



VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION GUIDE



Welcome to the Bella Terra Volunteer Program

Bella Terra is a small nonprofit organization. It is the service of our volunteers that makes our program possible. We appreciate the contributions of our volunteers in enabling the services we provide to those in need or facing other challenges in their lives. As a volunteer at Bella Terra, you are valuable support in assisting this organization to fulfill its mission and achieve success.

Volunteering at Bella Terra is about being of service – to the community, to the horses, and to the clients of Bella Terra. It's also about having fun and making new friends (both two legged and four legged) while serving. It is a rewarding and fulfilling experience.

So, the staff of Bella Terra want to express our deep gratitude for your decision to become a volunteer and sharing the most precious gift of all ... yourself.

Contact Us

<p>Bella Terra, Inc. 10736 RS Avenue Mattawan, MI 49071-9460 website: www.bellaterrainc.org email: staff@bellaterrainc.org phone: 269-978-8138 Business hours are: Monday - Friday at 9 AM - 5 PM</p>	<p>The Staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Todd Shook, Cofounder<input type="checkbox"/> Kim Shook, Cofounder <p>Volunteer Specific Information: http://www.bellaterrainc.org/VolunteerConnection.htm</p>
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The Bella Terra Mission

Bella Terra, Inc. is a nonprofit organization empowering individuals facing life challenges by providing quality therapeutic, personal growth and educational opportunities utilizing experiential programming with horses.

- Partnering with organizations and nonprofits to provide programming for those in need.
- Providing fee-for-service programming to the general public in the areas of team building, leadership development, and personal growth.

Please visit our website (www.bellaterrainc.org) to learn more about Bella Terra, the Equine Adventure program, and the clients we serve.



Applying to Volunteer

Anyone at least 13 years old can apply by submitting a volunteer "Registration and Release" form (required by our liability insurance). Those under the age of 13 will be considered on a case by case basis. Please obtain a copy of this form on our website at <http://www.bellaterrainc.org/Volunteer.htm> or by contacting the staff at Bella Terra.

From time to time we have more volunteers than we can support. If this situation arises, new volunteers can go on a wait list and will be contacted when openings become available.

All volunteers will be trained for their role prior to beginning their volunteer work, either on an individual basis or as part of a group Volunteer Training and Orientation Session. All volunteers must become familiar with and follow our Volunteer Expectations (documented on the last page of this guide).

Volunteer Training and Orientation lasts approximately ½ to 1 hour. This is a great opportunity to meet other volunteers, learn about the Bella Terra Volunteer program, and be trained on work activities. During the orientation, volunteers will participate in the following activities, so please come dressed to work:

- Meet the Bella Terra staff and horses
- Submit volunteer "Registration and Release" form
- Review the key information about volunteer schedules, work activities, and other expectations we have for our volunteers
- Review the Volunteer Orientation Guide
- Participate in a Horse Communication & Safety Demonstration
- Be trained in the horse care work activities
- Answer questions about volunteering

Volunteer Scheduling

- Volunteers are required to work under the direct supervision of Bella Terra staff.
- The parents/guardians of youth are welcome to stay during the volunteering time, but it's optional; however, we do reserve the right to require the parent/guardian to be present if it becomes necessary. Volunteers that do not drive themselves need to be picked up on time at the end of the volunteer session.
- All volunteer work is scheduled based on staff availability. We conduct equine experiential workshops on a regular basis and typically not on a set time schedule. Therefore, we must schedule volunteering around our programming and other work schedules.
- All volunteers must sign-up for the pre-scheduled volunteer times at least 24 hours in advance and on a first come, first served basis. In most cases, volunteer jobs take 1.5 to 2 hours to complete. A maximum of five volunteers will be scheduled at the facility at one time to ensure that we have enough work for everyone. Bella Terra schedules volunteer jobs as needed by season. As changes occur they will be communicated, primarily by email and on the Bella Terra website (<http://www.bellaterrainc.org/Volunteer.htm>). Please check our website or contact the Bella Terra staff to find out about the current volunteer schedule.



- ❑ If you would like to set up time to volunteer at a time other than those pre-scheduled, please contact us with a 72 hour advance notice and we will do our best to honor your request; based on our availability and work available.
- ❑ If you are unable to make a scheduled volunteer time, please notify the Bella Terra staff as soon as possible so that someone else can take the spot.
- ❑ Bella Terra routinely conducts equine experiential workshops and sessions. These are private and confidential. To ensure confidentiality for program participants, volunteering will not take place during programming and no one is allowed at the facility when they are taking place. Due to this, there will be times when we will need to cancel volunteer times to accommodate programming with our clients. We will do this with as much advance notice as possible and primarily communicate these scheduling changes through email.
- ❑ Most volunteer jobs can not be done during severe bad weather, such as rain or snow storms. If these conditions exist as your scheduled volunteer time approaches, please contact Bella Terra to determine if you need to report or reschedule your volunteer hours. Volunteering is held year-round however we will not have volunteering on days where the temperature falls below 25°F. Please feel free to contact Bella Terra to confirm the volunteer schedule.
- ❑ Bella Terra strives to provide as many volunteers as possible the opportunity to work at our facility. To accomplish this, we ask that all volunteers commit to working at least 2 hours per month. If you are unable to meet this commitment, please notify a Bella Terra staff member as soon as possible so that your time slot can be given to another volunteer on our wait list.

What to Wear When Volunteering

Time will be spent outdoors doing physical activities with the horses. Wear comfortable and casual clothing that you don't mind getting dirty. **Participants are required to wear closed toe shoes** with socks to protect their feet when working with the horses (no exceptions). Long pants are preferable. Dress appropriately for the weather and it is best to layer clothing during all seasons.

Recording Volunteer Hours

Please record your volunteer hours in the Volunteer Log, as this allows us to recognize your contribution. The Volunteer Log can be found in the Volunteer Book, which is located in the Tack Room in the top, middle desk drawer or obtained from a staff member.

Volunteer Opportunities

For the most current and complete volunteer information, please check our website at <http://www.bellaterrainc.org/Volunteer.htm>. From time to time we have unique volunteer needs and we will contact you about these opportunities, such as assistance at workshops.

Provide Your Feedback as a Volunteer



We are interested in hearing about your volunteer experience. Please let us know on a regular basis your feedback on volunteering at Bella Terra and what we can do to improve the experience. Also, at least annually or at the end of your volunteer commitment, please complete and submit a Volunteer Evaluation Form; which can be found in the Volunteer Book, which is located in the Tack Room in the top, middle desk drawer or obtained from a staff member or can be downloaded on our website at <http://www.bellaterrainc.org/Volunteer.htm>.

Visiting Bella Terra and the Horses

We encourage individuals to visit the horses whenever they like and we have visitors to our farm on a regular basis. However, due to confidentiality reasons, no one is permitted at the facility when programming is taking place with our clients. When you visit, no one is allowed to go in the paddocks or stalls with the horses unless a staff member is present. Also, due to prior issues that have arisen, do not feed any of the animals. If you turn off the electric rope fencing, please turn it back on before you leave.

The Bella Terra facility is a place of business as well as a private residence. You are welcome in the barns and around the property, but please do not enter the private residence. Also, all the other expectations documented within this guide apply when visiting the horses.

Help Us Promote Bella Terra

Please help us promote our program and gain more supporters. Please tell others about the programs and volunteer opportunities offered at Bella Terra. We are a nonprofit organization and rely solely on the financial support of our donors and revenue from workshops. We serve many local nonprofit organizations to provide programming to their clients. We also provide team building and leadership development workshops to business teams, groups, and student organizations as a revenue source to support our organization. If you would like brochures to distribute, please contact the Bella Terra staff.

Our Appreciation

We are sincerely grateful for the numerous hours donated by our volunteers. We thank you for your generous support and contribution to Bella Terra.



Ranch Hand Volunteers - Horse Communication & Safety Primer

“Human safety is first. Horse safety is second. Everything else is third.”

~ John Lyons

It is the basic nature of horses for them to respond by doing what we ask them to do. However, it is usually a matter of the horse *understanding clearly* what we are asking of them. The natural, nonverbal communication horses use within the herd is called “Equus.”

It is important to be aware at all times and use common sense when around a horse. Here are some things to watch for to ensure safety:

- ❑ Wear closed toe shoes that will protect your feet. Ensure that your feet are always at least 6 inches away from the horse’s hooves so that you don’t get stepped on.
- ❑ Ensure the electric rope fencing is turned off when starting your work and turned back on when finished.
- ❑ Do not feed the horses. This is required to ensure the health and well being of the horses as well as the safety of the volunteers.
- ❑ Be completely calm and quiet when near a horse. Sudden movements and loud noises can startle a horse and cause it to jump sideways, rear up, or kick out.
- ❑ Be aware of flying insects because these can cause a horse to startle, move quickly, or swish its tail.
- ❑ Don’t squat, kneel, sit or lay down near a horse. Instead, bend over so that if the horse moves you can get out of the way quickly.
- ❑ The safest place to stand near a horse is beside the horse’s shoulder. Never stand directly behind a horse. If you are grooming its tail, stand to one side and gently pull the tail over.
- ❑ To walk around a horse, either (1) walk around always maintaining body contact between you and the horse as close as you possibly can or (2) leaving the distance equivalent of double the horse’s body length (or one body length plus the distance from the hip to the tip of hoof plus the length of slack on the lead rope).
- ❑ The safest way to lead a horse is with a halter and lead rope. Walk on the left side of the horse (the horse on your right side with the lead rope in your right hand). Don’t walk a horse without a lead rope. Don’t hook your fingers through the halter straps or rings. If the horse pulls away your fingers or hand could be caught and cause injury. Never loop or wrap lead ropes around your hands or any other body part. If the horse pulls away you could be dragged and be seriously injured. Instead, hold it bunched up in your hand.
- ❑ When going through a doorway or fence gate with a horse, make sure the door is wide open so the horse doesn’t hit itself on it and get startled. Also, always immediately close fence gates and barn doors that have been opened.
- ❑ If a horse gets loose, immediately notify a staff member. It is best for a staff member to approach a loose horse. To assist with catching a horse, get a lead rope and some grain in



a small container. If the horse is running in front of the barn, please close the chain link gate at the road as quickly as possible.

- ❑ Understand horse behavior as it relates to herd social order and the way they express dominance. Don't get in between horses. Watch for the visual signs of behavior and attitude (this is not a complete list):
 - ❑ Signs that the horse is accepting us and aware of what we are doing:
 - The ears are forward, pointing towards you, or rotating around.
 - The eyes are on you
 - The horse is licking and chewing
 - The head is down
 - The leg resting
 - The horse is focused on eating
 - ❑ Signs that the horse is feeling too much pressure and is potentially agitated (if any of these are demonstrated, immediately stop what you are doing and step away from the horse):
 - The ears are pinned down and back
 - The head is swinging back and forth
 - The horse is pawing the ground
 - The horse is jumpy, tightening its muscles, or other movements indicating they are startled or uncomfortable
- ❑ How to move a horse when not on a lead rope – a.k.a. The Zones:
 - Motivation Zone – To move a horse forward, apply pressure from behind to get the horse to go
 - Stop Zone – To stop a horse or turn them around in the opposite direction when moving, apply pressure in front of the horse
 - Relationship Zone – To get the horse to walk with you, walk forward next to the horse's shoulder (when using a lead rope, on the left side)

Additional horse safety information can be found in the Volunteer Book, which is located in the Tack Room in the top, middle desk drawer or obtained from a staff member.



Ranch Hand Volunteers - Activity Checklists (Listed in Sequence)

Horses require daily care to ensure they live healthy and happy lives. As volunteers, it is our responsibility to provide the horses the best possible care and respect.

- ❑ **Muck Stalls:**
 - If there is clean, edible hay left in the stall, collect it and put it in the feeder.
 - Use a fork to collect all the manure in a wheel barrow. Please make sure to shake what is collected to leave as much clean bedding in the stall as possible.
 - Sweep the bedding into a pile.
 - If directed by the staff, empty the wheel barrow in the location designated.
 - Put away the equipment.
- ❑ **Muck Paddocks:**
 - Take a wheel barrow into the paddock ensuring the horses do not get out.
 - Use a fork to rake manure into piles. Collect all the manure in a wheel barrow. Please make sure to shake what is collected to leave as much sand/dirt on the ground as possible.
 - If directed by the staff, empty the wheel barrow in the location designated.
 - Put away the equipment.
- ❑ **Switch/Replace Bedding:**
 - This is only done once a week, so ask a staff member if this needs to be done.
 - Use a shovel to collect all the bedding in the tractor wagon. Be sure to collect all the wet/used bedding and sweep any remaining clean bedding into a pile.
 - Put one bag of bedding (Woody Pet) in each stall.
 - The staff will dump the wagon when full at the back of the property.
 - Put away the equipment.
- ❑ **Sweep the Barns:**
 - From time to time we will remove the spider webs and dust the barn walls and ceilings with the brooms.
 - After the stalls are clean, sweep both barns with a broom. Collect the debris into a pile. Sweep into a shovel and empty into a wheel barrow or the tractor wagon.
 - Put away the equipment.
- ❑ **Water Tank and Bucket Cleaning and Filling:**
 - **Inside Water Buckets:** The staff will indicate if the buckets only need to be filled with fresh water or if the buckets need to be cleaned out. If so, empty all the buckets, clean with a brush and rinse with water, put them back in the stalls, and fill with fresh water. If the buckets are not cleaned and just filled, an aquarium net may be used to collect hay and other debris in the water buckets.
 - If directed by the staff, empty the outside water tanks, clean with a brush and rinse with water, and then fill with fresh water.
 - Put away the equipment.
- ❑ **Horse Grooming/Shedding:**
 - A staff member will halter and take the horse(s) out of the paddock. The horse will either be held or tied up for grooming.
 - Use the grooming tools to shed (if they are shedding their winter coats in the spring and early summer), brush, comb the mane, tail, and forelock.



- If there are flying insects, a staff member may apply fly/insect spray but this should only be done by a staff member.
- Put away the grooming tools.
- Rake up the hair and put it into the wheel barrow.
- When you are done working with the horse, a staff member will put the horse back in the paddock.
- Put away the equipment.
- ☐ Horse Walking (only during certain weather conditions):
 - A staff member will assist in haltering and taking the horse(s) out of the paddock.
 - Walk the horse for approximately 20 minutes near the barn or around the circle driveway.
 - When you are done, walk the horse back to the paddock and a staff member will assist with putting the horse back in the paddock.
 - Put away the equipment.
- ☐ Horse Lunging (only during certain weather conditions):
 - A staff member will assist in haltering and taking the horse(s) out of the paddock.
 - Walk the horse back to the red round pen. Free lunge the horse in the round pen (per the instructions of the staff) for approximately 20 minutes (and no longer unless directed by a staff member). Ensure the horse only walks and trots - the horses shouldn't go faster than these paces. Also, ensure the horse does not get too hot by checking its breathing and front chest area for sweat. For safety reasons, ensure that you do not get directly behind the horse. Please do not hit or touch the horse with the whip/pointer.
 - When you are done, walk the horse back to the paddock and a staff member will assist with putting the horse back in the paddock.
 - Put away the equipment.



Volunteer Expectations (a.k.a. Ranch Rules) – A Summary

Because volunteers may be working with equipment, heavy items, and near/with horses, it is important that all of Bella Terra's policies set forth within this guide are observed and followed at all times, unless other individual arrangements have been made with the Bella Terra staff. If a volunteer does not comply, they will be asked to leave.

- Every volunteer must submit a signed Volunteer "Registration and Release" form (required by our liability insurance).
- All volunteers working with horses must observe a Horse Communication and Safety demonstration (required by our liability insurance).
- Everyone must wear closed toe shoes (required by our liability insurance).
- No smoking is allowed on the premises (required by our liability insurance).
- Ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the individuals participating in the equine experiential program.
- Ensure that all opened fence gates and barn doors are closed immediately after passing through.
- Do not feed the horses. This is required to ensure the health and well being of the horses as well as the safety of the volunteers.
- Everyone must follow instructions and provide immediate response to all Bella Terra staff requests, commands, and feedback. This is required to ensure safety.
- Everyone must remain calm and quiet at all times around the horses. Do not startle, move quickly, or make loud noises near the horses. Always ensure the horses know where you are at all times and do not walk up from behind a horse. This is required to ensure safety.
- No one is allowed to strike, hit, or in any way show aggression to any animal or person.
- Because of the unique circumstances of our facility, the clients we serve, and the requirements of our liability insurance, we are not able to provide court appointed community service.
- Working with the Bella Terra miniature horses is a privilege. The care and well being of both our volunteers and the animals is our top priority. Because of potentially serious health and safety reasons, we reserve the right to deny volunteer and visitation opportunities to any one, for any reason.
- If you have any questions about your role as a volunteer at Bella Terra, please discuss them with a staff member as soon as possible. Communication is essential to everyone's success.