

**League of Agricultural and Equine Centers
November 2017 News**

We here at the League of Agricultural and Equine Centers wish you, your staff, and your families a wonderful holiday season. We're thankful for your continued membership and involvement in helping each other to succeed. Please enjoy this month's issue of the League News, and if you haven't already, make plans to attend our annual Symposium in January. Details are below, and as always we have a fantastic line-up of presenters for you. What a great benefit of your League membership!

In This Issue: Welcome & Acknowledgements – Hall of Fame and Facility of the Year Awards – Member Profile: Bert Rodriguez – Upcoming League Events – Feature Article: Jumping Into the Future with Air-Ess Equine – Symposium Recaps – Sponsors

Welcome New Members

We are happy to welcome the following new members to The League. We hope you take full advantage of all your membership has to offer!

Matt Bixenman, Arapahoe County Fairgrounds

Michelle White, Celebration Centre

Jill Delay, Routt County Fairgrounds

Abby Powell, The Ranch Events Complex

Member Profile: Bert Rodriguez

*Maintenance Manager, Southwestern Fair Commission
Pima County Fairgrounds*

While many members of the League started their lives in the agricultural industry and found a career within it, Bert Rodriguez took a different path. "I spent 30 years in the construction field, from owning my own company to working with a national builder for 20 years. When that industry declined I was forced to make a career change. Fortunately, the Pima County Fairgrounds was looking for someone with a construction background. What I didn't have was any knowledge of the equine sector, but I told them that I would learn."

Learn he did, and has continued to do so throughout his career there. In fact, he had to get up to speed very quickly. "I wasn't here a week when we had the Silver Buckle Arabian Horse Show. We had an over-watered arena, inexperienced help, and inadequate machinery. It was a nightmare! All I had going for me was the countless hours of customer service skills I had acquired in the building industry. A week later I was at my first League Footing Academy."

Bert put the knowledge he gained at that Footing Academy to use and has continued expanding his knowledge and skills. "I continue to belong because it has been invaluable. I have added another employee to your organization (Chris Pohst), and between us there isn't anything we can't address pertaining to arena footing. We have also sent three other employees to the Footing Academy. As a result of the knowledge we've gained, we have been asked to do footing seminars. We have not put one on yet, but I imagine we will. Because of The League, we have taken our facility to another level: we are now known to have some of the best footing in Southern Arizona. We have also mastered our drags and can give every equine discipline exactly what they want in arena footing."

We are proud of The League's part in Bert's successful career, and especially that so many exhibitors benefit from it as well.

Upcoming League Events

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

December 6, Green Initiatives, George Chatigny, Los Angeles
Equestrian Center

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 as well as the George Ingalls Equestrian Event Center.

Feature Article: Jumping Into the Future with Air-ESS Equine

The best products come about because someone needed them, and Jacqueline Nadler had a unique reason for developing the Air-ESS Equine range of products. She was training horses in

Africa, and the local baboon troop would steal and break her jumps to assert their dominance. Her solution was to build jumps that are extremely difficult to break and can withstand extreme weather without rotting. Air-ESS was the result.

“We use a military grade PVC coated polyester somewhat like material they would make rescue boats and decoys out of,” Jacqueline explains. “You can watch videos of the testing we did right on our website. We dropped 1,400 pounds on several different pieces, then cut them with a razor, patched it, and did it again. The material is rated for -30 to 190 degrees, so it will stand up to the worst weather. I had my jumps out in freezing weather; four feet of snow water dripped on them and froze in a block shape on one of them and they didn’t crack, rip, or lose their graphics when I pulled the ice off. The city in Namibia where some of the first prototypes still are in use is over a mile elevation with summer temperatures exceeding 100 degrees, and they continue to hold up well. They are great for indoor or outdoor use in any weather.”

The Air-ESS components make great jump fillers, with quick set up and tear down. “You can use any air pump to fill them, and they take anywhere from 15 seconds for the five-foot piece to 90 seconds to inflate the eight-foot fillers. The Complete Jumps (tm) take three minutes to inflate but deflate in seconds by pulling a zipper,” Jacqueline explains. “The two part valve is easy to use and has double protection against leaks. You can add water to make them as heavy as you want or loop them to ground poles and standards for extra stability. The fillers are like Legos, so you can put them together in different configurations creating a plethora of different styles from a few shapes. Our Rail Fillers have a pass-through for a ground, or two short poles can be used to raise and lower the fillers thus allowing for changing the height.”

Because they are inflatable, they are made to be light. Without water, most pieces weigh ten to twenty pounds and compress to fraction of the inflated size. This makes them easy to relocate and save space in storage.

Air-ESS jumps are cost effective as well as convenient. “I believe they are priced very competitively, if not cheaper than many of the traditional jump components on the market,” Jacqueline says. “But there is a great long-term savings with my products. They don’t have wood to splinter or screws to break, and they don’t need repainting. Although it’s difficult even to cut them open, the entire product line is easily repaired. They’ve been thoroughly tested for two years, including mounted police horses walking on them with borium shoes. If a horse goes through or lands on it, the chances of injury are lessened with the softer landing and no sharp edges or nails. Convenience-wise, you don’t need a tractor or to be particularly strong to relocate them or change your course. It’s a win-win!”

Air-ESS is a fun way to help get younger students involved in setting the courses and well as keeping repetitive motion injuries at bay. Plus, it’s easy to get them out of the way to thoroughly groom your footing. The benefits of Air-ESS products are numerous.

2017 Symposium Recaps

The annual 2017 League Footing Academy and Symposium were held in January, featuring a broad range of speakers, presentations and discussions. In each issue of the newsletter, we bring you recaps of some of those sessions. We cannot cover all of the material presented here, so please refer to the PowerPoints and other resources available in the Members Only section of the [website](#).

Social Media Marketing do's and don'ts

- Plans for things that happen in a moment's notice – shutting down in case of a severe weather warning or other imminent threat
- Get with local leaders and make a formal plan
- Be sure that all advertising incorporates key information, such as your brand and location. In traditional media, the best bang for your buck can be used by purchasing ad space that is left over, such as remnant billboards and extra space in print. E-blasts can target specific groups and are generally easy and inexpensive to implement.
- Don't spread yourself too thin by trying to take on all the platforms at once. Begin with one or two, and only consider adding more platforms when you are comfortable with and stable in your different pages. People love interactive content, whether they are polls, giveaways, or videos.
- Marketing each client and event that enters your facility. Encouraging news to promote events not only helps that particular event, it makes event managers more likely to use your facility. Local news stations may have a program that will feature events for a fee, and sometimes that fee can be passed to your event clients.
- Ask your clients and visitors for feedback.

Alternative Revenue Sources Roundtable

Here are a few of the many suggestions made during the roundtables on Alternative Revenue Sources:

- Offer sponsorships for big classes, such as the grand prix. Offer other perks like banners and sponsor events to sweeten the deal.
- Charge fees for open riding when the arena is not rented. Offer memberships for the season.
- Private events during the week, such as club events, ropings, etc. Non-equine events like business meetings, family reunions, wedding, quinceniera, swap meets.
- Charging for internet access; broadcasting
- Charge damages to the show, which makes show management responsible for policing their own participants.
- Rent out concession stands to groups/clubs for fundraisers
- Sell alcohol

- Apply for grants from county, etc. for being a park
- Rent out concession stands to events and do not allow outside vendors. Rent to groups as fundraisers and keep a small piece of the profit.
- Offer a full kitchen with menus tailored to events. Serve high quality food and take pride in it. If business does not support this, bring in mobile concessions.

LEGIS Corner: Be Prepared

There have, unfortunately, been a lot of natural disasters this year. Many people, including horse owners, had to evacuate their homes and businesses. It will take a long time to recover, and our hearts go out to all who were affected. Let's hope Mother Nature takes a break for a while!

When you are facing an emergency is not the time to be searching for important information. If your facility has faced a disaster, you don't want to have to rummage around for who you need to call to report a potential insurance claim.

In an emergency your first responsibility is to make sure your staff, exhibitors, and animals are getting the immediate attention they need, as well as securing your facility, equipment, and the like. Safety first. However, as soon as possible you need to notify your insurance agent or carrier. Sometimes there are emergency services available to you through your insurance policy, plus valuable advice for things to do and not do in an emergency situation. Having a plan that is understood and discussed ahead of time will help ensure safety to all involved, and aid you with any insurance claims needed, which will help you get 100% operational faster.

We hope you won't have to face an emergency, but if you do please be prepared.



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