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## Donor Profile: Ilona S. English, WEV '77, GFA '88

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## Ilona S. English, WEV'77, GFA'88

BY JANE SIMONE

**A** torrential downpour, a lame horse and a dynamic personality all combined to set in motion an important initiative for New Bolton Center in late spring of 2008. Ilona English, breeder and owner of Summit Sporthorses and Sportponies in Ringoes, New Jersey, brought one of her Oldenburg horses to New Bolton Center for a lameness evaluation. Just as she arrived, the heavens opened and the rain was so heavy that it was impossible to evaluate the horse out of doors. The alternative was to impose on one of New Bolton Center's generous neighbors, Vince Dugan, and do the evaluation in his indoor facility.

Ilona, who has been a New Bolton Center client and supporter since 1995, is a woman with a can-do attitude and tremendous vision. A multi-talented graduate of Penn's

“My late father always instilled in me the concept of “giving something back.” He said it didn't matter if it's time or money and the amount isn't important—just look for opportunities to make a difference.”

Wharton School and School of Design, Ilona cares deeply about her animals and wants only the best for them. The frustrating experience with her horse on a very wet day compelled her to inquire as to why New Bolton Center lacks a covered performance evaluation facility and what could be done to rectify this situation. Such a structure has been a long-time goal of Penn Vet's large animal campus, but because of other pressing clinical, teaching and research needs has not topped the priority list for funding.

With characteristic zeal and great generosity, Ilona provided initial funding for a feasibility study to determine the scope of a covered performance evaluation facility and over the months has continued to be involved in the study's progress within New Bolton Center's master plan for an expanded and refurbished large animal hospital. Construction must meet established University of Pennsylvania standards for both site preparation and building materials and Ilona has reviewed plans and suggested ideas for helping to make such a facility more eco-friendly. The indoor arena on her farm in New Jersey incorporates solar panels (providing all of the farm's



electricity needs plus additional income from solar credits); underground cisterns capture rainwater runoff used to water the arena footing and surrounding planting; and specially designed screens protect against extremes of heat and cold, while providing a well-ventilated environment for horses and riders. The NBC Performance Evaluation facility will offer the opportunity to incorporate several such green concepts.

Having this on-site facility immediately adjacent to Widener Hospital will reduce the stress to horses and owners who come to NBC, while making more efficient use of staff and student time; thus meeting the criteria that Ilona and her husband Terry, also a Wharton graduate set for their charitable donations. The structure solves several immediate deficiencies and also provides an ongoing benefit that serves many purposes, now and into the future. Ilona has, therefore, committed a large percentage of the initial funding. Approximately \$300,000 will still be needed to complete the building, which will form part of the projected new Performance Evaluation/Outpatient Facility. The new facility will house special procedure spaces, research space and a sophisticated farrier clinic, as well as holding stalls and a smaller covered exercise space and trot-up aisle.

Ilona is a thoughtful and concerned individual who wants to see her gifts to Penn Vet used wisely and in the best interest of equine patients, clients, faculty and students. She enjoys being involved in the projects she supports, and sincerely hopes her support will serve as a catalyst that sparks the generosity of others. She is indeed a new age donor. We salute her for her deep commitment and genuine caring and look forward with great anticipation to the completion of a much-needed building on New Bolton Center's campus that will benefit our patients and our gifted faculty.

We invite you to join Ilona in raising the funds needed for the Indoor Performance Evaluation Center and to be part of the celebration that will surely take place when it is done! Every donation, regardless of the amount, allows the donor to become a part of this facility. 🍷