



Volunteer

Handbook



Skipka 2007 PMU Foal saved from slaughter

About Spring Hill Horse Rescue...

Spring Hill Horse Rescue is a 501©3 non-profit organization. Founded in 2000, Spring Hill has rescued, rehabilitated and re-homed hundreds of animals in need. We are routinely called on to evaluate cases of suspected abuse and neglect and collaborate with other Vermont animal welfare organizations. When animals other than horses are in need, Spring Hill doesn't hesitate to take them in, rehabilitate them and re-home them as well. Spring Hill has been able to find qualified homes for almost all the horses that come through our facilities. We have placed 30-year-old ponies, retired racehorses, blind and lame horses, and PMU foals; the majority are rehabilitated into healthy horses that require normal care and become wonderful family horses. Some have even gone on to become champion performance horses.

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Spring Hill is located on a 15-acre property with a large barn set off the 'beaten path' in Clarendon, which is five miles south of Rutland. Spring Hill does not receive any state or federal funding. Some revenues are derived from adoption fees, owners relinquish fees or court ordered restitution, but most of our income comes from individual donations and small grants.

Mission Statement and Goals

Spring Hill's mission is to protect Vermont's equines through:

Education, prevention & advocacy and rescue, rehabilitation & re-homing

Every horse that comes through our facility has its own 'tale.' Our goal is to make sure those stories have happy endings through the efforts of Spring Hill with the help of the community, our volunteers, our staff and our donors. RUNNING AN EFFECTIVE RESCUE OPERATION TAKES A COMMUNITY: people to come forward and report suspected abuse, public pressure to ensure Vermont's animal-cruelty laws are being enforced, staff and volunteers to care for the animals that come to us at SHHR. Last but not least, it takes kind-hearted adopters to open their homes to these special animals.



Founder, Gina Brown, pictured with some of the 40 horses rescued in a single cruelty case in 2008. Spring Hill was the leading rescue organization on this case.

About Spring Hill's Founder

Gina Brown, the founder of Spring Hill Horse Rescue, has been riding and training horses for more than 30 years. She got her first pony when she was seven, and grew up across the road from a Morgan breeding farm where she halter-trained the foals. As a young adult, Gina began training horses, specializing in starting youngsters under saddle and helping owners get through behavioral issues using gentle, humane methods.

Gina recognized the need for horse rescue at a young age. Because she loved animals so much her Uncle would take her to some auctions that sold various items including horses and livestock. The vivid memories of the horrible conditions of the horses that would come through those sales stayed with her until adulthood. In January of 2000 Gina founded Spring Hill Horse Rescue at her Brandon farm. In 2006, the Brandon farm was sold and Spring Hill moved to its Clarendon location.

Goals of our Volunteer Program

Volunteers are a valuable resource of SHHR. Volunteers are extended the right to be given meaningful duties, the right to be treated fairly, and the right to effective supervision. In return, volunteers shall agree to actively perform their duties to the best of their abilities and to remain loyal to the mission, programs and procedures of SHHR. Volunteers play an essential role in the mission of SHHR. They contribute to the education and programs which enable SHHR to further its outreach and dedication by helping to protect Vermont's horses.

Many benefits of volunteering at SHHR are intangible: gaining knowledge about horses and their care and safe handling, learning new skills, meeting and participation with people with similar interests and contributing to a much needed organization.

What to Expect When Volunteering

Our mission is to rescue, rehabilitate and rehome horses which are the core of our programs and services. Volunteers shouldn't expect that they will be allowed to ride horses as part of the volunteer program. We are not a riding facility or stable. Most of the riding horses find homes quickly and those that have suffered abuse or ill-training will need to be handled or retrained by professionals. However, we encourage our volunteers to seek further education through responsible lesson programs and our own educational programs when available.

Rescue & Rehabilitation: SHHR takes in animals from various situations. Many of them have either or both health or behavioral needs. Volunteers may partake in picking up animals, animal intake process, dietary evaluation and assessment, medical treatment and hoof care. SHHR staff evaluates the animals behavioral and training.

Rehoming: Finding the right home for our animals is very important to ensure a lasting and safe relationship between the animal and the adoptive family. Our adoption program consists of phone interviews, home-site checks, arranging visits between potential adopters and animals and post adoption follow-up – all of which volunteers can assist with. Volunteers must be 18 or older to do site visits. SHHR will determine who will qualify. **Facility Maintenance:** Volunteers can help with barn chores, water tub and hay bin cleaning, building repair, fence maintenance and grounds clean-up. Volunteers may be asked to participate in special projects like small construction or spring cleaning.

Administration: Paperwork is necessary to keep on top of the organization's mission. Volunteers can help with database updates, adoption contracts, animal record upkeep, grant writing, and creating newsletters.

Fund Raising and Public Outreach: SHHR is non-profit organization that is not funded by any state or federal funding. We are awarded grants from time to time for specific projects but most all of our income must be raised through special events and individual donations. Volunteers are essential in helping SHHR to raising funds to do our important work and to educate the community through public outreach. Duties will include brainstorming, creating and organizing events, displaying SHHR brochures and info at related functions.

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County Response Teams Those individuals that are not close to SHHR's facility can still volunteer by joining our County Response Teams. Our goal is to have a team in every one of Vermont's counties. Team members can help by organizing special events, providing pre-adoption home-site checks and post-adoption follow-ups, cruelty response and animal fostering. Of course county response members are always welcomed to participate in any functions at our facility.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Volunteer Involvement

Volunteers may be utilized in all programs and activities of SHHR and serve at varying levels of skill and decision making. Volunteers should not, however, be utilized to displace any paid employee from their position. Volunteers and SHHR will discuss and agree upon which activities would be best suited for the needs of the organization.

Volunteer Service

SHHR recognizes your right to discontinue your service at any time and for any reason. Whenever it is deemed to be in the best interest of the organization, we also reserve the right to discontinue the volunteer service relationship. Volunteers shall not nor shall be expected to receive any form of payment, including wages, food, clothing, shelter or other kinds of payment, for volunteer talents and services contributed to SHHR.

Youth Volunteer and Service Learning

Youths must be at least 13 years old to volunteer. Volunteers under 18 must have written consent of a parent or guardian before volunteering. The exception would be those youngsters participation with a group such as 4-H, pony clubs or school groups. Volunteer's 13 - 15 years of age and those people with special needs must have an adult accompanying them at all times during volunteering.

Students volunteering for service learning credit hours for their school must submit the school name and contact information before volunteering. Volunteer tasks for students may be assigned rather than chosen.

Community Service

SHHR is a non-profit organization and is eligible to receive community service volunteer hours. However, applicants must disclose the nature of their crime as SHHR will not allow people to volunteer that have been convicted of violent crimes, child molestation, rape, or murder. Applications must allow SHHR permission to call their probation/parole officers for disclosure of their offense. A SHHR representative must verify and sign off on all hours served. Tasks for community service volunteers may be assigned rather than chosen.

Health/Medical Insurance

All volunteers must have their own health/medical insurance and show proof of it prior to volunteering.

Liability Waiver

All volunteers must read and sign SHHR's liability waiver before volunteering. Volunteers under 18 must have a parent or legal guardian sign the waiver on their behalf.

Record Management

SHHR maintains records on each volunteer throughout the organization. Records include dates of volunteer service, positions held, and duties performed. Volunteer records, including applications, reference checks and background checks, are confidential. Volunteers are responsible for submitting and updating information contained in their files to SHHR on a regular basis.

Dress Code

Volunteers are representatives of SHHR and are responsible for presenting a positive image to constituents and the community. Volunteers will dress appropriately for the conditions and performance of their duties. Volunteers that serve in a capacity of a presenter, speaker or other face-to-face constituent contact should wear a SHHR name tag. Volunteers who work at the farm and/or around the animals should wear comfortable, closed-toed shoes with hard soles and mud boots when appropriate.

Attendance

Volunteer attendance is important to the operation of each program. Volunteers should notify SHHR in advance if they are unable to be present on their scheduled day or presentation.

Change of Placement

Volunteers may request a change in placement anytime during their volunteer service. If a volunteer elects to be re-assigned, the volunteer must apply for the volunteer position and receive all appropriate training. The request for the specific position may be denied per SHHR's discretion.

Public and Animal Health

If a volunteer is ill or has had a fever within the past 24 hours he/she should not come to perform services. If a volunteer has sick animals at home they should take precautions to not bring germs with them to SHHR premises. This will mean putting on a fresh set of clothes and footwear and washing your hands prior to coming. If there is a sick animal at SHHR volunteers should take the same precautions to not bring germs home to their animals.

Training

Most SHHR Volunteer opportunities require orientation, and some may also require additional training. Some training may require registrations fee's which is the responsibility of the volunteer.

Conduct

All volunteers are expected to act in the best interest of SHHR. Personal opinions should not be expressed in Spring Hill's behalf unless they are the same. Meaning, if you use a particular training method you should not state they are the methods that Spring Hill uses but those of your own choosing. **Religious and political beliefs should not be discussed on property or during an event.** All

volunteers are expected to act professionally regardless if you are working around the farm or in a public setting. **SHHR reserves the right to dismiss any volunteer if they feel they are not acting in the best interest of the organization.**

Volunteers are also expected to follow all of SHHR's policies and procedures that will protect the interest and safety of all volunteers, staff and SHHR. The following are only some examples of inappropriate conduct which could lead to dismissal:

- Theft or inappropriate removal or possession of SHHR's property or that of any SHHR volunteer, staff, agent or visitor, including failing to cooperate fully in any SHHR investigation.
- Volunteering under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs and/or illegal or unauthorized possession, distribution, sale, transfer, or use of alcohol or illegal drugs in the volunteer environment.
- Any kind of violent acts toward any persons or animals on SHHR premises or at a function being held by or attended by SHHR.
- Creating a disturbance on SHHR premises, at sponsored activities or in areas which could jeopardize the safety of others.
- Improper use of SHHR's property or property owned by any other individual or organization.
- Lack of cooperation, or other disrespectful conduct.
- Violation of SHHR, federal, state, or local safety and health rules.
- Unauthorized disclosure of SHHR proprietary or confidential information.
- Inappropriate use of tools, equipment, tack, telephones, computer equipment or systems, email system, or other SHHR-owned equipment.
- Unsatisfactory performance or conduct.

Smoking

SHHR intends to provide a safe and healthy environment. Smoking inside of any structures is prohibited. Smoking is allowed outside in locations that aren't being used by others.

Drug & Alcohol Free Environment

SHHR provides a drug and alcohol-free, healthy, and safe environment. While on SHHR premises and while conducting SHHR-related activities off SHHR premises, a volunteer may not use, possess, distribute, sell or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs. Occasionally, SHHR may sponsor events where alcohol is served. In such situations, volunteers who consume alcohol are expected to act in a responsible manner.

The legal use of prescribed drugs is permitted during volunteer service only if it does not impair a volunteer's ability to perform the essential functions of the volunteer position effectively and in a safe manner that does not endanger themselves or other individuals in the workplace. Volunteers must advise SHHR if they are taking any prescription or over-the-counter drug which could adversely affect safety or performance.

Safety Liability

SHHR aims to provide a safe and healthy environment for all volunteers. If a volunteer is injured in the course of the volunteer's service, it is important that the volunteer notify SHHR immediately.

Volunteers must have current medical insurance in order to volunteer in any aspect.

Reimbursement of Expenses

In some cases, volunteers may be eligible for reimbursement of pre-approved, actual out-of-pocket expenses, including transportation expenses, incurred while engaging in volunteer service for SHHR. If eligible and upon the approval of SHHR, volunteers need to track and submit receipts for all actual out-of-pocket expenses for which they seek reimbursement. On occasion, Volunteers may be asked to purchase items on SHHR's behalf which will be reimbursed upon submitting a receipt.

Reimbursement for travel to and from volunteer service by motor vehicle must be pre-approved.

Travel reimbursement is based either on an out-of-pocket expense or the standard mileage rate for non-profit organizations. Reimbursement for travel to and from volunteer service by public transportation is based on actual out-of-pocket expense which must be substantiated by receipts.

Reimbursement requests must be submitted to SHHR. Non-reimbursed expenses incurred while volunteering for SHHR may alternately be deductible on your Federal Tax return, and volunteers should consult their accountant.

Emergency Closing

SHHR strives to ensure the safety of all volunteers. In the event of inclement weather, volunteers will be responsible for informing SHHR that they will not be performing their scheduled service. If the duty is something that will affect the health or well being of an animal the volunteer should help make arrangements to ensure the duty gets completed. If SHHR should close its facilities or cancel an event, SHHR will notify volunteers scheduled to perform service via phone or email of the closing.

Equipment, Tack, Tools and Vehicles

Horse tack may be used as necessary by all volunteers but it must be used properly. Any equipment, tools, or vehicles that are necessary to use to perform a duty must get pre-approval and possibly training on how to properly and safely use it. Any such equipment, tack, tools, or vehicles which appear to be damaged, defective, or in need of repair should be reported to SHHR. Prompt reporting of damages, defects, and the need for repairs could prevent deterioration of equipment and possible injury to others. SHHR may decide, in its sole discretion, to deny certain volunteers the use of any or all equipment.

Return of Property

Volunteers are responsible for SHHR property which includes all materials, uniforms, files, keys, passwords or any other written or electronic information issued to volunteers or in volunteer's possession or control. All SHHR property must be returned on or before your last day. SHHR may take all actions deemed appropriate to recover or protect its property.

Harassment of Others

SHHR is committed to providing volunteers with an environment that is free from discrimination and unlawful harassment. Actions, words, jokes, or comments based on an individual's sex, race, ethnicity, age, religion, or any other legally protected characteristic will not be tolerated.

Animal Care and Handling

SHHR has policies for animal care and handling and expects all volunteers to follow these policies even though it may be different than what they are used to or how they care for or handle their own animals. These policies are necessary for consistency for the animals, safety of the animals and people and the consideration of the various situations animals may come to SHHR from. (See Animal Care & Handling and Farm Management Policies & Procedures)

Conflicts and Resolutions

Volunteers are necessary to help SHHR with its mission. However, they are expected to help and not hinder the process. Volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a manner which is fair and respectful to other volunteers, visitors, donors, adopters, SHHR staff and board members.

Understandably there may be personality conflicts and if this should happen volunteers should contact SHHR to get the matter resolved. Resolution will be at the discretion of SHHR. SHHR simply does not have the where-with-all to council or mediate constant conflicts and personality clashes.

This creates discomfort and stress for other volunteers and the animals and disrupts the efforts of all.

If a conflict cannot be resolved then one or both of the persons may be asked to terminate their roles with SHHR or be assigned new ones. If a volunteer suspects or witnesses any persons displaying acts of harm to any animals, other people, or themselves he/she should tell SHHR immediately. If a volunteer sees a situation that could be potentially harmful or hazardous to an animal or person, he/she should report it to a SHHR.

Animal Care & Handling and Farm Management Policies and Procedures

Color Coding

SHHR has a simple color coding system for its animals, its volunteers, and its tasks. All horses and volunteers will fall into a color code as explained below. Any kind of involvement with handling of animals has a color of Red, Yellow, Green or Blue. The White Team performs tasks that are not directly involved in handling animals. All volunteers will be considered Blue with basic blue training. A volunteer may work their way up to a Green with experience and training. Red and Yellow volunteers are considered documented professionals such as vet's, farriers, established horse trainers, etc. We do not train volunteers for Red and Yellow teams.

Horse Color Code

Red – Considered dangerous; may be aggressive and could potentially attack humans. Red horses can only be handled by qualified SHHR staff or professionals.

Yellow – Take caution; may not necessarily be aggressive but most likely has behavioral issues around human respect or some sort of vice. Yellow horses can only be handled by SHHR staff or professionals.

Green – Unsocialized or ill mannered; may have nice dispositions but still not trained to be safely handled (usually younger horses). Green horses can only be handled by Green volunteers.

Blue – safe; although no animal is 100% safe, Blue coded horses have shown no signs of aggression or have vices that are dangerous to people. Generally Blue horses are seniors. Blue horses can be handled by all volunteers qualified to handle horses.

Volunteer Color Code Teams

Red Team Member - Considered a professional; must have proven successful previous experience or training in handling dangerous horses. Red's can handle all color coded horses and must be at least 21 years of age

Yellow Team Member – Considered a professional; must have proven successful previous experience or training in handling horses with behavioral issues. Yellows must be experienced with reading equine behaviors including signs of aggressive and unsafe behaviors. Can handle Yellow, Green and Blue coded horses and must be at least 21 years of age.

Green Team Member – Considered Intermediate; must have proven successful previous experience in handling or training young or unsocialized horses. Green's must be experienced with reading equine behaviors including signs of aggressive and unsafe behaviors. Green's can handle Green and Blue coded horses under supervision only and must be at least 18 years of age.

Blue Team Member – Considered a Beginner; must have some proven experience with horses and must be at least 16 years of age. Blue's can handle Blue coded horses under supervision only.

White Team Member – Cannot handle any horses; would be qualified to do other volunteer services rather than handle animals. Services could include barn work as long as no contact is made with horses.

Animal Housing

SHHR strives to house horses in ways that are most natural to them as possible. Horses are allowed access to outdoors 24/7 with the exception of sick or injured animals in need of intensive care.

Horses that are scheduled to leave may be stalled within 12 hours of leaving.

Horses are housed in herds unless they are overly aggressive or too passive with the other herd members. Overly aggressive horses must be removed to protect the other horses. Horses that are

too passive or nervous within the herd and cannot maintain their weight and health must also be removed from the herd.

Handling of Animals

- No persons may handle an animal without qualification, prior consent from SHHR or without a qualified SHHR representative.
- All animals must be properly outfitted with a halter or leading device that is safe for both the animal and the person.
- No animal is to be restrained by tying to gate panels, fence poles, fencing, stall doors, etc.
- Persons may handle only those horses within their color code.
- No persons may use force, hit or use inhumane handling tactics with any animals.
- If an animal needs to be caught and it is hard to catch or walks/runs away from you out in the pasture then you must seek assistance rather than chase the animal around.
- If a person would like to pet an animal and it walks/runs away then you must leave the animal alone – chasing of any animal is **not** allowed.

Feeding

SHHR feeds free choice hay, water and minerals to all animals unless an animal is on a special diet. SHHR feeds grain products only when an animal is in need such as older, younger, hard keepers or ill animals. Do not feed anything extra to animals outside of their regular diet without prior consent. Do not bring a bucket of grain out into a group of horses; this will cause crowding and fighting among the herd and is a hazard to the horses and people.

Hand Feeding / Treats

Hand feeding horses is prohibited! This causes them to become muggy, aggressive and increases the risk of getting bit. Horses will also fight among themselves around treats which could cause injury to the horses and people.

SHHR does not normally feed horses treats. The only time treats are given is on an individual basis and should be fed in a bucket rather than by hand.

Riding Horses

Only trained and qualified professionals may ride horses. Riding horses is for training or exercising purposes only. When riding or exercising horses, professionals must stay within SHHR's premises; no going in the surrounding corn or hay fields and no riding or walking horses off of the property.

Orientation Training

WHO

All of SHHR's volunteers must complete the orientation training **unless** volunteer's services are for a particular project or service that **does not** involve SHHR's program work. Meaning, if you are a carpenter and volunteer to fix a stall, you do not need orientation training. Orientation training is a must for anyone wanting to help with chores, animal care or handling, public outreach, or any event that involves SHHR representation. Some volunteer work may require more training which may be determined at orientation.

WHAT

Orientation training will cover SHHR's mission, goals, policies and procedures. It will instruct volunteers as to the general duties and go over its volunteer needs and expectations. It is a good time for volunteers to get any questions they have answered.

WHEN

Orientation trainings occur monthly unless otherwise posted. Volunteers must fill out and submit the volunteer application. A SHHR representative will contact you via email, US mail or phone with a confirmation, a date and time of the next orientation training. If a volunteer pre-registers for an orientation training and cannot make it, they should call SHHR 24 hours prior to cancel. SHHR may need to cancel trainings from time to time.

WHY

Orientation training is necessary to keep both volunteers and the animals safe. It is the time to learn our policies, procedures and programs, and determine how you can fit into our volunteer program. At Orientation training you will also get to know other volunteers, staff and possibly SHHR board members.

Evaluations and Training

Before any volunteer handles a horse he/she must undergo training for their color code level.

Regardless of their previous experience with horses, this is necessary to be consistent in the horses handling and training when needed.

Nominal participation fees may apply for some advanced trainings but they are very educational and volunteers will benefit with valuable skills they can use throughout their 'horsey' relationships.