



Kate Byron, an active rider, is on the Board of the Shenandoah Horse Park.

Effort Underway To Build New Horse Park/Ag Center

Jefferson County, West Virginia Has A Horse Community On A Mission

By Meredith Wait

The purpose of the proposed Shenandoah Horse Park & Agricultural Center is to provide a multi-use equine and agricultural facility encouraging tourism, local and state economic development, recreation, and environmental education opportunities.

This endeavor is being led by a small group of people interested in equestrian sport, agriculture, land preservation, and economic development in Jefferson County, WV and the surrounding areas.

Early meetings found that our region could sustain a facility to expand on the existing equine industry in all its forms, i.e. multiple equestrian disciplines besides Thoroughbred racing, build up business for the

accompanying infrastructure of suppliers such as veterinarians, hay producers, shippers, workers, etc. and contribute to the growing tourism industry in the region.

Initially we were focused on the equine industry, but as we learned more about the agricultural industry, we found we wanted to include the broad interpretation of agriculture in our future.

Some of the ideas mentioned for the agricultural aspects of this project are to supply a “collection hub” for products that then could be shipped to the Washington/Baltimore markets, provide a commercial kitchen for growers to finish and package products, provide classrooms and a meeting place for growers, purchasers and distributors to meet and learn how to expand their businesses.

The Shenandoah Horse Park Board is comprised of local residents who are horse owners and business owners, and those who know neither end of a horse or a tractor but feel that this would be a good fit for our community.

We envision that this Park will:

- Create an area for equestrian activities and competitions for western, English, trail and pleasure. The facility may include a coliseum, covered arena with spectator seating, outdoor competition and training rings, cross country course, dressage arena, all-weather gallop, and barns.
- Provide a year-round attraction for residents and visitors to the area and serve as a generator of tourism and economic growth.
- Expand the opportunities for local growers within the agriculture community.

After three years of seeking funds, we secured a USDA Rural Business Development Grant of \$35,000 to move ahead on a feasibility study. We are currently in the middle of the study and hoping to complete it by the end of March. Once it is completed, and if it supports the vision of the Board, we will plan a presentation to the community stakeholders.

This project will need to be built using private and public funding sources as well as local expertise and skills. As the development of ideas moves forward we hope to gain support and expertise to navigate the stages necessary to completion. We will continue to reach out to our communities for volunteers who can help us reach our goals. Read more about this exciting project at www.shenandoahhorsepark.com.