be safe, rewarding, therapeutic and fun. It is essential for our participants, volunteers, and horses that we uphold consistency in VTYR activities, procedures and policies. As a new family member of VTYR it is important that you understand how and why we ask for your commitment to respect the basics of our operating system, which are explained in this new rider manual. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to ask. We look forward to sharing the VTYR experience with you.

### This packet contains information about:

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### Important Phone Numbers:

**Greg Bozard** - Executive Director  
Mobile: 956-369-9278  
[greg@valleytrottersyouthranch.org](mailto:greg@valleytrottersyouthranch.org)  
[info@valleytrottersyouthranch.org](mailto:info@valleytrottersyouthranch.org)  
[volunteer@valleytrottersyouthranch.org](mailto:volunteer@valleytrottersyouthranch.org)

**Abby Bozard** - Mentor & Instructor  
Mobile: 956-369-1078  
[abby@valleytrottersyouthranch.org](mailto:abby@valleytrottersyouthranch.org)



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## 1. EQUINE INTEGRATED ACTIVITIES

*“There is something about the outside of a horse that is good for the inside of a man.”  
~ Winston Churchill ~*

### More Than Riding at Valley Trotters Youth Ranch

VTYR is continually exploring services that would benefit youth and families of the Rio Grande Valley. The following is a brief description of each activity that VTYR offers and the proper definition of each.

**Horsemanship Development Program (HDP)** may be mounted and non-mounted equine activities conducted by our instructor. Those who benefit from this program are the typically developing or people with disabilities or diverse needs who wish to develop their skills in horse care, stable management, and riding. Most students progress in riding and horse care skills while improving cognitive, emotional, social and behavioral skills.

**Focused Riding Programs (FRP)** may be a single or series of mounted activities including traditional riding disciplines or adaptive riding activities conducted by our instructors. At VTYR these activities are taught using a unique one horse/one rider/one instructor method, some students however, respond well to group lessons where they can accomplish specific goals. Mounted activities are designed to meet each participant’s individual needs and may focus on the improvement of; fine and gross motor skills, cognitive, emotional, social, behavioral, balance, strength, coordination and tactile senses, team work, communication, and much more. All lessons in the focused riding program are scheduled by appointment.

**Equine Rescue Program (ERP)** is non-mounted equine activities lead by our instructor. Those desiring to participate in our rescue program have the opportunity to learn and practice the science skills necessary to care for mild -to- moderately abused or mistreated horses. While we cannot provide a clinical environment or direct in-house veterinary care we can and do supply a comfortable setting and excellent care for our angels in horse hair while they recover. Throughout the restoration process our goal is to return each horse to its useful and beneficial state. The children, youth and families of the Valley Trotters Youth Ranch develop broad expertise when caring for the recovering horses including, but not limited to; proper equine nutrition, disease prevention, wound care, parasite control, grooming techniques, rehabilitation methods and conditioning of the equine mind and body. Many horses recover completely and can be placed into service here at the ranch. After careful and complete evaluation by the ranch staff some horses are selected to be trained for use in our focused riding program. Horses that are not suited for our riding program are offered to a good home under mutual adoption terms.

**Therapeutic** - An activity is therapeutic if a participant derives benefit, shows improvement or feels better once engaged. An activity can be therapeutic without being considered a therapy. In general, our HDP, FRP & ERP programs may be described as therapeutic, but they are not therapy and are not considered treatment without fulfilling specific requirements. (See Therapy, defined below)

**Therapy** - At present, VTYR does not offer, nor makes any claims of providing therapy or treatment, or billing for services with a third party, this may be done only by a licensed/credentialed professional such as a PT, OT, SLP, psychologist, social worker, or MD, among others.



## 2. OUR RIDING PROGRAMS

*In the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years.*

*~ Abraham Lincoln ~*

### VTYR Offers Four Riding Programs:

1. **Horsemanship Development Program (HDP)** – this program focuses on helping the student to become proficient in three basic areas. The program is delivered in (2) 90-minute sessions, each month. HDP is open to all youth ages 8-18 years that have a goal of becoming a horse owner.
  - i. Improving riding skills
  - ii. General equine care
  - iii. General barn management
  
2. **“Hats & Horses” - A Focused Riding Program (FRP)** – this program is open to children and youth ages 8-18 years (max rider weight 190 lbs). “Hats & Horses” sessions occur twice monthly, each 90-minute session is designed to exercise fine and gross motor skills, balance, strength, coordination, tactile senses, cognitive, social and behavioral skills. The program is set-up to teach valuable life lessons while using the horse as a learning aid. Each riding session is led by (1) experienced and skilled instructor.
  
3. **“Saddle & Ride” - A Focused Riding Program (FRP)** – this program is open to children and youth ages 8-18 years (max rider weight 190 lbs) that have a diagnosis requiring special needs. “Saddle & Ride” sessions occur twice monthly, each 60-minute session is designed to exercise fine and gross motor skills, balance, strength, coordination, tactile senses, cognitive, social and behavioral skills. Each participant rider is the primary focus of the “Saddle & Ride” team consisting of:
  - i. (1) participant rider
  - ii. (1) gentle well trained horse
  - iii. (1) lead walker
  - iv. (1) side walker
  - v. (1) experienced and skilled instructor
  
4. **“Just Ride” - A Focused Riding Program (FRP)** – this program is open to children (3-yrs) through adult (max rider weight 190 lbs) that have a diagnosis of physical disabilities, special needs or those that just need a little extra help! “Just ride” is offered quarterly on monthly intervals, each 30-minute session is design to maximize the equine riding experience. We utilize an experienced and skilled instructor for (3) “Just ride” teams. Each “Just Ride” team consists of:
  - i. (1) participant rider
  - ii. (1) gentle well trained horse
  - iii. (1) lead walker
  - iv. (2) side walkers



### 3. HOW TO SCHEDULE APPOINTMENTS

*“In riding a horse we borrow freedom”*

**Delivery of Service and Scheduling of Sessions for (HDP, Hats & Horses programs)** - VTJR is open January thru December except for the holiday schedule stated below. VTJR accepts reservations for upcoming sessions beginning the 20<sup>th</sup> day of each month. Sessions are scheduled on a first come / first served basis. Reservations may be secured by texting or calling your request to (956) 369-9278. Priority will be given to the text requests. Participants may schedule sessions based on the program guidelines see section #2. Special scheduling preferences are given to our students with disabilities or diverse needs.

**Delivery of Service and Scheduling of Sessions for (Saddle & Ride, Just Ride programs)** - VTJR is open January thru December except for the holiday schedule stated below. In order to manage the diverse challenges of the program participants, each appointment is scheduled privately during consultation with the parent or guardian. VTJR has allocated specific blocks of time and resources for these programs; “Saddle & Ride” appointments are scheduled for Friday evenings or Saturday mornings twice per month. “Just Ride” appointments are scheduled once per month on the first Saturday evening of each month.

**Holiday Schedule** - VTJR will be closed on the following holidays: New Year’s Day, Easter, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s Eve. In the event a holiday falls on a Saturday, we will be closed to observe the holiday on Friday. Sunday holidays will be observed on Monday.

### 4. CANCELLATION POLICY

*“I shall pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.”*

**Who do I call if I can’t come?** - Many volunteers give their valuable time! If you must miss a lesson, please let us know as soon as possible, so we can notify volunteers for that day. If there is an emergency and you can’t come on the day of class, please call and speak to Greg Bozard at (956) 369-9278.

**How do I find out if lessons are cancelled?** - Because consistency is so important for our riders, we rarely cancel a lesson. If you think weather conditions threaten a safe riding environment or you are unsure that lessons are being held, please call Greg Bozard at (956) 369-9278. If VTJR triggers a cancellation, you will be contacted at the numbers given on your participant application.

**What if I’m late?** - We plan a prompt start to all sessions; under most conditions the 90 - minute session can tolerate small fluctuations to the start time however, if you are more than 15-minutes late that session will be cancelled and recorded as a participant absence.



## 5. DRESS CODE

*“He knows when you are happy, he knows when you are comfortable, he knows when you are confident and he always knows when you have carrots.”*

**Safety is our overriding priority** – In order to minimize risk of injury to person or horse we ask that you conform to our code of dress.

- ❖ Shoes or boots with minimum ½” heel height must be worn when riding. This will reduce the risk of a “slip thru” by the rider’s foot and ankle.
- ❖ You will find a higher level of comfort when you wear light weight stockings as opposed to thick athletic style socks.
- ❖ Full length jeans are acceptable, riding tights are preferred, shorts and uncovered legs are not permitted.
- ❖ Dress for comfort by layering your clothing, jackets or hoodies with front zipper are preferred as opposed to a pullover style. Don’t forget to protect your skin from sunburn, use sunscreen or long sleeves.
- ❖ Bulky jewelry, large belt buckles, and cell phones are unnecessary burdens to carry while riding at the ranch.
- ❖ Long hair is best controlled when gathered into a pony tail at the base of the skull.
- ❖ Available upon request VTYR can provide you a recommended equipment list for the rider.

## 6. RANCH RULES

*“No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care”*

**Rules are developed for the benefit of all who visit** – During your visit, whether short or lengthy YOU ARE A WELCOME FRIEND! Please remember, everyone will benefit when you follow the rules...

- ❖ Please park to conserve as much space as possible in our small lot.
- ❖ Gates should be closed unless requested otherwise.
- ❖ All riders must wear a helmet.
- ❖ All visitors must have a completed release form.
- ❖ Riding is not allowed without a completed release form.
- ❖ Closed toe /heel shoes are required around horses.
- ❖ Enter paddock / tack areas only with a leader.
- ❖ Always move attentively / respectfully around horses.
- ❖ Clean up after yourself.