

# THE POST

FOR HORSE LOVERS IN VIRGINIA



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horseman can teach you**  
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**T**hank you for reading this issue of The Post. Whether you are a horse owner or not, we think you might enjoy this new publication from the Virginia Horse Industry Board and Media General.

Our goal is to focus on the people in the Virginia horse industry — whether it is the veterinarian in Blacksburg or the polo player in Charlottesville. They all have a story about how horses have influenced their lives, their way of living and, in many cases, their livelihoods.

There are discussions of hope, happiness and sometimes challenges — but they are

always focused around the horses they love.

Horses are a passion for many owners whether they are taking them to a show, enjoying the antics of newborn foals or simply hacking through the woods. These horse enthusiasts come in all sizes, shapes and ages and are from nearly every county in Virginia.

Take a minute to talk with some horse people — they are never shy about sharing information on their horses. You have made their day when you ask questions or comment on the beauty of their animals — large or small, young or old, registered or rescued.

Looking for greener pastures other than the area shopping mall? Why not take the time to visit a horse farm, experience an art exhibit highlighting horses in history, watch a demonstration at a local riding facility or attend a show at a county fair. Even go on the Internet and visit some of the hundreds of Web sites that offer insight into all things equine.

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**“ OUR GOAL IS  
TO FOCUS ON THE  
PEOPLE IN THE  
VIRGINIA HORSE  
INDUSTRY ”**

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Horses are a social and, most importantly, a family activity. Get to know the horse people in your area and their contributions to keeping the parks, trails and countryside green and people-friendly. Enjoy this issue of The Post and learn more about Virginia horses — and the people they own!

**Andrea Heid**

Program Manager

Virginia Horse Industry Board

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Photo by Luis Leche

Virginia Horse Industry Board Program Manager Andrea Heid shows off her horse Poquita, a purebred Andalusian mare.

# THE POST

For Horse Lovers in Virginia

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To view The Post online, visit the Virginia Horse Industry Board Web site at [www.vhib.org](http://www.vhib.org).

On the cover: In this Feb. 21 Skip Rowland photograph, Ken Wright is shown on Major, his Tennessee walking horse.

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Doug and his daughter Stephanie at the base of the Grand Tetons in Jackson Hole, Wyo.

Hello Virginia Horse Enthusiasts,

Welcome to our first issue of The Post, Media General's new publication dedicated to Virginia's thriving equine industry. Four times a year we will be focusing on the people who make this industry great and sharing their stories with Media General newspaper readers and others throughout the commonwealth. I hope you enjoy our first issue and encourage you to send your comments or suggestions to [ThePost@mediageneral.com](mailto:ThePost@mediageneral.com).

Doug Forshey  
Publisher

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# HONORING THE PAST



The Buffalo Riders recently held their annual Parade of Horses, an 8-mile ride through historic Portsmouth.

By Bonnie V. Winston

**A**sk Ken Wright about Buffalo Soldiers, black cowboys or Tom Bass and other accomplished black horsemen and he's off – his fact-filled stories galloping like Pearl, the palomino draft horse that's stabled in Smithfield with his other horses.

Wright, a graphic artist by training and fine artist by avocation, is a skillful horseman himself. He is a founder and the current president of Buffalo Riders of Hampton Roads, an African-American riding club started in 1997.

Like Wright, the 30-member group is dedicated to honoring the contributions of the Buffalo Soldiers and black cowboys by keeping alive the culture and heritage. Wright and the Buffalo Riders speak at schools, churches, military bases and community centers about African-American horsemen and their history, including how the post-Civil War Buffalo Soldiers of the 9th and 10th Cavalry units opened pathways to the American West for the railroads and settlement.

Dressing in a uniform of black shirt, jeans, chaps

and Western boots, a gold scarf at their necks and a gold band and crossed sabers adorning their hats, Wright and the Buffalo Riders often take a horse or two to the engagements.

The talk – and the horses – typically are a hit.

"A lot of kids – and adults – don't have a clue about the history," said Wright, who, at 6 feet 5 inches tall, is an impressive figure even when he's not astride Major, his Tennessee walker who stands at 16 hands.

A back injury in high school squelched Wright's desire to play pro basketball, although he still rightfully claims that former four-time NBA All-Star Bob Dandridge played backup to him as students at Richmond's Maggie L. Walker High School in the 1960s.

That same back injury led Wright to choose Tennessee walking horses as the breed he most often rides. Their gait is very smooth, Wright said. "I can talk on a cell phone or drink a glass of water while riding."

Affable with an expansive personality, Wright is very unassuming. What comes across clearly in conversation is his dedication to helping and teaching

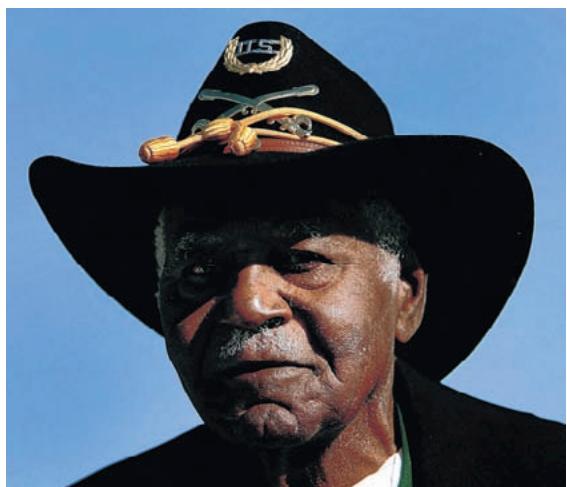
young people by using horses. During the summer, he works with groups of foster children and troubled teens who come to the stable. Their interaction with his horses builds confidence and, he said, in some instances changes their attitudes for the better.

Wright also has passion for the arts. Horses and Buffalo Soldiers are the latest subjects of his paintings.

But he'd never boast that his work hangs in private and corporate collections all over the world, including in the White House. And he'd never tell you, unless you asked, that in 1993 he was appointed by then-Gov. L. Douglas Wilder to a five-year term on the advisory board of the Virginia Commission for the Arts.

"Getting involved with horses has done a lot of things. It has taken me places where I'd never have gone," he said.

As a Buffalo Rider, he has appeared on the "700 Club" and other television shows. He also has ridden with UniverSoul Circus and at the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo.



Chesapeake resident Gidwood W. Sutton, 90, is an actual Buffalo Soldier and an honorary Buffalo Rider.

The group's annual Parade of Horses, an 8-mile ride through historic Portsmouth during Black History Month (February), draws about 100 horses and riders. Hundreds of spectators cheer and wave as the riders pass. And many meet the riders at the parade's end at I.C. Norcom High School, where club members talk about the history of Buffalo Soldiers and black cowboys, chat about their horses and let youngsters climb into the saddle for a short walk.

"Anyone who has a horse that is parade worthy is welcome to ride with us," Wright said, noting that the club's members range in age from 16 to 80.

This year's special guest was Gidwood W. Sutton, 90, of Chesapeake, an actual Buffalo Soldier who served in the 9th Cavalry during World War II. He is an honorary member of the Buffalo Riders. ■

For a story on Ken Wright as an artist see page 6.

The Post welcomes feedback and story ideas. To contact us, e-mail [ThePost@mediageneral.com](mailto:ThePost@mediageneral.com) or call Joan Hughes at (804) 512-4373. Contact Ken Wright by e-mail at [kenwrightart@verizon.net](mailto:kenwrightart@verizon.net) or through d'Art Center at (757) 625-4211.

## WRIGHT AND THE BUFFALO RIDERS SPEAK AT SCHOOLS, CHURCHES, MILITARY BASES AND COMMUNITY CENTERS ABOUT AFRICAN-AMERICAN HORSEMEN AND THEIR HISTORY.

### More about Ken Wright

**Name:** Kenneth E. "Ken" Wright.

**Born:** October 1943, Richmond.

**Current residence:** Western Branch area of Chesapeake.

**Family:** Wife and high school sweetheart, Simonetta; two children, Ken Jr., 40, and Shelly, 35; and four grandchildren, Brandon, 19, Ken III, 8, Christopher, 7, and Chele, 6.

**Pets:** Cat, Sheba, a Persian; two horses, Major, a Tennessee walking horse, and Pearl, a Belgian; a miniature horse, Peanut Butter; and a Shetland pony, Buttercup, and her 6-month-old foal, Storm.

**Education:** Bachelor of Fine Arts in graphics and fine arts from Norfolk State University, 1969.

**Horse highlight:** Playing an overseer on horseback in the 2000 television miniseries, "Sally Hemings: An American Scandal."

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# FROM SADDLE TO STUDIO

## Horseman is also an artist

By Bonnie V. Winston

**A**s easy as he is in the saddle, Ken Wright is at home in a studio. It's hard to say whether art or horses are his first love.

A graphic artist for The Virginian-Pilot newspaper in Norfolk for 39 years before retiring in December 2007, Wright also is accomplished in the fine arts, winning more than 300 awards and honors through the years for his abstract paintings.

Celebrities and notables such as Will Smith, Tatyana Ali, the late Eartha Kitt and Bismarck Myrick, former U.S. ambassador to Lesotho and Liberia, have purchased his work. His paintings also hang in corporate and private collections as far away as Indonesia.

One special piece of Wright's, a visually forlorn but triumphant-feeling "September 11," could be

**IN THE LAST YEAR,  
WRIGHT'S WORK HAS  
BEEN INSPIRED BY HIS  
PASSION FOR HORSES  
AND THE BUFFALO  
RIDERS.**

viewed in the White House until early this year, when former President George W. Bush took it to Texas, reportedly to hang in his planned presidential library in Dallas.

Wright began the piece two days after the devastating terrorist attacks in 2001 to express his feelings and to honor those who died at the World Trade Center. He donated the painting to Bush, although he'd had an early offer of \$4,000 for it.

"The White House called me and they wanted to know the value of it -- how much and so forth. But I said, 'I'd just be honored that the president wants to have it.' And I just gave it to him," Wright said.

"Now that I think about it, I say, 'Dong, dong, dong, dong,'" he said, clunking his head with his fist.

But Wright's karmic good came back to him. After being featured on B. Smith's former syndicated television show and having a two-month exhibition



Ken Wright holds "September 11," a reproduction of the original painting that hung in the White House. Photo courtesy of Ken Wright

of his work in September 2002 at her restaurant at Union Station in Washington, he sold more than 2,000 reproductions of the distinctive piece.

Framed, they sold for \$575; unframed, for \$200, he said, laughing at his good fortune.

In the last year, Wright's work has been inspired by his passion for horses and the Buffalo Riders. The result is an 18-piece series called "As I See the Horse," a sequence of acrylics and reproductions that reflect horses and Buffalo Soldiers in abstract. All but two of the original paintings have been sold. Giclee prints, which are available, also are hugely popular.

When Wright isn't at the stable in Smithfield with

his horses, he can be found at his cheery studio at d'Art Center, a co-op gallery in the old Selden Arcade in downtown Norfolk. Wright, who was on the board of the Tidewater Artists Association when the center initially was proposed, is the only artist from the initial group to still have a studio in the center after nearly 23 years of operation.

Wright also served on the Virginia Commission for the Arts, having been appointed in 1993 by then-Gov. L. Douglas Wilder. For five years as a commission member, and later serving three as a consultant, he helped direct millions of dollars in state grant money to artists and arts activities and events throughout Virginia. ■

# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

**Teaching, seeing equine patients and research are all part of the job for Blacksburg veterinarian**

By Deborah Rider Allen

**S**cott Pleasant's first experience with equine care was a bit of a shock. At age 15 he bought a paint mare named Foxfire for \$150 at his uncle's livestock market. Ten months later he walked out to the field to find that she had given birth.

"I had no clue," said Pleasant, who in his own defense says that other family members who were horse people just thought she was getting fat on green pasture. "All the anxiety and fears and care taken today with pregnant mares and she did just fine without me. It was really surprising." Foxfire had a colt named Sundance.

It was Pleasant's exposure to horses and cattle at his family's farm in Abingdon that influenced his decision to become a large animal veterinarian. "Before we moved there we would come every summer on family vacations and ride horses and play with cows just for fun. When we moved there when I was in high school, it was the first time I ever experienced working around large animals and it exposed me to what it was to be a large animal vet," he said.

Eventually the idea of a career as a vet took hold. "I liked to be outside, I liked working with animals and I liked the idea of never having to dress up and having fun with animals," Pleasant said.

He explains that a large animal vet covers everything that is not small (dogs, cats, small rodents) and predominantly covers horses, cows, sheep and goats. "But I have seen a giraffe and done work on camels, llamas and alpacas. But the main thing I work on is horses."

While Pleasant always imagined himself as a vet in a private practice, it was at the University of Illinois that he realized his love for teaching. "During my residency, teaching was something I had to do and I found I really enjoyed giving back to the students," he said. "I never dreamed of going back to teach but when [Virginia] Tech offered me the job



Photo courtesy of Scott Pleasant

and the chance to go back near my family in Virginia it all worked out."

A typical day for Pleasant is never typical. As Equine Extension Specialist at the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine in Blacksburg, he may teach one day, see equine patients the next, do research the next day or do a bit of all three on one day. "Our schedule is extremely varied and no two days are the same. That is what makes it fun and exciting."

Although his reputation is solid today, Pleasant is sure that early in his career in Virginia Beach, his neighbor seriously

thought he was up to no good. A client had a sheep that developed tetanus and was paralyzed so Pleasant brought it home to care for it. "In most cases of advanced tetanus the survival rate is very low," he said. "Each day, expecting the worst, I would go out back and dig a little on the hole I planned to bury

**“ OUR SCHEDULE IS EXTREMELY VARIED AND NO TWO DAYS ARE THE SAME. THAT IS WHAT MAKES IT FUN AND EXCITING. ”**

it in. Every day as I dug, my neighbor watched me from the window but never said a word. It turned out the sheep lived and I did not need the hole. I never explained anything to my neighbor but I am pretty sure he thought I was doing something strange." ■

The Post welcomes feedback and story ideas. To contact us, e-mail [ThePost@mediageneral.com](mailto:ThePost@mediageneral.com) or call Joan Hughes at (804) 512-4373. To contact Dr. R. Scott Pleasant at the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine call (540) 231-4621.

## Dr. Pleasant's tips for aspiring veterinarians

- Understand what it is going to take to be accepted to vet school and start working on that as early as possible. Set goals semester by semester for your undergraduate grades and stay on track.
- Get good advice from someone who really knows what it takes to get into vet school — usually a vet who has been through it. Most school advisors do not really understand.
- Understand the time and cost associated with vet school. It is a four year commitment after a regular degree and it is more expensive than graduate school.
- Work for, volunteer for, or ride with as many vets as possible to make sure this lifestyle will suit you. This job takes a lot of time commitment.
- The biggest misconception is that vets make a lot of money so you need to love what you do.

### More on Dr. Pleasant

**Family:** wife Kelly; son Nash 19; son Troy 16. **Virginia Horse Industry Board member:** Since mid-2000s. Pleasant is currently vice-chairman of the board.

# WHAT'S HOT IN 2009!

By Pamela Stallsmith

**D**uring this year's show season, English riders, and their horses, will see the return of the classic, timeless look in all disciplines, according to Patricia Nesto of Dover Saddlery, which has Virginia locations in Charlottesville, Chantilly and Lexington. At home, it's still all about fun colors for both the horse and rider, she said.



■ **Rider's International Hunter/Jumper Saddle Pad** is a quality pad at a great price, 100 percent cotton topside and brushed cotton underside. \$19.90.



■ **Essex Coolmax White Show Shirts** are classics that will never go out of style. Dover Saddlery's choices offer a subtle texture and a hidden pastel lining under the placket and on the inside of the collar and cuffs. \$109.90.



■ **R.J. Classics Show Coats** in dark colors are made of 100 percent worsted wool fabric with a coordinating colored lining. \$96.90 to \$276.90.



■ **Designer Collection Plaid Horse Sheet**, a 100 percent cotton sheet trimmed in sturdy poly web, makes a perfect dress sheet for shows or trailering. \$34.90



■ **Browbands** of bling or bright colors are always fun at home, though they're no longer seen very much in the show ring. \$19.90 to \$189.95.



■ **Ariat Challenge Zip Field Boot** is an ideal choice for the avid rider, offering a fully lined premium European calf upper and leg mold construction for an improved custom fit. \$359.90.



■ **Charles Owen GR8 Riding Helmet** is covered with microfiber suede and treated to protect against scuffs. A gently rounded brim flatters a rider's face. \$279.90.



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■ **Hunter Derby Bridle** is a classic design with an elegant look, made with the finest quality English leather. It combines traditional craftsmanship with modern enhancements. \$299.90.

Photos courtesy of Dover Saddlery

Linda Warner, co-owner of Champion Saddlery, with locations in Doswell, Midlothian and Lexington plus a mobile tack trailer, says that "bling is the next thing" in Western show this year as the focus is on eye-catching items. For Western trail horses, better-fitting saddles and pads are among the hot items.



■ Ultra-light show saddles with lots of silver that gleam are popular. Take note that dark-colored saddles date the participant. \$995 to \$3,000, depending on the amount of silver.



■ Chaps with PMS sizing made by Hobby Horse offer elastic inserts that allow a perfect fit, even if the rider gains a few pounds. \$200.



■ Tucker saddles featuring patented gel cushion provide shock-absorbing seat comfort for the rider. \$1,000 to \$1,895.



■ Circle Y flex tree saddles conform to a horse's back for optimum fit on several horses with different wither types. \$1,000 to \$1,675.



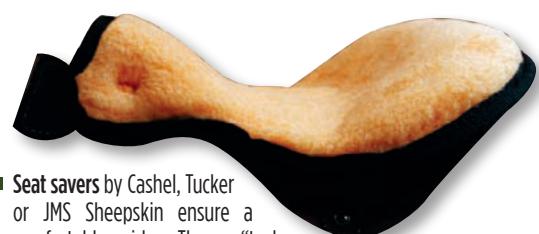
■ Non-slip antibacterial, shock-absorbing Tacky saddle pads by Reinsman and Toklat stop slippage. \$40 to \$120.



■ Coordinating colors of show shirts with saddle blankets for an eye-catching image will impress any judge. \$80 to \$300.



■ Crystals on everything, from show shirts and belts to saddles, bridles and show halters, are the rage. Crystal-studded belts, for instance, can sell for between \$90 and \$300.



■ Seat savers by Cashel, Tucker or JMS Sheepskin ensure a comfortable ride. These "tush cushions" for rider comfort are available in sheepskin, gel and rubber coverings to pad the seats. \$40 to \$80.

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■ Artificial horsetail extensions are the hottest item for Western quarter horses this year. The tails enhance the fullness of the natural tail but be careful – not all are legal with the American Quarter Horse Association. \$159 to \$359.

# NEW TO YOU

**Virginia businesses offer an alternative to full-price horse gear**

By Pamela Stallsmith

Janelle Weast calls dealing in secondhand tack and riding accessories "the ultimate swap meet."

"You know the price is going to be good, and you know it's geared to what you're looking for," said Weast, who with her husband owns Wolf Creek Tack & Feed just outside the town limits of Appomattox along U.S. 460. "Horse people love it."

Secondhand riding gear, whether sold through consignment at a store or directly from a dealer, is a burgeoning business across Virginia that offers horse people a cheaper alternative to new items bearing a full-price tag.

"People like saving money," Weast said. "If you're a first-time horse owner, or if you're starting over from scratch, it can be very expensive" to build up your inventory of tack, accessories, grooming gear and other equine-related items.

For instance, a winter blanket that can cost \$150 new could sell secondhand for \$40 or \$50. Or a riding coat that retails for \$280 or more new could go for \$40 used. Riding boots costing hundreds of dollars can be found for double-digit prices.

Saddles, bridles and riding clothes are among the top-ranking used goods, according to business owners across the state who sell the secondhand merchandise.

Spring is a busy time for secondhand goods, Weast said, as people clean out their homes or tack rooms. Sometimes a saddle that fits one horse doesn't work on another, or people acquire gear they don't use.

When they bring in an item to sell on consignment, customers will set the price, while Weast determines how much they're willing to negotiate. Her cut of the sale can range from 10-15 percent, and sometimes reach 20 percent. Consignment sales account for about 10 percent of Wolf Creek's business.

Middleburg Tack Exchange calls itself "the Middle Atlantic's premier consignment tack shop," offering more than 4,000 square feet of merchandise in the heart of Virginia's horse country. The business specializes in English hunting tack and apparel, both used and new.

"A lot of people didn't believe it would work at first," owner Jo Motion said, but 17 years later she's proven the worth of her idea.



Mary McKann (right), who sells tack from her garage in Varina, chats with a potential customer.

More than 7,300 consigners have sold merchandise through the store, she said. One floor is dedicated to used saddles, boots and blankets.

Motion hasn't noticed whether people are buying or consigning more because of the economic downturn.

**Nobody wants to pay full price. I would rather have good, used tack of high quality than el-cheapo stuff that's brand new.**

"I can't honestly say I've felt a lot of difference either up or down," she said.

Varina resident Mary McKann, who runs The Damn Horsetraders, is philosophical about her secondhand tack business: "It's so wide and varied that you never know what you're going to find."

And she always keeps her eyes out for potential items. "I buy everywhere I go. You never know where you're going to buy stuff."

Besides selling out of her home, McKann operates

a tack trailer at Colonial Downs racetrack in New Kent County. And her other business, Victoria Livestock Market, provides a good source for buying and selling goods.

"Horse people don't mind it being used," she said of the secondhand items. "Nobody wants to pay full price. I would rather have good, used tack of high quality than el-cheapo stuff that's brand new."

McKann, the mother of eight adult children, said she first entered the used tack business about 27 years ago. She traded a saddle that she had bought for \$55 for a chestnut pony named Clancy who "served my children for years and who was shown in 4-H. They did a lot of good things with the pony."

In particular, she said, secondhand riding gear makes sense for fast-growing children. A pair of riding britches can fetch \$200, while a used pair goes for far less.

"Nobody's going to pay full price for something their children will grow out of in three months," McKann said. ■

The Post welcomes feedback and story ideas. To contact us, e-mail [ThePost@mediageneral.com](mailto:ThePost@mediageneral.com) or call Joan Hughes at (804) 512-4373. To contact Wolf Creek Tack & Feed, call (434) 352-9653 or (866) 548-207 or visit [www.wolfcreek tackandfeed.com](http://www.wolfcreek tackandfeed.com). To contact Middleburg Tack Exchange, call (540) 687-6608 or visit [www.middleburgtack.com](http://www.middleburgtack.com). To contact Mary McKann, call (804) 539-6946.

## 14 people attending the fall Equine Extravaganza at the Richmond Raceway Complex were asked: **WHAT'S THE BEST HORSE ADVICE YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED?**

By Joan Hughes



**Shona Ensign**, Chesterfield, with Elbie, 13, a Hanoverian mare.  
It's never the horse's fault. It's yours, so work it out.



**Jessica Mendoza**, Beallsville, Md., with Fridse, 7, a Friesian.  
Don't lose your head in no matter what situation.



**Richard Varneode**, Pasadena, Md.  
If you're thinking about getting into horses, remember the cheapest thing about owning a horse is the horse.



**Cindy Bradford**, Chester.  
No matter how much you think you know, you learn something new every day.



**Ben Pittman**, Montpelier, holding Duke's Risky Business, 8, a Tennessee walker.  
Keep it simple. It's not rocket science. Love 'em but demand their respect.



**Doug Sloan**, Doswell.  
The thing that changed my training the most is probably 18 years ago or so, I went to a John Lyons symposium. He helped me organize what I did so I could show others.



**Marianne Jolley**, Fincastle, with Jeremiah, 10, a Rocky Mountain Horse.  
Take your time and they will do it – whatever it is. Don't rush them.



**Elizabeth Weakley**, Ruther Glen.  
The horse is a mirror of you. And the horse will teach you more about yourself than you will teach the horse.



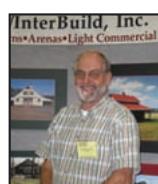
**Betty Duck**, Franklin.  
Before you mount, know where your horse's attitude is.



**Marjory Morden**, Ontario, Canada.  
Pat Parelli's statement that green plus green equals black and blue.



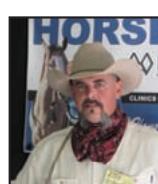
**Rosanne St. Hilaire**, Drakes Branch.  
Prepare to, and then do. The horse wants to be prepared.



**Doug Fuog**, Purcellville.  
If you're doing racehorses, pair up with somebody who knows the bloodlines and has lived with horses.



**Darcy Van Audenhove**, White Stone, with Luminosa, 8, a Peruvian Paso.  
Treat your horse like your best friend.



**Aaron Thornbrugh**, Winslow, Ark.  
Trust your horse. Horses don't lie.

# HER SPIN ON REINING

New Kent County woman's efforts lead to grant to promote the sport

By Joan Hughes

**O**ne ride on a reining horse was all it took to hook Joy Blake.

"I went over to Ashland to the Gill farm [Farrington Quarter Horse Farm, owned by Donnie Gill] and I got on a reining horse that was being trained and I did a spin and I was hooked instantly," Blake said.

That was 11 years ago.

Now, on behalf of the Virginia Reining Horse Association, Blake is trying to hook others.

As the association's liaison officer, Blake applied for and received a \$2,100 grant from the Virginia Horse Industry Board to promote the art and science of reining in Virginia in 2009. This is the third time the group has received such a grant from the Virginia Horse Industry Board.

We want to promote the sport and to demonstrate that there is a lot of precision (the science part) and beauty in the sport, Blake said. Reining has "been described as doing the compulsory patterns in figure skating. And it's really beautiful to watch."

The New Kent County resident also said reining is very difficult and has been called as frustrating and challenging as golf.

Blake said reining is a Western sport that originated from moving cattle. Reining involves riders negotiating a set of patterns or maneuvers that include a sliding stop, spinning, flying lead changes, fast and slow circles and backing up – all on a loose rein. Quarter horses are most commonly used but Arabians, appaloosas and paints are also seen in the sport, according to Blake.

The grant money from the Virginia Horse Industry Board will be used



Photo courtesy of Virginia Reining Horse Association

to host a clinic – "Connecting the Human and Equine Mind" with Texas reining horse trainer Gaetan Gauthier – from March 27-29 at Campbell Springs Farm in Chesterfield County, according to Blake.

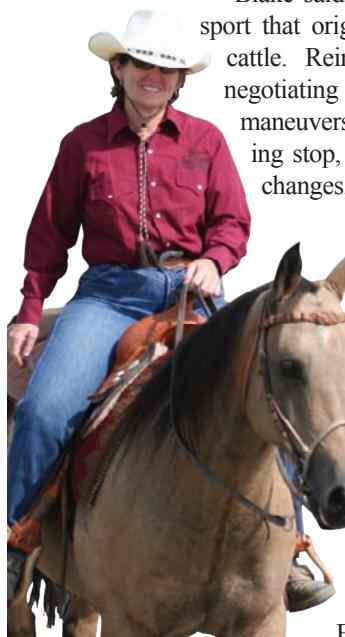
During the clinic, the trainer will probably go over each reining horse maneuver individually and then may go over putting them together effectively in a pattern, according to Blake. In addition, he could go over show presence (how to cover up problems that happen in the show pen), Blake said.

She said this clinic is open to everyone but is more focused on the green rider, rookie rider and limited non-pro, which are three levels of reining horse competition.

Last year's clinic was more focused on children, she said. "We like to expose the younger kids to the sport by letting them ride seasoned horses and getting the feel for the precision and maneuverability of a reining horse," Blake said.

Anyone can audit the late March clinic but there are only 10 rider spots for the whole weekend, Blake said. There is a fee to participate and a fee to audit the clinic.

Comments by clinic participants and an increase in membership in the reining association right after the clinic have been indicative of the success of past clinics, according to Blake. ■



The Post welcomes feedback and story ideas. To contact us, e-mail [ThePost@mediageneral.com](mailto:ThePost@mediageneral.com) or call Joan Hughes at (804) 512-4373. To contact Joy Blake, call (804) 932-4814. For more information on Virginia Horse Industry Board grants visit [www.vhib.org](http://www.vhib.org).

## Virginia Reining Horse Association

The Virginia Reining Horse Association is a branch of the National Reining Horse Association and its purpose is to promote reining at the affiliate level, according to Joy Blake, liaison officer between some of the breed associations and other reining horse affiliates on the East Coast. Most states have an affiliate club like Virginia, some states have two and some have none, she said.

The Virginia group has 80 to 100 members, with equal numbers of men and women, with most between the ages of 30 and 65, Blake said.

For more information on the Virginia Reining Horse Association, visit [www.virginiareininghorse.com](http://www.virginiareininghorse.com).

## More about Joy Blake

**Age:** 48.

**Residence:** Born, and still lives, in New Kent County.

**Family:** husband Erik, a farrier.

**Pets:** dog Ginger, and cats Bo and Silkie.

**Job:** Health, physical education and driver's education teacher at West Point High School and West Point Middle School.

**Horses:** Hannah and Nina, Percherons; Mocha, an appaloosa; Jag, a palomino reining-horse-in-training for Erik; Rusty, a reining-horse-in-training for Joy; Doti, Erik's show reining horse; and Joe, Joy's show reining horse.



On a recent Friday evening, the University of Virginia men's and women's varsity polo clubs played matches against the University of Connecticut at the Virginia Polo Center in Charlottesville. Both Virginia clubs won their matches.

# MEET THE CAPTAINS

By Kyle Fitzgerald

**U**niversity of Virginia's polo clubs are in the midst of their season as part of the United States Polo Association's intercollegiate league. With that in mind, The Post decided to chat with Joey Beh Yen Ling, 19, captain of the men's varsity club, and Cristina Fernandez, 21, captain of the women's varsity club. Beh, a sophomore, is an economics major and is from Ipoh, Malaysia. Fernandez, a senior, is a Spanish and Latin American Studies double major and is from Aiken, S.C.

**Q: How did you get started playing polo and why does it appeal to you?**



**Beh:** The first person who started polo in [my] family was my father, Beh Chun Chuan, followed by my elder brother and sister. Polo just came in handy for me because when I started polo we had all the facilities and the polo is just next to my house. Polo became a family thing.



**Fernandez:** My dad [professional polo player Daniel Fernandez] plays and my mom [Theresa King] plays as well, as a hobby. I went to a boarding school in Baltimore, Garrison Forest, and they have one of the only all-girls teams. Then I got recruited to U.Va.

It's a family tradition. I've always loved horses and am incredibly competitive. I always joke around that in high school, I'm athletic and I'm tall but I'm

not much of a runner so I tried all the sports and when I found polo I was like "ha" I don't have to run, the horses do all the work.

**Q: How does polo figure into your future?**

**Beh:** I treat polo as a hobby, not a professional job.

**Fernandez:** It is probably the most expensive sport, so in that sense I'll always be around it and if I figure out what I'm doing after I graduate hopefully I'll make enough money to play eventually. Probably right afterwards I'll just be a spectator for a while.

**Q: Is there the equivalent of a Super Bowl for college polo? If so, when and where is it and what are the chances of your team participating in it?**

**Fernandez:** Nationals [United States Polo Association National Intercollegiate Championships] is the biggest. We've been to Nationals every year. This year Nationals is going to be at U.Va. [April 6-11 at the Virginia Polo Center]. We're really excited. There are three teams – Cornell, us and UConn [University of Connecticut] – that are normally Top 3 every year.

**Q: What advice do you have for prospective college polo players?**

**Beh:** Appreciate the facilities you have in school because polo is costly.

**Fernandez:** First things first. People really need to focus on school and just make sure [to] get the right school. For polo, just work hard. Like any other sport you need to work hard and be passionate.

**Q: Do you have your own polo ponies? And what qualities do they have that make them**

**good polo ponies?**

**Beh:** Yes, at home I have 21 horses. Mostly the ones that I have are polo mares from Argentina. Bloodline, size of the pony, the organization, and the facilities you have all this contribute to the quality of the horse.

**Bloodline:** If the parents/grandparents have been playing polo for many years and won many Best Playing Pony awards most likely the foals will turn out to be a good pony.

**Size:** This is just a small portion that contributes to a good polo pony.

**Organization:** Grooming is very important in this aspect because to get the most out of a horse, a good groom makes a difference. Have the initiative to check the horse's appetite and behavior frequently.

**Facilities:** Paddocks and a walker is a must.

**Fernandez:** I don't, but my parents both have their own and in terms of U.Va. we have about 60 horses that are donated. Nobody brings their own horses.

Polo ponies are the ultimate athlete because they have to be quick and really fast and, especially in arena polo, they have to be really handy. The best ones have the heart for it. A lot of them love what they're doing – they're just as competitive as we are. ■

The Post welcomes feedback and story ideas. To contact us, e-mail [ThePost@mediageneral.com](mailto:ThePost@mediageneral.com) or call Joan Hughes at (804) 512-4373. For more information, including on polo clubs in Virginia, visit the United States Polo Association Web site at [www.us-polo.org](http://www.us-polo.org). For more about U.Va.'s polo clubs, visit the Virginia Polo Center Web site at [www.vapo.org](http://www.vapo.org).

## The Virginia Horse Center 2009 Schedule of Events

### March

- 6-7 Turnbull Brokerage Horse Sale  
 7 Virginia Winter Tournament  
 7-8 House Mountain Horse Show (Hunter/Jumpers)  
 10 Old-Time Music Jam  
 13-14 UPHA Riding Saddleseat Clinic  
 13-14 Adopt-A-Wild-Horse or Burro Program  
 14 Mounted Map and Orienteering Clinic  
 14-15 Virginia Classic Llama & Alpaca Show  
 19-22 Spring Breakout Quarter Horse Show  
 20-22 Virginia 4-H/FFA Horse Judging & Educational Comp.  
 27-29 Spring Arabian Classic Horse Show "A"  
 27-29 Virginia Extravaganza Paso Fino Horse Show  
 28-29 Virginia Starter Horse Trials

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### April

- 4 Mounted Map and Orienteering Clinic  
 7-12 AQHA East Coast Championship Show  
 7 Old-Time Music Jam  
 17-18 Old Dominion Gaited Horse Association Classic  
 17-18 Old Dominion Futurity Benefit Horse Show  
 18-19 Old Dominion Region Pony Clubs Dressage Rally  
 22-26 Lexington Spring Premiere "AA"  
 29-M3 Lexington Spring Encore "AA"

### May

- 6-9 Bonnie Blue National Horse Show "A"  
 10 Hear the Beat Horse Show (Therapeutic riding fund-raiser)  
 12 Old-Time Music Jam  
 16-17 SBRAA Lee-Jackson Spring Fling (Appaloosas)  
 21-24 Virginia International CCI\*  
 22-24 Virginia Horse Trials  
 29-31 Speed Horse Bonanza (barrel racing)  
 30-31 House Mountain Horse Show (Hunter/Jumpers)  
 30-31 Old Dominion Region Pony Clubs Games Rally

### June

- 5-7 Southern States Showdown  
 6 Eastern Summer Sale  
 7 Hear the Beat Horse Show (Therapeutic riding fund-raiser)  
 8-12 O'Connor Eventing Clinic  
 9 Old-Time Music Jam  
 12-13 Virginia Celebration Walking Horse Show  
 12-14 Mason Dixon Spectacular Paso Fino Show  
 13-14 Old Dominion Region Pony Clubs Show Jumping Rally  
 18-21 Shenandoah Arabian Classic Championships  
 24-27 Mid-Atlantic Morgan Horse Show  
 26-27 Virginia Gaited Jubilee  
 28 Special Olympics

**Schedule as of 01/13/2009**

Dates and/or events are subject to change.  
 Please call 540-464-2950 to confirm show dates.

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# FOLLOW THAT CAR!

By Roy Proctor

**V**irginia's enduring love of horses is proclaiming itself on the nation's highways as never before.

To say nothing of the nation's parking lots.

The parking lot at the fall Equine Extravaganza in Richmond, for example, was peppered with Virginia license plates denoting their drivers' allegiance to horses and fox hunting.

Thank Virginia's special-license-plate program for that.

It all began in 2000 when the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles introduced special plates emblazoned with HORSE ENTHUSIAST in royal blue letters, according to Melanie Stokes, DMV spokesperson. That plate comes complete with a head-and-shoulders depiction of a horse.

At last report, 14,519 horse enthusiasts had taken the state up on its offer for a \$10 annual fee, in addition to the standard vehicle registration fee, Stokes said.

A second special plate, featuring two hounds in hot pursuit of a fox across FOXHUNTING in black letters at the bottom, was introduced in 2004, according

to Stokes. It's attracted 2,029 buyers so far, she said.

In addition to the special plates, Virginians can express their love of horses by sending personalized messages in place of a license plate number for an additional \$10 annually. These may be on any plate.

But it's impossible to know how many personalized plates refer to horses, according to Stokes. A plate honoring Sally, for instance, could refer to the driver's wife or girlfriend as well as his horse.

Virginia's 16,548 horse-oriented special plates represent 1.3 percent of the 1,257,738 special plates on the state's roads. Twenty-two percent of the state's drivers now sport special and personalized plates.

"A lot of our special plates are revenue-sharing, which means they cost \$25 a year and \$10 goes to DMV to run the special plate program and the \$15 goes to whatever organization was designated by the person who created the special plate," Stokes said, adding that the horse enthusiast and fox hunting plates are not revenue-sharing plates, which is why they cost \$10 and not \$25. ■

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**horse sense:** - noun [hawrs sens] *Informal Common sense; practical knowledge.* "With a little horse sense you can find affordable health insurance for you or your company from TPA Benefits."

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