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Caring for Retired Race Horses, Rehabing People

Posted By [Mike Hall](#) On December 28, 2009 @ 9:00 am In [In the States](#) | [No Comments](#)



For most of us, the world of thoroughbred horse racing begins and ends with the Triple Crown, those few weeks in the spring when the world's best horses run in the Kentucky Derby, the Preakness and the Belmont stakes.

But beyond the glamour that gilds the top of the horse-racing world, there's a dirty secret that tarnishes racing's carefully crafted image—the fate of the run-out and worn-out horses at the bottom-rung tracks far from Churchill Downs or Pimlico.

Every year, thousands of horses are shipped across U.S. borders to [1] [slaughterhouses](#) in Canada or Mexico, while thousands more are neglected, abused or abandoned.

There are humane alternatives. Jim Tremper, a member of the New York State Public Employees Federation ([2] [PEF](#)), an AFT affiliate, has been running the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation's ([3] [TRF](#)'s) horse farm at the Wallkill Correctional Facility for the past 25 years. That work is the centerpiece of the new documentary [4] "[Homestretch](#)," much of it filmed at Wallkill, now available on DVD.

Tremper is a vocational instructor at Wallkill, where he says the horse farm serves a dual purpose. First, it's a place where horses can rest and get rehabilitated after often being severely abused. Second, the foundation's work helps the inmates who feed, exercise, treat and train the horses to learn responsibility and redevelop a sense of trust. The goal for both inmate and horse is to find a new life on the outside.

Our goal is to help the inmates become better citizens upon their release and provide much needed care to the retired thoroughbreds.

In the latest issue of the PEF [5] [Communicator](#), he says he hopes the documentary will reach "the right audience."

The people who don't know what is going on when a race horse is finished with its career. This film could change the mindset and show what can be done with these animals when they can no longer race. They still have the power to rehabilitate.

The film chronicles the pairing of the inmates and rescued, end-of-career race horses as they come together to care for and save each other, says the filmmaker, Sheri Bylander. Tremper, says Bylander

allowed me to become an insider in a way that's very necessary for a documentary. From the minute I set foot on the farm, his compassion for the inmates and horses become clear.

The goal of "Homestretch" is to raise the public's awareness of abuse and cruelty that many

horses face at the finish line of their careers. Tremper says the film already has had an immediate impact on the inmates working with the horses at Wallkill.

The loved the attention. They loved being in the spotlight. They developed a deeper meaning in the work they do with the horses. The filming helped them realize their work is necessary, important and special.

Click [4] [here](#) for more information on the film or to purchase a DVD of "Homestretch."

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URLs in this post:

[1] slaughterhouses:

http://www.hsus.org/horses_equines/issues/get_the_facts_on_horse_slaughter.html

[2] PEF: <http://www.pef.org/>

[3] TRF: <http://www.trfinc.org/>

[4] "Homestretch: <http://homestretchthemovie.com/>

[5] Communicator: <http://www.thecommunicator.org/>