

### From the President

By Neil Agate, Maryland Horse Council President

Recently the Maryland Equine Transition Service (METS) released its Annual Report for 2020. As its last year of a three-year grant from The Right Horse Initiative and the Arnall Family Foundation, 2020 was supposed to be a breakout year for the program as two large events were planned to jumpstart fundraising and introduce the program to a much larger audience and insure the program's sustainability.

As many of you will recall, METS began as a result of the Maryland Horse Council's vocal support of the SAFE Act, which aimed to ban shipping horses to Mexico and Canada for slaughter. We realized that if the act were passed, there would be a large number of horses that would need to be taken care of in other ways. Over several months in 2017, MHC and our partners looked at many ways we might be able to help those horses in Maryland. These included setting up our own rescues, supporting existing rescues and many others alternatives.

We elected to set up METS as a single resource for anyone in the state of Maryland who, for whatever reason, could no longer keep their horse (or horses). Not only did this structure allow us to quickly scale up to support the whole state, but also complemented our existing network of horse rescues in Maryland.

In early 2018, we were fortunate to receive a grant from The Right Horse Initiative/Arnall Family Foundation to support the creation of METS and cover our operating expenses for the first three years. We are now nearing the end of the grant funding and as a community, we need to determine if METS will just be a three year flash in the pan or if it can be sustained through support of the Maryland horse community.

In the last three years, METS has helped transition over 200 horses to new homes. While not all of these horses were in immediate danger of ending up in inhumane situations, they all had the potential of having



Neil Agate, MHC President / MHC Board member, meeting with Dr. Chris Smith, DVM of Foxhall Equine to discuss METS and talk about ways that the Maryland horse community can sustainably support METS moving forward.

much worse outcomes than they did through METS support.

In 2020, the management of METS was transitioned to the new MHC Foundation, a 501(c)3 non profit organization that will allow all donations to be tax deductible.

We are quickly approaching a time when we will have to make a decision on whether to continue METS beyond the middle of 2021. I feel it would be a tragic loss to the Maryland horse community if we are not able to sustainably fund the program. It has been a huge success in every way but fund raising. We have had discussions with neighboring regions about expanding the program which would increase our network reach as well as our potential funding opportunities.

We all love our horses and I know we all feel that we will not desert our horses as they get older or as our lives change as we get older. However these issues often require finding our horses new homes and once they leave our ownership we usually have very little control or visibility into their future care. This is the reason to fund METS and keep it going. To have a program like METS as a resource for future owners of our horses that can insure they have the best chances of avoiding bad situations is an invaluable resource for our Maryland horse community.

Please read the one page summary of the METS Annual Report on page 6 of this issue and the full report on the METS website at <https://www.mdequinetransition.org>.

If you are able to support the program financially or have ideas and suggestions on keeping METS functioning please reach out to our METS Development Officer, Jessica Avila-Franco at [jessica@mdequinetransition.org](mailto:jessica@mdequinetransition.org) or 202-258-2226.



In April, The Maryland Fund For Horses (MFFH) and METS banded together to assist horse owners throughout the state affected by the COVID-19 economic crisis. The MFFH and METS collaboration was to provide an expanded safety net geared toward keeping as many horses as possible out of danger during this challenging time.

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