

Re-Creating A Workforce

Seeking to return African-Americans to the prominence they enjoyed in horse racing in the late 1800s and early 1900s, former University of Kentucky football player Ron Mack formed the Legacy Equine Academy a year ago, and it comes at a good time in terms of the potential to fill jobs working around horses.

“LEA is a non-profit that works with youth in middle schools and high schools to encourage them to pursue equine agriculture, natural resources, and environmental science degrees,” said Mack. “We’ve got about 50 kids involved, and we hope to build a pipeline for them to get interested in, and eventually enter, the horse industry. We’re also working with adults to point them toward getting the right training and education so they can fill jobs.

“African-Americans were so prominent in the industry, and we want to connect racially diverse youth to the vast opportunities in the farm and horse racing industries.”

LEA has secured support from the Kentucky Thoroughbred Association, Breeders’ Cup, Kentucky Horse Park, and Claiborne Farm, and the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture has given it a \$30,000 endowment. LEA is also holding a fundraiser entitled Legacy Ball that will take place May 5 in the Woodford Reserve Club inside the University of Kentucky’s Commonwealth Stadium featuring food, beverage, music, dancing, and simulated wagering, along with an exhibit on the history of African-American racing pioneers.

The LEA’s educational program has been endorsed by Fayette County Public Schools. It includes in-school and after-school work as well as an eight-week summer course.

“Through these relationships, we will attempt to provide a service that offers staffing opportunities to qualified African-American and other minority workers,” Mack said. “These positions will range from laborers to farm managers to veterinary techs. The equine industry takes a special kind of skill, passion, and patience, and we want to promote the career-related opportunities it offers.”

Tickets to the Legacy Ball are available at the www.legacyball.com. —LS