



# Backside News

APRIL 2010

## LEARNING CENTER UPCOMING EVENTS:

**MARCH 30TH-**  
CHURCHILL VITA  
FREE TAX  
PREPARATION  
2PM-6PM

**APRIL 18TH-**  
GRAND RE-  
OPENING OF THE  
KENTUCKY DERBY  
MUSEUM.  
LAUNCH PARTY!  
12:00 PM

**APRIL 20TH-**  
BACKSIDE  
LEARNING CENTER  
OPEN HOUSE  
11:30 AM-2PM

**APRIL 24ST-May  
2ND-**  
2010 DERBY GIFT  
SHOP!

## Employment on the Backside

*Written by: Emily Dingman*

The dynamics of the workplace on the backside are quite different from most other large organizations. While Churchill Downs owns the facility and rents out the buildings and the track, most of the workers back here are not directly employed by them. Maintenance, facilities, security, and management are among the people you may see who are Churchill Downs employees, however most everyone else arriving at the backside early in the morning is considered an independent contractor. This means they determine their own terms of employment and to some extent have control over their own salaries and schedules.

Most trainers are independent contractors. They generally rent as many stalls from Churchill Downs as they need, and work for the owners of the horses they train. The trainer's responsibility is to get a horse in the condition desired by the owner and to enter that horse into the races appropriate for its level of fitness and performance. If a trainer has only one or two horses they may be able to do all the chores and training for that animal by themselves, but when a trainer has upwards of five horses that gets to be too time-consuming and back-breaking, so they hire grooms and hot-walkers. Because trainers are independent contractors contracting out to various owners, their terms of employment may vary from season-to-season or from year to year, and certainly no two trainers set exactly the same conditions for their employees.

Few of our clients are exercise riders; these are the people who do some of the most dangerous work

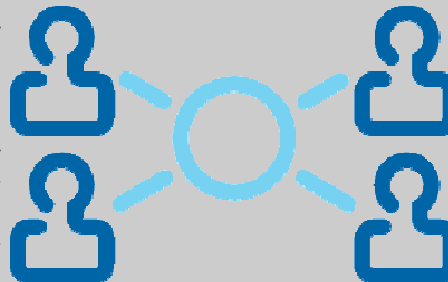
at the track. Many racehorses are young and inexperienced, but these riders must get on every day not knowing what to expect, and give the horse the workout requested by the trainer. Exercise riders are also responsible for discovering any lameness (injury or soreness) or abnormality in the horse's gaits (way of moving), and they must react accordingly. This may mean changing the way they sit or stand on the horse, or it could mean making a last-minute decision to modify the work-out and consult the trainer. It is very important to detect discomfort when riding each day to prevent injury to the horse, and to help determine the proper workout for the animal. It is also a safety issue for the rider as a horse in pain can be testy and unpredictable. Some exercise riders are employed by trainers, but most work as independent contractors.

Most of our clients are grooms. A groom is employed by the trainer, and cannot dictate the terms of their employment. They must be at work at the time designated by the trainer, and they receive the amount of pay agreed upon with their boss. Grooms may have as many as five horses that they are responsible for grooming (brushing, bathing, and

checking feet), tacking up (dressing for the workout, i.e. wrapping legs, putting on boots, saddle, and bridle), feeding (hay and grain 3-5 times per day), watering (as needed), dressing wounds, noting, reporting, and responding to signs of illness, mucking stalls (keeping stalls free of manure and urine), and cleaning tack and brushes at the end of the day. Grooms are expected to travel to and from races with the horses they care for. They may be paid per horse or hourly.

We also have a lot of clients who are hot-walkers. Most people who are new to the industry and don't have riding experience start out as hot-walkers. These are the people who lead the horses to and from the track, hold the horses during baths and vet checks, hold the horses while riders mount, and walk them until they are cool after a workout. Hot-walkers also assist in the general upkeep of the barns, they may check hay nets and water buckets, assist with feeding, muck stalls, and help clean up at the end of the day. They are expected to be available to help the grooms and exercise riders. Hot-walkers, like grooms, are employed by the trainer.

There are still more employees on the backside; we can't forget the vets, farriers (sometimes called blacksmiths, they trim hooves and fit shoes), bedding suppliers (straw or shavings), manure removal, feed suppliers, etc. But this gives you a general idea of the make-up of daily activity on the backside. Trainers and their assistants are at the top of the ladder, then exercise riders who must come here every morning, then grooms who make sure the horses are well cared for, and hot-walkers who keep the horses healthy and assist the grooms.



**Hierarchy on the backside isn't conventional with many individuals working as independent contractors.**

## LEARNING CENTER WISH LIST:

- Any book for adults written in Spanish
- Bilingual books
- Audio books with accompanying texts, particularly shorter or easier books, poetry or adult-appropriate learning-to-read books
- Spanish-English dictionaries
- Soccer shoes (size 8, 8 1/2, 9, gently used is fine)
- Soccer balls
- Class supplies, especially notebooks, binders, pencils, dry erase markers
- 2 Updated GED textbooks in English
- 2 Updated GED textbooks in Spanish
- 10 Pimsleur Inglés: English for Spanish Speakers with Audio CD textbooks
- Popcorn & oil packets for theater popcorn machine

## Team Notes

By Kevin Oberhausen

The Learning Center's staff is not big, but between us and our dedicated volunteer base we manage to accomplish a lot. This year we may have some extra assistance, as we are working with the AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) program in hopes of receiving two summer VISTAS. Taken from the AmeriCorps website, "AmeriCorps VISTA is a national service program specifically designed to fight poverty".

([www.americorps.gov](http://www.americorps.gov)).

Normally a VISTA serves at an organization for a period of 1-2 years. However, Summer VISTAS only serve at an organization for a period of 8 weeks. Another difference of a Summer VISTA is that

they are able to provide direct service to clients. This means that if these VISTAS come to the Learning Center they would be able to teach a class or directly run a service (something that all of our other previous VISTAS have never been able to do).

If approved the two Summer VISTA terms will be May 10-July 6 and July 1-August 27. This means that from July 1-July 6 these positions would slightly overlap and we would have a total of 5 people on staff!



The official AmeriCorps Logo

This is not a common occurrence for the Learning Center, but definitely a welcome rarity.

If these VISTAS join our team we will send an email out to volunteers letting everyone know. Stay tuned and wish us luck!

## VOLUNTEER CORNER

### **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES:**

Contact Emily Dingman at the Learning Center if you're interested in volunteering.

### **CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEWSLETTER:**

If you would like to write an article for the newsletter about a class or student you teach/volunteer with, please contact the Learning Center. We would love to have your contributions!

**DATA ENTRY:** Volunteer needed once per month to update student and volunteer hours for soccer, movie night, guitar and other programs in Microsoft Access. Experience with Microsoft Access preferable but we can train.

### **HORSEMEN'S GOLF SCRAMBLE**

**PLANNING COMMITTEE:** We are already planning for our 2nd Annual Horsemen's Golf Scramble. If you would like to be a part of the planning committee, contact the Learning Center. Tasks will include planning the event, promoting and getting donations/sponsorships. Time commitment: meet once a month starting in January and any additional planning/promoting as necessary.

**DERBY GIFT SHOP TEAM:** We are already thinking about Derby. We need people to help get volunteers to work the Derby Gift Shop and pick out the merchandise we should sell. Time

## THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR HARD WORK AND TIME!

commitment: meet periodically starting in January, help out with the Derby Gift shop and any additional planning/promoting as necessary.

### **FUNDRAISING DINNER COMMITTEE:**

We are planning a fundraising dinner tentatively scheduled in June. This would be the first time we have ever had the event. We need a committee to plan and organize the event. Time commitment: monthly meetings starting in January and any additional planning/promoting as necessary.