

horse



Horse Capital of the World®

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HORSE CAPITAL DIGEST • 2024 SUMMER SPECIAL EDITION

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Erin Gilmore



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Equines Impact Tourism Dollars

The Ocala/Marion County Visitors and Convention Bureau announced that from April 2023 to March 2024, more than 1.4 million visitors with a \$1 billion in economic impact, visited the county. Visitor spending saves locals \$466 in taxes per household annually.

Equine-generated dollars are a significant part of the tourism equation in the Horse Capital of the World®. According to the 2023 American Horse Council study, non-horse owning participant and spectator travel, dining and lodging equates to a \$2.7 billion in total economic impact in Florida. Marion County equates to about \$965 million, more than one-third of that total.

The county also experienced a record-breaking February producing the highest Tourist Tax Development revenue on short-term stays since its inception in 2005. February is part of the high season for horse shows and events, which taper off in the summer but pick up again in late September.



The AHC report identified a number of large-scale equine events held annually that bring in visitors who spend including the five-week Federation Equestre International with 36,000 participants and 15,000 spectators, the three-month hunter-jumper event series Horse Shows in the Sun with 9,600 visitors, Live Oak International with more than 10,000, the North American Reining Stakes (7,850 attendees and 550 participants), CONFEPASO Youth Equitation Mundial with an estimat-

ed 3,500 attendees, and a reported 10,000 people attended the Furusiyya FEI Nations Cup jumping series at the World Equestrian Center.

Additionally, buyers and sellers for the Ocala Breeders' Sales travel to the county for five world-class Thoroughbred auctions annually. Thoroughbred breeders, owners, and trainers with Thoroughbreds based at training tracks and foaling centers in Central Florida also make the trip to see their horses progress.





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Rattlesnake Bridge Returns to Florida

By David Shults

After spending the last couple of years in Illinois and passing through the hands of the late country music star Toby Keith, Thoroughbred stallion Rattlesnake Bridge has returned to Florida to stand at stud. Bred in Kentucky by Bill Graves and Dennis Lynch, he earned \$518,000 in 11 starts with a career record of 3-3-2.

His new owner Laura Willson is an equestrian show jumper and highly skilled and sought after player, trainer, and breeder of polo ponies. Currently, her young mustang, Betty White, who was born in the wild and adopted from the Bureau of Land Man-



Rattlesnake Bridge – Serita Huli

agement, is her latest success story. Thanks to Betty White's stellar performances on the field at the Florida Horse Park for Ocala Polo Club matches, and partly due to her famous name, Betty White has garnered national attention and even has her own fan club.

Willson wants Rattlesnake Bridge to be her next 'nontraditional' horse by producing both racehorses and polo mounts. Taking a line from a Keith song, Willson said, "Rattlesnake Bridge 'ain't as good as he once was, but he's as good once as he ever was.'"



Dr. Hal Phillips

By Patricia Nobles, UF/IFAS Extension,
Marion County Director

Dr. Harrell Phillips and Scott Seiler will be inducted into the Marion County Agriculture Hall of Fame at an induction ceremony on Thurs., Nov. 21, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Southeastern Livestock Pavilion at 2232 NE Jacksonville Road in Ocala. The banquet is part of the annual Farm City Week activities held November 20 through 27.

Dr. Phillips is a third-generation cattleman involved

Two Aggies Make Hall of Fame

in the commercial beef cattle, equine, and crop industries from an early age and has instilled a love for agriculture in multiple generations. He has dedicated his life to preserving the heritage of both land and livestock.

Scott Seiler has produced peanuts and cattle in Marion County since he started full-time in the family business after high school graduation. He grows and markets peanuts from the Southeast, to New York, and California. The Seiler brand is an industry standard



Scott Seiler

for green peanuts thanks to his innovations and quality control. He shares his knowledge with younger farmers and is an expert in strawberries, peas, watermelons, cantaloupes, corn, hay, and cattle.

Since 2003, the Hall of Fame has recognized 41 leaders, including the equine industry's Gus Gray, Harry Mangurian, Michael and Joseph O'Farrell, Carol Harris, Elmer Heubeck, Dr. William R. Brawnner, Jackson C. Dudley, Carl G. Rose, and Bonnie M. Heath II.

*Alexia Guillemette – Erin Gilmore**Bridlewood Farm – Jon Siegal*

Central Florida is Horse Capital of the World®

In 1997, Ocala/Marion County Horse Capital of the World® and Horse Capital of the World® were trademarked by the Florida Thoroughbred Breeders' and Owners' Association. Ever since, the marks have become synonymous with the FTBOA and its Association services. While others periodically try its use, by trademark and literally, Marion county is the Horse Capital with more horses and ponies than any other in the U.S. and Florida ranks third as a state in horse population.

FTBOA trademarked the phrase to create a brand identity for the area and the services it promotes related to equines. The diversity of breeds and disciplines make the area an ideal setting for any horse fanatic, casual horse lover or for services catering to the horse world.

Horses in Florida are more than pretty scenery in a pasture. They are economic drivers for our county and state. The concentration of equine – particularly the Thoroughbred breeding, training and sales industry in Central

Florida – is strongly supported by a network of equine services, such as specialized veterinarians, feed and tack retailers, blacksmith, equine dentists, feed mills and major horse transportation companies by land and by air.

This makes Ocala a great place to enjoy equines with its opportunities to attend world-class horse shows and events, equine venues, recreational activities and farm tours at a variety of venues, farms and showgrounds. Visitors have the chance to go on a farm tour, take a trail ride through our numerous parks and national forest, enjoy a carriage ride, learn polo, visit an equine museum or gallery, attend the world's leading two-year-olds-in-training Thoroughbred sales, watch a horse train at Ocala Breeders' Sales or wager on simulcast horse races from the state's tracks and from across the country. The choices are limitless and local citizens are a daily part of the one-of-a-kind experience that only the Horse Capital of the World® can bring.

Marion County's Equine Impact

- Equines are 22% of the county GDP
- A top breeding region in the world for Thoroughbreds
- Thoroughbreds sold at Ocala Breeders' Sales in the past decade valued at more than \$1.3 billion
- OBS buyers come from 49 states, 2 territories and more than 44 countries

Source: AHC

Florida Racing's Annual Impact

- \$3.24 billion overall economic impact
- \$400,000+ in payroll taxes
- 1 in 4 horses are Thoroughbreds
- 33,500+ jobs

Source: AHC



FEC Wins National Awards

Greetings from

FLORIDA

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*Florida...
the best state to breed,
own & race thoroughbreds*

- No tax on stallion seasons • No personal state income tax
- No individual capital gains tax • National leader in veterinary and equine research • Ranks second in the U.S. for number of thoroughbred horses • Feed and animal health items, along with other specific items are exempt • Horses are exempt from sales tax when purchased from their original breeder
- Florida's greenbelt exemption provides property tax breaks for Florida horse farms • Physical climate allows for year-round training, racing, showing and business opportunities

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Florida Equine Communications staff won four American Horse Publications equine media awards, including one top honor, on May 18 from among 78 AHP members and more than 453 entries in 47 categories.

'Greetings From Florida' took first place in the equine-related single advertisement design category with a 1950's retro linen postcard design with a beach scene featuring two colorful slingback beach chairs fac-

ing the ocean with a photo of a Florida Thoroughbred on a beach table between them. The ad was created by Tammy Gantt as part of a Florida Thoroughbred Breeders' and Owners' Association and Florida Department of Agriculture campaign.

FEC earned second place for a Florida Thoroughbred History Moment video which featured the career of beloved Florida-bred Silver Charm as a black white

newsreel. Gantt collaborated with Sean Kaplan of Kaplan Media.

Nancy Moffatt and Brock Sheridan took home a second and an honorable mention for themed layouts also.

For more than 50 years, American Horse Publications promotes excellence in equine media and encourages relationships and communication within the horse industry through education and networking.

THE **Florida**
HORSE

Interviews with industry insiders.
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