

CAMDEN LIVING™

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The Talk of the Town





Tamara Flinn, and her horse Harry

A CHANGING OF THE GUARD

After Thirteen Years Of Service!

Thank You, Mike Mathis!

By Tamara Flinn

Chair, South Carolina Equine Promotion Foundation

The South Carolina Equine Park, managed by the South Carolina Equine Promotion Foundation board, officially opened in September 2009. Mike Mathis was hired by the board to be the Park Manager. He has served in this role for 13 years. Mike originally worked and retired from South Carolina State Parks, where he had a very successful career as Park Manager. If you have ever been out to the South Carolina Equine Park you would have been greeted by Mike! Over the past years, Mike has treated this facility as his own. He has worked with several chairpersons over the years to include John Cushman, Jonathan Potter, and myself (Tamara Flinn). Each of us has come with our unique ideas and Mike has moved them forward. From a facilities perspective, beautiful footing was put in, a new state of the art covered arena was built on his watch, as well as new permanent bathrooms more conveniently located down at the ring. Most recently Mike has overseen the development of the 13 acres adjacent to the facility that will be used for further parking of horse trailers and RVs, allowing more room for exhibitors to get around the facility.

If you have met Mike, you know there is no one who will stop what they are doing to help you and solve your problem more than Mike. Every time I am with him, I am amazed by the number of people who have his direct cell phone number and can use it at a moment's notice. That includes exhibitors, show managers, county council members, contractors, etc. The list goes on! He is always willing to lend a hand outside of his normal facility management to help. He can fix a broken stall board, help you hook-up your RV, put air in your trailer tires, set-up for parties at the show, whatever you need, whenever you need it. He stays out there with the show staff until the late evening hours to make sure everyone's needs are met. You honestly can't put a price on what all Mike has done out there over the years.

The best part about Mike is everything he does, he does

with a smile. And trust me when I tell you, Mike gets some very interesting requests when we all bring our beloved horses to the Park! I specifically remember a time when I took off to the show (I only kept my horse about five miles away from the Park) in my trailer that had not been used in about a year. Everything looked fine until I arrived at the Park. When I parked my trailer and went to unload my horse, I realized my tires were not slightly flat, they were all four completely flat. I called Mike and asked if he happened to have an air pump handy. He and some help showed up about five minutes later. This was not a heavy-duty air pump so while I schooled my horse, gave him a bath, got his stall set up and was prepared to go home for the night Mike had JUST finished filling up all four tires. Now most people would have thrown enough air in there to tell me to get it to the gas station and get those tires pumped up. Not Mike, he filled all four tires to the brim so I could get my horse back home on Friday evening and did not have to stop at the gas station late at night or at the crack of dawn when I returned to show. You can't put a price on that. Not many people would have taken up two hours of their day on the day everyone arrives to a horse show to fix my problem which I had created!

Fast forward to 2022 and Mike decided to retire January 1, 2023, so he can enjoy more time with his family and his new grand baby! We couldn't be more excited for him, but that certainly put me on a path I had no idea would be so hard!

We had many good candidates, but the Board was looking for someone who could really move the Park forward for the next 20 years and alas came Tanja!

Tanja Schnuderl was born in Germany where she grew up riding and developed her love of all things horses. She moved to the United States in 2013 and took over managing a large operation of 28 horses that included everything from fixing

boards, dragging rings to in-depth care and management of the horses and boarders. She has also managed a barn that hosts the Maryland Horse Trials every year so is well aware of what is needed at a facility and how it should be prepared. In the words of Tanja, "I pay good money to come to horse shows and I expect the facility to look nice, be run well, and to be safe for exhibitors and horses alike." Tanja is an equine appraiser, and has a Bachelor of Law degree that allows her to be a consultant on equine law cases. She is also a contributor to many magazines. She is very excited about the Park and loves the entire vibe of the Camden community. Congratulations Tanja and we look forward to your ideas on how to move the South Carolina Equine Park forward!

We wish Mike all the best in his retirement and realize we couldn't have done it without HIM! Make sure you wave when you see him on the mower on the race track in his spare time and when you see him out at the Park, as a visitor this time.



*Tanja Schnuderl, our new Park Director, with her horse Kela.
We are excited to move the Park forward together!*



Mike Mathis on the porch of our Cafe' at the Park, enjoying a specially prepared, much-deserved delicious steak dinner.



The South Carolina Equine Park, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization supported by private donations, grants and public funds, not state funded, is a major economic driver. Since opening in 2009, we average 30 weekends booked each year, contracting with show operators and horse associations, consistently producing an economic impact of more than \$4 million annually.



443 Cleveland School Rd, Camden SC 29020 I-20 Exit 101 Minutes from downtown Camden