



John Barlett and Jacqueline Taylor from the Equus Television Network with Neda DeMayo, founder and president of the Return to Freedom charity; Valerie Angeli, Equus Foundation vice president of engagement; and Steven Latham, producer and co-director of *The Mustangs: America's Wild Horses*.

PROTECTING AMERICA'S VULNERABLE HORSES

The Equus Foundation Works To Educate People On The Importance Of A Horse's Life Both In And Out Of The Show Ring

BY SYDNEY JONES

The lives of horses are not only measured by how high they jump or how many ribbons they win. There comes a time when a horse can no longer compete and is in need of a next chapter or deserving of a long-term, relaxing retirement life.

Unfortunately, many horses don't get that chance, which is where the Equus Foundation steps in. Founded in 2002 by Lynn Coakley, the foundation exists to place emphasis on horse care both during and post competition.

Driven by a mission to safeguard the comfort and dignity of America's horses throughout their lives, the Equus Foundation focuses on empowering equine charities to operate at the highest standards for horse care and service, inspiring horse lovers to become horse protectors by simulating advocacy and volunteerism, and by educating the public on the value of horses through stories of their achievements and contributions.

Coakley founded the Equus Founda-

tion after realizing a staggering statistic. "Over two million horses have been shipped across our borders for slaughter, most of which were young, healthy and had untapped potential," she explained.

The transition period between competing and retirement is when the horses are most vulnerable. It's a time when their owners can no longer care for them, so the foundation helps to provide financial support to ensure these horses go to a good home and live out their lives. ►



Victoria Colvin at the Winter Equestrian Festival in Wellington. PHOTO BY CASSIDY KLEIN/HELPS MEDIA GROUP

“The Equus Foundation has awarded over \$5.2 million in grants to equine charities nationwide that rescue, rehabilitate, retrain, re-home and retire horses, and charities that partner with horses to improve the well-being of people,” Coakley explained.

The foundation also prides itself on education about the significant impact of horses. The foundation does this through several initiatives to help spread awareness about horse care both in Wellington and nationwide.

This year, the Equus Foundation initiated its 2022 “Stepping Out for America’s Horses” campaign to coincide with the Winter Equestrian Festival and held two major events in Wellington this season.

The campaign provides the opportunity for horse lovers to directly impact the lives of horses at the Equus Foundation’s Guardian charities by selecting a horse from a list of 120 horses to fundraise for. The fundraiser provided the opportunity

for equestrians to share their “Stepping Out” page with their family and friends, furthering the reach of the foundation.

The foundation will also be supporting America’s Wild Horses through the Stepping Out Campaign. On March 30, the foundation held an exclusive live screening in Wellington of the documentary *The Mustangs: America’s Wild Horses*, produced and co-directed by Steven Latham. The Equus Foundation has vouched to match the first \$25,000 raised during the campaign. There are more than 80,000 wild horses on federal lands and more than 50,000 in government corrals.

Another prestigious event held this season was the Robb Report’s Horsepower Gala, which took place March 31 at the farm of Helgstrand Dressage in Wellington. The event was created by the Robb Report to increase awareness surrounding the issues of horse abuse, neglect and slaughter and sup-

port the mission of the Equus Foundation. The foundation was the beneficiary of the live auction, receiving more than \$110,000 to go toward protecting America’s horses.

Aside from the fundraising initiatives and financial support that the Equus Foundation provides, many well-known riders have stepped in to support its mission and serve as athlete ambassadors throughout the country.

“The Equus Foundation Athletes program recognizes equestrians who demonstrate that success is measured not only by winning but by making the quality of life of their equine partners paramount,” Coakley said. “They serve as inspirational role models in the world of equestrian sport to help raise important awareness on behalf of the horses we all love. These athletes exemplify that the horse should always come first — and what happens to them after their sport careers are over is just as important.” ➤



The Robb Report's Horsepower Gala benefiting the Equus Foundation, held at Helgstrand Dressage in Wellington. PHOTO BY KOLODNY PHOTO

Two local top-level riders, Catherine Tyree and Victoria Colvin, have taken a stance alongside the foundation to be a voice for America's horses both here and nationwide. Colvin is proud of her work as an Equus Foundation athlete ambassador.

"I am proud to support the Equus Foundation as an athlete ambassador and support the work they do in bringing awareness to the abuse horses face across the world," she said. "We are privileged to work with and rely on such incredible animals for our careers, so it's important to me to give back in any way that I can and champion organizations like Equus that are making such a big difference."

Tyree agreed. "Working with Lynn and the entire Equus Foundation has been a wonderful experience," she said. "We are all fueled by one thing: our love for the horses. What Lynn has built is truly special. The foundation's commitment to making sure each and every horse has their forever home with the proper love and care is admirable. I'm grateful for the opportunity to work with such a special group to give back

to the animals that give us so much on a day-to-day basis."

Moving forward, the Equus Foundation wants to continue to spread awareness about abuse and neglect to America's horses and provide financial and educational support to help keep horses an important part of American life.

"Informed giving is more important now than ever before — which is why we ensure donor dollars are invested in programs that have the greatest impact. We believe boundless opportunities exist for thousands of horses to contribute positively to the cognitive, physical, emotional and social well-being of all people," Coakley said. "There are 61 million people in the United States with disabilities, yet only 69,000 are benefiting from the powerful healing ability of horses. Many more at-risk and transitioning horses could be serving people with disabilities. We need to embrace a fundamental shift in our attitude toward horses — from the horse as a commodity to the horse as an athlete, companion, teacher and healer."

Learn more about the organization at www.equusfoundation.org.



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