

Pegasus Special Riders

Rider Handbook



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www.pegasusspecialriders.org

Office Contact Information

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Contacts

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Board of Directors

Stacy Seaworth – President
Nancy Reed – Treasurer
Verna Neal – Secretary

John Hintzsche – Director
Nate Hamilton – Director
Kathy Medema – Director
Jodi Ziegler – Director

2026 Proposed Sessions

Session 1: April 13 - May 22

- **No Classes: May 25 - 29**

Session 2: June 1 – July 10

- **No Classes: Jul 13 - 17**

Session 3: July 20 – August 28

- **No Classes: Aug 31 - Sep 4**

Session 4: September 7 – October 16

Introduction

Pegasus Special Riders (PSR) is a non-profit organization founded in 1997 to provide therapeutic equine services to individuals with special challenges in Ogle and surrounding counties. At PSR, we believe the bond between horse and rider is not only physical, but emotional and spiritual as well.

The purpose of our programs is to improve lives in ways that can only be accomplished with the help of a horse. For riders that aren't vocal, we see communication; for riders that are immobile, we see movement; for the emotionally reserved, we see bonds created.

The three-dimensional rolling gait of the horse can help relax spastic muscles, increase joint mobility, enhance strength, improve balance, and promote good posture. Additionally, the social nature and structured environment of the riding classes provide mental stimulation and can help improve concentration and verbal skills. Many riders gain self-confidence and experience improved overall wellbeing.

Accreditation

PSR is a PATH Intl. center (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International).

PATH Intl. certifies instructors and equine specialists according to a set of field-tested standards to ensure the highest levels of safety, ethics and effectiveness in the equine-assisted services industry. Instructors must complete workshops and pass both written and practical exams to become certified to teach equine-assisted services. Participants and their families can be confident that PATH Intl. Member Centers and Professionals deliver safe and effective Equine Assisted Services (EAS) programming.

Mission Statement

The mission of Pegasus Special Riders, Inc. is to facilitate healing and empowerment in the lives of physically, mentally and/or emotionally challenged individuals through a variety of equine assisted services.

Lesson Descriptions

PSR provides Therapeutic or Adaptive Riding lessons to riders over the age of four with physical, mental, and/or emotional challenges. Our lessons are typically 30 minutes once a week for six weeks. The instructors, volunteers, and staff of PSR work hard to ensure riders are given the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Each rider is paired with a horse, instructor, volunteer(s) and other riders according to riding ability and therapeutic need. PSR strives to maintain consistency with each lesson,

keeping riders with the same horses, volunteers and instructors. However, PSR Staff, and Instructors reserve the right to make changes to the rider's horse, volunteers or instructors as needed.

Riding Schedule/Lesson Availability

PSR's riding schedule typically consists of six-week sessions, April through October, with a week-long break between sessions. Lessons are scheduled according to availability of certified instructors and volunteers.

- Lessons are filled on a first come, first served basis. If all lesson slots are full, the participant will be placed on a waiting list. The rider can be added to lessons as the appropriate time slot becomes available.
- Riders are matched to a suitable horse. PSR considers the individual limitations of each horse based on the horse's size, temperament, age, and physical condition. If a suitable horse is not available, the rider can opt to be placed on the waiting list.
- Lessons are held only if there is a certified instructor present and sufficient, trained volunteers.

Rider Eligibility

- Rider must be at least 4 years old.
- Rider must face physical, mental, and/or emotional challenges as determined collaboratively with PSR Staff and/or participant's medical team.
- A risk/benefit review is considered to ensure the rider will benefit from and not be harmed by riding.
- Rider's weight cannot exceed 180 lbs. Exceptions will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Refusal Policy

PSR reserves the right to refuse and/or revoke a participant's riding privileges or dismiss a rider prior to the lesson's end.

Possible grounds for refusal and/or revocation of riding privileges or dismissal of a rider may include, but are not limited to:

- Conduct that endangers themselves
- Conduct that endangers, harasses, or bullies another participant, volunteer, staff, or horse
- Conduct that blatantly disregards instructor's direction
- Consistent failure to follow safety procedures

- A gain in weight above the maximum level
- Failure to cancel in advance for three lessons
- Incomplete paperwork, and/or a failure to pay for lessons
- Development of a contraindicated condition or the deterioration of a condition in which horseback riding may be harmful to the participant or negatively impact the safety for other participants, volunteers, or staff

PSR reserves the right to deny services to any individual based upon concerns for the participant's safety and/or the safety of the horses, volunteers, staff, facility, or for other reasons in accordance with PATH, Intl. operating center guidelines.

Registration Procedures

A potential rider must register annually and participate in a PSR orientation. Registration forms can be obtained by contacting PSR by calling 815-973-3177 or going online at www.pegasusspecialriders.org to obtain the appropriate forms. Once PSR receives a properly completed application and supporting documentation, an intake session must be completed.

A Rider Intake is conducted consisting of a tour, an assessment of the rider, and a brief interview to determine a rider's ability and needs. A new rider must be approved before they will be allowed to ride.

Once a rider is enrolled, should there be no lesson and/or suitable horse available, the rider will be placed on the waiting list. The rider remains on the list until an appropriate lesson slot becomes available. At that time, the rider can choose to take the open time or remain on the list until a more suitable slot opens.

Annual Paperwork Update Policy

PSR requires that each rider submit a registration packet and supporting documentation annually. Go to www.pegasusspecialriders.org to download the packet.

New riders must submit a physician's statement prior to acceptance into the program.

Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH) also requires that riders with Down Syndrome be screened annually for AAI (atlantoaxial instability) from a licensed physician. Completed screening documentation must be submitted with registration packet.

Lesson Fees And Payment Policy

Riders are required to pay in advance for each six-week session they participate in.

- Annual non-refundable insurance fee \$45
- 30-minute lesson \$25
- Fees must be paid prior to the start of each six-week session (i.e., 6 lessons x \$25 = \$150)
- If a lesson is cancelled, and/or a rider notifies PSR more than 4 hours in advance of a scheduled lesson of an absence, credit for the missed lesson will be applied to the next session
- If a balance remains on a rider's account at the end of the riding season, the rider/parent/guardian may request a refund via email at admin@pegasusspecialriders.org. If a request is not received by December 15th of the current year, the remaining balance will be considered a donation to PSR.

Financial Assistance (Scholarships)

Limited funds are available to assist in cases of financial need. Riders may indicate the need for assistance during the application process. Participants will need to provide the following paperwork for the Scholarship Committee's review prior to the beginning of EACH requested session:

- Pegasus Special Riders Scholarship Application (contact us at admin@pegasusspecialriders.org to obtain the 2026 version)
- Completed rider registration packet

*The committee will **NOT** consider incomplete applications for scholarships.*

Absence Policy

- Consideration for PSR volunteers and staff time is appreciated.
- Riders are asked to give 24-hour notice whenever possible if unable to attend a lesson.
- Notification that is less than four hours in advance of a lesson is considered an unnotified absence.
- Any rider with two or more unnotified absences may lose their slot in the six-week session.
- Riders arriving to lessons more than 10 minutes after the start of scheduled time may forfeit the right to participate in the lesson (determined case-by-case)
- **All absences must be reported using the "Teamreach" application. Failure to use the Teamreach notification system will result in an unnotified absence.**

Lesson Cancellations

The safety and good health of riders, volunteers, and horses is of utmost importance. If the riding portion of the lesson is unable to proceed, a cancellation notice will be sent to riders and/or guardians using the *Teamreach* application. It is the responsibility of riders, parents, and guardians to monitor *Teamreach* for lesson cancellations. (PSR will no longer send text messages to notify riders of cancellations). PSR is unable to make-up lessons due to cancellations or participant absence.

Cancellation reasons may include:

- High or low temperatures
- Severe weather conditions
- Lack of volunteers, instructors, or horses

Clothing Requirements for Riders

Helmets are mandatory for any rider who is mounted on or working with a horse. PSR provides helmets that are ASTM/SEI rated. Riders may bring their own ASTM/SEI rated helmet with instructor approval. The helmet must sit directly on the rider's head for proper fit. Helmets have an expiration date. If the rider purchases their own helmet, that helmet must be replaced every 5 years.

Long pants are recommended; however, three quarter length pants are acceptable. PSR asks that riders do not wear long, flowing, dangling, or loose clothing or jewelry or slick jogging-type pants due to safety concerns.

Sturdy shoes with moderate heels, oxfords, or riding boots are recommended. Tennis shoes are acceptable if boots are not available. For safety reasons, crocs, sandals, ballet flats, flip flops, or open toes shoes are not permitted.

Rider/Parent/Caregiver Responsibilities

- **Quietly** observe lessons from the seating area or viewing room
- Utilize the viewing room in the arena office for phone calls and social conversations. (Avoid receiving/making cell phone calls in the arena seating area.)
- Ensure timely arrival for lessons (recommend 5-10 min ahead of scheduled lesson). Any rider arriving 10 minutes or more past lesson start time, will not be allowed to ride. Exceptions may be made if the instructor was notified ahead of time.
- Provide a 24-hour notice of absence using the *Teamreach* application.
- Provide payments in advance of each six-week session
- Ensure rider is dressed appropriately

- Ensure riders stay in the designated viewing/waiting area when not mounted on horseback
- Notify Instructor of any changing conditions of the rider
- Remain in the designated viewing area throughout the lesson

Barn Rules

- Children must always be supervised by a parent/guardian
- No yelling/screaming/rock throwing/obscene behavior, language, or gestures
- No standing on gates or fences—as this distracts riders and horses
- No running
- Pick up after yourself
- If you open a gate, close it
- Drive slowly on farm property
- No pets! Service animals are permitted on premises, but not in the arena area.
- No feeding our horses treats (PSR monitors the horse's diets closely)
- No use of alcohol, drugs, vaping, or smoking on PSR grounds during scheduled lessons
- Avoid fenced areas outside the arena (fencing is electrified)

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the PSR staff by calling 815-973-3177 or emailing admin@pegasusspecialriders.org