



**MANE**  
MONTGOMERY AREA NON-TRADITIONAL EQUESTRIANS

“Where Horses Change Lives”

# Rider Handbook

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For updates and event information: [www.maneweb.org](http://www.maneweb.org)

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## **Welcome to MANE!**

Montgomery Area Nontraditional Equestrians (MANE) is a non-profit organization formed in 1994 by individuals who recognized the need for therapeutic horseback riding opportunities for area children and adults who have disabilities. MANE is operated by a Board of Directors under the guidelines of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.). MANE strives to provide a therapeutic horseback riding program that safely and effectively meets the therapeutic needs of individuals in the Tri-County area who have physical, cognitive, and/or developmental needs.

At the present time, MANE is the only program of its kind in the Tri-County region, and one of only three PATH Intl. Premier Accredited Therapeutic Riding Centers in the entire state of Alabama.

Welcome to MANE, where horses change lives.

## **Volunteers**

Trained and dedicated volunteers are crucial to each positive step that MANE students achieve. Volunteers must be at least 14 years old to work directly with riders and must undergo sufficient training to ensure the safety and privacy of all of MANE's students. Volunteers report directly to, and are supervised by, MANE's staff and the Volunteer/Administrative Coordinator. Volunteers must agree to follow MANE's guidelines and policies, meet the requirements for assigned/chosen task(s), and comply with and sign MANE's Confidentiality Agreement.

MANE's therapeutic riding program encompasses a scope and magnitude that require virtually hundreds of tasks to be completed daily to ensure the effectiveness and safety of riders, horses, staff, and volunteers. MANE's success is proportional to the direct, hands-on participation from volunteers. Volunteer commitment allows MANE to continue providing lessons at a reasonable cost to participants.

Each volunteer at MANE is pre-screened and thoroughly trained for the job(s) to which they choose to dedicate their time and enthusiasm. The only information shared with volunteers about MANE students is that which is pertinent to the students' progress during the riding lesson. To ensure students confidentiality, volunteers are required to sign an agreement not to discuss personal information about MANE's students.

If you would like to become a MANE volunteer, please schedule your orientation and training with MANE's Volunteer/Administrative Coordinator. Remember to thank your volunteers for their hard work, support, and dedication to MANE!

MANE volunteers can assist in any way that enhances the quality of MANE's programs. A few examples of volunteer opportunities include:

- Leading
- Sidewalking
- Sweeping the barn
- Cleaning stalls
- Washing blankets
- Cleaning tack room
- Cleaning office
- Cleaning bathrooms
- Grooming horses
- Mending fences
- Painting
- Gardening
- Photography

## **Funding**

In spite of the valuable contribution from volunteers, the costs of MANE's program are substantial. Currently, MANE's operating expenses exceed \$200,000 per year. Some of the funding comes from tuition, but the majority of MANE's funding comes from grants, individuals, and corporate donations.

MANE posts a "Wish List" of items needed (such as tissue paper and hand soap) or desired (such as a digital camera to record client progress) in a quarterly newsletter and on site. Monetary donations and donations in the form of memorial contributions or honorariums also help support the program. Please keep in mind that professional services and in-kind services may be donated and are fully tax-deductible. All families of MANE riders are encouraged to contribute needed items.

Please consider following MANE's social media platforms and add friends and family to our newsletter mailing list so that they can be a part of the MANE experience!

Tax deductible gifts and donations may be sent to MANE's mailing address:

**MANE 3699 Wallahatchie Road  
Pike Road, Alabama 36064**

## **Program Requirements, Rules & Regulations**

- Completed paperwork and payment must be submitted no later than two weeks prior to the beginning of a riding session. Scholarship Applications must also be completed no later than one month prior to the first lesson or scholarship funding will not be awarded. Questions about any forms should be directed to MANE Staff members. MANE's Board of Directors and/or Director will determine scholarship eligibility and awards.
- Staff and Instructors will review all student applications, select all participants, and schedule based on class instructor, volunteer and equine availability. (See Participant Selection Policy.)
- All returning students will be required to update the full participant application prior to the Summer session (August), regardless of when it was completed last.
- On-going evaluations will determine if riding therapy continues to be beneficial and if MANE's horses, volunteers, and staff are able to safely and effectively accommodate the student.
- When riding or working directly with horses, properly fitted, ASTM/SEI approved helmets for horseback riding must be worn at all times. Participants are encouraged to purchase their own helmets; however, helmets are available for use by participants. Please consider helmet use when preparing a participant's hairstyle.
- Appropriate insect allergy medications must accompany rider on each visit to MANE's facility. Teammates must also be advised of rider's sensitivities and the location of the medication.
- Participants must be dressed in appropriate riding attire. (See Dress Code.)
- MANE reserves the right to cancel classes as outlined in MANE's Cancellation Policy. MANE must be notified as soon as possible if a rider must cancel a lesson. Please note that advance notice is very important to ensure proper care of the horses and proper utilization of MANE's volunteers. Make-up lessons are NOT given for absences.
- Parents, siblings, and visitors must wait in the Resource/Viewing room or picnic area during classes to avoid creating distractions for participants and instructors.
- All children/siblings who are not participants of MANE's program **must** remain with and be directly supervised by their parents while on MANE property. Designated off-limits areas (including the pond, barn utility areas, and outbuildings) must be respected.

- Riders with Down syndrome are required to have annual medical clearance from a licensed physician that includes a neurological exam that specifically denies any symptoms consistent with atlantoaxial instability (AAI).
- Smoking is not allowed anywhere on MANE property.
- No pets are allowed on MANE property, with the exception of trained service animals. MANE reserves the right to request that an animal be removed or relocated if any situation becomes hazardous for the service animal, students, staff, volunteers, or horses.

## **Participant Selection Policy**

MANE staff has the duty to select students for the MANE program based on its professional knowledge and experience, horse suitability and availability (including weight carrying limits of the horses), availability of volunteers and instructors as well as the age, weight, and medical condition/needs of the rider. There is a weight limit of 200 pounds for all mounted activities at MANE. However, lesser limits may be set based on the physical ability or limitations of the horse matched to the rider. This helps ensure MANE horses enjoy a long and pain-free career in the program. MANE is designed to meet the needs of individuals with special needs/disabilities; however, there are some precautions and contraindications, limitations, challenges, and scheduling constraints that may prevent MANE from successfully providing therapeutic riding activities to some individuals. To ensure positive benefits for each rider, MANE's certified instructors are given the right to limit the number of riders for each class based on the staff/volunteer ratio to the students, demands of the students, and/or availability of the horses.

As a method of ensuring a successful program, the staff, administrator(s), and instructors must carefully evaluate all factors involved in the implementation of the therapeutic riding services.

The Precautions and Contraindications to Therapeutic Riding Guide (provided by the PATH Intl.) are used in determining the individuals who may benefit from therapeutic riding and who may not. The following guidelines are examples of those which have guided the professionals of MANE in the process of evaluating the potentials of MANE's services for interested individuals:

- If the movement activity will cause a decrease in the client's function, an increase in pain, or generally aggravate the medical condition, therapeutic riding may not be the activity of choice.
- If the interaction is detrimental to the client or the horse, equine activities may be contraindicated.
- If the therapeutic riding program cannot accommodate the client's equipment needs, or the environment will aggravate his condition, riding may not be the activity of choice.
- The possibility of a fall should be given careful consideration and may lead to the informed decision that therapeutic riding is not the activity of choice.
- Working around horses (i.e.: grooming, leading, etc.) involves risk. Horses are large, move quickly, and can be dangerous to the client who is unable to respond appropriately.

At the end of each session, each rider/family will receive a survey. The survey is an opportunity to assess and report progress and to offer suggestions that could help MANE riders achieve greater success. Everyone at MANE appreciates your feedback.

## Scheduling

All classes are scheduled in one-hour increments, however time in the saddle may be significantly shorter, depending on the rider's experience, strength, stamina, medical conditions, and many other factors. Unless special arrangements have been made, students and caregivers should expect to be at the MANE site for a minimum of one hour. Exceptions to this are as follows and participation limits are determined on a case to case basis:

- When students are under the age of six.
- When it has been mutually agreed upon by MANE staff and program participants that a shorter or longer lesson time is needed.
- Instructor sees that participants have reached their physical or emotional limit.

Classes are limited by number of participants based on working area and an individual's needs. Classes conducted in the arena and on the Sensory Integration Trail are limited to five riders. Instructors have the right to limit class size based on the involvement and needs of the student to be addressed in each lesson. Classes may also be limited by the amount of volunteer man power available.

Participants are required to submit a new registration form and Physician's Statement in August of each calendar year (beginning of Summer Session). Submission of this form and timely receipt of tuition is necessary to ensure your continued participation. Four sessions are performed throughout the year, each student will be automatically enrolled in the next session unless verbal or written confirmation is provided that the student will not be returning.

## Curriculum

Lesson plans are developed according to individual needs and the goals agreed upon by MANE staff, the participant, and (if applicable) the participant's caregiver(s). Effective communication between participants, MANE staff, and caregivers is essential for ensuring a safe and enjoyable riding experience. MANE encourages on-going input from participants and their caregivers.

Further, MANE curriculum is structured to include many equine-assisted components. It should **not** be expected that students will ride during every lesson. MANE's curriculum is based on a ratio of 70% of lessons taught as riding and 30% as ground lessons. In some situations, such as extremely muddy conditions, hazardous weather conditions to include a heat index in excess of 95 degrees, inability to use necessary equipment, or the lack of available volunteers or horses, students will **not** have a riding component during their scheduled lesson.

## Dress Code

For safety reasons, all participants should adhere to the following dress code when participating in therapeutic riding lessons:

- All participants must wear ASTM/SEI approved helmets for horseback riding. Consider helmets when preparing hairstyles. Long hair should be tied back at the nape of the neck. Avoid large accessories or barrettes and hairstyles that might interfere with helmet fit. Refrain from wearing large and dangling jewelry that could catch on tack. When possible, participants are encouraged to provide their own helmets.
- Long pants, breeches/jodhpurs, or jeans must be worn to prevent chafing or pinching. During extremely hot weather, the student may be allowed to wear shorts, but only with the permission of the instructor.

- Shirts should be tucked in and jackets should be zipped so that the instructor can observe the participant's posture.
- Proper footwear is mandatory. Absolutely no open-toed shoes or sandals are permitted. Leather boots or sturdy leather shoes with a one-inch heel are suggested for all riders. Close-toed, hard-soled shoes are permitted for riders using saddles that are equipped with PATH INTL. approved safety stirrups and for riders who do not use stirrups.
- Dress should be weather appropriate. Jackets and gloves should be worn on cold days. Scarves, earmuffs, and toboggans may be worn under riding helmets only if fit allows.

### **Tardiness**

Please arrive 10 minutes prior to class start time. If a rider has not arrived or is not ready to begin the lesson 15 minutes past class start time, tack will be removed from their horse. Late comers will not be permitted to ride as this disrupts the lesson. Missed time due to tardiness will not be made up. Ground lessons will be conducted if volunteer man power allows. If your lesson time is scheduled following a large group, please be aware that your start time may fluctuate to ensure safety of all students.

### **Absences**

Participants must commit to lessons for the entire duration of the scheduled riding session. Those unable to attend a scheduled lesson should contact the center as soon as possible. Advance notice of an absence is very important to ensure proper care of the horses and proper use of MANE's volunteers. Termination of participation should be submitted in writing as soon as possible. Make-ups are NOT given for rider absences.

### **Cancellation Policy**

MANE reserves the right to cancel lessons based on the availability of instructors, volunteers, and/or horses. Further, any factor or situation considered by MANE staff to be a threat to the safety of students, volunteers, staff, or horses is reason for cancellation.

Cancellations due to weather will be made if MANE staff determines that the following conditions exist one hour prior to class:

- Winds exceeding 20 MPH.
- Tornado warnings, thunderstorms, or hail storms.
- Steady, heavy storms with lightening. (Classes will not be canceled in light rain.)
- Hazardous driving conditions.
- Temperatures above 100 degrees or wind chill/temperature below 40 degrees.
- Conditions, such as extreme muddiness, that would make it unsafe to hold classes.

## Make Up Lessons

Program participants should bear in mind that lessons are a highly weather dependent activity, much like football, soccer, and baseball. For the safety and well-being of MANE's equines and students, the official make-up policy is as follows:

Make-up lessons, canceled due to weather or other reasons deemed necessary by MANE's staff, will be offered the week after the session ends. Characteristically, **only one make-up opportunity for each student is offered** when two or more lessons have been canceled. Make-up lessons will not be extended for student cancellation such as illness or inability to attend or those participating through scholarship funding. No refunds will be provided for missed classes.

## Tuition and Fees

Tuition and fees charged to MANE clients only accounts for a very small fraction of MANE's operating expenses. In an effort to make MANE's services accessible to as many clients as possible, MANE tuition is currently set lower than the industry standard for therapeutic or able-bodied riding lessons with similarly qualified instructors. Tuition is due on or before the first class of the session.

### Session rates are as follows:

6 Week Summer Session	\$250
6 Week Fall Session	\$250
6 Week Winter Session	\$250
6 Week Spring Session	\$250

## Scholarships

MANE provides a limited number of scholarships to assist riders who demonstrate a financial need for the cost of tuition. As these scholarships are dependent upon donor sponsorships, the amount available for assistance varies each session. Applicants interested in applying for tuition assistance must request a scholarship application and return with all necessary paperwork. If accepted, participants will be notified in writing of the scholarship amount awarded. Provision of scholarship assistance for one term in no way guarantees continued financial subsidy.

As a method to meet the needs of potential clients with financial limitations, MANE's Board of Directors will accept applications for scholarships to pay partial fees of the lesson cost for each scholarship recipient.

- Scholarship Applications must be completed at least four weeks prior to the first lesson or scholarship will not be awarded.
- Applications must be resubmitted *each* session. If you need a scholarship application, please see a member of the MANE staff.
- Upon receiving applications, the Director will select recipients based on their financial need.
- All scholarship recipients will be required to pay a portion of the lesson cost depending on the client's financial status and the availability of MANE scholarship funds. This decision will be left upon the discretion of the Board of Directors.
- You will receive written notification concerning the status of your scholarship.



- Any balance owed to MANE is due upon approval of scholarship to reserve student's place.
- Scholarships are dependent on an 80 percent attendance rate.

### **Grounds for Dismissal**

Students, volunteers, and guests who cannot adhere to policies or the Code of Conduct, set forth in this handbook, will be dismissed from all program activities.

Individuals at MANE may be asked to leave the program for various reasons, including but not limited to:

- The use of drugs or alcohol on the grounds, or at an event, where alcohol is not permitted
- Breach of confidentiality policy
- Verbal or physical abuse or sexual harassment or other inappropriate behavior towards participants, animals, volunteers or staff
- Mistreatment of the horses or any other animals at MANE
- The expression of vulgar language, inappropriate jokes, or disrespectful language
- Frequent missed class times without prior explanation
- Abuse of phone or computer privileges
- Smoking or use of any open flames on the property
- Persistent disruption of staff during lessons or special events
- Any behavior deemed inappropriate by the MANE staff

All dismissals will be handled by the Director and other staff. The grounds for dismissal will be discussed with the individual and /or parent/guardian in private and a written record of all reasons for dismissal will be attached to the individual's registration forms and kept on file. The dismissal may be appealed in writing at the next MANE Board of Director's meeting. The decision made by the Board of Directors will be final.

## Staff

Parents/guardians, as well as riders, may have information that could benefit a rider and improve MANE's impact. Please contact the MANE staff with any questions or concerns by emailing or calling the MANE office 334-213-0909:

### **Tiffany Atkinson- Director, Instructor [tiffany@maneweb.org](mailto:tiffany@maneweb.org)**

Tiffany is a lifelong equine enthusiast and resident of Central Alabama with over 15 years of marketing and management experience. She graduated from Alabama Christian Academy in 1996 and obtained her bachelor's degree in marketing from Auburn University of Montgomery in 2001 while helping to manage a premier Quarter Horse show barn and breeding facility. After graduating, Tiffany served as the Marketing Coordinator for Knology, creating local marketing and public relation campaigns that helped to grow and strengthen the company's community relations as well as their phone, cable, and internet sales in both the Montgomery and Prattville areas. After three years with Knology, Tiffany founded AA Advertising, where she created advertising campaigns for Ben Atkinson Motors, a Ford, Chrysler, Dodge, and Jeep dealership in Tallahassee, Alabama. She joined MANE's team in November 2015 and earned her PATH Int'l registered level instructor certification in 2016.

Although Tiffany has always lived within a twenty-mile radius of Pike Road, she has traveled all over the United States showing and competing in equestrian events. She has enjoyed a successful show career with many regional and world titles through the Arabian Horse Association, Palomino Horse Breeders Association, and American Quarter Horse Association. In 2005, she began competing in United States Team Roping Association events all over the Southeast and Texas. Tiffany and her husband Ben own and operate Cedar Ridge Farms, which specializes in quality rope and ranch bred horses and provides riding and roping lessons to children and adults.

### **Jessica McWhorter- Program and Operations Manager, Instructor [jessica@maneweb.org](mailto:jessica@maneweb.org)**

Jessica McWhorter began loving horses at an early age. She learned most of her equine knowledge from her mother, a former barrel racer, and surrounding neighbors who were quarter horse breeders and equine enthusiasts in Montgomery County where she was born and raised.

In 2006, Jessica began working at Vaughn Road Veterinary Clinic as a veterinary technician, increasing her knowledge and interest in the veterinary medicine field. In 2016 she began teaching at her children's preschool part-time and quickly found a passion for teaching young children while still maintaining the care of the animals on their small hobby farm.

In 2019 Jessica, her husband, Patrick and two children, Audrey and Colton, moved to Pike Road to start a family farm of their own, landing them just a few doors down from the MANE facility. Her family, including her mother Janet, have become avid MANE volunteers and supporters. Jessica joined the MANE team in 2022 as Volunteer Coordinator and in 2023 now serves as Program and Operations Manager. In September of 2023, Jessica received her PATH Intl. Instructor Certification and is excited to continue to pair her love of equines and children together.

### **Emily Stephens- Volunteer and Administrative Coordinator, Instructor [emily@maneweb.org](mailto:emily@maneweb.org)**

Emily Stephens grew up in Union Springs, the Field Trial Capital of the World, sparking a love for horses at a very young age. Emily began riding Tennessee Walking Horses, going on to find a love for rodeoing. Emily barrel raced in the Alabama High School Rodeo Association throughout her high school career.

Emily began volunteering at MANE at age fourteen and never looked back. She immediately found her passion working with horses and special needs individuals. Emily joined the MANE team as Volunteer and Administrative Coordinator in May of 2023 shortly after graduating from Southern Union State Community College.

Emily and her husband Cole, along with their three dogs, live on her family's farm in Union Springs and recently celebrated their wedding in Fall of 2024. Emily is overjoyed to have received her PATH Intl. Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor status in May of 2024.

### **Brittany Queiroz- Instructor**

Originally from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Brittany found her way to Montgomery courtesy of a soccer scholarship to Faulkner University in 2013. Upon arriving at Faulkner she discovered MANE, began volunteering and immediately discovered a passion for therapeutic riding. Brittany spent countless hours at MANE during her four years of college and began working towards becoming a PATH instructor. Brittany graduated Magna Cum Lauda from Faulkner University in 2017 with a Bachelor of Science in General Clinical Psychology and is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Applied Behavior Analysis. In November 2018, Brittany obtained her PATH Int'l Registered Level Instructor certification. Brittany resides in Montgomery with her husband, Gabriel, and two children.