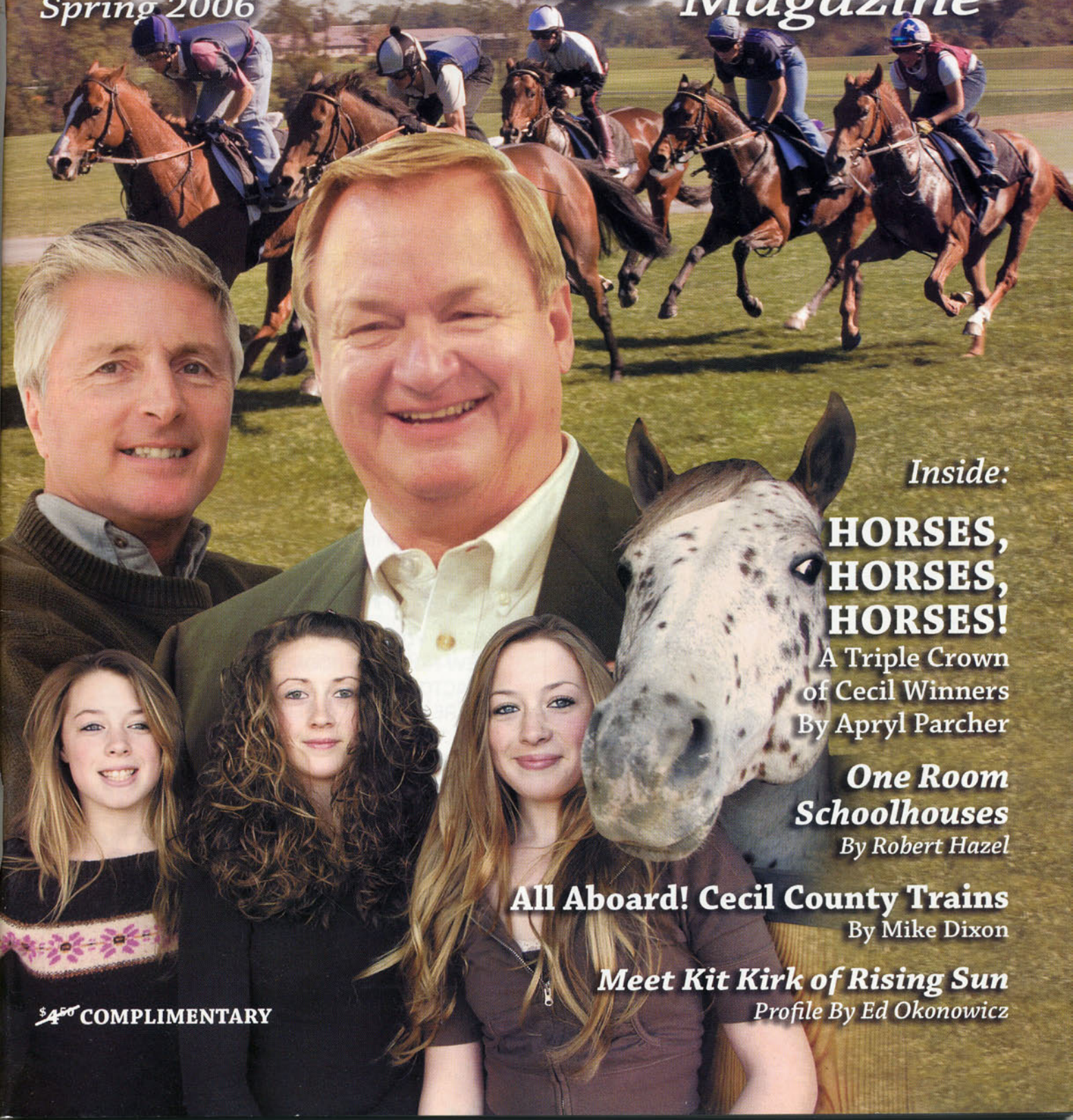


Down to Earth News for the Gentle People of Cecil County

CECIL SOIL

Spring 2006

Magazine™



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\$4.50 COMPLIMENTARY

A TRIPLE CROWN OF CECIL WINNERS -

WINBAK FARM: RAISING A WINNING CROP ON CECIL SOIL *Chesapeake City, MD*

"Born to compete – Raised to win" is the Winbak foal motto, and this year's crop of potential champion Standardbreds is starting to arrive—86 so far—with many more on the way. Growing up on over 2,300 acres of some of Maryland's finest pastureland, many Winbak foals become champion trotters and pacers, winning millions of dollars for their owners, and later producing more winners. Owned by **Joe and JoAnn Thomson**, Winbak Farm is the largest and leading foal nursery in the state, and the second-largest Standardbred breeder in the country. Its many acres of pasture are of great benefit to the health of the Chesapeake Bay; no chemicals are used on Winbak grass—which not only benefits the mares and foals that feed on it, but also the water table beneath.

Grass is the single best use for land," said farm manager **Bill Gerweck**. "It's the cleanest type of farming. Properly managed, pastureland acts as a natural filter, eliminating runoff and loss of topsoil."

Brood mare and breeding manager **Raymond Fernandez** is too busy, however, to think much about grass these days. It's the height of foaling season, which began in February and runs through June.

It's go-go-go every morning," notes Fernandez with a shake of his head and a wry smile. "It's basically all reproduction (handling mares and foals) in the mornings and then breeding (stallions) in the afternoons."



Raymond Fernandez keeps an eye on these mares getting ready to deliver their foals



Joe and JoAnn Thomson, center, with members of the Winbak staff

Mares in various stages of gestation dot the rolling landscape around the two yearling barns near the Winbak farm office to await the arrival of their young ones. They are kept in different areas around the barns, depending on their due date, and the last weeks are a critical stage for the moms-to-be.

"Our foaling barn is 24/7... always people there all the time," said Fernandez. **"The mares that are due any day get watched around the clock, and someone comes out here to the paddocks and checks them just about every hour. When they're ready, they're moved into the barn to deliver their foals. Everyone is on constant watch."**

Once the foals are born, they stay in the barn with the mares until they're ready for the outdoors. Foals nurse from six to seven months, and then are weaned from the mares and kept in groups to grow and play together. "We keep them together by size and ability," says Fernandez, who also notes that growing up on the premium grass and open space of Cecil County gives Winbak foals their competitive edge.

"Our soil here has been great at the

yearling division...these foals and mares do great on the grass here. They grow big and healthy, and the rolling hills provide lots of exercise while they're growing."

KEEPING TRACK

With so many foals to keep track of at Winbak, proper identification is important. Some extra-maternal mares have been known to "steal" a foal from another mare and try to keep it, so colored plastic chains are draped around the neck of each newborn. These "necklaces" have an ID number that matches the mother's, and foals wear them until they are "freeze branded." Freeze branding, conducted by a representative of the United States Trotting Association (USTA), is a permanent marking procedure that involves minimal discomfort to the horse. A super-cold branding iron is applied to the skin, which alters color pigment producing cells, causing white hair (instead of colored hair) to grow at the brand site.



S — Our local equine industry at work

By Apyl Parcher

Not all the moms at Winbak are Standard-breds. Three "mini" mares also await babies on the farm. Foaling is a delicate process with miniature horses, so these little mares are given lots of extra TLC.



This year's crop of foals is coming along nicely, and Fernandez sees a bright future ahead for Winbak, and for

Cecil's equine industry as a whole. "The horse industry right now is doing

great," he says. "We would like to get more people to visit the farm to learn more about the industry. It gets bigger every year, and will continue to get bigger. I encourage people, especially high-school or college kids who want to take equine courses, to come out to see how we operate. We have a lot of people working here, and everyone does a great job."

For more information about Winbak Farms, visit www.winbakfarm.com.

TAPETA™ FOOTINGS AND TAPETA FARM

North East, MD

Soft and springy, it looks like sand strewn with colored confetti, and feels like a rich, loamy soil when sifted through the fingers, but to a horse's legs and feet—Tapeta™ Footings is like a magic carpet ride—which is exactly why Thoroughbred trainer **Michael Dickinson** created it. A unique, all-weather synthetic replacement for dirt race tracks and training surfaces, Tapeta™ seems poised to make over the Thoroughbred racing industry.

With ingenuity fueled by a passion for horses and their wellbeing, Dickinson created his brainchild right here in Cecil County after moving here from England in 1987. Before that, he was a champion steeplechase rider with 378 wins during his career, and he holds the world record for the most wins by a trainer in a single day.

Obsessive about surfaces, he has the reputation in racing circles of being a little eccentric, but that doesn't bother him. "Some people think I've gone to the moon and back three times," he says with a grin, "and now they know."

Sand, rubber, blended waxes and other secret ingredients make up Michael Dickinson's magic recipe for Tapeta™ Footings, shown here at the all-weather track at Tapeta Farm ("Tapeta" is Latin for "carpet").



Dickinson is dead serious, however, about the health of his horses and their riders. "Too many horses are getting hurt," he explains. "Statistics published by racing authorities confirm what we [trainers] see on a daily basis; bowed tendons, stress fractures, and devastating injuries to both horse and rider—especially on a sloppy track or one that's too hard. When I was a steeplechase rider, the horses I rode taught me a great deal about the difference a good surface makes...and I listened to them."

To that end, he maintains three different turf (grass) tracks for training at Tapeta Farm, his 200-acre training facility in North East, Maryland, where he worked hard to develop and patent his synthetic surface.

"It took us 4 years and 52 trials," said Dickinson, but once perfected, Tapeta™ lived up to its name. After seven years of hard use under every conceivable weather condition, it has proven impervious to

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Warming up on the all-weather Tapeta™ track at Tapeta Farm

Cecil Equine ... *continued from pg 40*



Alyse showing Zippo's Country Lady

with the idea in 1995, and Giulia Hodge, of the Cecil County DJS, worked with Sabrina on implementing the program, which ran for nine years.

Through "Girls on Track," at-risk girls ages 11-17 were given the opportunity to come to Stone Creek twice a year for a 3-day camp and learn what it's like to live on a busy equestrian farm.

"I think it had an impact on many of them," noted Sabrina. "These kids were struggling with misfortunes in their lives, and it gave them a release—but it also taught them about responsibility and sharing. They had to pitch in just like the rest of us; we taught them about feeding and car-

ing for the horses, and they participated in our family activities. It was a good connection."

"It was a very successful program," agreed Hodge. "It gave these girls a chance to witness first-hand, a healthy family system where everyone sits down at meals together, works together and plays together. They were taught that responsibility and respect go hand in hand and that they could choose healthy alternatives over negative influences in their lives."

Unfortunately, the program ran into funding problems in 2005, but Hodge hopes to get new funding to start the program again. The Ginn family hopes that JAVA finds the resources to restart the program, too. A loving, giving family, they like to share their good fortune with others.

"I also like volunteering to coach the Cecil County 4-H Horse Bowl and Horse Judging Teams, which keeps local interest up in equestrian activities," said Sabrina. "Along with lessons, boarding, training and showing, we're busy, but that's the way we like it." ↴



Caitlyn shows Abe in English Saddle



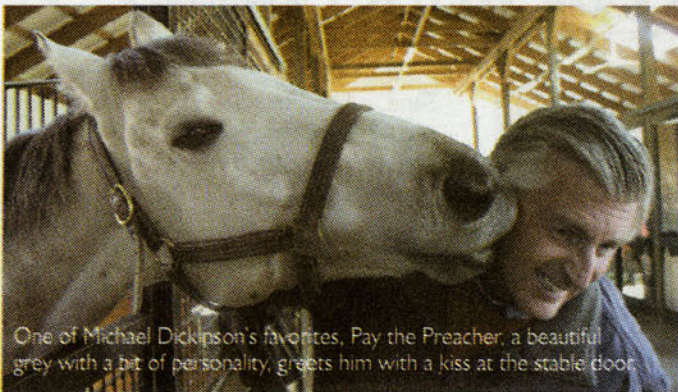
Seventh Heaven ...

Mrs. Doris Twitchell of Calvert, Maryland, poses with her seven beautiful grandchildren.

Sitting in her lap is Anne Russell, and going clockwise is Nathan Twitchell, Christine Hayes, Ashton Twitchell, Abel Russell, Chad Hayes and Daniel Russell.

 Cecil Snaps

In our last issue, "Big Heart in Chesapeake City", we incorrectly reported that the program Generation Station has 45 middle-schoolers attending, rather they have a capacity for 45 children. In the same story, Mom's Canal Kitchen, is *not* another food ministry program operated by the Ecumenical Association.



One of Michael Dickinson's favorites, Pay the Preacher, a beautiful grey with a bit of personality, greets him with a kiss at the stable door.

weather, easy to maintain, and above all, easy on a horse's legs, and is rapidly becoming a hot topic among trainers and track managers across the country.

Joan Wakefield, Dickinson's wife and long-time training partner, is also happy with the new product, and recently retired from training to manage Tapeta™ Footings, Inc. full-time.

"The new company is both challenging and exciting," says Wakefield, who shares office space with Dickinson on the 2nd floor of the roomy, 40-stall barn at Tapeta Farm. She believes that synthetic surfaces have the potential of improving conditions not only in racing, but in "almost every equestrian discipline."

It takes more than a revolutionary surface to train at Tapeta Farm, however. Understanding the horses' emotional as well as physical needs is equally important.

"Each horse has a big window to look out," says Dickinson. "They enjoy it! Herd animals have social needs that mustn't be ignored."

He also attributes the vitality of his equine athletes to their surroundings, where the gentle inclines of the Cecil countryside give his horses the "best exercise possible," and the grass provides key nutritional benefits. "We love it here on the bay," says Dickinson. "We turn the horses out for two hours in a fresh pasture in the morning; it promotes lung integrity and allows them to move around and prevent stiffness—and it helps them to relax. Also, the benefits of fresh green grass in the equine diet cannot be overstated," he says.

Perhaps that's why Dickinson's Kentucky Derby contender for 2004, Tapit, (who trained exclusively on Tapeta™ and the farm's lush turf tracks) was given his own plot of "Cecil Sod" to munch on while at the races in Kentucky. While that might seem a little eccentric to some, it's certain that Dickinson's horses love the extra attention—along with their nightly bottle of Guinness Stout while in training.

For more information, visit Tapeta Farm (www.tapeta.com) and Tapeta™ Footings (www.tapetafootings.com).

THE GINN FAMILY OF STONE CREEK STABLE

Earlville, MD

"We don't have the kind of horses that make money... we have the kind that cost money," says **Sabrina Ginn** with a laugh. Relaxing in the living room of the family farm house, Sabrina and her three teenage daughters, **Alysse** (15), **Caitlin** (15), and **Rachel** (14), sift through an assortment of photographs that commemorate their victories in showing and training champion registered Appaloosas.



Rachel Ginn with her solid chestnut Appaloosa, Lady's Country Zippo

The 227-acre farm, once known as Old Philadelphia Farm, has about 25 acres dedicated to the family's 15 horses. What started out for Sabrina and her husband Burke as a hobby showing breed horses evolved as their children came along into riding, training, judging and breeding, plus boarding and lesson programs in Western and English disciplines—and Caitlin, Alysse and Rachel stay very busy.

"We've had Regional Championships, Top 5 and Top 10 in events such as Halter, Western and English Equitation, and Showmanship in the past years competitions," said Burke proudly, and the family is looking forward to going to the Appaloosa Youth Worlds in Oklahoma City this summer as well as perhaps getting to go to POA International Competition.

However, life at Stone Creek Stable isn't all about winning competitions. The Ginns also possess a spirit of volunteerism. When the children were young, Sabrina found a unique vehicle for giving back to the community through a program called "Girls on Track." The Juvenile Agency Volunteer Auxiliary (JAVA), a non-profit group created to promote the welfare of children in the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) system, originally came up

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The Ginn Family of Stone Creek. Pictured (left to right), Caitlyn, Sabrina, Alysse (with Muffin), Burke and Rachel