

# RAISING the STANDARD

by Mary Marshall  
photos by Kelly Morvant



Ginger, Keith and Little Miss Protocol

Raising the standard for Louisiana-bred Thoroughbreds to compete and sell on a national level has become a reality for Keith

and Ginger Myers, the hands-on owners of Coteau Grove Farms in Sunset, Louisiana.

The prestigious farm encom-

passes 430-acres of meticulously manicured grounds nestled on the Coteau Ridge which was once the west bank of the Mississippi. The

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~ Keith Myers

soil is nutrient rich and perfect for raising horses. The beautifully designed barns are surrounded by the naturally sculpted landscape of ancient oaks and rolling ridge lines that contribute to the serenity of this southern Louisiana Thoroughbred farm.

As Keith tells it, part of the farm became known for producing the largest volume of sweet potatoes per acre in the state when it was owned by jockey Calvin Borel's

family members in the 1950s. If the land can grow the state's best sweet potatoes imagine what kind of young horses, it can produce.

The Myers have five children and seven grandchildren—two sons live on the farm. Several of the grandchildren love horses and enjoy riding.

“We have to keep some riding horses around for the grandchildren,” said Ginger. “Our first granddaughter thrives on animals,

completed equestrian studies, and took one of our riding horses with her and is still into it.”

“It is a true family affair,” said Keith. “Our son Hunter is also a managing partner and is an integral part in the development of the farm. He has an office in the barn. Hunter is involved in many business ventures but is learning the business from the ground up. When we started the farm, we made the decision to set the bar high, and breed horses





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The Myers founded LHC Group in 1994, a service-oriented in-home healthcare company that personalizes the journey for everyone that they serve. LHC, based in Lafayette, Louisiana, is a leading national health care provider throughout the United States. The Myers passion for their healthcare business has transcended into the Thoroughbred industry on a national level, and just keeps growing with absolute joie de vivre.

The Myers bought their first Thoroughbred mares in 2008 at the

Keeneland November Sales. As luck would have it, one of the



Ginger Myers

mares was a Coronado’s Quest daughter named Character Builder that they purchased for \$65,000 in

foal to El Corredor. The resulting foal was the first one born at Coteau Grove, so of course she was special from the moment Ginger laid her eyes on her.

“I delivered this filly, and she was so determined to do everything the right way from the moment she was born so we named her Little Miss Protocol,” said Ginger who makes certain that each mare and foal receives individual attention. “She would cross her legs, fall in the straw, and get up, try again, and I said ‘Well, aren’t you just little Miss Protocol.’ I imprinted this filly from the moment of birth, and as a result she became very people oriented. She was also an amazing

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racehorse and is now retired to the farm as a broodmare. We have forty plus mares on the farm, and it is a girl's world here at Coteau Grove, no doubt about it."

Little Miss Protocol became a multiple stakes winner for the Myers with victories in the 2014 Magnolia Stakes, 2013 Louisiana Legends Distaff Stakes, 2012 Louisiana Bred Premier Night Starlet Stakes to name several. She also finished third in the 2013 Sixty Sails Handicap (G3) at Hawthorne and retired with earnings of

\$731,290—a current earnings record for the farm.

Little Miss Protocol produced a Nyquist colt named The Great One who appeared as though he might put the Coteau Groves silks on the 2021 Kentucky Derby Trail after several impressive performances including a second-place finish in the 2020 Los Alamitos Futurity (G2). However, it was the Violence colt No Parole, out of the Bluegrass Cat mare Plus One, that elevated breeder Coteau Grove Farms to Grade One status.

No Parole was purchased for \$75,000 by Maggi Moss at the 2018 Keeneland September Yearling Sale. The precocious bay colt won his first three starts as a two- and three-year-old by a combined thirty-four lengths including the 2020 Louisiana-Bred Premier Night Prince Stakes. After an eighth-place finish in the Rebel Stakes (G2) No Parole rebounded with a speedy wire-to-wire victory by three  $\frac{3}{4}$  lengths in the Woody Stephens Stakes Presented by Claiborne Farm (G1). Following that win No



Ginger and Hunter Myers



Keith (left), Ginger (right) and Hunter (center) with the Coteau Grove Farms Team

Parole was named the 2020 Louisiana-bred Horse of the Year and Champion Three-Year-Old. He retired in 2021 with earnings of \$369,866.

The Myers decided to repurchase No Parole in partnership with Whispering Oaks Farm in a deal brokered by bloodstock agent Andrew Cary who has had a long-standing relationship with the Myers as a bloodstock advisor, manager, and friend since 2014. The Myers support the stallion with their own mares and were delighted when No Parole's first foal was born January 6 at Coteau Grove Farm. The colt, out of the Street Sense mare Naïve Enough, is a half brother to listed stakes winner Tumbarumba who finished second

by a nose in the Oklahoma Derby (G3) on September 24.

"We are thrilled to be able to



Bloodstock agent, Andrew Cary with wife Matia.

stand homebred No Parole at Whispering Oaks Farm," said Cary,

whose agency is based in Lexington, Kentucky. "We are big supporters of the Louisiana breeding program and to keep a Grade One winner like this in the state is an outstanding opportunity for Louisiana breeders. He was a fantastic horse with a great deal of talent and elite speed. We are supporting him with some very well-bred mares, and his first foals are athletic and exceptionally good looking."

Cary oversees the selection of mares, stallions they will be bred to, the yearling prep and the choice of sales consignors for each individual yearling. This process has led to a high degree of success for Coteau Groves including an Exaggerator-Elitism filly that sold for \$400,000 at the 2019 Saratoga sale and a City



2017 Louisiana Horse of the Year, No Parole, entered stud at Whispering Oaks

of Light colt that brought \$250,000 at the 2021 venue. Coteau Grove Farm sold eight yearlings at the 2022 Keeneland Sales for an impressive \$702,000. At the 2023 Keeneland September Sale a Coteau Grove Farm bred yearling by Curlin may have set a record as the highest-priced Louisiana bred yearling to ever sell at public auction for \$575,000. He was followed by sales graduates selling for \$460,000, \$300,000, \$275,000, and \$170,000 most notably. It was a record sales venue for Coteau Grove selling sixteen yearlings for over \$2.2 million.

“Andrew and I have had great communication since the beginning,” said Keith. “Being in the healthcare field I always worked

with data daily. Other people would always say about a horse ‘I just have a feeling.’ Andrew worked off data and I have always been amazed how he can see the future success in a pedigree.”

In addition to the racing, breeding and sales success, Coteau Grove has expanded their operation to offer boarding, rehab and layups beginning in 2024. The Myers have also sponsored a new Louisiana Stallion Stakes this year in support of the Louisiana Thoroughbred industry, and a benefit for the backstretch employees. The Myers, humble down to earth horse people with Louisiana farming roots in their blood believe in advocacy and helping to grow the Thoroughbred industry so that everyone benefits.

“We just strive to keep doing better,” said Keith. “This year we put in a state-of-the-art equine pool. We started swimming horses as part of the prep program. We are going to start doing some outside prep, boarding and rehab, and built an outside property with a 50-stall barn just for that purpose. We also put in a Eurociser for the benefit of the horses.

Another thing that we have done is place a perpetual equine easement on this farm which means it can never be developed and can only be used as a horse farm. It is a legacy for our family and the community to enjoy. The farm is really part of who we are. It is very meaningful.”