



THE UNITED STATES PONY CLUBS, INC. PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – PHOTOS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

Press Contact: Sarah Evers Conrad, communications@ponyclub.org

Pony Club: ponyclub.org | (859) 254-7669

2023 USPC Championships East Celebrates Teamwork, Leadership, and Horsemanship

August 31, 2023 (Lexington, KY) — The 2023 USPC Championships East took over the grounds at Tryon International Equestrian Center in Mill Spring, N.C., for four days of competition and camaraderie while members focused on their horse management and riding skills. The United States Pony Clubs, Inc. (USPC or Pony Club) competitions follow a unique format as competitors compete on a team and are judged on how well they care for their horses (horse management), in addition to how they score during a ride. In addition, the discipline of Quiz is offered, which allows unmounted competitors in a five-phase discipline to showcase their equine knowledge as a team. This focus on teamwork and horse care teaches Pony Club members to become excellent all-around equestrians who can provide the highest care for their mounts while learning life skills, such as leadership, teamwork, sportsmanship, organization, and much more.

The event brought more than 360 competitors together representing 23 Pony Club regions from around the country to compete in Dressage, Western Dressage, Eventing, Mounted Games, Quiz, Show Jumping, and Tetrathlon. But what makes the competition truly stand out is the dedication and support from the large number of volunteers, Pony Club leaders, parents, and friends who showcase the love within the Pony Club community. Talk to any volunteer, leader, member, or parent about what Pony Club means to them or their child and you will understand what a special organization it is.

“Each year, USPC Championships offers the ultimate experience in competition for Pony Club competitors to show their mettle as they compete with their fellow teammates,” said Teresa Woods, Executive Director of the United States Pony Clubs. “But what sets USPC Championships apart from any other competition is that focus on horse management, and seeing all of the members carefully caring for their mounts and working together as a team. It warms the heart while really showcasing how unique Pony Club is as an equestrian organization. Our focus on education is what make USPC Championships, and also USPC certifications, really special within the horse community.”

The event kicked off with competitor packet pickup, which featured numerous goodies from event sponsors; then discipline briefings from each discipline’s leaders; horse inspections; three days of competition; and barn night checks at the end of each day, which is just one of the moments when members focus on taking care of not only their mount, but also their teammates. Educational workshops were also offered, including an Ask the Judge session for Dressage and Western Dressage, an Eventing cross-country course walk, strategies for Mounted Games play, how to judge horse conformation for Quiz, a Polocrosse discipline demonstration, a shooting clinic for Tetrathlon, and what an equitation judge is looking for in Show Jumping.

“Championships is the only national competition that competitors not only show their skills for their discipline, but show what it takes to be a well-rounded horseperson through Horse Management, which is the core of what Pony Club is,” said Erin Roland, USPC Activities and Events Director. “It is a feat in itself to become eligible for Championships, let alone compete in, not only your discipline, but Horse Management, in addition. All attendees should be extremely proud of their accomplishments. I know I am proud of all our members who attended. Well done to all!”

USPC plans various special events for entertainment of competitors, such as the Opening Ceremonies, where members march in a parade of regions, while many youth carry regional banners, flags, and decorations, and many wear face paint and costumes with their friends to stand out in this super festive event. The competitor party provided a delicious dinner for all participants. The penultimate entertainment was the Saturday Night Lights and Upper-Level Showcase.

Saturday Night Lights, hosted by the Tryon International Equestrian Center, invites the public for free entertainment, such as pony rides, live bands, face painting, performers, and rides on a hand-painted Venetian carousel, and more. Attendees could grab dinner, a carnival-style treat, and enjoy the Upper-Level Showcase, which featured riding demonstrations by upper-level Pony Club members and trivia challenges with Quiz competitors. It’s an honor to be chosen for the Showcase, as Pony Club members must qualify through their certification level. Riders and quiz competitors did not disappoint as they entertained this year’s crowd.

The final event that everyone looks forward to is each discipline’s award ceremony, sponsored by Kentucky Performance Products, where ribbons, prizes, and swag from sponsors are presented to those who accumulated the highest team and individual scores—in both horse management and riding—in their discipline and division. In addition, competitors who achieve outstanding turnout scores are recognized with a special ribbon to wear. During the award ceremony, stable managers were also recognized. Stable Managers play a unique, integral role on a Pony Club team as a non-riding member who helps keep the team working together to provide the best care of horses and equipment throughout the competition.

Special awards include the Margo Leithead Cornerstone Award for Excellence in Horse Management, the Tiny but Mighty Character Award, and the Scandalously DanDee Best-Presented Pair Award. In addition, discipline awards are given to those who complete the requirements of the USPC Breed Recognition Award programs offered by USPC and affiliate breed partners. This year, riders with horses registered with the American Connemara Pony Society, the Arabian Horse Association, and the Thoroughbred Incentive Program (TIP) were recognized for their accomplishments. In the discipline of Eventing, recognition was also provided by the United States Eventing Association (USEA). View overall results and awards from each discipline at the 2023 USPC Championships East [here](#).

The event wouldn’t be possible with USPC’s generous sponsors, including corporate sponsors Kerrits, the official apparel sponsor; Shapley’s, the official grooming products sponsor; The Horse; Triple Crown Feed, the official feed sponsor; Wintec, the official saddle sponsor; and Zoetis, the official equine health and wellness sponsor. USPC Championships East sponsors also include Achieve Equine, Dimples Horse Treats, Dover Saddlery, Dreamers & Schemers, Gore Trailers, HandsOn Gloves, Kentucky Performance Products, the Equine Veterinary Education Program at Lincoln Memorial University, Middle Tennessee Pony Club Fund, Ride EquiSafe, Santa Cruz Animal Health, Shires Equestrian Products and one anonymous sponsor.

Next year’s USPC Championships will take place as part of the USPC Festival, held July 15–22, 2024 at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, Ky. The 2024 event, which also includes educational

opportunities and riding clinics, promises to be extra special since USPC will be celebrating its 70th anniversary. For more information about the 2023 USPC Championships, visit www.ponyclub.org/events/championships, and for more information about the 2024 USPC Festival, visit www.ponyclub.org/events/festival. If you would like to receive information via email about the 2024 USPC Festival, [click here](#).

About The United States Pony Clubs, Inc. — *The United States Pony Clubs, Inc. (USPC or Pony Club) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational organization that builds the foundation of teamwork and sportsmanship through riding, mounted sports, and care of horses and ponies, while developing and enhancing leadership, confidence, responsibility, and a sense of community in its youth and adult members. USPC is proud to offer instruction and competitive opportunities in 11 competitive disciplines through hundreds of clubs and centers across the United States. USPC's educational standards continue to be instrumental in curriculum development for schools, universities, equestrian professionals, and organizations across the United States. Many of the nation's top equestrians, including Olympic team members, as well as successful business professionals and leaders in a variety of fields, have roots in Pony Club. For more information, please visit www.ponyclub.org.*