

RANSOM WINS STAN BERGSTEIN WRITING AWARD FOR STORY ON BORELLS EXPOSED CONDITIONS AT FARM THAT LED TO ANIMAL CRUELTY CHARGES SPURRED RELIEF FROM VOLUNTEERS AND EQUINE RETIREMENT GROUPS

Margaret Ransom has won the Stan Bergstein Writing Award for a story that revealed dire conditions for more than 40 horses at a Kentucky farm that led to animal cruelty charges against Chuck and Maria Borell.



Margaret Ransom accepts the \$25,000 Stan Bergstein Writing Award from Team Valor CEO Barry Irwin, right, and Jeff Lowe.

Ransom's story on USRacing.com prompted aid from outside horsemen and equine retirement groups and an investigation from the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, which charged Chuck Borell and his daughter, Maria, for apparently abandoning the horses in their care at a Mercer County Farm. Chuck Borell was arrested on June 29, pled guilty to nine charges in September under a plea deal. His daughter, Maria, who trained last year's champion sprinter Runhappy, also was charged with 43 counts of animal cruelty. State and local officials seized the horses and volunteers and retirement farms stepped in for their care.

Ransom's prize is \$25,000 from Team Valor and its CEO, Barry Irwin. The full story is [here](#).

Irwin said, "Margaret's story exposed a problem and led to action, which is what this award is all about, so she deserves credit and recognition for her work even though the website that published the story is for an offshore wagering company that contributes nothing to the racing industry."

Team Valor nominates stories throughout the year and assigns a panel of judges to select an award winner. This year's judges were racetrack announcer Trevor Denman, Hall of Fame jockey Chris McCarron and veteran turf writers Neil Milbert, Maryjean Wall and Michael Veitch.

Wall, a Pulitzer Prize nominee and three-time Media Eclipse Award winner as the long-time Turf writer for the *Lexington Herald-Leader*, said "The initial reaction of many following the firing of Maria Borell was to come to her defense. However, Margaret Ransom's thorough research revealed there was much, much more to this story than the popular press initially reported. The article took a trending news item and went after the unanswered questions.

"While all entries did a good job taking readers beyond the obvious, this one dealt with a topic of intense emotional interest to an audience exceeding the bounds of racing insiders, and did so in a reader-friendly way."

The award presentation along with a panel discussion with racehorse owner Andrew Cohen of 60 Minutes and the Marshall Project and Paulick Report features editor Natalie Voss is [here](#).