



SPECIAL PEOPLE UNITED TO RIDE

# STUDENT HANDBOOK



MONMOUTH COUNTY PARK SYSTEM

**Special People United to Ride**

**In Conjunction with the  
Monmouth County Park System**

**Proudly Introduces**

**The SPUR Sponsored Therapeutic Riding Program  
at Sunnyside Equestrian Center**

**A PATH International Premier Accredited Facility**

**628 Middletown-Lincroft Road  
Middletown, NJ 07738**

**Phone: 732-224-1367**

**Fax: 732-224-1392**

**[www.spuronline.org](http://www.spuronline.org)**

**[www.monmouthcountyparks.com](http://www.monmouthcountyparks.com)**



**PATH International**

PATH Int'l is a non-profit organization that promotes and supports equine-facilitated activities for individuals with special needs. PATH sets all safety guidelines and teaching standards for the industry.

**All SPUR instructors are certified by PATH.**

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**Monmouth County Park System**  
**Equestrian Division**

**MISSION STATEMENT**

To provide fundamental equestrian experiences to people of all abilities, with a major emphasis on offering benefits to individuals with disabilities by helping them to develop to their full potential.



**Special People United to Ride**

**MISSION STATEMENT**

Working in conjunction with the Monmouth County Park System, Special People United to Ride (SPUR) is a non-profit organization providing individuals with disabilities the opportunity to achieve personal goals through therapeutic horseback riding.

SPUR   
**STAFF**

**Stable Manager**

Stephanie Hunt  
PATH Int'l Registered Instructor

**Head Instructor**

Jacqueline West  
PATH Int'l Registered Instructor

**Equestrian Volunteer Coordinator  
Application Processing and Enrollment**

Pat Bernstein

**Equestrian Program Administrator**

Lisa Haskell

**Volunteer Program**

Volunteers have always played an important role in the therapeutic riding lessons and the success of the program. Volunteers assist the instructors by preparing the horse for the lesson and leading the horse or acting as a side walker during the lesson. Volunteers also assist staff in other equestrian-related activities, programs and special events. Volunteers must be at least 14 years of age and must complete a volunteer orientation and training in order to assist with lessons.



## **SPUR HISTORY**

In the late 1970s, a grass roots movement for therapeutic riding began to grow out of its backyard origins. In 1978, the Monmouth County Park System became indirectly involved when a local program sought use of the Park System's spacious showground at East Freehold Park.

In 1980, the program was moved to the Park System's headquarters, Thompson Park. A program director/instructor was hired as a member of the therapeutic recreation staff. That year, with four leased horses and the assistance of 31 volunteers, 33 special needs students experienced the benefits of horseback riding. As the program gained recognition, program participants and volunteers realized the need to become a more formal organization with specific direction and goals. By 1981, SPUR became incorporated, and its inaugural Board of Directors had 11 members plus a Park System liaison.

A new chapter began in 1989. The SPUR board entered into a formal agreement with the Monmouth County Park System. The Park System would provide a site, equipment, support, and program staff at operational cost. SPUR would become the source for public relations, information, fundraising for special events, staff training, scholarships, horse acquisition, and a horse retirement fund. This was also the year that the program moved to Huber Woods Park. The site offered accommodations for nine horses, a therapy/class room, and three paddocks.

By the late 1990s, the dynamic SPUR Board made the commitment to "think big." Saying goodbye to bake sales and 50/50's, SPUR's first major fundraising drive in 1997 raised over

\$10,000. In 1998, a presentation by Monty Roberts at Asbury Park's Convention Hall raised \$30,000!

A new century brought new dreams...of an indoor arena! For nearly 20 years, lessons had been held outside only in the spring and fall. Any inclement weather meant a rider would be disappointed by a class cancellation. On October 21, 2000, "Off to the Races", an evening honoring jockey Julie Krone, became a magical fundraiser for the Park System and SPUR. The Who's Who social event of the year raised \$730,000, and through its press coverage, the final tally grew to \$850,000.

Construction began in late 2001 on the former Neuberger Farm in Middletown, now owned by the Monmouth County Park System and renamed Sunnyside Recreation Area. The site plans included five paddocks, an outdoor sand instruction ring, an 80'x200' indoor instructional arena, and a 19-stall barn complex with a small classroom. On September 27, 2002, Sunnyside Equestrian Center opened with a VIP reception and a two-day fundraising event featuring Herrmann's Royal Lipizzan Stallions of Austria.

While SPUR continued to provide scholarships and support to the riding program for individuals with disabilities, it still had more work to do. The next goal was to raise funds for an arena viewing area, classrooms, and offices to complete the Equestrian Center. In 2008, SPUR and the Monmouth County Park System achieved a new chapter in the history of SPUR: the official opening of Sunnyside Equestrian Center's Phase II.

The Monmouth County Park System's therapeutic riding program continues to grow today because of the commitment of the Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders and its Board of Recreation Commissioners, and the SPUR Board of Directors. The Monmouth County Park System, with the assistance of SPUR, is honored to provide the tangible benefits of horseback riding to its special needs community, making all of us Special People United to Ride.

# **MONMOUTH COUNTY PARK SYSTEM**

## **SPECIAL PEOPLE UNITED TO RIDE**

### **Program Goals**

To provide a safe, quality therapeutic riding program to all SPUR students.

- a. To identify future needs and trends in therapeutic riding
- b. To develop, promote and provide a comprehensive equestrian program
- c. To provide an opportunity for students to ride at their highest potential
- d. To provide a multi-sensory experience utilizing the horse in a safe environment with trained professionals

### **Methodology**

Special People United to Ride uses a progressive, individualized therapeutic program with each of our students. Students begin the lessons using an approach that reflects their level of postural control, balance, coordination, and perceptual and cognitive skills. A lesson plan stating goals and objectives for the student is written at the start of each session, and the student's progress is documented after each riding lesson.

### **Scholarships**

The SPUR Scholarship Fund is intended to provide financial assistance to students who wish to achieve personal goals through the benefits of therapeutic horseback riding, but may be unable to do so because of financial hardship. To fulfill this mission, SPUR creates an annual budget to award scholarships to as many students as possible. Students may pickup an application at Sunnyside during office hours. If you would prefer to have an application mailed to you please call the equestrian center.



### **Guidelines for Participation**

Students will be accepted into the SPUR program based on the following criteria:

1. **Disabilities** – SPUR is open to individuals with disabilities including, but not limited to, learning disabilities, neurological impairments, cerebral palsy and multiple sclerosis.
2. **Ages** – Students are accepted at age four and up.
3. **Weight Limit** – Any new student must weigh no more than 160 pounds. Any current student weighing more than 160 pounds will be re-evaluated each session.
4. **Height Limit** – Any new student must be less than six feet tall. Any current student who is more than six feet tall will be re-evaluated each session.
5. **Priority** – Students are accepted on a first come, first served basis, in the order of their application, as spaces are available, assuming they meet the following criteria.
6. **Evaluation** – Each new application will be reviewed by a staff member who will determine that the applicant is appropriate for SPUR with the presence of no contraindications.
7. **Availability and Expertise** – An applicant will only be accepted if the staff has the expertise to develop a safe therapeutic program for that individual. This is based on the availability of appropriate horses, equipment, volunteers, instructors, and schedule.
8. **Paperwork** – All forms and applications are valid for one year from the signature date. Students will be notified as it becomes necessary to update their paperwork, including their Medical History, Physician's Statement, and Returning Student Update. All forms can be downloaded from the SPUR website or requested from the office. **Only students whose paperwork is current will be scheduled for a given session.**

## **STUDENT/FAMILY GUIDELINES**

### **Attendance**

As consistency is extremely important to a rider's progress, it is expected that each rider will maintain regular attendance.

In the event of an anticipated absence, please notify the instructor as far in advance as possible. If the absence is occurring close to the start of the lesson time, please call the Sunnyside Equestrian Center at 732-224-1367. Messages may be left with a staff member or on the answering machine extension 0#.

#### **Please leave**

1. Name of the student
2. Day and time of the lesson
3. Instructor's name

A staff member will notify the instructor and any volunteers of the absence.

*To help keep participants, volunteers, and staff as healthy as possible, we suggest that if a student is not well enough to attend school on a given day, he or she should not ride on that day.*

**PLEASE NOTE: THERE ARE NO MAKEUPS FOR MISSED LESSONS. REFUNDS WILL BE PROVIDED FOR MEDICAL EMERGENCIES OR ILLNESS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE HEAD INSTRUCTOR. REQUESTS FOR REFUNDS MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A NOTE FROM A PHYSICIAN.**

### **Cancellation by Instructor/Park System**

Lessons are held **rain or shine**.

**PLEASE NOTE:** School closings do not reflect a closing of the Equestrian Center.

If an instructor needs to cancel a lesson, the student will be notified as far in advance as possible. If inclement weather makes it difficult or dangerous to travel or if any other circumstances make it necessary for the Park System to close the Equestrian Center, students will be notified by phone. To find out whether lessons are being held, please call the Sunnyside Equestrian Center at 732-224-1367.

**If the equestrian center closes or an instructor cancels a lesson, the class fee will be refunded for that missed lesson. Due to time restraints, make-ups are not provided.**

### **Arrival Time**

A late arrival means that the rider will not receive his/her full allotted time.

Students should arrive 10 to 15 minutes before their lesson. A ten to fifteen minute prior arrival allows for pre-lesson sign-in and preparation without creating stress for the rider. Too early an arrival time can create adjustment problems for a rider who has difficulty waiting for an activity to begin.

Students should wait for their instructors in the lobby unless otherwise directed.

### **Lesson Times**

Private lessons run for 30 minutes, and group lessons run for one hour. Lesson time includes helmet and belt fitting, mounting, riding, and dismounting. Lessons will also include other ground activities, such as grooming or tacking, when appropriate. Each lesson is designed according to the student's individualized lesson plan, and adjusted according to the student's needs. Lesson structure and activities may be changed or modified if deemed necessary to maintain safety and quality standards.

### **Sign-In Procedure**

At the beginning of each lesson, students must sign in using the registration notebook located in the lobby. This is in keeping with Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH Int'l) regulations and insurance risk management requirements.

## **Student Attire**

The stable and riding arena are not climate controlled. Please dress appropriately for the outdoor temperature. Layers are highly recommended. Students are required to wear long pants and tie shoes.

Students riding in a saddle are required by PATH standards to wear shoes or boots with a small heel. This prevents the rider's foot from sliding through the stirrup. Students riding with vaulting surcingles may wear sneakers or other close-toed shoes. Boots in a variety of sizes are available in the lobby to borrow during your lesson time.

Riders need to wear long pants even in the hottest weather. Friction from pads and saddles on bare skin can cause skin rashes and topical injury. (If the participant is prone to skin breakdown, avoid triple seam blue jeans that will cause irritation along the seams.) A small selection of riding breeches is available in the lobby.

## **Helmets**

Students must wear an ASTM/SEI certified riding helmet while working on or around the horses. Helmets are provided in the lobby. Participants wishing to wear their own helmet must show proof of ASTM/SEI certification. **Bicycle or other helmets are not permitted.**

## **Family Involvement**

Families are invited to become actively involved in the development of their student's individualized lesson plan and in providing information and feedback as the program progresses. During the riding lesson, families are asked to remain outside the arena area in a viewing position away from the student. **We have found that for both safety and the accomplishment of program objectives, family involvement during the actual riding lesson should be kept to a minimum.** The student's attention to the movement of the horse, his or her balance, control and behaviors are essential to both safety and progress. The instructor will consult with the family during the lesson only if absolutely necessary, or if appropriate within the context of the lesson plan.

## **Discharge Criteria**

Students may be discharged from the SPUR program for any of the following reasons:

1. The student does not show documented progress over the course of a session with the existence of no extenuating circumstances.
2. The student exhibits behavior that is considered inappropriate and/or unsafe during program session.
3. The student has three inexcusable absences in a session when no prior notification was given to program staff.
4. The student can be safely graduated into a mainstream commercial riding program.
5. The student develops a medical contraindication to riding.

## **Facility Protocol**

- Families are asked to observe any posted barn rules on the facility grounds.
- Siblings or accompanying friends must be kept under adult supervision and behave appropriately.
- There should be no feeding of horses. Donations of treats are welcome.
- Certain areas of the facility are restricted to staff only. Designated areas of traffic will be explained to all at the beginning of the session.
- **The use of cell phones is prohibited.** For the comfort of our students we require that cell phones be turned off or to vibrate. If you must make or receive a call, please step outside the lobby and program areas.



**Monmouth County  
Board of Chosen Freeholders  
Board of Recreation Commissioners**