

Letter From the Chairwoman



Charting the Future: To 2023 and Beyond

It's been 15 years since the Thoroughbred Owners of California was approved for incorporation with the Secretary of State, back on March 3, 1993. Papers were filed and received by the state on Jan. 19, 1993, and today you can review those documents online at the TOC website. Set up as a non-profit mutual benefit corporation, today TOC represents about 10,000 thoroughbred owners throughout the great state of California. It took several years to get TOC up and running, but today the organization is one of the strongest and most respected horse racing industry groups in the country.

Fast forward through 15 years of history to 2008, and TOC has quite a story to tell. But the question is not where have we been, rather where are we going? Where do we want to be 15 years from now, when it's the year 2023? How relevant is the organization today for owners in 2008 compared to when it was formed 15 years ago? It's up to your board of directors to set the direction and tone of the organization and to plot the TOC road map for future generations of thoroughbred owners. However, we can't do that without hearing from you, the owners.

As Chair of this organization, I appreciate every e-mail, every phone call and every letter I receive from owners across the state. And I know that the other directors of this organization appreciate the feedback they get as well, not only from other owners, but also from trainers, veterinarians and the fans of our sport. As a board, we depend on the feedback we get from owners to make decisions and to move forward with new policies. As directors, we can't be everywhere at once; we try to stay as informed as possible on the issues of the day, but we really need to hear directly from the California owners.

I received a letter several months ago from an owner who was critical of TOC and its board of directors, including myself. The letter wasn't signed, because the person who wrote it feared there would possibly be some sort of retaliation against them for writing the letter in the first place. While I initially disagreed with a lot of what the letter said, I tried to understand why it was written and tried to see things from that person's point of view. The truth is we are all here for one purpose at the TOC, and that is to be of service to California owners. Whether as a volunteer serving on the board of directors or as a paid staff member, we all share the same goal: to make horse racing in this state the best it can be. It is the duty of every board member and staff member to protect owners' interests, to represent them in negotiations, and to fulfill our mandate as the legal representative of California thoroughbred owners. No one here takes that responsibility lightly.

The heart of our organization will always be the owners themselves; the TOC board and staff can never forget this. As we approach our annual meeting set for August 16 at Del Mar, we will be distributing a questionnaire to owners before and during that meeting, and we want to hear your suggestions and comments on how we can make this organization better. In about six months, the board of directors and staff will be doing an extensive strategic planning workshop to chart TOC's course over the next decade. We will be examining everything including our structure, our mission statement, our bylaws, communication with owners, our staff, our relationships with other organizations, as well as what more we can do for owners in this state and how we can improve racing for everyone. I encourage everyone to fill out this questionnaire in the next month and to attend our annual meeting in Del Mar this summer. Let's chart TOC's future together, and continue to make this organization the best it can be.



Marsha Naify