



# The Horsemen's Newsletter

November 2018

Vol. 28 • Number 11

## Nominations Sought For Backstretch Employees Of The Year

Trainers at Laurel Park and Pimlico Race Course are encouraged to submit nominations for the MTHA Backstretch Employees of the Year for 2018.

The MTHA, as it has in previous years, will recognize one backstretch employee at each racetrack based on the nominations. The awards will be presented in early 2019 at the second annual Renaissance Awards.

The deadline to submit nominations is Nov. 30.

"Our backstretch workers are very important to our industry," said Bobby Lillis, MTHA Benevolence Administrator.

"They arrive at the track in the darkest hours of the morning and are doing jobs that any nine-to-fiver just couldn't comprehend. They feed a barn full of horses, scoop manure from stalls, and lift hay, straw and water. The groom bathes them when they get back from the track – all before the rest of the world wakes up.

"They are very dedicated and spend most of the day making sure the horses are well taken care of. They always put the needs of the horse before their own. They know the personalities of their horses and every blemish on every inch of their bodies. The best feeling these workers experience is taking a horse in their care on race day and watching it come down the stretch to win or at least place well.

"They are indeed the force that makes it all happen, and we could not be here without them. We very much appreciate them."

To submit a worker to be considered email their name, position and a summary of why they deserve this award to [info@mdhorsemen.com](mailto:info@mdhorsemen.com).



## MTHA Christmas Party & Toy Drive

Tuesday, December 11, 2018 • 6 p.m. - 10 p.m.

\$35 in Advance • \$45 at Door • \$300 Table of 10

The Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association will host the popular Horsemen's Christmas Party celebration on Tuesday evening, Dec. 11, from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. in Laurel Park's new Sports Bar.

Maryland Racing's Party of the Year, the MTHA Christmas Party will feature a buffet dinner, open bar and a dance floor with tunes provided by Larry Smith's party band Release.

Tickets are \$35 in advance, \$45 each at the door or \$300 for a table of 10 and can be purchased on race days in the MTHA racetrack office at

Laurel Park, online at [mdhorsemen.com](http://mdhorsemen.com) or by calling 410-902-6842. See Diana Pinones in the MTHA office for more details.

Horsemen are urged to purchase tickets in advance.

MTHA will also be hosting its annual toy drive for the third consecutive year and is asking attendees to the party to bring a new, unwrapped toy to be collected at the door.

Gifts will be distributed to children of backstretch workers during the holiday season.





## MTHA Bowling League

Bowling will be starting soon and we still have a couple spots open if you are interested in joining the fun. Please call Marty Leonard at 203-733-1367 and let him know if you are interested.

## MTHA Express Van Service

The MTHA Express Van runs on Tuesdays and Thursdays to service horsemen who reside at Laurel Park and Pimlico. Please contact Dan at 410-802-5798 to sign up.

## Poker

The next poker game will be played on Tuesday, November 6th in the Laurel Park Rec Room. The October match was won by Marty Leonard. Steve Kell finished in second and Bird Kaufman finished third.

**Helen Polinger**, a longtime Thoroughbred owner and breeder who raced multiple graded-stakes winner and millionaire The Very One in the late 1970s and early 1980s, died Sept. 12 in Maryland.

Polinger, whose farm in Montgomery County at one time stood several stallions, was a mainstay of the state's breeding program for many years along with her late husband, Milton. She greatly reduced her operation after her husband's death but in this decade has maintained a small racing operation in the state.

Several of Polinger's most successful runners in recent years have been trained by Laurel-based Tim Keefe, including the mare Understanding and the gelding Dancing With Maude, who finished second in the 2018 Maryland Million Nursery at Laurel. She maintained her passion for the business until her death.

**Dr. Ralph Yerkey**, a talented veterinary surgeon well-respected by Maryland horsemen, died Oct. 17 after a short illness at age 88.

Yerkey was with his son in Virginia at the time of his death. He considered the racetrack his home, and a celebration of life will be held at Laurel Park at a later date.



# MTHA Board Agrees To Support Losing Mount Fee Increase

The MTHA Board of Directors Oct. 24 voted to support a request by Maryland jockeys for an increase in losing mount fees.

The mount fee was last increased in 2013 when it rose to \$75. The Board agreed to increase it to \$100 for fourth-through last-place finishes in keeping with a structure used at other racetracks in the region.

Winning jockeys will continue to earn 10%

of the first-place purse, while second-place and third-place finishers will continue to receive 5% of their respective share of purse money. The minimum earned will be \$100.

Maryland riders currently contribute to a MTHA-managed fund in which 60% goes to support the Beyond The Wire aftercare program and 40% to a local benevolence fund for locally-based jockeys who may need financial assistance.

## Violette Remembered As A Champion For Horsemen

Trainer Rick Violette Jr., who retired in 2017 after 10 years as President of the New York Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association and more than 25 years as a member of the NYTHA Board of Directors, died the morning of Oct. 21 at his home in Delray Beach, Fla., after a battle with lung cancer. He was 65.

Violette also was the longtime President of the Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association, and earlier this year was named Director Emeritus, the first member of the organization to hold the title. He won 870 races as a trainer, and his horses earned more than \$44 million.

Violette was recognized, and will be remembered, as a dedicated advocate for horsemen and horses in New York and nationally.

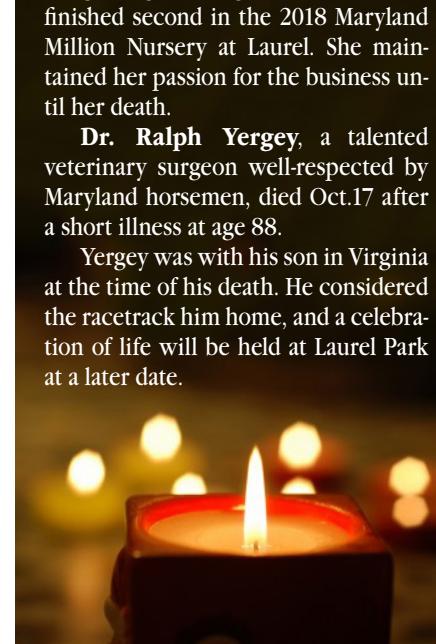
"We have lost a leader," NYTHA President Joe Appelbaum said. "Rick Violette was one of a kind: smart, tenacious and indefatigable. His commitment to horse racing was unparalleled. From workers' compensation to the racing pro-



gram to the welfare of our workers, there was no area on track that Rick was not deeply involved in."

"There is not a segment of our industry that has not been impacted by Rick's work," THA Chairman Alan Foreman said. "He was consumed with the best interests of New York racing and the racing industry. He was a force behind the creation of the THA. He was, perhaps, the most consequential figure in New York racing over the past 20 years."

NYTHA noted that accomplishments during Violette's presidency were "truly historic." They include leading horsemen through the bankruptcy of the New York Racing Association; negotiating the horsemen's share of revenue from video lottery terminals at Aqueduct Racetrack; increasing funding for benevolence programs; helping the THA shape the National Uniform Medication Program; and creating aftercare programs for which NYTHA has been nationally recognized.



# Email System For Horsemen's Concerns Speeds Up Response Time By MJC

The newly created email system for reporting backstretch and track surface concerns by Maryland horsemen has drastically improved response time by Maryland Jockey Club to address concerns at Laurel Park and Pimlico.

The MTHA created the system in early summer to improve communication among horsemen and track maintenance staff to expedite the process of issues being addressed.

Previously issues were communicated by horsemen by a paper-based ticket system which proved cumbersome.

Horsemen are now encouraged to send emails, with photos, of their concerns to [backstretchissues@mdhorsemen.com](mailto:backstretchissues@mdhorsemen.com) for backstretch concerns or to [track-issues@mdhorsemen.com](mailto:track-issues@mdhorsemen.com) for track surface issues.

Messages to each of these accounts are forwarded to a multitude of relevant parties as well as to the MTHA so progress and response time can be tracked.



## The Horsemen's Newsletter

Published by the  
**MTHA**

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# Board Actions

MTHA Board Meeting – October 24, 2018

**Members present:** Timothy L. Keefe (President), Linda S. Gaudet (Vice President), Dale Capuano (Vice President), Michael F. Horning (Treasurer), A. Ferris Allen, JoAnn Hayden, R. Larry Johnson, Mark B. Lapidus, Robert T. Manfuso, Hugh I. McMahon, H. Graham Motion, Philip B. Schoenthal, Michael J. Trombetta and Katharine M. Voss.

**Members absent:** Charles J. Reed.

## Thanksgiving Dinners

The Board unanimously voted to approve all expenditures related to serving Thanksgiving Dinners to backstretch employees and their families on Thanksgiving Day at Laurel Park and Pimlico.

## Appropriations

The Board unanimously voted to appropriate funds necessary for the continuation of the Recreation, Counseling and Benefit Trust programs and the Jockey Injury Worker's Compensation Fund through the end of 2019.

## Turf Preferences

The Board unanimously expressed opposition to the new turf preference rule that was to begin with the November Condition Book as well as the process of the implementation of this rule. The Board also requested this rule be rescinded immediately in which MJC agreed.

## Award Procedures

The Board unanimously voted to approve procedures for the selection of various year-end awards to be presented at the Renaissance Awards in February in conjunction with MJC and MHBA.

## NTRA

The Board unanimously approved its 2019 membership in NTRA.

## Jockey Losing Mount Fees

The Board unanimously agreed to support an increase in the losing mount fee for jockeys finishing 4th through last place on the condition that Maryland jockeys continue their contribution to the Beyond The Wire program at current levels.

## Aftercare

The Board unanimously agreed to forward all requests for thoroughbred aftercare support to the Beyond The Wire Board of Directors for consideration before approving any funds to these initiatives.

## Backstretch Pension

The Board unanimously accepted the 2017 audited Financial Statements for the Backstretch Pension Plan.

**APPEARING LIVE AT MTHA CHRISTMAS PARTY**

# RELEASE



# ENGLISH as a SECOND LANGUAGE

*Free English as a Second Language classes are being held regularly at Laurel Library, Russett Community Library as well as Anne Arundel Community College.*

*Call Diana Pinones at 410-902-6844 registration for assistance.*



# I NEVER GET SICK.

The Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association will assist backstretch workers to learn more about and sign up for health insurance under the Affordable Care Act.

For help in English or Spanish, stop in the MTHA racetrack office or call  
Bobby Lillis at 410-902-6843 or Jessica Hammond at 301-776-0404.



**MTHA**

500 Redland Court, #105  
Owings Mills, Maryland 21117

**November 2018**

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## THANKSGIVING DINNER

The MTHA will continue the long-standing tradition of serving Thanksgiving dinners free of charge on Thursday, November 22 to all backstretch workers and their families at Laurel Park and Pimlico.

Turkey, mashed potatoes and gravy and all the trimmings will be served from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Laurel Park in the track kitchen and from 8 a.m. to noon at Pimlico in the Snack Room above Barn 8.



### Board of Directors

A. Ferris Allen, III  
Dale Capuano  
Linda S. Gaudet  
JoAnn Hayden  
Michael F. Horning  
R. Larry Johnson  
Timothy L. Keefe  
Mark B. Lapidus  
Robert T. Manfuso  
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