



## FOUNDATION FEATURE:

# NSBA's Trainer Crisis Fund: AN UNBROKEN CIRCLE OF SUPPORT



Joe Bregman

**N**SBAs members often enjoy the many fundraisers that take place throughout the year for the NSBA Foundation's Trainer Crisis Fund. From the bar-b-ques to donkey races to polo, there are often many laughs and many memories made.

Beyond the laughs and the dollars raised, the NSBA Foundation's Trainer Crisis Fund provides an important lifeline for the professional trainers around the industry. The late Joe Bregman, of Pinnacle, North Carolina, was a big supporter of the Crisis Fund, donating his time as a trainer to the Trainer Sale and participating in the association's fundraisers.

Little did he know that twice during his short life, the horse community would come to his aid and, through his death, donations to the Crisis Fund continue the circle of love and support.

Joe moved to North Carolina 30 years ago to work for trainers Gene Parker and Troy Oakley. He would later create his own training business, showing champion AQHA, PHBA, ApHC and NSBA horses.

"The first time we saw how kind the horse community could be, Joe was showing at the Tom Powers in 1990 and he was hit in a head-on car accident," said his wife, Dena Bregman. "He ended up with a broken jaw and a broken back and was laid up for 13 weeks. We were just overwhelmed by the support we received from the horse community."

Dena considers herself 'married into the horse industry.' "I had no idea of this whole other world of wonderful, kind people. Until you experience people showing up or calling you from near and far all over the country, you can't explain it," she said.

"In 2000, Joe was diagnosed with pulmonary sarcoidosis and two years later he had complications that required pulmonary surgery," she said. "He went in for the procedure on July 6th and didn't leave the hospital until mid-August."

"He had a lot of rehab, but he was able to live a fairly normal life with limitations after his surgery. I had my job and carried our insurance, but he was worried that he might lose the business he had built up. As a trainer, you can have a lot of lean years—you may get a few wins and sell a few, but not everyone makes a lot of money. The Trainer Crisis Fund, along with other fundraisers that were held at several of the shows, helped us keep the barn going and allowed Joe to focus on getting healthy. In the end, we were able to spend 16 more years with him than we thought we had."

Joe's passion for the horse industry and drive to succeed helped him overcome many obstacles, even as his health declined. "He really had the sarcoidosis for about half of his training career, but he would not quit," Dena said.

"He was able to get better and better horses and he had a way of getting the most from each one." As his health declined, Joe transitioned his training business to a trail riding stables, where he was able to capitalize on the nearby Pilot Mountain State Park and its bridle trails.

When Joe died of complications due to pulmonary sarcoidosis in April, Dena knew exactly where his friends could send a memorial contribution. "The Trainer Crisis Fund was something that was important to Joe and was such a big help to us. It's always been on my heart to give back and these donations in Joe's name are a way to do that."

The NSBA Foundation Trainer Crisis Fund has paid out \$236,000 to 32 recipients over the past 15 years. Donations of any size are accepted for the Trainer Crisis Fund. Payments can be made by MasterCard, VISA, American Express, Discover or PayPal at [nsba.com](http://nsba.com). For additional information, please visit the Foundation section of the NSBA website, [www.nsba.com](http://www.nsba.com) or contact Lynn Campbell at [lcampbell@nsba.com](mailto:lcampbell@nsba.com). ■