

# Recruiting TOOLS

*Horse Country Beckons Academics*

By Rena Baer | Photo by Anne M. Eberhardt

The Bluegrass leaves a lasting impression on visitors, especially those who love horses — whether it's riding them, watching them graze in a grassy field, or seeing them race at Keeneland. That impression goes a long way when it comes to drawing job candidates to the area. Even

upon landing at Lexington's airport, new arrivals are struck first by the endless green pastureland, dotted with neat barns and towering stands of trees. Keeneland Race Course sits a stone's throw from the airport, a further reminder that Lexington is horse country.



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Local universities find the equine industry can influence whether staff decide to take jobs in the Bluegrass, even if those individuals are not in the horse industry.

University of Kentucky's new basketball coach Billy Gillispie is a horse racing fan, and though UK's nationally renowned basketball program was a huge draw for the former Texas A&M coach, the proximity to Thoroughbred racing was an added bonus.

When basketball coach Tubby Smith announced he was leaving UK for Minnesota, *New York Times* blogger Pete Thamel interviewed Gillispie about the possibility of succeeding Smith and came up with four reasons he thought Gillispie would take the job. Coming in at #2:

"Gillispie loves horse racing. It may sound silly, but when I asked him if he had any outlets outside basketball, he immediately brought up horse racing. Gillispie said he's been to all the major tracks and that an A&M booster took him to the Kentucky Derby last year, which he said was a thrill like going to the World Series. Obviously, the horse farms in Lexington have a lot of influence on Kentucky. Don't laugh. These things tend to come into play."

And not just for the basketball coach.

Beth Barnes said that the first thing that popped into her mind when she saw an advertisement for the director's job at UK's College of Communications and Information Studies was: "Lexington — that's where that racetrack is!"

As a child, she and her father, who



LEXINGTON HERALD-LEADER/CHARLES BERTRAM



ANNE M. EBERHARDT

First-time visitors flying into the Bluegrass might get an aerial glimpse of Shadwell Farm (top) and closer views of mares and foals once they are on the ground.

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grew up in Hopkinsville, Ky., always had followed the Triple Crown races. Although Barnes had never visited Kentucky in her formative years (all of the family had since moved away), she felt a connection to the state and horse racing through her dad.

This connection further strengthened during Barnes' first teaching job, a stint at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. There, she made a couple of friends from Cincinnati. Every April she would accompany them to the races at Keeneland.

"It is one of the loveliest places I've ever been," she said.

After 18 years as an advertising professor and an assistant dean at Syracuse University's journalism college in New York, she wanted to move up and spotted the job opening at UK.

When UK asked her to come and interview, she asked whether Keeneland had a meet going on. When she found out it did, she made sure to fly in the Saturday prior to her interview so she could attend the races.

"It definitely was a draw for applying for the job," she said. "Granted, if I hadn't liked the area, the people, or the program, it wouldn't have been enough to take the job."

Since moving here, Barnes said she has come to realize what an integral part the horse industry plays in the area and has



ANNE M. EBERHARDT

UK basketball coach Billy Gillispie and Keeneland president Nick Nicholson

tried to incorporate that into UK's journalism program. These days she is at Keeneland more for educational purposes than to watch the races.

"There are so many great opportunities for us (the journalism program) to do things with the horse industry," she said.

All these opportunities also make the Bluegrass an ideal location for academics in the horse industry. William B. Drake Jr., president of Midway College, which has an extensive equine studies program, said Central Kentucky is a "prime place for them (faculty) to be in practice."

"We have wonderful, major breeding operations that are successful and provide vibrant business models for students to study," he said. "On the science side is the fact we have the best equine vets in the world to collaborate with."

"The level of theory and practice comes together, also enabling faculty to do research."

Janice Holland, an assistant professor of equine studies at Midway College, grew up a horse-crazy girl on a farm near Harrisburg, Penn., and at age 12 attended Girl Scout camp at the Kentucky Horse Park.

"I was amazed to be camping at the horse park, with all the exposure to the different breeds and disciplines," she said. "Especially when all my life all I had been riding were farm and camp horses."

She decided to pursue an equine management degree at Penn State in the hopes of managing a horse farm. Her adviser suggested graduate school, and Holland went on

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MATT GOINS

Beth Barnes, director of UK's College of Communications and Information Studies

## INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

While the horse industry helps draw some college employees to locate in the Bluegrass, Keeneland also helps support higher education, scholarships, and corresponding equine programs.

Keeneland has a long history of giving to higher education, stretching back to 1947 when the Keeneland Foundation gave UK much-needed funds to purchase an electron microscope — a critical tool to elevate its research programs — said Fran Taylor, executive director of the Keeneland Foundation. An endowment of over \$100,000 for scholarships in Agriculture was created in 1960 at UK — and the fund has grown significantly and has helped qualified students attend the university, she said. Keeneland also was actively involved in funding the Gluck Equine Research Center at UK with a \$1 million gift.

## KEENELAND'S TOTAL GIVING TO HIGHER EDUCATION —TOP 5

University of Kentucky	\$3,333,601
Transylvania University	\$867,700
Midway College	\$274,500
Kentucky Independent Colleges Foundation	\$164,000
Race For Education scholarship program	\$25,908



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*"We have wonderful, major breeding operations that are successful and provide vibrant business models for students to study."* — William B. Drake, president, Midway College



MATT GOINS PHOTOS

Jen Roytz, Georgetown College's equine scholars program director

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to Virginia Tech to earn a doctorate in animal science with a concentration in equine science.

After graduate school, Holland became the director of the equine management program at Salem International University in Salem, Virginia.

When the job she now has came open at Midway College, she knew she'd found her niche.

"It's just a phenomenal area — with the horse park, racing, and eventing. It offers the opportunity to get very involved in the equine community and get students involved in the equine community," she said.

"Where else would a horse person want to be?" she said. "You could go to a horse event every night of the week and on the weekends."

Jen Roytz, executive director of the Equine Scholars Program at Georgetown College, said she grew up in Cleveland riding hunter jumpers since she could walk. During her childhood she would pass through Lexington while headed south on family vacations. "My sister and I would always beg our parents to stop so we could tour the horse farms or go to the horse park."

As she neared college age, Roytz said she had developed an interest in Thoroughbreds and every school she applied to was near a racetrack. She chose Morehead State in Morehead, Ky., where she majored in communications and exercised horses in the mornings before class.

After she graduated, Roytz took some marketing jobs in Lexington but knew she had found her niche when the Georgetown College job opened up. With 30 horse-related associations in the area, The Red Mile, equine competitions and events, not to mention Keeneland and the horse park, Central Kentucky was the ideal place for her to get students involved in the horse industry.

"Every professional field of study that can be related to the horse industry is represented locally, and the national headquarters for many equine businesses and associations are right at the students' disposal.

"There is absolutely no better place in the country for students to get a comprehensive education about the professional opportunities in the horse industry — this location allows me to do my job to the best of my abilities." 🐾



Dr. Janice Holland poses with Duke, her retired 21-year-old Thoroughbred, at the Equestrian Center at Midway College.