

A SEAL OF APPROVAL

The **EQUUS FOUNDATION'S GUARDIAN PROGRAM** screens charities to ensure they are transparent and operating at the highest levels of horse care.

ALL HORSES, even champions of the racetrack and show ring, are only one unlucky sale away from an uncertain future," said Lynn Coakley, founder of the EQUUS Foundation. The foundation, which works to promote all types of collaboration between humans and horses, also works to protect and save increasing numbers of horses at risk of abuse, neglect, and slaughter, in large part through the support of organizations nationwide.

"To ensure a future for America's horses, it is critical to identify and invest in the most effective equine charities in the U.S.—those that operate at the highest standards," Coakley explained. "With the internet and social media, it is easy for people to be misinformed and misled, so the need for transparency is more important now than ever before."

In 2017 the EQUUS Foundation established the Guardians program, which recognizes organizations that have made themselves transparent and accountable for their programs, horse care practices, and governance.

In order for an organization to earn the EQUUS Foundation Guardian designation, the organization must first join the EQUUS Foundation Equine Welfare Network, an online nationwide network of equine nonprofits and government entities where people can search and connect to the organizations in their community. Afterwards, they must submit information regarding all aspects of their organization. Only charities that undergo this comprehensive and unique verification process receive the EQUUS Foundation's seal of transparency and are eligible to receive financial support.



KILEY BATES FOR THE HAMPTON CLASSIC

Lynn Coakley, Georgina Bloomberg, and EQUUS Foundation vice president, Valerie Angeli with the staff and volunteers from Rising Starr Horse Rescue and an adoptable horse at a parade of adoptable horses held at the opening ceremonies of the Hampton Classic 2018.

"Prior to our establishing the Guardian program, equine organizations seeking financial support from the EQUUS Foundation completed a traditional grant application," said Coakley. "Over the years, it became apparent that many of these organizations not only needed financial support, they needed direction and training to improve their operations and practices. The information required to receive the Guardian seal serves as a

guide to best practices in governance, financial management, program operations, and horse care. The program is a critical component of our commitment to not only increase adoptions of at-risk horses and provide a safe haven for aged horses, but also increase opportunities for all people to partner with horses in innovative ways."

Helping spread the EQUUS message are the EquuStars, an inspirational group of equestrians who work with the foundation to motivate fellow equestrians and horse lovers to take action on behalf of horses. They include Georgina Bloomberg, Brianne Goutal-Marteau, Hayley Barnhill, Paige Johnson, Jessica Springsteen, and Clementine Goutal (see page 48).

The foundation has highlighted some of their Guardian charities at the annual Animal Adoption Day at the Hampton Classic. The event, sponsored by Georgina Bloomberg, also included adoptable dogs, cats, and rabbits. "This is one of our most anticipated and joyful events of the year, when horse lovers and the horse community come out to the beautiful Hampton Classic with the sole purpose of supporting at-risk and transitioning horses that need our help and to learn what they can do to make all horses feel like champions!" said Valerie Angeli, EQUUS Foundation vice president.



GRIFFIN AND RISING STARR HORSE RESCUE

Griffin was taken in by Rising Starr Horse Rescue (RSHR) from a kill pen waiting to be shipped to Mexico. After seven days in the pen, Griffin had contracted pneumonia. "He had scars on both sides and on his face and lower legs," said Kelly Stackpole, the organization's founder. "He was generally healthy, but he had been abused, and needed help learning to trust people. We rescued him, and then rehabilitated and retrained him."

RSHR was founded in 2015 by Kelly and a group of friends and school-age children, and it took some time before they were able to raise enough money to start rescuing horses. When the opportunity to rescue Griffin came along in 2016, the group saw their chance to rescue their first horse. "The money to rescue him was raised by our school-age volunteers," said Kelly, who is a professional riding instructor and horse trainer.

So far, RSHR has rescued 16 horses and re-homed 13 horses. "Our programs have also expanded to include educating the public on the reality and responsibility of horse ownership. We welcome volunteers of all ages and have training programs for them," Kelly continued. "We're looking to expand our rescue and programs, and EQUUS has been absolutely instrumental in our growth."

As an EQUUS Guardian, RSHR has been invited each year to the Hampton Classic Animal Adoption Day where rescue organizations feature adoptable horses, dogs, and cats. It was at the event in 2017 that Griffin found his forever home with a loving family from Great Barrington, Massachusetts. Today, he is a well-adjusted member of their family and a best friend to his young rider.



TEDDY AND OMEGA HORSE RESCUE

When renowned equestrian Georgina Bloomberg began her search for her five-year-old son, Jasper's, first pony, she contacted the EQUUS Foundation for help. It was no surprise that the animal welfare advocate would take the opportunity to find and help a horse in need. The foundation put Georgina in touch with one of their Guardian charities, the Omega Horse Rescue in Airville, Pennsylvania. Kelly Smith, the founder and president of the rescue, had recently rescued a miniature horse named Teddy from a tragic fate. Held in a kill-buyer's facility, he was headed to slaughter. Smith described him as sweet and docile, trained for both riding and driving, with a thick and scruffy winter coat. In January, Teddy was shipped to Gotham South, the Bloomberg's winter home in Wellington, Florida. There, Teddy received a haircut and an instant best friend in young Jasper. The pair have been taking lessons together, and have even jumped some small fences.

"Thanks to the EQUUS Foundation and Omega Horse Rescue, watching Jasper take his first riding lesson with Teddy was one of the most joyful moments of my life," Bloomberg told *Tap Into Horses*. "This is the perfect match. Teddy and Jasper will have many happy moments and a lifetime together."

Above left, Georgina Bloomberg, Valerie Angeli, and a volunteer for Rising Starr Horse Rescue riding Griffin at Adoption Day at the Hampton Classic in 2017, the day Griffin got adopted. **Above right,** Jasper and Georgina Bloomberg with Teddy and Crown.

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