

# horse



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HORSE CAPITAL DIGEST • JUNE 2024 SPECIAL EDITION

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# Strength of Thoroughbreds Means Millions

The Florida Legislature passed HB 7073 in March that included the extension of Florida's all-time strongest Thoroughbred breeding and racing incentives and maintains state funding of Horseracing Integrity and Safety Authority (HISA) federal regulatory assessments.

In 2023, the Florida Legislature enacted a two-year breeding and racing stimulus package totaling more than \$66 million. This year's bill, HB 7073

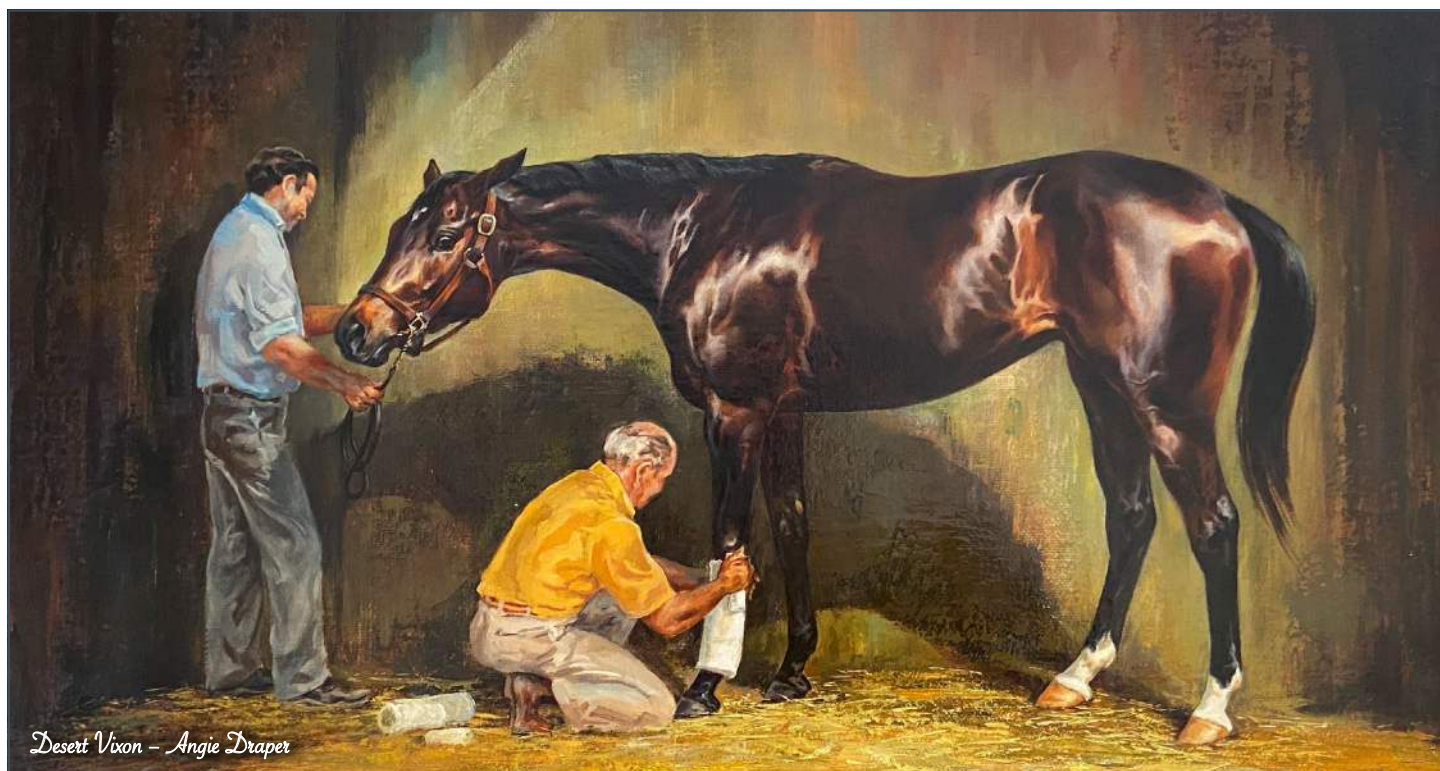
extended critical industry funding of about \$33 million that annually:

- \$15 million in purses/facility improvements at Gulfstream Park, \$5 million at Tampa Bay Downs
- \$5 million for the Florida Thoroughbred Breeders' and Owners' Association breeding and racing incentives and/or promotions; and
- \$2.5 million in additional Florida-bred racing incentives

- \$5.5 million in annual racetrack tax credits to offset HISA funding assessments

The extended annual funding provides long-term stability and enhances a Florida industry already on the upswing in 2024. The FTBOA expresses sincerest gratitude to the Florida Legislature.

The Florida equine industry drives an estimated \$12.8 billion contribution to the Florida economy, including a \$3.24 billion economic impact by Florida Thoroughbreds—an impact larger than the total combined contribution from all of Florida's collegiate athletics. Florida is a perennial top producer of Thoroughbred runners, second-ranked source of national stakes-winners, and the global leader in racehorse training and juvenile sales. [Read more here.](#)



## Healthcare Targets Equine Workers

By Tammy A Gantt

Reducing barriers to health care for equine workers in Marion County is a top priority for AdventHealth Ocala, so Harnessing Health: Equine Worker Health Initiative was created.

The health initiative program will include a bilingual healthcare navigator to bridge gaps of care

for equine workers. A mobile clinic van will travel to local farms and provide onsite health care services to equine workers. The clinic will be for well visits, physicals, common acute and chronic health issues, point of care tests for blood glucose, pregnancy, rapid strep, etc., and immunizations, as well as wellness education.

AdventHealth Ocala, the AdventHealth Ocala Foundation and members of the equine industry including the Florida Thoroughbred Breeders' and Owners' Association, invite supporters to help provide services for equine workers and their families by contributing to the program which is an estimated \$350,000.

Contact Amy Mangan at 352-857-5388 or [amy.mangan@adventhealth.com](mailto:amy.mangan@adventhealth.com) or visit [yourgenerosityheal-socala.com](http://yourgenerosityheal-socala.com).



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# Ocala Metro CEP Promotes Equine Impact

By Tammy A Gantt

The Ocala Metro Chamber and Economic Partnership features a special equine edition of the CEP Network magazine annually thanks to equines contributing 22% to the county's GDP. The upcoming July/August issue takes a deep dive into the findings of the 2023 American Horse Council Foundation study on the economic impact of the equine community in Ocala, which was funded solely by the Florida Thoroughbred Breeders' and Owners' Association.

While those in the equine industry know the impact is significant and growing, with Thoroughbreds making up 1 in 2 horses in the county and 56% of the equine commerce, business leaders and members of the CEP may be surprised at just how much those dollars percolate through the local economy. This issue will detail the economic impact, land preserved, and jobs created.

FTBOA is a member of the nationally award-winning Ocala Metro CEP. FTBOA was named the CEP nonprofit of the year in 2015 and FTBOA's leadership, including CEO Lonny Powell has served on the CEP board over the years.

The CEP also offers an Equine Initiative program that allows CEP partners to become engaged in building the community's farm relationships and support the equine industry. The program goals include expanding awareness of the equine industry to residents and visitors to the Ocala Metro.

FTBOA has worked closely with the CEP and partnered with the City of Ocala to create the Walk of Champions honoring the area's equine heritage. Unveiled in April, 28 bronzes grace the downtown square sidewalks promoting National Hall of Fame Thoroughbreds and champions of many of the breeds represented in Ocala.

Thoroughbred plaques located on the Walk of Champions include Kentucky Derby winners Needles, Carry Back, Foolish Pleasure and Silver Charm; Desert Vixen; Triple Crown winner and two-time National Horse of the Year Affirmed; Precisionist; National Horse of the Year honorees Holy Bull and Skip Away; world's fastest miler Dr. Fager; Ta Wee; and Susan's

Official Magazine of the **Ocala Metro Chamber & Economic Partnership**

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Your Ocala business connection.

**JUL/AUG 2024**  
A GOOD LIFE PUBLICATION

**In This Issue:**

**TRA WILLIAMS** **CHARISSE RIVERS** **PETE CLEARY**

**BIG IMPACT**  
**How The Equine Industry Is Shaping Ocala's Economy**

**PLUS:**  
**Networking > New Partners > Ribbon Cuttings**

Girl. These line the sidewalk in front of Mark's Prime Steakhouse. The all-breeds walk includes Chester Weber, Magic, Treble's Tanqueray, He's Just Cool, Rugged Lark, The Hunter, H Verykt H, Cushti Bok, Vivaldi De Besilu, Tiny Prince Charming, Buggy Malony, Tony De Pony, and Cyfaith Foxtrot. These line the sidewalk near the downtown Hilton.

Additionally, FTBOA has worked with county equine studies faculty to provide industry guidelines for curriculum for the award-winning Marion County Public Schools program, now approved by the Florida Department of Education. Based at North Marion High School, students gain equine skills and specialize in aspects of Thoroughbred production and sales.





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*Payson Park – Dana Wympfheimer*

## 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.

### 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

*Oak Ridge Training Center – LMB Photography*

### 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



# THOROUGHBREDS

## Off the Track and on to New Careers



Photo by Tre Wheway



Photo by Tre Wheway



Photo by Sally Moehring



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*Florida-bred Happy Farm and Jocelyn Brooks*

By Logan Wallace, Florida Equine Communications Intern

Florida-bred Happy Farm, a graded stakes winner and Ocala Breeder Sales graduate, retired from the track and joins trainer Jocelyn Brooks to prepare for the Retired Racehorse Project Thoroughbred Makeover.

On June 19, 2024, Brooks tweeted, "Thrilled to share that Happy Farm has retired to me after all these years."

In 2015, Brooks noticed the horse as a yearling while at Sagamore Farm where she worked as chief of staff. From the photos she posted to social media, it is clear after a nine year wait, she's ready for the retraining journey to begin.

The prolific gelding kept making his way to the winner's circle ticking off a record of 13-14-7 out of 52 starts for earnings of \$870,338. By Ghostzapper out of Gospel Girl, by Florida-bred champion Holy Bull, he was bred by George and Karen Russell of Rustlewood Farm in Reddick, Fla. They are avid Florida breeders and George serves on the board of the Florida Breeders' and Owners' Association. Their notable homebreds included Grade 2 stakes winners Pappacap and Mach Ride, and G3 stakes winner Prudhoe Bay.

Happy Farm's Florida roots go even further back to his famed grandsire National Racing Hall of Famer

## Barn Favorite Florida-bred Happy Farm Ready for Next Career

Holy Bull. The horse was a dual champion in 1994 reigning as Horse of the Year and Champion 3-Year-Old Colt. Holy Bull was bred by Rachel Carpenter's Pelican Stables in Florida in 1991.

The old campaigner's sire Ghostzapper is also a Hall of Famer and 2004 Horse of the Year and Champion Older Horse. The horse finished in the money ten out of 11 starts, with nine wins, including the G1 Breeders' Cup Classic, and a third earning \$3,446,120.

While Happy Farm had successful runners in his pedigree, Brooks wanted him for quite different reasons, his

small stature and outsized personality.

"Everybody just adored him because he was so snuggly and sweet, cool personality, and easy to ride," she said.

The small "just cute" Happy Farm does not have the conformation of his sire or grandsire both large, towering horses. In fact, Holy Bull was so big as a foal he had to be pulled out of his mother.

Now Director of Bloodstock for Boardshorts Racing, Brooks has served as director of sales at the late Brereton C. Jones's famed Airdrie Stud and six years working for Sagamore Racing based at Sagamore Farm where she became an avid supporter of the life of thoroughbreds beyond their racing career. She created the farm's Next Move program specializing in retraining retired racehorses to work in new disciplines, ranging anywhere from hunter/jumpers to even therapy work.

"He's eligible to do the makeover next year. So, it would be really cool to do it again and do it with him, said Brooks. "It's a wonderful event."

She competed in the RRP makeover for the first time this year with a Sagamore retiree named Maryland Pride. Her own Sagamore retiree, Perpetual Optimism is a three-time veteran of The Real Rider Cup, competing with the Kentucky Thoroughbred Farm Managers team.

The Real Rider Cup is a charity show jumping event featuring members of the racing industry competing on off-track Thoroughbreds. They will hold two shows this year, on July 13 at New Vocations at Mereworth Farm in Lexington and on September 13 at Fair Hill Thoroughbred Show in Elkton. Proceeds from the event benefit the Fair Hill Thoroughbred Show, New Vocations Racehorse Adoption Program, and the Retired Racehorse Project.

When Perpetual Optimism isn't winning with the Real Rider Cup team, or finishing a course cleanly without a bridle, he can be found competing in eventing.

"And being a very good boy," said Brooks.

Brooks now the steps for retraining that the loveable Happy Farm will need to settle into his well-deserved retirement from racing.

"He's, sweet. He's smart," she said.

It's clear they will have a happy ending in store as their story continues to inspire the next generation of riders who love retired Thoroughbreds.



**Wire to Wire**  
FLORIDA'S DAILY RACING DIGEST

**Florida**  
**HORSE**

## CONGRATULATIONS

Trainer Ken McPeek, your owners and your entire team at Silverleaf Hills Training Center in Summerfield, Florida - Historic winners of the Kentucky Derby with Mystik Dan and Kentucky Oaks with Thorpedo Anna.

### MYSTIK DAN

KENTUCKY DERBY



**Kentucky Derby winner Mystik Dan**

Trainer: Ken McPeek

Owners: Lance Gasaway, 4 G Racing,  
Daniel Hamby III, Valley View Farm LLC

Photo Credit: ©Renee Torbit/Coady Media



### THORPEDO ANNA

KENTUCKY OAKS



**Kentucky Oaks winner Thorpedo Anna**

Trainer: Ken McPeek

Owners: Brookdale Racing Inc., Mark Edwards,  
Judy B. Hicks and Magdalena Racing (Sherri McPeek)

Photo Credit: ©Renee Torbit/Coady Media





*Mystic Dan – John Gallagher*

## HCOTW Horses Win Oaks, Derby

By Tammy A Gantt

Annually Florida Equine Communications editors research contenders for the Spring Classic races, like the Kentucky Derby, Kentucky Oaks, and Preakness Stakes. Not surprisingly, a majority, if not all have Florida connections including horses born in the state, Thoroughbred sales graduates, early schooling graduates, and runners in the nation's leading prep races at Florida's tracks. Horses with ties to the Sunshine state translate to starters in the gates the first Saturday in May and world class races throughout the year.

In 2024, Florida-connected horses got off to a fast pace with both the Kentucky Oaks winner, Thorpedo Anna, and Kentucky Derby winner, Mystic Dan hailing from Silverleaf Training Center near the Villages in Central Florida.

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