



ROBIN'S NEST
RANCH | RETREAT

ROBIN'S NEST RESCUE VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK AND POLICY MANUAL

Did you know that **over one million healthy animals are euthanized** in the U.S. every year, while **28 million people struggle with untreated mental illness**? At Robin's Nest, we're changing that narrative. We rescue animals from dire situations and create programs to pair them with veterans, exonerated individuals, victims of violence, and at-risk children, leveraging the profound healing bond between animals and humans.

Our slogan is Rescue, Nurture, Rebuild. You can join in spreading our message:
We rescue them. They save us.

PURPOSE OF THIS VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

The lifeblood of any public charity organization is its volunteer force. You have chosen to become part of a very special organization. Robin's Nest Rescue would like to thank you for your generous gift of yourself.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Robin's Nest Rescue

Kimber R. Williams, President

Karin Marsicek, Program Manager

L. Sue Williams, Secretary

WHO WE ARE

Robin's Nest Rescue operates exclusively for charitable, educational, and scientific purposes as recognized under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

At our core, we are a sanctuary dedicated to providing forever homes for rescued animals. Our focus is on fostering connections between animals and humans, particularly among those who have endured pain and trauma.

Each year, over one million healthy animals face euthanasia in the U.S., while 1.7 million veterans grapple with untreated mental health needs. Robin's Nest Rescue seeks to rewrite this narrative by rescuing animals from dire circumstances and developing programs that pair them with veterans and other vulnerable populations. Through these initiatives, we harness the profound healing power of the animal-human bond.

Located in a serene retreat-like setting, our facilities include multiple animal shelters and spacious equine structures. "The Acres" serves as a peaceful haven, essential for our programs and accommodating our 21 program animals. Our organization is bolstered by a diverse and skilled team, encompassing expertise in military, legal, educational, medical, and veterinary fields.

Robin's Nest Rescue stands as both a sanctuary and a refuge, committed to nurturing the well-being of animals and fostering transformative connections that heal hearts and minds.

Our Mission

Our mission at Robin's Nest Rescue is to provide sanctuary for neglected or abused animals; our growing family of rescue animals is used to provide education and advocacy concerning the gravity of animal protection measures and the critical significance of animal-human bonds. Our vision is to grow and nurture our collection of rescue animals and through active learning experiences, share with others the positive healing of animal-human bonds. Robin's Nest Rescue is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization recognized by the Federal and California governments.

Our Vision

We envision a community caring for its animals and their humans, healing hearts together through the amazing animal-human bond.

Our Tagline

Rescue~Nurture~Rebuild. A 501c3 organization promoting help and healing through the animal-human bond.

Our Slogan

We rescue them. They save us.

These six simple words embody a powerful truth. In the realm of animal rescue, each organization holds a belief in their own uniqueness, and rightly so. Yet, our distinction at Robin's Nest lies not only in our rescue efforts but in the transformation that happens between us as humans and the creatures we save. Some call it magic.

Our History

One Little Girl. The statuesque solid oak arena bears a sign that reads, "Doc's Flurry Memorial Arena," a standing testament to the Quarter Horse that was beside the founder of Robin's Nest Rescue, Kimber R. Williams, from 1985 when Kimber was eight, Doc five. While they were forever companions, Doc crossed the rainbow bridge in 2008. Their bond formed the seed of a dream and a lifelong devotion to the amazing animal-human bond.

As a relatively new and animal sanctuary, Robin's Nest Rescue stands on four generations of women's dreams. When Annie Almeda Allen, at age 13, drove a horse-drawn wagon across the fast-flooding Red River into Texas — headed toward a true pioneer life of hardship, sacrifice, and satisfaction — little did she know that 125 years later her great granddaughter would culminate her own dream with a life-changing move to Ramona, California.

In the midst of the Pandemic, Kimber set out to realize a life goal, and together with her mom Sue, over the span of one weekend, bought a five-acre ranch in San Diego County. They

founded Robin's Nest Ranch & Retreat, based on a logo that Kimber had envisioned over a decade earlier. "All our dreams come true if we have the courage to pursue them" (Walt Disney).

The Problem We Address

As a country and culture, we have a long history of the misunderstanding, neglect, and abuse concerning the animal kingdom. In brief:

- Abandonment, abuse, and deaths of animals in the US increases each year, and legislative protection is largely lacking.
- A large portion of our population does not understand the critical significance of the animal-human bond, thus failing to utilize its healing power for both animals and humans.
- The lack of awareness and appreciation for trauma associated with the loss of an animal — to both humans and other animals in the fold — often leads to escalation of other kinds of loss, grief, and trauma.
- While scientists increasingly support the positive impact surrounding the animal-human bond, we have not done well in educating and putting it into practice.

Together, this panel of problems, supported by a large body of research, inevitably results in harm to both animals and humans; we aim to address each of them in our work at Robin's Nest Rescue. Our business plan is created with that pathway in mind.

Our Organization

What we do

As often happens in the nonprofit world, we set out to establish an animal welfare organization based in part on our individual experiences and passion for animals. However, our work is rooted in science and based upon a set of characteristics unique to Robin's Nest:

- We focus on the healing powers of animal-assisted interactions for BOTH populations — humans and animals.
- Our unique approach builds upon the interrelationship between animals and their humans, based on equity between and among the two species, a concept related to animal protection efforts and known as multi-species justice.

- We work toward correcting the disenfranchisement of grief — that unaddressed trauma that occurs when people lose an animal close to them without the emotional, social, or public support they should be able to expect.

Robin's Nest Today

Our property, set in a serene retreat-like environment, naturally lends itself to the programs and retreats we organize, conveniently accessible to a diverse array of populations across Southern California.

Despite being a relatively new nonprofit organization, Robin's Nest Ranch & Retreat has been operational for three years. During this time, we have hosted over 500 guests at various events and conducted more than 75 farm tours. Recently, we extended our popular Robin's Nest Farm Tour to include school children and other community groups beyond our regular retreat guests.

Our approach is best described as boutique; intentionally maintaining a smaller animal population allows us to effectively fulfill our mission. This strategy enables us to offer specialized programs tailored to our target populations, including veterans, victims of violence, and at-risk children.

Additionally, we accommodate individual cases that contribute valuable insights to our animal encounter programs. For instance, we recently assisted a concerned parent from a nearby town whose 22-year-old daughter, Mari, was struggling with life challenges. Following an onsite visit where our staff introduced Mari and her mother to each animal and shared their stories, Mari began to connect deeply with the animals, finding solace and joy. In just a few hours, positive changes were evident, as Mari's mother gratefully noted, "My daughter was happy again and expressed gratitude for the experience. Thank you for lifting her spirits!" Stories like Mari's inform and inspire the ongoing development of our programs.

Programming

Our motto, Rescue-Nurture-Rebuild, succinctly captures our mission and vision. The healing influence of touch, compassion, and sanctuary offers our animals a haven to thrive peacefully while providing humans with unconditional love and a safe space to heal, process, and rebuild. Our goal is to share this transformative experience with our community.

The *Side by Side* program encompasses all animal interactions at Robin's Nest, representing the full symbiotic partnership between humans and animals in our therapeutic environment. We tailor sessions to meet participants at their greatest points of need, focusing on individual and collaborative outcomes within our diverse populations. Supported by research from institutions like the Veteran's Administration, we advocate for the health benefits derived from animal-assisted programs and the profound animal-human bond, facilitating these connections.

Currently, our program includes 19 rescued animals—potbelly pigs, alpacas, miniature equines, dogs, cats, sheep, and tortoises—each carefully rehabilitated from challenging circumstances.

Additionally, two animals serve vital roles in assisting with specific program needs and principles. The inclusion of each animal is meticulously considered based on the situation and the needs of both participants and animals alike, ensuring all involved are free to engage or withdraw as encounters progress.

Our mission extends to serving at-risk populations through:

- **Rescue and Rehabilitation:** We provide a refuge for neglected, abandoned, and abused animals, delivering essential medical and supportive care.
- **Education and Engagement:** Within a retreat-style environment, we foster carefully curated interactions that underscore the profound significance of the animal-human bond, emphasizing its positive health benefits for both humans and animals.
- **Growth and Advocacy:** We strive for expansion, encompassing a broader array of animals, serving multiple at-risk populations, and advocating for policy advancements that recognize and promote the benefits of the animal-human bond.

At Robin's Nest, we are dedicated to transforming lives through compassionate care, meaningful interactions, and advocacy that extends the healing power of animals to those in need.

The Change We're Making and Why It's Important

Rescue, Nurture, Rebuild succinctly defines our mission. What sets us apart is our commitment to more than just saving lives; we prioritize building connections. Our approach integrates diverse perspectives, blending human ingenuity with the innate wisdom of the animal kingdom. This unique formula not only promises change but guarantees a profound impact on our world.

The therapeutic benefits of the animal-human bond are widely acknowledged across various health organizations, including the Veterans Health Administration and researchers at the National Institutes of Health. These partnerships enhance the well-being of individuals grappling with pain and trauma.

Research consistently shows that regular interaction with animals among at-risk populations correlates with improved wellness metrics such as increased physical activity, reduced cardiac disease risk, higher reported quality of life, and overall better health outcomes. To ensure sustainability, our business model supports multiple sessions, ongoing access, and the tailored pairing of participants with suitable program animals based on individual needs.

Impact

In summary, our Side by Side program provides a therapeutic environment where the San Diego community can experience healing through the profound bond between animals and humans.

Research underscores the significant benefits of the animal-human connection, supported by esteemed organizations like the Veterans Health Administration, American Counseling Association, American Veterinary Medical Association, and researchers affiliated with the National Institutes of Health. These studies highlight improvements across emotional, psychological, physiological, and physical health metrics. For instance, veterans engaged with animals often exhibit higher physical activity levels, reduced risk of cardiac disease, enhanced quality of life, and overall better health outcomes.

These benefits hinge on consistent access and sustainability, key considerations integrated into our business model which supports multiple sessions, ongoing participant access, and personalized matches between individuals and program animals.

Through outreach efforts, we invite others to join us in this meaningful journey. Our approach is more than just a strategy; it reflects our deep-seated passion and purpose. Whether you're a corporate leader seeking impactful community involvement, a compassionate advocate, or someone eager to effect positive change, we encourage you to listen, engage, and stand with us as we continue to foster compassion and drive meaningful transformation. Together, we're shaping a future where empathy and healing thrive.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

A volunteer is anyone who, without compensation or expectation of compensation performs a task under the direction of and on behalf of Robin's Nest Rescue. Volunteers are not employees of Robin's Nest Rescue.

RNR Animal Care Volunteer Program

These volunteers constitute the ongoing group who commit to regularly being a part of Robin's Nest Rescue's operations, dealing with the care and maintenance of the animals.

RNR has a progressive volunteer program that provides for one-on-one time with our 21+ animals. There are three levels of animal volunteer opportunities and volunteers must start at Level 1 and work their way to Level 3, earning more responsibility as the volunteer advances.

- **Volunteer Level 1 (Agent Alpaca)** - clean pens, grounds, equipment
 - Clean, rake, muck animal enclosures
 - Clean, rake grounds surrounding animal enclosures, including hay storage sheds and grain storage areas
 - Clean food and water bowls
- **Volunteer Level 2 (Private Piggy)** - clean pens, feed animals, basic interaction & handling of animals
 - Volunteer Level 1 duties +

- Feed all animals breakfast and/or dinner (6+ species)
- Basic level of interaction with all animals inside their enclosures (includes touching, scratching, loving on all of the animals!)
- **Volunteer Level 3 (Deputy Donkey)** - clean pens, feed animals, advanced handling of animals including grooming
 - Volunteer Level 1 & 2 duties +
 - Advanced level of interaction with all animals inside and outside their enclosures. Includes haltering, grooming, cleaning feet, leading/walking around the property, desensitization on all of the animals (as approved), plus lots of love!

Requirements

Application

All prospective individuals must fill out our **RNR Volunteer Application** form and attend a Volunteer Orientation and tour. This will help you learn about our volunteer program, the benefits to the animals and the community, and the commitment involved.

Generally, we accept most applicants who apply for the program. However, we cannot guarantee a spot for every individual. At different times throughout the year, we may have more applicants than positions available. Sometimes an applicant's availability may not meet the time frame of the program.

Qualifications

We do not require any previous animal experience. We just need your willingness to learn and love! Where a volunteer has a background in or experience with animal care, we will consider fast-tracking them through the progressive levels of duties. Please let us know if you have any special talents or skills that you think would be of particular interest to RNR. **We do adhere to the golden rule of volunteering: if you commit to doing something, do it!**

Age

Minimum age to volunteer is 14 years old. Any volunteer under the age of 18 must have their parent/guardian's express permission and all relevant waivers/forms must be completed by the parent or guardian.

Time Commitment

Volunteer positions require a monthly commitment of at least 3 hours. You should plan to dedicate a minimum of one hour per visit to the ranch.

Hours

Those at Volunteer Level 1 can volunteer anytime between 8:30am - 5:30pm once they've gone through orientation and received permission to work independently. Shifts available Monday through Sunday.

Those at Volunteer Levels 2 -3 should plan to volunteer at meal times (8:30am and 4:30pm every day) if they would like to participate in the feeding of the animals. Other duties can be scheduled between 8:30am - 5:30pm. Shifts available Monday through Sunday.

Orientation

Orientation sessions are held based on incoming applications. Typically, orientations will be held on Saturday or Sunday, and we will do our best to accommodate the most number of schedules.

RNR Special Events

We host several special events throughout the year, providing a fun and exciting experience for volunteers. Our volunteers typically contribute to setting up, taking tickets, running a food stand, assisting in our RNR Marketplace, or acting as a parking assistant or tour guide!

Orientation requirements are less detailed than the Animal Care Volunteer Program.

Our big event of the year is the Rockin' Robin Music Fest & Fundraiser, set this year for Sunday, October 13, 2024. It's a blast – AND we need lots of volunteers!

Whether you're an animal care volunteer or provide other services (see below), you can also volunteer for an RNR Special Event.

Other Volunteer Opportunities

If you are not able or interested in the physical care of the animals, there are still plenty of other ways for you to volunteer your time. We'd love to put your talents to use in many ways, including but not limited to:

- Social media
- Event planning
- Marketing
- Fundraising
- Grant writing
- Admin/clerical
- Technical, including video

Have a special talent or something specific in mind that's not listed here...? Let's chat! We're always open to a conversation about how to further involve our community and ensure the success of RNR. **Reach out to us!**

Safety & Health Policies

RNR has established rules for the health and safety of all staff members and volunteers:

Supervisors shall insist on employees and volunteers observing and obeying every rule, regulation, and order as is necessary to the safe conduct of the work.

Smoking and the use of drugs or intoxicating substances is prohibited while on the job.

Avoid horseplay, scuffling, or any other action that influences safety and well being of others.

Work should be planned and supervised to prevent injuries.

No one shall be required to work while impaired by fatigue, illness or other causes that might expose them to injury.

Ensure that all guards and protective devices are in place and adjusted properly for fit or report the deficiency to your supervisor.

Do not tamper with or handle any electrical equipment, machinery, and air/water lines that are not within the scope of your duties, unless instructed by your supervisor.

Report all injuries immediately to your supervisor.

Use the large muscles of the leg versus the smaller muscles of the back when lifting heavy objects.

Wear appropriate footwear at all times (thin or badly worn soles should not be worn).
Follow dress code of your area of assignment.

Make sure materials, tools, and other objects are not thrown from buildings or structures until proper precautions are taken to protect others from falling objects.

Clean hands and body thoroughly after handling hazardous substances and follow special instructions for cleansing when instructed to. Use foot bath when appropriate.

When using a ladder, make sure to face the ladder and use both hands while climbing.

Volunteer Guidelines (in brief)

1. **Robin's Nest Rescue ("RNR")** Volunteers are required to attend interviews, orientations, and training as RNR deems necessary. **Volunteers are required to**

- commit to a regular monthly schedule for 6 months to participate in any RNR program unless otherwise stated on job description.
2. Volunteers should be polite and helpful at all times. All people and animals are to be treated with respect and courtesy. Volunteers are required to adhere to the rules explained in the training as it pertains to animal handling.
 3. Volunteers should refer questions from the public regarding RNR policies to the staff only. Volunteers should maintain confidentiality in regards to RNR clients and business.
 4. Volunteers must accept the guidance and decisions of the professional staff person responsible for volunteer activities. Problems and disagreements should be taken to the department supervisor or the Volunteer Coordinator. Volunteer supervision should be consistent with the Volunteer Handbook and Policy Manual. This manual is available for review online.
 5. Volunteers are responsible for keeping track of their schedules and logging in according to their supervisor's system. Reasonable notice is required if unable to make a volunteer shift.
 6. For safety reasons, volunteers are required to wear appropriate attire when working with animals and/or representing RNR in any capacity. Smoking is NOT allowed on the ranch. **Volunteers who work in a public access area are required to purchase and wear a RNR T-shirt (approx. \$15) during their volunteer shift.**
 7. Volunteers should not be in any area of RNR without the proper training or supervision. Guests of volunteers are welcome to schedule a visit to the ranch but are not allowed to accompany the volunteer during their shift.
 8. Volunteers shall agree to RNR's right to release them for unsafe practices if they do not follow the procedures described in orientations and training sessions, or for engaging in any behavior that is inappropriate for RNR business. Release will be determined by RNR staff only.
 9. Parents are required to sign paperwork for junior volunteers. We reserve the right to release a junior volunteer from his or her job without delay if we feel the situation is either unsafe or unproductive.
 10. Any accident or injury to either a person or animal should be reported to RNR staff immediately.
 11. Volunteers may not give any unapproved treats to any animals on RNR grounds. Please check with RNR staff before giving any kind of treat to any animal on RNR property.

RNR agrees to:

1. Provide an orientation, training, and continuing education as available for the assigned position.
2. Assign a staff person to supervise volunteer activities.
3. Provide extended opportunities, when available, for those volunteers who are interested and qualified.

RNR Social Media Guidelines

These are the official guidelines for social media utilization at Robin's Nest Rescue (RNR). We understand that you are not a RNR employee or contractor creating or contributing to blogs, social networks, or any other kind of social media at the request of RNR, but that you may be active on your personal social media sites.

These guidelines pertain to any postings that are made by you on a personal site about your volunteer experience. Robin's Nest Rescue reserves the right to request removal of any content in conflict with these guidelines. Any violation of these guidelines may result in termination from your volunteer position.

We encourage all volunteers to share content posted by RNR on Facebook, Instagram, or other social media platforms.

When choosing to participate in social media, please follow these guidelines as it relates to RNR:

Any photos you have been approved to take at RNR must have RNR's approval before taking and posting. Photo approval and releases may be obtained from an RNR officer.

Respect proprietary information and content and keep confidentiality. No confidential information or internal policies and procedures are to be disclosed to outside parties. Photos of privately owned animals are not to be taken. This includes all animals, staff, volunteers, and guests of RNR.

Photos of Robin's Nest guests are not to be shared on any social media platform.

Don't reveal confidential information. If you do post about your volunteer experiences, by all means talk about your good work and make meaningful connections with friends and family members, but you must accomplish this while respecting the privacy and confidentiality of RNR. ***This includes unauthorized images and video.*** Please refer to this document when making decisions about your online content.

The same principles that apply to your volunteer assignment at RNR apply to your online activities. Make sure your efforts to be transparent don't violate RNR privacy, confidentiality, and legal guidelines for external commercial speech. Ask permission to publish or report on conversations that are meant to be private or internal to RNR.

All statements must be true, factual (not an opinion), not misleading, and all claims must be substantiated and approved. Please never comment on anything related to legal matters, litigation, or any parties we are in litigation with without the appropriate approval. Also be smart about protecting yourself, your privacy, and RNR confidential information. What you

publish is widely accessible and will be around for a long time, so consider your content carefully. The information you give should follow the same guidelines on information you would give to customers in person, on-site.

Do not discuss sensitive medical issues concerning an animal.

Be transparent. If you discuss RNR, or the animals that it cares for, then you have a duty to disclose your volunteer role within our organization.

Be responsible and professional. In online social networks, the lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred. Just by identifying yourself as a RNR volunteer, you are creating perceptions about your expertise and about RNR. You are the RNR brand. Be sure that all content associated with you is consistent with your work and with RNR's values and professional standards: we are a place where people help animals and animals help people and make every effort to do so in every way we are able to.

Also, please respect brand, trademark, copyright, fair use, trade secrets (including our processes and methodologies), confidentiality, and financial disclosure laws. If you have any questions about these, see an RN officer. Remember, you are personally responsible for your content.

Use disclaimers. You must make it clear that the views you are expressing are yours alone and not necessarily those of RNR.

Be accurate. Even though your social media posts may be primarily made up of personal opinion, do your research well and check that your facts are accurate. Make sure you have permission to post any copyrighted or confidential information (this includes images of the animals in RNR's care).

Be considerate. Remember that anyone, including other volunteers, may be actively reading what you publish online. If you encounter someone with a different opinion or policy, please be respectful and show consideration for differing attitudes. Inflammatory remarks or speech will not be tolerated. RNR regularly checks its sites and microsites for full disclosure and truthfulness.

If you have constructive criticism or observations about Robin's Nest Rescue or any of its other activities or its policies, please direct all inquiries to Kimber Williams at kimber@robinsnestramona.com.

By reporting those types of issues on a social media platform, and not directing your concerns to a staff member, you may do more harm than good; worse, problems may not get to the attention of the staff members who can correct them. Robin's Nest Rescue cares about your concerns and wants to ensure the safety of our animals and volunteers

Guidelines for signing up for social media platforms. No social media platform with the RNR logo or brand should be signed up under anyone other than Robin's Nest Rescue, Robin's Nest Ranch, Robin's Nest Retreat, RNR, or any other version of the organization.

If you find a social media platform that you think would benefit RNR, please contact your supervisor to discuss your thoughts and ideas.

If you have questions about participating on social media as a RNR volunteer, please contact Kimber at kimber@robinsnestramona.com.

Supporting a Healing Environment

Robin's Nest Rescue proudly stands as a healing and inclusive environment for all. As an RNR volunteer, you will always be supported here.

In order to support Robin's Nest as a healing environment, the following policy is in effect for all staff, volunteers, and guests who enter our gates:



A HEALING ENVIRONMENT

Robin's Nest Rescue stands as both a sanctuary and a refuge, committed to the well-being of animals and humans alike, fostering transformative connections that heal hearts and minds.

Robin's Nest is a healing environment for animals and humans alike. Aggressive or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated here.

Here at Robin's Nest, we welcomed you with an inclusive and open mindset one that prioritizes growth through listening and learning. No matter where you come from or where you're going, we want to create a place where you belong!



Examples of aggressive and/or disruptive behavior include:

- Physical assault of any kind
- Verbal or other forms of threat
- Abusive language including yelling
- Speeding or aggressive driving of any vehicle
- Sexual language, verbal or nonverbal
- Any show of harassment based on sex/gender, race/ethnicity, national origin, or any other point of social difference
- Failure to respond to staff instructions

There is **zero tolerance** for aggressive and/or disruptive behavior. Incidents may result in removal from the Robin's Nest property.

Volunteer Policy Handbook and Policy Manual Acknowledgement

Please use the online link provided to certify that you have read the Robin's Nest Rescue Volunteer Handbook and Policy Manual and signify you understand all that is required as a volunteer of Robin's Nest Rescue. In so doing, you further certify that you have been given a copy of the Robin's Nest Rescue Volunteer Policy Manual for your use during your time as a volunteer.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

