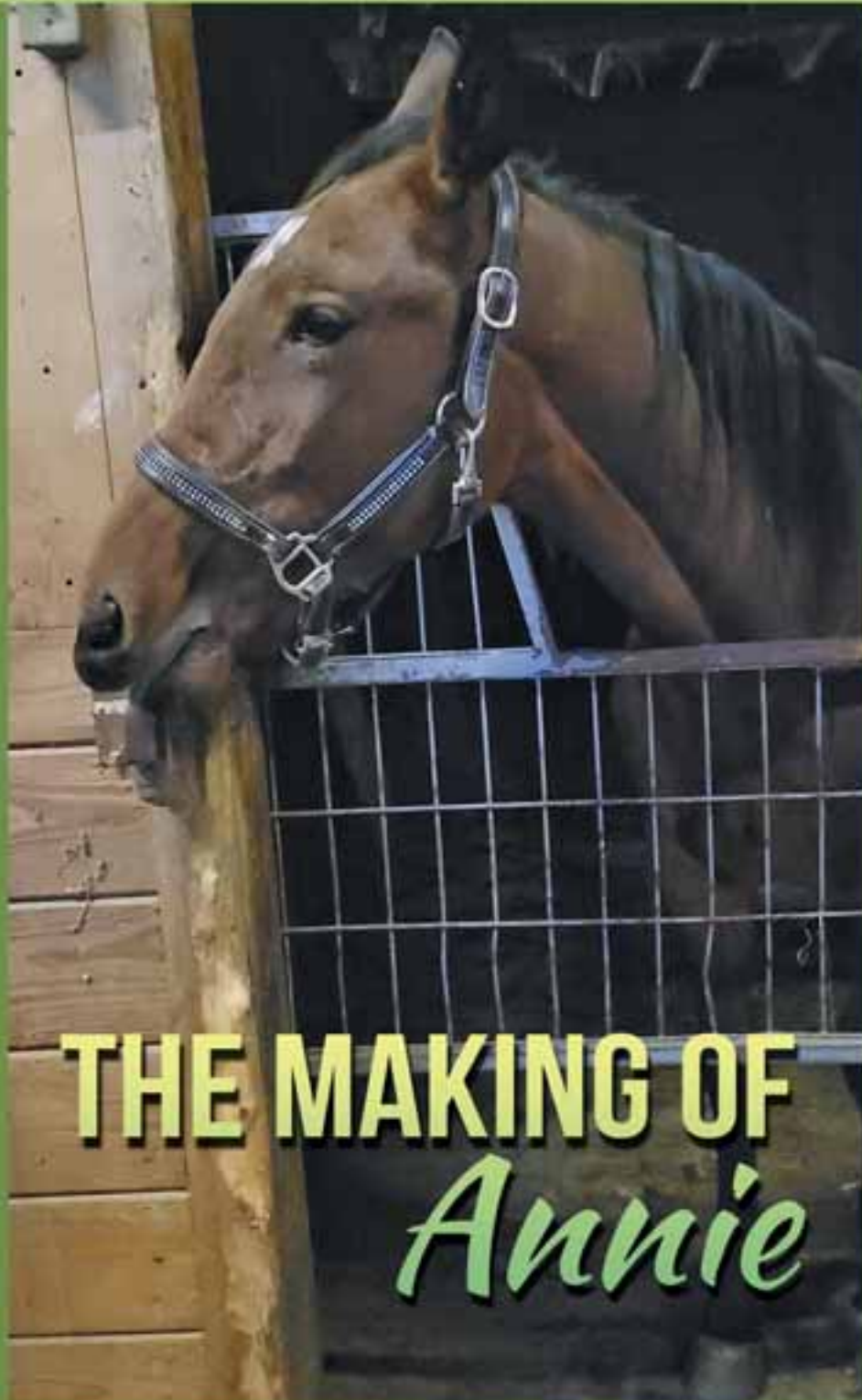


# MAY 23 Youth Beats

The harness racing 'zine for teens



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# Youth Beats



Dancin For Dollars, better known as "Annie," ready to go for owner-trainer Ryan Miller  
PHOTO COURTESY RYAN MILLER

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BY JAMES WITHERITE



**JAMES WITHERITE**

*Youth Beats* editor

TREVOR EARLEY PHOTO

## Letter from the Editor

Our last *Youth Beats* — and my first as the editor — focused on the very different journeys of two young people involved in our sport: Sophie Norton found her way into harness racing from an equestrian background, while Lucas Wallin began his path to the Breeders Crown winner's circle halfway around the world. This issue likewise shares the story of a journey, but of a different kind.

On the other side of this page turn, contributor Paige Kopiec takes us through the first stages of the career of 2-year-old pacing filly Dancin For Dollars, better known around trainer Ryan Miller's barn as "Annie." Paige explores the foundation of a Standardbred's racing career, looking at Annie's weaning, breaking and early training regimen as she prepares to take to the racetrack for the first time this summer.

There's a lot that goes into preparing a young Standardbred for the races, and for me, all that early preparation that turns a foal into a racehorse always was and still is kind of mystical. Paige pulls the curtain back on what it takes to turn a foal into an equine athlete, and I know that, after reading her piece, I've got a new-found appreciation for all the work behind the scenes that can go unnoticed to many racegoers.

How Annie fares this season remains to be seen — but that's what Part 2 of this series is for! We're delighted to be along for the ride and to be able to share it with you, our readers. I hope you enjoy the first chapter of Annie's story, and the other stories in the pages to come.

Cheers, James

**James Witherite**  
Editor, *Hoof Beats*

U.S. Trotting Association | 6130 S. Sunbury Rd. | Westerville, OH 43081-3909  
Phone: 877.800.8782 ext. 3237 | 614.224.2291 ext. 3237 | james.witherite@ustrotting.com

# THE MAKING OF *Annie*

## Part 1: Weaning, Breaking and Early Training

*This is the first of a two-part series documenting the path of 2-year-old pacer Annie (registered name Dancin For Dollars) as owner-trainer Ryan Miller prepares her for her racing career. Below, Youth Beats contributor Paige Kopiec takes a closer look at everything leading up to Annie embarking on her rookie season of racing — from her foaling to early training miles and everything in between.*

BY PAIGE KOPIEC

Dancin For Dollars, known around trainer Ryan Miller's barn as "Annie," was born May 23, 2021, in Greenville, Ohio. Unfortunately, Annie's dam (mother), a mare named Allergic To Money, passed away from colic when Annie was two months old. So, she was turned out with a pony to keep her company and be a friend for her, and she ate milkbased pellets after being bottle-fed for about a week after her mom's passing. Not wanting to be separated from her pony, Annie was attached to her perhaps even more so than she would have been with her own mom. She was always very playful and gave people a fun time when going to catch her in the field. But once she was caught, she was very well-mannered and easy to work with.

When other foals were weaned from their moms, Annie was put out in a field with seven other weanlings (foals in their first year of life). Miller, whose Miller Racing Stable Inc. owns Annie in partnership with Horseplay Racing Stable and Edward Marrinan, said that her going out with the other weanlings helped them bring all the horses in from the field when it was time for them to get their hooves trimmed and annual vaccines. The other weanlings had not been handled as much as Annie had been, and once she was haltered, the others followed her because they wanted to stay together.

In September 2022 — the fall of Annie's yearling (1-year-old) year — Miller started breaking her to a jog cart. She was a little nervous the first day because she was not used to how the harness felt on her. After the first day though, she handled it well, and Miller said she has been one of the easiest horses that he has trained. Miller was able to jog her on the track by himself in just her fourth day of training.



In late November, he turned her to jog the "right way of the track" — that is, counterclockwise — the direction in which Standardbreds race. This was to let her see the sights around her going the opposite direction and to get a feel for how she would take to training and racing. During December and part of January, Miller turned Annie out into a field to give her a break from working, and, as he said, "to let her mature and understand what had happened." This also gave Annie a much-needed break and let her come back to training stronger than before.

Once Miller brought Annie back in from the field, he started working her again and reminding her how to do things. The times that Annie had jogged before this were to get her moving almost every day and get her used to what her work as a racehorse will be like. Her first true training trip — one of many "practice miles" at gradually intensifying speeds that will prepare her even further for racing — was in late January, when Miller went a slow mile the right way of the track.

On an average day, Annie jogs between two and four miles. Miller takes her a training mile every five days or so, which allows her to have more of a break in between

**Ryan Miller's grandfather owned Annie's dam, Allergic To Money. Her previous name was Violet Jessop. The mare was allergic to almost everything around her in her life, so Miller's grandfather jokingly renamed her Allergic To Money. Annie's sire (father) is Dancin Yankee, so Miller wanted to combine the two names and came up with Dancin For Dollars.**

**HOW ANNIE  
GOT HER  
NAME**



the faster-paced miles and her normal, slower jogging miles. The intervals let her body recover and not have her tendons and ligaments overworked. By the beginning of April, Annie had trained a mile as fast as 2:20, and Miller

hopes to get her down to 2:00 by June 1.

Every so often, Miller will turn Annie out to pasture for a week to let her take some time off and reset her mind. Miller, who does this for all his horses, does not even want them to see a track at all during this time. He wants them away from all the commotion that goes on in the barns and does not want them concerned with jogging for a little while.



Once they are brought back to the track, the horses work better and feel refreshed. When Annie jogs, she always has her ears pricked forward and enjoys her time on the track. Miller remarked that when other horses pass by her, she grabs on to the bit and is ready to go.

Miller says that training a horse that he also bred is special. As an owner, he knows what has gone into the horse to make her what she is today. He has enjoyed watching Annie grow up and working with her, as well. Since Annie has such a great attitude on the track and in the barn, he hopes that she will be competitive in her racing career and will continue to enjoy her work.



Photos courtesy of Ryan Miller

**Together with the Harness Horse Youth Foundation, Ryan Miller is logging Annie's progress toward the races — everything from feeding, farrier visits and learning barn manners to jogging and training miles — in periodic video journal entries, giving viewers a unique behind-the-scenes perspective to her development.**

*Watch Annie work her way toward the races and follow her throughout the season by scanning this QR Code:*



Annie's granddam, Fox Valley Topaz, won the 2008 Breeders Crown — harness racing's year-end championship — as a 2-year-old pacing filly, and won 12 other races while earning \$823,581 in her career on the track. But as a broodmare, she did not have the best foals: some of them had conformational faults, meaning their bodies were not built well, and other foals had some health issues. Annie's mom never raced because of health issues, so Miller is hoping that they skipped a generation, and that Annie inherits her granddam's talent on the racetrack.

His goal is to race Annie this summer in the Buckeye Stallion Series or some Ohio Sires Stakes races. The next major step toward Annie making it to the races will be her first trip behind the starting gate, which Miller hopes will happen in early May in a matinee race.



# HHYF: A Day At Camp

**So...What exactly does a day with HHYF look like?  
Is it fun, or mostly just shoveling manure? Here are  
a few testimonials from former participants:**

"Anybody who gets the chance to go to horse camp should go — it was a great time!" *CP*

"You taught me many things about harness horses. That camp is awesome!!!" *Austin*

"Thank you for this wonderful experience! On Day 1, when you showed us about the harness and equipment, I was like, 'How do you do that?' Now I am pretty familiar with it!" *Liz*

***And here is what a teacher thought:***

"Thanks for such a wonderful camp. My students, although apprehensive at first, had a great time. I was very, very impressed with the way things were organized."

*Charles, Kentucky teacher*





## A day at camp

gives attendees a glimpse "behind" the scenes and the horses. Participants spend all day in the barn with the horses — brushing, harnessing, hitching, sitting in the jog cart with a professional driver on the race-track, cleaning equipment and giving the horses baths. Sure, there are hard parts like carrying fresh water to fill horses' buckets, and yes, there is stall cleaning. But the opportunity to learn about Standardbreds, make new friends, and, perhaps most importantly, try something outside your comfort zone are just some of the best reasons to attend a HHYF program this summer!

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# **BULLDOG**

## ***2022 HORSE OF THE YEAR***



PHOTO BY MARK HALL



# HANOVER



# STANDARD BRED



Jason Bluhm has worn many hats in harness racing, most recently serving as the director of racing at Ohio's Dayton Raceway since 2019. Before that, the native of the Buckeye State spent 13 years at Tioga Downs, in New York, holding a similar title in addition to his work as a race secretary, assistant race secretary, charter and track superintendent, among other jobs. *Youth Beats* caught up with Jason to discuss his path into harness racing and learn about his role in racetrack operations.

**YB:** *How did you get involved in harness racing?*

**JB:** My best friend's dad had some racehorses, and we would occasionally go to Scioto Downs and watch them race. The funny thing to me about that was the horses he had early on weren't very good — they never won. But then, all of a sudden, I got a phone call from my best friend, and he said, "My dad spent way more money than he normally spends on a horse. This horse is supposed to be good." We went to watch him, and he won his first start. Then he swept a series at Lebanon. I was going to the track every week, and it was fun. A couple years later, I bought a horse, and another one and another one. At one point, I had four horses racing in Indiana with Jimmy Shelton. That got my foot in the door.

Ask A

Pro

**YB:** *Going from owner to racing official/executive, how did that come to be?*

**JB:** In 2005, I ended up with an opportunity to work for the USTA in the (Information and Research) department. Through there, I met Jason Settlemoir (current COO of the Meadowlands). One day, we had lunch together and he asked me what I wanted to do. I said, "I really like the sport, and I'd really like to work for a track." During that time, Jason had several meetings with Jeff Gural, and Gural convinced him to come work for him (as vice president of racing at Tioga Downs and Vernon Downs, in New York). Jason remembered our conversation and said to me, "I'm going to this track; do you want to go?" I took that job, and it started me on my path. I started as the assistant race secretary, charted — crash-coursed my way into that side of the business.

**YB:** *What does a race secretary's job entail?*

**JB:** You take all the entries from the horsemen, put them together, and you try to make the most competitive card you can. When I'm writing a condition sheet, I'm trying to create competitive levels of races — so horses don't have to jump too far when they win or fall too fast through the classes when they lose, because that just creates unbalanced fields. If I watch a race and see six or seven horses crossing the line together, or if I look at the toteboard and have a 3-1, 7-2 or 4-1 favorite, I feel like I've done a good job. Not every race is going to be perfect, but if I see a good odds board and a good finish, I feel like I've done my job.





# SPOTLIGHT

**YB:** *What is the most challenging thing about your job?*

**JB:** My job is to put on the most competitive card possible, and every single trainer is only concerned about the horses they enter — their livelihoods revolve around the horses in their stables. You're dealing with 100 different individuals who want 100 different things. Each of them is trying to do the best they can for their stable, and you're trying to do what's best for the collective.

**YB:** *You've done a lot of jobs around the racetrack. Aside from carding competitive races, what's your favorite?*

**JB:** The only two jobs I haven't done are announcer and starter. Of all the other ones I've done, my favorite job of them all is probably track superintendent. You're off by yourself. You're making decisions like, "I'm going to dig the track today; it's going to rain, so we're going to keep the track a little bit tighter today so we can seal it quicker." Any job I've had in my life where I'm off on my own, I've really enjoyed, and in this sport, it's set up the best for me.

**YB:** *What advice would you give to a young person considering a job in the industry?*

**JB:** Be around it. The best people I've worked with on the "frontside" are usually the people that have experienced multiple sides of the sport. Some of the best judges are former trainers or drivers — they understand the situations.

If you want to get into the sport, come to the track. A lot of tracks have internships every year — Hoosier does a good job with that; we kind of did that at Tioga — just getting in, experiencing the business, learning as much as you can. I dabble in a little bit of everything, so I always have had a path to go in multiple directions.





## *Always looking ahead* Harness Horse Youth Foundation

# 2023 HHYF SUMMER PROGRAMS & EVENTS

## Programs Requiring Preregistration

April 29	Shenandoah Downs, Woodstock VA
June 19	Jay County Fairgrounds, Portland IN
June 28	Darke County Fairgrounds, Greenville, OH
July 7	DeLong Stable, Anderson IN
July 8 - 12	Leadership Program, Crimson Lane Farm, Anderson IN
July 18 - 20	Crimson Lane Farm, Anderson IN
July 28, 29	Tentative, First Tracks Cumberland, Cumberland ME
August 2	Goshen Historic Track, Goshen NY
August 6, 7	Gaitway Farm, Manalapan NJ



## Open To The Public Events

April 13 - 16	Equine Affair, Columbus OH
June 3	Diamond Creek Open House, Wellsville PA
June 4	Moonsville Horse Show, Moonsville IN
July 14 - 16	BreyerFest, Lexington KY
July 27 - August 20	IN State Fair Barn Tours, Indianapolis, IN
August 5	Hambletonian/Meadowlands, East Rutherford NY
September 8 - 10	Dan Patch Community Festival, Oxford IN
October 20, 21	Hoosier Classic Yearling Sale, Indianapolis IN

For more information visit [HHYF.org](http://HHYF.org)  
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# BEYOND *the*

## **Maryland middle-schoolers enjoy unique introduction to racing**

BY JAMES WITHERITE

In the words of Winston Churchill, “There is something about the outside of a horse that is good for the inside of a man.”

The same can be said for the over 4,500 middle school students who attended the Junior Achievement Inspire career event held March 14-16 in Salisbury, Md., and enjoyed a particularly hands-on first taste of the harness racing industry.

Many young people involved in harness racing find their way into the industry by following in the footsteps of their parents, grandparents, or an aunt or uncle. In direct contrast, the eighth-grade classes from 33 schools throughout the Delmarva Peninsula — comprising Delaware, the Eastern Shore of Maryland, and a small sliver of Virginia — learned of the sport at an exhibit presented by the Cloverleaf Standardbred Owners’ Association (CSOA), the Maryland Standardbred

Breeders’ Association (MSBA) and Ocean Downs.

As for how it came to be? A discussion between Bobbi Sample, general manager at Ocean Downs, and Ricky Pollitt, communications coordinator for Junior Achievement of the Eastern Shore — both involved with the Greater Ocean City (Md.) Chamber of Commerce — was the catalyst.

“Several months ago, I was invited to speak to the young professionals from our Chamber at their monthly meeting,” Sample explained. “Ricky spoke about the Inspire event as well as opportunities to participate in education events with the local schools. I spoke to him after the meeting regarding the education events, and he expressed an interest in involving Ocean Downs in the Inspire event. The goal is to create an experience in the booth that will immerse the eighth-grade students in your business. I thought it would be a great opportunity for racing and the horse industry.”

With cooperation from driver Jonathan Roberts, from the CSOA, and Jackie MacLeod, from the MSBA, their respective organizations partnered with the racetrack to provide the experience. The centerpieces of the exhibit — an in-person appearance from former race mare Wynnfield Savannah 4,1:54.4f (\$37,575), a now 15-year-old trotter owned and trained by





# BACKSTRETCH

Pam Polk, and a 3D virtual reality race simulator that literally put kids in the driver's seat — transcended immersive, by all counts.

"The interaction between the kids and the horse and the virtual drive of the race was priceless; they loved it," said Peter Szymanski, director of racing at Ocean Downs. "Pam Polk brought the horse, and she was an absolute sweetheart. She allowed people to pet her. The kids' faces just lit up over the fact they were going to interact with a horse."

"According to Ricky Pollitt, we were the belle of the parade. We were the best booth in the whole place by numbers — and that includes NASA, the Salisbury (Md.) Airport, hotels, other businesses."

"We were always busy," said Cheri Stambaugh, Maryland Standardbred Race Fund administrator. "They started at 9 a.m. each day and had the schools coming in for an hour and 45 minutes each to go through the whole hall with different aisles of business and vendors."

While exhibit attendees were enamored with Wynnfield Savannah and the race simulator, other industry participants were just as delighted by the team effort that went behind presenting harness racing to a new, young audience.

"It was a fantastic event; it was great to see everybody come together," said Roberts.

Trainer Michael Hall echoed Roberts' sentiments, praising all three organizations in their cooperation to make the exhibit not just a reality, but a rousing success.

"The fact that all of them went in together to get it done, to me, is something that just doesn't happen enough," Hall said. "It was nice to have that collaboration, and we reached thousands of eighth graders that potentially could end up being in this industry that were never exposed to it before."



Although "continuous effort" — to borrow from Churchill again — may be the key to unlocking potential, the teamwork of industry leaders in the Delmarva region undoubtedly went a long way toward expanding the sport's potential to reach the next generation.



Photos courtesy of Cheri Stambaugh





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