

THOROUGHBRED  
INDUSTRY EMPLOYEE  
AWARDS

PRESENTED BY



USA  
2020



November 5, 2020

Go to [tiea.org](https://tiea.org) at 12pm ET to watch this year's ceremony

# WELCOME

The Thoroughbred industry is uniquely fortunate in its connection between horse and human. A symbiotic relationship that motivates many of us watching this virtual ceremony to show up to work every day. Those relationships have been put to the test, we're sure, on many occasions, but even more so in this unprecedented year.

Despite the loss of race days, changes to sales calendars and more, many dedicated farm and racetrack workers have continued to diligently do their jobs, taking care of their horses and other responsibilities to our industry. This is the steadfast commitment and passion we strive to recognize and reward through our support of the Thoroughbred Industry Employee Awards (TIEA).

In its first four years, TIEA has awarded more than \$500,000 in prize money to 86 finalists, with over 700 nominations across the seven categories. Yet again, the nominations this year were incredibly impressive, in both quantity and quality. From Oregon to Florida, almost every facet of our business was represented in this year's nominees. Without a nomination, we wouldn't have finalists to recognize. Thank you to all of the nominators who took the time to acknowledge the hard-working men and women in their lives.

The toughest job in this process falls to our two independent judging panels, who have the difficult task of selecting finalists and then the winners in each category. With another extraordinary group of nominees this year, we offer our heartfelt thanks to each of our judges for their volunteered time and careful consideration.

Lastly, we want to thank our other industry and media partners who have helped us adapt this year's awards ceremony into a virtual event. We are indebted to our partners for offering their invaluable resources, so we can in turn share this special occasion with the world and in doing so, ensure we properly celebrate this year's phenomenal finalists.

We are extremely proud to be a part of this industry initiative and look forward to its continued growth and popularity. TIEA, and its five counterparts across the globe, each have a resounding impact in our industry. The unsung heroes of our sport now have an opportunity to garner the recognition they truly deserve.



Eric Hamelback,  
CEO



Dan Metzger,  
CEO



Jim Gagliano,  
President and CEO



Drew Fleming,  
President and CEO

## SPONSOR'S MESSAGE



Jimmy Bell  
President, Godolphin USA

The current Covid-19 pandemic has shone an even brighter spotlight on the frontline, hard-working men and women that ensure the health and welfare of our equine athletes. These individuals aren't able to work from home or in some remote fashion. Horses still need to be fed and exercised, their stalls cleaned and foals delivered.

The Thoroughbred Industry Employee Awards, now in their fifth year, will once again take place during Breeders' Cup week, having been graciously hosted by Keeneland in three of the four previous years. This year's ceremony will be a virtual one, with the assistance of Studio 46 in Lexington, Kentucky, but the lack of face-to-face celebrations will not diminish the excitement of these awards, nor will it lessen the important contributions that these people make day in and day out to our industry.

On behalf of Godolphin, we would again like to thank The Jockey Club, the National Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association, the Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association, and the Breeders' Cup for their ongoing participation. Their efforts in helping the nomination process, in addition to monetary support, are vital to the success of these awards.

To our media partners, we also send a big thank you. We have never put a value to the publicity and advertising space they provide for TIEA, but undoubtedly it would be significant. BloodHorse Publications, the Thoroughbred Daily News, the Daily Racing Form, the Paulick Report, TVG, and our newest partner, Fox Sports: we appreciate you and your continued support for this great cause.

The judges, too, are deserving of special recognition. First, they are ready and willing, without fanfare, to take on the important responsibility of deciding the finalists from what is always a very competitive and worthy group. We've heard them say "it was a dead heat" on many occasions, describing what a talented, deserving group they are presented with. They also reflect on how meaningful the entire process is as they get the chance to hear firsthand the amazing stories of all the finalists.

But most of all, especially during these tumultuous times, we would like to acknowledge all the 2020 nominees. While the judges are tasked with narrowing down the pool of entries, you should feel proud that someone you know or work for felt you should be recognized for your outstanding efforts and devotion to our industry. Please know that your dedication has been validated and that we truly appreciate what you do.

# THE AWARDS

## ADMINISTRATION

An award to an individual who works in an administrative role in the Thoroughbred breeding or racing industry, or any support service within the Thoroughbred breeding and racing sectors.

## DEDICATION TO BREEDING

An award to an individual who has worked a minimum of 10 years in the Thoroughbred breeding industry and who has shown consistency, reliability and a talent for Thoroughbred breeding horsemanship. Must be a pivotal part of his or her employer's success.

## LEADERSHIP IN BREEDING

An award to an individual in a supervisory or managerial role at a Thoroughbred farm who displays exceptional leadership qualities – particularly in terms of motivating, mentoring and supporting colleagues in the workplace.

**PRIZES FOR THE ABOVE AWARDS:** Trophy and \$7,500 to the winner, plus \$2,500 to their stable/farm. Certificate and \$2,500 to each runner-up, plus \$2,500 to their stable/farm.

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## NEWCOMER

An award to an individual who has been working in any area of Thoroughbred breeding and/or racing for less than five years and who has shown commitment to – and ambition for – a career in the Thoroughbred industry, including a desire to improve and progress their skills and knowledge.

**PRIZE:** Trophy, \$2,500 and a five-day educational tour to Dubai for the winner, plus \$1,000 to their stable/farm. Certificate and \$2,000 to each runner-up, plus \$1,000 to their stable/farm.

\*Dependent on Covid-19 travel restrictions. If necessary, an educational trip of some kind will be offered instead at Godolphin's discretion.

## COMMUNITY

This award recognizes those who have made an outstanding contribution to the Thoroughbred industry. Nominees should be those who contribute to the greater good of the sport. This could include those who support the breeding and racing staff or have made an outstanding contribution to the wider Thoroughbred community. Nominees for this award do not need to be directly employed in the Thoroughbred industry.

**PRIZE:** Trophy and \$7,500 to the winner, plus \$5,000 to a charity of their choice.

# ADMINISTRATION FINALISTS

## **DIONNE JOHNSON** Business Manager New York Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association (NYTHA) Nominators **William Alempijevic and Andy Belfiore**



Dionne has worked for NYTHA for over 30 years. Nominator and NYTHA consultant, Andy Belfiore, said: "It is remarkable how she has risen from Administrative Assistant to Bookkeeper to Business Manager for NYTHA. She has been the backbone of the organization for more than a decade." She is involved in many NYTHA committees, including the Scholarship Committee, which under her guidance has donated over \$1.6m in scholarships to 460 children of backstretch workers in the past 10 years. Nominator and NYTHA Executive Director William Alempijevic, said: "Dionne takes great pride in the scholarship program but there is no aspect of the business she isn't involved in."

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## **LYNNELLE FOX SMITH** Executive Director Oregon Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association (OTOBA) Nominator **Gay Welliver**



Lynnelle began working part-time for OTOBA in 2010, but she quickly moved into the role of Executive Director and is now the sole employee of the organization. Nominator and OTOBA President, Gay Welliver, said: "The OTOBA's Board of Directors look upon Lynnelle as the glue that holds our organization together." Lynnelle has successfully represented OTOBA to the State Government, acquiring grant funding for safety and education within the racing industry. Gay continued: "As the industry within the state of Oregon has changed, Lynnelle has become the linchpin for Thoroughbred owners and breeders throughout the state."

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## **MICHELE HOLBROOK** Office Manager Silver Springs Stud Nominator **Steve Johnson**



Michele's 30 years of experience in the Thoroughbred industry has helped mold her position today at Silver Springs Stud. Nominator and employer, Steve Johnson, said: "She thoroughly understands the outside and inside of the business. Our staff, our clients, as well as all the professionals with whom she interacts each day completely respect and admire her." From the little things, like birthday brownies for employees to bigger picture items, her attention to detail makes her a vital part of Silver Springs. Steve continued: "I attribute Michele's behind-the-scenes work as the glue that has enabled our farm to withstand so many of the ups and downs we've experienced over the last 30 years she has worked for me."



# DEDICATION TO BREEDING FINALISTS

## **DAVID KYLE** Plant Manager

Fasig-Tipton

Nominator **Andrea Greathouse**



David started working for Fasig-Tipton in 1987 at 19 and has been there ever since. As Plant Manager he oversees the Newtown Pike facility where he prepares the grounds for sales, organizes last-minute accommodation for horses and consignors, runs stable crews at the Gulfstream and Saratoga sales, and much more. David's nominator, Andrea Greathouse, said: "No day is too long, no task is too large or small and he approaches his job with a smile and kindness."

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## **HELEN OTERO** Stallion Administrator

Coolmore America

Nominator **Dermot Ryan**



Born in Ireland, Helen came to Coolmore in 1993 as a veterinary nurse but was quickly promoted to the position of Stallion Administrator. Earning the respect of everyone in the office, she also serves as a mentor for others starting out on their careers at Coolmore. Her organizational skills are apparent in scheduling breeding appointments for thousands of mares during the months-long breeding season. Coolmore America Manager, Dermot Ryan, said: "When the breeding season starts, we basically hand the keys and the driver's seat to Helen."

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## **STEVE AVERY** General Farm Manager

Taylor Made Sales Agency

Nominator **Logan Payne**



With more than 40 years' experience in the horse industry, Steve has spent the last two decades at Taylor Made Farm, where he has managed or raised such notables as Songbird, Havre de Grace, Speightstown and Princess Rooney. His nominator, Taylor Made's Logan Payne, said: "His responsibility, his reliability, his work ethic: it's just phenomenal. Even on vacation, he walks his dog, Henry, up to the barns to check on things." Dr Hyde, of Rood and Riddle, said, "His impact on the industry can be seen through all those he has helped to start their careers."

# DEDICATION TO RACING FINALISTS

## **GREGORY SMOTHERS** Head Rider

Niall Brennan Stables

Nominator **Niall Brennan**



Gregory has worked for Niall Brennan Stables for 31 years. Niall said: "His passion for the horse is unparalleled and his ability to give a shy horse confidence, an aggressive horse discipline and all horses the ability to understand the breaking process with the minimal amount of stress is phenomenal." On his 30th anniversary of riding, he was asked to name his favorite horses of the many champions, Derby winners, and Breeders' Cup winners he had started and developed. He was at a loss, stating that those weren't necessarily the most rewarding horses or the ones that made him the most proud. A true testament to his character and horsemanship.

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## **MARCELO ARENAS** Assistant Trainer

Leah Gyarmati Stables

Nominator **Leah Gyarmati**



Marcelo began his career in the racing industry in his home country of Chile at 16. He came to the US in 2000 and has continued to pursue his career in the industry, working his way up from hot walker to groom to foreman, and now to Assistant Trainer. Nominator and employer, Leah Gyarmati, said: "He is truly an asset to my barn and in these difficult times, I don't know how I would have made it without him. His experience, and most importantly, his desire to learn and expand his knowledge in the industry, is impressive. His love for the game is evident in everything he does."

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## **PATRICK 'SHAWN' AUTRY** Assistant Stable Manager

McPeek Racing

Nominator **Kenny McPeek**



Shawn has been around horses his entire life, from breaking to exercising riding and training in his own name after taking out his trainer's license at the age of 19. Paralyzed after a training accident in 1994, Shawn went back to school, making the transition from riding and working with horses daily to an office environment. Nominator, Kenny McPeek, said: "Shawn and I go back at least 35 years. I remember when he was one of the best exercise riders around. He's worked for me since we opened Magdalena Farm. He knows the ins and the outs of this business like no one else and loves it. He has certainly dedicated his life to it. His passion for the horse business will never end."

# LEADERSHIP IN BREEDING FINALISTS

## **CHRISTY HOLDEN** General Manager Country Life and Merryland Farms Nominator **Sallyellen Hurst**



Christy attributes a great deal of her success as a manager to her mentors and Country Life owners Josh and Mike Pons. First employed by Country Life Farm in 1985, she went on to become General Manager of both Country Life and Merryland Farms in 2015. She has served on the board of the Maryland Horse Breeders Association since 2018. When she departs for a well-deserved vacation, she's been heard to say: "I'll have my laptop and phone at hand, so don't hesitate to reach out if you need me."

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## **MATT LYONS** VP and COO Candy Meadows Farm Nominator **Teri Tucker**



Originally from East Galway, Ireland, Matt has been at Candy Meadows Farm/Cheyenne Stables since 2019. His first full-time role in the States was with Gerry Dilger at Dromoland Farm, followed by other positions at Taylor Made Farm, ClassicStar Farm and Woodford Thoroughbreds. Matt has been complimented for his special gift – his ability to spot an individual's potential and direct them to a role in which they can shine. Coach, teacher, honest, trustworthy, respected – these are some of the words that describe Matt in his TIEA nomination.

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## **WAYNE CLEM** Assistant Yearling Manager Claiborne Farm Nominator **Seth Hancock**



"Wayne is one of the most selfless and best people I've ever worked with," says Yearling Manager Robby Hertzfel. Employed by Claiborne Farm since 1967, Wayne implemented an internship program several years ago, mentoring and teaching students about all aspects of yearling care. Nominator, Seth Hancock, said: "It is because of his hard work and thoughtful spirit that we can trust Wayne to fulfill Claiborne's motto of doing the usual unusually well."



# LEADERSHIP IN RACING FINALISTS

## **CARMEN MCSHANE** Assistant Trainer

D/M Racing

Nominator **Michelle McShane**



Carmen has put her heart into Thoroughbred racing for more than 30 years. She has been a jockey, exercise rider and an outrider, while also helping to look after horses on the farm, too. Nominator and daughter, Michelle, said of her mother's work ethic: "She is the first one to the barn and the last one to leave. If there were more hours in the day, I believe she'd spend those at the barn as well." A compassionate leader by example, Carmen is the first person to offer help when someone needs it. Drawing on the experiences of D/M Racing interns as well as her own, Michelle continued: "I learn something new from my mother at the barn almost daily."

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## **CINDY HUTTER** Assistant Trainer

George Weaver Racing

Nominator **Blair Golen**



Cindy has served the Thoroughbred industry for 35 years. After working for D Wayne Lukas, she became an assistant to Todd Pletcher before joining her husband, George, as Assistant Trainer when he started training in his own name. Nominator, Blair Golen, said: "I have so much respect for her. She would never ask you to do something that she wouldn't do herself. She expects the best from us every day, but that is because she gives her best every day."

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## **ROY SMITH** Track Superintendent

Indiana Grand Racing and Casino

Nominator **Joe Carr**



From a young age, Roy has worked in various roles, from hot walker and groom to outrider and assistant track superintendent. As Track Superintendent at Philadelphia Park for 31 years, Roy helped establish Track Superintendent Field Day promoting collaboration among his peers with the goal of increased safety of track surfaces. Nominator, Joe Carr, said: "As part of his lifelong passion for the industry Roy has dedicated his life to the health and welfare of the horse, the rider, and the track personnel through his work. He is

a global resource of racetrack management knowledge and shares that knowledge through the Track Superintendent Field Day he established over 15 years ago."

# NEWCOMER FINALISTS

## **AARON WEST** Racing Operations Manager Bradley Thoroughbreds Nominator **Pete Bradley**



A native Arkansan, Aaron was bitten by the Thoroughbred bug at the Oaklawn Park races. He followed his passion for Thoroughbreds and moved to Lexington, Kentucky, eventually graduating from the North American Racing Academy where he focused on ground skills and barn management. He was a yearling groom at Lane's End Farm and then went to Bradley Thoroughbreds where he does "everything", according to Pete Bradley. Aaron coordinates with owners, organizes seating on race days, provides updates on breezes, races, and more. Bradley added: "Aaron comes to work every day with a can-do attitude".

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## **ALEXIS KOLASA** Administrative Assistant Denali Stud Nominator **Conrad Bandoroff**



Alexis has been involved with horses her entire life and was captain of her college equestrian team. Her first exposure to Thoroughbreds was through an internship at Southern Illinois University during which she spent a semester at Lane's End Farm. She went on to work for Juddmonte and then found her way to Denali Stud, taking on various responsibilities, including communicating with clients, staff, and managers, as well as answering phones and farm scheduling. Denali Stud COO, Craig Bandoroff, describes Alexis as "Our Swiss Army knife; she has lots of different skills and assets rolled into one."

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## **ROBERT COLE** Intern/Co-op Program student Florida Thoroughbred Breeders and Owners Association (FTBOA) Nominator **Tammy Gantt**



Robert's early passion for Thoroughbreds was rekindled when he retired from the Coast Guard after 20 years. He went on to enroll in the College of Central Florida's equine program and started an internship at the FTBOA. Here, his attention to detail was exemplified in a variety of roles, including instructional tours, fundraising, seminar ownership planning, and writing. Nominator, Tammy Gantt, of the FTBOA, said: "He was born with the gene of the soul of horseracing. He doesn't want to tell you what the industry is – he wants you to feel it."

# COMMUNITY AWARD WINNER

**MARIA CRISTINA SILVA** Backstretch Program Coordinator  
NYTHA

Nominator **Joseph Brocklebank**



Originally from Santiago, Chile, Cristina first served the backstretch community as an interpreter at Belmont. In her expanded role, she procures items such as clothing, furniture and food for backstretch workers and their families, or puts together backpacks for children in need before they start school in September. Nominator Joseph Brocklebank said: “No one has served the employees on the backstretch with the dedication and love that Cristina demonstrates every day.” Cristina said: “My grandchildren are so proud but I didn’t do this for the reward, I do this for the people because I know they need the help.”

## AMBASSADORS AND JUDGES

### Shortlist Judging Panel

Chairman Susan Martin – Director of Marketing for The Jockey Club and BloodHorse

Stephanie Brennan – Director of Sales and Marketing for Niall Brennan Stables

Corey Johnsen – President of CJ Racing Stable

Cate Masterson – Executive Director of the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame

David Pope – President and Co-owner of Siena Farm

### Final Judging Panel

Chairman Susan Martin – Director of Marketing for The Jockey Club and BloodHorse

Julie Krone – Hall of Fame Jockey, retired

Dr David Richardson – Chief of Surgery at the University of Louisville, Thoroughbred owner and breeder

Kevin Grisby – TVG Executive Producer and SVP of Television

Pat Cummings – Executive Director of the Thoroughbred Idea Foundation

Terry Finley – Founder and President of West Point Thoroughbreds

Bessie Gruwell – Executive Director of the Delaware Thoroughbred Horsemen’s Association and 2019 TIEA Administration Award winner

### Master of Ceremonies

Jill Byrne, Vice President of Racing Operations at Colonial Downs

Congratulations to our  
2020 finalists and winners

AARON WEST  
ALEXIS KOLASA  
CARMEN MCSHANE  
CHRISTY HOLDEN  
CINDY HUTTER  
DAVID KYLE  
DIONNE JOHNSON  
GREGORY SMOTHERS  
HELEN OTERO  
LYNNELLE FOX SMITH  
MARCELO ARENAS  
MARIA CRISTINA SILVA  
MATT LYONS  
MICHELE HOLBROOK  
PATRICK "SHAWN" AUTRY  
ROBERT COLE  
ROY SMITH  
STEVE AVERY  
WAYNE CLEM

Thank you again to our media partners.

**BLOODHORSE**

