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Retired thoroughbreds given fresh start

What happens to racehorses after they cross the finish line for the last time?

Attention has increased recently on the plight of retired thoroughbreds who were not big winners and weren't needed for breeding. Some are retired to farms where they are well cared for, but there are stories of others being neglected or sold for slaughter.

Kim Smith's Second Stride Inc., a nonprofit adoption organization for retired thoroughbreds, is helping write new beginnings for some horses long after the last call to the post.

"**I adore the sport** of racing, and I believe these horses are bred for it and love it," Smith said. "We believe that most horsemen who work with them are inherently good people ... but a lot of them just don't have any context for where to send them."

Many smaller trainers whose horses become ineligible for racing must remove the animals from track stalls on short notice and sometimes have no place to send them and no time to locate someone willing to adopt, Smith said. Such horses are often placed with Second Stride, on Moserwood Farms in Oldham and Henry counties.

"We want to be there to help them transition with a little dignity while they're physically able to move on to their next career," Smith said. "Most of them don't enjoy just being idle in the field. They thrive on a routine."

Within a few weeks of arriving at Second Stride, horses begin retraining for use in three-day eventing, dressage or other competition. They get identification numbers for tracking, and stallions are gelded. Adoption fees generally range upward of \$400.

"I had a Storm Cat colt out of a Breeder's Cup mare that we placed with a North Carolina fella who does search and rescue," Smith said. "It was perfect for this horse, because he hated repetition and that's something new every day."

Another retired racehorse is being used as a cutting horse for cattle. His new owner said the small thoroughbred was well-suited for the work because of his speed and agility.

Rachel Logsdon, who lives near Lexington, said her adopted thoroughbred, Max, is "becoming quite the dressage boy," although he prefers jumping.

"**He's so fun to ride**, with the way he holds his head so high, and his canter is so great," she said. "I get lost in the rhythm of it sometimes and forget where to go."

About 70 retired thoroughbreds have come through Second Stride during the past 2½ years.

Second Stride operates through private fundraising, some help from equine-related charities, adoption fees, public donations and more than a few dollars out of Smith's own pocket, her friends

say.

Check out www.secondstride.org.

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