

Star sports agent Leigh Steinberg to quarterback first Equine Industry Symposium Jan. 16.

by Kim F. Miller



Most people get into the equine business because they love equines. The business part -- not so much, maybe, and that can be a recipe for disaster. FirstTime Events proprietor Liza Rogers knew this intuitively and has seen first-hand how it plays out for many in the equestrian industry while staging events and promoting her Rancho Santiago Obstacle Course in Norco.

During a practice session with trainers schooling horses at her facility, Liza and her fellow professionals started swapping stories. "We got to talking about how little information is available to assist you in various business transactions," she says.

Take a liability release form. Boilerplate release forms, or forms created for another business, may not hold up in court because every horse-related business has unique characteristics and risks. "The only way you get an iron clad release form is through experiences," Liza recalls the group concluding. "That's where the idea hit of having a conference where everyone could get together and talk about what they have learned over the last year," Liza explains. "Finding out what changes we'd made, because of experiences, that could help others in their business operations."

The idea hit with the professionals gathered that day and Liza rose to the challenge of organizing the first Equine Industry Symposium, drawing on her corporate marketing background and her four years promoting Rancho Santiago's events. She took the idea one step further by booking star mainstream sports agent Leigh Steinberg as the keynote speaker, and assembling a cast of industry experts to lead panel discussions throughout the day.

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Wednesday, 31 December 2014 21:55

The all-day Symposium is slated for Friday, Jan. 16 at the Nellie Weaver Hall in Norco, aka “Horsetown USA,” with a welcome reception at the Hampton Inn on Thursday evening. Additional speakers include California Riding Magazine founder Cheryl Erpelding; HUB International Insurance Services, Inc.’s Mark Fredericksen; attorney B. Paul Husband; Cal Poly Pomona’s David Prenovost and Sharon Wagner of Unbridled Promotions. In hosting the Symposium, FirstTime Events is partnering with MPM Publications, which owns California Riding Magazine and Horseman’s News.

Liza wishes there had been a Symposium when she started FirstTime Events. Although she had extensive mainstream marketing experience and was a long time horse owner, the particulars of the equine industry had to be learned day-by-day and the hard way, by experience. “There was no manual or collective resource when I got started.”



“Horse trainers would rather work with horses than deal with the business side,” Liza observes. “I find that many have no idea how to run and/or grow their business and they are really struggling.” Trainers are not the only pros who stand to benefit from attending the Symposium. Boarding facility owners and managers, horse haulers, breeders, veterinarians and other care providers, horse club members, competition managers, manufacturers of horse related products, tack store owners and riders seeking sponsorships from the corporate world are

additional Symposium beneficiaries.

“Basically, if you make your living or want to make a living in the equine industry, this conference will give you tools to better run your business,” Liza explains. Taxes, legal issues, insurance, marketing and growth are key agenda items.

Hosting the Symposium will benefit attendees and, Liza hopes, serve a larger mission. “The whole industry, as is, keeps fishing out of the same barrel. We compete with each other for dwindling resources and the same customers. We need to be better organized and start collectively presenting to the greater corporate America that we are a demographic that needs to be paid attention to.”

Toward that end, she knew she needed a “game changer” as keynote speaker for the inaugural Equine Industry Symposium and she landed one in Leigh Steinberg. The legendary sports agent “changed his industry forever, and that is what our industry needs.

“Our young trainers have no path to learn different behaviors,” Liza concludes. “Our industry has done things the same way forever because nobody knows a different way of doing it. I want to change that. I want FirstTime Events Inc. on the forefront of how we do business.”

To register for the Equine Industry Symposium or for more information, visit www.equineindustry_symposium.com

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