

## Everyone can be a winner

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At the end of 1977, Doug Peterson was on top of the world. He'd just been handed Horse of the Year Seattle Slew to train. Twelve months later, Peterson shared in the glory when the horse was named champion older male.

Today, among Peterson's 18 horses in training is Grade 3 winner and Triple Crown contender Fly'n J. Bryan. Life is good.

But ask Peterson what his life was like between Seattle Slew and Fly'n J. Bryan. He'll tell you straight out about his long, miserable struggle with alcohol addiction, the homeless condition it led him to, and the near death it caused. Then he'll tell you what turned him around.

Steve Walker started racetrack riding at 15. Not long after, he developed an addiction to diet pills. Not long after that, he developed a fondness for whiskey. By the end of his 15-year jockey career, he was taking diet pills all day and drinking all night.

Over the next seven years, he'd get good jobs only to drink them away. It was, as he says, a gradual slide downward - to the point where 14 months ago, he was only galloping horses. He was about to lose that job, too. But Walker found help, and he's been clean and sober ever since.

Both men sought, on their own, the assistance of the Winners' Foundation, a California substance-abuse program with branches at every track in the state. Both cite the merits of a track-based program because the counselors and participants are racetrackers.

Peterson and Walker are only two examples of success stories. Programs similar to the Winners' Foundation have sprung up in many states, but too many people with problems aren't getting help, mainly because at too many tracks substance abuse programs still don't exist.

That's why the folks at Winners' Foundation, along with the leaders of similar and related organizations, have formed a national coalition to unite the various state programs with an ultimate goal of implementing a substance-abuse program at every North American racetrack.

The name of the national program is the Winners Federation, and it sounds like a winner to me.

□ *Anne Lang is the Texas breeding correspondent for Daily Racing Form.*