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FOR RELEASE: Immediately

CONTACT: Doug Parrott, Bailey Lauerman, 402-305-1625

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**NEBRASKA HORSE PARK UNVEILED TO LEGISLATURE***THOROUGHBRED HORSE RACING JOINS EQUESTRIAN PROGRAMS AND EQUITHERAPY TO CREATE ONE OF THE FINEST EQUINE FACILITIES IN THE MIDWEST*

Sept 18, 2008 – Lincoln, Neb. – A unique coalition of government, university, special needs and private entities have joined to propose building Nebraska Horse Park on property near 84<sup>th</sup> Street and Havelock Avenue in Lincoln. Leaders of the effort said the facility brings together thoroughbred horse racing, equestrian programs and equitherapy at one location.

While still in the early concept stages, Nebraska Horse Park has strong interest from the Nebraska Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association (HBPA), Lancaster Event Center, Sunrise EquiTherapy and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, with additional support from City of Lincoln and Lancaster County officials, and 2015 Vision.

JoAnne Kissel of The Clark Enersen Partners, which has provided architectural support to the group, presented the Nebraska Horse Park concept to the Nebraska Legislature's General Affairs committee at a public hearing in Lincoln.

"Nebraska Horse Park will be one of the finest equine facilities in the Midwest," Kissel said. "It will bring a wide variety of horse shows, events and educational opportunities to east Lincoln, spurring economic growth and attracting visitors from all over the country."

Nebraska Horse Park would be built on approximately 200 acres near 84<sup>th</sup> Street and Havelock Avenue, adjacent to the Lancaster Event Center. The combined grounds would cover more than 300 acres and provide opportunities for shared parking, stables, campsites, horse trails and equestrian facilities. The park would include:

- Construction of a new mile-long thoroughbred horse racing track and grandstand, replacing the current facility located in State Fair Park. Nebraska horsemen consider the 1-mile track extremely important to attracting quality horses and larger purses to the state.
- Construction of a new indoor/outdoor Equestrian Center and multi-purpose building to increase the potential for shows and special events, providing significant economic benefits to the city and state.

- Participation by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for expanded equine science academic programs, and potentially new veterinary medicine and hospitality, restaurant and tourism management programs. In addition, the facility would support UNL student organizations including the equestrian, horse judging and rodeo teams, as well as 4-H horse programs.
- Participation by Sunrise EquiTherapy, a 501 (c) (3) organization, that provides equine-assisted therapies for individuals of all ages with physical and cognitive disabilities. Sunrise has been providing these services in Lincoln, Omaha and southeast Nebraska for the past 10 years, utilizing indoor and outdoor facilities and a multi-sensory trail for our clients.
- Construction of shared parking, stables, campsites, horse trails and other related facilities.
- Anticipated construction of restaurants, hotels and other commercial properties by the private sector.

Representatives of organizations involved in Nebraska Horse Park expressed excitement about opportunities at the proposed facility.

“The construction of this project is essential to the survival of the horseracing industry in Nebraska,” said Jerry Fudge, president of the Nebraska HBPA. “Lincoln constitutes a substantial portion of the racing market, and the plan to replace the old facility must be undertaken as soon as possible.”

“The Lancaster County Agricultural Society looks forward to the opportunities presented by having the Nebraska Horse Park adjacent to the Lancaster Event Center and Lancaster County Fairgrounds,” said Ron Snover, managing director of the Lancaster Event Center.

“The College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources has enjoyed significant growth over the past several years, in part due to the growth and success of our equine program,” said Steven Waller, dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. “Continued growth of our equine programs, both curricular and co-curricular, is limited by the existing facilities. The proposed Nebraska Horse Park offers a wonderful opportunity for our college to enhance its equine program and meet the growing demand of current and future students.”

“This new project will make it possible to implement the Sunrise EquiTherapy program on a year-round basis,” said Julie Wood, executive director of Sunrise EquiTherapy. “It also will provide us the opportunity to serve additional special needs clients. Sunrise EquiTherapy is pleased to be a part of this unique and innovative equine complex.”

“When the decision was made to move the Nebraska State Fair to Grand Island, we still felt there was tremendous growth potential at the 84<sup>th</sup> Street and Havelock Avenue location,” said Terry Fairfield of 2015 Vision. “We believe Nebraska Horse Park provides a great new home for thoroughbred horse racing in Lincoln, while creating a world-class equine center that will stimulate further economic growth in Nebraska.”

Lincoln attorney Kent Seacrest of 2015 Vision told the committee that plans for Nebraska Horse Park are still in the early stages and a great deal of work is needed to determine costs, final design, government approvals and construction timeline. Seacrest added that the coalition is convinced flood plain issues at the site can be addressed so the project can move forward.

“We know there is a great deal of work to do, but everyone involved in Nebraska Horse Park agrees there is tremendous potential for this project,” Seacrest said. “We pledge to keep Lincoln, Lancaster County, state officials and the public informed as we work to bring this great project to reality.”