

## **MHC March 2<sup>nd</sup> Planning Meeting Report**

*by Ross Peddicord*

Dear Group,

Thanks for attending the March 2 MD Horse Council marketing meeting at MD Dept. of Ag. on Wednesday night. We had nearly 40 people attend from all parts of the state and from many facets of the industry.

There was a lot of great input and ideas from many people, including:

Jade Ostner, events coordinator MD Wineries & upcoming event partner

Joe Clancy, publisher, Steeplechase Times at Fair Hill

Phoebe Hayes, Horsemens Relations dir. at MD Jockey Club tracks

Lynda Hill, equine mystery author & blogger

Margaret Addis, Southern MD horse owner & foxhunter

Bill Reightler, TB bloodstock agent & breeder (White Hall)

Valerie D'Ambrosio, Equine Infrared tech & equine marketer

Jerome Aiken, TB Racing Productions website (Balto.)

Stan Salter, MD Horse Radio host

Tara Cullen, Nutramax marketing

Harry Ketts, Prince George's Equine Task Force

Deborah Graham, veterinarian

Linda Gaudet, MTHA bd member

Ursula Ayd, SB owner

Ciara McMurtrie--Balto. Co. equine specialist

Sharon Roberts--Cloverleaf SB racing assoc.

Kim Clark--TB Placement and Rescue LLC

Christine Bricker--MHC board

Dorothy Troutman--MHIB board member

Carol Kaye-Garcia--TB breeder/owner of many SWs

Kitsi Christmas--equine insurance

Lucy Krone--TB trainer and exercise rider

Don Litz--TB breeder and stallion manager

Nancy Lisi--SB trainer & musician

Leslie Diamond--horse therapist & video producer

Malinda Lawrence--attorney

Amy Castillo--marathoner & jockey's wife

plus many others, including Clarissa Coughlin, Christina Church, Sandra Crow, Dale Maddox and Angie Leihy.

All input and ideas are valuable & much appreciated. We will have a more formal sign-in process next time so I get everyone's name down who attended! I just wanted to put down the above partial list of attendees, plus committee chairman Christy Clagett & MHC chair, Stuart Pittman, so you could see the wide range of equine interests, occupations, media people & marketers who we had participate at our first marketing meeting.

While we discussed many items from developing Fantasy Racing Stables to branding the horse industry as a whole, we agreed from this first meeting on the following:

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### **1. Serve as a co-sponsor of DECANter--in six weeks SAT. April 16.**

Decanter is a first-ever wine event sponsored by the Maryland Wineries Association, the MD Jockey Club & the MD Horse Council (in conjunction with the MD Horse Industry Bd.) at PIMLICO RACE COURSE, Sat. 16, 2011 during live racing at the Pimlico spring meet.

The event is in the infield from Noon-6 p.m. The Wineries are anticipating participation of about 10-12 MD wineries--the event is restricted solely to MD wineries--and MWA is expecting a crowd for this first-time event of between 1,000-2,000 people. This is being targeted as an upscale event (no college frat parties or "Running of the Urinals" :). I believe main ticket is \$20 with upgraded tickets available at \$40 or more.

The event will principally be held in a large tent along the infield inner Turf Course rail, location of the Turfside Terrace seating for the Preakness.

Wine and horse vendors would be located in the tent, with outdoor horse exhibitions & music.

Jade Ostner has sent us an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding). This is what we (MD Horse Council) are responsible for:

1. Formally endorse Decanter
2. Bring all Decanter promotional materials, publications and press materials related to MWA for review
3. Marketing and general promotion of the event
4. Secure vendors of equine products
5. Secure a horse exhibition
6. Be available the day of the event to provide on-site management assistance
7. Work collaboratively with MWA to facilitate successful implementation of Decanter

We need to enlist between 8-10 equine vendors. They will be housed in the tent. So if you have names/ideas of likely participants, please send them along!! Don Litz has already suggested bringing a TB mare & foal--need proper fencing (such as a round pen)--and Steuart is available to ride and do a reprise of his popular TB retirement and rehabilitation seminar that he performed with Andrea Seefeldt at Horse Expo. He would do this exhibition in various phases between races during the day--also needs proper fencing (snow fence is acceptable). Steuart will do this in conjunction with other TB retirement and rehab facilities who might also want a presence and to participate.

We will have to call a meeting shortly to work on the details!

### **2. Explore Participation in Preakness Week Tent in Balto. Inner Harbor to promote whole MD horse industry and Horse industry participation on BESD (Black-Eyed Susan Day), day before the Preakness-- in nine weeks May 16-21**

Jerome Aiken suggested the idea to have a tent in the Inner Harbor during Preakness Week to promote the MD horse industry. This is the week when Marylanders' minds turn to horses and when there are several thousand out-of-state visitors coming to MD. The Balto. Office of Promotion & The Arts handles this space. Ross contacted Bob Sicard, BOPA sponsorship manager, and is in process of seeing if this could work plus cost factor, etc. Jerome has offered to help man the tent. MD Jockey Club is

already working on displays in Balto. Visitors Center so the Horse Tent would complement their efforts. Phoebe Hayes filled us in on plans for Ladies Legends Race II and the international participation this year of women jockeys from around the world flying into participate on Black-Eyed Susan Day (May 20). This event is held in conjunction with Susan Komen Breast Cancer awareness. There is also an effort to honor great MD horsewomen from all aspects of the sport on this day, so keep posted!! This week could develop into a showcase for the whole MD horse industry as well as Pimlico & the Preakness. Other ideas are to have a MD Horse Farm Tour during this week as well as a Preakness Breakfast in the same tradition as the famous Kentucky Derby Breakfast.

### **3. Blog & Website Development**

Author Lynda Hill filled us in on how successful her blog has become in promoting her equine mystery book and suggested our committee set up a blog site. She works through Blogger.com. The blogger site also interfaces with Facebook. If we do this, we need someone to take the lead, set it up & keep it current daily. Lynda estimates she spends an hour a day updating & posting on her blog. Volunteers? Margaret Rizzo couldn't attend the meeting, but said she is interested in helping us develop social media initiatives.

There was also a call to enhance and improve website presence for the horse industry. Valerie d'Ambrosio said we need to concentrate first on Search Engine Optimization so that when we Google "Maryland Horse" the MHIB and MHC websites leap out among the top choices--they are now somewhere about 50th on the search list!

Secondly, we need to make sure all horse organizations are linked. Many of the sites already are, but there are exceptions. Jerome has already sent his website link to our email distribution list. There was discussion about developing one central site to make sure people who are interested in getting involved with horses should be able to get all the information they need to become active participants. MHIB is exploring upgrading and improving its website. David Richardson and Caroline Worrall were suggested as excellent equine website developers.

### **4. Overall Industry Branding**

Valerie D'Ambrosio, Harry Ketts and Bill Reightler all brought up the need to brand MD's horse industry to make it more attractive and appealing to the general public and to create more awareness and presence among mainstream Marylanders.

After the 2009 MD Horse Summit several MD horse people convened a marketing committee to come up with a strategic marketing and branding plan for the MD horse industry. The group included Ellie Trueman, Crystal Kimball, Ross, Steuart, Christy Clagett, Rob Burk, Karin DeFrancis & Carrie Everley from MD Jockey Club and Ellen Moyer, former Annapolis mayor and horsewoman. The group met three times. After Rob left MHIB last summer, the group took a hiatus, but is now re-convening. Ellie Trueman is working on developing the group's work and putting it into a strategic marketing plan format. She plans to have it ready to present to this committee at its next meeting.

### **5. Other Upcoming Initiatives**

The group also discussed ways to help promote other forms of racing such as Standardbred and Steeplechase racing and perhaps partner for an event at the Ocean Downs summer meet and at a steeplechase meet like Fair Hill. In addition we want to expand and find ways to market the entire horse industry. Another upcoming opportunity will be participation in the War of 1812 Bicentennial,

which is going to be a major tourism and historic celebration by the State of Maryland on a national and international scale. Horses played a major part in the War of 1812, from a mounted cavalry unit called the Maryland Light Dragoons to using horses as the primary means of transportation for soldiers, citizens & supplies.

I am sure I have left out a lot of ideas and comments so please send along items I missed & that we need to bring up & discuss at our next meeting. Leslie Diamond is working on a horse industry video and had plans to present it last Wednesday night. We ran out of time, so hopefully she will be able to present it at our next meeting.

Stay tuned for announcement from our committee chairman, Christy Clagett, on the date & time of the next meeting. Stan Salter has offered to bring food!! Also send along suggestions for meeting places--you are always welcome to return to MDA.

THX & have a great wknd!

*Ross*

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