

Given a new life when racing's run its course

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AT full gallop, they are aweinspiring. Lungs like bellows, legs like pistons.

But not every racehorse becomes a champion. Just what happens to the also-rans is a major taboo. Many of them go to the sales. If they're not pretty, being bought by the knackery for as little as \$50 is a real risk.

But many in the industry have faith in thoroughbreds as animals of enormous postrack potential. They can become mounts in a variety of equestrian sports, or simply do good in the community.

Two of these believers are Raewyn Parkin and her boss Shane Brady. Brady is general manager of security and risk for the Australian Turf Club, and Parkin manages the ATC Mounted Division at Royal Randwick. Royal Randwick.

The Mounted Division, set up in 2010, has six retrained

ex-racehorses which take their riders on security patrol at Sydney's premier racetracks. Refined and beautiful, they have even graced the atrium of Crown Casino to promote the Melbourne Cup.

Duffield, sired by the great Octagonal, and Larkhill, grandson of Danehill, were among the first graduates of the pilot program which evolved into the NSW Thoroughbred Rehabilitation Trust, a Racing NSW charity of which Brady is a trustee.

"We take (horses) off the track and put them out into the paddock to defuse and be horses again for a while," Brady said. "We then re-educate them to basic dressage level and move them on."

Racing NSW CEO Peter V'Landys is right behind the trust.

"We realised there was a lot of ex-racehorses out there

with limited options beyond their racing career," Brady said.

Now the former champions are visiting senior citizens' homes as part of the program.

Next, Brady wants the horses to visit hospitals and other facilities where the residents are sure to be brightened by the sight of an eager, nudging face into which carrots will quickly disappear.

The idea came to Brady when he and Parkin were riding past the Montefiore Jewish Home in Randwick, causing excitement among the residents. Brady asked Montefiore management if the horses could make an official visit.

"The horses need exercise and we thought it would be nice," he said. "The smiles that people come up with, it's just awesome."

The horses' next outing is

tomorrow at BUPA Aged Care in Waverley.

Brady and Parkin want to extend the visitation program, and welcome inquiries from hospitals, health or aged-care facilities on 9663 8434. The visits are free.

The Trust operates out of Canterbury Racecourse, and St Heliers Correctional Complex in the Hunter Valley, where selected inmates handle the animals to help them shake their galloping machine mind-set. Brady said 92 horses had graduated from the program. Another 52 are in it.

Retrained thoroughbreds can excel in equestrian disciplines, including show jumping, dressage or stock work.

Graduates for sale are on the Trust Facebook site.



Racegoers Christina Elias, Stephanie Buckman and Krystal Raad admire former racehorses Duffield and Larkhill in the Rosehill betting ring. **Picture: Simon Bullard**