



With the New York Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association declaration of support for the Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance this April, the *TDN* sat down with TAA Executive Director James Hastie to check up on the progress the organization has made since he began his duties last fall.

TDN: Since you started in November of last year, how has the job been going?

JH: For somebody like me--who grew up on a small showjumping farm, volunteered for pony club, and competed on the circuit, who then left the horse world for nine years to work at a university, and then another four for the Red Cross, that will be combined 20 years of fund raising experience with horses--every day is honestly a pleasure. One of the reasons I think they hired me outside of the Thoroughbred racing industry is that I don't have any political connections and I don't owe anybody anything in this business. That's the plus side. The down side, before I took this job, I didn't really know much about Thoroughbred racing other than my parents had a racehorse that ran in the 80's, and then I've been to a few tracks.

TDN: What progress have you observed since you started with the TAA?

JH: We've grown from 13 stallion farms in 2012, and we just picked up our 24th yesterday, so we continue to gain support from them. We have 15 of the top 100 trainers giving us pledges in 2014 and that is up quite a bit from just a couple last year. Half of them have sent a check in already and the others are talking about it. Our brand is becoming more recognizable and these trainers are starting to figure out that with one gift to the TAA that they could support aftercare organizations all across the United States, no matter where they are racing.

TDN: Have there been any more donations since you started?

JH: You've probably read about the New York Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association, they just came on board with [owners contributing] \$5 per start with a \$100,000 dollar guarantee, [starting with Belmont's spring meet] so if they only have 18,000 starts the horsemen's organization [NYTHA is going to write a check to cover the fee difference. We still continue to get fan contributions to our website. Gulfstream Park has been giving us program ads.

[During Pimlico's] GI Preakness S., they are going to be displaying TAA banners, they've given us a program ad, and they are putting their logo on their outriders' saddlepads. This is all complementary. Belmont is talking about doing some things too [during the GI Belmont S.], I don't have any specifics yet.

TDN: Since NYTHA declared for the TAA have there been any further communications from similar jurisdictions?

JH: On Tuesday morning I've got a meeting with another state's horsemen's groups, and the tracks, who want to learn what's going on in California, Florida, Maryland, and now New York. Hopefully we will be adding another state to the roster on Tuesday. [With any luck] we will continue the momentum those states and those institutions within those states have provided for TAA. One gift to our organization supports 23 aftercare organizations right now. Seven [facilities] have submitted already and the deadline is five days away [May 15]. I know we've got quite a number in the queue that are trying to get through the application process. We worked with the American Association of Equine Practitioners and the American Humane Association and I'll admit it, our accreditation process is not a simple one, but it is designed that way. We only want to accredit the best organizations out there, the most efficient, sustainable and those that provide the greatest number of opportunities for Thoroughbreds.

TDN: Where would you like to see the TAA go in the future?

JH: Well that's a big question and it's one we are asking ourselves right now. We've got a strategic planning session with the board set up for July to really look at our long-term goals, two years, five years, 10 years.

TDN: How do you feel about fans being more aware of aftercare efforts now than they used to be?

JH: It seems like a lot more people are following us and watching what we are trying to do and that's a great thing. If we are raising the awareness and contributing to the industry's efforts with their solutions for these great athletes, we are proud to be part of that. The more aftercare efforts, the more dollars dedicated to aftercare, the better for the Thoroughbred. As Jimmy Bell [President of Darley America] has often said, it all starts and ends with the horse. [CLICK HERE TO SHARE THIS STORY](#)