

Thursday, October 11, 2012

Team Valor donates race earnings to fund scholarship honoring jockey John Velazquez

The Race for Education is pleased to announce The John R. Velazquez Scholarship. This college scholarship is sponsored jointly by Team Valor International Racing and the stables owners, Barry and Kathleen Irwin and will be awarded to a Hispanic student that has a passion to work in the equine industry upon graduation. Criteria for this scholarship include financial need, communication skills, leadership, and commitment to the thoroughbred industry. This scholarship will be awarded to one student annually. The amount will be based on the recipient's level of financial need for up to \$6,000 per year for four years.



Two percent of the earnings of all Team Valor's horses will provide funding for these scholarships. "Team Valor International is dedicated to the idea of providing funding for worthy minority students. Our first dedicated scholarship, geared toward African American students, is the Isaac Murphy Memorial Scholarship. The second is for Hispanic students and honors another riding legend in Johnny Velazquez," states Barry Irwin, Founder and CEO of Team Valor International.



John R. Velazquez learned to ride in his native Puerto Rico. On January 3rd, 1990, he won his first race, aboard Rodas at El Nuevo Comandante racetrack in Canóvanas, Puerto Rico. That same year, under the guidance of agent and former jockey, Angel Cordero, Jr., he moved to New York State where he has earned 24 riding titles at Aqueduct Racetrack, Belmont Park, and Saratoga Race Course.

During his 22-year career in the United States, Velazquez has become one of racing's most elite riders. He is a two-time Eclipse Award winner as outstanding jockey and ranks fourth on the

career purse earnings list. In 2012, he was inducted into the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame. Some of Velazquez's most decorated victories have been the 2011 Kentucky Derby aboard Animal Kingdom, the filly Rags to Riches victory in the 2007 Belmont Stakes and the 2012 Belmont Stakes aboard Union Rags. He has also won 11 Breeders' Cup races. In 2011, he won his fifth Saratoga riding title.

Applications for the John R. Velazquez Scholarships as well as The Race For Education's Horsemen's Scholarships and Thoroughbred Scholarships will be available at www.raceforeducation.org beginning December 1st for the 2013 – 2014 school year.

Celebrating its' 10th Anniversary, The Race for Education provides educational programs and college scholarships to young people in the equine and agriculture industries with significant financial need. The majority of their students come from high need, low income backgrounds. The Race for Education not only offers financial support for these students, but also mentoring, tutoring, and partnership support to ensure students are receiving the support and educational skills they need to be successful. The Starting Gate, an afterschool college readiness and literacy program was also established by The Race for Education in 2009 in New York and has expanded to five locations in Kentucky.

From *The Race for Education*