



The Horsemen's Newsletter



April 2019

Vol. 29 • Number 4

The Maryland Backstretch Community Has Its Benefits

The Maryland racing community takes great pride in its backstretch workforce and, in turn, the MTHA provides meaningful benefits for those who care for our equine athletes every day.

The racing industry considers it a civic responsibility to care for those who make sacrifices to ensure the well-being of the many racehorses that compete at tracks in Maryland. They provide a sometimes-underappreciated skill that requires a true bond with and understanding of the horse.

The MTHA last year began offering courses for newcomers with an interest in becoming grooms as well as classes to help employed grooms hone their skills. The role backstretch workers play in the daily care of horses and their dedication under difficult circumstances is critical to the Maryland racing program.

Backstretch workers are offered free room

and board, if they choose, and have access to other dormitories for a small monthly fee.

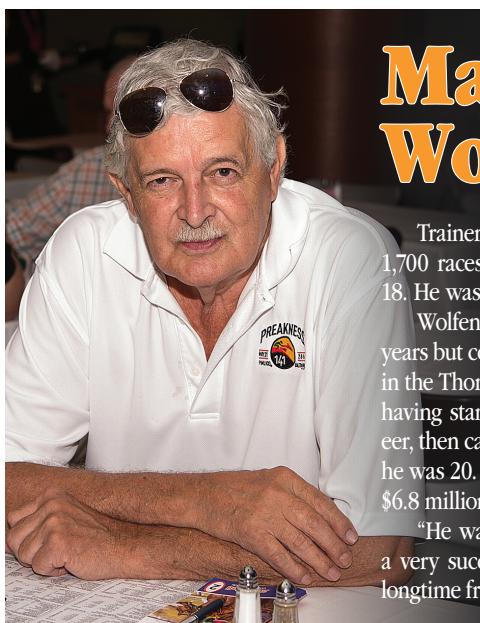
Construction of a three-story barn that will include modern dorms has been approved by the Maryland Jockey Club and should begin construction soon.

Other services and benefits available to backstretch workers are as follows:

- Free access to health care through the Horsemen's Health System, with physicians provided by MedStar Health
- Free transportation for those who need specialized treatment off site
- A \$750,000 a year pension plan fully funded by the industry
- A full recreation program that includes organized sporting events and field trips around the region
- A recreation room that provides games, television and free computer access

- Free van service for transportation to appointments or for shopping
- Free full-time counseling services
- Access to funds to pay for continuing education programs
- Free English as a second language classes
- Free bereavement services
- Social Service assistance
- Various free business services including financial planning, immigration assistance and tax filing.

The MTHA, as part of its commitment to those who work with horses, has staff offices on both the backstretch and in the grandstand office areas at Laurel Park and Pimlico Race Course. The staff willingly makes itself available to backstretch employees, particularly in the case of emergencies outside of regular office hours.



Maryland Mainstay William Wolfendale Dies At Age 74

Trainer William Wolfendale III, who won almost 1,700 races, most of them in Maryland, died March 18. He was 74.

Wolfendale, who was in poor health in recent years but continued to be a regular at Laurel Park, was in the Thoroughbred business for more than 50 years, having started as an owner and trainer at Mountaineer, then called Waterford Park, in West Virginia when he was 20. As a trainer, his runners earned more than \$6.8 million in purses.

"He was a guy that came (to Maryland) and had a very successful career," said trainer Ferris Allen, a longtime friend of Wolfendale. "He was a force around

here for probably 15 years. But the biggest thing about Billy was that he took care of everybody around him. When he came to town he brought folks with him from Waterford. He brought his mom, he brought his brothers and sisters, he brought grooms and hot walkers, and he always made sure that everybody was taken care of. Nobody went hungry, and nobody went thirsty."

Wolfendale, a native of western Pennsylvania, "retired" from training at the end of 1994 and worked as a jockey agent, and then Allen hired him as a groom

— *Continues on Page 3*

Bowie City Council Hears Training Center Plan

The Bowie City Council March 18 indicated it is receptive to plans by the Maryland Jockey Club to rebuild and reopen the dormant training center on the old Bowie Race Course property.

It was the first formal presentation by the MJC before local officials about the facility, which closed in April 2015. The \$40 million project is tied to another \$80 million in planned renovations and reconstruction at Laurel Park, located about 15 miles from the training center.

MJC President Sal Sinatra said the plans, which aren't final, call for use of the entire property—the racetrack is on one side of Race Track Road and most of the barn area is on the other side. They are connected by covered bridge horse path that would be refurbished and utilized.

Sinatra said the one-mile dirt course would be restored and a seven-furlong Tapeta surface installed inside the main track to maximize

training opportunities, and that he recommended the existing barns, which at one time housed about 1,000 horses, be leveled and rebuilt. He also said he'd like to preserve and renovate the "Hacienda," a covered circular, narrow training track that was regularly used in the winter.

The training center also would have amenities such as whirlpools and a medical facility along with modern dormitories.

State lawmakers as of late March were considering a bill that would expand the Racetrack Facility Renewal Account to not only include Bowie but to allow the Maryland Economic Development Corp. to float bonds that would expedite the projects.

RFRA, which allows tracks to make capital improvements if they match the amount withdrawn, is funded by 1% of video lottery terminal revenue at five of Maryland's six casinos. The 80% annual Thoroughbred share is about \$8 million.



We've Got Your Ticket

The MTHA has access to season tickets to the Baltimore Orioles, Major League soccer's DC United and Arena football's Baltimore Brigade that are regularly distributed free of charge by a raffle to horsemen working on the backstretch at Laurel Park and Pimlico

If you are interested in attending any of these events, contact Dan Mangum at 410-802-5798 to enter into a drawing today.



MTHA Backstretch Pension



2019 Sign Up Schedule

Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Backstretch Pension Plan Registration for the year ended 2018 will take place at the following times and locations.

Please bring your MRC Badge and W-2, 1099, or tax return for 2018.

For more information call the MTHA office at (410) 902-6842.

Failure to register during these times will result in the loss of your 2018 benefit.

April 22 through April 26

Laurel Track Kitchen,
9:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

April 29 through May 3

Laurel Track Kitchen,
9:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

May 6 through May 10

Pimlico MTHA Office,
9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Rec Report

Spring Trips

The MTHA is in the process of planning a day trip to Sandy Point State Park and various fishing trips throughout the spring and summer.

Trips will be limited to 10 backstretch workers. Look for details and signup sheets in the kitchen.

Softball

Pickup softball games will start after Preakness as in the past. Stay tuned for further details.

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Published by the

MTHA

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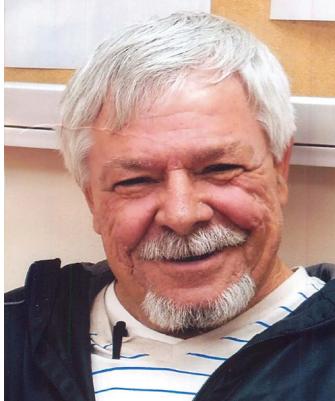


Beloved Horsemen Steve Pettit Remembered At Memorial Service

Steve Pettit, a van driver and former trainer and groom known for his love of horses and willingness to assist members of the backstretch community, was remembered during a March 19 memorial service at Laurel Park.

Pettit, who died March 6, was among the first to offer his services to the Beyond The Wire aftercare program, which launched in May 2017.

"He was a friend of mine, a friend of yours, and a friend of the industry," said Jessica Hammond, who administers aftercare services. "He really cared about the horses and he cared about the people. He was a just a good, fun person who will be sorely missed by our community."



Ron Singh, who provides ministry services at Pimlico Race Course, said Pettit's personality was infectious.

"Most if not all of us have had the pleasure of interacting with him over the past 40 years," Singh said. "As you know, on the racetrack a warm smile isn't always forthcoming, but Steve was different. Our brother wasn't afraid to take on the challenges of life. Let us learn from our brother Steve."

Pettit's wife, Judy, who was on hand for the service hosted by the MTHA, expressed her appreciation.

"Thank you so much," she told the gathering. "This really means a lot."

A Letter To Horsemen From Chris Merz:

On behalf of the racing office I would like to extend my thanks to all of you in putting on a fantastic winter. We embarked on something that we have not done in quite some time in running four days a week. Through the end of February we ran 43 more races than 2018 and our field size was higher than Aqueduct, Santa Anita, Golden Gate Fields and Penn National. With our combined efforts we had a Winter Festival for the ages and were up 62.6% (in handle) over 2018. Just recently on March 16, we put on another great showing of Maryland racing being up 18% on another big stakes day.

As we continue to add more days and push Maryland racing further into the spotlight, I cannot stress enough on how we all must work together in making our program better. As we move forward we must stand together as one and not as many. This is our opportunity to shine and show to the rest of the industry what Maryland racing is all about! Let's keep the positive momentum going to our big day in May!

Thank You, Chris Merz, MJC Racing Secretary

Tax time is here. The MTHA will assist backstretch workers and trainers to prepare and file their state and federal tax returns.

An appointment is required. Stop in the MTHA racetrack office during live racing from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. or call 410-902-6843 to schedule.



MJC is raffling off a TORO mower as part of a fundraiser that will benefit the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation.

Tickets, at \$10 each or three for \$25, are available at the guest services window or racing office at Laurel Park. The drawing will be held May 17, Black-Eyed Susan Stakes Day, at Pimlico Race Course. You need not be present to win.

The mower is on display in the grandstand lobby at Laurel.

→ **Wolfendale, From Page 1**

and van driver and also boarded his horses at Wolfendale's farm near Laurel. He returned to training in 1999 and continued on a limited basis with breaks in 2009, 2010 and 2012.

Wolfendale's 24-year-old son, Scott, has run the barn in recent years.

"He wouldn't say much or wouldn't do much to promote himself," Allen said. "Business had always come to him and family members had always talked him up and got him business and it just flowed to him. When he was on tough times it wasn't like him to go out and hustle business, so he worked for me. He had a little farm and I would put a couple horses out there so he would have something going on. He was such a good guy, he really was."

The MTHA will hold a memorial service for Wolfendale on Monday, April 1, at 11:30 a.m. in Tycoons in the Laurel Park clubhouse. All are invited to attend.

Free Easter Breakfast

For Maryland's Dedicated Backstretch Employees

Easter Sunday

Laurel & Pimlico Kitchens



Arena Football Night

July 13 • Royal Farms Arena • Baltimore Brigade vs. Washington Valor

In a special event for Maryland Horsemen, the MTHA, in conjunction with the Baltimore Brigade and Medstar Sports Medicine, is hosting "Arena Football Night" on Saturday, July 13th at Royal Farms Arena when the Baltimore Brigade battle the Washington Valor.

Maryland horsemen will be offered tickets at a reduced rate for the night, a special reception before the game as well as field

access after the game in which Recreation Director Mary Leonard will coordinate a special flag football game among interested attendees.

Medstar Sports Medicine physicians, in addition to serving the Horsemen's Health System, are also the official health provider of the Brigade and Valor.

Complete details and pricing will be announced soon.



MTHA

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April 2019

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MTHA Golf Tournament Monday, May 13

Spring is right around the corner and that means one thing, the MTHA Spring Golf Tournament is upon us.



Walden Country Club
Crofton, Maryland
Registration: 11 a.m.
Tee Off: Noon

\$65 per golfer. Contact Marty Leonard at (203) 733-1367

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