



# Student Handbook

5080 146th Avenue

Holland, MI 49423

For further information, contact:

(616) 227- 3639 ext. 3

[programs@renewtrc.org](mailto:programs@renewtrc.org)

## **Welcome to Renew TRC:**

We are glad that you have an interest in learning more about Renew TRC programming! We strive to provide high quality equine assisted services to individuals in our community. We look forward to welcoming you as a beloved part of the Renew TRC family.

## **Our Mission:**

Our mission is to enhance the well-being of individuals in our community through the physical, cognitive, and emotional benefits of therapeutic horsemanship. At Renew, each rider has the opportunity to go beyond their disability, inability, fear, or reality. We encourage and support dreams by offering therapeutic horsemanship activities to fulfill our mission, striving to help riders develop their maximum potential in a caring and fun environment that empowers the rider in ways different from traditional therapy.

Our vision - Positive life change with each horse experience.

Our values - At Renew, we *empower* people by providing *excellent* service and promoting *Christ-centered acceptance* of all.

Renew Therapeutic Riding Center is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that is focused on improving the lives of all its participants. We are a Premier Accredited Center with PATH International, the only accredited therapeutic riding center in West Michigan.

## **Our Team:**

Each therapeutic riding lesson is taught by one of our PATH Intl. Certified Instructors who come from a variety of professional backgrounds. Our instructors work with riders, their families/caregivers, or fellow healthcare and educational professionals to develop a plan to address each rider's needs. With an emphasis on the safety, well-being, and respect of the student and the horse, our trained volunteers assist the instructors in implementing the riding goals for each lesson. Instructors document outcomes and maintain progress notes for each session with an overall goal of increased independence and riding skill attainment. All files are maintained securely on-site in locked file cabinets in compliance with PATH Intl. and rider forms and information are kept confidential.

## **Our History:**

The riding program began in 2009 by founders, Jodi Geerlings and Phyllis DeHaan, as a result of a lifelong dream to offer therapeutic riding lessons to those who could benefit from this service. In 2011, we moved to Rusty Spurs Equestrian Center, where Jodi and Phyllis partnered with Tom and Kelly Rozema to begin therapeutic riding at this location. The name was then changed to Renew Therapeutic Riding Center, taking the notion of renewal from Isaiah 41:30.

In 2013, the Board hired Melissa Conner as Executive Director and as an Advanced Instructor, and Renew began another stage of growth, doubling our number of students served and volunteers involved in the program. This growth necessitated searching for additional space and arena time than was currently

available. In late 2014, Renew began a Capital Campaign to raise funds to build its own facility by repurposing a large enclosure at the south end of the property at Rusty Spurs. Due to the generosity of many, including a major grant of \$30,000 from the Community Foundation of Holland/Zeeland, the new barn, pasture, heated indoor riding arena, and outdoor arena were completed in January of 2016.

Renew is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and is governed by a Board of Directors. As a nonprofit, we are dependent upon donations and grant money to meet our budget. Lesson fees cover less than 30% of operating expenses and we continue to depend greatly upon volunteers to meet the needs of the organization.

## **Renew Today:**

Renew currently serves approximately 100 students each week and has a growing waiting list. We purchased 20 acres at 5080 146th Ave in the Fall of 2018, where new facilities continue to be built as our capital campaign continues for phase 2 (learning center and horse barn). We moved to our new space in early 2020 and now call it home, complete with an 80' x 200' heated indoor arena, outdoor dressage arena, round pen, viewing room, pastures, fishing pond, riding trails, parking lot, and restrooms on site. We are thankful to continue growing and serving our community on this beautiful landscape!

## **WHY THERAPEUTIC RIDING?**

### **Horses That Heal**

Therapeutic riding opens new pathways of physical, mental, and emotional rehabilitation. The rhythmic and rocking gait of the horse transfers a gentle three-dimensional movement to the rider that relaxes muscles, improves muscle tone, flexibility and balance, and enhances spatial awareness. Accompanied by a team of encouraging volunteers and a supportive horse, self-control, self-esteem, self-confidence, and independence grows. Rehabilitation becomes a joy rather than a chore.

Individuals with disabilities such as cerebral palsy, spina bifida, neuromuscular disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, acquired brain injury, cognitive limitations, emotional challenges, autism, learning disabilities, and attention deficit disorder, can use riding and learning horsemanship skills to experience an overall improvement in their quality of life.

### **Healing Attributes of Riding**

- Normalizes muscle strength and tone. Improves coordination, freedom of movement, balance, respiration, body awareness, tactile perception, and oral motor control.
- Enhances self-image and confidence. Increases acceptance of unfamiliar experiences. Develops loving relationships with a team of individuals and the horse.
- Increases attention and safety awareness. Enhances comprehension and memory. Improves ability to sequence and follow directions.
- Improves interpersonal communication. Promotes family interaction and broadens social activity. Develops a recreational skill with opportunities to experience success.

### **Therapeutic Riding**

At Renew TRC, our instructors strive to teach riding skills in the learning style that is best received by each individual involved. The Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl., *see [pathintl.org](http://pathintl.org) for more info*) Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructors conduct each lesson. The rider receives the physical, cognitive, and emotional benefits that come along with learning how to ride. Each lesson incorporates an opportunity for rider skill growth and learning through implementing a thoughtfully planned 45 minute lesson. Although there is variability in the skills achieved based on a variety of factors, including the rider/horse pairing, we encourage the practice of safe and relational horsemanship at all levels. Please reach out to [programs@renewtrc.org](mailto:programs@renewtrc.org) if you'd like to learn more about our teaching methodology.

### **Speech Therapy**

Renew TRC is pleased to host Dr. Beth Macauley, of Macauley Therapy Services, on Tuesday evenings during regular scheduling to provide SLP sessions at the barn on horseback. If you'd like to learn more about these services and how to get involved, please [click here](#) to visit our website.

### **Additional Programs**

If you would like to hear more about other unique program offerings available at Renew TRC throughout the year, please contact us at [info@renewtrc.org](mailto:info@renewtrc.org). This could include trailer visits, field trips, equine assisted learning opportunities, or other educational offerings.

# Student Information



## Lesson Schedule:

We offer therapeutic riding lessons throughout all seasons of the year. Most sessions are 6 weeks long, with one 45-minute lesson each week (2-6 riders per lesson). Each lesson includes a warm-up, review of previous skills learned, introduction of a new skill, practice, progression, and a cool down. Registration information is generally emailed to participants a few weeks prior to the start of each session. We follow the Holland Public Schools systems closures and delays.

Upcoming session dates in 2022 include:

Session 5 - September 6th through October 17th, 2022

Session 6 - October 24th through December 10th, 2022

Upcoming sessions dates in 2023 include:

Session 1 - January 9th through February 18th, 2023

Session 2 - February 27th through April 15th, 2023

Session 3 - April 17th through June 3rd, 2023

Session 4 - June 12th through July 22nd, 2023

*\*\* Special programs offered in August*

Session 5 - September 5th through October 16th, 2023

Session 6 - October 23rd through December 9th, 2023

## Lesson Cancellation:

Renew prefers at least a 24 hour notice by phone to (616) 227-3639 ext. 7 if a rider needs to cancel a scheduled lesson due to unexpected absence (ie. illness). An email to [programs@renewtrc.org](mailto:programs@renewtrc.org) in addition to the phone call is preferred. If a student has a treatment, surgery, or injury mid-session we are happy to discuss the possibility of passing the credit on to an upcoming session they can attend. Riders who arrive more than 10 minutes late to their lesson without a phone call may not have the opportunity to ride out of respect for the volunteers, other riders, and horse as the horse will be returned to pasture. Please utilize the cancellation hotline number to inform your instructor that you are running behind schedule and they will help determine the best plan with you. Preplanned absences, such as vacations, are asked to be communicated at the start of the session whenever possible.

## **Make-Up Lessons:**

At this time, make-up lesson dates will only be offered if the lesson is canceled by Renew TRC due to weather, or if the rider has a medical emergency/related-reason during their session and as determined by Renew Staff. If scheduling does not allow make-up, credit may be given to the following session attended by the student if deemed appropriate by staff. We cannot guarantee the rider will be given their regular horse, time, or instructor during our provided make-up dates.

## **No Shows:**

If you fail to show up for your scheduled lesson, you will still be charged for the lesson with no make-up date option given. If you don't attend your lesson without notice more than twice during a session, you may be dropped from the regular schedule and allowed back in as the schedule permits. Lesson credit will not be given for no-shows.

## **Annual Form Updates:**

The two required forms for participation in Renew TRC lessons are the Participant Application and the Physician's Statement. They both can be downloaded from our website: [renewtrc.org](http://renewtrc.org) under the 'Therapeutic Riding' tab. The Release of Information Form is only necessary when the rider attends lessons with a school group or group home. With the help of their instructor, all riders will participate in a verbal session reassessment of their goals and abilities to add to their rider progress notes. If there are any changes in the rider's health/medical status, please notify the instructor immediately and a Participant Annual Update form will be required. Updated riding forms are required at least every 3 years, or every year for riders with Down Syndrome.

## **Confidentiality:**

Any information pertaining to the participants is strictly confidential. It is critical that we respect each individual by keeping confidential who participates in the program and what occurs at the center unless given specific permission by an authorized person to share information outside of the Renew TRC community. Confidentiality and respect are considered two of the most basic responsibilities of our staff and volunteers.

## **Rider Eligibility (weight, age, etc.):**

Renew TRC respects the guidelines listed below when making decisions regarding horse selection for the lesson. Each guideline is in place so that every member of the team (horse, rider, volunteer and instructor) may have a safe experience.

\*For safety, we ask that riders *do not exceed the weight of 250 pounds* for participation in Therapeutic Riding. Other program options, such as grooming/ground time with a horse may be offered in place of riding when appropriate. Staff of Renew TRC will take into consideration various factors such as rider's skill set, weight, and stability on the horse in order to provide the best service possible. Each of our horses are evaluated and assigned a maximum carrying weight for balanced and unbalanced riders with the help of our

veterinarian. Considerations will be made for the horse's age, health/soundness, stability, equipment available, and appropriateness of volunteers available.

\*Each rider will be evaluated as an individual. Considerations will also be made for the rider's height, range of motion, balance and ability to dismount independently. Our riders must be at least 4 years old and able to self-support their head/neck/trunk for at least 10 seconds. This is for the well-being of the rider.

\*Please note that the herd and volunteers at the center are dynamic and due to this fact, we do not always have the means available to safely accommodate every individual who wishes to participate in therapeutic riding services/hippotherapy.

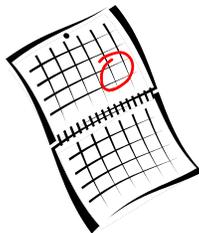
\*New policy - if a rider exceeds 200 pounds, Renew will ask for a bi-annual weight update to be provided by the family to ensure that the rider is still an appropriate match for their horse and riding services. This is for the safety of all involved. Weight can be self-reported or completed at the barn with our scale.

## **Dismissal Policy for Volunteers and Guests:**

In accordance with PATH Intl. Standards, Renew TRC has a policy to dismiss any volunteers or guests who become disruptive to horses, staff, or programs. This may include not following barn rules, disrespectful or foul language, uncontrolled behaviors, violating the confidentiality policy, or exhibiting actions or language that endanger horses, volunteers, staff, property owners, neighbors, horse owners, or program participants. This policy is to ensure that the culture and environment at Renew TRC remains safe and secure for all stakeholders.

Once a dismissal occurs, the individual involved will not be welcomed back to the facility unless approved in writing by both the Executive Director and the Board of Directors. If a dismissal occurs, staff members will complete an Incident Report and the Executive Director and Board of Directors will be notified.

## **Financial Information**



### **Payments:**

Lesson fees are to be paid in full during the first week of the session, or weekly payment plans are available if desired. The total cost of a 6-week session is \$240 (\$40 per lesson) but payment for the entire 6-week slot, regardless of planned absences, is expected. An invoice will be sent to your email for the convenience of online payment, or payments can be mailed or dropped off to the payment box inside the viewing room in the arena.

## Scholarships:

**Renew TRC Scholarship** is a fund that provides participants dealing with financial hardship a chance to participate in our programs. This is thanks to generous donors from our community. [Click here](#) to visit our website and learn more about scholarships and guidelines.

You can complete the application from the link above, or contact Shaina at [programs@renewtrc.org](mailto:programs@renewtrc.org) for more information. Scholarship funding is limited to 4 sessions per year per participant. We ask that participant's receiving a scholarship maintain at least 80% attendance, or they will be asked to skip a session before being eligible for scholarship coverage again. Makeup lessons are not typically available to our scholarship covered students.

## Respite Funding Through OCCMH:

As respite funding through CMH is only available for lessons attended, families are given one grace lesson every 6 months. If a family is unable to attend more than one lesson in a 6 month period, the family will be invoiced and expected to privately pay for the lessons they were unable to attend.

## Riding Information



## Clothing:

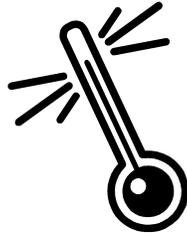
Riders will be in a barn environment, and must dress appropriately. We ask that all riders wear closed toed and heeled shoes such as boots or tennis shoes. An ASTM/SEI helmet is required for each participant. We will provide the helmet for lessons if the rider does not own one. Please check to make sure all headbands and hair ties are worn below the helmet and that jackets are zipped. Also, horses may be wary of any noisy clothing or observers' umbrellas. Please avoid both noisy and long jewelry.

### **WINTER/FALL:**

In the cool or cold seasons, please be aware that the temperatures at the barn can feel 10° colder than at your house. Layers work best for our riders. Big, bulky coats can hinder the rider and can become a safety issue when dismounting. Gloves can be helpful so long as the rider is not bothered/distracted by them. Please note that when the temperature is below 20 degrees outside, trotting may not be available to ensure our horses can stay healthy and cool down appropriately before being turned out.

### **SUMMER/SPRING:**

In our warm or hot seasons, light colored clothing can help keep the rider more comfortable. Shorts are allowed but can cause the rider discomfort when riding in a saddle. For this reason, long pants like jeans or riding pants are more appropriate. **No sandals are allowed.** During the lesson the rider may be outside in the sun, so sunscreen is strongly recommended. Insect repellent is also available and recommended.



### **Inclement Weather:**

If the heat index is above 105°F, lessons will be canceled. All effort will be made to contact the riders whose lessons are affected by this decision. However, if there is a question as to whether we are having lessons, please contact the barn at 616-227-3639. If **Holland Public Schools** have canceled classes or evening activities due to snow or extremely low temperature during the winter months, we will cancel lessons. If there is a threat of tornado or severe thunderstorms, please contact us for details concerning lessons.

### **Frequently asked questions:**

Q: Will I/my child ride the same horse every week?

A: *We try to keep the rider with the same horse for every session unless there is a health issue with the horse, scheduling conflict, or the instructor requests a horse change based on student needs.*

Q: Will I/my child have the same instructor every session?

A: *Scheduling and availability of instructors drives much of our assignments. It's possible that their instructor may change from session to session, but we do our best to avoid this.*

Q: Will I/ my child have a private or group lesson?

A: *Research has shown that most children benefit from a group experience. Therefore, we attempt to group our riders for the group experience. However, during the initial assessment the instructor may decide that a private lesson is most beneficial for the rider and may be an option based on schedule availability.*

Q: I/my child need(s) to take a session off. Can I/my child keep the same lesson time for the next session I/my child ride(s)?

A: *Since scheduling requests are made per session/semester, we can try to keep to the same lesson time if possible, but this is not guaranteed. Due dates for each session's registration form will be provided in emails from the Program Manager.*

Q: If I know of a lesson I/my child will miss a lesson before the session begins, what should I do?

A: *If you know of a pre-planned lesson cancellation, let the Program Manager know at registration so the instructor and volunteer team is aware of the absence. No make-up lessons are available at this time in order to be good stewards of our waitlisted riders.*

Q: If the traffic is bad and I think I/my child will be late, what should I do?

A: *Call the HOTLINE at (616) 227-3639 ext. 7 and tell us about the traffic and try to get to the barn ASAP. If you think that you cannot make it in time, we will help work out a solution with you.*

Q: I would like to help the program but not in lessons, what can I do?

A: *We always love help answering phones, helping with mailings, special events, and even dusting or cleaning around the barn. We will direct you or your rider to our Volunteer Coordinator to schedule your volunteer time. We have a Parent Committee that meets quarterly so please contact the Program Manager if you'd be interested in learning more!*



### **Contacts for Concerns or Questions:**

| <b>Position</b>                | <b>Name</b>           | <b>E-mail Address</b>       |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Executive Director             | Melissa Conner        | melissa@renewtrc.org        |
| Administrative Assistant       | Emily Hill            | info@renewtrc.org           |
| Program Manager                | Shaina Strikwerda     | programs@renewtrc.org       |
| Program Coordinator            | Jael Ymker            | jael@renewtrc.org           |
| Volunteer Coordinator          | Siobhan McManus       | volunteer@renewtrc.org      |
| Communications Coordinator     | Cassie Pelon          | communications@renewtrc.org |
| Farm Manager                   | Dan Habers            | dan.habers@renewtrc.org     |
| Equine Coordinator             | Ellis Stitch          | equine@renewtrc.org         |
| Other Certified TR Instructors | Kayla T. or Teresa H. | instructors@renewtrc.org    |

## **Safety Rules and Regulations**

### **Facilities Address and Phone Number:**

Renew Therapeutic Riding Center  
5080 146th Ave  
Holland, MI 49423  
Phone: (616) 227-3639

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the safety of participants, the health of the horses and document compliance with standards of the PATH Center Accreditation Manual.

1. No smoking or open flame anywhere on the facility
2. All riders must wear approved helmets while mounted
3. Children must be supervised at all times
4. Speed limit for vehicles is 5 MPH
5. Treat everyone with respect (no offensive language)
6. No activities that may cause a horse to spook (running, roughhousing, etc.)
7. No hand feeding horses or going into paddocks without permission
8. Volunteers and/or students are not able to bring pets/dogs onto Renew TRC Property, unless it is a service animal with a designated task. Please note that Renew staff reserves the right to ask that the animal leave the property if it's behaving inappropriately in order to maintain the safety of all involved.
9. Obey all posted signs and instruction of staff

**Please help keep Renew TRC a safe and caring environment for all!**

**SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

1. Facility Safety
  - All barn rules are to be followed, including respecting designated off-limits areas as marked by "Authorized Personnel Only" signs.
  - The designated Emergency Phone is located on the side of our sound box in the NW corner of our indoor arena with emergency phone numbers and directions to our facility located adjacent to it. The farmhouse phone number is (616) 227-3639.
  - In the event of a *fire* in the building, please vacate using the closest safe exit. A staff member will call 911. No one is to re-enter the barn until cleared to do so by emergency personnel. All on the property are asked to gather behind the

3-stall garage located across the drive from the farmhouse (east side of property).

- In the event of a *tornado*, if possible, leave horses as they are (either in the barn or in pasture) and gather in the interior of the indoor arena. Remain there until instructed otherwise.

## 2. Emergencies in Lessons

- If a student needs to be dismounted, be prepared to follow instructions from staff to safely perform an emergency dismount. Ideally, the horse would be at a halt and sidewalkers are responsible for dismounting the student safely if an instructor is not near enough to do so in an emergency situation (horse spook or stumble, saddle slip, rider off balance). Horse Leaders should stay with the horse and put as much distance as possible between rider and horse when an emergency dismount occurs.
- If a student is exhibiting unsafe behavior (such as a tantrum or removal of a helmet while mounted), volunteers should assist as best they can until staff can respond appropriately.
- During mounting and dismounting procedures, it is important for volunteers to follow the directions of the instructor. Sidewalkers should attend to students and Horse Leaders should attend to the horse only (not the student).
- When assisting with the lift, volunteers should follow the instructions of the staff member in charge. Only instructors or other trained personnel should operate the lift, and the lift should be in 'charge' mode when not in operation.
- **The first aid kit (horse and human) is located in the connector.**

## 3. Emergencies with Horses

- Only trained and authorized volunteers and staff are allowed to handle, tack, feed and groom horses.
- If illness or injury are suspected in a horse, staff should be contacted immediately.
- When working around horses, it is important to use appropriate tone of voice, to walk, use appropriate touch, and to take care to not startle them (beware of loud noises, opening doors, etc)
- All volunteers should maintain safe spacing when working around horses and be respectful of the horse's "personal space."
- It is always preferred to walk in front of the horse rather than behind the horse to avoid the danger of being kicked, or keep your hand on the horse when walking behind.
- Emergency numbers, including vet/farrier numbers, are located adjacent to the designated phone on the sound box in the arena.

## **Other Safety Concerns:**

Please refer to the Safety Manual for additional information on safety issues. If you have any concerns or input, please contact the Executive Director or a member of the Board of Directors.

## **Horse Sense:**

Think of each horse having a danger zone surrounding it the size of a baby elephant. You or your student can be seriously injured by a horse kicking, striking or biting. Because of this, we ask that you please be aware of the following when working with our horses:

- Don't yell, run or make sudden movements near a horse; be slow and gentle.
- Speak softly as you approach a horse to let them know that you are coming. Like people, horses do not like being surprised by loud noises or unexpected encounters.
- Approach a horse from the side, never from the rear or directly in front of a horse. A horse cannot see what is directly behind or in front of them.
- When walking behind the horse, be sure to keep an elephant's distance from the rear end of the horse and yourself until you have walked completely around to the other side.
- Never walk under a horse's neck. Never walk under a horse.
- It's easy to get your feet stepped on, so be aware of where your feet are in relation to all four of the horse's hooves.
- Hand feeding horses is an invitation to get your fingers bitten. Please keep your hands away from the horse's mouth and treats are to be fed in a bowl.
- Keep horses well away from other horses at all times

We hope to see you soon!  
Renew Staff