

MHC UPDATE

mdhorsecouncil.org

President Erskine Bids Adieu

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the membership of the Maryland Horse Council (MHC) for giving me the opportunity to serve as President during the past four years. I am especially grateful to have worked with the dedicated individuals of the MHC and very proud of what we have accomplished. It has been an incredibly rewarding experience for me. I wish Stuart Pittman all the best as he becomes the new President in July. Stuart has great energy and ideas, and he is deeply committed to the success of the MHC.

Four years ago the Executive Committee completed a strategic plan to chart the course of the MHC. We began immediately to implement elements of the priorities identified. Our efforts have resulted in improvements in the MHC management and communications, increased educational opportunities through the Business Seminar and the Health Seminar, and a very successful BBQ picnic. All of this was done while continuing our most important obligation which is to advocate for the interests of the entire horse industry in Maryland. It is my belief that these initiatives lay the foundation for our future success.

My hope is for the MHC to fully reach its potential as the central voice of Maryland's horse community; to be the place where horse people and non-horse people, legislators and the media go to understand the horse industry. It is the MHC that can explain what we already know; that horses are good for kids, good for health, good for business, and good for land use. In short, horses and the horse industry are good for Maryland.

Evidence of this influence already exists, but more needs to be done. We had a very successful legislative session. We regularly receive requests for information from our members and the general public regarding horse related issues. And our educational seminars have been very successful. We can build upon these positive indicators and expand our influence. Each one of you can help promote membership in the MHC and by extension help secure a better future for horses in Maryland. We need to work together to set and achieve our goals.

In the coming years, a strong MHC will be increasingly necessary to successfully support the interests of the horse industry in Maryland. We can expect greater challenges in areas of land use, trail access and maintenance, health and welfare issues, and economic viability. Our success will directly impact how and where you keep and ride your horses. We need all of our members to remain active in the MHC and to promote membership in the MHC to others. We need your help to expand the roles of the MHC membership. We each have a responsibility to our future, and the Maryland Horse Council gives us all an opportunity to shape that future.

- Michael Erskine, DVM, DABVP (Equine) - President



Council Kicks! *by Stuart Pittman, President-Elect*

There's something about the tough economic times that makes coming together as a community more satisfying than ever. It's been a busy winter for the Horse Council, and the results should make us all proud that we have a way to support one another.

Read on to find out what some of us have been up to. Tell your peers. Any business, farm, and individual horse person who is not a member of the Maryland Horse Council should join. We need not only their dues money (desperately, in fact), but also their voices.

Business Seminar

On Feb. 25 the Maryland Horse Council hosted a Business Seminar at the Prince George's Equestrian Center. Forty equestrian business owners cleared their calendars for a day, paid the registration fee, and opened up their minds. Jane Siegler of Reddemeade Stables, Crystal Kimball of *The Equiery*, Lizzy MacMillan of equestrianprofessional.com and others led the discussions. We all pondered new ways to think about budgeting, planning, and marketing and we shared our ideas on how to apply these concepts to our own business models. Everyone in the room was rooting for each other, eagerly offering advice and acknowledging the mistakes they have made. Isn't that the way the horse industry should be? Don't

you wish you'd busted out of your own little routine and been there? Even the food was good.

Let us know what you think the topics should and speakers should be for next year's seminar. Or, if you'd be interested in joining the committee that organizes these types of events, contact Jane Siegler at jane@reddemeade.

MHC Executive Committee

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Beverly A. Raymond 410-592-8687, raymonba@mda.state.md.us

Dorothy Troutman 301-627-1327

MHC Elected Officers (start July 1, 2009)

President: Stuart Pittman

Vice President: Amy Burk

Secretary: Christine Bricker

Treasurer: Royce Herman

Maryland Horse Council membership is open to all associations, farms, businesses and individuals.

To join, please visit mdhorsecouncil.org, contact secretary@mdhorsecouncil.org or call 410-489-7826 and request a membership form.

The Maryland Horse Council is sponsored by Naden/Lean, LLC, Southern States, Maryland Horse Breeders Association, B&D Builders, Mid Atlantic Farm Credit and The Equiery.



com. Should we do some follow-up sessions? Maybe a support group that meets regularly and shares their experiences?

The Feed Fund

You may remember a couple of Equiery issues ago the two-page spread explaining what the Maryland Horse Industry Board does within the MD Department of Agriculture on behalf of our industry, and how the feed fund that supports it has only raised a third of what was projected. MHC polled its membership on whether an increase in the

per bag feed assessment from 5 cents to 15 cents would be the best way to salvage the MHIB budget. You could have complained about paying \$3 per horse per year when before you had been paying \$1 per horse. You did not complain, a vast majority supported the idea of the increase, and MHC pushed it through the state legislature.

Delegate Virginia Claggett introduced this proposal as HB 973 on behalf of the Horse Council. A group of us went and testified at the March 4 hearing of the House Environmental Matters Committee. We were armed with letters of support from Southern States and Farmers Coop of Frederick. We had support also from the MD Horse Breeders, the MD Horse Industry Board, and the vast majority of the association members of MHC. The hearing was an opportunity not only to remind the delegates how important horses are to the state's economy and its environment, but also to demonstrate the power of horse people when we are united. They were impressed by our willingness to reach into our own pockets to support our own industry, and the bill passed easily through the committee the following week. Subsequently the MHC membership was asked to contact their senators and delegates, and the bill passed with virtually no opposition.

Horses ARE Agriculture

Members of MHC have been struggling in recent years at both the county and state levels with government bureaucrats who question whether what we do with our horses is actually agricultural. The MD Farm Bureau passed a resolution a few years ago clearly stating that what we do is agriculture. Now we wanted the state to insert this idea into the law.

Del Claggett introduced our bill, HB955, alongside the feed fund bill, and we testified in support of it at the same hearing on March 4. Things were not looking good at the hearing. At first, the position of the Department of Agriculture was only partially supportive. They wanted to amend the bill in a way that would have made it useless. Members of the legislative committee asked questions that worried us. Thanks to our close relationship with Rob Burk, director of the Maryland Horse Industry Board, we got a meeting with MDA Deputy Secretary Buddy Hance, who understood our goals and brought MDA over to our side. The bill then passed with no opposition.

A Big Summer

This summer the MHC is bringing in a new slate of officers and a new Administrator. We are thrilled to have secured the services of Nancy Hill. She is best known for her lobbying efforts on behalf of foxchasers, the State Fair, and the horse industry, but she also is an experienced association manager.

In addition to my new position as president, Amy Burk will be vice president, Chris Bricker will be the secretary, and Royce Herman will serve as treasurer.

Our first big challenge is to work with the Maryland Horse Industry Board on the August 6 Horse Forum at the Prince George's Equestrian Center. The last Horse Forum was five years ago and drew the Governor and some 300 horsemen. Coming off of our legislative wins, this forum has the potential to lay the groundwork for big plans to restore Maryland to its historic place in America as Horse Country. We all need to be there. ■

- Maryland Horse Council Membership -

P.O. Box 233, Lisbon, MD 21765

Name: _____

Farm/Business/Association: _____

Address/City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

Benefits: Newsletter • Annual Equiery subscription • Discount to all MHC Annual Seminars (an annual savings of up to \$50!) • E-mail alerts MHC decal • Networking

Membership Type	Annual	Lifetime
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$40	\$400
<input type="checkbox"/> Farm	\$75	\$750
<input type="checkbox"/> Business	\$100	\$1,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Association	\$100	\$1,000

• Do you own horses? yes no or ride horses owned by others? yes no

• What is your biggest concern facing equestrian community?

- Loosing trails to development Lack of equestrian facilities Lack of educational programs
- Lack of representation on television, sports programs, etc. Other

• Reason for joining MHC:

- New to area, want to meet other equestrians Want to attend related seminars
- Want to work on legislative issues affecting the equestrian community Other

Master Card and Visa accepted, credit card application may be faxed to 410-489-7828

Name of cardholder as it appears on the card: _____

Credit card no: _____ Exp. Date: _____

Signature: _____