



The Show Barn at Legacy Saddlebreds

Dreams Fulfilled

Legacy Saddlebreds

By Jackie Hale

It's not often that a stable opens its doors and doubles their client base and lesson program in just a couple of years, but Legacy Saddlebreds in Winston-Salem, NC has done just that. With all the buzz about the need to grow lesson programs and get more "butts in saddles" in order to save the declining ASB industry, Legacy's prescription for growth and aggressive marketing efforts can be a lesson to us all.

Jamie Jankowicz cut her teeth and paid her dues in the Saddlebred industry as the owner/trainer/instructor of her own farm, Talley Oak Stables, in Upton, Kentucky. The farm was built piece by piece by her father and husband, and she shared the space with her cousin, Tammy DeVore, until Tammy moved to her own barn in Sonora. Showing mostly on the KY County Fair circuit, the Jankowicz's earned a hard living doing what they loved to do, but barely got by. "When the recession hit, we went through some hard times," Jamie said. Like so many horse trainers trying to make ends meet, she was the trainer, instructor and groom. "I also operated a therapeutic riding program and worked part time teaching lessons and doing camps for Betsy Webb to earn extra money," she remembers.

When Jamie's father passed away in 2010, the farm was suddenly sold. "Just like that, everything I had worked for during the past 10 years was gone. I was worried about how we would survive," she said. Jamie accepted a job as Instructor at Cash Lovell Stables and moved to North Carolina that fall. "Picking up and moving like that with 3 kids was the scariest thing I've ever done, but it was also the best thing that has ever happened to me." When CLS discontinued their training operation in 2012, it opened the door for Jamie to start Legacy Saddlebreds.

Initially operating out of Cash Lovell Stables, Legacy started with 4 horses in training. The training program began to grow out of the lesson program and in 2014 it was decided that Legacy needed its own facility. The Jankowicz partnered with a group of investors (made up of customers and family members) to build a new complex that could accommodate their growing program. They rented stalls at a Morgan farm in Lexington, NC for six months while the new stable was being built. They moved into the new facility, located just 10 miles outside Winston-Salem, in January, 2015 with 18 horses in training and teaching about 90 lessons a week.

"We were fortunate to be able to build a facility that we could grow INTO, rather than just what we needed at the time," says Jamie. Her husband, Johnny, had worked in the construction industry, so overseeing the building effort was a natural fit. The most unique feature of the facility is that there are two separate barns: a Show Barn and a Lesson Barn. "This enables us to teach lessons and have camps at any time and not interfere with the training of the show



Jamie and Johnny Jankowicz



The main drive into Legacy Saddlebreds featuring two barns - a Lesson Barn (front left) and a Show Barn (down the hill). Legacy Outfitters tack shop is located in the cabin to the right.



Legacy celebrated their Grand Opening in January, 2015



horses," explained Jamie. Both barns have indoor arenas with large industrial fans for the summer and heaters for the winter, keeping the instructors, riders, and horses comfortable year round. Both indoor arenas have separate viewing areas that are climate controlled and allow the parents/families to watch the lessons in a comfortable setting. A camera system provides a live feed from the arenas and the stable area into each viewing lounge. The instructors use headsets and a PA system and that audio is also piped into the lounge, so parents can see and hear the entire lesson without physically being in the arena. Two other big screen televisions are in each lounge, one tuned to a news station and one running a slide show of upcoming stable activities or a live feed from a horse show.

Another cool feature is the on-site tack and apparel shop, Legacy Outfitters, where the students can purchase anything they

need: helmets, boots, gloves, ModJods, Breyer Horses, jewelry, show necessities, and Legacy apparel. The shop is in a cabin that was original to the property, and dates back to the 19th century.

"Having had my own barn in Kentucky, as well as working for Betsy Webb and Cash Lovell Stables, I took the good and the bad from all of those and fashioned what I thought would be an ideal facility. Having two separate barns was a must," said Jamie. There is a 36 stall training barn and a 14 stall lesson barn, with 10 additional tie stalls currently under construction to accommodate tacking up for the 30+ lesson horses on the property.

Today, Legacy teaches over 160 lessons a week and has 35 horses in training. So how do you get from 18 to 35 horses in training, and from 90 to 160 lessons a week – all within two years? For the Jankowicz, the answer was hard work, an amazing facility in a great

location, incredible people willing to invest in the ASB industry, and aggressive marketing efforts.

Sondra Warren is Jamie's 'right hand', working as the Assistant Manager and teaches riding lessons part-time. She spearheads the marketing efforts and provided some wonderful insight and great ideas for growing a lesson program. "With all of the media outlets we use to market Legacy Saddlebreds, we mainly target mothers because in the majority of homes, the moms are the ones that plan the schedules for the children, so this is our main target market," said Sondra. On the top end of the advertising spectrum are their television ads. "Our TV commercials run on the Triad's two most popular broadcast news stations within their programs that target this demographic the most. New for 2016, we are the presenting sponsor of the Triple Crown races that are aired on one of those stations,



(Training Barn)



(Indoor Arena)



(Outdoor arena)

The 36-stall training barn has an attached indoor arena as well as a beautiful outdoor arena on the property.



Legacy displays a booth at local fairs and festivals, providing a "Pet the Pony" station and face painting to attract a crowd.

so we are visible to horse lovers watching the races throughout the Triad. We also combine our commercials with digital advertising, such as YouTube pre-roll videos, The Weather Channel App ads within certain zip codes, and retargeting through online behavior," said Sondra.

In addition, Legacy advertises in local print publications such as Forsyth Family, and they host at least one "Kid's Morning Out" event a year for the magazine. "For two hours, we welcome families to come out for pony rides, stick horse races, hayride tours of the property, and a giveaway for lessons or a summer camp," said Sondra.

Warren continues, "We do a lot of work with local schools and churches for their family festivals, where we donate packages of riding lessons or a summer camp. At some of these events, we bring a pony for a "Pet the Pony" station, and then have a table with information about our lessons and summer camps. When someone wins a package of our services at these auctions/raffles, they tend to stick with it after their package runs out. We also will host groups for field trips to the barn (such as daycares and church groups) so they can see the property, brush a horse, and do pony rides, sending them home with a coupon for a discounted lesson." These festivals and field trips are low cost (aside from your time and effort) but can yield great results.

Legacy works with a local company for their website development and maintenance, SEO marketing, and online reputation management. "The SEO (Search Engine Optimization) marketing has been very beneficial to us, because when you search for horseback riding lessons in our area, we pop up first," said Sondra.

As part of their kick-off in 2015, once the majority of the construction of the facility was completed, Legacy had a Grand Opening Festival on Derby Day. A local country music radio station came out and the stable offered pony rides, bouncy horse races, face painting, tours of the property and great food. They had a Derby Hat Contest and watched the Kentucky Derby on the big screen. Since then, they have hosted several Open Houses throughout the year bring people to the facility to learn about the services. Just recently they had a Summer Camp Open House where, in addition to the some of the above activities, they had raffles for a free camp and other door prizes, and a photo booth. During that 2-hour event, they had 10 people register for camp.

"The biggest focus for us in the start-up of Legacy Saddlebreds has been branding," explains Sondra. "People need to know who you are and what you offer. Yes, television is expensive. However, since we started running our TV commercials in the fall of 2015, we have had a large influx of new riders that have really built up our lesson program. About 75% of new customers in the past 6 months have seen our commercials, which have prompted them to call and schedule their first lesson. When they come, they see the beautiful property, experience our wonderful instructors and horses, and get a good sense of who we are as a barn family. More often than not, they stick with it after that." Investing in advertising, and the right advertising, has been key. She continues, "We have learned a lot of what works and what doesn't, and that is mainly trial and error. Allocating your marketing dollars to where your consumer spends the most time and is the most influenced is key-and television is drastically more influential than other media outlets. Using print, digital, and social media are beneficial as well, because you then will be able to have that repetition across different media outlets and reach your consumer in different places, making them more apt to recognize you when

they are ready to make a decision about where to go for riding lessons. Many stations have production in-house, so you don't even have to worry about finding a video production company." Check out Legacy's television ads at: www.legacysaddlebreds.com/about-us.

The stable markets WITHIN their customer base as well, offering a variety of lessons as well as an Academy Team and a Performance Team. Jeanine Lovell, Riding Academy Manager, explains, "Different types of lessons open up more ways to add lessons, such as Drill Team, Academy Show Prep, Show Rider Groups, Pattern Classes, conditioning classes, etc. We also strongly encourage our riders that show either on our Academy or Performance Teams to ride more than once a week, preferably in one group lesson and then a private or semi-private lesson in addition." As a result, they are moving riders out of Academy and into Performance at an above-average rate. "In 2015, we had 8 riders join our Academy Team, and 6 move out of Academy into Performance. In 2016, we have already had 6 riders join our Academy Team, and 3 riders move out of Academy into Performance," reported Jamie.

"We also have several stable-owned show horses available for lease," said Jamie. This allows a rider who can afford an annual lease fee and the monthly training expenses, but perhaps not the full purchase price, to move out of Academy. "If the stable purchases a \$20,000 horse and leases it annually for 25% of its purchase price (\$5,000/year) the horse is paid for in 4 years, and we are able to add another rider to our Performance Team."

Legacy also has an active Youth Club that meets bi-monthly. "We explore horses and other facets of life, such as social media do's and don'ts sportsmanship, barn safety, and horse health and nutrition have all been topics of our Youth Club meetings." Jeanine added, "We also have parties and fun outings to keep the kids involved and making friends, such as a movie nights and trail riding." Jamie continued, "We want our students to understand the importance of giving back. Our Youth Club has been fundraising for Make-a-Wish since 2014. In 2014, we raised \$1,000; in 2015 we raised \$2,000; in 2016, we hope to raise \$4,000 for Make-a-Wish, which is enough to send a child to Disney World! We also help with local community service efforts, such as the Salvation Army's Stuff a Stocking campaign. The kids also brought in baked goods that we distributed to our local police and fire departments around Christmas time."



Zach Duffy (left) joined Legacy Saddlebreds as Trainer in the Fall of 2015. Pictured with Grace Weisner, Emma Grace Lovell, and Jamie Jankowicz.



This 19th century cabin, original to the property, serves as the on-site Legacy Outfitters store where riders can purchase equipment, apparel, jewelry, collectibles and gifts.



Each indoor arena has a climate-controlled Viewing Lounge equipped with monitors so that parents can watch and listen to the riding lessons, as well as keep an eye on what is going on back in the stable area.



While every stable's focus is on the riders who show in either Academy or Performance, Legacy has their fair share of "recreational" riders too. "Approximately 40% of our students are recreational riders that come once a week for the pleasure of riding a horse. 80% of our Academy and Performance Team members ride at least 2x/week, as we encourage them to do so to be successful in the show ring. The other 20% that only ride 1x/week tend to only go to one or two Academy Shows a year, and do it more for fun than competition," said Jeanine. Jamie added, "The recreational riders are a good baseline to have to help pay the bills."

With the increase in training horses, Legacy added a new staff member in the Fall of 2015, Zach Duffy, as trainer. "The majority of our show customers started in our lesson program, showed Academy, and then leased or purchased a show horse," said Jamie. "The riding lesson program is the best place to grow your show barn. You develop a relationship and trust with the student and their family throughout the years, and when it is time for them to purchase a show horse, you have a better understanding of what that rider is capable of, making horse shopping more successful, and thus their partnership with that horse easier to develop so they can be successful in the show ring. Having Zach come on board has helped not only with managing the amount of horses we have now, but also to lend a different perspective on the horses and riders. The kids love him and respond to him very well."

Zach joins a staff of 12 full time and 3 part time employees at Legacy. Jamie keeps a watchful eye on the overall operation and is one of the primary instructors while husband, Johnny, serves as Farm Manager. Jeanine Lovell is the Riding Academy Program Manager, teaching full time and managing the other part time instructors, Sydney Cearley, Nicolette Anderson and Sondra Warren. Monica Walsh is the Accounting Manager, Ashley Pate is the Customer Relations Manager, Erin Nettles is the manager of the Legacy Outfitters store and manages the marketing efforts along with Sondra Warren.

Jamie concludes, "With all of the hustle and bustle that is now at the barn, we still are very true to ourselves and our original vision of what we wanted to build." They wanted a place where people can learn about and enjoy the American Saddlebred. They dreamed of building a barn where parents would feel comfortable letting their children 'hang out', and know that they would be watched and kept safe. Having worked so hard for so long, she wanted to build a facility that would be a comfortable and positive place for people to work. She also wanted to have lesson horses that were high quality, and to be able to maintain their health and well being. And she wanted to introduce as many people as possible to the American Saddlebred. She is fulfilling all of those dreams with Legacy Saddlebreds.



Legacy teaches over 160 riding lessons a week and has growing Academy and Performance Teams.