



The Horsemen's Newsletter

September 2018

Vol. 28 Number 9

Backstretch Pension Plan May Receive a Financial Boost

The Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association Board of Directors voted unanimously Aug. 28 to increase the amount of money devoted each year to the Backstretch Employee Pension Plan pending Maryland Racing Commission approval.

An overview of the plan by MTHA President Tim Keefe indicated that the annual \$400,000 contribution from the Maryland Thoroughbred Purse Account for the plan hadn't been increased since 2013 and before that not since its inception in 1988. Keefe recommended an increase for the plan beginning in 2019.

The MTHA Board approved an amount not to exceed \$500,000 from the Maryland Thoroughbred Purse Account for the 2019 contribution to the pension plan if authorized by MRC.

Maryland law states that the Commission may direct a deduction from open purse money of 0.25% of all mutuel pools to be paid to the Maryland Backstretch Pension Fund, which equates up to slightly over \$1.5-million.

Sign-ups for the Pension Program are conducted each spring at Laurel Park and Pimlico. At that time, employees must register to receive benefits based on the previous year.



Beyond The Wire Aftercare Program Hits the 100 Mark

Beyond The Wire, Maryland's Thoroughbred aftercare program, recently accepted its 100th horse, a major milestone for the program that was launched in May 2018.

Jessica Hammond, who administers Beyond The Wire and works closely with its Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance-accredited partner farms, said the program has become well-established in Maryland racing and also is viewed as a model for other states or racetracks looking to provide aftercare services.

"Beyond The Wire has been up and running for 15 months, and I'm very excited to see many owners and trainers take advantage of the program," Hammond said.

Beyond The Wire, which receives funding from the Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association, Maryland Jockey Club, Maryland Horse Breeders Association, owners and jockeys, also accepts and encourages voluntary donations when each horse is placed in the program. The partner farms that re-home retired racehorses receive a stipend to pay for the care of the horses.

A network of TAA-accredited partner

farms is important to any aftercare program, and Beyond The Wire, which started out with two, now has six: MidAtlantic Horse Rescue, the Foxie G Foundation, New Vocations, Akindale Thoroughbred Rescue, Life Horse, and After the Races. The latter, which relocated from Nottingham, Pa., to Elkton, Md., has been active in the Maryland program.

"This place is trying to get familiar with the racing industry," Hammond said of After the Races, which is operated by Bonnie Hutton. "It's doing a fantastic job and is doing a high volume, like all of our partners do. The adoptions (from the farm) seem to be really good."

After the Races said it combines a horse's history at the racetrack with vetting on the farm to develop a proper rehabilitation plan. After evaluation of temperament and physical abilities, a horse is retrained and matched with a suitable owner who can provide a long-term home.

Hutton said that since After the Races launched in 2010, the program has "found an increasing desire among racing professionals to see their horses get a second chance."



Rec Report

Fall Golf Tournament

The next golf outing will be held at Compass Pointe Golf Course on Monday, Sept. 17. Cost is \$65 per golfer. Call Marty Leonard at 203-733-1367 for further details or to register.

Texas Hold 'Em

Poker is back for the fall. Texas Hold Em matches are held every Tuesday at 12:30 p.m. in the Rec Room at Laurel Park. Just stop in or call Marty Leonard at 203-733-1367 to reserve your spot.

Bowling

The MTHA Bowling league is set to begin in October at Laurel AMF Lanes. Call Marty Leonard at 203-733-1367 to register your team or yourself as an individual. Plenty of spots remain.

Team Potts won the Maryland Racing Bowling Championship held Sept. 2 at Greenmount Bowl in Hampstead. The event featured 12 teams of five and was a fundraiser for the Beyond The Wire Aftercare program. Team Potts' five-person team consisted of Wayne Potts, Marty Leonard, Berkley Kern, Kristi Schmidt and Brandon Barshinger.



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MTHA

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Two New OTB Facilities Set for Public Hearings

Plans and schedules have firmed up for two additional off-track betting facilities in Maryland that combined are projected to generate more than \$1 million a year for the Thoroughbred purse account.

The Maryland Racing Commission Sept. 11 will hold a hearing regarding an OTB facility at MGM National Harbor Casino that has been in the works for months. Another hearing will be held Sept. 20 on plans to put a betting parlor in a hotel just off Interstate 270 in Frederick.

Maryland Jockey Club President Sal Sinatra said the National Harbor OTB outlet could open as soon as Sept. 12. The casino is located about three miles from Rosecroft Raceway, the MJC-owned harness track that also serves as a year-round simulcast facility.

It will take longer to get the Frederick facility up and running, though plans call for it to open this fall. Sinatra said it will be the first MJC-operated OTB parlor in a hotel and conference center.

"The hotel gets lots of groups," Sinatra said. "We're interested in seeing how our business plays out in a hotel. It would replace the Cracked Claw, which did really

well when it was open."

The Cracked Claw, which closed in the fall of 2011, was located about 10 minutes south of Frederick. Open about 10 months that year, the restaurant had pari-mutuel handle of almost \$14 million.

The betting area at National Harbor is roughly 2,000 square feet, about the same size as the one at Horseshoe Casino Baltimore. It's located on the second floor near the poker room and a smoking patio.

Sinatra told the Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association during its Aug. 28 Board of Directors meeting that the two new OTB outlets could generate \$1.2 million to \$1.5 million for purses in a full year of operation. The MTHA board, which approved the National Harbor plan earlier, at the meeting voted unanimously in support of the Frederick OTB facility.

Both will operate under a model by which the MJC, MTHA and the OTB owner share equally in revenue and expenses. The model has been in place at Horseshoe Casino, the Maryland State Fair at Timonium, Boonsboro Event Center, and Greenmount in Hampstead.



Free Health Fair

Thursday, Sept. 27
9:00 am to 1:00 pm
Laurel Park Rec. Room

Services Include: Flu Shots, Cholesterol & Glucose Screenings, PSA and CMP Blood Screenings, Blood Pressure, Body Fat Composition and More.



Groom Elite 101 Program Approaching Quickly

There is still time to sign up for the Groom Elite 101 program that will begin Sept. 17 and run through Oct. 11 at Laurel Park.

As of late August, almost 20 people had signed up, and the limit for the class is 24. However, given the chance of defections, those interested in the program are encouraged to sign up as soon as possible.

Groom Elite 101 is an entry-level 40-hour certification course for horse care workers who have some experience at the racetrack but seek more comprehensive knowledge about horses and how to perform their jobs. It follows up on the Groom Elite 099 program held at Laurel for one week in June.

A few people who participated in the Groom Elite 099 program are among those who signed up for Groom Elite 101.

The program has varied from track to track, not in terms of required hours but the time frame in which the 40 hours are allocated. At some tracks it has spanned two weeks, but at Laurel it will run four consecutive weeks on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

For more information, contact the MTHA Laurel office at 410-792-7775.



MTHA Board Supports Participation in Biomarker Study



UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY
GLUCK EQUINE RESEARCH
FOUNDATION

The Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association has given its support to a research project designed to measure multiple equine inflammatory and anti-inflammatory biomarkers.

Dr. David Horohov at the Gluck Equine Research Center at the University of Kentucky laboratory has developed a method by which a single blood sample can be used to measure the biomarkers. The study thus far has involved Thoroughbred racehorses, and published results have indicated the blood testing could be useful in determining a horse's fitness or risk of injury, according to a University of Kentucky memorandum.

Kentucky and California already are participating in the research, which was recommended for funding by the Kentucky Horse Racing Commission. Mike Hopkins, Executive Director of the Maryland Racing Commission and current Chairman of the Association of Racing Commissioners International, was asked if Maryland could participate, so he brought the proposal before the MTHA Board of Directors at its Aug. 28 meeting.

"The purpose is to examine messenger (ribonucleic acid) for inflammatory and anti-inflammatory biomarkers," Hopkins said. "They hope that after two years they can develop a tool that could be used with a PCR instrument to give an indication of excess biomarkers and maybe project (the likelihood) of (catastrophic injury)."

Hopkins noted the study relies on "non-disclosure," meaning the blood samples wouldn't be publicly identified. The motion approved by the MTHA Board states that information gleaned from sample collection only be used for the biomarker study.

There is no cost to Maryland horsemen for the study, which entails collection of samples from the first two finishers in a

race, another post-race sample, and a pre-race TCO2 sample. Samples would be taken from catastrophically injured horses and non-injured horses.

The University of Kentucky said that "to protect the identity of all horses and trainers, as well necropsy findings, (the university) will execute a non-disclosure agreement with any participating jurisdiction which requests one. While the goal of this study is to publish findings of the work, no identifying information regarding horses, owners or trainers would be included in the publication."

Researchers hope to obtain about 150 samples in total from all participating jurisdictions within a two-year period. They said that given preliminary data and reports indicating pre-existing conditions are a factor in injury, they expect horses with catastrophic injuries will have "significantly elevated inflammatory markers" compared with non-injured horses.



Backstretch Appreciation Day

Monday, September 10, 1-4pm • Tent Beside Grandstand • All Are Welcome

The MTHA will celebrate the unsung heroes of the racing industry during its annual Backstretch Appreciation Day, which will be held Sept. 10.

The event, scheduled for 1-4 p.m., will be held under a tent on the racetrack apron at Laurel Park, which was the case the last few years.

The MTHA recognizes not only the care and attention backstretch workers provide on a daily basis, but also the unusual hours such jobs require. Family is a very important part of that equation, and the MTHA encourages workers to invite their family members for an afternoon of food, games, and cash giveaways.



MTHA

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September 2018

STANDARD
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MTHA GOLF TOURNAMENT

Monday, September 17, 2018
Compass Pointe Golf Club

Entry Fee \$65 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 Marty Leonard at (203) 733-1367**



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