Hunt Country Network
September 2, 2026 | Reach out to us at Editor@TheMiddleburgPage.com

The Race Before The Race

Gold Cup to Host Free Clinic Fundraiser

By Leland Schwartz

What keeps Rob Marino up at night is his worry that upcoming changes in the 2010 Affordable Care Act (ACA) are about to knock up to 1,500 Fauquier County residents off their Medicaid insurance.

The Fauquier Free Clinic already spends every cent of the nearly $3 million it raises to take care of more than 2,260 patients who came to the Clinic for nearly 13,000 cost-free visits.

The Clinic has more than 200 volunteers including doctors, dentists and mental health care practioners, but the medicine they prescribe and the supplies they use are by no means free.

Indeed, more than 90 percent of the Clinic's funding goes to medical and pharmacy costs, dental care and hygiene expenses and in providing mental health care.

"It's more important than ever for us to have some support from the community so that we can continue to be there for people," Rob says. "This is an especially important year for us to seek that support and to be ready for what's going to be more patients looking for help than we've been accustomed to."

"We're already working really at capacity," he said of the health care engine he's been running for 26 years. If there were another 1,500 people uninsured in this community, it would really be a strain to take good care of them."

So the Virginia Gold Cup Races, in keeping with its twin missions, is going to have a fundraiser on October 23, the night before the International Gold Cup and 100% of the proceeds will go to the Clinic.

This is the race before the race, to help the Free Clinic raise enough extra new money to be able to take care of the hundreds of new patients that will turn to them for help next year.

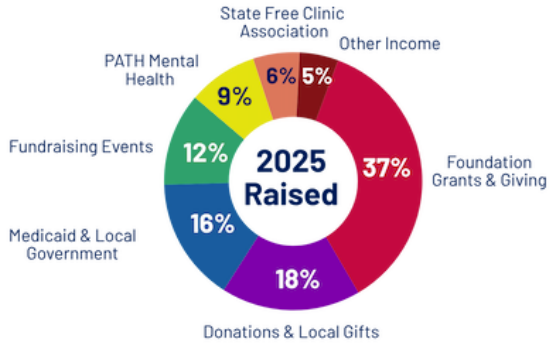
The Taste of Gold Cup

Friday, October 23, 2026

Great Meadow in The Plains

The best dishes from some of Race Country's best restaurants

TICKETS: https://www.fauquierfreeclinic.org/invitation.html



Gold Cup Chairman Al Griffin explained it this way: "The Virginia Gold Cup Association has two goals. One, to provide the best steeplechase racing possible for the horsemen and spectators, and two, to create benefit to the local community through the races."

"This is the model for all steeplechase racing in America and is why steeplechasing is actually showing significant growth," he says. "It's a partnership between the races and the community that we want to enhance moving forward."

They're calling it "A Taste of Gold Cup" where "The spirit of Gold Cup meets the heart of Hunt Country."

"Those involved in steeplechase racing are by nature very passionate people, and that passion also extends to involvement in local community needs," Taste of Gold Cup Committee member and donor Sondra LeHew said.

The Gold Cup and the Clinic have deep roots together. Longtime Race Chairman Dr. Will Allsion and current Chairman Al Griffin, both dentists, were among the original group that started the Clinic in 1993, and, more to the point, many of the Clinic's patients are part of the equine community's workforce.

Dr. Sara Kepple, who runs Prosperity Family Medicine in Warrenton and is the president of the Clinic's board, says without the clinic healthcare for many would vanish.

"They would miss their cancer screenings. They would miss their chronic disease management. They would have more bad outcomes with heart disease and lose access to mental health care and dental care. Those things are hugely impactful in people's lives."

About ten years ago Gold Cup sponsored a similar funraiser, which Rob says is a key reason the clinic has flousirshed.

"A lot of the folks who met us there continued to help us after the party was over. It's pretty great, but we do need to come back to them and give an update, and this is why it's important what we're doing, an opportunity to help understand what we need next.

"It's a lot to raise every single year," Rob says of the Clinic's budget." But this community has been incredibly good to us. You know, whenever we have raised our hands and said we need help, people have come through and said, yes."