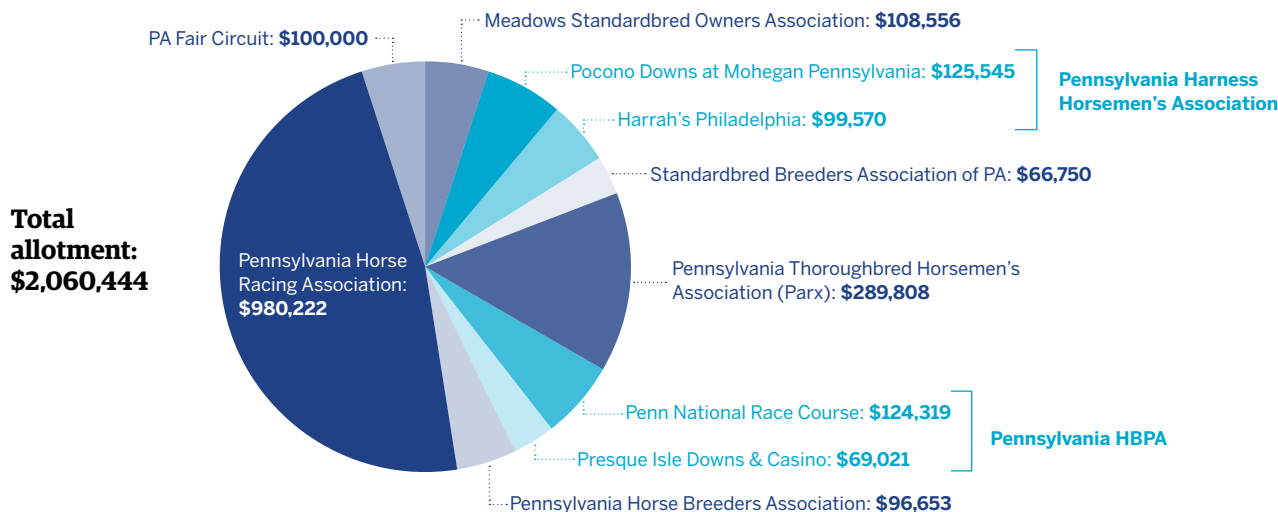


Marketing Allocations

THE CHART below shows current allotments for the six Pennsylvania Equine Coalition partners; the Pennsylvania Horse Racing Association, which handles the statewide campaign; and the Standardbred fair circuit. The formula is based

on each racetrack casino's percentage of gross slot machine revenue. After the amount for the fairs is taken off the top, the statewide campaign receives 50 percent and the six PEC partners split the remaining 50 percent.



training center. This year marks the 15th anniversary of *PA Harness Week*.

As for the free past performances, Olszewski said the results “have been phenomenal” with year-over-year growth in downloads of 35 percent for Harrah’s Philadelphia and 31 percent for Pocono Downs with 86,000 total downloads. For opening week of this year’s Pocono meet, downloads increased 182 percent year over year, she said.

“The traffic we get from the program downloads seems to correspond with handle (growth),” Olszewski said.

Stu Kirshenbaum, owner and executive director of Keystone Films, provides marketing, video and social media services to multiple PEC associations. The state’s breeders’ associations have common goals, but the messaging can be different, he said.

“The SBA of Pennsylvania is in a unique position because Pennsylvania is the creme de la creme of Standardbred breeding in the country, if not the world,” Kirshenbaum said. “We try to underscore that fact that there is an extraordinary amount of prestige and

success here—Hanover Shoe Farm, Diamond Creek Farm, Vieux Carré Farm—and to speak to the folks of central Pennsylvania to make them aware that a strong Standardbred industry is important.

“The (PHBA) message is different because you have Kentucky at the top on the Thoroughbred side. So, the message is there is a lot to be proud of in Pennsylvania because the program is terrific and it’s producing very good horses. The mission is to speak to the industry about the wonderful opportunities and for participants to make Pennsylvania part of their operation because it’s to their advantage. PA-bred has become a brand recognized in the industry.”

Kirshenbaum also provides services to the Pennsylvania HBPA, which represents horsepeople at Hollywood Casino at Penn National Race Course and Presque Isle Downs & Casino. The group has focused on telling the public about equine health and safety and the impact horse racing has on the economy in Pennsylvania. In the mid 2010s, there were a string of negative and misleading news reports that reflected poorly on racing at Penn National and

“The mission is to speak to the industry about the wonderful opportunities and for participants to make Pennsylvania part of their operation because it’s to their advantage.”

Stu Kirshenbaum

elsewhere in the state.

“I called (Pennsylvania HBPA executive director) Todd Mostoller and said to him, ‘I think there needs to be some messaging. You have a wonderful story to tell.’ He said, ‘Can you be here tomorrow?’ So we started working on it. Mission No. 1 is to talk about job creation and economic impact, and the industry employs thousands of people. We also tried to stress—and this is a lot more nuanced—the way horses are cared for. People want to know horses are cared for; there truly is something called a social license.

“For racing, it’s important to put a focus on major events and go all-out to promote them. Marketing is a part of it, but the racetrack has to support the whole process. The racing office deserves credit (for events such as Penn Mile night). People are going to try it once, and if they don’t like it, they won’t want to come back. The product has to be there.”

Kirshenbaum also said the collective marketing efforts involve reaching out to lawmakers in Harrisburg, the state’s

capital.

“The process is really sort of the meshing of ideas and meeting of the minds to determine what is the most cost-effective way to do it,” he said. “It’s our job to find that balance.”

So marketing in the Pennsylvania racing and breeding industry has many faces, and in some ways is linked to increased integrity measures adopted by the PHRC over the last several years. Metrics provided by the PHRA indicated progress has been made, though the PHRA has noted it makes adjustments as needed.


For the 2021-22 cycle, which followed the COVID-19 shutdowns of 2020, the PHRA website experienced a 58 percent increase in traffic, with the page hosting the free past performances the second most visited. A total of 363 students from 19 classrooms took part in a virtual field trip to a breeding farm to meet a mare and her foal. A live foal cam generated 150,000 impressions and 33,000 engagements. Live handle in 2020-21 was up 16.4 percent from 2019. And the

company Spanish Plus Media has been retained to drive traffic to Spanish language pages on the PHRA website as part of a strategy to customize racing’s message to that audience.

Most recently, Eisenbeil initiated a “Caretakers’ Day” to show appreciation for those who take care of Thoroughbred and Standardbred horses. PHRA hoodies were distributed at The Meadows and Parx as part of the program, which Eisenbeil said will become an annual event.

“We’re trying new things and learning what works,” she said. “It’s a learning process. There is support within the industry, and we’re moving in the right direction.” **HB**

Tom LaMarra has worked as a writer, columnist and editor for newspapers, magazines and websites in the racing industry, both Thoroughbred and Standardbred, for more than 25 years. He currently is director of communications and backstretch services for the Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen’s Association. To comment on this story, email us at readerforum@ustrotting.com.




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