

For Release: Monday 5 March 2007

## **Washington Area Polo Community UNIFIED in Promoting Equestrian Opportunities for Inner City Kids**

The Washington Post column of 5 February 2007, "Reliable Source" by Amy Argetsinger and Roxanne Roberts < <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/05/AR2007020501739.html> >, in reporting a personality conflict over a local charity declared as their headline: "Courage Cup Organizers Cross Polo Mallets." The lead sentence reads: "Forget the country club rep: Polo is a *very* rough game."

As representatives of the only polo organizations that have been involved with the Courage Cup charity activity from its inception through the plans for 2007, we take the strongest exception to the suggestion that we are anything but united in trying to promote opportunities for young inner city kids or that we are divided with respect to how this charitable activity ought to be organized and run in the future.

In 2004 and 2005 the Muldoon farm in Poolesville, Maryland, hosted the start of a local effort to combine a Washington, DC, social event, called The Courage Cup, with fund-raising focused on helping to provide opportunities for inner city youth to participate in equestrian sports and play the game of polo. In 2006, the event was hosted at Great Meadow, Virginia, with record attendance. As the event grew it was necessary for the charitable group to become properly organized as a non-profit, with state incorporation, the filing of taxes, sound Board governance and identified as <[couragecup.org](http://couragecup.org)>. The primary beneficiary of these efforts has been the Work-to-Ride organization which provides inner city kids with the opportunity to learn the love a horse in exchange for their commitment to help care for the animal.

Founded in 1994, Work-to-Ride is a 501c3 program that aids disadvantaged youth (male and female between the ages of 7 and 18) through constructive activities centered on horseback riding. Lezlie Hiner is the founder and director of Work-to-Ride and her program has received national recognition -- including major coverage in Sports Illustrated and on ESPN Sports -- for her success in taking disadvantaged kids from inner city backgrounds, and, by exposing them to equestrian sports in exchange for barn work and commitment to stay in school, has had phenomenal success with young teens. Work-to-Ride received the United States Polo Association national "2005 Image Award" and its students have participated in all of The Courage Cup games since its inception. Work-to-Ride has been the advertised beneficiary of these fund raisers and Ms. Hiner is a member of The Courage Cup <[couragecup.org](http://couragecup.org)> Board of Directors.

For four decades the Muldoon family have been a polo institution in the Washington area. Through the Potomac Polo Club and their "Gone Away Farm," they have led the way in demonstrating how the sport of polo, once thought to be the preserve of the few, can be an accessible and popular sport for the Washington area community, and a very successful venue for charitable fund raising. Professional polo player Charlie Muldoon, the highest rated polo player living in the region, helped with sponsorship and organized the players for the polo games for the 2004 and 2005 Courage Cup, and today is Director of Development at the historic Morven Park equestrian center in Leesburg and venue for The America's Cup of Polo. Mr. Muldoon is a member of The Courage Cup <couragecup.org> Board of Directors.

Great Meadow, home of the Virginia Gold Cup, is the region's largest Polo Club and location of the popular summer-long Saturday night "Twilight Polo." It is nationally recognized as the leading center of stadium polo in the country and hosts the US Arena Open. Dr. Phillip A. Karber is a Trustee of the Great Meadow charitable Foundation, President of the Great Meadow Polo Club, Chairman of the US Polo Association national Marketing Committee, Equine Editor of Capitol File Magazine and was responsible for the Work-to-Ride kids having the opportunity to demonstrate their polo skills before the 10,000 person audience of the Washington International Horse Show this last fall. Dr. Karber is a member of The Courage Cup <couragecup.org> Board of Directors.

These three Courage Cup Directors collectively represent the Washington polo community that has been involved in this charitable effort from its inception to the present and they hold a majority of the votes on The Courage Cup <couragecup.org> Board. They share the goals of promoting the sport to a new generation and providing opportunity to participate in it to all Americans. They believe that the current leadership of The Courage Cup <couragecup.org>, along with the support of its Host Committee and hundreds of volunteers, undertook necessary reforms to insure that the organization operated responsibly as well as assuring its fiscal viability for the future; and as a local charity, deserves the continued and unified support of the Washington area community.

The controversy referenced in the Washington Post has nothing to do with polo. The complaints come from an individual instrumental in starting the original Courage Cup charity effort and who, in leaving the local area to run for political office in New York, admittedly turned over the unincorporated informal organization to a "friend." Now, nearly two years later, and as a newly elected New York Assemblyman, he complains that he is not receiving proper credit and in publicly pressing his case has made particularly egregious personal attacks on the young Washington volunteers who, in his absence, so selflessly and

successfully kept The Courage Cup alive and donated their time and effort for the charitable cause of Work-to-Ride.

We believe that both the Washington Post and the local community need to know that this individual, who has made a point of complaining that his successors are not polo players, is himself neither a part of the Washington area polo community nor does he speak for any fraction of it. He is not a member of the US Polo Association (and according to their records has not been for at least the last six years), does not hold a sanctioned handicap (necessary for serious play), nor is associated with a Polo Club, team, equestrian farm or venue for the sport in the local area. This individual continues to be associated with personal attacks launched from New York against the local young ladies that now manage The Courage Cup and we feel these negative attacks are of no redeeming social value to our community and have nothing to do with helping inner city kids get an equestrian experience.

A recent email from <gball@ball4ny.com> sent to the charity circuit throughout the Washington area with the title "*The Courage Cup: 'Passes now available!'*" makes the following claims:

*This year the event will be held at historic Morvin [sic] Park in conjunction with, and as part of, the America's Cup....  
The Courage Cup Executive Committee is dedicated to controlling the guest list....  
Passes are therefore limited, and ticket sales are available online at [www.couragecup.com](http://www.couragecup.com), so purchase your passes today!*

This is bogus! He has nothing to do with the organization and presentation of that event, there is no Courage Cup fund raising associated with it. The claimed "*Courage Cup Executive Committee*" is an unidentified group in an entity that has no legal standing in the State of Virginia and without a discernable link to the sport of polo. He does not speak for Morven Park; America's Cup of Polo has not designated his group as a partner let alone given him any exclusivity for the distribution of passes; and none of his antics are helping the Work-to-Ride charity program.

We have no idea why promoting polo in our area is of value to his New York constituents, but we will have nothing further to do with this person and his imaginary polo activity <[couragecup.com](http://couragecup.com)>, either collectively or individually. His self-promotional emails are confusing and divisive and we want the Washington community to know that he is not part of our polo venues and will not be allowed to participate in our charity fund raising activity. We encourage the DC community to support the local and real charity The Courage Cup <[couragecup.org](http://couragecup.org)>, the only legally established one in the Washington area.

For our part you will see our mallets swinging in unison to support a historic and honorable sport rather than indulging in "rough" politics in gossip columns or blogs for self-promoters. Great Meadow Polo Club members will be playing in the America's Cup of Polo gala at Morven Park on May 12<sup>th</sup> with a host of supporters from The (real) Courage Cup there in force to enjoy a great show. To participate go directly to < <http://www.americascupofpolo.com/>> and do not be intimidated by self-annointed middlemen.

In 2007 there is only going to be one Courage Cup charity fundraising polo match and it will be at Great Meadow on June 16<sup>th</sup>. Morven Park Director, Charlie Muldoon will be leading a team there when once again the Work-to-Ride kids perform their equestrian magic on the field at the real Courage Cup sponsored "Meadow Matches" fund raiser for them.

Sincerely,

Lezlie Hiner, Work-to-Ride Program  
Charlie Muldoon, Morven Park and America's Cup of Polo  
Dr. Phillip Karber, Great Meadow and US Polo Association  
Marketing Committee