

A New Year

As we start off the New Year, the Thoroughbred Owners of California has some tough challenges ahead for 2009. While we finally came to an agreement with ADW companies, that agreement will expire at the end of this year, and we will have to fashion a new agreement for 2010 and beyond. Given the past history in this area, we will probably have another battle on our hands, but this war has to be won. Horse owners deserve their fair share of the profits from wagers made on Thoroughbred races. All of us as owners know the high cost of owning and training a horse; without higher purses we can't survive, and the board of directors will continue to do everything it can to see that purse levels are increased.

In 2008 we saw stricter medication rules passed including the ban on steroids. Our goal at the TOC is to make sure that California continues to test horses for illegal substances and hands out tough penalties to trainers who violate the rules. We know that owners want to see tough standards when it comes to medications and drug testing.

One of the great success stories for California in 2008 was the launching of CARMA, the California Retirement Management Account, which handles funds to see that California race horses are taken care of at the end of their racing careers. This landmark program is a model for the entire racing industry and should be adopted in other states. The TOC plans to work with the NTRA to see where and how this program can be implemented in other racing jurisdictions. On opening day at Santa Anita, \$150,000 was distributed to qualified retirement farms and retraining facilities by CARMA. Kudos to CARMA Chair Madeline Auerbach for her tireless work in this area in making the CARMA program so successful.

The Thoroughbred Owners of California was founded 15 years ago, and one of its founding board members was Mace Siegel, who this year retired from the Board of Directors after serving on the board since its inception. He held the title of Vice President and was Chair of the Racing Committee. He was instrumental over the years in helping to guide the organization until it became one of the most respected organizations in the country. Not only did he devote his time, knowledge and experience, but he gave generously to Thoroughbred organizations that needed financial assistance. On opening day at Santa Anita, we took a moment to honor Mace for his huge contribution to California racing.

As we head to the Spring of 2009, once again owners have a chance to run for the board of directors. We are looking for a few good women and men to serve on the board. Last year, we had a large number of owners vying for the board slots that were open, and we hope to have another successful election this year. When Mace Siegel retired from the board in the Fall, the directors appointed Pete Parrella to fill his vacancy until elections could be held. Pete ran in 2008, and just missed being elected by a few votes. As the next highest vote getter in the election, his appointment was a natural. As an appointee, he will be required to run for reelection this Spring, along with those whose terms have expired. I encourage every owner with an interest in running to contact the TOC office and get on the ballot.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the Board of Directors and staff of the TOC for the wonderful job they do in serving the owners of this great state. We've got a lot of hard work ahead of us in 2009, but I know we are up to the task.



Marsha Naify