

Crawfords open their house and their hearts

by Chris Tully

Goshen, NY --- Few harness horse breeders have made a larger multi-media splash this year than Crawford Farms of Durhamville, N.Y.

When top trotters Sebastian K and Market Share line up for this Friday's (Aug. 29) \$200,000 Crawford Farms Open Trot at Vernon, they will score behind the bright red Crawford Farms starting car. And that is just the beginning of the Crawfords' omnipresence.

Driven by a passion for the sport, and a desire to help harness racing prosper, the Crawfords have sponsored this season's Meadowlands Pace, Kindergarten Classic and the aforementioned Crawford Farms Trot, formerly the [Credit Winner](#). In addition to vast purse support, they have recently completed a state-of-the-art equine therapeutic spa, 40-stall barn, and a six-gate horse exerciser at their central New York breeding and racing operation.



The brand new Toyota Tundra starting car at Vernon Downs is just one of the many places fans notice the Crawford Farms logo.

Their hearts and minds are 'all-in' this game; for their farm and for the future of the Standardbred. Michelle and Albert Crawford have undoubtedly jumped-in with both feet, and provided a much-needed push to a somewhat hesitant industry.

"We love this business," noted Albert, son of the late Jim Crawford, who was the affable former president of the Harness Horse Breeders of New York State. "My wife and I are committed to breeding top horses in New York State and supporting the industry in the process. We know that it is an uphill battle, but we are digging in for the long haul!"

From the second-story Crawford Farms mural at The Meadowlands to the upcoming Red Mile Grand Circuit meet where the water trucks will bear the farm's iconic insignia, racing fans are constantly reminded of the dynamic duo's substantial commitment to the sport. Evident across multiple digital platforms, the Crawfords are very active on social media and have produced and broadcast several TV commercials.

This weekend is no exception. With the \$400,000 Zweig Trot also this Friday, renovations to the farm have reached a feverish pace this month in preparation for their inaugural Open House on Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. The team is eager to show the sport the fruits of their labor.

"Our yearlings are ready and we hope to draw a large crowd of horse people for some food and refreshments while they evaluate our stock," exclaimed Michelle Crawford, who provides much of the spark in the engine around the farm.

"My crew has really stepped up over these past few weeks to make this facility 'show ready' for the upcoming affair," the hostess added with a proud smile.



Chris Tully photos

Albert and Michelle Crawford join Ken Warkentin (right) on the set of The Meadowlands TV studio.

The farm, which was founded in 1966 by Jim and Patricia Crawford, continues to be a family affair. The 100-acre nursery has continued to expand not only their footprint, but also their broodmare band. Last year Crawford Farm was the leading major consignor at the Morrisville Sale and will bring nine yearlings back to that venue on Sept. 21. In addition, they have ten yearlings consigned to the Lexington Selected Yearling Sale, including two selling on opening night, Sept. 30.

While the yearlings were being videotaped, it was 'all hands on deck' and all feet had running shoes. Al, Michelle, Jim Jr., and even matriarch Pat participated in the 35th annual running of the babies.

Albert stated, "This is the day we get to really see what we have. It's exciting, but a little nerve-racking too."

When they are not prepping yearlings, Michelle and Al own and operate one of the most successful healthcare lending institutions in the nation, Bankers Healthcare Group. In fact, BHG was ranked as the 5th Fastest Growing Private Company by Inc.

Formed in 1992 from a modest group of four finance experts, BHG now employs close to 200. It appears that growth and commitment are not just a mission statement, it is a Crawford way of life.