



Breeders' Cup World Championships, just to name a few, allows the TAA to connect with current and potential supporters, while raising funds and awareness for accredited aftercare.

As the official charity partners of the 2021 Breeders' Cup World Championships, the TAA and California Retirement Management Account (CARMA) provide owners with ample information on accredited Thoroughbred aftercare and the opportunity to pledge a percentage of their Thoroughbreds' possible Breeders' Cup purse earnings.

Clearly, providing opportunities for aftercare participation on race days benefits the TAA, its 81 accredited organizations, thousands of retired racehorses, and the racing industry as a whole. But, how else can horsemen find opportunities to collaborate with aftercare experts?

Last spring the fifth annual International Forum for the Aftercare of Racehorses conference offered four virtual sessions. Prior to the pandemic the conference took place in locations all over the globe.

Wanderlust heartbreak aside, the transition to a virtual venue was a resounding success. More than 700 attendees from 22 countries, who previously might not have had the means to attend, took the opportunity to gain an understanding of the global perspectives and practices of Thoroughbred aftercare.

Closer to home, New York racing and horsemen have a long history of impressive aftercare development and awareness. TAKE THE LEAD, created and funded by the New York Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association, works directly with TAA-accredited organizations to place retired Thoroughbreds. Rick Schosberg—NYTHA vice president, TAKE THE LEAD president, TAA board member, and New York-based trainer—encompasses the synergy between racing and aftercare

that is fundamental to TTL's success.

"The racing and breeding segments of the industry are crucial to proper aftercare in several ways, certainly funding, as about 75% of the horses' lives are post-racing, and networking is vital to the logistics of a successful aftercare program," Schosberg said. "Having the knowledge that all of your contacts in the crucial areas—veterinary care, transportation, rehabilitation facilities, and, of course, the owners and trainers



TAA operations consultant Stacie Clark-Rogers speaks on aftercare at Equestricon in 2018

of the potential retirees—are easily accessible and readily available can help create a seamless transition from race-track to second career."

Other aftercare efforts—such as the Jockey Club Thoroughbred Incentive Program and the Thoroughbred Makeover—showcase the diversity of off-track Thoroughbreds and their ability to have meaningful second careers after racing. At both the TIP Championships and the Thoroughbred Makeover, the TAA sponsors awards dedicated to OTTBs that were adopted from TAA-accredited organizations.

Although nothing compares with the pride and excitement of watching your horse cross the wire first, many previous connections find it just as rewarding to see their OTTB accomplishing something new.

Anyone who has spent time working with just one Thoroughbred retirement facility would agree that aftercare is a team sport, and without clear communication from every player—the whole team loses. Luckily, the TAA has a star-studded roster of organizations and an open line of communication.

Currently, 81 organizations with facilities spanning 27 states, Puerto Rico, and two Canadian provinces hold TAA accreditation. Rather than be competitive over their commonality, TAA-accredited organizations find strength among their differences. Each month available members meet virtually to share successes, failures, fundraising ideas, to seek advice, and to network the OTTBs in their care. Whenever possible, TAA groups convene at Thoroughbred racing events to promote their overarching mission and collective goals.

"We all care about the survival of racing, and we all care about our wonderful Thoroughbreds," said MidAtlantic Horse Rescue president and TAA Organizations Committee chairwoman Beverly Strauss. "Individual entities can't solve the issue of proper aftercare. We must network across all facets of the industry in order to provide quality aftercare for all Thoroughbreds. Anything less than full industry focus on aftercare is a betrayal to the horses that give us so much."

More than 2,700 miles across the country, CJ Wilson, founder and lead trainer of California-based Win Place Home, shared a similar sentiment.

"Networking is so important among Thoroughbred aftercare charities," Wilson said. "Together, not only can we help more horses, but we can help each other be better at what we do. Participants in the racing and breeding industry need to make aftercare part of the conversation, and we are here to help." B