

TDNQA

The Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance recently announced that they have awarded a total of \$1,000,000 to 23 accredited facilities. Since its formation in Feb. 2012, the TAA has provided accreditation to Thoroughbred aftercare facilities and provided them with a source of funding to support their efforts. The TDN's Catlyn Spivey caught up with newly appointed Executive Director James Hastie to discuss what it means to be accredited and what the TAA has to look forward to in 2014.

TDN: Before coming to the Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance last month, you worked on behalf of the American Red Cross. Can you explain your background and how you became involved in the Thoroughbred racing industry?



James Hastie and TB retiree "Sport"

JH: I was working for the Red Cross essentially raising money to provide funding to people displaced by fire, flood, tornadoes and other disasters. With four years at the Red Cross, I had really taken a step away from

horses. I grew up on a hunter/jumper farm in Casenovia, NY. My younger sister and I were the only ones really involved in competing in horse shows which generated from my mother's love of horses. I competed and had the opportunity to ride with some really high-class riders in the circuit, like Rodney Jenkins before he retired to become a racehorse trainer. The board at the TAA was looking for someone who had experience with horses but also had a non industry take on fundraising. Through due diligence with a rehabilitation center, I was connected with the people at TAA.

TDN: Every organization that is funded by your organization must first apply and complete a rigorous accreditation process. Can you explain what it takes to be accredited?

JH: First, it's a very thorough application process. We have an accrediting committee composed of a diverse group of individuals that have been involved in aftercare, as well as financial representatives that decide the financial stability of these facilities and their programs. Our accredited partners agree to live up to a specific set of standards. Often, they undergo surprise inspections by volunteers such as vets and farriers.

This component sets the TAA apart and allows for us to ensure the money is going to support the horses. Everyone involved is extremely passionate about the process and the donor's dollar. We have a very strong commitment to making sure the money is spent wisely and efficiently.

TDN: Why is the rigorous application process so important to donor confidence?

JH: It's the same whether we are talking about horses or the Red Cross. You want to know that your money is going to where we say it's going. It's all about delivering upon the mission. Our core supporters stepped up early on in this process to get the foundation going. Aside from the seed investors and the money they set up for basically starting the foundation, we can honestly say that every dollar we raised from our donors goes directly to horse care.

TDN: Some may say Thoroughbred aftercare is not a taxing issue. After raising \$1,000,000 to support the efforts of those striving to care for racehorses after their career, how much would you say is needed to solve the issue?

JH: It's easy for people to say how much is needed when people have lost everything and have nothing. The horse world is a bit different. We are trying to work on researching the issue a bit more to come up with a figure. As we accredit more facilities we are going to need more money. The \$1,000,000 we awarded from Arizona was just so well received, and the aftercare facilities and the volunteers were so grateful it makes me want to work even harder. I think anyone who has ever owned a horse knows it's a fairly expensive proposition. We have some folks that are really great at providing Thoroughbreds with a comfortable retirement and/or a quality retraining program, where they can find them a new job and adopt them out to a family that is going to really care for them and pamper them.

TDN: With so many generous donors already contributing to the program, what are some new fundraising ideas in place for the future?

JH: We are reaching out to every segment of the industry right now. There is a lot of interest out there. I'm hearing from bloodstock agents, vets, jockeys, owners. People that I never thought I could get a meeting with, instead they are reaching out to me. I want people to know if they are in a position to help us, in any of the different sectors of the industry, we absolutely need their help. The potential is out there. I just need to meet with these folks one on one. The sales companies and stallion owners were first to step up. The Jockey Club, Keeneland, Fasig-Tipton, OBS, Barretts and the Breeders' Cup have all been phenomenal. For somebody in my position, it has been extremely gratifying to see all the people reaching out to me. For each person that contacts me I have a different idea for how they can help. If we can get modest contributions from every sector in the industry the aftercare solution is going to present itself.

TDN: If you had one goal for the TAA in 2014, what would it be?

JH: My one goal for 2014 is to grow that \$1,000,000 to \$5,000,000 and we are well on our way.