

## Group seeks to end greyhound racing worldwide

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**By Laura Krantz/Daily News staff**

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ARLINGTON — Five years after toppling the greyhound racing industry in Massachusetts, a grassroots nonprofit has taken its mission worldwide.

Grey2K, known in the Bay State for the 2008 ballot question that shuttered Massachusetts greyhound race tracks, this weekend officially changed its name to Grey2K USA Worldwide, a reflection of work its members are doing with animal rights groups as far away as Australia and Guam.

"Dog racing is ending, but we would like to help the dogs get out of it faster," said Grey2K President Christine Dorchak said.

The organization recently moved from a cramped office in Somerville to a sunny, spacious one in Arlington. In that office, Dorchak this week told the tale of Grey2K's evolution from a naïve nonprofit to an internationally known group that has helped topple a deep-seated industry nationwide.

On the wall in Grey2K's new office hangs a sign from the Wonderland dog track. It is a testament to its work and a reminder of the days when Dorchak thought stopping dog racing was as simple as rallying outside Wonderland every weekend with costumes and banners.

Now, armed with a law degree and volumes of records about injured and mistreated dogs, Dorchak, with help from her staff, aid likeminded groups in other countries.

Greyhound racing originated in the United States and spread.

"We want the other countries to follow us in a different way and get rid of it," Dorchak said.

Dorchak learned the power of public records and research in her fight against Massachusetts track owners. The organization takes the same data-driven approach in other states.

Last month Grey2K issued a report about greyhound racing in West Virginia. The report says that in the past five and a half years, West Virginia tracks reported 4,796 greyhound injuries. In all, 289 greyhounds died or were euthanized.

It also documents the sport's shrinking profit margins. Between 2008 and 2012 the amount gambled on live greyhound racing in West Virginia declined by 37 percent.

The organization sees the same trend nationwide.

When Grey2K formed in 2001, there were 49 dog tracks in the United States, including one in Guam. Now there are 21 in seven states, according to the group's own figures.

It all started with Massachusetts, they say, the first state to outlaw greyhound racing. New Hampshire and Rhode Island followed shortly afterward.

Grey2K credits its success in Massachusetts in part to partnerships with prominent state and national groups, such as the Massachusetts Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals.

"They are the leaders on this issue and we feel confident that they will work just as effectively and with as much tenacity to stop greyhound racing in countries across the world as they worked to do so in the Commonwealth," the MSPCA'S Director of Advocacy Kara Holmquist said in a statement.

Still, greyhound advocates aren't without opposition. The Massachusetts tracks' closings also cut short a way of life for many and embittered breeders and track owners who still attempt to stop Grey2K's work.

Florida has 13 greyhound racing facilities, the most of any state. Grey2K, along with track owners, are lobbying there for legislation that would untie dog racing from other types of gambling.

Dog racing is a money pit, but Florida laws require it in order for facilities to offer other types of gambling. A report commissioned by the Florida legislature and released this year said greyhound racing facilities in 2012 lost a combined \$35 million on racing.

Grey2K members in 2012 took their first trip abroad, to the United Kingdom. They are working on a report about the downsides of dog racing with the England-based group the League Against Cruel Sports.

They also helped end racing in Guam and prevented it from coming to South Africa, Dorchak said.

Her philosophy is to provide guidance to local organizations using what they learned during their fight in Massachusetts and elsewhere in the United States.

Grey2K is a 501(c)4 group with an annual budget of around \$400,000. It is funded by private donations.

Jeroen van Kernebeek, a new Australian director at Grey2K, in an interview this week talked about the robust greyhound racing and breeding operations in Australia. Sponsors such as Schweppes lend the sport legitimacy, he said.

Van Kernebeek is working with a group commissioned by the country's parliament to investigate the largely self-regulated industry.

There are around 75 tracks in Australia, he said. About 20,000 dogs are bred to export every year. He said racing in Australia hasn't been challenged like it has in the U.S.

Grey2K's mission there is to have a consistent voice for dogs. Local groups tend to focus on adoption and have little money.

"We need a group there that can help the local groups," Dorchak said.

Approximately eight other countries have commercial greyhound racing, she said. Many other countries have underground versions of the sport. Vietnam appears to be on the verge of expanding its industry, she said.

While Grey2K is in the business of lobbying governments to stop greyhound racing, the local greyhound adoption organization Greyhound Friends has a different mission.

The Hopkinton organization works with tracks to import greyhounds from the racing world to be adopted by loving pet owners.

Director Louise Coleman has also traveled abroad for greyhounds.

Coleman travels to Ireland annually to raise awareness among Irish that greyhounds make good pets. Much like pit bulls in the U.S., greyhounds in Ireland have a reputation for being dangerous.

Coleman said she worries about what happens to dogs when tracks close suddenly. She doesn't want the dogs to be abandoned, or the racing breed to die out.

Any laws that end racing should include provisions to ensure dogs are safely transferred to good homes, she said.

"Whatever the status of racing or non-racing our concern is what will happen with the dogs both individually and as a breed and we're as active as possible to help dogs," Coleman said.

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