



# The HorseCountry Quarterly

A PUBLICATION OF THE TRYON RIDING & HUNT CLUB

Run for Glory: The 76th Annual Block House Steeplechase — PAGE 8

Jockey Talk: Graham Watters Aims for Another Block House Win — PAGE 6



PHOTO TOD MARKS/NATIONAL STEEPLCHASE ASSOCIATION

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TR&HC PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

See You at the Races!



The Block House Steeplechase, undoubtedly the "crown jewel" of TR&HC's events, has been a Tryon spring tradition for 75 years!

around the course at speeds of up to 35mph...the ground shakes, the turf flies, and the adrenaline rushes!

There is something for everyone at the Block House Races, from the heritage members who have attended the steeplechase for as long as they can remember, to first timers.

Please round up your friends and family and join us on Saturday, April 13th for a day to remember.

Angie Millon

Angie Millon
President, TR&HC

SAVE THE DATE!

2024 TR&HC Dates

- April 12: Block House Pre-Race Party
April 13: 76th Block House Steeplechase
April 19-21: Tryon Horse & Hound Show
June 4-9: 96th Heritage Charity I Horse Show (Spring 6)
June 7: Charity Horse Shows/CSHHF Induction Party
July 2-7: Charity II Horse Show (Summer 4)
September 21-22: Schooling Days
October 19-20: 49th Morris the Horse Trials
November 3: 91st Any & All Dog Show
December 6: Annual Meeting/Holiday Party

Visit tryonridingandhuntclub.org for more info.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

We emerge from winter with a warm welcome to spring and much to celebrate, which we will collectively do from our tailgate spaces at the Tryon Block House Races!

In addition to events, we celebrate friends coming and going, like Molly Oakman and Corinne Rainey who are serving new roles with TR&HC, and Linda Lee Reynolds whose life we remember.

Embrace the equestrian community spirit and join us at these upcoming events that TR&HC has planned for this vibrant spring season!

Michelle Yelton

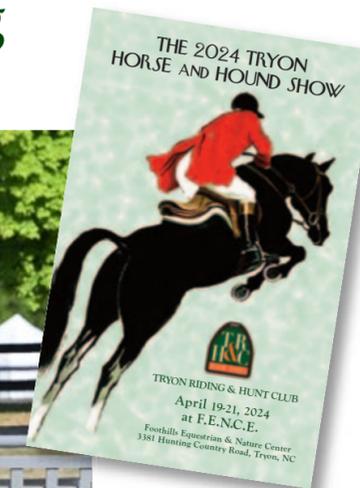
Michelle Yelton
Editorial Director



Nostalgia and Tradition Return this Spring For the TR&HC Horse & Hound Show

The Tryon Riding & Hunt Club's Horse and Hound Show, set to return on April 19-21, 2024, is a cherished event steeped in history and tradition.

While concrete evidence of its origins may be elusive, the unwavering spirit of tradition continues to thrive.



PHOTOS LIZ CROWLEY

Special Thanks

TR&HC would like to thank Susan Petty and Bob and Lisa Bezzig for their generous year-end donations to the TR&HC.

Donations such as these go a long way towards helping us meet our philanthropic goals!



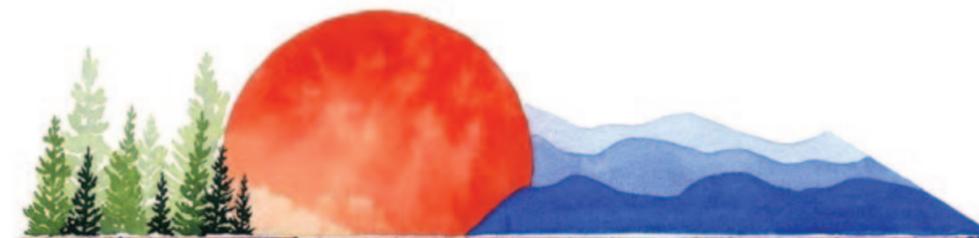
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TR&HC President: Angie Millon
Editorial Director: Michelle Yelton
Art Director: Stephen Bleezarde
Business Liason/Advertising: Leigh Borreson



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YOUNG RIDER: HARPER PEARSON

by Sarah Madden

# Jumping into Riding!

Harper Pearson (Spartanburg, S.C.) is arguably a lot like most eight-year-olds — her favorite color is purple, she wants to be a veterinarian when she grows up, and she loves shopping. Like many horse girls, the first time she sat on a horse was through a family member, in this case, her cousin's horse, Sweetie. And, like with many horse girls, once discovered, the love of the horse didn't fade after that first pony ride.

Last spring, Pearson started taking lessons at Hidden Valley Farm in Inman, S.C., under the teaching of trainer Amelia Nowicki. Her lesson mount is actually Nowicki's first pony, a lovable 22-year-old quarter horse pony, My Beary Best Friend. Pearson and "Bear," as he's affectionately known around the barn, have quickly become fast friends, and Pearson will begin half-leasing Bear this show season.

"He doesn't try to do anything bad," Pearson said of her easygoing and patient pony. "My favorite thing to do in a lesson is jumping, and I like cantering better than trotting." Pearson loves jumping so much that at the moment, she thinks it might make a good career, even more than being a veterinarian.

Like most ponies who are worth their weight in gold, Bear has the patience of a saint, and is ridden by a wide variety of lesson riders. He's teaching Pearson to keep her eyes up over cross-rails fences

and how to find a straight approach. When he's not toting around his favorite lesson kid, he's begging for cookies by twisting his head and serving up his best "treat face."

Pearson is not only the youngest rider in the barn, but she keeps up with riders of all ages with her hilarious one-liners and her outgoing demeanor. "It's super fun riding with the other kids here," she said, "because you can go and ride with other ponies, with people who are about your level. We like to ride in the field together and do 'around the world.'" When asked what rider she looks up to in the barn, she was quick to clamp her mouth shut and retorted, "Now that I cannot answer!"

Her favorite horse-related show is "Heartland," Pearson shared. She loves it "because of the horses, and there is sooo much drama. All the drama is so interesting!"

Bear and Pearson have shown together once already, at the Harmon Classics Winter Series



Pearson and 22-year-old quarter horse pony, "Bear" as he's affectionately known around the barn, have become fast friends.

hosted in the Indoor Complex at Tryon International. The duo made their debut in the Walk Trot division, to great results. Up next, at the 2024 Tryon Welcome Series, they'll aim for Walk Trot Poles and maybe even some Walk Trot Canter classes in the show ring, while continuing to practice jumping cross-rails at home.

"My favorite part of the horse show we did was all the events there were, and all the things that you could do, like the gingerbread contest," Pearson gushed. "I can't wait for Saturday Night Lights to come back to TIEC! I go all the time; I love going to the chocolate shop there, and watching the horses jump."

An avid shopper, Pearson is always on the lookout for something special to bring to the barn for Bear. "His favorite treats," — besides all of them, of course — "are Likits," Pearson said. Given an unlimited budget, she would head straight to The Farm House. "Is shopping my favorite thing about being a horse girl? Yes!"

# Show Stewards: Watchful Unsung Heroes

by Leigh Borreson

Have you ever thought about why a horse show runs so smoothly? One key reason is, quietly behind the scenes, a small bevy of professionals, known as stewards, are dedicated to the smooth operation and fairness of equestrian competitions.

Stewards focus on animal welfare, maintaining a level playing field for competitors, overseeing warm-up areas, barns, schooling zones, and equipment compliance. Throughout the day, they check on horses' well-being, ensuring compliance with regulations, and handling any conflicts or protests that may arise. These licensed officials undergo a thorough vetting process that includes interpreting and enforcing the rules of the organizing body.

Eric Straus — a Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI), Licensed Level 3 Chief Steward in Show Jumping and Reining and Tryon Riding & Hunt Club Board member — has a long list of credentials that include officiating at the 1987 Pan American Games, 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games, 2002, 2006 and 2010 FEI World Equestrian Games™, 2015 World Cup Finals, North American Junior Young Riders Championships 1997-2016, 2016 Rio Olympic Games, and 2017 World Cup Finals. He first met show stewards when he was competing as a boy in Texas. "I got to know some of them and knew what they did was important," Straus said. "Their primary focus is the welfare of the horse."

Rhonda Tockmakis from McClellanville, S.C. agreed. She has been a licensed steward in South

Carolina for over 10 years, which also allows her the ability to steward in the bordering states of North Carolina and Georgia. "I'm a rules person — and don't think it is fair if one person wins by breaking the rules. We have a lot of rule breakers, so you just have to be there and watch everything."

Straus reinforced the value of having rules and minimizing infractions to level the playing field for all competitors. "People need to understand that the stewards aren't against anyone, we're just for the people that follow the rules. Exhibitors need to know the rules. 'Would you go into the ring and not know the course?'" Straus asked. In essence, stewards help prevent violations and intervene if necessary.

The steward position includes many different tasks. "We are an extension of the show operations team," Tockmakis said. Some say the judges are responsible for the show ring, and the stewards are responsible for everything else! "We check the barns, the lunging areas, and the schooling & areas," Straus explained.

Straus added, "Organizers will seek you out if you do a good job. I remember a show manager telling me that he always brings in the best stewards he



Rhonda Tockmakis



Eric Straus

can get because if there is a problem, a good steward can really protect him and resolve things."

Straus said that stewards need to be comfortable dealing with conflicts and confronting abusers, but diplomacy is also called for. Tockmakis suggests that it is also important to be good with people. "I spend a lot of time at the barns and rings talking to competitors, and making sure everything is running smoothly."

Both Straus' and Tockmakis' equestrian backgrounds help. "Knowing horses, their behavior, ways of going and jumping is key," said Straus. "It can help you anticipate and recognize where an issue might be developing."

Tockmakis and Straus stressed that stewarding is a valuable and rewarding job, and there is a growing need for more stewards. The role is a great way to stay connected to the equestrian game, especially for anyone who is no longer competing. "I had stopped showing and really missed seeing the horses go around," Tockmakis said. "I love it! I still get to experience the camaraderie of the show, watch horses jumping, and get paid for it!" she added.

Getting certified is very similar to getting a judge's license. There are two levels, C1 and C2. After the application process, there are courses and internships with experienced stewards.

Anyone interested in getting a steward license can learn more at [www.USEF.org](http://www.USEF.org).

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JOCKEY TALK

by Michelle Yelton

# Meet 2023 Block House Winner Graham Watters

Tryon horse country has a rich racing heritage thanks to Carter P. Brown who started the Block House steeplechase in 1947. But rarely do we witness the personal tales of jockeys who grace its track.

Hailing from the birthplace of the steeplechase, Irish native Graham Watters is a fixture in the world of professional steeplechase racing. He has made several appearances locally and was a winner at last year's Tryon Block House Races.

"I have been coming to Tryon since the new track opened six years ago and what I love about this track is that the footing is always beautiful. They have a fantastic irrigation system there which guarantees safe ground," said Watters.

His journey into the world of horse racing began early. This seasoned jockey discovered his love for horses at age nine, began racing ponies at 13, earned his first amateur license at 16, and turned professional at 21.

"I got into horses in general like any other kid — for the love of horses, but to be able to combine that with a love of competition and a small bit of danger makes it the perfect sport for me. And then the fact I can make a career from it makes it even better," Watters shared.

Now a resident of Sparks, M.D., Watters rides 100-120 races a year, but rode 250-300 races a year when he lived in Ireland. Preparation for races like the Tryon Block House is rigorous and methodical.

"Training for the Tryon Block House Races fits into the same regime as the other race meets we do. We try to get the horses to a certain level of fitness for the season and then try to target them for a specific race meet depending

Jockey Graham Watters (right) is a past winner at the Tryon Block House Races.



PHOTO TOD MARKS

Below, Watters at the 2021 Cannon H. Memorial Race trophy presentation.



PHOTO TIEC

on ability or likes/dislikes. There's a lot of truth in the saying 'horses for courses,'" Watters explained.

Off-season training is also important, which for Watters is from November through March.

"In the off-season, myself and my wife have a barn of horses and we like to go fox hunting here in Maryland and try to do some show jumping. It's a great way to do some cross-training and stay sharp. You can always learn something from a different discipline," he added.

Watters is looking forward to coming back to Tryon, not just for the races, but to also immerse himself in the local horse culture. "I love getting down a day or two before and exploring the beautiful horse country and touring around the equestrian center."

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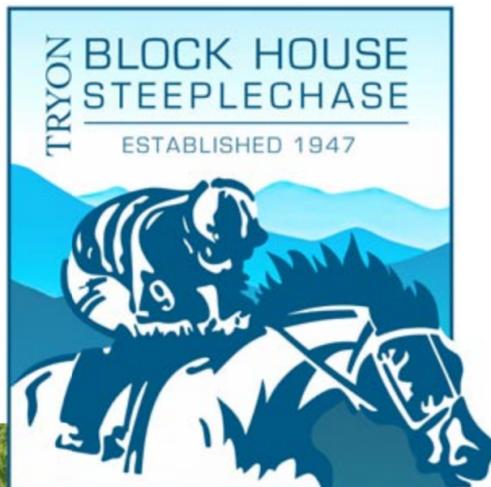
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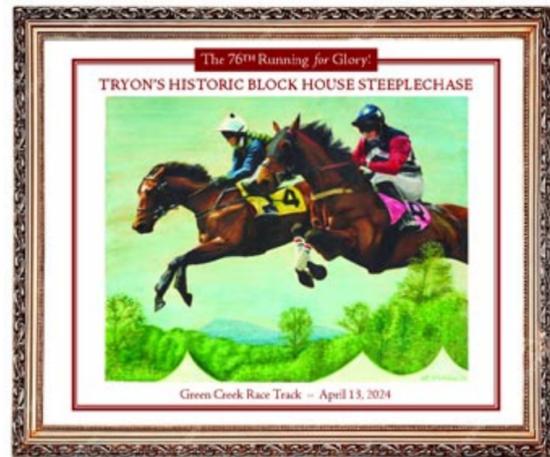
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## 2024 Steeplechase Art Contest *And the Winner is — Anna Ruby Whitmire*



The 2024 winners first place (left), second place (middle) and third place (right).

In a remarkable display of talent and consistency, Anna Ruby Whitmire, a distinguished student from Converse University, has once again clinched first place in this year's steeplechase art contest.

Whitmire was thrilled to hear of her repeat win that earned her \$1,000. Whitmire is no stranger to this contest's winner's circle — she won the first year, finished second in 2023's contest, and has now won again this year.

Whitmire drew inspiration for the artwork from her past experiences at the steeplechase. "When sketching ideas for this piece, I thought back to the excitement and inspiration I experienced when attending the Block House Steeplechase in previous years, and how wonderful it was to immerse myself in its rich culture and traditions."

In addition to her own experiences at the steeplechase, Whitmire wanted her art to reflect the captivating atmosphere of the event.

"My goal for this drawing was to celebrate the many sources of inspiration that make the steeplechase so special, from the beauty and power of the horses to the Blue Ridge Mountain skyline and everywhere in between."

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# The Block House Steeplechase – A Glimpse Into Our Past

Embark on a visual journey through the rich history of the Block House Races, a legacy event that has captivated audiences and challenged riders for nearly 100 years!



Above, riders dash over the rustic hedges at the 1987 Block House Races.



Above, some hats are hard to top! From left to right: Ed Rudisill — 3<sup>rd</sup> Best of Show, Mary Melton – 1<sup>st</sup> Most Unusual, Ann Deviney — 1<sup>st</sup> Best of Show, Bill Randall – Beefeater, Michelle Fields – 2<sup>nd</sup> Best of Show, and Peter Diller – Beefeater



Right, Jarrett Schmid with For Art's Sake and trainer Bill Braemer in 1968.



Above, fans enjoying the 1987 Block House.



Right, a 1987 Trophy presentation. Dr. John Bradshaw congratulates Mrs. James L. Gassaway of Betton, S.C. on winning a door prize.



Right, a 1987 Trophy presentation.

## Excerpt from a 1963 paper: "The Block House" by Eugene Warner

"The story of the Block House except as a stopping place for drivers in the years between the Civil War and the present is pretty much lost until 1905 when George Bridgeman, then aged one, and today the manager of the estate, was brought to the old place by his father and mother to live. 'I remember hearing [my daddy] say, "in a way I bought the Block House and in a way I stole it.' He says, 'I was working as a stone mason for 40 cents a day, then I got up to a dollar, then to a dollar and a quarter and when I got that high, I put a quarter in my pocket every day.' Somebody says to him, 'Why don't you buy the Block House?' and he says, 'I might just do that.' Daddy had the money all right from them quarters, so he bought it. He farmed all the bottom land. After he died, and we'd moved away, nobody bothered to keep it up, it just went to pieces."



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**NONPROFIT SPOTLIGHT: WHISPERING FEATHER FARM**

by Margie Askins



**The Way of the Equine Warrior – Fighting for Better Understanding**

Whispering Feather Farm is a beautiful 50-acre farm nestled in Mill Spring, N.C., and home to 40 animals — 16 of them horses. This sanctuary serves as a hub for The Way of the Equine Warrior, a non-profit organization that provides a safe haven for abused equines in need. Founded, co-owned and operated by one of the country's top horse whisperers, Anna Twinney, the organization gives these horses a place to find peace, understanding and language shared between horse and human.

Twinney's incredible career — that began in the U.K.'s mounted police and evolved to a globally-celebrated and sought-after horse communicator — was featured in our Spring 2023 issue, but in this issue the spotlight is on the work she is doing through her nonprofit organization to improve the lives of literally thousands of individuals and horses worldwide. "I was meant to give a voice to the voiceless, to seek justice and speak their language," Twinney explained. This conviction to fight for the underdog and her expertise as a horse whisperer are the magic behind all the beautiful healing they accomplish at Whispering Feather Farm.

As the main base for The Way of the Equine Warrior, attendees come to Whispering Feather Farm to learn the Equine Warrior's methodologies about the language of the horse and the unique relationship that can exist between horses and humans when we understand their language and partner with them by connection. Classes range from one to 24 days, and Twinney encourages anyone who genuinely wishes to learn how to bridge the gap between horse and human to participate. The workshops vary in instruction focus from liberty clinics to behavioral modification, colt starting, mustang gentling, trainer certification courses, energy healing for horses, animal communication and life coaching. Twinney added, "The workshops all have one thing in common — communication and connection, and with it the true language of the horse." Ideal participants are those who are looking for a heart-centered relationship with their horse, rather than one of dominance.

She also welcomes the wounded — horse and human alike — who seek communication on a deeper level of understanding and respect. The methodologies taught by The Way of the Equine Warrior train individuals to silently communicate with the horse through body language and connection. "One must speak softly for their language is silent," said Twinney, adding that the goal to gain wisdom and trust. "People come to Whispering Feather Farm for horse training, but leave with their lives changed, with new insights about themselves and their place in the world. See them and they will show you exactly who you are."

*Ideal participants are those who are looking for a heart-centered relationship with their horse rather than one of dominance.*

Learn more about The Way of the Equine Warrior and their programs at [www.equinewarrior.org](http://www.equinewarrior.org). Volunteers are always needed, and they are always looking for more lives to change — and ways to bridge communication gaps — one horse and one human at a time.



Anna Twinney alongside her equine therapy team.

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**COLLEGIATE EQUESTRIAN**

by Misty Yelton

**How to Get Your 'Horse Show Fix' in College**

For many students heading off to college, the thought of having to leave their horse and the show scene behind is discouraging, however, thanks to collegiate riding programs, they don't have to. Colleges across the country offer competitive riding teams for men and women in both English and Western disciplines. Two main associations govern collegiate equestrian — National Collegiate Equestrian Association (NCEA) and Intercollegiate Horse Shows Association (IHSA). While both organizations are for collegiate equestrians, there are some differences to consider when deciding which school and program are the best fit for you or your rising collegiate rider.

With over 400 teams represented across the United States, the IHSA invites all skill levels in Hunter and Western disciplines for team or individual competition, with men and women competing together. Costs are reduced as horses are provided by host colleges and assigned randomly. Also, no personal tack or schooling is allowed, ensuring fair testing of skills across divisions from Beginner to Open. Classes seen at an IHSA competition include Hunt Seat Equitation, Hunt Seat Equitation Over Fences, Western Horsemanship, Reining and the recently added Ranch Riding.

On the other hand, the NCEA represents a more structured and elite level of collegiate equestrian competition, operating as a varsity sport within the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) framework, with member institutions offering scholarships and recruiting riders to compete at the highest level. Unlike the IHSA, the NCEA follows a team based format where five riders from each school compete on the same horse

head-to-head. They have four minutes to warm up on their horse before competing. Classes held at an NCEA meet include Hunt Seat Equitation, Hunter Seat Equitation Over Fences, Western Horsemanship, and Reining.



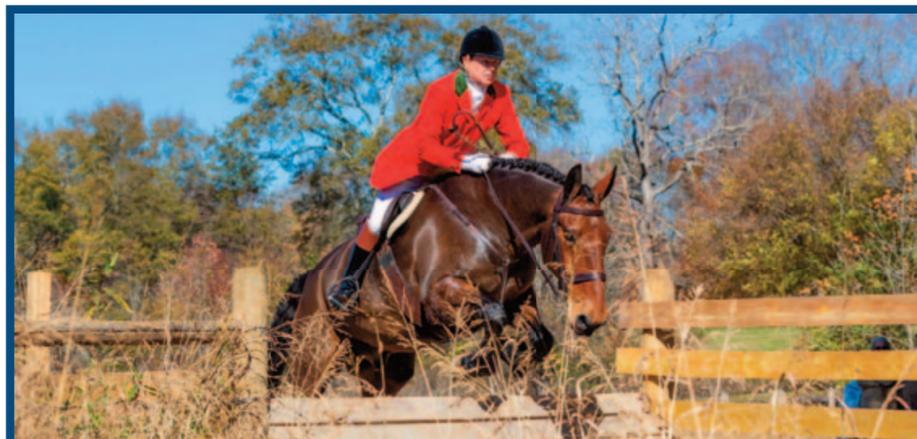
Stevie Brown (left) and Carolina Hall (right) are enjoying collegiate riding.

This fall, Caroline Hall is planning to ride for the Intermont Equestrian team at Emory and Henry College that boasts five ISHA National Championships, the most recent one coming in 2022. Hall, who completed an internship with



Recently, two local students from Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy have signed with collegiate programs. From the Class of 2022, Stevie Brown signed to ride with the University of Tennessee (UTM) Martin's Division 1 NCEA program. At UTM, Brown competes on the Reining team. "Riding on a collegiate team is much different from showing; it's a team sport not an individual sport. Through the team, I have grown as a person and as a horsewoman. I have been provided with so many opportunities as a student-athlete that I would not have had otherwise," Brown stated.

Tryon International Equestrian Center (TIEC) this summer in their horse show office, said, "I always knew that I did not want my riding career to end after high school but was not sure how to make that happen. When Emory and Henry offered me a spot on their IHSA team, it solidified my way to continue my equestrian career. Combine that with their incredible Equine Studies program, I immediately knew where I wanted to go and what I wanted to do." To witness collegiate equestrian competition at the highest level, visit TIEC this May 3-5 to watch the IHSA National Championships.



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2024 SHOW HUNTER HALL OF FAME

by Elese Nicholson

# Meet the Equine Inductees: Brunello & Numbers

Brunello's reputation precedes him. The 16.2-hand gorgeous chestnut Hanoverian gelding has an extensive list of accolades, so many that this beloved horse was added to the Breyer toy family in 2015. Foaled in 1998 in Belgium, Brunello's career began as a Grand Prix Jumper but he proved to be too slow. Exported to the U.S. in 2007, Brunello was purchased by Janet Peterson (Landrum, S.C.) and Liza Boyd (Camden, S.C.) and made his home at Finally Farm in Camden, S.C. Together, Brunello and Boyd quickly became one of the most competitive pairs on the Hunter circuit.



Dynamic duo Liza Boyd and Brunello.



Brunello was designated an official member of the Breyer collection in 2015.

Between 2007 and 2015 Brunello was unbeatable. This horse was awarded numerous championships at the Capital Challenge Horse Show, the Pennsylvania National Horse Show, the Washington National Horse Show, and the National Horse Show. Brunello won three International Derby Hunter Finals and was awarded USEF National Horse of the Year in 2013 and 2015. With

this impressive show record, it was no surprise when Brunello was inducted into the National Hunter Hall of Fame in 2023.

In an article featured in *The Chronicle of The Horse* (COTH), Jack Towell stated, "I don't know how it would've ended up with another rider other than Liza. I just know it was a match made in heaven. And luckily we never had to find out."

Brunello set records during his Hunter career. A total of 17,015.5 points in the High-Performance Hunters, 33,901 points in the Regular Working Hunters, and 3,350 points in the A/O hunters. When it came to Hunter Derbies, Brunello was the third-highest money winner in the USHJA

Lifetime Money Won Standings. Brunello competed in 40 international derbies, winning 22 of them. When Brunello retired in 2017, it wasn't because he was broken or didn't want to continue competing. Boyd told COTH that she listened to her horse and decided: "Let's end on that; I have shown these people." Brunello retired at Finally Farm and is still enjoying his life with his beloved team and family.



Numbers, with rider Peggy Wohlford.

Numbers was a 15.3-hand off-track Thoroughbred (OTTB) with a big heart and endless talent. Joan Boyce was the first to see potential in this horse and together they qualified and showed at the National Horse Show (NHS), going on to win the Working Hunter Stake in 1976. Numbers and Boyce graced the cover of the March 25, 1977 edition of the *Chronicle of the Horse*, with the headline, "Numbers and Joan Boyce at Upper-ville." In 1978, Pat Warren purchased Numbers from Boyce where he continued to thrive in the Working Hunters, again qualifying for the NHS.

In 1979, Numbers found his forever home with Peggy Wohlford where he continued his winning ways in both the A/O and Regular Working Hunter divisions, winning tricolors up and down the West Coast. He was the Pacific Coast Hunter Jumper Association A/O Champion in 1980. "This little thoroughbred horse was my horse in a million," remembered Wohlford. Winning the adult amateur championship at Spruce Pine is Wohlford's favorite memory of her teammate. They loved to show in the open grass field. "He was fantastic," Wohlford said. "This little horse with not a huge stride, just galloping around an open field like it was nothing."

At 17, Numbers concluded his career with a retirement ceremony at the Menlo Circus Club Horse Show. He lived with Wohlford at her farm in Southern Pines until he passed away at the age of 33. Wohlford always remembers how he looked resting under the oak trees at her farm: "I consider myself lucky and privileged to own him, show him and get to retire him. I will never forget him!"

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# Safely Restrict Grazing this Spring



By Polk County Equine, Livestock & Forage Agent, Cassie LeMaster



Score your horse's body weight to determine if you need to restrict grazing.

Well-maintained pastures can be an excellent resource, reducing feed and hay costs and providing much-needed free exercise for your horse(s). Many young horses, those that are lean and fit, and many without any previous laminitis episodes can graze safely in the spring without issue, but for those that are overweight or "easy keepers," care must be taken to restrict grazing time. Restricted pasture access can be a management tool to restrict calories or non-structural carbohydrates consumed at pastures, but knowing how to do it correctly is the key to success.

Many horse owners are aware of non-structural carbohydrates (NSC) in grasses, hay and feed, and the health implications if they are consumed in excess. Horse owners who battle EMS, obesity or laminitic episodes in their horses are all too familiar with the dangers that spring grazing can bring. When trying to restrict horses from pasture, which tends to be "lusher" in this season more so than others, there are some things to consider: Graze in the early morning hours. Pasture NSC builds throughout the day as the plant carries out photosynthesis; therefore, early morning hours are when pasture sugar concentration is the lowest. Right before sunrise is when daily NSC concentrations are lowest.

Don't turn a hungry horse out in a pasture. When attempting to reduce the amount of pasture forage consumed, be sure not to turn a horse out with an empty stomach. Horses that have been on drylots or in stalls for hours will consume a greater amount of pasture forage at a faster rate, potentially overflowing the digestive system or causing spikes in the blood glucose and insulin levels — both modes to which laminitis can take place. Search for lower quality hay that is more mature/ less leafy (but of course not moldy or full of weeds) to feed when horses are not at pasture. Horses will also increase their intake rate when their schedule includes fewer hours at pasture. Although a horse will normally spend about 16-17 hours consuming forage throughout the day, they can speed up their consumption rate to eat a full day's worth in as little as 7 hours once they learn their new schedule.

Utilize a grazing muzzle. The benefits of a grazing muzzle allow the owner to restrict a horse's forage consumption while they remain with herd mates in the pasture and have access to free exercise (vs. being contained in a stall). This can involve quite a bit of trial and error to find the right fit that works for your horse, and there will always be key individuals who have a knack for removing and losing them in the field. We had a horse that learned to lift his head up and down like a jackhammer, pressing the hole in the muzzle down on a clump of fescue to push new leaf blades through each time. His consumption was never slowed by a muzzle. Despite this, muzzles have been very effective management tools for many horses.

Horse owners should also monitor body condition

and cresty neck score. If you need help learning to score body condition, ask your veterinarian or extension agent. Using a tape to measure girth and neck circumference can be more objective, allowing you to record results and monitor on a monthly basis. Overweight horses are less sensitive to insulin, which requires their body to produce more each time they consume a sugar-containing meal, potentially leading to conditions such as laminitis. Tracking changes in weight regularly can help you stay on top of important management decisions before a problem arises.

As always, if you need help designing a grazing plan that is best for your horse, contact Cassie at 828-894-8218 or [cassie\\_lemaster@ncsu.edu](mailto:cassie_lemaster@ncsu.edu).

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LOCAL LEGEND: DR. BIBI FREER

by Margie Askins

# A Lifelong Equestrian Journey



Dr. Bibi Freer's journey into the equestrian world began with her first pony ride at her cousin's birthday party, igniting a lifelong passion for riding. She asked her

parents for riding lessons and spent childhood afternoons at a stable where she later boarded her horses, Herman and Cloud Nine. When people would ask her parents, "Where's Bibi?" they would reply, "She's on Cloud Nine," whom she had through college until he was 30.

This youthful passion sparked a career that spanned decades. Now a beloved and retired veterinarian, Dr. Freer worked for the Forest Service before switching careers to riding horses. Luck was in her favor when a friend found her a job riding for Hall of Fame trainer Charlie Whittingham in California, but the mountains called her back home after two years. At a crossroads in her career, she contemplated a shift into veterinary medicine at the age of 30, but worried she was too old, and went back to Whittingham for advice. Whittingham's reply was simple — would she rather be a 30-year-old rider or a veterinarian — and Bibi knew her answer.



Bibi and Ron Freer, then and now.

Dr. Freer earned her Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine from North Carolina State University (NCSU), and went on to establish Bonnie Brae Veterinary Hospital. Starting as a solo practitioner, she later partnered with Dr. Angel Mitchell in April 1991 and together they expanded into a large mixed-animal practice complete with a boarding kennel and equine surgical facility. Dr. Freer's passion and practice thrived thanks to a strong support system. "The specialist veterinar-

ians at the University of Georgia and NCSU have been there for me, either for consultations or for referrals. Both universities made me a better clinician over the phone!" emphasized Dr. Freer. After 16 years, Dr. Freer and her partners divided the practice and she resumed her independent practice, launching Freer Equine Mobile Veterinary Service. This venture lasted 13 years until 2019, when she merged her practice with Dr. Grace Buchanan to form Hunt Country Equine Mobile Veterinary Service. Dr. Freer retired in 2023 after Dr. Buchanan acquired the full practice, marking the conclusion of a distinguished career.

*There's no way that I could have done this without Ron. While I was working non-stop ... he was taking care of our child, 74 acres, 19 horses AND doing all of the cooking!*



During her career, Dr. Freer cultivated many treasured relationships with clients, veterinarians, equine specialists, and, of course, horses, many becoming lasting friendships. While they all had a lasting impact on her career, she gives the most credit to her husband, Ron Freer. "There's no way that I could have done this without Ron. While I was working non-stop developing my veterinary practice and on call 24/7, he was taking care of our child, 74 acres, 19 horses, and doing all of the cooking."

Today, Dr. Freer is metaphorically back on cloud nine. If you ask, "Where's Bibi?" the response you most likely will get is, "On her farm with Ron and her animals." What began as an interest in horses discovered at a childhood birthday party, led to a lifetime of profound love, care and dedication to the equestrian world.

# Greener Pastures: Retirement Options for Your Senior Horse

by Sarah Madden

Horses, on average, live to be 25-30 years old, with many factors—from nutrition to workload and possibly even sheer luck—affecting their health and ability to work as they age. Keeping an aging horse happy and healthy deserves close monitoring and guidance from your horse's care team, but there are also some things owners can consider in advance in order to help make their horse's golden years just that.

What do you do when a horse can no longer work at the same level? When changes in nutrition, veterinary maintenance or management don't seem to be enough, the horse may need to step back from its current level of activity. For some owners, this poses no problem, and the horse itself dictates what the rider does. For other riders, whose objectives or even livelihoods depend on their horse performing at a certain level, a new role or home has to be found for the aging horse.

At the end of the day, there is nothing wrong with putting a horse in a new situation so that it can continue to be happy and comfortable. Not all of us can afford to keep a horse that cannot work. There are multiple ways to achieve a happy retirement for most performance horses, but each option comes with its own caveats to consider.

Can the horse step down a level or two in the sport, and continue on with a new rider? If so, leasing or selling a horse is a common way to provide an active retirement. Of course, caution should be taken to ensure that the horse remains well cared for and that a potential new lessee or owner is aware of the horse's limitations. In-barn leases allow for close monitoring of the horse's condition and care, if it's feasible for the horse to remain in the same place.

Alternatively, many schools and educational programs such as therapeutic riding centers accept donated horses, offering a low-level workload to older horses or those needing a slower pace. From IHSA teams to colleges and universities or therapeutic riding centers, there may be an organization nearby that suits the needs of a former performance horse. Some centers may have requirements for donations, such as only accepting geldings, or horses that already have experience in a certain discipline.

For horses that are no longer able to be ridden or do not fit criteria to be able to continue working in a new environment, a retirement facility or pasture board arrangement may be a good option. Retirement facilities should be thoroughly vetted like any new boarding facility, and should allow close communication and oversight of the retired horse. Though there are usually multiple levels of boarding offered at various facilities, horses that can "just be horses" and live in a social environment with the ability to move freely in a pasture can live comfortably long after their riding days are over.

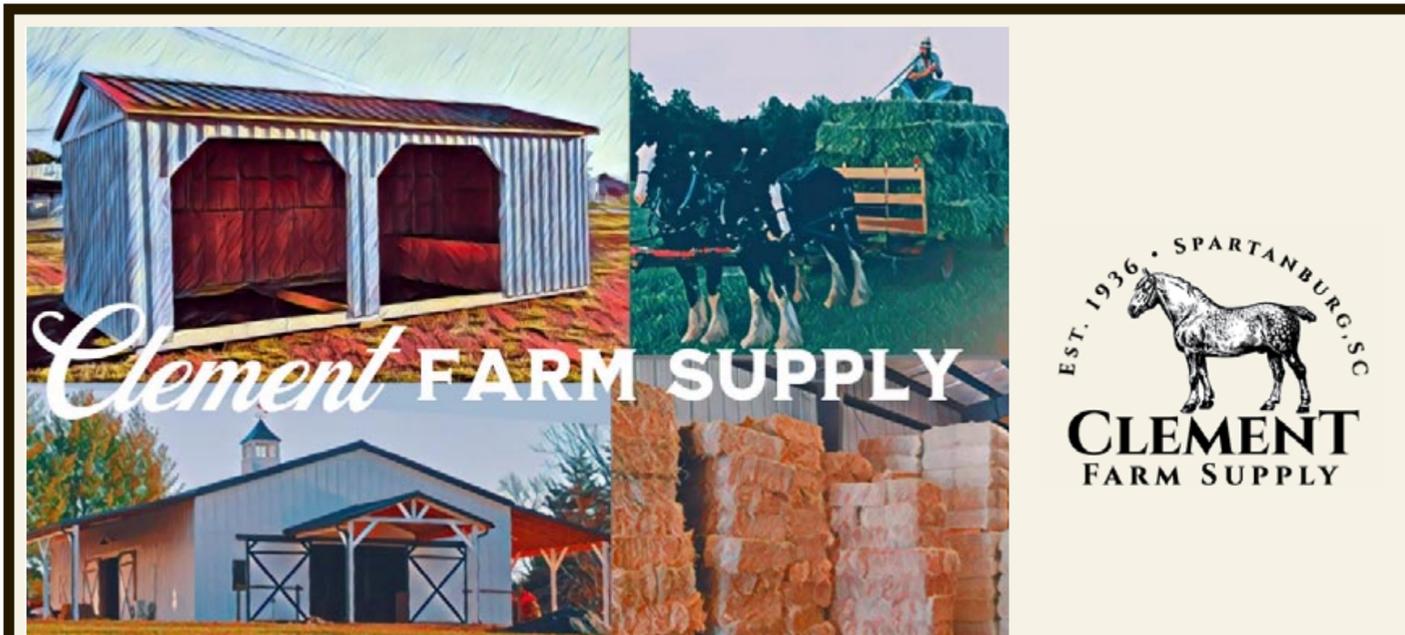
Most importantly, no matter what your horse's retirement years look like, it's important to have a plan for the end of their life. As owners, it's our responsibility to provide a dignified end for our equine companions and teammates, and prior planning makes that process easier for all involved. Some boarding facilities or companies offer end-of-life services for horses. Either way, setting a plan with your horse's care team can provide ease of mind as well as guarantee a standard of care is upheld throughout the entirety of the horse's life.




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**ASK THE DENTIST: IF HORSES SMILED (AND SOME DO!)**

**Keeping Equine Pearly Whites Healthy**

Like worming, vaccinating, or shoeing, preventive horse health includes routine dental care — which can be easily overlooked until a crisis hits. Below, the highly respected Dr. Michael Lowder answers a few basic questions about equine dental health.



**Q. When and how often should a horse have his teeth done?** Typically, when they are about two years old after they start to shed their baby teeth called caps. You want to make sure that the new permanent teeth come in properly and remove any wolf teeth coming through. About half all horses have wolf teeth which if not extracted, can be painful with a bit in their mouth. After this initial visit, I suggest a barn call every six months till about six years of age, then, routinely, once a year.

**Q. What are signs that teeth need to be done?** Typically, you'll see quidding (dropping grain from their mouths while eating is the most common sign) or turning their head to one side while eating. Or the horse may show resistance to the bit where typically they had not shown any resisting the bit.

**Q. What are the consequences of not having routine care?** Young horses that are in training may develop an adverse behavior to the bit or pressure from the bit causing discomfort. Once the horse gets this discomfort in their head, it might be hard for him to get over it. Without proper dental care, they could develop malocclusion, where upper and lower teeth don't align nor wear at the same rate thus altering tooth development and biting patterns — causing discomfort.

**Q. What is floating?** Floating is a carpenter's term describing the process of smoothing as in floating concrete or a piece of wood. Floating is removing sharp points.

**Q. Do horses get cavities?** Yes. But not cavities in the same sense as in people. They do get caries which is a decaying spot on a tooth—typically the pulp chamber has been exposed to bacteria from inside the mouth. This can lead to infection. Depending on the situation and on the age of horse, the tooth can be floated, filled or extracted.

**Q. What are common periodontal issues?** Typically, periodontal issues are seen in middle or older horses. Like with people, it's caused by feed or other material that gets pushed down into a pocket where bacteria can proliferate and become a source of potential systemic low grade bacterial infection.

Proper diagnosis is important and most often a speculum must be used to properly open their mouth and evaluate individual teeth. You can't just use a finger and to determine if the teeth are sharp.

*Dr. Michael Lowder is a graduate of Tuskegee University College of Veterinary Medicine. In addition to his DVM, he holds a Masters in cattle reproduction (Brigham Young University), and a degree in medicine and surgery (Auburn University). He served 27 years as associate professor at the University of Georgia, College of Veterinary Medicine, Large Animal Medicine Department. His practice is mainly hooved animals and includes exotic animals such rhinos and zebras plus the occasional hippo.*

**Cheers to 80 Years — Happy Birthday, Tot Goodwin!**

On February 3rd, Goodwin Hounds hosted an extraordinary Hunt Ball and Birthday Bash to celebrate the 80th birthday of Jefferson "Tot" Goodwin, MFH. Friends and family from 13 states and Ontario, representing 20 fox hunts, came together to honor Tot's dedication to fox hunting spanning more than 60 years.

Organized by Trena Kerr with the help of Christie Hendrix, Colleen Goodwin, and others, the event was a hit with 175 guests enjoying a night of stories, dinner, dancing to a 60's band, and a live auction. Toasts, testimonials and fond memories were shared by friends and colleagues.

Goodwin's reputation as a prolific huntsman precedes him and many publications have documented his impressive career. With soft-spoken discipline, Goodwin's masterful command of a pack is a source of admiration. In an interview with the *Chronicle of the Horse* in the December 2019/January 2020 edition, Goodwin elaborated on his unique style: "I don't like a whole lot of noise. That's just the way I am. Any pack of hounds adjusts to what you do. It's just my way of doing it."

Six decades of hunting generates a long list of fans, including Dennis Foster, former executive director of the Master Fox Hunting Association and author of multiple books on the sport. In a Spring 2022 *Covertside* article written by Josh Walker, Foster extended praise to Goodwin: "Tot had a huge influence on my learning to be a whipper-in ... He was the epitome of a great whipper-in, which I didn't realize until years later ... no one's been able to improve on that definition. Tot could ride hard, stay with the hounds and do whatever was necessary to keep the day," shared Foster.

The birthday festivities also featured two days of excellent fox hunting and time with the Sugars and Foot Beagles, making it a memorable celebration.



PHOTOS MARK JUMP

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A TRIBUTE

# Linda Lee Reynolds, A Life Well-Lived

Linda Lee Reynolds will be truly missed in Tryon. She moved to Tryon in 1992, and quickly became an integral member of the community. Linda Lee Reynolds was the epitome of a strong southern woman — opinionated, always stylish, a strong leader, and deeply involved in her community, especially the equestrian side. Her passions included gardening, Thursday bridge, singing, her family, her church, and enjoying life in general.

Linda Lee Reynolds' involvement in our community was robust. She was a founding member of NCHJA, a member of the NC Horse Council, a board member of the NC School of Veterinary Medicine, a chairman of the TR&HC Charity Shows, a member of the Old Tryon Foot Beagles, President of the Community Chorus, President of the Tryon Historical Museum, a member of the Second Wind Hall of Fame, Chairman of the Tryon Presbyterian Women, and played the bass in the Cigarette Holders Jazz Band.



During her years serving as chairman of the TR&HC summer shows, her goal was to deliver shows that were special...like the small "boutique" shows of days gone by, where hospitality ruled. Each night was a different themed exhibitor party. And with her connections, she was able to find sponsors for them to keep costs down, making the shows not only more affordable, but also profitable. During those years, the shows were often sold out; everyone wanted to come because everyone had fun — trainers, exhibitors, and spectators alike.

Her daughter, Lee Reynolds Heelan, tells us her mom loved working with the TR&HC not only with the horse shows, but also the *Any & All Dog Show*. "She was there every year cheering on her daughter and her dogs!"



Join us this June as we give special recognition to Linda Lee Reynolds at the Carolinas Show Hunter Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony.

TR&HC MEMBER NEWS

## Molly Oakman Joins TR&HC Board



TR&HC is thrilled to welcome Molly Oakman as its newest member of the TR&HC board. Oakman brings a wealth of equestrian and event knowledge, having spent the last eight years as Director of Equestrian Operations at Tryon International Equestrian Center (TIEC) where she oversaw the annual show schedule that included more than 40 competitions across multiple disciplines. Currently, Oakman serves in a hybrid capacity as the President of TerraNova Equestrian in Myakka City, FL., allowing her to keep Rutherford County as her home base, while still contributing to TIEC and the local community with her involvement in several equestrian events. She is the proud mother of two teenage daughters, Grady and Kelty, and mini horses, Pumpkin and Daisy. Oakman is assuming the board seat recently vacated by Kaitlyn Kubiak who is relocating to Virginia.

## Corinne Rainey Joins TR&HC Fundraising Team

Corinne Rainey began her equestrian journey at age seven, initially engaging in Eventing before shifting her focus to the Hunters during her teenage years. She managed Still Creek Farm in Columbus, N.C. for 11 years. Although currently without a horse, Rainey has continued to contribute to the equestrian community.

Now working in sales at Audi Asheville for over a year, Rainey looks forward to blending her professional skills with her passion for horses through her new fundraising role with Tryon Riding & Hunt Club (TR&HC). "I hope that my involvement with the TR&HC will permit me to take more of an active role in the community," Rainey shared.



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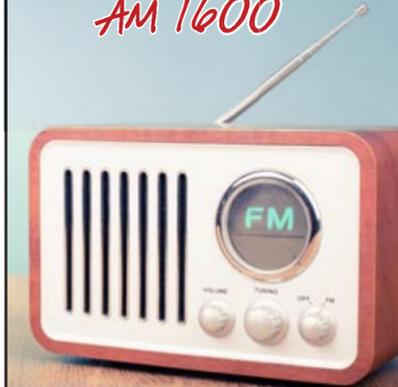
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