



# The Horsemen's Newsletter

September 2016

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## Setting The Standard For Health Care On The Backstretch

In its first year of existence the new MTHA health program has provided a level of health care unprecedented on a racetrack backside. The program, at its inception, aimed to provide essential health services for horsemen and backstretch workers. Needless to say, it has hit its mark. Even more, new services have been implemented throughout the



year, resulting in a comprehensive health system that goes above and beyond simply caring for injuries and illness.

The new health system, a cooperative effort between the MTHA and the Maryland Jockey Club, employs a team of on-site doctors from the renowned Medstar Sports Medicine program, along with a group of MTHA administrators who, for years, have worked tirelessly to provide health services for horsemen and backstretch workers.

Dr. Kelly Ryan is one of the physicians from the Medstar team and has nothing but praise for the program in its first year. "Other racetracks are looking at our system as a model for their own [new health initiatives]."

The upcoming health fair in October is a perfect illustration of the range of services offered by the Medstar team. Horsemen will get the opportunity to have bloodwork done, receive a blood pressure screening, and learn about the sometimes complicated health insurance system. Most of the services will be offered

Continued on Page 2 ➔



## Backstretch Scholarship Apps Now Being Accepted

Applications for the Maryland Racing Media Association's 2016 scholarship program are being accepted through Sept. 30.

With the support of industry donors and organizations including Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association, MRMA has distributed approximately \$30,000 annually to scholarship recipients over the past decade. Those interested in applying must either be backstretch

employees, work on a Thoroughbred farm or with an equine vet clinic in Maryland.

Submissions need to include an employer's letter of recommendation and a second reference from an individual who is a licensed or recognized member of the Maryland racing industry. Scholarship application forms may be found at [mdhorsemen.com](http://mdhorsemen.com).

For more information, contact Ted Black at (301) 459-4408.

## Revamped Counseling Program Helping Maryland Horsemen

The physical demands that horsemen face are well known to those familiar with the industry. Long hours, hard labor, and non-stop care for our equine athletes can not only affect a horsemen's physical health and stability, but their mental well-being too. That is why MTHA in partnership with Maryland Jockey Club has placed a renewed interest in the counseling and mental health services offered to horsemen and backstretch workers, and the results have been remarkable.

Spearheading these efforts at Maryland tracks is Counseling Administrator Jessica Ham-

mond. Jessica attended Towson University for her undergraduate studies and then the University of Baltimore for post grad work in clinical psychology. However, her lifelong work with horses and experience on the backside is what allows Jessica to excel at identifying the sometimes unique problems found only on a race-track backstretch.

"When I saw the ad for this position, I knew [a career] in the psychology/racing intersection was a unique and amazing opportunity. It was a perfect fit for me," said Jessica.



Continued on Page 3 ➔

The first obstacle for Jessica in improving the services offered to horsemen was simple: Making horsemen aware that there was a program at all. While the MTHA has offered counseling services for years, upon talking with horsemen on the backside, Jessica realized that many were not aware of its existence. The programs offered were not very developed and without people coming in to take advantage of them, the services were not helping as many people as they could.

This turned around quickly following Jessica's involvement beginning in July. Having started with only a few clients who were required to be in the program in order to get their license reinstated after a suspension, Jessica now manages the care of about 17 clients on a regular basis. This does not include the many horsemen who have taken advantage of her abilities on a less frequent basis.

Some horsemen have more serious issues that Jessica has had to help with. Many workers on the backside are dealing with pre-existing issues like depression or anxiety and, while working with animals can be therapeutic, it is critical to have a someone available for those individuals. Personal and professional relationships can be another potential area of stress, especially in the horse racing community where it is very common to be working alongside family, friends and significant others. Often times we simply need a good listener and to get something off of our chest in order alleviate stress from certain situations and Jessica is here to listen and give advice.

Jessica also works hand in hand with the team of onsite Medstar physicians, also part of the new Horsemen's Health System. If the Medstar physicians think that Jessica's work would be beneficial to a patient they will refer them to her, and she will do the same for people that come to her but need medical attention in addition to counseling. Jessica will also help facilitate communication between patients in the hospital and the on-site Medstar physicians.

One of the most popular counseling services in the new MTHA health initiative is the Alcoholics Anonymous program. In order to get this program off the ground Jessica contacted an ad-

ministrators from Maryland AA and asked if they would come to the track to conduct meetings. Since the spring, AA meetings have taken place every Wednesday at 7 p.m. in the Laurel Rec Center, and according to the AA administrators, attendance has been good and the quality of discussion great. Anyone can attend.

The MTHA counseling program is always trying to encourage horsemen to take advantage of all the MTHA has to offer. There have been many new activities that center on games and sports which, although open to all, draw primarily male participants. The upcoming Ladies Spa Day, on Oct. 6, is an effort to encourage the women of the backside to be more involved,

and Jessica is taking the reins. There will be massage and other spa services along with a chance to participate in Yoga activities which, if popular, could become a regular offering. The goal, aside from a fun, relaxing day, is to promote female participation and awareness, not just of backstretch activities, but services like counseling of which they may not be aware.

In the especially fast-paced world of horse racing, anxiety, stress and other mental issues can be hidden but debilitating stigmas. The MTHA Counseling Program, headed up by Jessica Hammond, is here to provide horsemen with a convenient, free resolution mechanism for these problems.

## **TOBA Concierge Service Provides Valuable Resource To Owners**

If you own a Thoroughbred and are taking it to a racetrack or to a sale where you've never been before, you probably have a dozen questions.

Who do you call to get stalls? Where should you stay? Where should you eat? How do you get a box seat at the track? Do you need a rental car, a car service or are taxis readily available?

Like the old movie line asks: Who you gonna call?

The Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association and Fasig-Tipton have joined together to create the TOBA Owners Concierge Program. It is a service dedicated to providing owners with superior customer service.

They hope their members will call owners concierge services director Christina Bossinakis at 732-677-9626 or email her at [christinaboss@toba.org](mailto:christinaboss@toba.org) to get needed help; or go to the website <https://ownersconnection.horse>, which is a guide to North American Thoroughbred tracks and area resources.

Maryland owners, trainers and consignors traveling out-of-state can call on the service when they are going to unfamiliar tracks and sales.

"I think it's a great idea," says Maryland MTHA Director Bob Manfuso, who has been in the public eye this year due to the success of Cathryn Sophia, the Kentucky Oaks-G1 winner who was bred at his and trainer Katy Voss' Chanceland Farm. "Anytime you reach out to recognize the owner, to help him, her or them and get them to the racetrack is fabulous. I don't think there is any question about its usefulness."

It also means owners, trainers and consignors from elsewhere are being helped in similar fashion when they come to Maryland.

"If someone who had never been to Pimlico or Laurel Park, for instance, was running a horse there or just going to the tracks with-

out a horse running, they might need answers to where do I stay? How do I get there?" says Bossinakis. "I might direct them to a car service, a charter flight. And I might direct them to track hospitality. It all depends on what they're looking for."

In Maryland, Phoebe Hayes is the Maryland Jockey Club's well-known and respected director of horsemen's relations. She says she appreciates TOBA's new concierge service.

"The TOBA service really does help the owners who have never been here before, even new owners in the state," says Hayes. "They now know who to call and it means people come to me in a better frame of mind because they haven't wasted two days trying to figure out who to call and then how to reach that person."

The program is free, funded by TOBA and the Fasig-Tipton auction firm. It is primarily for the use of owners and consignors, who are going to tracks and sales. But Bossinakis says trainers are using it, too, to help their owners.

"We're finding a lot of trainers are making a lot of the plans for their owners," Bossinakis says. "Some have someone taking care of customer service, some don't. We're trying to take some of that off their plates. Our aim is to help with the care of their clients."

The program was launched in the spring of 2015, created after several TOBA board members, sitting together at a meeting, began talking about some of their needs that weren't being addressed when they were traveling.

"They left feeling there needed to be a service for owners, trainers and consignors," Bossinakis says. "This program came from that conversation and continues to evolve."



### ***The Horsemen's Newsletter***

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500 Redland Court-Suite 105,  
Owings Mills, Maryland 21117;  
(410) 902-6842; Fax: (410) 902-6841;  
E-mail: [info@mdhorsemen.com](mailto:info@mdhorsemen.com)  
Website: [www.mdhorsemen.com](http://www.mdhorsemen.com)







## Rec Report

### Basketball

The winners of the 3-on-3 basketball tournament were Angel Cruz, Irwin Almodovar and Chris Pipito. The winner of the free throw contest was David Taylor and the winner of the 3-point shootout was Lou Garner.

We will be holding another tournament and cookout on Tuesday, Oct. 3 at the Laurel Park Kitchen. Please contact Marty Leonard at 203-733-1367 to reserve your team.

To be eligible to win the prize, please have your team signed up before we start the tournament.

### Ping-Pong Tournament

On Thursday, Aug. 25, MTHA held a Ping-Pong Tournament in the Laurel Park Track Kitchen. The winners of the doubles tournament were Jorge Perez and Gustavo Santiago. The winner of the singles tournament was Jorge Perez.

### MTHA Express Van Service

The MTHA is sponsoring a Van service for employees on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The service includes transportation for shopping, pharmacy, lunch, movies, doctor and dentist appointments etc.

You must sign up in the track kitchen each week for the service. For information please call Dan Mangum at 410-802-5798.

### Poker Tournament Results

The winners of the Texas Hold'em Poker tournament on Aug. 8 were: 1st: Marty Leonard; 2nd: Erik Fowble; 3rd: Tim Walsh. The next tournament is scheduled for Monday, Sept. 12 at the Laurel Park Rec Room starting at 12:00 p.m. For more information, please contact Marty Leonard at 203-733-1367

# Thank You!

MTHA wishes to say thanks to Maryland Jockey Club for providing our horsemen with free bottled water near the paddock during the dog days of Summer. Our horsemen very much appreciated this!



# Ladies Spa Day

Thursday, October 6, 2016 • 1 p.m. • Laurel Park Recreation Room

Yoga, seated massage, lunch and much more available to the ladies of the backstretch.



### Backstretch Health Care

free of charge. Physicians will be available to talk with patients about routine screenings like colonoscopies and mammograms, and horsemen can get a flu vaccine too.

"One of the goals [of the new health system] is to get more information on all employees, [in order] to provide appropriate details on specific treatments," said Dr. Ryan. Having a health fair facilitates the gathering of this information and as such all horsemen are encouraged to attend.

Having an experienced sports medicine team like the one from Medstar affords horsemen the opportunity to receive the same high level care provided to many of the professional sports teams in our area. Medstar physicians have developed relationships with top surgeons and specialists in the area and horsemen have access to those doctors should they need specialized care.

All the Medstar physicians have extensive experience in dealing with concussions which can result from a jockey or exercise rider being thrown from their mount. The on-site doctors are there to evaluate riders after a spill, to look for signs of a concussion, and implement a protocol for returning to work.

The biggest advantage to having on-site physicians is that they can identify and concentrate on issues and problems that may be less acute and severe but just as important to the overall health. Much of their role is to not only provide care for the injured or ill, but to develop relationships with horsemen and educate them on topics related to health. This allows physicians to provide the best care possible, especially for those suffering from chronic issues like diabetes and asthma which require continual monitoring and management.

As horsemen have become more aware of the new program throughout the year they have increasingly been coming to the Medstar team to get advice on nutrition, weight loss, and other topics important to good health. Many backstretch workers, having done physically demanding work for years, suffer from chronic pain and other orthopedic issues. The Medstar team has seen more and more of these employees as well, seeking treatment for pre-

viously untreated problems and finding relief. Furthermore, because physicians are located at the track where many horsemen work and live, they can receive care without having to take off work.

One of the ways the MTHA Health Program has expanded is through its implementation of a counseling program which, among other services, offers regular Alcoholic Anonymous meetings. Headed up by Jessica Hammond, the mental health program offers relief to horsemen suffering from stress, grief, drug and alcohol addiction, marital problems, and financial issues. These often times hidden afflictions can take a toll on an individual and even lead to more serious physical problems.

A vital piece to the MTHA's health system is MTHA's Racetrack Representative Diana Pinones. Not only does she serve as a translator for the Medstar team, communicating with horsemen more comfortable and familiar with Spanish, but she also helps those horsemen to navigate the health insurance landscape.

Mrs. Pinones, like Dr. Ryan, also points to the gathering of health information of individuals as a crucial factor in providing care. "Before Medstar, [we] never had any medical records [of horsemen]. Now we have robust records for trainers, jockeys and other employees so we can function as a full service physician's office at the racetrack."

With this information Pinones is able to provide horsemen with much more than just translation. She helps horsemen sign up for Medicaid, Medicare, or health insurance through the state insurance marketplace. This has allowed many backstretch employees to get health insurance coverage for the first time. Pinones is also available to set up appointments for horsemen if they need to see a specialist outside the Medstar team and the new MTHA Express Shuttle service can be utilized for transportation.

These are often the biggest obstacles to health care for backstretch employees and Mrs. Pinones has been bridging that gap for years, and now, with the Medstar team in place, she can accomplish even more.

# Backstretch Appreciation Day

Monday, September 19, 1-4pm • Tent Beside Grandstand • All Are Welcome

A celebration you won't want to miss because, for the first time ever, we will be giving away \$5,000 in cash and other door prizes. There will be (8) \$500 cash winners and (1) grand prize of \$1,000.

This year's Appreciation Day will be held in a

new location, as the Maryland Jockey Club has offered us the use of its newly erected tent on the apron of the grandstand.

In addition to all that cash, our backstretch workers will be provided with All-You-Can-Eat BBQ Chicken, Pit Beef, Ham, and much more!



## MTHA

500 Redland Court, #105  
Owings Mills, Maryland 21117

**September 2016**

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# MTHA GOLF TOURNAMENT

**Monday, September 26, 2016**  
**Walden Country Club**

**Entry Fee \$60 Per Person Includes:**

- 18-Hole Tournament with Cart
- Two Drink Coupons with Prizes
- \$500 Team Awards
- Two \$50 Closest to the Pin Awards
- One \$50 Longest Drive Award
- Call Dan Mangum at 410-802-5798



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