

From the President

By Neil Agate, MHC President

Happy New Year & welcome to 2021! We made it! Like most, I am hopeful that 2021 will be a lot different than 2020.

As I write this column in the middle of December, glimmers of hope are beginning to shine through. Although COVID-19 numbers still seem to be on the rise, news of several vaccines being given to front line workers is an encouragement to all. Unfortunately, I suspect that long after the virus has been eradicated by the vaccine we will feel the financial stresses of the pandemic. The financial conditions of the Maryland Horse Council, *The Equiery* and the Maryland Equine Transition Service (METS) have been greatly affected as we have seen big drops in advertising, sponsorships and donations.

But, we made it through 2020. I am proud of the hard work put in by everyone involved with the Maryland Horse Council, *The Equiery* and METS as conditions were less than ideal for all three components of MHC. We survived 2020!

Over the last few months I've had many discussions about what 2021 is going to look like for the Maryland horse community. The fact that the vaccine is starting to be delivered in larger quantities is certainly reason to hope that we are on the way back to normalcy. It is very likely, however, that we still have a few bumps on the road to recovery. For MHC, *The Equiery* and METS we need to focus on thriving and not just surviving. To do that, we need participation from our members, readers and supporters. That means you!

All parts of MHC are here to serve you, the Maryland horse community, and everything we do is driven by your feedback. Not only is it driven by you, but it is supported by you. It is supported by your membership dues, by your ad placements and by your donations. For the entire Maryland horse community to thrive, we need to make sure that the community grows and we believe that growth needs to be bolstered by strong organizations like the Maryland Horse Council.

The Maryland Horse Council is primarily a membership based organization that, under the direction of our Board of Directors and Executive Committee (both made up of our members), fosters the growth of the Maryland horse community in many ways. As things change in Maryland, our efforts need to evolve to make sure that we are well representing our members and addressing their needs.

It is important for us to have as large a base of members as possible, not only to ensure that we represent our broad horse community, but also to know that we have the support to fund our activities and give our sponsors maximum exposure to keep their businesses functioning. So, if you

are reading this, please encourage your friends in the horse community to join MHC and if you have ideas on how to reach out to more members of our community, please let us know.

One of MHC's most important functions is representing our community before the state legislature, and sometimes local governments, too. Our impact in Annapolis is bolstered by our Political Action Committee, which financially supports the campaigns of legislators who support the horse community. A strong and effective Horse Council in Annapolis requires a strongly supported PAC, and we rely on you to support the PAC and keep it strong and effective.

If we want to make sure that we continue to have a great community communications vehicle like *The Equiery*, we need to make sure that we advertise our businesses in *The Equiery* and as members, we need to support those advertisers (and tell them you saw their ad in *The Equiery*). Recently, we've had discussions with several advertisers about the value of print advertising versus other methods, such as social media. The popular opinion seems to be that social media is the way to go, but those who have been in the advertising business know that there is no one single best advertising forum, as for an advertising campaign to be successful, it needs to be seen in multiple formats and multiple times to reinforce the message in a consumer's mind. Even Facebook understands this as when they have important information to disseminate they take out full page ads in traditional newspapers like *The Washington Post* or *New York Times* (as they recently did in their privacy battle with Apple)

While platforms like Facebook might appear to be successful as you're constantly fed ads, we all know how quickly we can block out those ads and how rarely we click on them to see the message they are trying to convey. Despite this, we see value in social media ads as part of a coordinated approach which includes multiple types of media, including regional print advertising such as *The Equiery*. By doing so, it delivers on a triple bottom line, supporting your business, your Maryland horse community and your horse.

If you are a business owner reading this, call *The Equiery* today and ask about our multi-platform advertising packages. Our staff can customize a package that best suits your needs while maximizing exposure of your business. Although it was a financially tough year for the *Equiery* the MHC Executive Committee have decided not to implement our usual cost of production advertising rate increase this year - see reprinted letter to Advertisers on page 8.

Almost three years ago, MHC received a grant to help us address the pervasive problem of unwanted horses. The grant funded the startup of our Maryland Equine Transition Service (METS), which to date has helped re-home almost 200 horses without placing additional demands

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