

# Mohawk plays host harness horse youth camp



Photos by GRAHAM PAINE

Cassandra Chornoboy takes the reigns of 'Sweet Karen' with Hall of Fame driver Ron Waples (left) and practices putting on her helmet (above) during a recent week-long harness horse youth program at Mohawk Raceway. Safety — as seen below — was a top priority at the camp.

## Local preteen among a dozen participants at week-long camp

Cassandra Chornoboy knows only too well now that harness racing is a great deal more than just horsing around.

As one of a dozen preteen participants in last week's Harness Horse Youth Foundation Summer Camp at Mohawk Racetrack, she got a behind-the-scenes crash course feel for the sport from some of the top trainers and drivers in Canada.

"It was really cool, I learned a lot," said the 11-year-old Rockwood resident and most local member of the group. "The best part was jogging around the track."

Held for the first time in Canada, the introduction to harness racing program offered southern Ontario youths the opportunity to do everything from learning about harness equipment and horse grooming to actually getting in the sulky and racing around the Campbellville oval.

They did so under the watchful eye of renowned horsemen like Hall of Fame driver Ron Waples and well known area trainer/driver Bill Sharp — who seemed to get as much of a kick out of the program as its young pupils.

Said Sharp, "The kids really enjoyed it, you could see it in their eyes. When they sat in the cart for the first time, they were grinning from ear to ear."

The Harness Horse Youth Foundation Summer Camp program began in the United States in 1999 and has grown steadily ever since, with support for this year's local camp coming from a number of horse racing associations as well as volunteers, trainers, drivers and grooms.

To be eligible to participate, campers had to write a 250-word essay entitled 'The Wind In My Hair, The Pounding of Hooves — Why I Want to Feel the Thrill of Driving a Race Horse.'

Approximately 150 youngsters have attended the various camps since the program began, many of whom have remained involved in the sport to some degree after graduating.

"More than 50 per cent of them have stuck with racing in some way, whether it's actually getting their family involved in buying horses, going to the races more, or deciding that they want to work in racing when they grow up," said Ellen Taylor, the executive director of the program.



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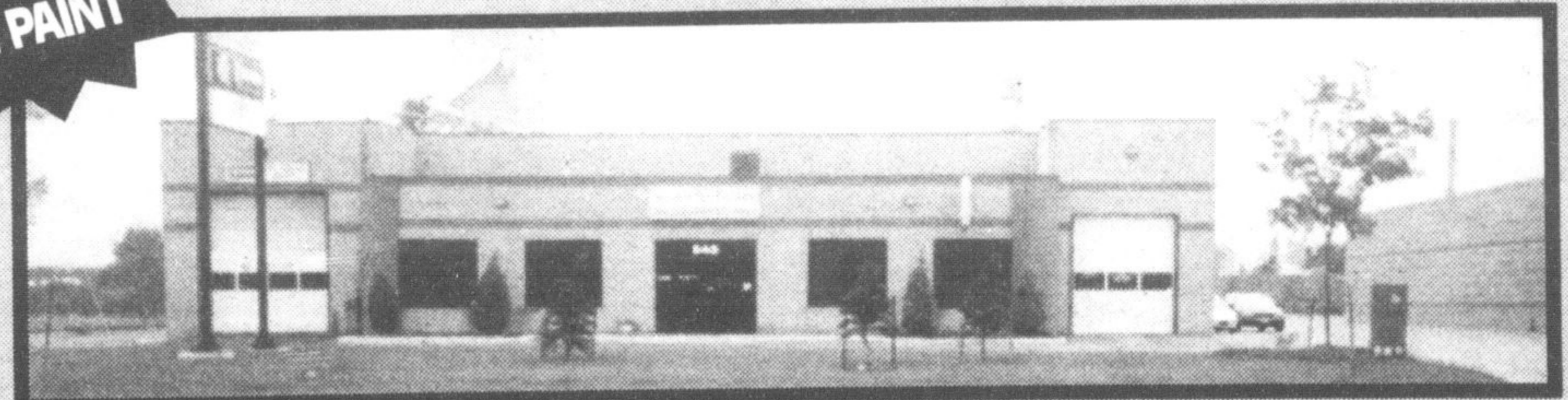


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