

Chaplains in Ontario



Photo by Johnnegia Riggs

OHHA is working with the Race Track Chaplaincy of America Inc. (RTCA) to determine how to establish a chaplaincy program for people who work in Ontario's harness racing industry.

For over thirty years, the RTCA has been helping people who work at racetracks – people who may not have a religious community to turn to in times of crisis. The mission of the RTCA is *to meet, with excellence, the spiritual, emotional, physical, and social/educational needs of horse racing's work force.*

In 1972 the RTCA incorporated and began with its first full-time chaplains at three racetracks. Today the RTCA has 55 chaplains serving more than 87 racetracks, horse farms, and training centres across America. In the past year, two chaplains have started work in Canada.

RTCA chaplains are trained, certified, and ordained clergy with skills, character, and motivation to make them an exemplary part of racetracks. Chaplains must have a working knowledge of the racing industry.

The chaplaincy program is a part of most thoroughbred tracks in the United States. Churchill Downs in Louisville, Kentucky recently announced plans to build a 5,042 square foot, \$600,000 chapel. To date, the harness tracks hosting a chaplaincy program include the Meadowlands in New Jersey, Pocono Downs and the Meadows in Pennsylvania, and Cal-Expo in California.

The idea for a chaplaincy program for Ontario's harness racing community was sparked by Robin Dorion. Robin works part-time in the race office at Mohawk Raceway and is involved in racing through her husband's stable at Mohawk. She contacted RTCA last year and together they presented a proposal to OHHA. Last October, OHHA's Board of Directors agreed to fund a feasibility study.

Over the next few months, Chaplain Les Riggs will visit Ontario racetracks and training facilities to determine how great a need there is for a chaplaincy program.

He will also address what resources are required to meet this need. He expects to have his report ready by August.

Chaplain Les Riggs has been a chaplain with the RTCA for 19 years in Louisiana. He has helped open several chaplaincies, including the establishment of Chaplain Shawn Kennedy at Woodbine and Fort Erie racetracks in 2004.

He began his racetrack visits with Quinte Raceway, Rideau Carleton Raceway, and Kawartha Raceway. He also held his first non-denominational church service at Mohawk Raceway on May 15. Chaplain Les feels that he was warmly received and that there is a great need for a chaplaincy program. He admits he "hopes that people will see that the chaplaincy program is something good for the community".

Chaplain Les is enthusiastic about the opportunity to help people in Ontario. Until he has a local phone number, anyone wishing to speak to him regarding any matter can reach him via Robin Dorion at (519) 622-3938. You may also call Yvonne Smits at (905) 858-5854, extension 22, to make an appointment with Chaplain Les.

Racing for a Cure at Georgian Downs

The North American Women's Driving Challenge is set to go Saturday, June 4 at Georgian Downs in Innisfil, Ontario. Twenty of the best female drivers from the United States and Canada will compete to raise money for the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation. This exciting evening of racing and charity event will likely fill the grandstand at Georgian Downs.

In order to succeed, the North American Women's Driving Challenge requires commitment from owners, trainers, and drivers. Racing on June 4 you will be part of an exciting international harness racing event and help to raise money for a worthwhile charity. This is a special affair for a very special cause.

The View From Here...

BY JOHN WALZAK



Photo by Dave Landry

Summer has arrived – at least the summer tracks have opened! As you race this summer, OHHA is working on some projects that I believe will have a positive impact on the racing experience. These projects range from putting customers into the grandstands, through figuring out a sustainable live racing schedule, to helping make working and racing at Ontario tracks a rewarding career.

Fans in the Grandstands

Harness Racing Marketing Programs for 2005 on page 3 describes the marketing initiatives from the Standardbred Revenue Allocation (SRA) monies. I shall describe the research the SRA Marketing Committee has commissioned.

The committee decided to rethink the strategic direction of its marketing efforts. New Owners Workshops and Youth Camps are successful, but both are long-term builders of the fan base. Despite bringing literally thousands of new people to the tracks over the past 10 years with car, truck, and trip giveaways, wagering on Ontario races has stagnated and, in some instances, decreased. The marketing efforts did not create any new fans!

The committee resolved to hire a professional marketing firm. The firm would conduct research to provide guidance for creating a strategic plan that would address goals to increase attendance and betting.

The first stage was to look inward into our industry to determine strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The professionals found that we needed to find ways to increase attendance and betting on Ontario harness racing. Tell me something new!

It was also determined that, by and large, the industry has no clear idea who its race fans and customers are and, therefore, no real idea on how to develop new customers. Not knowing who our customers are means we waste money chasing people who have no desire or intention to go to the races. We need to target real prospects.

The second stage is to define potential customers to the extent that we can target their tastes and needs in our marketing and presentation of racing. A phone survey across Ontario this summer will identify

harness racing customers.

This fall, with the survey results in hand, the SRA Marketing Committee shall begin the process of creating its marketing strategy. The tracks support this project – many asked for it! OHHA will share the results with tracks so that they may utilize the findings directly in their marketing efforts.

Live Racing Schedule

Directly related to customers in grandstands is the live racing schedule. There seems to be a basic conflict between track operators wanting to limit live race days and horse people wanting to expand or rearrange the days to meet the demands of racing their horses.

I believe we need to find a way to create a schedule that supports the long-term sustainability of both horse operations and racetrack operations. Horse people need to race horses and tracks need to profit from racing.

Maybe slot revenue has made us lazy or maybe we have grown a little complacent, but we need to spend some time and money to ensure that our core business – live harness racing – is vibrant and thriving.

To that end, on behalf of OHHA, I have invited every track and the Ontario Racing Commission (ORC) to attend a summit. At the summit we will discuss the processes and structures needed to support live racing for the foreseeable future.

June 6 is the tentative date for the summit. The tracks have agreed to attend and the ORC has agreed to host the summit. I shall inform you of progress on this very important initiative.

Working in the Racing Industry in Ontario

OHHA has three projects designed to help make the experience of working in the industry a little better.

First, OHHA is working with the Race Track Chaplaincy of America to conduct a feasibility study on introducing its service to Ontario harness tracks. This endeavour is described in *Chaplains in Ontario* on page 1.

Chaplain Les Riggs will visit each of the tracks over the next few months, meeting horse people, conducting Sunday services,

and observing how racing operations are organized. He will report back to the OHHA Board with recommendations on how the chaplaincy may be introduced at our tracks and training centers. The Board will then decide on future support.

Please let your Directors know how you feel about the chaplaincy as Chaplain Les makes his visits and contacts.

The second project involves the development of a grooms' skills training program through Equine Guelph. This education program will combine classroom, on-line, and on-the-job training for new grooms. The pilot project will begin this August. OHHA will ask for industry participants to take part in the pilot project as mentors and as employers.

A future newsletter will explain more about the grooms' skills training program. Also, a future issue will cover Equine Guelph's plans for education from youth programs through to university courses – all focusing on the horse.

OHHA supports initiatives by Equine Guelph as ways to help current industry participants maintain and increase their knowledge of the horse. These initiatives also help attract and prepare future participants and encourage university researchers to apply their expertise to our industry.

The third project is a collaboration between standardbred and thoroughbred participants to develop a regulatory system that owners, trainers, drivers, and jockeys understand, support, and follow.

The system should encourage competitive racing and confident investing. The Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association (HBPA), Jockeys' Benefit Association of Canada, and OHHA cooperated for the betterment of racing by lobbying for a review of how each race in particular is regulated.

Recently, Consumer and Business Services Minister Jim Watson, responsible for the ORC, announced that he would take more interest in the racing industry. He has appointed Parliamentary Assistant MPP Ted McMeekin to be his main point of contact with the industry. We feel we have made an impression at this leadership level and will continue our efforts for change.

Last Words

The lawsuit of Windsor Raceway Inc., a case that involves race days, customers, fairness and our future viability, is unfolding as expected. Negotiations continue on the easier parts with lawyers scheduling action on the more contentious parts.

Meanwhile, racing continues. Good luck with your horses!

Harness Racing Marketing Programs for 2005

The Standardbred Revenue Allocation (SRA) Marketing Committee promotes harness racing across all Ontario racetracks.

For 2005, the committee has a budget of \$585,000. This money is a ten percent share of the SRA funds. SRA funds equal one percent of pari-mutuel wagering in Ontario. In 1996, the Ontario Government reduced its taxation of pari-mutuel wagering and allocated that money to support the promotion of harness racing in Ontario.

Successful Repeats

Successful events from previous years will be repeated in 2005. This June through September, **OHHA Youth Camps** will help children and their families to experience the excitement of harness racing. The Youth Camp Committee selects children based on submitted essays.

As an ongoing commitment, the SRA Marketing Committee allocates funds to **Equine Guelph** for industry-driven research and education relevant to the equine industry.

The popular **Wanna Bet Program** will return its customer service teams to tracks for a second year. Designed to educate and encourage new customers to return to the tracks, the teams will be assisting tracks with their promotional nights. The program is a joint effort between Standardbred Canada and the SRA Marketing Committee.

Two **New Owners Workshops** are planned for 2005. Hosted by Standardbred Canada and OHHA, these workshops educate new or prospective standardbred owners on the “ins and outs” of the industry. Participants will have the opportunity to drive the OHHA horses.

The seventh **OHHA Media Golf Tournament** is set for August 17, 2005 at Copper Creek Golf Club in Kleinburg, Ontario. The tournament is an opportunity for harness racing participants to socialize with invited media personalities from across the province.

OHHA and Standardbred Canada will host another **Media Training Workshop** in 2005. The goal of this workshop is to help trainers and drivers become more confident and comfortable when speaking to representatives of television, radio, magazines, and newspapers.

Each Ontario racetrack will be eligible to receive \$2,500 for **racing promotions** approved by the SRA Marketing Committee. Racetracks will need to explain how the

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Daily Double



The Daily Double, a new \$2 scratch-and-win lottery ticket, debuts May 23, 2005. Produced by the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Commission (OLGC), the horse racing themed ticket will be available at 8000 lottery retailers across Ontario.

The idea for the Daily Double came from a planning session held in 2003 between the racetracks, horsemen groups, and the OLGC. The ticket is an innovative method to encourage people to wager at Ontario racetracks and visit racetrack slot parlours.

Multiple Ways to Win

The purchaser has multiple ways to win money and prizes with this ticket. Each ticket is divided into three sections.

The top portion has two scratch-and-win games. The purchaser may instantly win up to \$35,000.

The middle portion entices a visit to a racetrack. The purchaser may instantly win a betting voucher worth \$2 to \$10. The betting voucher is valid at any racetrack which also hosts a slot parlour. The betting voucher is transferable, it cannot be redeemed for cash, and is valid until December 31, 2005.

The bottom portion encourages a visit to a racetrack slot parlour. Depositing the bottom portion in a ballot box at a racetrack slot parlour, the purchaser can win additional prizes. Beyond monthly draws at individual racetracks, the grand prize is a 2005 Chevrolet Avalanche (base price approximately \$45,000). If the winner is

also a member of the Winner's Circle (a free membership offering cash rewards, special events, and promotional prizes) the grand prize will include free gasoline for a year.

The Daily Double tickets will be sold from May 23 until the draw for the Avalanche is made on September 16, 2005.

Joint Effort

The new lottery ticket is funded by the OLGC, racetracks that host slot parlours, and horsemen via the Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association (HBPA) of Ontario, and the Standardbred Revenue Allocation (SRA).

Kimberley Brooks, Marketing & Communications Director of the Ontario Horse Racing Industry Association (OHRIA), believes that the development of the Daily Double lottery ticket is the first time the OLGC has combined resources in partnership with another industry.

“This partnership makes sense as both parties have something to gain” said Brooks. “Most customers are not really aware that there are two separate companies under one roof, so if we can develop initiatives that will benefit both industries it can only be a win/win situation.”

It is unknown if the OLGC will continue to develop this concept with the racing industry in years to come. Future plans depend on the outcome of this promotion and what new spin can be added to the tickets.

Harness Racing Marketing Programs for 2005

(Continued from Page 3)

promotion will benefit the Ontario harness racing industry.

New This Year

New this year is the **North American Women's Driving Challenge**. Twenty women drivers from Canada and the United States will compete at Georgian Downs on June 4. The challenge will raise money for the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation.

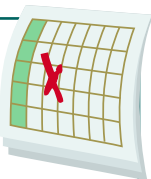
Also new in 2005 is the **Daily Double** – a scratch-and-win lottery ticket with a horse racing theme. The Daily Double lottery ticket is a joint promotion between the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation (OLGC), racetracks, and the SRA. The lottery tickets will be available at lottery retailers on May 23, 2005.

Two new **Adult Harness Racing Camps** are planned for this fall. Similar to the Youth Camps, adults will learn more about horses and harness racing and have the opportunity to drive the OHHA horses in an exhibition race. Unlike the Youth Camps, there will be a fee to participate in the Adult Camps.

Funds are also allocated in 2005 for the development of a **Strategic Marketing Plan**. OHHA has engaged Bond Creative Marketing Inc. to assist with this endeavour.

Integral to this plan is to identify a customer base for harness racing. Beginning this June, Bond Creative Marketing will conduct a telephone survey to determine the demographics of racing fans. The results should be available by this fall - in time for the SRA Marketing Committee to plan for 2006.

Mark Your Calendar!



The following OHHA sponsored events are planned for the next few months:

- May 23** Daily Double lottery tickets available at lottery retailers
- May 28** New Owners' Workshop at Grand River Raceway
- June 4** North American Women's Driving Challenge at Georgian Downs
- July 1-4** First 2005 OHHA Youth Camp begins at Quinte Raceway.

Coming Soon

Sometime during this May through October, OHHA representatives will be visiting your local racetrack. The visit will be an opportunity for horsemen to ask questions about OHHA membership, benefits, insurance, or the OHHA Group Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) Program.

Representatives will visit Ontario racetracks either during morning training sessions or during afternoon or evening

race cards. Walking through the shed rows or the paddock, representatives will be available to answer questions and provide further information and application forms.

The date of the visit to your local track will be listed on the condition sheets, entry lists, and on posters in the backstretch. For further information about the benefits of membership visit the OHHA website at www.ohha.ca or call the OHHA office at (905) 858-5854.

Correction

The April issue of this newsletter should have credited Equine Guelph for the Equimania Youth Quiz Challenge during the Can-Am Equine All Breeds Emporium in March in London, Ontario.

As part of its initiative to educate young people about horses, Equine Guelph developed a new website called www.equimania.ca.

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