

League of Agricultural and Equine Centers
May 2017 News

We hope the weather is warming up and business is booming for you and your facilities. This month, in addition to a few announcements and upcoming events, we have a feature on our new board member, Denise Alexander, as well as Symposium recaps and a brief article highlighting the needs of different venues.

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Welcome & Acknowledgements

The League would like to welcome Curtis & Elisa Moran of Blacktop Trucking Inc. from Vero Beach, Florida, and Stephen Shimp of Georgia National Fairgrounds & Agricenter in Perry, Georgia.

Congratulations to our CMEC Graduates—Summer Ivey-Platt, Joe LaFollette, and Tim Lynch—as well as our CMEC Recertification recipients: Jennifer Bexley, George Chatigny, Mark Darsey, Jil Goodson, and Jamie White.

Hall of Fame and Facility of the Year Awards

The League is proud to introduce the new Hall of Fame and Facility of the Year awards. The Hall of Fame will recognize those people who have greatly contributed to our industry, and the Facility of the Year will likewise recognize a facility that has been a leader in facilities and all aspects of facility management. The applications are available on the League's website, and the deadline for submission is September 1. [Contact](#) the League office with questions.

New Board Member: Denise Alexander

Southeastern Livestock Pavilion

Denise Alexander never thought she would be in the equine industry, even while she was attending the University of Kentucky. "I thought I was going to be an elementary school teacher. That never happened," she says. "After I got out of college, I worked for several large Thoroughbred horse farms in Kentucky, working in the office handling sales, registering horses, meeting with clients, keeping breeding records, that kind of stuff."

Her work in the Thoroughbred industry moved her between Kentucky and Florida several times, including for Donald Dizney and Double Diamond Farm. However, changes in her personal life led to changes in her career. "I got out of the Thoroughbred industry and worked in the hospitality industry," Denise shares. "I worked for Hilton Corporation for about twelve years as their Director of Catering and Special Events. That's where I got a lot of my event-planning

experience, though I did a lot of that with the Thoroughbred industry as well. When you're selling Thoroughbreds for clients, a lot of that is planning so that when the buyer comes to the sales barn, farm, or auction, they're comfortable. You learn a lot about event planning when you work in the Thoroughbred industry."

Denise eventually found herself back in Florida and working for Marion County in the tourism industry. "The county administration came to me and asked me to move over to the Livestock Pavilion. At the time, we weren't very busy here. It's in the center of downtown Ocala, so it's a prime location; we just didn't book a lot of profitable events. That was five years ago, and in the first six months we increased our revenue by two-hundred percent – that's not because I did a fabulous job, it's only because I said yes instead of no to people who would call and ask if they could hold an event here. Now we are booked 37 weeks out of 52."

With many different arenas at the Pavilion, Denise enjoys putting on multiple events at the same time. "We work with different clients every weekend, and there are many weekends where we have five different events going on. I can have a barrel race going on in one covered arena, a steer and heifer show in the back arena, and a conference going on in the rec hall or sales arena. The best part of my job is my staff. It's taken me five years to put this crew together, but our primary focus is always customer service. I'm Hilton trained and worked in the Thoroughbred industry, so we don't tell people 'no.' If they're asking for something that we're incapable of providing for them, we're going to find a better solution."

Having recently completed construction on a new 92,000 s.f. structure housing an arena, Denise hopes to be able to accept even more events. "This is Florida, and if it's raining or in the middle of June, July and August, when the sun is unbearable here, we had an arena we couldn't use because it wasn't covered. Now that the arena is covered, I only don't want to work on Christmas, Thanksgiving, or Easter," she jokes. Most events at the Southeastern Livestock Pavilion last four to five days and utilize most of the space available. "We have campsites and stall space, so when people get here they don't have to leave. We bring in food and merchandise vendors for them, so it's like a little village that's completely enclosed."

Denise values her membership in the League, and she certainly brings value of her own as a new board member. "I can't say how many round tables I've sat in and listened to other peoples' situations and I think, 'Oh my gosh, that's exactly what happened to me!' Then you hear how they resolved it and bring that information back to your facility. It makes you a better manager, anytime you can learn from your peers," she says. "I will tell you, I was resistant at first. When I first took this position, my director came to me and said, 'Listen, I want you to go to this League conference,' and I said, 'I'm too busy. I don't have time to do that; I'm running this facility. I don't have time to take off four days and go to a conference someplace.' That was the silliest thing I've ever said. It's a fabulous organization for all of us who work in the industry."

We're certainly glad she gave us a chance! Thank you, Denise, for all of your contributions and for stepping up to serve on the board.

Upcoming League Events

The League Summer Footing Academy

The League Footing Academy is held twice annually at different locations throughout the country. It provides attendees the opportunity to receive a comprehensive overview of footing. Time is devoted to soil essentials, arena condition and maintenance, moisture and dust control, indoor and outdoor arenas, and synthetic footing. Attendees are encouraged to bring samples of their footing material for evaluation.

The Summer Footing Academy will be held May 23 and 24, 2017, at Boulder County Fairgrounds in Longmont, Colorado. Check the website for more information and to print a registration form.

The League Forum

The League Forum is a round table teleconference sponsored bi-monthly by The League. Every other month a topic will be announced. Interested participants are asked to sign up through the League office, info@laec.info or 859-887-0033. A dial-in number and passcode will be sent the day prior to the call. It is not a toll free call. Long distance charges will accrue depending on your telephone calling plan. Each call will be moderated by a board member or CMEC graduate. Experts may be included on the call to give their knowledge of the specific topic. The times will be 2:00 eastern, 1:00 central, 12:00 mountain, 11:00 pacific and 10:00 Alaskan time.

Be sure to mark your calendars and contact the League office if you wish to be on a call.

Upcoming Forum Dates

June 7: Biosecurity Measures with James Holloway, Synbiont Global, and Dr. Joe Lyman, Neogen Corp.

The League Footing Academy & Symposium

Mark your calendars! The 2018 Footing Academy will be held January 12-13 at the George Ingalls Equestrian Event Center in Norco, California. The Symposium will be held January 14-17 in Ontario, California, and will feature a tour of the Los Angeles Equestrian Center.

Feature Article: Expanding Events

Every venue and every locale is different, each with their own sets of challenges, advantages, patrons, and types of events. There is no one-size-fits-all solution for managing agricultural and equine facilities. When it comes to choosing management, it is important that those considered have experience with a wide range of events—including those beyond the scope of horses and livestock. “Years ago, when I first started in equestrian venues, the focus was purely just equestrian,” says [SMG's](#) National Equestrian Director Lesa Williams. “The majority of our facilities are owned by municipalities, and municipalities in this day and age are looking for venues to stay busy twelve months a year, every weekend. The other piece of it is that since a lot of them are funded through community initiative, you really need management who is able to garner support from the entire community, not just from the equestrian base who really utilize the venue.”

In South Jordan, Utah, SMG manages the Salt Lake County Equestrian Park and Event Center. Set against the backdrop of the Wasatch Mountains, the Equestrian Park features an 85,000 sq. ft. arena and event center, an AQHA-approved ¾ mile racetrack, a polo field, five outdoor arenas, and 306 stalls. In addition to hosting equestrian events such as barrel races, rodeos, hunter/jumper shows and breed shows, the Equestrian Park is home to the annual Salt Lake County Fair and offers boarding and open ride times. During the County Fair and other indoor events, the 45,000 sq. ft. dirt arena floor can be leveled and covered to transform the arena into showroom space. Though the majority of events are equine-related, the Equestrian Park is a flexible venue that has hosted other events such as circuses, BMX racing, gem shows, and dog shows.

On the other side of the country, Osecola Heritage Park in Kissimmee, Florida, is another SMG managed facility. The crowning jewel of Osecola Heritage Park is Silver Spurs Arena, nearly 34,000 sq. ft. with 8,000 seats and an 11,500 seat capacity. The park also boasts a 47,850 sq. ft. Exhibition Building as well as 150 acres to provide flexibility and many different options for any type of festival, fair, concert, sport or more. While dirt covers the arena floor for the annual Silver Spurs Rodeo and other agricultural events, Osecola Heritage Park is home to events like the USAG Men's Junior Olympics Gymnastics, high school graduations, basketball tournaments, concerts or music festivals, and jewelry shows.

“As far as being a manager, I have learned that the more events you do, the more types of events you do, the more of everything,” Lesa shares. “Everything benefits. Even learning the way to do a concert will somehow inadvertently benefit how you set up a horse show. I know that sounds kind of crazy, but it does broaden your view and you suddenly look at it with a different eye. It makes you be a more versatile manager, someone who can look at things a bit differently. When we get working with equestrians we tend to put on our cowboy hats or whatever it is, and we kind of view it that way; but viewing it more like a spectator would view it, or as a person who might not be coming straight from that avenue, you suddenly can broaden things a little bit. I think that's another thing that benefits from being able to do other types of events.”

Every venue has different situations, from ownership and funding to the communities around them. Large venues may have marketing funds set aside that can be used for “at-risk” events such as concerts, while small facilities might not have such financial support. “Just because a venue isn't doing more types of events doesn't mean that they don't have a good manager, it just means that their financial structure might be a little bit different,” Lesa says. “In looking at a manager, you're really looking for somebody that can A) work within the confines of the client, what the client and the community needs, and B) never stops learning. I can tell you, after 20 years in this industry, I'm constantly like, 'Wow, that would be a really neat event,' or, 'That's a great idea.' I think you just have to keep evolving.”

Symposium Recaps

The annual League Footing Academy and Symposium were held in January 2017, featuring a broad range of speakers, presentations and discussions. In each issue of the newsletter, we will

bring you recaps of some of those sessions. PowerPoints and other resources are also available in the Members Only section of the website.

Business and Strategic Plans: Why You Need Both!

Presented by Kevin Monahan, Small Business Development Center at the University of North Florida

Generally, for-profit companies are comfortable with business plans, and non-profit organizations are more familiar with presenting strategic plans. However, both plans are important for all types of companies. A business plan covers the “who” and “what” of the business. Who is running the business? What makes them qualified? What do they bring to the business that adds value? Who are the competitors? What does your company bring that others cannot? A business plan helps readers understand if the business is run efficiently.

A strategic plan gives us the “how” and “when.” How will you measure success? What metrics matter, and how will you track them? What needs to happen so you can achieve your goals? What resources are needed to get there? When will each task take place, who will do it, and when will milestones need to be met? The strategic is the action plan for your business; the tasks, milestones, and steps needed to drive your business forward.

Both a business plan and a strategic plan are necessary for the successful operation of any business, whether for-profit or nonprofit. These plans can help in raising money from grants or even bank loans. You can write your own business and strategic plans, but there are also companies you can hire or groups, such as at universities, that will help you for free. Regardless, they are important foundational tools for your organization.

Bio-Security Measures – Biosecurity Officers

Dr. Joe Lyman, Neogen

Most facilities do not have a designated biosecurity officer. A biosecurity officer would be one who is in charge in a crisis, ideally somewhat scientifically trained, understands principles of disease transmission, and is responsible for implementing biosecurity protocols. The biosecurity officer should have enough knowledge to determine whether a situation calls for the isolation of one animal, or the full quarantine of the facility. Presenting biosecurity measures to staff and ensuring the proper compliance is also important for a facility.

When biosecurity is done well, it is transparent. Infractions may go without repercussions, but sticking to all biosecurity protocols is imperative in the case of an outbreak, so it is important to have someone making sure that all employees are in compliance with the protocols. If there is one person responsible, it is easy for those who notice infractions or issues to know who they should tell.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution. Having someone knowledgeable come out and evaluate your particular facility can be a great help in establishing biosecurity measures and becoming aware of your specific risks. Thinking beyond a specific disease that is currently breaking out,

such as EHV-1, is important to prevent the next threat. Environmental diseases such as salmonella need to be prevented as well.

Disease exclusion is key to preventing an outbreak at your facilities. Checking each animal that enters your property is where you can truly stop a disease from entering. Having a vet on hand to inspect each animal before it gets out of the trailer might be inconvenient, but it can be extremely valuable in preventing outbreaks. General signs should be watched for at all times, such as nasal discharge, loose stool, or high temperatures. Intentions for biosecurity need to be made clear in event contracts so that your facility maintains the ability to control situations.



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