



The Horsemen's Newsletter

July 2016

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MTHA Introduces New Counseling Administrator

Jessica Hammond was looking for a new career path this spring that would allow her to return to her professional counseling roots. It was then her husband, Scott, saw an online posting.

"He was on Facebook and saw the MTHA [Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association] was looking for a counseling program administrator," says Hammond, who recently turned 39. "He showed it to me and I thought, 'Did they make this job for me?' Who even knew there was such a thing that would combine horseracing and counseling? It's perfect."



Before becoming the new Assistance Coordinator for the Horsemen's Counseling Program, Hammond spent 35 years at Greater Baltimore Medical Center (GBMC) working in the emergency room as a social worker. She left in 2012 to manage her husband's business, Somerset Racing, for four years and then, this past January, the whole family, including their son, Luke, moved to England to pursue another racing endeavor.

"My husband is from England, but the job didn't work out for us and after 2½ months Scott and I returned home," Hammond says. "But before we left, we got Luke, who turns 19 July 7, settled into the National Stud Diploma Course there. It was a six-month program and he graduated from that June 24. Now he's taken a great job at Cheveley Park Stud in Newmarket [England], working the yearling prep program, getting horses ready for the sales."

Back in Maryland, her husband, too, has settled into a new job, managing the new Ti-

Continued on Page 2 →

Commission To Handle Glaucine Positives as Contaminant

Glaucine has been found in bedding for Maryland horses. But the Maryland Racing Commission is not sleeping on it.

Alarmed that the herbal extract that is widely used in Europe for bronchial dilation to help a horse breathe better but is not allowed to be used in the United States was showing up in blood tests in New York and Delaware a few months ago, the MRC took steps to assess Glaucine's impact in Maryland.

To the MRC's surprise, results returned from Maryland's independent testing facility, Truesdail Laboratories, Inc., in Irvine, Calif., found a rash of positive tests, but it wasn't exactly the Glaucine used in Europe.

Maryland's Glaucine was coming from tulip poplar trees (pictured below).

"We adjusted our [post-race] testing to look for it," said MRC executive director Mike Hopkins. "What we discovered was that it was coming from sawdust, the bedding being used by some trainers. Our tests showed the Glaucine, but it also showed one of three or all three alkaloids that are not present in the Glaucine that is used in Europe."

A total of 10 positive tests surfaced the first week of May; two at Rosecroft Raceway, Maryland's harness track, and eight at Laurel Park. The blood and urine samples all showed the alkaloids associ-

ated with the tulip poplar trees present with the Glaucine.

"All of the trainers were using the same provider," said Hopkins. "In these cases the form of Glaucine being found was coming from the poplar trees the manufacturer was using for the shavings."

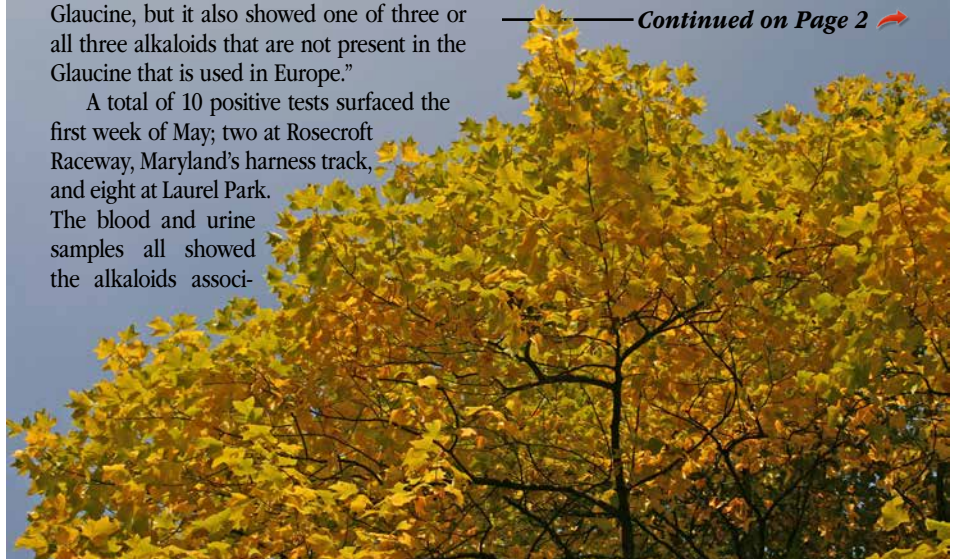
The MRC conducted a meeting June 27, and moved to handle the findings as an environmental contaminant and released the purses of the trainers affected.

"The commission also decided if future positives occur, and contain one of or all of the alkaloids from the poplar trees, no action will be taken against the trainers," Hopkins said. "However, if the test is positive and it doesn't contain any of the alkaloids, we will prosecute."

Trainer Tim Keefe, president of the Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association, said he thinks the decision is fair.

"I think it is the right thing to do," Keefe said. "The research and testing that was done

Continued on Page 2 →



➔ **Jessica Hammond Continued** —

monium Off-Track Betting facility at the fairgrounds. With the two men in her life settled, it has allowed Jessica Hammond to rekindle her own career, enhancing the new, revamped Horsemen's Counseling Program with her experience and familiarity with the industry.

A Maryland native, Hammond grew up in Baltimore and Harford County. She graduated from Bel Air High School, got her degree in psychology from Towson University and did her postgraduate work at the University of Baltimore in counseling psychology.

"When I saw this position advertised, I applied," says Hammond, who replaces Jasmine Arian, who is pursuing other career opportunities outside of horse racing. "I worked for two months as a temporary employee and then was hired full time. I already knew a lot of people in the industry, because my husband had been training here for 25 years and I was a horse owner. It's been a nice comfortable transition."

She officially began her full-time duties July 1.

"Jessica brings a wealth of experience to the table to our newly revamped Counseling Program," said MTHA Executive Director David Richardson. "Not only does she understand the culture on the backstretch, which is huge, she has a ton of real world social work and counseling experience that our horsemen can utilize. We couldn't be happier that she is a part of our team."

During her part-time work at Laurel Park and Pimlico Race Course, she already has seen workers who are dealing with substance abuse, depression and anxiety, a fact she doesn't find surprising.

"There are certain things you almost expect with the backstretch," she says. "They have abnormal sleep schedules and people sometimes live there and have difficulty getting around. And then there are injuries that can lead to social and mental issues."

"But what I like is that the MTHA and MJC together have been working to improve the entire backstretch community. They have transportation services now and the new Medstar medical program which is second to none. It re-

Expedited Purse Release Program

MTHA has implemented a new program that allows the immediate release of purse monies after the required 72-hour waiting period for a race to be declared official by the stewards – provided the owner signs and files an original copy of a notarized agreement affirming they will return purse money received in the event of a positive drug test result.

To obtain a copy of this agreement, visit the MTHA racetrack office or visit mdhorsemen.com.



ally is wonderful what they've been doing. And those services and what I do complement each other."

Hammond is able to touch base with the doctors and transportation services when necessary.

"If a horseman has an accident or injury or if they're suffering from anxiety or the such, I can send them to our medical staff and have their treatment managed by professionals," she says. "If someone needs social services or Medicaid/Medicare set up or have no way to get to an appointment or get a prescription, I can help schedule appointments and transportation to get them where they need to go."

And the backstretch workers pay nothing, as the MTHA absorbs the costs as a perk for working within the Maryland racing industry.

The most important thing, says Hammond, is for people to know she is on-site to help.

"I can help them with many things beyond substance abuse," she says. "I can help with relationship issues, with work or financial stress or even if someone wants to pursue a GED and they don't know how to get started, I can help get them to the right person and on the right path."

She also has started an Alcoholics Anonymous group that had its first meeting June 29.

"The AA meeting is once a week at Laurel Park at 7 p.m. on Wednesdays," she said. "Any-

one interested in joining can call me or stop into the Rec Center the night the meeting is held. If people call me and we see the need at Pimlico we can work on starting a group there, too."

She is based in the Rec Center at Laurel Park and in the MTHA Office at Pimlico. She is at Pimlico every Thursday from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. At Laurel, her schedule alternates each week. If it is a week when she is working Saturday, she is at Laurel Park, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. If she is off Saturday, she is at the Laurel track Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, with the hours the same, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

The schedule is posted in the Rec Center. Anyone wishing to call Hammond for information or help can reach her on her cell phone at 301-776-0404.

"I'm excited," she says. "I just really like my clients and my co-workers and I am working in an industry I love. I'm hoping my pre-existing relationships here will help people want to come to see me. I really don't think these services have been utilized enough by the backstretch employees. I don't think enough of them know they're available or that I'm here."

"But I like to talk a lot, so I'm going out into the Rec Center when people are there watching TV. I go out and introduce myself and tell them what I do. I'm letting them know if they need me, I'm here."

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➔ **Glaucone continued** —

was thorough and clearly found the contamination was from an environmental cause, coming from poplar tree shavings. No one was trying to do anything underhanded or wrong."

Just what trainers would have to worry about should Glaucone be found without the alkaloid markers from the tulip poplar trees is unclear. Hopkins said there are no penalties in place for the offense.

"We've never had it appear before," he

said. "And we won't have any penalties until the need arises."

But Hopkins added that due to the findings in Maryland, the Racing Medication and Testing Consortium, which strives to develop and promote uniform rules nationally, has established a committee of scientific advisors to study the issue.

"Hopefully, they will be making recommendations at some point in the future," Hopkins said.

MTHA Poker Tournaments

MTHA sponsors monthly mock Texas Hold 'em tournaments in the new Recreation Room. The next tournament will be held July 11 at Noon. Come join the fun and meet a few new friends.



Rec Report

Softball League

The MTHA is holding pick-up softball games for fun on Tuesdays at the field located across from the track on RT 198 at the Driving Range. Games start at noon.

Through the first few weeks some of the highlights have been Sheldon Russell going undefeated as a team captain, the quickness of Angel Cruz in the field, the power of Wayne Potts and Jonathan Maldonado and the perfect on base percentage of Jack "Wheelz" Hurley.

Van Service

The MTHA is sponsoring a free Van Service for employees on Tuesdays and Thursdays.



The service includes transportation for shopping, pharmacy, lunch, movies, doctor and dentist appointments, etc. You must sign up in advance in the track kitchens each week for this service.

For information please call Dan Manguam at 410-802-5798.

Ticket Distribution

The winners of the most recent Orioles ticket drawings include: Justin Feeley 7/26 vs Houston, Kristina Schmidt 8/16 vs. Boston, Jack Hurley 8/22 vs Washington.

The next drawing will be held at Laurel on August 22, so please sign up at the track kitchens for the chance to win.

In addition, MTHA sponsored 15 backstretch employees to the Orioles vs. San Diego game on Wed 6/22 as the O's rewarded them with a big win. Some who attended were Skeets Holland, Carolyn Tapsco, Matt Dillon, Jose Corrales, Emilio Cabrela, Jon Murphy and William Lee.

Backstretch Appreciation Day

The ever popular MTHA Backstretch Appreciation Picnic will be held on Monday, September 19 from 1pm-4pm. Food will be catered by Russell Clark and will include pit ham, pit beef, barbecue chicken, potato salad, cole slaw, baked beans, refreshments and more.

There will be many door prizes up for grabs so no one will leave disappointed. Music will be provided by Carlyle Entertainment.

Please note that this year's event will be held at a NEW location in the tent beside the Laurel Park grandstand.

Poker Tournament Results

The winners of the Texas Hold'em Poker tournament on June 13 were: *1st*: Tim Walsh, *2nd*: Jacob Hess, *3rd*: Tracy Campola. The next tournament is scheduled for Monday, July 11th at the Laurel Park Rec Room starting at noon.

For more information please call Marty Leonard at (203) 733-1367.

Board Adopts Changes To Backstretch Pension Plan For Easier Accessibility

When Mary Grason, the new third-party administrator of the Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association's Backstretch Pension Plan, learned the MTHA board wanted to make helpful changes to the Plan recently, she saw it as a confirmation of what she has found during the year since Pollard and Associates took over the Plan's administration.

"The MTHA Board really cares about the people on the backstretch," Grason says. "They want this plan to be meaningful to them and every change they've made is designed to make the Plan more accessible to its participants."

Grason says when MTHA executive director David Richardson approached her with issues the board wanted to improve, she was delighted to be able to tell them, "We can make some minor changes that will address your concerns without changing the basic structure of the plan, which is meeting your objectives."

At the recent June 23 MTHA board meeting, the following changes were approved:

1. Minimum age for participants in the Plan will now be age 18.

2. The installment payout option will be replaced with a "partial" withdrawal provision.

Regular monthly payouts are more common in annuity and IRA plans, than in one like the Plan in place for the backstretch workers. The change makes it possible for participants to make partial withdrawals when needed, which the MTHA board saw as being the more important benefit.

3. Participants can now get a distribution from their accounts on Mar. 31, Jun. 30, Sep. 30 or Dec. 31, at 80 percent of the last valuation balance with a "true-up" after the current year valuation is completed.

Originally, participants were allowed to take

a distribution from his/her account only between Oct. 15 and Dec. 31 of any year.

"It was very restrictive," says Grason. "If someone put in a claim any other time of the year, they would have to wait for the Oct. 15 - Dec. 31 window to get their money.

The change now allows funds to be distributed at the end of any quarter.

Because the plan is only valued once a year, when a snapshot of the plan investments is taken on Dec. 31, it means that when a payout is made any date thereafter, a participant's account could be worth more or less than the year-end balance.

"We will be paying out based on the December 31 balance of the previous year because we don't know what the accounting will be at the end of the current year. At that time we will "true-up" the participant's account based on the actual fund earnings for the year," Grason says. "We will pay the remaining balance after that has been done.

The administrator explains the 80 percent payout protects the Plan if there has been a market decline since the last valuation date. "If we paid out 100% of a participant's balance and there was a decrease in the plan's investment value, it would cause an overpayment, which could affect the plan as a whole. We feel a 20% hold-back should be an adequate cushion even in a serious market decline because of the diversity of the Plan's investments."

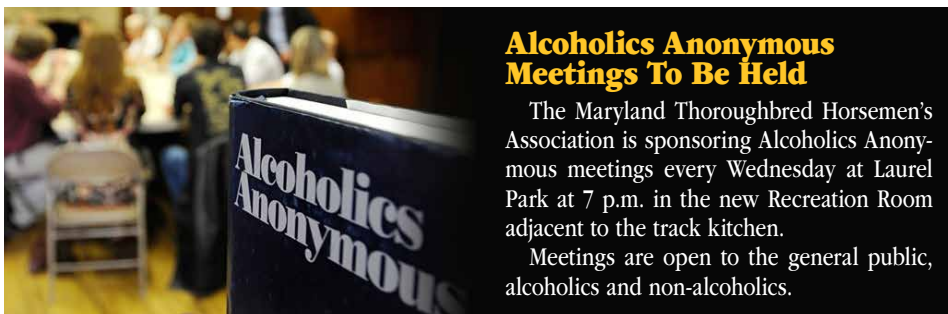
4. The Plan will now allow in-service withdrawal provisions for early retirement age participants. The previous rules allowed only those at the full retirement age of 65 and still working to make in-service withdrawals.

Now, if a Plan participant is still working at the early retirement age of 55 and has 25 years of service, he/she also can make an in-service withdrawal.

Alcoholics Anonymous Meetings To Be Held

The Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association is sponsoring Alcoholics Anonymous meetings every Wednesday at Laurel Park at 7 p.m. in the new Recreation Room adjacent to the track kitchen.

Meetings are open to the general public, alcoholics and non-alcoholics.



MTHA Pickup Softball Games

The MTHA Recreation Program will be hosting pickup softball games for horsemen on Tuesday afternoons at noon.

Played on the softball fields at the Laurel Golf Center and Recreation Center across from Laurel Park on Route 198, everyone is welcome to join the fun.

Call MTHA Recreation Program administrator Marty Leonard at (203) 733-1367 for more information.



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July 2016

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Backstretch Appreciation Day

Monday, September 19th, 1-4pm • Tent Beside Laurel Park Grandstand • All Are Welcome

