

TRF Florida Division Farm Welcomes First Retired Racehorses

The gates swung open at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, January 16, to welcome the first retired racehorses to the new Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation Florida Division farm in Ocala. Situated on 120 lush acres at the Marion County Correctional Institution (MCCI), it becomes the fourth major facility in the TRF's pioneering network of Thoroughbred rescue operations, in which imperiled former racehorses give new purpose in life to the prison inmates who are their caretakers.

The new facility will eventually accommodate approximately 50 Thoroughbreds. Among the first to take up residence at MCCI will be Carterista, a Florida-bred chestnut gelding who raced most of his lengthy career in the Sunshine State. Carterista competed 102 times and won 27 races -- seven of them stakes, including three Gr. III events: the 1992 Christmas Day Handicap, 1993 Tropical Turf Handicap, and 1993 Miami Budweiser Breeders Cup Handicap, all at Calder Race Course. In 1993, the Florida Thoroughbred Breeders and Owners Association named him Champion Turf Horse and in 1998, Claimer of the Year.

Attending the opening ceremonies will be Linda Miller, president of the TRF Florida Division and the owner with her husband, Leverett, of T-Square Stud near Ocala. Mrs. Miller has overseen the development of this division as well as the construction of the showplace facility. Also present will be Don S. Gladish, warden of MCCI; James H. Binger, for many years the chairman of the renowned Tartan Farms in Ocala; Brian Howlett, manager of Tartan Farms, and other racing industry luminaries.

Miller praised the determined efforts of the TRF Florida Division, whose enlistment of broad support from the Florida racing industry insures the program's success as well as sets the standard for continuing expansion into other states that come to the TRF requesting similar operations.

TRF founder and chairman Monique S. Koehler agreed. "Support from the racing industry has been crucial to our operations from the outset," she said. "We are proud of our longstanding partnership with the industry and deeply gratified by its increasing concern for the future of its equine athletes."

Completion of the farm was made possible by a gift of more than seven miles of fencing, gates, water tanks, and a large storage barn from Mr. Binger, who was named the 2000 *TRF Champion* in recognition of his critical contribution to the new facility. Said Miller, "His gift turned the Florida TRF's cherished dream into a working reality."

"I applaud the Foundation's horse rescue and retirement program and am glad to be able to contribute to its growth in Florida," said Jim Binger. "It is very constructive, not only for the horse business but for the whole corrections system."

"The partnership between the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation and Florida Department of Corrections is simply a win-win proposition," said Warden Gladish. "The specialized training in equine care that will result from this endeavor will prove beneficial not only for inmate programs but for the horse industry as well."

Betty Jo Bock of MCCI, who will be responsible for farm management and vocational training, said that the inmates' commitment to the wellbeing of their equine charges is already evident in the construction of the barn that will be the horses' residence. From the well-built stalls to the inlaid tile horseshoe in the floor of the

classroom, where hands-on experience will be complemented by the TRF's vocational courses, the workmanship is outstanding.

Calder Race Course, the FTBOA (through Florida Thoroughbred Charities), the Florida Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association (FHBPA), are charter contributors to the new TRF Florida operation. The Florida Thoroughbred Fillies, Florida Turf Writers, Tampa Bay Downs, and O.B.S. Feed have also been generous in their support. All have committed themselves to sizeable annual donations over the next several years to guarantee the program's continuing growth and success.

Founded in 1982, the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the humane retirement and treatment of Thoroughbred racehorses. It is wholly supported by donations from private citizens and the racing industry.

A pioneer in horse rescue programs, the TRF remains the largest organization of its kind in the nation, providing lifetime homes for former racehorses at TRF-operated and satellite farms in Connecticut, Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Vermont, Virginia, and Wisconsin, and through private adoptions. Major farms include facilities at Wallkill Correctional Facility in Wallkill, N.Y., Blackburn Correctional Complex in Lexington, Ky., and now, Marion County Correctional Institution in Ocala, Fla., where inmates learn vocational and life skills through their care of the horses, and at the Charles Hickey School in Baltimore, Md., where at-risk juveniles benefit from a similar program. At the Exceller Farm in Poughquag, N.Y., racehorses are rehabilitated and retrained for private adoption.

For more information or to make a donation, please contact the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation, PMB 351, 450 Shrewsbury Plaza, Shrewsbury, NJ 07702-4332; telephone, (732) 957-0182, or on the Internet at www.trfinc.org.

—Mary Ratcliffe