

Animal Guardians Horse Rescue, Inc.

Volunteer Handbook

(Revised 6/10/22)

Mission Statement

Animal Guardians Horse Rescue, Inc. provides sanctuary to local senior equines in need, while connecting our Southern California community through service and purpose. To achieve our mission, we work towards the following goals and objectives below:

1. Provide a safe haven for equines in need of permanent sanctuary retirement placement
2. Educate the public about compassion & responsibility in horse ownership
3. Develop an Equine Assisted Learning program in HorsePowered Reading (and Math)
4. Maintain Standards for Membership in: The Homes For Horses Coalition, the HSUS Safe Stalls Network, the ASPCA Horse Action Team, Guidestar (Candid), the Parelli Foundation, and the HSUS Forever Foundation Training Program
5. Serve actively as an Adoptions Partner with the Ventura, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, and San Bernadino County Departments of Animal Care & Control / Animal Services
6. Maintain Platinum Transparency on Candid / Guidestar
7. Provide New and Innovative Community Outreach and Leadership Programs through Committee Design and Development

Background Information:

AGHR is a CA state registered charitable organization with a 501(c)3 public nonprofit charity tax-exemption status. We maintain the highest standards of care available for our horses to ensure that they receive a quality of life which meets our safety standards of care guidelines. Our organization is a public non-profit group, funded entirely by charitable donations, sponsorships, & volunteer support. Our number of equines fostered or kept in permanent retirement depends upon the available foster care space and sponsorship funds we have at the given time.

Our rescue typically houses between 5 (five) and 12 (twelve) equines at a time, in order to ensure that each equine will receive the following care: at least 2 (two) full meals of hay forage or pellets, supplements as needed, feed as needed, per day, fresh water daily, at least 1 (one) annual veterinary wellness exam, including but not limited to a teeth check/float as needed, sheath cleaning for geldings, and lameness exam/xrays as needed, 6 (six) month vaccines, including a 5 Way + WNV Vaccine once a year, and a 6 mos. vaccine booster as directed by the equine veterinarian, dewormer rotation at least 3 times per year, hoof care by a licensed/qualified farrier every 6 to 8 weeks, shavings & dry bedding/footing as needed. All of our fostered equines receive daily adequate exercise & interaction with humans & horses, to ensure their physical & emotional/behavioral well-being, & enhance their relationship skills to become more easily handled by various humans. Some of our fostered equines receive professional training & professional bodywork & alternative medicine services as needed for quality of life purposes.

Our organization does not operate on one central stable/ranch facility to house all of our rescue horses. All fostered equines are housed in approved boarding stables & foster care homes, providing for their daily needs, as directed by our rescue Directors & equine Veterinarians. Rescued equines stay with us in foster care and boarding for a minimum of 12 months, maximum of lifetime of the equine, depending

upon the level of severity of rehabilitation needs. Most of our equines come to us for full retirement from riding, and we keep them for life in equine sanctuary with our program. A few may be adopted out to the public if they are deemed fit for adoption, unsponsored, and not considered to have special needs, nor be at risk for rehoming by an adopter. If an equine is adopted through our organization, we do not guarantee / warranty riding ability / fitness for any particular "purpose" other than companion animal. We do not euthanize horses for lack of funds or space.

We are a member of The Homes For Horses Coalition, and the Humane Society United States (HSUS) Safe Stalls Network, and the ASPCA Horse Action Team. We participate in the HSUS Forever Foundation Training Program and Parelli Natural Horsemanship trainings throughout the year. We obtain our horses from the local animal shelters to avoid unnecessary euthanasia. As much as possible, we rehabilitate and retrain the horses / ponies to participate in our EAL community service programs.

Because we are limited by funds and space, we are generally unable to take in most privately owned horses on surrender to our rescue. However, we serve as a networking agency to assist horse owners in finding good placements for their horses, rather than selling them at auctions or abandoning them at boarding stables. We have been successful in helping some private owners problem-solve to keep their horses, or find good homes for their horses, by referrals through our organization. A majority of our horses come directly from the Animal Shelters when the shelters are full and are in need of euthanasia. With increased fundraising support, we hope to build our own large pasture property for equine retirement sanctuary in southern CA, a much needed service for senior horses & horses with special needs. This is our long-term goal.

AGHR began in 2009 in Gloucester County, VA, with the rescue of Nizhoni Red Rose (Rosie), our first true Survivor. Rosie was stuck in a slaughter auction at the Cranbury Feedlot in NJ. She was the sole remaining horse after the lot was cleared out and the other horses died from an outbreak of EHV. We pulled Rosie, and hauled her to PA and then VA, and found our first foster caregiver / adopter there. Since then, Red Rose Nizhoni Animal Rescue was founded as a sanctuary in Church Falls, VA, after Rosie, our first collaborative rescue horse.

Our rescue relocated from VA, to Simi Valley, CA, in 2010, in hopes of saving more lives and stopping the vicious cycle of abuse and neglect of and abandonment of non-rideable equines. We obtained our 501(c)3 status & state registry in 2013. Because of the efforts of the volunteers, voluntary foster caregivers, generous sponsors & donors, and pro-bono professionals involved with our rescue, our horses are more loved, cared for, and permanently placed than we could imagine. These are mostly horses that would have been euthanized in the local animal shelters, sold at auctions, died in abandonment, or euthanized by private parties for no reason other than they could not afford to keep them. Now saved, rehabilitated, retrained, they are given a second chance to live again; leading healthy, happy lives.

Getting Involved

Corporate Sponsorship / Sponsoring a Rescue Equine Angel:

We always need corporate sponsors from local hay, feed, tack, & supplement distributors. If you, or someone you know, would like to join our Rescue Family, and help horses in need, we will be able to save more horses from needless euthanasia at the Animal Shelters. Any & all charitable donations & services are fully Tax-Deductible under the Section 501(c)3 Code of the Internal Revenue Service. Corporations

and local businesses can mutually promote our cause on our newsletter publication, website, and at local events and venues throughout the community. Horse sponsorship opportunities are plentiful, meaningful, and necessary to continue our life-saving work.

Volunteering

Welcome to our rescue family! We appreciate your involvement. As our community grows, so does our need for dedicated volunteers. Volunteering is a very educational, rewarding, fun, and important experience. We hope it will touch your heart and change your life for the better. Your time and effort makes a tremendous difference in the lives of homeless and unwanted horses in need.

Helping children / adults with emotional and learning challenges through Equine Assisted Learning, raising funds, rehabilitating a neglected/abused/abandoned equine, giving a horse a carrot and a warm blanket on its back for night time, and finding the right scratch spot to make the horse's lips quiver; well, if that does not warm your heart and lift your spirits, we don't know what will. Horses ask for nothing but our unconditional love. It is very rewarding to see how our rescue horses warm up to our voluntary members within a few visits and crave the love and attention they did not get in their former homes. In many cases, this is the first time anyone ever really cared for them at all. It is amazing what we can do together for these majestic animals. They are so deserving. In reading about our history below, we hope that you will be enthused by the opportunity to join our good cause & support our organization long-term. Thank you for giving your time, energy, and financial support, to help make the lives of our equine friends meaningful! You make a world of difference!

Our Board of Directors and Leadership Team

AGHR consists of a Board of Directors, including the Executive Director/Founder, the President, the Treasurer, the Secretary, Director of Program Development, Marketing Director, Volunteer Coordinator, Director of Operations, Community Outreach / Special Events Coordinator, Fundraising / Bequests Officer, and Lead Volunteer / Mentor. The President, Treasurer, and Secretary positions are filled by general membership vote at the end of their term, which is a minimum of 12 months, maximum of 3 years. Any long-standing active member can in any leadership, community outreach, or volunteer coordination position, and take an important role in our rescue annually. Everyone involved makes a tremendous difference and is greatly appreciated.

Foster Caregiver

Open your home and heart to a rescue horse with special emotional & physical needs. You may care for a horse that has been abandoned and needs nutritional health rehabilitation care, or a horse that has been abused/neglected and needs additional emotional support and retraining from a prior negative/traumatic experience. You may also be asked to take in a horse who is already well trained, well socialized, that simply needs a new home now. Participation in our voluntary Foster Caregiving program requires a Foster Care Agreement Contract, which requires tax-deductible sponsorship of your fostered equine(s). It requires home visits by AGHR Directors & assigns, and may require volunteer support with direct horse care. Many Foster Caregivers are matched with a horse they would eventually like to adopt, and so this horse becomes part of their family prior to adoption, which is very rewarding and comforting, knowing that the Foster has time to make an educated decision prior to adopting a rescue horse. Adoption by voluntary Fosters is not mandatory. In some cases, the rescue is able to secure outside sponsors to offset some sponsorship expense for the Foster. The rescue provides funds for emergency vet calls & humane

euthanasia if the need arises. The Foster provides the daily maintenance & love. We work together as a team for the benefit of the fostered equine.

Direct Horse Care (DHC) Volunteer

The Direct Horse Care Volunteer is responsible to make regular visits to the fostered & boarded equines. During the visits, this volunteer is responsible to lightly exercise, groom, bathe, and perform general socialization and basic natural horsemanship desensitization training with the horses as directed by the Training Program. Volunteers may be asked to muck & clean paddocks & stalls as needed, maintain water troughs as needed, blanket or fly sheet / mask horses as needed, clean & maintain equipment, barns, feeder troughs, mats, and assist with stocking hay, shavings, and supplies as needed, and to assist with loading horses & supplies for transport as needed. Volunteers may be asked to help with holding horses for Vet & Farrier visits, as well as to mentor more inexperienced Volunteers or provide orientation walk-throughs as needed, as directed by organization.

DHC Volunteers are responsible to maintain a regularly scheduled visitation program, to report their monthly visits in advance, by the 3rd day of each month, and post their visitation schedules in our “band” group app calendar in advance. They are encouraged to photograph / video their visits with the assigned horse and post that on our “band” group app for use on our social media / website pages.

Direct HorseCare Volunteers are required to attend all Experiential Learning Trainings, which are on weekends. You will be excused for illness or pre-notified emergency. Volunteers will not be permitted to conduct visits to the fostered horses without attending a pre-evaluation and orientation with Rescue Directors.

Volunteers are not authorized to ride, nor feed, the fostered equine, nor any other equine housed within the premises looking after the fostered equine, unless specifically directed to do so by the Board of Directors. Foster Caregivers may request assistance with grooming & ground training only, no riding. Volunteers are not authorized to feed the fostered horse; this is the responsibility of the Foster Caregiver &/or Stable Manager only.

Volunteers must be at least 18 years of age. Minor child participants may accompany Volunteers, only if signed on the Volunteer’s liability waiver. Minor child participants must wear a safety helmet and be supervised at all times while around the horses. Minor child participants under the age of 14 are not permitted to handle the horses’ feet. Adult Volunteers must pick the feet as directed by the Board of Directors, Foster Caregivers, Volunteer Coordinators/Mentors, & pro-bono professional Trainers, as appropriate for each individual horse.

Volunteers are required to provide a minimum of 6 service hours per month in visits with our rescue horses, including experiential learning trainings and meetings. Volunteers are encouraged to attend all special events, fundraisers, & outreach programs to help promote our programs.

General and Community Based Volunteers

We have an ongoing recruitment for Community-Based Volunteers to assist us with outreach events, fundraising (online and in-person), garage sale / auction Fundraisers, Community Service programs (i.e.

National Day of the Horse, Giving Tuesday, ASPCA Help A Horse Day, Horse Powered Reading / Math, Dine4Horses Restaurant Fundraisers, Parelli Clinic Fundraisers, etc.). We are always looking for like-minded, creative leaders to assist us with program development, grant writing, and special events. We are always looking for Educators, Special Education Teachers, Reading / Math Specialists, Equine Specialists, and Psychotherapists to assist us with our Horse Powered Reading and Math program. This is a wonderful way to get involved and help our horses teach literacy skills and build confidence in community youth.

Pro-Bono Professional Volunteers

AGHR needs pro-bono professional services, such as EAGALAcertified Equine Specialists and Therapists, Reading / Math Specialists and Teachers, Veterinary, Farrier, legal, accounting, horse transport, carpenters, electricians, plumbers, animal photographers & videographers, personalized tshirt makers, stationary/clerical print shops, ink donations, painters, natural horsemanship trainers, & landscapers. Special skills and talents are valued and appreciated by our organization, to help with our daily operations, or our occasional special events.

Volunteer Requirements

1. Age Requirement: minimum 18 years old for independent volunteering with horses (under the age of 18 requires parent / guardian supervision)
2. Time Commitment: 6 to 10 hours per month minimum service time required
3. Training Requirement: basic horse handling experience is required; no riding
4. Transportation Requirements: Volunteers must provide their own transportation to / between horse visits, and to / from community special events.
5. Foster Care Volunteer Requirements: Foster Care Application / Foster Care Agreement Contract the Foster Care Agreement Contract. Hay / Feed, Psyllium, 1st Aid, Grooming Supplies Sponsorship is required. Details specified in the Contract. 12 month minimum time commitment. Maximum time frame = lifetime of the sanctuary horse.
6. Safety and Liability Requirements: All Volunteers sign the Equine Liability Waiver & Hold Harmless Agreement, Confidentiality Affidavit, CDC Compliance Affidavit, provide their own medical and liability insurance. The rescue holds 3rd party liability insurance for public visitors only on specified sites for events and Horse Powered Reading. Volunteers must attend and participate in regularly scheduled safety trainings.

No Kill Philosophy / Dealing With Equine Abuse & Neglect

We are a “no kill” shelter organization. Because of this, AGHR, Inc. will not euthanize horses to make space for incoming horses. AGHR, Inc. will operate within its limited capacity for the safety and health well-being of the current horses in foster care, and volunteers involved. We reserve the right to accept or deny any horse at any time. We will not accept animals for the purpose of euthanasia only. AGHR reserves the right to limit or deny any breed, breed mix, foal, broodmare, or stallion intakes. Preference is given to horses impounded in the animal shelter, or in need of rescue due to desperate environmental risks such as abandonment, starvation, abuse, & neglect. We will network and help owners find other rescues or safe adopters for surrendered horses if we do not have space.

Horses with conditions such as significant laminitis, significant ringbone, cancer, or significant painful arthritis and the inability to walk, are referred to veterinarians and other animal rescues more equipped to

deal with quality of life concerns. Though we are a “No Kill Shelter”, we do support humane euthanasia in extreme suffering cases. We need our Volunteers to know that Rescue is not always pretty, and can be extremely sad, emotional, and stressful in some situations for horses and humans. This is one of the primary reasons our rescue recruits Volunteers over the age of 18 only. It is rare that Volunteers will encounter this difficult decision our Rescue needs to make, but they may encounter a horse that is injured, chronically lame, or abused/neglected beyond rehabilitation, at one of the Animal Shelters, or in foster care with us. And this is a reality to what we sometimes need to do. So this is noteworthy to tell Volunteers in advance. Our Rescue horses do not live beyond their quality of lives. We do not keep Rescue horses alive when they are suffering. Volunteers must understand that AGHR reserves the right to conduct humane euthanasia on any of our horses if the Vet recommends this for quality of life. Therefore, it is important that volunteers do not become overly attached to horses whom are suffering. This is a cruel fact that our rescue must follow. We ensure the best quality care possible, and we do not force endured suffering to extend life.

It is important for volunteers to understand that AGHR is in place to support abandoned horses, not humans who are unwilling to accept the financial responsibility that comes with owning a horse. AGHR does not offer low cost wellness and preventative health programs, low cost gelding or euthanasia, for private owners. However, we can try to help make referrals to other agencies which may be a resource to help horse owners in financial need. It is also important to understand that AGHR does, and will, report horse owners who mistreat, neglect, abuse, or abandon their equine to the legal authorities in the county where the horse resides. This includes adopters, foster caregivers, and horse owners related to our own rescue. This is a cruel and necessary reality at times. This is why it is critical that all members read, understand, and sign the Confidentiality Affidavit Form. This prevents our rescue family from any legal suits or claims for slander and libel, and keeps us all aware of our legal rights and responsibilities.

Accident Policy

AGHR makes every effort to provide a safe working environment for all voluntary Members. However, occasionally accidents occur. As a voluntary Member, you are required to sign a Liability Waiver and must report any accident to the Volunteer Coordinator & President immediately. Volunteers under the age of 18 MUST wear an approved/certified riding helmet at all times while working around the rescue horses. Some foster homes may require that all handlers, regardless of age, wear an approved/certified riding helmet. We must respect all safety rules and regulations to avoid accidents as much as possible. All Voluntary Members are required to carry and maintain their own liability and/or medical insurance for themselves and their child minor participants. All Volunteers in any capacity must have a signed Liability Waiver and a signed CDC Compliance Affidavit form with a completed Registration Packet prior to beginning with service in our organization. This is for your protection and ours. AGHR follows the current state and CDC code of regulations and ordinances, and reserves the right to demand the use of face mask, or other PPE materials and procedures. We have a non-compliance policy in place for Volunteers who do not follow our Volunteer – Safety Rules & Procedures, and you will be asked to discontinue service. This is for everyone’s protection and good. Thank you for your collaboration and compliance to keep everyone safe and happy in this volunteer experience.

Conduct

It is rare that we need to ask a Volunteer to discontinue service with our Rescue, but it is critical for each Volunteer to know that we will, if misconduct becomes an issue. We are a model Rescue with a high reputation of excellence through the HSUS and the County Animal Care & Control Shelter Agencies. Although there are no paid positions as a Volunteer with our organization, we are serious about our professionalism and mannerism.

As a representative of AGHR, it is important that you are familiar with its policies and procedures. When dealing with adopters, foster care homes, sponsors, and the public, as well as with Directors and fellow volunteer Direct Horse Care Volunteers, you must be polite, courteous, and helpful. You must respect the Rules & Regulations posted clearly and distributed to you when you joined our organization.

This includes NO RIDING horses on the foster care sites. This is critical. Even if the Foster Caregiver approves or encourages you to ride our fostered equine, or another horse on the property, this is AGAINST our policy and you will be dismissed from our program for liability purposes. Please follow the Rules of the Rescue, even if the Foster Caregiver or Boarding Stable does not. This is non-negotiable and will be dealt with on an individual basis, but is cause for dismissal due to insubordination, breach of contract, and irresponsibility to the liability risk factor involved.

Please understand this when you join. This Rescue, and its Safety Rules & Procedures, is put in place to keep everyone safe and happy, especially our horses, whom have special needs and at risk for injury by misuse / misconduct. Please take this seriously and act in a mature and responsible manner when conducting business on the foster care sites.

It is the policy of AGHR to provide a workplace that is free from discrimination, harassment, and on that promotes equal opportunity and equitable treatment. Any type of harassment or discrimination based on a person's race, religion, skin color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, HIV status, etc., is prohibited. Horse rescue can be a very emotional and stressful job; however, please refrain from using any slang or foul language when dealing with negative people, known kill buyers, abusers, or uncaring surrendering owners. Each volunteer is expected to represent AGHR to the public in a positive manner. Failure to support the code of conduct and the policies & procedures in detail may result in the termination of your volunteer service.

General Overview of Rules & Regulations Include:

1. Dress Code - Volunteers are representatives of AGHR. A volunteer must wear a rescue shirt at AGHR special events. Voluntary Fosters & Direct Horse Care Volunteers must wear long pants (jeans or breeches preferred), appropriate closed to footwear (work boots or riding boots preferred), no dangling jewelry, no loose clothing, all long hair tied back. All participants under the age of 18 must wear a safety helmet at all times around the horses.
2. Smoking - Not permitted on or around the foster care / activity premises.
3. Alcohol/Drug Use – AGHR is a drug & alcohol-free workplace. The following activities are prohibited on any premises associated with AGHR or while conducting AGHR services: the lawful manufacture, distribution, possession, or use of a controlled substance. Voluntary Foster Caregivers and Volunteers are not allowed to be on duty after having used a controlled substance which has not been legally prescribed by a health care practitioner. Violation of this policy will result in immediate dismissal from the volunteer program.
4. Violence – All volunteers & visitors should be treated with courtesy & respect at all times. Conduct that threatens, intimidates, or otherwise emotionally or physically harms a human or animal within an AGHR setting will not be tolerated, and the volunteer will be immediately dismissed from service.
5. Privacy – Any information pertaining to AGHR records, cases you may become privileged to (including names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, etc.) as a result of your position is confidential and may not be discussed or reproduced. Volunteers are specifically prohibited from discussing any aspect of AGHR records & cases with any representative of the media or public. Personal contact information of any rescue members shared via email shall not be reproduced or shared with any public entity who is not specifically an active member of AGHR. A Confidentiality Affidavit Form must be signed. Please note, AGHR Directors reserves the right to publish & post photos or short video clips of volunteers and horses from trainings & special events to our website, facebook page, and other social media means.

It is the responsibility of the volunteer to contact the rescue Director if he/she prefers not to appear in photographs or videos of our organization. Names will not be used / published unless specifically indicated with permission by volunteer. Also, AGHR does not take responsibility for photos / video clips published by volunteers on their own facebook / social media pages. We encourage all volunteers to notify the rescue Directors prior to publishing materials, but do not have control over what is published. Honesty, respect, and confidentiality is the “best practices” with our organization. In such, Members are encouraged not to send emails regarding personal issues, and always to discuss personal issues with the Director first prior to communicating with the general Membership.

Violations of these rules is due cause for AGHR to reserve the right to terminate association with any volunteer. Poor performance, disruptive behavior, habitual tardiness or absenteeism, or falsification of work hours will be brought to the attention of the Volunteer Coordinator & President. Every effort will be made to provide clear warning & notice to the volunteer, conduct an investigation to determine truth prior to terminating the volunteer, apply the termination rule fairly and equally, and find alternatives to termination wherever possible. We strongly encourage volunteers to complete the term of their commitment. However, if circumstances make this impossible, please notify the Rescue Directors as soon as possible if you are unable to fill your term.

Thank you for joining our Rescue Family! We are glad to have you on our Team!

Our Contact Information

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