



GallopNYC Volunteer FAQ

As of August 2011

Thank you for contacting GallopNYC's Therapeutic Riding Program! We are delighted to hear from you and hope you will join our volunteer team.

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About GallopNYC:

1. What is GallopNYC?

We are a nonprofit organization based in New York City that offers therapeutic riding to individuals with disabilities. We operate our riding program at three facilities: the historic Kensington Stables in the East Windsor Terrace section of Brooklyn, near Prospect Park; Jamaica Bay Riding Academy on the Belt Parkway in Brooklyn; and Lynne's Riding School in Forest Hills, Queens.

GallopNYC (Giving Alternative Learners Uplifting Opportunities, Inc.) provides therapeutic horseback riding to children, youth, and adults in New York City, using interactions with horses to promote the growth of functional and mental abilities in a safe, supportive, and fun manner. GallopNYC bases its program on good horsemanship, sound riding principles, and therapeutic riding and hippotherapy standards that are approved by PATH International (a national accrediting organization).

2. Who can benefit from therapeutic riding?

We think that just about anyone will benefit from therapeutic riding. GallopNYC works with children, youth, and adults who face developmental, emotional, social and physical challenges. Our riders have a wide range of disabilities including learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, and developmental, speech and language delays. We also work with at-risk teens and children exposed to domestic violence. We focus on the individual with compassion in an enjoyable, supportive, and rewarding learning environment. GallopNYC helps our riders achieve their life goals. As one volunteer observed: *"I have marveled to see how much people are capable of when you don't limit the expectations put upon them."*

GallopNYC knows from experience that therapeutic riding is a uniquely effective and engaging form of therapy for people dealing with various disabilities, and growing research is providing evidence to back this up, with two clear themes emerging:

- 1) The combination of effective physical and cognitive tasking in a motivating context enables people with disabilities to more rapidly attain needed skills, and
- 2) A bonding relationship with a horse opens individuals to better acceptance of counseling, therapy, or training.

Therapeutic riding provides concrete benefits, as demonstrated in a recent study that found "that children with autism between the ages of 7 and 12 showed improved cognition, communication, and motivation after participating in specific equine assisted activities (EAA). The research shows that riding, grooming, and interacting with horses had a noticeable, positive effect on study participants."

These research results are consistent with anecdotal reports from parents and teachers, who report gains in attention span and communication skills that carry over to the home and the classroom. As one teacher of students with autism spectrum disorders said, *"We have been able to use GallopNYC as a springboard for academic tasks... We have seen astronomical changes in posture, balance, muscle control, body awareness, concentration, [reduced] self stimulatory behaviors, language, socialization, patience and sensory integration."* A special needs teacher from an NYC public school wrote: *"It is amazing to watch my unruliest students calm down, my most scattered students focus, my quietest students shout, and my least expressive students laugh when they interact with you and the horses... I feel like we can never do enough to express our gratitude."*

3. What is the difference between therapeutic riding and hippotherapy?

Therapeutic riding lessons teach an individual to ride, which typically offers many therapeutic benefits. Lessons are conducted by a PATH International certified therapeutic riding instructor employed by GallopNYC. Hippotherapy sessions are offered by a physical therapist trained in Hippotherapy, a method that uses the horse as a physical therapy tool, with less emphasis on learning to ride.

4. How do I contact you?

Email us at volunteer@GallopNYC.org or call 917-727-1241.

About Volunteering for GallopNYC:

5. What do GallopNYC volunteers do?

Most of our volunteers help us by leading horses (“lead-walking”) and assisting our riders (“side-walking”) during riding lessons.

Experienced GallopNYC volunteers may be trained to be Volunteer Leaders. This role includes managing the session’s volunteers, greeting volunteers as they arrive for their shift, assigning duties, orienting new volunteers to our program and introducing them to our team, answering questions, helping to make sure each volunteer is involved, and maintaining volunteer logs and data entry.

Experienced GallopNYC volunteers who have a background of horsemanship may be trained to be a Paddock Master. The Paddock Master is responsible for, among other duties, preparing the horses for the lessons.

Volunteers also help with fundraising, web design, and as support for special programs and activities.

For a full description of the duties of side-walkers, lead-walkers, Volunteer Leaders and Paddock Masters, please go to www.gallopnyc.org/volunteers.html and download the Volunteer Information and Training Packet.

6. Does a volunteer need experience with horses or people with therapeutic riding?

No prior experience with horses or in therapeutic riding is necessary. You will be provided with the information and training required during our orientation sessions and on an ongoing basis.

7. What type of commitment do you expect of volunteers?

We ask our volunteers who wish to help during our lessons to commit to a minimum of two hours a week for an 11-week period. If you must miss a shift, we ask that you give advance notice to the Volunteer Coordinator.

8. What is the minimum age for volunteering?

We accept volunteers as young as 16 years of age.

9. How do I sign up to volunteer?

To sign up for an Orientation go to: http://gallopnyc.force.com/GW_Volunteers_VolunteersJobListing. Once you register, we will send you the forms you need to bring with you to the orientation. At the orientation, you

can talk to the Volunteer Coordinator about the different volunteer jobs and sign up for a volunteer shift. If you do not have access to the Internet, call 646-281-4268 and ask for an application packet and information on orientation dates to be mailed to you.

Program Schedule and Location of Stables

10. When do you need the help of volunteers?

Since the majority of our volunteers help with the lessons, our greatest need for volunteers arises during the program year, which currently runs from September through June, divided into three 11-week sessions. We offer lessons most days of the week at one of our three locations. Our lessons generally take place between the hours of 10:00 AM and 6:30 PM. Our schedule follows the public school schedule. Schedules are available on our website at www.gallopnyc.org/volunteers.html.

Throughout the year we often need volunteers to help with special projects and activities. When you fill out the volunteer registration form you have the opportunity to indicate whether you are interested in assisting with, for example, special activities or fundraising.

11. Do you have opportunities for volunteering on the weekends or in summer?

Opportunities to volunteer on weekends and in the summer are limited. Check GallopNYC's calendar at www.gallopnyc.org/volunteers.html for our current schedule.

12. How do we get to the stable?

GallopNYC offers its program at three stables. More information about the locations can be found on the websites below, or you can look up door-to-door subway directions using www.hopstop.com.

Kensington Stables in Brooklyn near Prospect Park, 51 Caton Place, Brooklyn, NY 11218.

Directions to the stable can be found at: www.kensingtonstables.com/directions/index.htm. The closest subway stop is the F train at Fort Hamilton Parkway.

Lynne's Riding School, 88-03 70th Rd. Forest Hills, Queens 11375

See www.lynnesridingschoolnyc.com.

Jamaica Bay Riding Academy, Shore Parkway, Brooklyn NY

Not easily accessible by public transportation. See <http://www.horsebackride.com/>.

Specific Questions:

13. Do volunteers have the opportunity to ride?

Although there may be a chance once in a while for a volunteer to ride, it is not a regular occurrence. Private riding lessons are offered at all three stables at which we offer our program. You can arrange a lesson or discuss trail riding opportunities directly with the stable.

14. What should volunteers wear?

Volunteers should dress appropriately for the weather, as we do not have heat or A/C in the arenas. Volunteers should wear long pants and closed toe shoes or boots with heels. Jewelry and hair ornaments can catch on the horse's mane and tail and should not be worn to lessons.

15. When are lessons cancelled?

Our lessons happen rain or shine, as we have access to enclosed indoor arenas. However, if the temperature is, or is predicted to be, 90 degrees Fahrenheit or above, or 25 degrees Fahrenheit or below, lessons will be cancelled. In the event of an epidemic or pandemic, GallopNYC will follow the guidance of the city health officials for school closings. Every effort will be made to contact volunteers by email when we cancel lessons. If in doubt, you may contact the Volunteer Coordinator.

16. Can GallopNYC verify my hours for school or other requirements?

We can provide formal letters of verification with 5 – 7 days notice. For informal verification of hours, please give us 48-hours notice. Contact volunteer@gallopnyc.org or 917-727-1241 to request verification of hours. (Remember to always sign in and out when you volunteer.)

17. What do people say about GallopNYC?

A list of links to press about GallopNYC's therapeutic riding program can be found on our website at www.gallopnyc.org/links.html.