



USEA Chairman of the Board, Kyra Stuart.

Lessons Learned

In June of 2005, the Westmoreland Davis Memorial Foundation, Inc. released a statement announcing: "the Foundation will no longer operate the Morven Park International Equestrian Center as an internal part of the Foundation." However, "the Foundation still intended to support the Northern Virginia equestrian and event community by looking for a strategic partner to lease the facilities from the Foundation," according to Will O'Keefe, executive director of the Foundation.

In the fall of 2005, the USEA began to explore just such a possible strategic partnership. A presentation was made to the USEA Board of Governors at the December Annual Convention and a USEA Morven Park Task Force was formed.

"The USEA and Morven Park have had a long and amicable relationship and we wanted to see if there was any way that relationship could be developed into a mutual partnership whereby Morven Park would remain available for all equestrian use as well as for the benefit of the local community," said Jo Whitehouse, USEA CEO.

"However, at a meeting of the USEA Executive Committee, in February, it was decided that while the USEA fully supported the effort to preserve open space for equestrian activities it could not, as a national association with a charter to support members all over the United States, focus its attention and resources on one site in particular," concluded Whitehouse.

In March, with the USEA no longer involved directly, financially or as an organization, an independent, non-profit new company (Newco) was formed to represent the current and future users of the park.

According to the Newco chairman, Roger Secrist, "While the USEA authorized \$25,000 to front end the due diligence costs, none of those funds were used. Jo secured and received pledges totaling over \$30,000 from the eventing community, the majority of which paid for the community feasibility study and due diligence and the development of a multi-use business plan."

"As recently as the end of May, Newco, to be named Governors' Park Foundation, seemed very close to closing a deal, but in the final analysis obstacles were encountered that prevented the group arriving at a lease agreement amicable to both sides," said Whitehouse.

In the overall view of this year-long exploration, the USEA now has a wealth of knowledge, and an extremely useful document, that can be shared with other equestrian facilities to show how a multi-use model may be the way forward for equestrian land preservation. If the USEA has been the catalyst and facilitator of such findings, we have served the equestrian community well indeed.

As the Westmoreland Davis Foundation goes forward to perhaps create its own Newco to maintain the equestrian facility, and use some of the ideas the Governors' Park Foundation study revealed, then we have all achieved our main goal of keeping the Morven Park International Equestrian Center available for equestrians of all disciplines, and perhaps even beyond that of just equestrian pursuits, to soccer players, and cultural venues not explored in the past.

On the eventing calendar, of great importance as this issue reaches you, are the USEA American Eventing Championships at the Carolina Horse Park September 20-24, and the World Equestrian Games (FEI Games) in Aachen, Germany. We salute all the participants from Beginner Novice to those members of Team USA who will represent the United States on the world stage. You convey the best at all levels of competition and remind us of the vastness of our sport. Our pride shines on all of you and the excellence you represent.

A most special thank you to Lefreda Williams and her marvelous crew at the Carolina Horse Park for bringing our first AEC to fruition. You gave it life and a wonderful home for three years. You gave our vision wings! **And many, many thanks to our new AEC title sponsor, Wellpride, an amazing company that produces an Omega-3 fish oil supplement for horses. The event will now be called the Wellpride American Eventing Championships.**

To Tom Moxley and Steve Cooper, co-owners of Lamplight Equestrian Center in Wayne, Illinois, congratulations on becoming the home for the 2007-2009 AEC. We know you, and your organizer, Katie Lindsay, will do a marvelous job of welcoming our eventing world to the Midwest. When we created the AEC, we did so with the hope that it would be a competition which would move around the country, allowing more and more to participate. We thank Lamplight Equestrian Center for stepping up to the plate and allowing this to happen.

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