

Across the Fence

THE MARE CENTER'S QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

IN THIS ISSUE:

Model Farm
Project 1

New Faces 1

Dr. Bridgett
McIntosh 2

Shayan
Ghajar 3

Angela
Virostek 3

New Horse
Owner Certifi-
cation Series 4

Equine For-
age Confer-
ences 5

Meet the
Horses 5

Clermont
Farm Partner-
ship 6

Horse Farm Conservation Project Launched



with no rest or rotation, while the other will feature a rotational grazing system of subdivided paddocks, two vegetative heavy use areas, and a rock-based heavy use area.

The rotational pasture system showcases a variety of fence types to enable land managers to decide which fences might work best for their farms. The budget for the project was set at a price point small farms can afford.

Maintaining soil cover and preventing erosion can be difficult on small acreage horse farms, but the MARE Center's newly-installed model farm project will serve as a demonstration site for small farm managers to learn about practices and tools to preserve their land while enhancing their horses' health.

The demonstration site will have two adjacent small acreage pasture systems with four horses in each. One will be grazed continuously

Ultimately, the model farm is a template from which small acreage horse owners can base their own environmentally-friendly projects. The MARE Center will hold a number of educational outreach events to inform landowners about conservation best management practices and discuss ways similar systems can be installed on their farms. For more information, please contact Shayan Ghajar or Dr. Bridgett McIntosh at (540) 687-3521. 🐾

New Faces

The MARE Center is happy to welcome three new faces to the team in recent months—Equine Extension Specialist Dr. Bridgett McIntosh, Equine Extension Program Coordinator Shayan Ghajar, and undergraduate student Angela Virostek. All three are lifelong equine enthusiasts. *(Continued on pp. 2-3)*



Bridgett McIntosh, PhD

Equine Extension Specialist

Dr. Bridgett McIntosh joined the Virginia Tech MARE Center and the Department of Animal and Poultry Sciences as the state Equine Extension Specialist in August 2014. She is an alumna of Virginia Tech and the MARE Center where she received her M.S. and PhD in Animal and Poultry Sciences with a focus on equine nutrition under the former Paul Mellon Distinguished Professor of Agriculture, Dr. David Kronfeld. She grew up on a horse farm in New York state and was initially drawn to Virginia to attend Hollins College, where she earned a B.A. in biology and competed on the I.H.S.A. riding team. Dr. McIntosh served as the Equine Extension Specialist and Associate Professor at the University of Tennessee before returning to her roots at the MARE Center.



As the state Equine Specialist for Virginia Tech Cooperative Extension, Dr. McIntosh develops and implements educational outreach and research programs that are multi-disciplinary and broad in scope to address the needs of Virginia’s diverse equine industry. Her primary focus area is on pasture and grazing management to improve horse health and environmental stewardship. Properly managed pastures provide an ideal source of nutrition and exercise for horses, while reducing adverse environmental impacts associated with soil erosion and nonpoint source pollution. Dr. McIntosh is excited to offer new programs that will engage the community and horse industry through the MARE Center as it provides an unparalleled setting for demonstration research and educational programs. In addition to traditional Extension programs, Bridgett will also continue to work with undergraduate and graduate students in a hands-on, experiential

learning environment to train tomorrow’s leaders in the equine industry.

Dr. McIntosh has a deep-rooted passion for the horse industry and serves as a representative for Virginia Tech on both the Virginia Horse Council and the Virginia Horse Industry Board. She has also been newly appointed as an equine representative on the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council and the Virginia State Feed Association. In addition to her professional interests, Bridgett has had a lifetime involvement in the horse industry where she began showing in the hunter/jumpers at seven years old, and continues to compete as an adult amateur today. Bridgett and her husband are both avid foxhunters and are delighted for the opportunity to live in Virginia’s hunt country and to be a part of the Middleburg community. 🐎



Dr. McIntosh and her husband, Dr. Preston Buff, mounted on Richie and Rain, riding with the Hard Away Whitworth Foxhounds in Alabama.

Shayan Ghajar, MS



Shayan Ghajar is the new Equine Extension Program Coordinator at the MARE Center, having joined the team in March. Shayan grew up in Virginia and has a master's degree in Rangeland Ecology & Management from Colorado State University. He brings valuable experience in pasture management research and educational programming to improve the ecological and financial sustainability of farms.

Shayan's research interests include fostering biodiversity on equine properties and integrating native warm-season grasses back into Virginia's equestrian landscapes. At the MARE Center, he facilitates equine research and outreach programs, which includes everything from event planning to designing research protocols or giving a horse dewormer.

A devoted fan of desert breeds like the Akhal Teke and Arabian, he keeps his Arabian/Paint mare in Rectortown. Having travelled around or lived in Hunt Country for much of his life, Shayan fell in love with its equine culture and the local dedication to conservation. His name, he notes, is pronounced "Shy-on" and is of Iranian origin (his father's homeland), for those who may be wondering. If you see him around town, introduce yourself! 🐾

"The health of the land and the health of the horse are inextricably tied. At the MARE Center, we integrate both into everything we do."

Student Spotlight: Angela Virostek

Angela Virostek is a junior Animal and Poultry Science major at Virginia Tech and our current intern at the MARE Center. She has been with us since January, and we're happy to say she'll be staying through the summer.

Angela grew up around horses locally in the Northern Virginia area and has trained in hunt seat equitation. Angela has a special interest in mare and foal nutrition research, which she hopes to continue throughout her undergraduate and graduate studies.

At the MARE Center, Angela is currently completing a research project that will create a model farm in order to

demonstrate best practice management and the effects of rotational grazing versus continuous grazing on the botanical composition of the field. She is studying equine nutrition with the intention to complete veterinary school and become an equine reproduction veterinarian.

She is currently involved on campus with the Virginia Tech Equestrian Team and is a member of the Sigma Kappa sorority. She enjoys working with our off the track Thoroughbreds on the farm and hopes to establish a relationship with the racing community through this internship. 🐾



New Horse Owner Certification Series

Owning a horse for the first time can be an intimidating responsibility. New horse owners often find themselves either lacking the information they need or trying to make sense of a cacophony of conflicting opinions on any given topic. Guidance on different aspects of beginner horse care could only be found by spending a great deal of time asking ques-



tions of anyone and everyone, or casting one's questions into a Google search and praying for a shred of sound advice to appear. Thanks to the New Horse Owner Certification Program, that's all changing.

“As a prospective horse owner, I learned SO MUCH from this series. I LOVED it.”

Recognizing the need for a consolidated, science-based information source for new horse owners, Virginia Tech's MARE Center—in partnership with the Virginia Horse Industry Board—launched the New Horse Owner Certification Program to educate new or prospective horse owners on all the fundamentals of starting the horse ownership journey. New horse owners are provided with a series of five classes on all the basics of horse ownership: pasture and facilities management, nutrition, hoof care, routine medical care, and selecting the right first horse for them. After attending the classes, participants must get passing scores on three quizzes to receive a certificate recognizing their success.

The program was held on March 27th and 28th at the Virginia Horse Festival in Doswell, and was a tremendous success. More than forty people registered in advance, and still more showed up in person. Attendees enjoyed classes held by some of the preeminent names in equine science and related fields. Graduates received manuals, educational materials, and a complimentary bag of Southern States feed. The Virginia Horse Council also offered a 2015 membership to graduates of the certification program.

Attendees indicated the program had enabled them to approach new horse ownership with more knowledge and tools to responsibly own and manage a horse for the first time. “As a prospective horse owner, I learned SO MUCH from this series. I LOVED it,” a participant wrote us. New or prospective horse owners aren't the only people this program will benefit—the certification aspect of the program provides sellers with the assurance that certified prospective buyers are motivated to go the extra mile to ensure the health and happiness of their horses.

Future certification programs are in the works, and will be announced as soon as planning is finalized.



Equine Forage Conferences

MARE Center alumna Carrie Swanson secured a Virginia Horse Industry Board grant on behalf of Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council this spring. The grant funded two educational outreach conferences addressing equine forage topics. The first program was held in the beautiful Buchanan Hall of Upperville, while the second was held in Albemarle County's Cooperative Extension office.

The conference addressed equine nutrition, hay selection, poisonous plant identification, and pasture management, and featured lively Q&A sessions and collaborative information-sharing. Speakers included Equine Extension Specialist Dr. Bridgett McIntosh of the MARE Center, Extension Agent Tim Mize of Fauquier County, Extension Agent Carrie Swanson of Albemarle County, and Extension Agent Jim Hilleary of Loudoun County. Dozens of horse owners attended both, and indicated the information they learned during the conferences would translate directly to on-farm management changes. 🐾



Meet the Horses: Obey

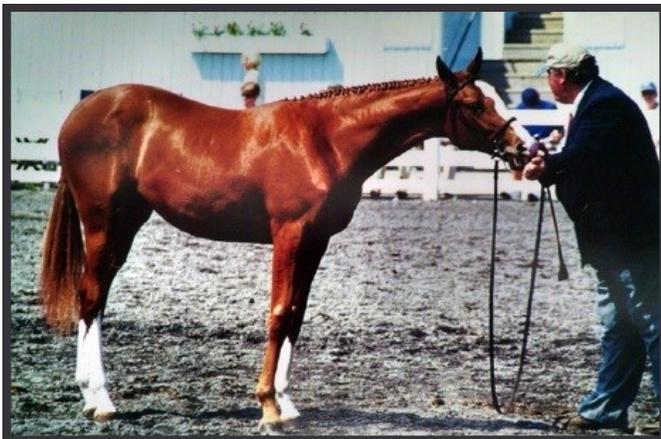
Obey is a 1999 chestnut Thoroughbred mare bred by Mr. Gary Baker of Middleburg, Virginia. As a yearling, Obey was named AHSA National Hunter Breeding Horse of the Year, after wins at more than 40 nationally rated shows.

Obey's show wins included the Devon Horse Show, Lexington Spring Premier, HITS Culpeper, Capitol Challenge, and Warrenton. She was also named Zone Champion, and was Young Horse of the Year for Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania.

Obey is by the graded stakeswinner Nepal, also the sire of Gala, AHSA National Hunter Breeding Horse of the Year, and the advanced eventer Catalyst. Obey's dam, Mongos

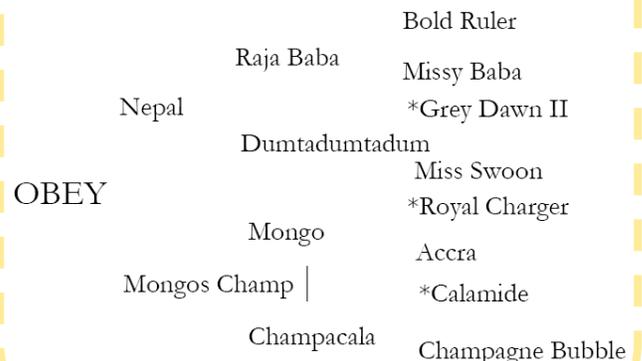
Champ, also produced Rosecroft Wise Guy, USEF Grand Champion Large Pony, and comes from the same family as blue hen Flaming Page (dam of Nijinsky II and Fleur).

Obey retired to breeding after an accident ended her show career. She is the dam of seven foals including the hunter breeding winner Greenbrier, and several Premium foals with Oldenburg NA. Her latest foal, the 2014 filly Replica VT, by the Hanoverian stallion Rienzi, was recently purchased by Bill Schaub of Over the Hill Farm in Sanford, Florida. 🐾



Obey winning the Yearling Fillies class at Devon, 2000.

Obey's Pedigree



Partnership with Clermont Farm

The MARE Center entered into a cooperative agreement with the Clermont Foundation in early 2014. The Clermont Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that maintains Clermont Farm in Berryville, VA (25 miles west of the MARE Center) as a cultural/educational facility and resource for the perpetuation and enhancement of agricultural heritage. The aim of the partnership between Virginia Tech and the Clermont Foundation is to improve agricultural productivity and operational efficiency as well



Tait Golightly (left), Farm Manager at Clermont, and Robert Stieg (below), CEO of the Clermont Foundation.



as to increase opportunity for education, research and demonstration, for mutual benefit of Virginia Tech and Clermont Farm. 🐾

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Cooperative
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Situated in the heart of Virginia's horse country, the Middleburg Agricultural Research and Extension (MARE) Center is one of Virginia Tech's 11 agricultural research and extension centers. Philanthropist Paul Mellon donated the 420-acre farm to Virginia Tech in 1949 to foster research that improved pasture and animal health while enhancing the land. The Center was used primarily for beef cattle research for 40 years, but was rededicated to equine research and teaching in 1992. Today, the MARE Center continues to play a critical role in the discovery, outreach, and education missions of Virginia Tech's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Through collaboration with academic and industry partners around the world, the Center advances the health and well-being of the horse through its innovative research efforts and exceptional educational programming.