

Moving outdoors helped make the cabaret fundraiser possible for Win Place Home; from left, Chelsy Gray, Chelsea Field, Scott Bakula



Second Acts

Creative Fundraising

TAA-ACCREDITED ORGANIZATIONS
FOUND WAY FORWARD IN 2021

By ALEXANDRA KOKKA



T.I.P. Championships Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance
High Point Award winners in the Pleasure division
are Chisolm and Sarah E. Coleman

AS ANOTHER YEAR comes to a close, it's only natural to feel compelled to reflect on the past 11 months, a year of innovation in Thoroughbred aftercare following the challenges of 2020 when business practices needed to change and events were canceled.

Despite the turbulent highs and lows, the Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance witnessed an array of opportunities for its accredited organizations and aftercare partners to advance initiatives. That's worth celebrating because it's easy to get bogged down in the weeds of aftercare and lose sight of the victories being achieved. At the same time, it's important to understand that the work of effective, sustainable aftercare is not complete.

In this year of transition, TAA-accredited organizations reported varied results in hosting fundraisers and events. Location played a crucial role in shaping the dynamics of events, with COVID-19 restrictions varying state-to-state and country-to-country.

THIS PAGE TOP: JOSH FINGERHUT PHOTOGRAPHY; BOTTOM: CHRISTINE QUINN PHOTOGRAPHY; OPPOSITE PAGE: YONNE SCHWABE

After a bleak year of shutdowns, Southern California's Win Place Home sought celebration in support of its Thoroughbreds that took the form of an outdoor cabaret, complete with food trucks, wine, great music, and, of course, a few horse selfies.

"We found that people are not willing to donate a ton this year, and we've had a hard time raising money," said Win Place Home founder CJ Wilson. "We had to cancel our annual silent auction and gala and our drag queen bingo event that we normally hold at the beginning of the year. But, we did start a cabaret for the first time outside among the horses. Everyone had a blast, and we hope to do it every year. We didn't have a ton of people wanting to come out in person, but we made it socially distant and safe."

Canada, in particular, held fast to restrictions on in-person gatherings. That made fundraising events a challenge. Thanks to an idea Bev Strauss from MidAtlantic Horse Rescue shared during the monthly TAA Organization Committee meeting, Ontario-based LongRun Thoroughbred Retirement Society had great success hosting an engaging fundraiser.

"The one new fundraiser we held was a virtual graduate horse race leading up to the Queen's Plate," said LongRun chairperson and founding member Vicki Pappas. "It went far better than expected and raised over \$15,000. I believe people have been more than happy to help us out during the pandemic, and we have received a record number of adoption applications."

On top of an already difficult climate for nonprofit fundraising, tragedy struck TAA-accredited Equine Rescue of Aiken in April 2021 when its barn caught fire, resulting in the loss of more than \$100,000 worth of supplies. Thankfully, no lives were lost.

Equine Rescue of Aiken continues to dedicate itself to the community that supported the farm in its hour of need. Six months after the devastating fire, the rescue was used as a clinic site for six counties of South Carolina authorities

to learn about identifying and rescuing at-risk equines.

"The fire has brought on many challenges for us, but we always face challenges in this industry and we just don't back down," said Equine Rescue of Aiken president Jim Rhodes.

"I BELIEVE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN MORE THAN HAPPY TO HELP US OUT DURING THE PANDEMIC..."

—LONGRUN'S VICKI PAPPAS

Despite the unpredictable year that TAA-accredited organizations faced, many found creative solutions to host fundraisers and engage their communities.

But not all 81 TAA-accredited orga-

nizations had the time and manpower to host new events. The Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance's ability to give grants ranging from \$15,000 to upward of \$170,000 is all the more meaningful during a time when aftercare organizations are struggling to maintain usual funding sources.

These TAA contributions are by no means enough, but they are a very good start to sharing the responsibility and putting the Thoroughbreds first.

As protocols were relaxed in some areas, the TAA was thrilled to represent its accredited organizations as the charity partner at major events such as the Pegasus World Cup Day, Preakness Stakes (G1), National Horseplayers Championship, Virginia Derby Day, and the Breeders' Cup World Championships.

"Partnering with the Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance on major race days not only displays a united front that aftercare is not an afterthought but also allows other industry participants the opportunity to collaborate and give back to the Thoroughbreds," said TAA fund-



A group of off-track Thoroughbreds at TAA-accredited LongRun Thoroughbred Retirement Society



Left, while no human or equine lives were lost, a barn fire at TAA-accredited Equine Rescue of Aiken claimed \$100,000 worth of supplies. Right, on E.P. Taylor Stakes day, Woodbine jockeys donated mounts to the TAA; row 1 from left, Kazushi Kimura, Steven Bahen, Gary Boulanger, and Daisuke Fukumoto; row 2, Justin Stein, Rafael Hernandez, Emma-Jayne Wilson, and David Moran; row 3, Yvonne Schwabe, Darren Gomez, Stacie Clark, and Martha Wakely

ing and events manager Emily Scandore.

This year, for the second straight year, TVG presented a \$100,000 check to the TAA following the TVG Breeders' Cup Juvenile presented by the Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance (G1). TAA shared the funds with its California partner CARMA.

Racing events returned with a renewed hunger for effective Thoroughbred aftercare funding solutions. Many racetracks, including Tampa Bay Downs, New York Racing Association tracks, Colonial Downs, and the Kentucky tracks help generate contributions to the TAA throughout their race meets by committing a small per-start fee from horsemen, matched by the tracks.

1/ST Racing's Gulfstream Park and the Maryland Jockey Club each hosted Canter for the Cause events in support of the TAA, among the numerous other funding initiatives the track owner has in place to funnel money to the TAA throughout the year.

"Maryland Jockey Club, The Stronach Group, and 1/ST all believe aftercare is very important to our industry," said MJC vice president of racing development Georganne Hale. "The TAA is a very important organization in the racing industry. We must all support the Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance, so they can make sure our horses are

taken care of after their careers are over. Having events like Canter for the Cause brings funding and awareness to the TAA and the aftercare organizations that they support."

In 2021 industry aftercare partners showcased retired racehorses like never before, highlighting their increasing market value and popularity in a series of events and horse shows.

For the second year in a row, CARMA held CARMathon, a virtual fundraiser hosted by TVG. The virtual Thoroughbred aftercare fundraiser was so successful it received donations for a week following the event, resulting in more than \$140,000.

The Jockey Club Thoroughbred Incentive Program provided the structure for which horse shows across the country can include special awards and classes for Thoroughbreds, concluding with the T.I.P. Championships in October. A staunch supporter, the TAA provided prizes to the highest-placed horse adopted from a TAA-accredited organization for each division.

"The performances by Thoroughbreds at the 2021 championship event demonstrate the wide variety of disciplines in which these horses can excel," said Kristin Werner, senior counsel of The Jockey Club and administrator of T.I.P.

From the Kentucky-based Retired Racehorse Project's Thoroughbred Makeover to the Siegel California Retirement Management Account Foundation-sponsored Thoroughbred Classic Horse Show series in Southern California, the popularity of the Thoroughbred is on the rise.

"Our mission centers around increasing the demand for Thoroughbreds in the equestrian world," said RRP executive director Jen Roytz. "There are so many more opportunities for Thoroughbreds than there have ever been, with incentives and awards from T.I.P., TCA, TAKE2, the Thoroughbred Makeover, and others. The needle is definitely moving."

As a result of the combined efforts from the racing industry and the aftercare community, the TAA will provide grants totaling \$3.7 million to 82 accredited organizations in 2022.

The bigger picture, however, is that the TAA estimates it would cost approximately \$23 million annually just to fund TAA-accredited organizations. So, as we celebrate the victories of 2021 and go into the new year, we take with it lessons learned from the challenges in the hope that more partners will support and join the cause to protect retired racehorses, the sport of horse racing, and our industry. **B**

LEFT: JIM RHODES; RIGHT: YVONNE SCHWABE