

Local members of horse racing industry helping victims of devastating track fire

By **RICHARD VIVIAN**
The Champion

The local horse industry is pulling together to aid those who suffered losses during the recent fire at Woodbine Racetrack that killed 31 horses and destroyed two barns.

Heading the local efforts is a \$35,000 donation to the Barn Seven Relief Fund from the thoroughbred breeders at Sam-Son Farms. It will assist trainers, groomers and hotwalkers who have lost work due to the fire.

The donation represents 10 per cent of their winnings from this past weekend's Breeders' Stake race at Woodbine. Two horses from the farm finished strongly in the race, with Portcullis taking first and Mountain Beacon claiming third.

"Right off the bat, we were going to contribute (to the fund) then we thought it would be nice to give a good feeling on the day (Breeders' Stake)," said Tammy Samuel-Balaz, Sam-Son Farms president and general manager. "We thought it would give people something else to cheer for."

Had their horses finished well or not, the farm was preparing to contribute to the fund — promising at least \$10,000 prior to the race.

"We did better in the race, therefore we were able to contribute more than the \$10,000," Ms Samuel-Balaz continued.

"We're so lucky that our horses weren't directly affected, but it could have just as easily been ours. At a time like this, any of

us which were lucky enough to have escaped it (fire), we can't be a part of racing without thinking about all the sadness and all the losses of other people."

Compassion for those who have suffered also flows from local standardbred breeders — though those most effected by the fire are from the thoroughbred industry.

Glengate Farms Manager Dough Nash told *The Champion* his facility also intends to contribute to the fund.

"We will make a contribution from our farm to assist them, just as they would if we were in trouble," the standardbred breeder said.

"In 1992, we had a barn fire up here at Mohawk (Raceway) and horses were lost. We've all suffered losses at one time or another."

In addition to donations from several area farms, local breeders are also contributing to the fund through their partici-

pation in the Ontario Harness Horsemen Association and the Horsemen Protective and Benevolent Association.

"The horse community is very resilient. They live with these horses and not only are they a means of employment, they're more of a way of life than anything else," said Mr. Nash. "The whole horse community just pulls together and supports each other."

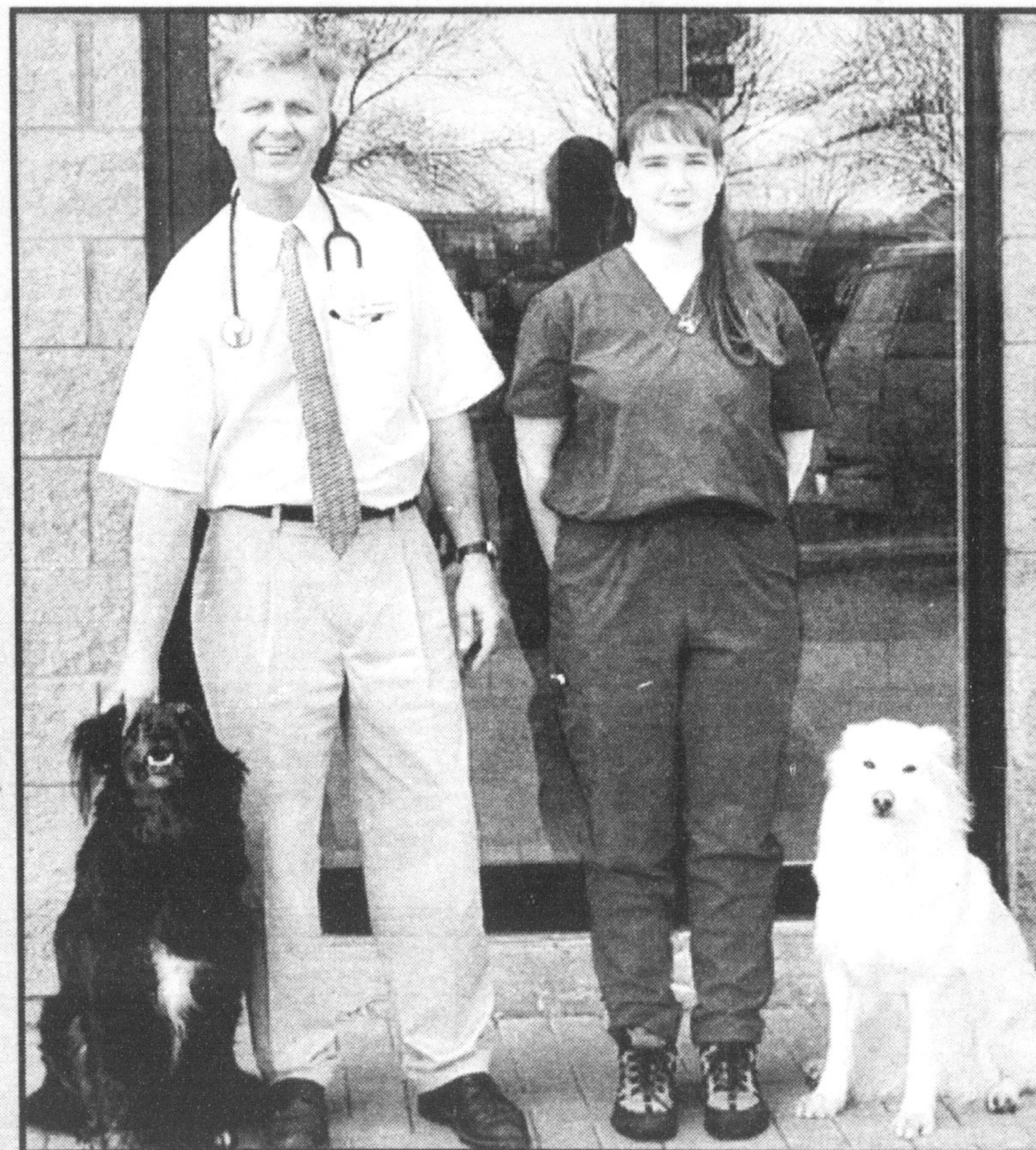
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