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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Prairie Meadows Inducts Derron Heldt, Lamont Marks, and Tom Benjamin into Hall of Fame

August 24 – Altoona, IA. Prairie Meadows recently honored three longtime racing department employees. Vice President of Racing Derron Heldt, Track Superintendent Lamont Marks, and Starter Tom Benjamin were inducted into the Prairie Meadows Hall of Fame on Friday, August 10.

“I am sincerely flattered to be recognized by Prairie Meadows for my contributions to the racing operation. My crew and I have always done our best to give the horsemen a safe and fair racetrack,” said Marks.

A native of St. Louis, Marks worked in a number of maintenance positions at Prairie Meadows before earning a promotion to Track Superintendent in 2002. By age 13, Marks was making his way to the backside of Cahokia Downs racetrack. He began walking horses there in the mornings before school to earn lunch money. After graduating from East St. Louis Senior High School and Southern Illinois University, Marks went on to work a number of jobs, but he was always thinking of returning to horse racing.

“One day my brother called me about a broodmare in foal that he felt we should purchase. This horse purchase began the road back to the racetrack for me,” said Marks.

This road eventually led to Prairie Meadows and blossomed into a 25-year career.

Heldt has been active in the racing industry since early childhood. He worked with race horses on his parents' farm in Nebraska. Heldt graduated from the University of Nebraska, Lincoln with a B.A. in agriculture. Throughout his extensive racing career, Derron has served in numerous capacities as a racing official at Oaklawn Park, Ak-Sar-Ben, Canterbury Downs, Lincoln State Fair, and Columbus Race Course. Heldt has been with Prairie Meadows since 1997.

Benjamin was born into a horse racing family and was introduced to the racing industry early in life by his father. Benjamin trained horses at several racetracks throughout the Midwest and Canada. He performed many jobs and duties, but working at the starting gate was his passion. Benjamin has been with Prairie Meadows since the racetrack's opening in 1989. He began as an assistant starter and was promoted to the official starter in 1996.

“I am grateful for all the help and support Prairie Meadows' management, the horsemen, and all my assistant starters have shown over the years,” said Benjamin.

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About Prairie Meadows

Prairie Meadows began operations as a nonprofit organization in 1989 with the goal of promoting economic development, jobs, agriculture, and tourism in the state of Iowa. Through taxes, grants, and charitable donations, Prairie Meadows has given more than \$1.73 billion to the state of Iowa. Prairie Meadows offers nearly 1,800 slot machines, table games, live and simulcast racing, hotel accommodations, entertainment, and more.

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