

Farm Offers Second Chance For Horses & Inmates

Reporting

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SYKESVILLE, Md. (WJZ 13)

<http://wjz.com/local/horse.second.chances.2.1009831.html>

A stable opened Thursday in Carroll County as a rescue for former racehorses, but they aren't the only ones being given a second chance.

Suzanne Collins explains inmates will work there and get training for jobs in the horse industry.

Donnie Goodman is serving time for second-degree assault and is soon to be released. He worked with other inmates overhauling an old livestock building on state land in Sykesville.

Second Chances Farm opened to great fanfare as a rescue for former racehorses. Work release inmates will tend to the horses and be housed at the nearby prison laundry facility. The Secretary of Public Safety says it might help inmates learn compassion.

"I don't know, it does something to you, I don't know what it does. Feel soft- hearted for some reason," said one inmate.

The horses, which once regally raced at thoroughbred tracks, could use some human affection. The Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation says otherwise they might end up at animal auctions and be sold for slaughter.

"Simply when they're racing in the lower ends of the business there's just not enough money for people or land. They don't have farms and they don't have a place to put their horses," said Diana Pilculski, Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation.

The state says the win-win arrangement costs very little.

"In this period of cut budgets and reduced budgets, we have to reach out and look for programs that don't cost a lot of money for the taxpayers. This program is like that," said Gary Maynard, Public Safety Secretary.

The inmates that come here in the future will be trained in what's called elite grooming skills. There's a demand for people who do that both at the track and at thoroughbred horse farms.

The ones who renovated the barn got extra skills, including a former Baltimore arabber.

"How to paint, how to build a barn, how to stall horses. I learned a whole lot since I've been here," said Michael Gray.

The Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation has opened similar stables with working inmates in seven other states.