

Stride

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ing 160 acres in Prospect used for the training program.

Another farm is owned in Henry County, with another 100 acres used for turning out horses.

The organization was incorporated in 2005, when Smith's bookkeeper told her Second Stride wasn't a business or a hobby.

"She said, Kim, for your family's sake, you can't keep going into the red like this," Smith recalled. "You're hemorrhaging money out of a community need."

What makes Second Stride different from other Thoroughbred retirement organizations is the training.

When horses come to Second Stride, Smith and her all-volunteer staff evaluate them to decide where to begin.

Some horses will need more turnout time to adjust to a new life, some need medical attention and some can't wait to perform again.

"The first month is so hard; getting these horses transitioned into a new job," Smith said. "We individualize the program to the horse."

Second Stride often brings in racetrack exercise riders to work with the



PETER CAMPBELL/SPECIAL TO THE OLDHAM ERA

Kim Smith is founder and president of Second Stride, a non-profit for retired racehorses and the occasional other needs-a-home equine.

horses, who are familiar with the racehorse temperament, before having their own trainers work with them.

Many horses in the program are retrained as eventing prospects, ready to compete in dressage or jumping when they are adopted. Senor Sancho, a Second Stride horse from Smith's founding stable, qualified for The Rolex Kentucky Three Day Event this year.

Before the horses can compete again, however, they need homes. Smith and the Second Stride vol-

unteers promote the horses by photographing them and posting their information online for potential adopters to view. Those interested can come out and even ride the horse, as long as it is deemed safe for horse and rider.

Potential adopters are carefully screened to make sure the horses are going to safe, caring homes. Adoption fees usually range from \$250 to \$850, although fees are waived for some horses requiring rehabilitation.

The adoption fees are one way Second Stride funds its

program, along with various grant programs through both equine and agriculture related programs.

In fact, NASCAR driver Tony Stewart donated money last summer to purchase fans to cool the horses.

Owners of horses being donated to Second Stride are asked to make a tax-deductible donation of whatever amount they can to help pay for the horse's board, food and other expenses.

However, 99 percent of donations go to the care of the horse and not admin-

istrative costs, Smith said, in part because the staff is entirely volunteer.

Second Stride hosted an open house in early September so potential adopters could come see many of the horses under saddle. That event resulted in two horses, Finn and Krismas Cactus, being adopted. A third, First and Gold, was adopted last week after a video recorded at the open house was posted online.

And then there's Lucky. A stable newcomer, Lucky was the story of the day at the open house. He came to Second Stride from an animal control agency in Southern Indiana, where he was rescued after numerous reports of neglect.

The 14-year-old earned nearly \$250,000 as a racehorse only to end up with no food and no care.

Within two weeks of being at Second Stride, he was trotting and cantering in the ring.

For Smith, the disappointment is that Second Stride can't bring in all the horses that need a home.

"We always have a waiting list," she said. "And we have enough stalls, enough land, enough volunteers that we could handle two or three times the number we have."

But funding is an obstacle.

"You can't take in more

horses than you can feed," she said. On average, it costs \$15 per day to keep a horse at Second Stride. That's not including training, veterinarian and farrier costs on top of that.

An upcoming golf scramble fundraiser, sponsored in part by Churchill Downs, on Oct. 7 at Eagle Creek Golf Course in La Grange will hopefully bring some much-needed funds to Second Stride, Smith said. Currently there are sponsorship and player slots available.

Smith said donations are always welcome, and the organization has a wish list on its website.

Volunteers are also needed, she said, including vet help, grooming and adoption counselors.

It's estimated some 1,500 racehorses make it into retirement programs each year, according to Lexington's Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation — a much better place than a slaughterhouse in Mexico or Canada, where TRF suspects the not-so-lucky are shipped.

But Smith wants to work with the racing industry, not against it, to find more retired Thoroughbreds a second career, and help horses wherever she can.

Just ask Lucky.

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