

*Mustang and Wild Horse Rescue of Georgia, Inc.*

# Volunteer Handbook



*Serving the Southeast since 2002*

**Member of United Way**

**David Hesse, Founder**

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# So You Would Like to Volunteer?

There are a million good reasons to volunteer and there are nearly as many opportunities to volunteer and make a difference. Helping horses in need can be a rewarding experience. Becoming a volunteer to work directly with our horses has great emotional appeal. Careful consideration of what volunteering entails will increase your chances of having an extraordinarily rewarding and enriching experience. The Mustang and Wild Horse Rescue, Inc., (MWHR) would like you to take a moment to consider the following questions before making that commitment. It is important that you are honest and realistic with yourself when answering them.

## **1. How much time do I have to volunteer?**

This is an extremely important question. MWHR relies on volunteers for a significant amount of the workload. Even though you will not be paid for your time, efforts or expertise as a volunteer, failure to complete or follow through on a task has a significant impact the organization, including other volunteers, the staff, the especially the horses. Their well-being will be in your hands and they will be depending upon you.

## **2. Can I commit to a specific day and time each week, or do I need a flexible volunteer schedule?**

Remember, not only must you assess how much time you have to volunteer, but also how your time is structured. Barn Volunteer hours are (to be determined) during the week; (hours to be determined) on Saturday; (hours to be determined) on Sunday. Other non-barn related projects do not have required times, but do require a number of hours and some have deadlines. Volunteers who have proven themselves responsible and reliable may be assigned to earlier times at the barn upon an officer's approval.

## **3. How long a period can I make this commitment?**

Our volunteer positions are ongoing and have no end date. Assess the length of time you are willing to commit to and make sure it is realistic and that you really have the time available.

## **4. Does my schedule change during the year?**

Very often schedules for the barn and pastures vary with the months or seasons. If you have school-age children, will your schedule be different during the summer months? If you are a student, will you be working full-time during the summer? Be sure to take into account any schedule changes that could affect your availability. We currently can be flexible with the days for which you are scheduled because we do not have set the hours at the barn at this time. More specific hours will be set for the barn as we acquire more horses, more acreage, and more volunteers.

## **5. Do I have the skills or expertise to do the job?**

Just because it is a volunteer position does not mean that you are exempt from getting the job done properly. If the position calls for special skills or expertise, be honest about your ability to handle what is needed and required. Task such a stall cleaning and watering do not require any experience and we will train you. Grooming horses, interacting with horses, etc., does require experience; however we are available to volunteers to learn these skills.

**6. Where do I rank on the emotional fortitude scale?**

Volunteer work can be immensely rewarding, but there are emotional risks. At our horse rescue you might be faced with the fact that not all horses can be saved. Consider your ability to deal with tragic and difficult circumstances. Horses with which you may become attached also get adopted and leave our facility.

**7. What is my volunteer budget?**

If volunteering at the barn you must commute to the facility so consider your travel costs, which add up over time. MWHR is a 501(c)3 organization so your time is not deductible on your taxes. However your mileage, expenses, and donations are. Please be aware that once in a while additional incidental expenses, such as paying for or replacing equipment that you have broken, come up and are also expenses that should be considered.

**8. What's in it for me?**

Be sure that you are volunteering because you sincerely want to help with no strings attached, not because you feel it will benefit you in some way. Be realistic about the rewards and expectations. Please note that although our volunteers can gain experience working around horses, our Volunteer Program is not designed as a teaching/learning opportunity for riding lessons, horsemanship training, groundwork, medical care, husbandry, etc. Our horses are trained using natural horsemanship methods and only experienced horse people ride and/or lunge and train our horses. If you are not an experienced horseperson, you are welcome to observe and, potentially, learn from us.

**9. Where will I fit in best?**

Give serious thought to the type of volunteer work you prefer to do. Do you want to work with people or horses? Do you mind physical labor or do you prefer an office-oriented desk job? Would you like to work behind the scenes or on the front line? Do you prefer working with other volunteers, or are you more comfortable working alone? Do you only want to work with the horses? The answers to these questions may help you eliminate some positions and may highlight others that would be a good match for your comfort zone and personality. If you are interested in volunteering your time for tasks that involve fundraising, administrative work, marketing, public relations, etc., please let the Volunteer Coordinator know so you can be directed to the appropriate MWHR contact.

**10. Am I really committed, or do I suffer from "great intention syndrome?"**

The urging of a good friend, a compelling speech, or an emotional appeal by a non-profit group can stir up our emotions and cause us to rush to the telephone or sign up to volunteer. Getting caught up in the emotion of the moment can make you commit to something that you will have to apologetically extricate yourself from later on. A volunteer who resigns shortly after training is very costly to an organization.

If you are ready to commit, we welcome you to join us.

# What do Volunteers Do?

## Barn Chores

Spend some time outside and help feed our horses! Then it's on to watering the horses, general barn clean-up, and preparing feed buckets for the next shift. We often have special projects that we need help with so any time you can spare after the regular chores are complete is appreciated. We welcome all volunteers who are strong team players and have a desire to work hard in order to help the horses.

## Beginner Barn Volunteers

Enjoy working outside around our horses! Beginner volunteers may interact directly with our Geriatric herd, but are asked to not enter other pastures as those horses can be more unpredictable.

## Intermediate Barn Volunteers

After regular chores are complete, get some one-on-one horse time by haltering and grooming specific Geriatric horses. We ask that intermediate volunteers not enter any other pastures, as these horses can be more unpredictable.

## Advanced Barn Volunteers

Lead our barn-chore teams through a morning or evening feeding. Coordinate, manage, and assist in the activities of all volunteers including horse handling, horse care, feeding, and general clean up. These volunteers must be detail-oriented and efficient so as to ensure the continuity of all barn protocol. Intermediate level horse handling skills are required. Human resource management experience is helpful.

*Please note:* It is very rare for a new applicant to be accepted as an advanced level barn volunteer. After working several shifts and getting to know the routine, intermediate level volunteers may be promoted to an advanced level.

## Barn Guidelines and Checklist

Please read the following guidelines and checklist. They have been prepared for your safety as well as that of our horses and the organization.

- Proper closed-toe shoes are required at all times.
- When working, make sure all gates and locks are closed. A loose horse is dangerous to itself and others.
- You break it, you bought it. Because our organization survives on donations it is important to help maintain forks, buckets, locks, wheel barrels, and other equipment as if it was your own. If something happens on your shift please report it immediately to your coordinator. If repairs are required we will address it as a team.
- Before leaving your shift please make sure that all of our animals have clean fresh water and ample hay. Feeding schedules can be found posted at both locations.
- Periodically walk and check the fence lines for down trees or other repairs that may be required. First shift after a tornado warning or bad storm should make this a priority.
- A healthy horse is a happy horse. Help clean and scoop manure whenever possible; dump in the designated area.

## **Facilities and Grounds Maintenance**

### **Light and heavy vehicle maintenance:**

MWHR utilizes a number of vehicles at the farm for all the many activities we work through each day. We are looking for mechanical people who can help maintain our “work horses” such as our pick-up trucks, tractor, skid steer, and horse trailers.

### **Building, grounds, and fence upkeep:**

In our efforts to keep our facility looking sharp, we can utilize more volunteers to help with such things as fence repair, harrowing of our pastures, horse shelter and barn repair, rock removal, manure spreading and/or hauling, and building of additional horse pens and pastures. These projects can be completed by an individual or a group of volunteers who enjoy outdoor farm work. If your work group has the necessary skills to help with these sorts of projects, we could certainly use the help.

### **Gardening:**

Depending on our available open space, we sometimes need of individuals or groups of volunteers who can help with maintenance of the garden spaces around our barn. This includes weeding, and mowing. If you have flowers or plants you would like to donate to help make our facility look better, we can always find spots for you to plant your favorite items! This could be a great activity for large work groups that are looking for a day-long project.

### **Plumbing and Electrical:**

There is always a need for various indoor and outdoor plumbing or electrical projects. Running electric fencing or providing more lights outside are both ongoing projects here at the rescue. Any previous experience is extremely helpful!

## **Special Event and Fundraising**

MWHR participates in numerous special events throughout the year. We are always looking to spread the word about horse rescues and provide education about our organization as well as the plight of the mustangs and wild horses captured by the Department of Agriculture’s Bureau of Land Management. Most events require our representatives to have an intricate knowledge of MWHR's procedures although some require no prior experience. Friendly and outgoing people as well as quick learners are great for this type of position. Events include merchandise and informational booths, open houses, and other off-site events throughout the year.

# Becoming a Volunteer

## Volunteer Benefits

- Opportunity to learn about and interact with horses
- Opportunity to stay involved with horses if you have had to give yours up
- Great opportunity for new trainers to gain experience with various types of horses and build your resume
- The joy and satisfaction of knowing that you are helping to save a horse's life

## Volunteer Guidelines

- Under the age of 18? A parent or **legal** guardian must attend the orientation
- Children under 15 yrs must be supervised by their parents at all times
- Horse experience is not required for non-riding jobs; we will train you!
- All on-site volunteers **must** complete a minimum of two (2) working orientation sessions prior to being released to work on their own
- A release form must be completed and signed when you come for your first orientation session

## Getting Started

- Fill out the volunteer application, return to MWHR Volunteer Coordinator
- We will contact you once your application is received to let you know the time and date of your orientation, as well as send you directions to our facility
- Once you have attended a MWHR Volunteer Orientation, you will be able to begin volunteering
- If you have any questions, please contact us at [MWHRofGA@gmail.com](mailto:MWHRofGA@gmail.com)

# Notices

## Resignation

Please provide two week minimum notice if you can no longer volunteer or you if you have a scheduling conflict. We rely on all of our scheduled volunteers for the care and well being of our horses and donkeys.

## Absences

If you are unable to attend your shift for any reason, please call:

<u>Contact</u>	<u>Phone Number</u>	<u>Title</u>
Izilda Venter .....	404-987-5500 .....	Barn Manager / Volunteer Coordinator

## Emergencies

In case of an emergency, please call:

<u>Contact</u>	<u>Phone Number</u>	<u>Title</u>
Izilda Venter .....	404-987-5500 .....	Barn Manager / Volunteer Coordinator / Administration
Ali Johnson .....	404-493-1388 .....	Marketing & PR / Administration

## Welcome Aboard!

We are looking forward to working with you and getting to know you!