

Do You Have the Right Partnerships?

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Exclusive Interview with Malvern Bank Affiliate, Laura Fredricks, and Erin Brown, Philadelphia Urban Riding Academy

Could you give me some background on Philadelphia Urban Riding Academy (PURA)?

Philadelphia has over a 100-year history in the equestrian community. Filmmakers recently created a Netflix film, [“Concrete Cowboy,”](#) where they came to the stables of Philadelphia to spend time learning exactly how a city like Philadelphia has stables giving inner city kids a truly fresh start and totally different perspective on life.

The film’s theme was the preservation of life, legacy, and culture of Black urban cowboys in the city of Philadelphia. It was during the time spent at the stables that filmmakers became passionate about this equestrian community within the inner-city and created Philadelphia Urban Riding Academy (PURA) alongside several local Philadelphia-born Equestrians, including myself.

PURA launched a [fundraising campaign “Fresh Start for Philly Youth”](#) in hopes of creating a forever barn for the community that won’t be threatened by redevelopment. But like any good expansion, the project will cost money. We have been highly successful with a crowdfunding campaign, raising \$119,000, but she really needed to think about a solid fundraising plan, one that had many revenue streams because she needs to raise \$2 million. This facility will provide a space unlike any other for children, teens and adults to experience horses up close and personal.

What sets PURA apart from other nonprofits?

I believe PURA is bringing additional focus on a unique need in Philadelphia. Part of the problem with stables and the history of Black riders in Philadelphia is that most of the time, they don’t own their land. And when they don’t own their land, it’s easier for them to be dispersed and broken up. So that’s part of the problem, and we want to provide a solution for that.

There are so many benefits of introducing horses to children. Not all kids want to play basketball. Not all kids want to play football. Some kids want to ride horses. We are giving them the opportunity to have the recreation they need—but it’s also more than that— PURA can provide a sense of belonging, community, and the confidence to conquer their world.

Can you give me some background on yourself and how you are involved in PURA?

I am known as the “*The Concrete Cowgirl*.” I grew up riding on Fletcher Street in 1990 and then eventually started managing one of the barns there for well over ten years. I know this treasured community needs a “forever facility,” and it is going to cost well into six or seven figures. Once the Netflix series was launched, it was a great that we have the filmmakers supporting this cause since they firsthand saw the benefits of having equestrians’ spaces and programs within Philadelphia and its rich history of the Urban Black Cowboy.

You mentioned partnerships being important when developing this nonprofit—could you please go into more detail on this?

PURA was started because an established community of cowboys in Philadelphia partnered with the filmmakers Ricky Staub, Dan Walser, Staci Hagenbaugh and Ryan Spak. There are more businesses and individuals who have an equestrian passion, it’s just about finding them.

Our banking relationship with Malvern Bank is an example of an organization that supports equestrian passions. My banker is Hillary Dobbs is one of the world’s most accomplished equestrians, having won 31 International Grand Prix show jumping events.

Through Hillary and the equestrian division at Malvern Bank, we were able to set PURA up with an affinity account so we can receive donations from the bank when our supporters bank there.

I have also been able to work with Phelps Media Group, who is an equestrian public relations and marketing firm, to get the message about PURA. PURA was started through partnerships, and we believe it will grow with the right partnerships.