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## Equine

### Working on one accord

### Council aims to unite industry

By Melissa Gagliardi

[mgagliardi@courier-journal.com](mailto:mgagliardi@courier-journal.com)

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Oldham County has long been home to horses and horse-related businesses, but just how many has been a question, and how to get the varied parts of the industry working together an even larger question.

Until now.



Alexander Thomson, left, and Katie Wilborn visited the Altavista Farm in Skylight. The farm's owner, Mary Lowry, said the county will benefit from unifying the many aspects of the industry. (By Michael Hayman, The Courier-Journal)

The Oldham County Equine Council has been formed to help build a countywide forum for everyone in the horse industry.

Created through a partnership between Oldham Ahead and horse-industry leaders, the council has a long list of goals.

For instance, members want to develop a directory of equine businesses and services, increase the number of riders and trails in the county, assist the Oldham County Fair Board in developing a new master plan and educate county officials and residents about the benefits of Oldham's equine industry.

Doug Wampler, executive director of Oldham Ahead, said the council will help spur

long-term benefits for the county. He believes tourism will benefit, as will the environment, through land-preservation efforts.

"Before now, we've never been able to measure the significance and total economic impact," Wampler said. "It is important for the county and the state to know what that figure is."

Mary Lowry, who owns Altavista Farm in Skylight, said she has long believed the county could benefit from unifying the many aspects of the industry.

After all, the county is home to thoroughbreds, saddlebreds and other breeds, as well as fox hunters, polo players, trail riders and businesses that offer boarding, lessons and trail riding.

Uniting the industry, from those who build horse stables to veterinarians, could help the horse community and Oldham County as a whole.

"This is the perfect time to make it happen," Lowry said.

One goal that Lowry endorses is getting landowners to allow horse trails to cross their property. Her 45-acre farm is home to 45 horses, a dozen of which are used for lessons. She would love for her riding trails to join with others.

Traci Missun, county agriculture and natural resources extension agent, said the council will help her in planning horse-related classes. They are already well-attended but could become more tailored to the community's needs.

The extension agency is planning a series of classes in the fall and typically holds one seminar a month. Last month the agency offered an equine business management and taxation course.

"If I know what's important to them, I can hold classes on those topics," Missun said.

The council also will work with the University of Kentucky, which is surveying just how many horses live in each county.

Missun said the latest agricultural census was completed five years ago, when Oldham County ranked sixth in the state in the value of horse sales at \$8.9 million, "and it's gone up since then."

Missun expects the numbers in Oldham will be greater than generally estimated, further demonstrating the industry's importance in the county.

"I think we are going to be astounded," she said.

## **TAKING PART**

Membership in the Oldham County Equine Council is free to anyone with an interest in the county's equine business and recreation. Membership forms are at [www.oldhamequinecouncil.org](http://www.oldhamequinecouncil.org).

To list your equine business or service in the Oldham County Equine Directory, contact Traci Missun, agriculture and natural resources extension agent, at 222-9453 or at [traci.missun@uky.edu](mailto:traci.missun@uky.edu).

Reporter Melissa Gagliardi can be reached at (502) 582-4117.