**The Barron Park Donkey Project – Volunteering as a Donkey Handler**

Becoming a Donkey Handler is both fun and extremely rewarding. You are joining a great community and participating in an historic tradition. These animals are gentle and highly intelligent. Something special happens in the pasture. Step away from hustle of Silicon Valley and into Palo Alto’s pastoral past…

Who Can Volunteer?

* Volunteers must be residents of Palo Alto (or regions within Palo Alto Unified School District).
* Volunteers aged 18 years of age or older may volunteer independently.
* Volunteers aged 16-17 may volunteer independently - with a waiver signed by a parent or guardian.
* Children aged 10-15 are welcome to volunteer as part of an adult/child team, under supervision of a trained adult guardian. (Only one child per adult to ensure safety.)

Opportunities for donkey handling include:

1. Regular Feeding
2. Regular Walking
3. Substitute Feeding / Walking

The time commitment is approximately 30-45 minutes for feeding and 60+ minutes for walking.

*Note: Feeding and Walking responsibilities are not mutually exclusive. Handlers can be trained in both feeding and walking and are welcome to participate in both activities.*

Regular Feeding: This is a big commitment and requires responsibility for scheduled times. Regular feeders commit to a set schedule – usually one time period per week. In some cases, volunteers may alternate but this must be well defined to avoid inadvertently missing a feeding time. It is also possible to sign up for more than one time slot or to sign up together with another handler.

As a feeder, you are responsible to feed both donkeys as well as scoop manure (approximately 4-5 locations around the field). Morning feeding should be between 6:30a-8:30a. Evening feeding is between 4:00p and 7:00p (~5:15p in Winter). If you have time, you are encouraged to brush them, but is not required (they both seem to enjoy being grooming and it is great for bonding with the donkeys).

If you cannot attend a feeding timeslot, send a note to the Donkey Handler email group to request a substitute. Please do pay attention to be sure that someone has agreed to fill your slot. This is a responsibility that we all share, but it is also a place where problems can occur. It is important to give as much notice as possible, especially for planned extended time away. You may also simply switch among yourselves with another Handler. However, do NOT ask someone who is NOT a handler to replace you.

Walking: Midday walking provides exercise and opportunities for added stimulation for the donkeys. It is required to have two (or more) handlers for each walk for safety of persons and donkeys. Timing is variable and can be arranged by volunteers.

Substitute: If you cannot commit to a regular day/time, there is still a role for you! Once you have been trained and approved, you will be a valuable asset to replace handlers when they cannot attend their regular shifts.

Training - Required: You will receive written instructions and individual training by an experienced handler who will introduce you to the food, tools and other materials in the shed; teach you the basics of feeding & cleaning and/or walking; provide helpful tips; and answer any questions. You will attend at least three sessions with mentor(s) and learn hands-on handling with guidance. After completion of training (number of sessions will depend on each volunteer & level of comfort), you will be “cleared” as an independent handler; this is the responsibility of the mentor in agreement with you.

Community Service**:** We are happy to provide documentation of volunteer hours for middle and high school community service purposes, if requested.

Questions & Suggestions: You are encouraged to participate fully in this community; your input is welcome!

**…Stay Calm and Bray On…**