

# YMCA campers enjoy a day of horseback riding

STORY AND PHOTOS  
By JOHN LYNDS

Kids in East Boston are getting a rare opportunity this summer that most inner city youth would never have a chance of experiencing living in a concrete jungle.

Suffolk Downs provided children at the East Boston YMCA horseback riding lessons each Thursday for eight weeks. The program was part of the famed racetrack's 2009 "Commitment to Community" program and allowed for the children, many of which are from low-income homes and would not be able to afford expensive horseback riding lessons, the chance to learn a fun and exciting sport.

The program was an idea of Suffolk Downs' principal owner

and horse enthusiast Richard Fields, who has continued to enhance the track's long-standing community outreach program.

"We are happy to provide an opportunity for our local kids to connect with these wonderful equine athletes," said Fields.

Each week, the group of about 25 kids assembles in the Suffolk Downs paddock with instructor Jade Hamilton and her staff. Hamilton has been teaching riding lessons since she herself was a child, having learned from her grandfather.

"I really loved the program and the kids really took to riding," said Hamilton. "I think it was a good learning experience for all of us."

Hamilton taught the kids the basics of horsemanship, includ-

ing how to mount and dismount a horse, how to feed them and groom them, and how to walk them.

"It was awesome," said YMCA's Russ Lamberti. "This was a great opportunity to get the kids out of the center and experience something different. You are here at Suffolk Downs and although you're still in East Boston you feel miles away from the city."

Lamberti added that kids usually have to wait an hour or so to travel to do anything like the horse riding camp and when they do it's usually only for a day.

"This is an eight week commitment so it's basically all summer and it's something the kids that participate look forward to all week," he said.



An East Boston YMCA camper takes a ride on her favorite horse.



Suffolk Downs' principal owner Richard Fields talks about his experience with horse riding with one of the kids.



Suffolk Downs Chief Operating Officer Chip Tuttle talks with the kids from the YMCA.

## SUFFOLK DOWNS HOSTS 'Y' CAMPERS



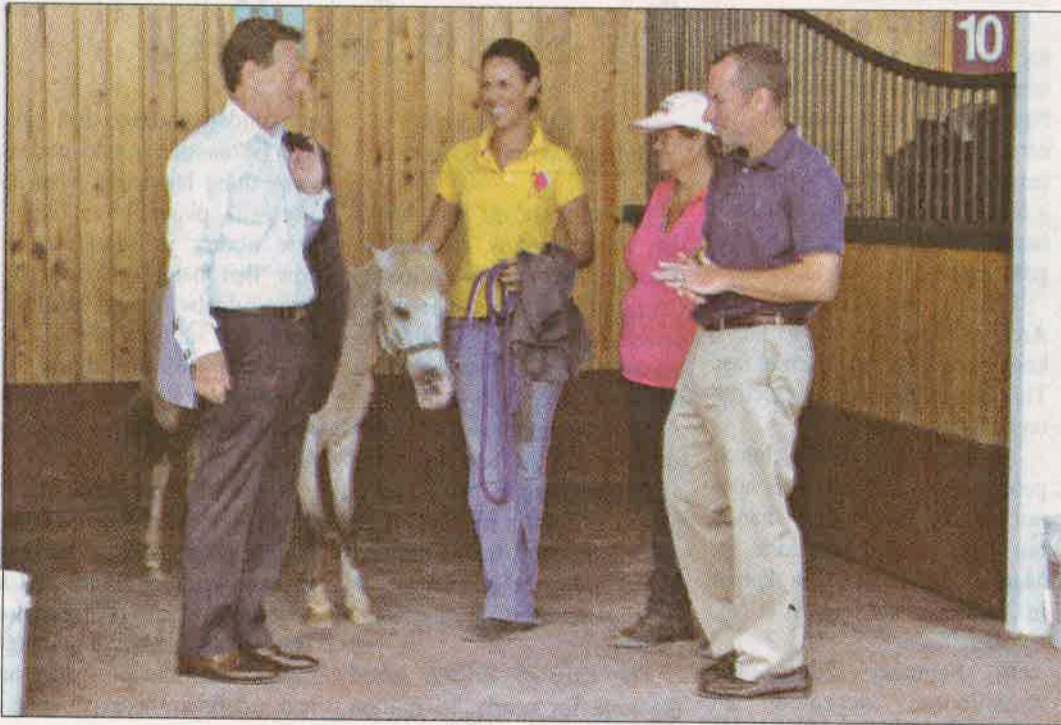
Suffolk Downs' principal owner Richard Fields takes a look at one of the horses while a camper and trainer look on.



YMCA's Russ Lamberti talks with Suffolk Downs' principal owner Richard Fields.



Suffolk Downs' principal owner Richard Fields helps one of the campers during his ride.



Suffolk Downs' principal owner and horse enthusiast Richard Fields (left) and Suffolk Downs Chief Operating Officer Chip Tuttle with horse trainers at the track during the East Boston YMCA's horse riding day camp. STORY AND PHOTOS, PAGE 9.

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