

OC Fair Board Considers Destroying One of Orange County's Few Equestrian Centers For Parking Lot

Area Equestrians Make Plea to Keep the Center Open

Costa Mesa, Calif., January 20, 2009 – The Equestrian Coalition of Orange County (ECOC) today officially opposed the closure of the Orange County Equestrian Center (Center) located at the Orange County Fair Grounds. The group stated it will do everything within its power to stop fair officials from turning the Center into a parking lot.

“We sympathize with the Fair’s need for extra parking but we do not believe that the flattening of the Center is the best solution nor the highest and best use of the 7.5 acres it is currently located on,” said Dr. Posnikoff Vice President of the Equestrian Coalition of Orange County. “We do believe that the Center not only serves the fair stake holders 365 days a year but that the beauty of the horse and equestrian sports can be re-introduced into the fair as a attraction for all to see.”

The Fair’s mission is “Celebration of Orange County’s Communities, Interests and Heritage.” The ECOC points out the horses have played a significant role in Orange County and have been a way of life for many generations – those traditions and interests continue to this day at the OC Fairgrounds. The Center has produced and still hosts world-class competitors such as Richard Spooner, currently ranked eighth globally in show jumping, Debbie McDonald, 2008 U.S. dressage team Olympian, and Robert Ridland, former show jumping Olympian and NBC Broadcaster to the Olympics.

The Center used to be celebrated as one of Orange County’s premier horse show sites and continued until only a few years ago when the Fair Board reduced the size of the facility, making it unable to host large events. It was also an integral part of the annual fair, supplying fair-goers with spectacular entertainment as horse events are always crowd pleasers. What remains today is the heritage of the horse in northwest Orange County in an area surrounded by urban development.

“The Center serves the public 365 days a year by supplying a whole range of

equestrian options from simple boarding to low level training to grand prix training,” said Dr. Posnikoff. “It’s a place of birthday parties for kids, after-school camps, small business opportunities for women, equine evacuation sites during natural disasters, free community programs to the less privileged and a place where a complete novice can watch an Olympian train and be inspired. But most of all, it’s a priceless gem that if laid to waste will be never be replaced.”

The ECOC is asking the Fair board to reconsider the use of taxpayer money on their current parking plan and to instead support quality equine recreation, community service and entertainment. They question the prudence of permanently destroying these equestrian opportunities for fair stake-holders and believe an alternative parking plan could gain local financial support – resulting in a win-win for the fair and the local community.

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