

# WORLD-CLASS CARE

Whether Thoroughbred owners have invested a little or a lot, the care of their equine extended family is important. As circumspect as they would be in finding suitable boarding schools for their children, they need to ensure a proper facility is caring for their horses. Of primary concern are safety, welfare, access to proper veterinary care, top-notch facilities, experienced staff, and good business acumen that includes timely, thorough communications.

Learn about some of the leading facilities around the country that specialize in boarding in the following profiles.

## AURORA FARMS

Located on gently rolling hills in Shelbyville, Ky., Melody Adler's Aurora Farms offers 89 beautiful acres for boarding horses.

Adler launched the farm when she couldn't find the right place to retire her own horse. Today the farm boards retired horses as well as horses rehabilitating from injury and foaling mares.

With its roots as a retirement farm, Aurora prides itself in specialized care for the older horse. The farm, which accepts all breeds for retirement, offers individualized feeding programs, feed supplements for issues such as joint aid and hoof care, deworming on a rotating basis, annual vaccinations, dental floating from a veterinarian, and regular hoof trimming from a farrier.

Horses receive turnout on multiple pastures of more than 30 acres with new run-in shelters with fans, and new fencing. Horses also receive top-quality feed, and hay and all of the pastures have automatic waterers.

Aurora Farms specializes in recovery for surgical patients and long-term care for all types of injuries. The farm has experience with cases of severe founder, navicular disease, suspensory desmi-

tis, suspensory injuries, post colic surgery, fracture recovery, eye injuries, and more. Adler will discuss each case with the horse owner and customize a treatment to ensure the necessary steps are carried out to help a horse recover from injury or illness.

Treatments include bandaging, monitoring vitals, 24-hour monitoring, injections, administration of oral medications, and specialized wound care. The farm is capable of running blood work on site.

"As such, we can keep up with the progress of the patient and get results quickly (including weekends and holidays) to the attending veterinarian," the farm notes on its website.

The farm's foaling care includes 24-hour video monitoring, a heated foaling area, four foaling stalls, and specialized attention—no more than four mares on foal watch at any time. Adler attends all foalings, and the farm has a veterinarian on call. In emergencies the farm has a foal resuscitator and oxygen tank.

The farm foaled Valerie and David Blethen's homebred Withgreatpleasure, winner of this year's Ruffian Handicap (gr. II) at Aqueduct.

Adler has certificates from Colorado State University in foaling, equine re-

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production, and working with problem mares and stallions, among others. From Rutgers, she has certificates in equine nutrition and horse management.

## BRANDYWINE FARM

There is no more valuable asset in the Thoroughbred business than experience. When owners and breeders are looking for a boarding operation in Central Kentucky, few places and fewer people have more experience than Dr. Pam and Jim Robinson at Brandywine Farm.

"This is what we've been doing for 40 years," Pam Robinson said. "This is our passion."

And it's what they've been doing on their farm outside Paris, Ky., since coming to Kentucky from North Carolina with a two-horse consignment for the 1997 Keeneland November sale. Their farm has grown from around 100 to 600 acres, and while their goal is to raise an equine athlete, the Robinsons have gone far beyond that of late with a steady stream of grade I winners coming off the farm.

They co-bred and raised Ruler On Ice, classic winner of the 2011 Belmont Stakes and third-place finisher in the Breeders' Cup Classic (both gr. I). This

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2012 Kentucky Oaks runner-up

**DISCREET CAT-G1**

Millionaire and Eclipse Award Finalist

**DISCREETLY MINE-G1**

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**DIXIE CHATTER-G1**

G1 stakes winning 2YO

**LADY OF THE DESERT-G2**

European Highweight

**MUSKET MAN-G2**

Millionaire and Kentucky Derby-3rd

**MALOSSOL-G3**

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**SO LONG GEORGE-G3**

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Jack Brothers  
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year they have been represented as breeder of grade III winner and Preakness Stakes (gr. I) runner-up Itsmyluckyday; Secret Compass, the grade I-winning 2-year-old filly; and grade III winner Debt Ceiling.

Brandywine is currently seeking some year-round boarding relationships, and the farm provides the individual attention your mare needs—be it a maiden mare, older mare, or one with special needs. The farm is well-suited to raise foals from the day they hit the ground to the moment they are ready for sale or the racetrack.

“We are full-service, and we can take your horse all the way through the process, from the time you breed the mare,

foal the mare, and prep the foal for a weanling or yearling sales.”

Brandywine’s extensive sales prep program has gone to the next level of late with the addition of its underwater treadmill.

“I think it is a fantastic thing,” Pam Robinson said of the treadmill. “Since we started using it, we’ve had several grade I winners.”

Robinson uses many of the principles she learned, helped devise, and researched while she was the director of the University of North Carolina’s human physiology research lab, that was a regional testing center for U.S. Olympic team candidates.

The Robinsons have learned a great deal about business and ways to treat their horses and their clients.

“We just try to raise good horses and keep a good reputation for treating people honestly and fairly,” Pam said.

Their story is another classic Kentucky horse tale.

**COLUMBIANA FARM**

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Ochocki’s Columbiana Farm, located near Paris, Ky., was born of the Ochockis’ personal interest in the Thoroughbred racing industry, which began in California more than 30 years ago. Originally based in Riverside, Calif., the Ochockis began providing boarding services for friends. As their personal interests grew, so did their client base and they expanded, eventually moving their farm to the Lexington area in the early 1990s. They established Columbiana Farm at its present location on Clintonville Road in 1995.

At the more than 400-acre farm, horses are treated to individual and customized care in five barns housing 120 stalls. Columbiana Farm’s full staff reside on site, and a night watchman is on duty to provide added security. Veterinary care is provided by the doctors of the Hagyard Equine Medical Institute, one of the most highly regarded equine practices in the area.

Every equine resident is personally handled daily, to best monitor their health and condition. Feed programs are customized and modified to meet the needs of each horse. In addition, the pastures have been analyzed to ensure premium forage for grazing. To further maintain the pastures, a rotation system is in place to give pastures necessary

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*Photo by Marc Manning*

rest. As an added benefit of this rotation system, the resting fields that are allowed to grow are then cut, baled, and used for stall bedding, providing a consistent environment for the horses.

Columbiana Farm has partnered with Kathy Berkey to expand its services to include sales prep and representation. Kathy brings to the farm more than 30 years of experience in buying and selling horses at public auction. The farm has seen notable success with its boutique consignment—a result of bringing the same high-level and personal attention to the sales as it does to its boarding and breeding operation. In 2012 Columbianana sold the highest-priced City Zip yearling (for \$170,000) at the Keeneland September yearling sale and this year continued its success with the sale's top-priced yearling by Tiz Wonderful, which sold for \$230,000.

The Ochockis have a dozen mares of their own, but they receive just as much gratification from their clients' horses as they do their own. "What's most satisfying is the success of the offspring," said Bob Ochocki. "Following the horses we've foaled and tutored, watching how they succeed...that's the real pride and satisfaction we take in our work." Columbiana Farm has produced quite a few

stars from its Paris pastures; from the many graded stakes winners who were foaled and/or raised under Columbianana care are Tizdejavu, Papa Clem, Taste of Paradise, Exfactor, Miss Houdini, Snow Ridge, Eishin Champ, Eishin Preston, and many more.

### ENDEAVOR FARM

From watching as a young boy the great Mr. Prospector being foaled at Spendthrift Farm, to managing multiple other Thoroughbred operations throughout his career, Terry Nickell's vast experience in the industry has finally led to the foundation of his own farm.

"(The horse industry) is the only thing in life that's been my focus. I don't know anything else, and I honestly don't want to," said Nickell, 54, who with Mark Tsagalakis, recently bought the former Richland Hills/Wafare Farm property near Midway, Ky., and renamed it Endeavor Farm.

The 160-acre property, which is under the operation of M&T Equine Ventures, offers boarding and sales preparation for all United States Thoroughbred sales. It also stands the stallion Greeley's Conquest, a multiple stakes-winning son of Mr. Greeley.

Nickell, 54, managed Wafare/Rich-

land Hills for 21 years prior to starting Endeavor, while Tsagalakis, 50, has been training on the Southern California circuit for more than 20 years and has a stable of a half-dozen homebreds.

Endeavor currently boards around 75 mares, half of which are owned by Tsagalakis and his family, and one of which is owned under the Endeavor banner.

The farm boasts two guests suites for traveling clients; four barns, two of which are being refurbished; and a total of 70 stalls.

With a goal of obtaining just 10-15 new clients, Nickell plans to keep Endeavor a boutique service operation. He noted one of Endeavor's best features is its dedicated employees, some of whom have been working on the property for more than 20 years.

Another strong point is the farm's ability to get mares in foal. "Our in-foal percentage over the last four to five years (as Richland Hills) has been around 95%," he said. "This year we only missed one mare out of 70, which we're very proud of."

The Richland Hills/Wafare property has been represented by several prominent horses over the years. The farm was instrumental in launching the stud ca-

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reer of the late influential sire Dynaformer and stood other such graded stakes-winning sires as Purim and Sightseeing. Richland Hills/Wafare additionally raised Hall of Fame steeplechaser McDynamo, campaigned grade I winner Richter Scale in partnership, and formerly boarded the multiple New Mexico champion racemare Peppers Pride.

Nickell, whose father, Harry Schmidt, managed Spendthrift Farm from 1952-1976, considers himself lucky that he grew up in the industry, as it has afforded him the opportunity to launch Endeavor.

“Being a second-generation horseman, my father has instilled in me a great love of the equine species,” said Nickell. “The opportunity to meet a diverse group of people that have now become clients has been wonderful.”

### **HERMITAGE FARM**

Hermitage Farm, located on 700-acres outside of Louisville, Ky., has been a successful working farm for nearly two centuries. Today broodmares, foals, and yearlings graze the land that is recognized as some of the most fertile and productive in Kentucky.

“Hermitage Farm’s equine operations have always been regarded as world-class, and we want to retain that distinction,” said Hermitage Farm owner Steve Wilson. He and his wife, Laura Lee Brown, will continue to expand the vision of the farm’s previous owners into the future.

The farm is proud of its long-term relationships with boarders and their horses. On their behalf, Hermitage has foaled European classic winners Lomond and Northern Trick, and grade I winners

Siphonic, Mani Bhavan, and C.S. Silk and grade II winner Justwhistledixie. Past Thoroughbreds at Hermitage also include a number of champions such as Kentucky Derby winner Dark Star, Irish champion and leading sire Woodman, and Breeders’ Cup Juvenile winner Is It True.

Hermitage provides excellent boarding facilities for mares and foals as well as sales prep, turnout, and surgery rehab for yearlings and racehorses; and its expert staff has extensive experience in these areas. Champion Caressing, graded winners Kiss the Devil and My Trusty Cat, as well as stakes winners Kiss Mine, Kadira, and Harrod’s Creek all graduated from the pre-training program.

Because of its proximity to Churchill Downs (less than 25 miles away), Hermitage is a post-operative recuperation center and turnout facility for leading Kentucky trainers and owners. The facility offers spacious paddocks, well-ventilated stalls, a covered walker, and daily attendance from two veterinary firms.

Hermitage farm manager Brian Knippenberg says that a testament to the relaxed setting and excellent pasture is the close to 100% conception rate for maiden mares. “They seem to recover quickly from the rigors of racing at Hermitage and generally by March are dappled out and in foal.”

“Great thought is also given to nutrition at Hermitage,” said general manager Bill Landes, who has been with the farm for 36 years. “This attention was impressed upon me by Warner Jones and past Hermitage manager Tom Sharple. Periodic soil testing and fertilization ensure quality pastures, and consultation with our feed and hay purveyors

provides our mares and foals what they need to develop as athletes. Close-to-nature rearing is employed, which gives our youngsters significant time out of the barn and on our rolling fields to achieve the ultimate goal, superior race performance!”

### **HIDDEN BROOK FARM**

Success in Thoroughbred racing comes at the racetrack but starts with the land. Where horses are raised and kept is undeniably connected to how often they and their progeny will visit the winner’s circle.

And when considering the land, there is no better place to board a horse than Hidden Brook Farm, located in the magical region of Bourbon County, Ky., near the town of Paris. Its immediate neighbors, Claiborne Farm and Stone Farm, have for decades turned out horses that have gone on to win every significant race on the North American calendar. And in just a handful of years, Hidden Brook is adding its own successful chapters to those of its storied neighbors. Grade I winners such as Discreet Cat, Discreetly Mine, Dixie Chatter, Starship Truffles, and Tell a Kelly were raised at Hidden Brook.

“We take great pride in managing our pastures and not overgrazing them,” said Dan Hall, one of Hidden Brook’s managing partners. “We believe that the land is the key to our success, and in order to continue to make that happen, we’re committed to never overpopulating it.”

Hidden Brook is a classic Central Kentucky farm, with rolling hills that make it a showplace location. The spacious pastures and paddocks stretch out over 600 acres, and there are 164 modern stalls that lend comfort to each inhabitant.

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*Waldorf*  
**FARM**

As impressive as the physical layout is the management team that ensures that each Hidden Brook client and horse receives the individual attention necessary for success. Hidden Brook will tailor a program that best suits each horse.

Sergio de Sousa, Dan Hall, and Jack Brothers all are based at Hidden Brook, which also benefits from the expertise of trainer Danny Vella and Mark Roberts. This team of renowned professionals and hands-on horsemen cover every aspect of the Thoroughbred's cycle. They are experts in foaling, mating and pedigree analysis, bloodstock advisory, sales prep and consignment, and feed and nutrition. This particular team gained experience while working for North America's leading breeder over the past decade, the Adena Springs operation of Frank Stronach. Adena has won more Eclipse Awards for owner and breeder than any other operation, and the lessons learned there have been applied as Hidden Brook rises through the ranks of top Thoroughbred farms.

For the finest in broodmare care, foaling, and boarding services; for clean, modern, efficient facilities that provide the best setting for bloodstock; and for a team that gives the highest-quality personal attention to your

horse, Hidden Brook Farm is a gem right in the middle of the action in the Horse Capital of the World.

## WALDORF FARM

Waldorf Farm in New York's Hudson Valley offers a strong blend of experience, veterinary expertise, and top-notch facilities for Thoroughbred breeders.

The North Chatham farm is owned by Dr. Jerry Bilinski, a reproductive specialist with 40 years of experience and co-owner of a veterinary clinic across the road from the more than 400-acre farm's entrance.

"We treat horses as individuals, which is not so easy when you're up to your elbows in the breeding season," Bilinski said. "But you don't want to have a mare that, before you know it, is in her third cycle and fallen through the cracks. You make your own luck in this game, which requires a high-degree of management and a high-degree of preventative medicine."

While some may opt to raise foals in warmer climates, Bilinski believes New York farms raise robust racehorses.

"I think the horses don't accept the heat as well as they do the cold," he said. "They may have snow on their backs, but they're running around frisky and alert."

The farm has 120 stalls, offers services in sales prep and layups, and has a yearling division and a broodmare division. Farm managers Buster and Teri Brown live on the farm and have a network of cameras with which to monitor the foaling stalls.

Waldorf also stands two stallions—Pollard's Vision and Bustin Stones—and has the facilities for 10 more.

Pollard's Vision moved from Kentucky to New York for the 2013 season. The multiple graded stakes winner got multiple grade I winner and 2010 champion 3-year-old filly Blind Luck in his first crop. The son of Carson City—Etats Unis, by Dixieland Band, now has 14 stakes winners.

Bustin Stones (City Zip—Shesasur-ething, by Prospectors Gamble) is a grade I stakes winner who had 63% winners in his first crop. Among Bustin Stones first foals is a filly named Keep Bustin, who has earned \$239,000 to date and is a poster child for the strength of the New York-bred market. Besides what the filly has earned on the track, owner/breeders Roddy Valente and Thomas Lemme have picked up another \$70,000 in breeders' awards.

"It has really taken us to another level," Bilinski said. **BH**



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