

# Kentucky Equine Education Project

## *The Purpose, The People & The Programs*

*The horse industry has an estimated \$4 billion impact on the state's economy each year.*

### **The Purpose**

The Kentucky Equine Education Project (KEEP) was formed to educate, inform and increase awareness of the benefits of Kentucky's horse economy to all citizens of the Commonwealth. Our end goal is to promote and preserve jobs and create more economic opportunities within the equine industry in Kentucky.

As the leading agricultural product and a main catalyst for tourism in the state, the equine industry has an ongoing need to maintain the success it currently enjoys while also protecting and growing it for the future. KEEP reaches out to those who would like to become involved in fostering the industry's ongoing contributions to the state's economy.

### **The People**

KEEP is a membership-based organization of horse owners, breeders, trainers, industry suppliers and horse admirers of all ages. Every breed and discipline is represented by KEEP in its programs and initiatives. KEEP's purpose is to represent all equine interests equally.

KEEP was established in 2004 and since has grown its membership to more than 10,000 strong across the state. KEEP's board of directors and its county team leaders represent the interests of all breeds, associations, disciplines and equine-related businesses.



*The horse industry is Kentucky's top agricultural cash crop.*

KEEP has a team leader on the ground in each of Kentucky's 120 counties and in several cases, there is more than one representative. This allows us to stay in touch with our members and be informed of all local and regional issues that impact the industry. This is where the strength of our initiative comes from, not the top down, but the grassroots campaign from every corner of the state.

### **The Programs**

KEEP has worked diligently to listen to various horse interests in the state and put programs in place to address all of those needs. As a result, KEEP's programming efforts can be categorized in four broad categories: advocacy, awareness, education and program development. Each of these categories focus on vital needs of the industry and helps put plans in place to improve and grow the industry.

## *Advocacy*

Because Kentucky is the “Horse Capital of the World,” KEEP believes our state should have the most progressive legislation in place that helps our equine industry thrive. KEEP works hard lobbying our state legislators and government leaders to develop pro-equine legislation and make Kentucky the most horse-friendly place to conduct business.

Some of our advocacy efforts include:

- Eliminating the sales tax on feed and equipment for the horse industry. Unlike other agricultural activities in the state such as cattle, hog, shrimp and goat farming, the equine industry is subject to sales tax. From its inception, KEEP has supported legislation to eliminate the sales tax and will continue its efforts to remove the patently unfair tax on the industry until we are successful.
- Creating a breeder incentive fund for all breeds of horse in Kentucky. Annually, \$15 million from sales tax on stallion breeding fees has been diverted to the incentive fund to promote the sales and breeding of Kentucky horses. Legislation was passed in 2005 that established the new Kentucky breeder incentive program and funds became available in 2006.
- Removing an out-of state buyer’s tax that encouraged owners to remove their horses from the state. Realizing that the more horses we keep in the state the more jobs and more economic prosperity the state will see, KEEP fought (and was successful) to get this tax removed as an incentive for buyers to leave their animals in Kentucky.
- Continuing to support right of Kentuckians to vote on the issue of expanding gaming. New resources from expanded gaming would help fund education, health care and economic development across Kentucky while keeping the equine industry competitive. Other states have used expanded gaming to strengthen their equine industry, not to mention their state’s budgets, and this has caused increased competition for Kentucky’s racing industry. KEEP realizes the health of racing industry impacts the breeding, sales and other segments of the horse industry in Kentucky.
- Supporting research programs vital to the equine industry. In 2006, \$13.5 million was appropriated by the legislature for the expansion of the Livestock Disease Diagnostic Center in Lexington (but was later vetoed). This center is responsible for the diagnoses of animal diseases and tests to safeguard the health of animals in Kentucky. The Center also provides an early warning system for impending epidemics, such as the mare reproductive loss syndrome. KEEP supports the funding of this center and will work to see that it is completed and fully funded.
- Supporting the Kentucky Horse Park and its efforts to host the 2010 World Equestrian Championships. The 2010 World Games will be the largest sporting event in Kentucky history and the largest equine event ever held in the United States with an estimated economic impact of more than \$150 million and attendance estimated at over 400,000. KEEP supports any necessary State funding to ensure a successful 2010 World Equestrian Championship event at the Kentucky Horse Park.

*Barbaro, the 2006 Kentucky Derby Winner, is the first Derby winner to qualify for funds under the new breeder incentive program.*

*KEEP works with many other agriculture-related organizations and associations. We believe that these partnerships help us all further our cause for the collective good of the entire agricultural community.*



## *Awareness*

A critical component of improving the equine industry in Kentucky is to build awareness of how vital the industry is to the overall economy of our state. Whether someone owns one pleasure pony or a hundred thoroughbreds, they are contributors to the economics of the equine industry.

KEEP works hard to inform legislators, business leaders, city and county administrators and the general public on the contributions of the equine industry as a whole. Since the organization was created our motto has been “Horses Work for Kentucky.”

Some of KEEP’s awareness building initiatives include:

- Developing a marketing program that uses newspaper, radio, television, direct mail and aggressive public relations to raise awareness of the importance of the equine industry.
- Creating a monthly newsletter that is distributed to the more than 10,000 members
- Creating a database of more than 12,000 names of equine industry participants in Kentucky. This core group has been and continues to be instrumental in KEEP’s efforts to seek legislative change in Frankfort.
- Traveling the state and speaking to civic and business groups about KEEP’s mission and the importance of the equine industry.
- Submitting letters to the editors across the state reporting on KEEP’s activities and how it impacts the local communities.

*There are more than 100,000 jobs generated by the state’s horse industry.*

**Horses  
work  
for Kentucky.**

## *Education*

Creating educational opportunities for students in the equine industry is vital to KEEP’s mission. It is the youth of today who will become the leaders of our industry tomorrow. We believe that Kentucky rightly claims the title “Horse Education Capital of the World” and young people should be encouraged to learn all there is to know about the equine industry.

- The following are some of the educational initiatives that KEEP has established: Funding a grant program for 4-H programs, horse shows and educational institutions throughout Kentucky. The KEEP board has allocated funds to support various equine events and activities. Some of those funds have been earmarked for 4-H equine clubs. Colleges and universities, public and private, can receive grants to pay for equipment in support of their equine programs. In addition, state horse associations are eligible for funding support to continue the educational mission of their individual organizations.
- Creating a scholarship program for college juniors and seniors studying equine programs at the state’s public or private institutions.

*To date, more than \$170,000 has been awarded in 81 counties for grants to help improve 4-H programs, breed associations, and provide college scholarships to students studying an equine program at a Kentucky institution.*

*The horse industry is a key driver of tourism expenditures in the state.*

## ***Program Development***

Because KEEP is a statewide and all breed association we seek to develop programs to benefit the entire industry. Putting programs in place that can not only support existing equine interests but also help establish new programs that can benefit the entire industry is essential to KEEP's mission.

The following are a few programs KEEP has helped establish:

- Founding and supporting the creation of the Trail Riding Equestrians in Kentucky (TREK) in conjunction with the Kentucky Horse Council to promote the preservation and expansion of trail riding opportunities for all breeds of horse on public and private lands.
- Creating a Youth Council of children from various backgrounds and horse breeds to work together to educate other kids about the KEEP program and to promote the benefits and importance of the equine industry. The program is set to begin in the Fall of 2006.
- Working in unison with the University of Kentucky Extension Service and the Kentucky Horse Council, KEEP is promoting efforts to count the number of horses in state. Previous counts have only been estimates and we support a more thorough study as we believe it is critical to our mission to understand the exact breadth of our industry.

## **Membership**

KEEP is a membership-based organization. Memberships begin at \$5 for junior memberships; \$10 for adults; and there is a new family membership available for \$20. To find out more about membership contact KEEP at 1-866-771-KEEP or log onto horseswork.com to apply online.

As a member of KEEP you will enjoy free admission to the Kentucky Horse Park and any of Kentucky's Pari-mutuel Race Tracks (except Kentucky Derby, Kentucky Oaks, or Breeders' Cup Days) through December 2007. Members also receive our newsletters, press releases, equine news, and a 15 percent discount at the Kentucky Horse Park Gift Shop

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## **KEEP's Board of Directors**

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