

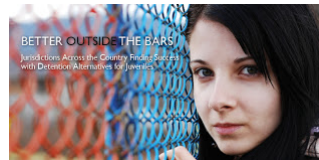
HOME (/)
ABOUT
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SUBSCRIBE (/SUBSCRIBE)
STAFF RESOURCES (/STAFF-RESOURCES)
PUBLICATIONS
PUBLICATION ARCHIVE (/PUBLICATION-ARCHIVE)
VOLUME 1 (2009) (/VOLUME-1-2008-2009)
VOLUME 2 (2010) (/VOLUME-2-2009-2010)
VOLUME 3 (2011) (/VOLUME-3-2010-2011)
VOLUME 4 (2012) (/VOLUME-4-2011-2012)
VOLUME 5 (2013) (/VOLUME-5-2012-2013)
VOLUME 6 (2014) (/VOLUME-6-2013-2014)
VOLUME 7 (2015) (/VOLUME-7-2014-2015)
VOLUME 8 (2016) (/VOLUME-8-2015-2016)
VOLUME 9 (2017) (/VOLUME-9-2016-2017)
VOLUME 10 (2018) (/VOLUME-10-2018)
SYMPOSIUM
INFORMATION (/SYMPOSIUM)
BLOG
FULL BLOG (/FULL-BLOG)
BLOG ARCHIVE (/BLOG-ARCHIVE-1)

SUBMISSIONS (/SUBMISSIONS)

November 25, 2012 (/full-blog/2012/11/protecting-traditions-rehabilitation-of.html)

Protecting Traditions: The Rehabilitation of Kentucky's Horses and Children (/full-blog/2012/11/protecting-traditions-rehabilitation-of.html)

"Bluegrass Aquatic Rehabilitation and Training Center" (/full-blog?category=%22Bluegrass+Aquatic+Rehabilitation+and+Training+Center%22), "Department of Juvenile Justice" (/full-blog?category=%22Department+of+Juvenile+Justice%22), "decreased institutionalization" (/full-blog?category=%22decreased+institutionalization%22), "horse rehabilitation centers" (/full-blog?category=%22horse+rehabilitation+centers%22)



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By: Yvette DeLaGuardia

In a state in which the horse industry provides over \$2.3 billion in goods and services,[1] it makes sense that Kentucky has a significant number of training and rehabilitation centers for one of the state's most valuable commodities,[2] its horses. At these centers, trained staff members utilize the highest quality equine therapy equipment to ensure the horses brought to the facilities are quickly

returned to "mental and physical wellness." [3] When considering the significant role the horse industry has played in the history and traditions of Kentucky and the impact the industry has on Kentucky's economy,[4] the fact that many Kentuckians are concerned with the wellbeing of horses should come as no surprise. What may, however, be surprising, is the use of horse rehabilitation centers as a means for a second chance not only for horses, but also for Kentucky juveniles who have found themselves entangled in Kentucky's juvenile justice system.[5]

The Kentucky Department of Juvenile Justice and the Department of Community Based Services have certified the Bluegrass Aquatic Rehabilitation and Training Center in Louisville, Kentucky to provide vocational training to Kentucky's youth. More specifically, the center is able to offer vocational training to juveniles between the ages of 14 to 18 years old[6] who have been committed to the Department of Juvenile Justice or to the Cabinet of Health and Family Services after adjudication and disposition of one or more public criminal offenses.

Kentucky's certification of the rehabilitation center demonstrates the state's attempt to effectuate the current trend in juvenile justice reform, the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative.[7] By offering Kentucky's juveniles the opportunity to leave their own "rehabilitation" centers[8] for a few hours a day to gain vocational training, the aggregate effect of the collaborative effort between the Department of Juvenile Justice and the cooperative equine center is to help prevent the institutionalization of juveniles. If more equine rehabilitation centers were to follow the lead of the Bluegrass Aquatic Rehabilitation and Training Center, the rehabilitation of Kentucky's horses and Kentucky's children could be enhanced through decreased institutionalization.

[1] American Horse Council. Economic Impact of the Horse Industry State Break Out Report (2005). *available at* <http://www.horsecouncil.org/state-breakout-studies-following-states>.

[2] Gregory A. Hall, *Kentucky Agricultural Receipts Set Record of Almost \$5 Billion*, COURIER JOURNAL.COM (Sept. 4, 2012 5:48 pm) http://www.courier-journal.com/article/20120904/BUSINESS/309040064/Kentucky-agricultural-receipts-set-record-almost-5-billion?click_check=1.

[3] The Kentucky Equine Sports Medicine & Rehabilitation Center Approach, <http://www.kesmarc.com/approach.html>.

[4] Governor Steve Beshear, *A Step Forward*, The Official Blog of Governor Steve Beshear (July 23, 2010 1:48PM) (describing the horse industry as "vital to the Commonwealth's overall economic health").

[5] *See generally* <http://www.bluegrassrehabcenter.com/> (providing general information about the available equine services).

[6] KY. REV. STAT. ANN. § 635.060 (4)-(5).

[7] *See* Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative, <http://www.aecf.org/MajorInitiatives/JuvenileDetentionAlternativeInitiative.aspx>.

[8] *See* KY. REV. STAT. ANN. § 610.010 (describing the purpose of Kentucky's juvenile code as treatment based).

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