

### What an Incredible Journey!

By Neil Agate, MHC President



As this will be my last MHC Publisher's letter as President of the Maryland Horse Council, I hope you will indulge me with a short trip down memory lane to see the incredible progress MHC has made over the last few years.

The Maryland Horse Council has always been a flourishing and influential organization within the state and has had many successes legislatively and in helping to solidify and build the horse community. When I first got involved with

the organization almost 10 years ago, we were very much a volunteer run organization with a part-time management company keeping the back office moving along. About five years ago, three separate topics started to be discussed within MHC. All of them were significant and I remember thinking that if any one of them came to fruition it would be good for MHC and the horse community in general.

Those discussions were 1) create a state wide aftercare program to stem the shipping of unwanted horses to slaughter, 2) whether the MHC should get into the publishing business with either a new newsletter or acquiring *The Equiery*, and 3) the hiring of a full-time Executive Director.

Ironically the third of these was the one we focused most of our attention on and yet it was the first two of these discussions that have been the most successful. Despite the fact that we have not been able to fully execute on the third, hiring an Executive Director is still on our radar. MHC has seen significant growth in size and influence during this time, and a professional Executive Director will no doubt be needed in the not so distant future to keep all the moving parts working efficiently and effectively.

The purchase and integration of *The Equiery* has been a great success and promises to deliver dividends to the MHC community for years to come. We continue to integrate MHC's missions and messages into *The Equiery* while maintaining the high quality of content that has made *The Equiery* a mainstay in all parts of Maryland's equestrian community. The staff, Katherine Rizzo (Editor-in-Chief), Tracy McKenna (Associate Publisher), Emily Nessel (Marketing Coordinator) and Carolyn Del

Grosso (Bookkeeping) have done an incredible job not only maintaining the high quality of the magazine but also making sure that we keep pushing forward on all aspects of the publication.

The whole team dug in when in 2018, our long-time printer announced with very short notice that they were going out of business and we were faced with finding a new printer within 30 days. Not only did we find a new printer, but in the process we selected one (Evergreen Printing) that uses new technology allowing us to upgrade the print and paper quality to deliver a higher quality publication than the newsprint we had previously been printed on.

Behind the scenes, we have recently moved to an all-in-one online publishing system (Magazine Manager) that allows us to keep all of our information within the same system for advertisers, ads and editorial content. While this gives us a great advantage in increased efficiency, like all new systems, it required a lot of effort, especially for Katherine who now does all of the layout on the new system and Tracy, whose whole ad sales workflow process has changed.

While our main focus for the foreseeable future will be on the print publication, like everyone in the publishing business, we have been spending a lot of time on integrating our online presence. Recently we've published new online classifieds and an all new online events calendar on equiery.com. Over the coming months we'll be working on a number of online directories, further integration of our print content to our online sites, and a new initiative that will allow us to boost our print advertisers reach through an exciting new online advertising program.

I'd like to publicly acknowledge the great work that Emily Nessel has done in not only holding many parts of *The Equiery* together, but also stepping up and taking over the role of MHC Membership Coordinator, where she has helped streamline the whole membership process and initiated several newsletters that allow us to keep our membership and the community informed on everything that is going on in our vibrant community.

Finally we all know that operations like MHC/*Equiery* can't run successfully without a good financial base and for that we can thank Carolyn Del Grosso who makes sure that all the right bills are sent out and our finances are in good shape. In addition, I want to thank Carolyn for keeping the doors open for the last 12+ months by physically going into the office every day during this pandemic to make sure nothing fell through the cracks.

The formation and growth of the Maryland Equine Transition Service (METS) over the last four years has been nothing short of amazing. What started as an unfunded idea to slow the transportation of unwanted horses to slaughter in Mexico and Canada has become an extremely

*continued...*

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