# 2020–2021 Annual Report

JULY 1, 2020 - JUNE 30, 2021



#### **OUR MISSION**

The Virginia Horse Center Foundation provides a world class facility hosting regional, national, and international equestrian events.

The Virginia Horse Center Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.



#### **VISION STATEMENT**

The Virginia Horse Center Foundation envisions a unique, bucolic landmark to honor and celebrate the timeless, special bond between mankind and the horse through safe, fair, and spirited equestrian competition.

#### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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With the support of the Foundation, the Virginia Horse Center serves as an economic and cultural asset for the benefit of the Rockbridge County community and the Commonwealth of Virginia. An important resource to the East-Atlantic equine competition circuit, the Virginia Horse Center hosts all disciplines of equestrian sport, standing at the forefront of Virginia's \$1.2 billion equine community.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

# **Endings and Beginnings**

**THIS YEAR WE WISHED JOHN NICHOLSON** well as he retired after serving six years as Chief Executive Officer of the Virginia Horse Center Foundation. Succeeding him, we are honored to have Glenn T. Petty fill that role. Some parting words from John and introductory comments from Glenn:

"I am honored to have served as The Virginia Horse Center's Chief Executive Officer," said John Nicholson. "I will continue to assist with the transition to ensure a seamless process. I would like to thank the entire VHC team. It has been a privilege to work with a truly remarkable group of people. The VHC has a bright future and I look forward to seeing its continued success."



Under John's leadership, VHC's financial stability was restored, enabling it to thrive at a time when its survival was in question. He and his team attracted new horse shows, recruited new board members, and garnered the support of the equestrian community. Most recently, VHC raised millions of dollars to fund newly added renovations and upgrades, guided by VHC's first-ever Master Plan.

John concluded his tenure saying "I would like to thank the Board of Directors for its leadership and the community of Rockbridge and Lexington for its partnership over the past six years. I strongly believe in the future of the VHCF. I am proud that many of our goals have been accomplished and look forward to all the good things that are going to happen for the Horse Center in the years ahead."

**GLENN T. PETTY**, John's successor, arrived in Lexington on May 1, 2021, and hit the ground running. "In my first months at the Virginia Horse Center as its new CEO, it has been exciting to see the resurgence of equine activity after COVID-19 restrictions were relaxed. Most shows have been back to their pre-COVID size, and many have been much larger. I cannot thank the staff enough, especially my predecessor, John Nicholson, for helping make my transition to the Virginia Horse Center a seamless one."

Though change is never easy, the future of the Virginia Horse Center continues to look bright and promising. Come and take a look. We think you will like what you see!



# OUR IMPACT

**SINCE 1985 THE VIRGINIA HORSE CENTER** has been an integral part of the Central Shenandoah Valley Community. The facility is available for community-centric events, hosting several each year including agricultural fairs, 4-H events, Balloons Over Rockbridge, and the Annual Holiday Gift Basket program for Rockbridge County families.

Chmura Economics and Analytics conducted an Economic Impact Study to accurately assess the 2019 economic impact of the Virginia Horse Center on the City of Lexington, the County of Rockbridge, and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The results of this study indicate the total economic impact for the following locations:

- City of Lexington an estimated \$7.4 million impact, supporting 67 jobs
- County of Rockbridge estimated economic impact is \$47.7 million, supporting 518 jobs
- **Commonwealth of Virginia** estimated economic impact of Virginia Horse Center-related activities is estimated to be **\$94.9 million**, supporting **896 jobs**





This event is one of the few that highlights all of the beauty that is the Virginia Horse Center. Often visitors don't wander beyond the main complex, but there is so much to see in the surrounding hills."

- David Taylor, Virginia Horse Trials

# Into the **FUTURE**

#### Several years ago, as we looked forward to the next decade of growth and improvement,

the Virginia Horse Center Foundation Board implemented a major planning process, the first part of which was to create a five-year strategic plan. The Strategic Planning Committee solicited input from a broad range of interested parties, including staff, external stakeholders, and board members. During the process, the committee developed a plan to provide a disciplined approach to address certain weaknesses and expand on our strengths. Importantly, the plan addressed financial sustainability while working to promote existing events and identify new opportunities. Over the last two years, we have made great progress. See for yourself.

### **GOALS AND STRATEGIES**

#### FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

#### What we said we would do:

We must ensure the Virginia Horse Center is on solid financial ground for the future. Our long-term goal is to make incoming donations critical to our expansion, not to our bottom line. The intent of our Goals and Strategies is to put the Virginia Horse Center Foundation in a position to fund operations and general maintenance through revenues so donations may be used for deferred maintenance and future growth.

#### What we did:

- Hired a new show manager for our three largest hunter/jumper shows — The Festival of Champions—with the mandate of making the shows more profitable
- Raised \$2.7 million from donors and sponsors primarily for capital improvements
- During last year's pandemic shut down, developed and implemented procedures that allowed us to be one of the few equine facilities in the Mid-Atlantic to reopen its gates, enabling us to welcome established shows that could not occur at their usual venue leading to a record number of exhibitors and a very full calendar

#### **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS**

#### What we said we would do:

To attract and increase the number of exhibitors, we must improve facilities for horses, riders, and audiences, and increase revenue-generating programs. To be a world class facility, we need to increase revenues generated by the number and caliber of events hosted each year.

#### What we did:

- 1. Adopted a Master Plan to guide capital improvement priorities
- 2. Made significant investments in addressing deferred maintenance issues:
  - Improved roads between Barns 1 through 4
  - Addressed stormwater management issues
  - Repaired the Anderson Coliseum roof
  - Painted the Moore Arena roof and the cupolas on the Coliseum
- 3. Through donations, we have:
  - Improved the footing in the Wiley, Wiley Warm Up, Northern, Northern Warm Up, Sandy Gerald, and Tardy Rings
  - Renovated Famesgate and Bent Tree barns
  - Designed, developed, and constructed a centrally located memorial park

Huge congratulations and gratitude for the footing improvements and new seating area; it was fabulous."

— Lauren Sprieser, USDF Gold, Silver, and Bronze Medalist; International Grand Prix competitor

- Installed fans and LED lighting in the Anderson Coliseum
- Installed LED lighting in Reel Arena, The Big Lonely Barn, and Barn 8
- Installed new fence line along Maury River Road, improving safety and aesthetic value of the Oak Hill X-Country course
- Upgraded the IT systems, expanded WIFI coverage, and installed a VOIP phone system
- Designed, developed, and constructed the Isabel de Szinay Complex—arena, warmup and pavilion
- Constructed and furnished the Stave Mill Pavilion
- Made significant efforts to attract and develop new shows as well as to grow and improve the profitability of existing shows.
  - Submitted a bid for the Washington International Horse Show
- 5. Added the following new horse shows:
  - Cowboy Mounted Shooting
  - VRHA North American Reining Stakes
  - Maryland Horse & Pony Show
  - End of Summer Showdown
  - James River Hunt Show
  - The Barracks Horse Show
  - Keswick Horse Show
  - Pennsylvania Harness Sale
- 6. Added the following non-equine event:
  - USA BMX Blue Ridge National Bike Race

#### **MANAGING AND STAFFING**

#### What we said we would do:

The continued growth of the Virginia Horse Center Foundation requires the direction and leadership of a visionary CEO, qualified staff, and employees who are committed to our goals and values and who demonstrate commitment in ways consistent with our mission.

#### What we did:

- Replaced retired CEO, John Nicholson with a new, locally based CEO with 40 years of hands-on experience running facilities similar to ours.
- Implemented employee appreciation activities such as acknowledging climate-related job stress by providing enjoyable ways to cool off and assure adequate hydration; ice cream days; employee appreciation picnics to promote team spirit

#### MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

#### What we said we would do:

To be recognized as a world class facility, our mission, programs, services, and calendar must be communicated and marketed on a timely basis. In addition, communication among the Board of Directors, administrative staff, program participants, and the community are essential to establishing strong working relationships.

#### What we did:

- Completed an Economic Impact Study
- Developed a Facility Guide that can be used for marketing the VHC to prospective show managers, donors, and exhibitors
- Developed a Sponsor Guide that is being used to introduce potential sponsors to the VHC
- Completed two professionally produced promotional videos for the facility; the first



targeted to attract new shows and a second version targeted specifically to trainers

- Maintained a continuously updated Events Calendar that not only lives on our website but is available as a stand-alone document in both digital and print formats
- Hired a Digital Media Manager to professionalize and grow our social media presence, manage digital sponsorships, and provide accurate data analysis to current and future corporate sponsors, successfully building a multi-platform social media strategy which reinforces our events calendar, provides sponsor activations, and effectively builds brand awareness as well as goodwill throughout the equestrian and nonequestrian community

#### INVESTMENT IN PHILANTHROPIC DEVELOPMENT

#### What we said we would do:

Earned revenue (including events) is not currently sufficient to support competitive administrative salaries, deferred maintenance, facilities upkeep, operating expenses, and other needs. We must generate sufficient financial resources and assets to accomplish our mission annually and ensure long-term financial sustainability.

#### What we did:

- Focused and expanded efforts to succeed on Giving Tuesday, an annual 24-hour event of concentrated donor appeals
- Upgraded our donor management system to include Text-to-Give fundraising options
- Increased fundraising through social media
- Recruited directors with resources and interest in supporting operations and capital projects. In the past three years, the majority of our gifts for capital improvements have come from our board members
- Established a relationship with the Virginia Equine Alliance, resulting in gifts totaling \$300,000 from 2019 to 2021
- Annually applied for and received grants from the Katharine B. Tierney Charitable Foundation
- Received a pledge commitment for our first major endowment gift



#### GOVERNANCE

What we said we would do:

We must ensure the Virginia Horse Center Foundation is following best business practices.

#### What we did:

- Welcomed three new members to our Board of Directors
- Finalized Naming Policy for capital gifts
- Enhanced our Board of Directors' orientation documents

#### IMPLEMENT PROCESS TO MEASURE PROGRESS

#### What we said we would do:

We must have definitive measures of success to be able to evaluate our performance.

#### What we did:

• Produced an in-depth analysis to present to the Board of Directors in September 2021 of accomplishments toward the strategic plan to begin the process of planning for the next five years

Going forward, we will continue to measure our success and communicate through our Year in Review— Annual Report. The successes detailed above are the continuing steps on a long-term journey.

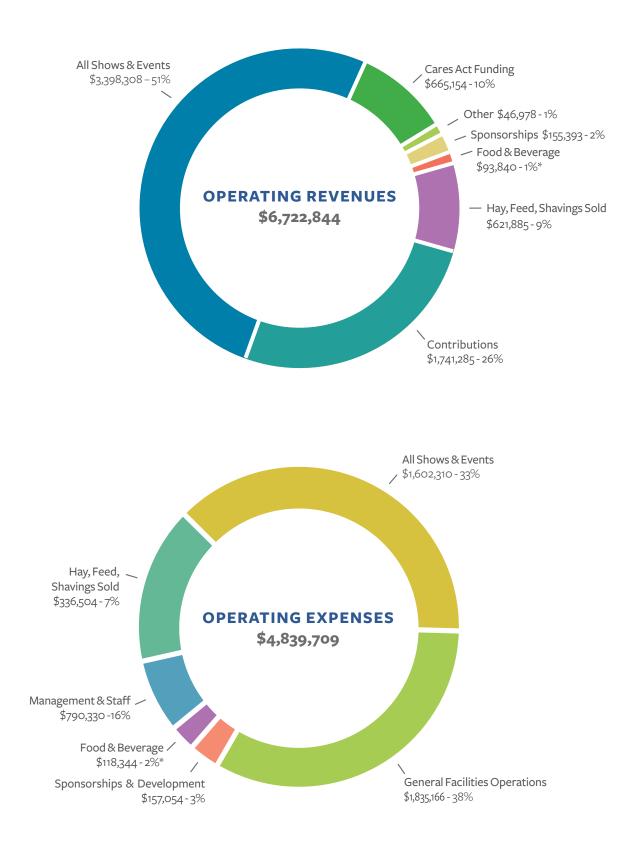
# FISCAL YEAR 2020–2021

Our primary revenues are generated by shows that we own, followed by revenues generated by third party shows which rent our facility.

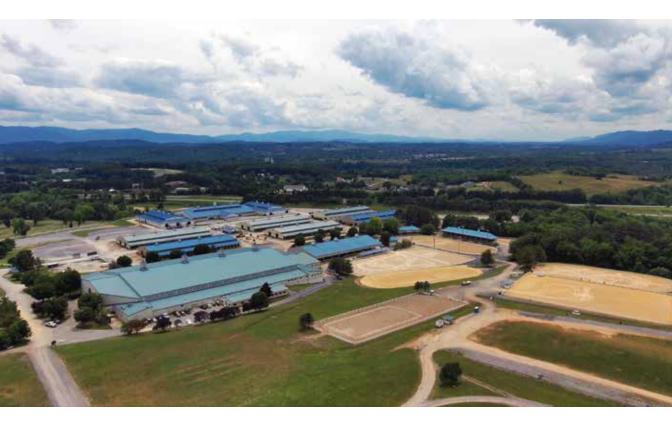
# Statement of Financial Position As of June 30

	2021	2020
ASSETS	(Audited)	(Audited)
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 1,809,080	\$ 1,648,360
Grants receivable	104,699	_
Contributions receivable	100,370	196,881
Otherassets	89,708	128,320
Property and equipment	19,952,625	19,393,177
TOTAL ASSETS	\$22,056,482	\$ 21,366,738
LIABILITIES	\$ 880,832	\$ 1,121,630
Accounts payable and other current liabilities	, , , ,	, , , , , ,
Notes payable and long term debt	10,908,643	11,376,620
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$ 11,789,475	\$ 12,498,250
NET ASSETS		
TOTAL NET ASSETS	\$ 10,267,007	\$ 8,868,488
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$22,056,482	\$ 21,366,738

**NOTE:** The information above is derived from the Virginia Horse Center Foundation's audited financial statements. For a complete version, including the Independent Auditor's Report, please contact the Foundation's offce.



\*Food and beverage operations began inhouse in November 2020. Previously it was outsourced to a third party



I am a 3rd generation horse trainer, we have been showing at this facility since it opened. It is the best place we come to show horses and we show all over the southeast. The new improvements to the barn, arenas, and facility ... they have definitely put this place over the top!"

- Matt Shiflet, North Carolina

# SUPPORT VHCF

**THE ANNUAL FUND** is critical to the Virginia Horse Center's success. Gifts made to the Annual Fund make an impact every day in every area. Gifts are used to bridge the financial gap between the income derived from our horse show operations and the cost of annual operating, maintenance, and program expenses. Many donors support our Annual Fund as well as sponsor events and fund projects.

#### Sponsorships

Donors may sponsor classes, trophies, divisions, and hospitality events at any VHC horse show. Facility sponsorships, including signage, are also available.

#### **Restricted Gifts**

A restricted gift is money or property given directly or indirectly for a specific purpose.

#### In-Kind Gifts & Volunteering

In-kind gifts are contributions of goods or services other than cash. VHC welcomes in-kind donations and values our volunteers.

#### Bequests

A bequest under a will or revocable trust can complement a donor's lifestyle and commitments today while supporting The Virginia Horse Center Foundation tomorrow.

#### Endowment

Establish a permanent charitable legacy. The principal of the endowment fund remains invested in perpetuity with annual earnings being used to support operations or any donor-specified, VHC approved purpose.

Donors can be confident that their gifts will have the greatest future impact on the Virginia Horse Center Foundation.





... this horse center has WAY more to offer. Aside from the 19 show rings, Coliseum and cross country course, the Virginia Horse Center sits on 600 acres of property which harbors A LOT of trails! If you can squeeze in some time between performances or if you have some free time in the evening, the Virginia Horse Center has a plethora of trails that can be accessed without even leaving the property.

-Marella Gruchalak, Horse Nation

# HOW TO GIVE

#### **CASH OR CHECK**

You may send your tax deductible donation to:

#### Virginia Horse Center Foundation

487 Maury River Road Lexington, Virginia 24450

#### **CREDIT CARD**

Make a gift by credit card through our website, or call our office. Recurring monthly, quarterly, or annual giving options are available.

#### TEXT

Text to VAHorse to 833-614-1922

#### ONLINE

Make a gift online at: **vahorsecenter.org** by clicking the "Donate" button or by visiting the "Support VHCF" page. From there donors are directed to the secure donation page.

#### **PUBLICLY TRADED SECURITIES**

Please contact our Chief Development Officer at (540) 464-2953 to discuss the best way to transfer appreciated securities to benefit the Horse Center.

#### **MONTHLY GIVING**

Set your account to give to Virginia Horse Center on a monthly basis.

#### **MULTI-YEAR PLEDGE**

The Virginia Horse Center relies on supporters who are committed through multiple years for support. This type of giving is critical for future planning and financial security.

We are unable to accept gifts of artwork, animals, jewelry, or collectibles.

# Thank you for your

# SUPPORT July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021

## DONORS

#### **Blue Ribbon Council**

(\$100,000+) Virginia Equine Alliance Ms. Karen Waldron & Mr. Shawn Ricci Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth M. Wheeler, Jr.

#### **Champion's Benefactor**

(\$50,000 to \$99,999) Anonymous Ms. Brooks Lucas Cushman Ms. Stefanie Gordinier Mr. & Mrs. Ronald A. Perkins

#### **Champion's Patron**

(\$20,000 to \$49,999) Ms. Gardy Bloemers & Mr. Nick Duke Mr. & Mrs. Buddy Derrick, Jr. The Katharine B. Tierney Charitable Foundation Ms. Bettina Longaker Ms. Jacqueline B. Mars Mr. & Mrs. Ernest M. Oare The Sterba Family Fund, Famesgate Stables

#### **Champion's Sustainer**

(\$10,000 to \$19,999) Mrs. Karin M. Banks Ms. Jane Forbes Clark McGue Millhiser Family Trust Ms. Lynn Ellen Rice

#### **Horse Center Partner**

(\$5,000 to \$9,999) Anonymous Ms. Christine Barnicle Betts Family Charitable Fund Ms. Laura Blair Butler The Heisley Bishop Family The Hewitt Family Fund Ms. Marne E. Martin Mountain Laurel Foundation

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#### **Horse Center Supporter**

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#### \$20,000+

The Heisley Bishop Family The Sterba Family Fund, Famesgate Stables

#### \$10,000 to \$19,999

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#### \$1,000 to \$9,999

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#### \$1 to \$999

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Blue Ridge Equine Clinic, Inc. Ms. Roxanne Booth Cross Keys Construction Co., Inc. The Heisley Bishop Family Ms. Melody Huffman Pinnell Custom Leather Southeast Val-6, Inc.

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The Heisley Bishop Family Markel Corporation Ms. Lynn Ellen Rice

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# IN HONOR OF ...

**R.H. Bennett** by Ms. Susan E. Swope

**Roxanne Booth** *by Ms. Irene Jennings* 

Brooks Lucas Cushman by Ms. Keedie Leonard and Ms. Ann Zirkle

The Heisley Bishop Family by The Heisley Bishop Family

**Hunter Hill 7-11 Marathon** *by Watts Petroleum Corporation* 

**Emily Kolokowsky-Pain** *by Ms. Brooks Lucas Cushman* 

**Keedie Leonard** by Ms. Brooks Lucas Cushman

Michael Morris by Ms. Brooks Lucas Cushman

**Ernie and Betty Oare** *by Ms. Brooks Lucas Cushman* 

The VHC Staff who helped find my lost cat at the SWVHJA Show by Ms. Annie Shawver

\* Every effort has been made to list each donor to the Virginia Horse Center Foundation. If you believe the above list contains errors or omissions, please contact the Foundation office.

## In Memory of ...

Marguerite "Peggy" Allen One fantastic horse show mom! by Ms. Annie Shawver

> BA Eno Looking over the show grounds from The Hill by Ms. Judy Cashwell

Lawrence Beard by Mr. & Mrs. Patrick W. Safstrom

**Conquest** Beloved Dressage Horse *by Ms. Claire Capron* 

**Debra L. Carter** by Her Loving Family & Friends

> Ernest Cummings by Anonymous

Dandy by Mr. & Mrs. James F. Brown

**John Evans** by Ms. Maggie Evans

**Sgt. Ed Henson** *by Mrs. Elizabeth Gathright* 

**Richard L. Kauffman** by Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Kalasky

> Sally Lamb by Mr. W. Donald Clark

Paige N. Messick by Her Friends

Winkie Motley by Mr. W. Donald Clark

**Eugene Wilson Paxton** by Mr. & Mrs. Brian Kelleher Ms. Susan Trimble

Amy Reistrup by The Washington & Lee University 2005–2006 Riding Team

#### Janet Sterba

by Mr. & Mrs. Bob Ehle Ms. Ceil Wheeler

#### J.T. Tallon

by his RMWC riders: Ms. Christine Anderson Ms. Jennifer Badgley Ms. Tracy Bradlee Ms. Audrey Brown Ms. Ellen Glover Ms. Colleen Gregerson Ms. Kathy Lemon Hoskins Ms. Jenna King Ms. Anne Long Ms. Amy Paisley Ms. Jessica Peace Ms. Megan Peters Ms. Keri Peyton Ms. Amanda Phillips Ms. Amy Phillips Ms. Amanda Pomeroy Ms. Brooke Prouty Ms. Shannon Taylor Ms. Sara Tucker Ms. Susannah S. Via Ms. Tamara Wenning Ms. Beth Zielinski

#### Richard M. Taylor, Jr.

by Ms. Joan Alberti Mr. & Mrs. Talmadge Bowden Ms. Catherine Brooks Mr. Oliver & Ms. Joan Brown Ms. Neysa Bryant Mr. Gregory Culp & Ms. Susan Weingard Mr. & Mrs. Bill Diggs Mr. Eric Dirks & Ms. Jan Simpson Mr. & Mrs. Brian T. Eubank Mr. Chuck Grossmann & Ms. Susan Tice Dr. Colin J. Hagen, D.V.M. Ms. Nardeen Henderson Ms. Ashleigh Holsinger, Memory Hill Stables Mr. William Howland Mr. Walter J. Lee Ms. Keedie Leonard The Martins - Ash, Joce, & John Ms. Meredith McLaughlin Mr. & Mrs. Robert A. Miller Mr. & Mrs. Ernie Oare Mr. Greg Schmidt Mr. Mike & Ms. Christine Sciarretta Ms. Pat Stephan Mr. Joel & Ms. Robin Stewart Mr. M. Kenneth Taylor, Jr. Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth M. Wheeler, Jr. Ms. Mary Lou Yates

Wall Street Heir by Ms. Patty Lemon

Gordon L. Wheeler by Mr. W. Donald Clark

#### Kenneth M. Wheeler, Sr.

by Anderson Holdings, LLC Bank of America Ms. Gardy Bloemers Mr. A. Clarke Brady Ms. Sally Carroll Ms. Jane Forbes Clark Mr. W. Donald Clark Dr. & Mrs. R. Reynolds Cowles, Jr. Ms. Debra Coyner Ms. Brooks Lucas Cushman Devon Horse Show and Country Fair, Inc. Ms. Joanie D. Eiland & Mr. H. Randolph Laird Mr. & Mrs. Gregory L. Fisher Ms. Nancy-Leigh Fisher Mr. Chuck Grossmann & Ms. Susan Tice Mr. & Mrs. William C. Heizer Hoffman Beverage Company Mr. Andrew Hutchison Kurz Equine Investment, LLC Mr. & Mrs. Paul Mathews Mr. & Mrs. Chuck Meehan Mr. Toby Norris Northern Trust Mr. & Mrs. Ernest M. Oare Ms. Corinne O'Shaughnessy The Standish Family Fund Ms. Robin D. Ray VA Beer Wholesalers Association Ms. Christy Womack Woodside Equine Clinic, Inc.

William A. "Pete" Whitlock

by Mr. W. Donald Clark Rotary Club of Lexington Sunrise

Margaret & Bob Wood Wakefield Farm by Ms. Bethany Wood



Lela is in the 8th grade at Maury River Middle School. Lela's father, Matt Crookshanks, is the Coliseum and Mezzanine Administrator for the Virginia Horse Center.



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