

The 2023 October USPC Board of Governors meeting was held at the USPC National Office, Lexington, KY.

Upcoming National Events

2024 USPC Convention - Peppermill Reno Resort, January 24-28 in Reno, Nev.

Festival 2024 - Kentucky Horse Park, Lexington, KY, July 15-22.

General Comments

Comments from President Jennifer Sweet

As I reflect on USPC over the last four years I am reminded that several things have pushed us to think and work outside of the comfort zones of the past. Past President Ben Duke's mantra of "Simplify, simplify, simplify," the Covid-19 pandemic and shutdowns that were experienced during 2020 and 2021. Board and Council Committee reorganization, staff responsibilities and changes have all put USPC on what I believe is a trajectory for success. We are looking at things through a different lens and plugging into the fact that "Education" is why we exist, and we are working to make our educational materials and opportunities available to many more members, leaders, and volunteers in many more ways.

During the Program Administration Council (PAC) Meeting, the Instruction Department/Council shared the main objectives used in updating the Standards of Proficiency (SOPs) for the upper levels. President Sweet recommended that the Board of Governors use a similar version of the objectives in their discussions and decisions which were:

1. USPC must be relevant and reflective of today's equestrian world.
2. Education is tested through attainable, focused certifications.
3. Focus is on competency, safety, and leader, member, and volunteer experience.
4. Deliver a consistent and practical approach.

The Club and Regional Ad Hoc Committee recommendations from the May Board of Governors meeting have been reviewed along with comments sent in by members of the Board of Governors, Committee members, and Staff. Below are the four recommendations that Executive Director, Teresa Woods; Committee Chair, Sue Beth Bunn; and President, Jennifer Sweet have identified as obtainable and fitting into the Strategic Plan.

1. Centralized Payment System for clubs and centers.
2. Learning Management System.
3. Direct Membership.
4. Developing benchmarks to identify the health of a region.

Centralized Payment System: The Ad Hoc committee recommended that USPC create a central system that allows members to directly make payments online for club/center/regional fees and events, allowing a way for

DC and Treasurer to have access to data as to who has signed up and for what. We have a new Technology Infrastructure Advancement Committee that will work on and explore the feasibility of this recommendation.

Learning Management System: The Ad Hoc committee recommended that USPC create an online interactive program that is engaging as well as educational. Interaction with the program is designed to engage and introduce nonmembers to USPC as an educational resource for equine knowledge, a revenue source to USPC, further establishing USPC as an educational leader in the industry, as well as an enhancement to the experience of membership. The LMS is something that we are already looking at via All Pony. It could make the second part of the committee's recommendation of being a part of a virtual educational program, by creating a virtual D-1 HM certificate for virtual members. A series of educational modules to be completed online followed by an online test that is submitted to the national office. It is recommended that this certification be adapted to the ability to evaluate HM knowledge (not skills) virtually. Additionally, the creation of a virtual membership and the creation of virtual D-1 HM certification will allow these members to achieve the first certification in USPC. With the potential growth of virtual membership, USPC may want to explore creating a virtual HM path for members who may never have access to an actual mount, and/or a more expanded certification path for those not readily able to access in-person certifications.

Direct USPC Membership: The Ad Hoc committee recommended that USPC membership be applied for directly to USPC.

Background - Currently USPC membership is driven by the District Commissioners recruitment and the availability of a geographically local club to a potential member. The growth of USPC membership is too heavy of a burden to be the responsibility of a local volunteer. Growth of membership is potentially being hindered by a local DC's lack of ability to organize more programming for more members and/or lack of enough current local clubs to capture new members.

- By having new members directly join USPC, they gain access to national information about the organization and educational material immediately. The national office can guide them to a local club nearest them if that is the path they choose to take. Membership establishes a relationship with the national organization from the start and then potentially a club and region later. In addition to creating additional opportunities for joining, this also connects members directly and first with the amazing resources available from the national organization.
- By having members join a club after they have first joined directly to USPC means members needing background checks and safety training will come to a club already compliant.
- Potentially parents of minor members will already have safety training and in some cases background checks, both of which alleviate the task of following up and chasing down these matters from the club/center leader before joining a club.

On Sunday morning Committee Chair, Sue Beth Bunn discussed the recommendation. The National Office has been working on this recommendation if it comes to fruition.

Region Benchmarks: From the committee’s report: USPC needs to effectively evaluate regions against a standard of benchmarks to determine their health. We will be asking the Regional Administration to put together benchmarks for a healthy Region. By evaluating each region that is falling short of these standards separately and finding the barriers that these regions are uniquely experiencing we can then help those regions create solutions including the possible combining with nearby regions, to provide a better experience for our members, leaders, and volunteers.

Thank you to Erin Roland, the new Activities and Event Director, for the incredible job of leading a team made up of new and old leaders, volunteers, and staff who gave the USPC membership an awesome 2023 Championships East experience at the Tryon International Equestrian Center in Mill Springs, NC.

Thank you to USPC’s talented and dedicated staff who support our members, the Pony Club brand, its programs, and volunteers.

Comments from Executive Director Teresa Woods

The months following the May board meeting were eventful for USPC volunteers and the national office team. In addition to organizing USPC Championships East, work on the new website has continued at a fast pace; a new regional fundraising campaign launched; and a review and revision of the Standards of Proficiency is complete with a new standard for Western Dressage developed.

National office staff and volunteers attended several outreach events; updates for the online year-end reporting requirements for all clubs/regions are now complete; data was evaluated, members surveyed, and focus groups formed to identify strengths, weaknesses, and threats to the current structure of the USPC Championship/Festival program, while also identifying opportunities for member engagement and experience at the local and regional level.

Report from the Treasurer/Finance Committee

The Board approved the 2024 Operating Budget.

Report of VP of Instruction

The Board approved the changes to the Standards of Proficiency for the H-B, H-A, C-2 to A Eventing, C-3 to A Show Jumping, D-2 to C-2 Dressage, D-2 to C-2 Western. In addition, the new Western Dressage Standards of Proficiency were approved by the Board.

The Visiting Instructors program has suffered due to not enough upper level members applying. The pandemic caused the program to be canceled for two years. To help increase the number of upper level members applying

we have increased advertising and on social media along with the Board of Governors approving the increased amount that Visiting Instructors would receive. Twelve requests were sent in for visiting instructors in 2023 and only three spots were filled. The Board approved that the program be discontinued, and the Visiting Instructor Committee be dissolved.

Report of VP of Activities

The 2023 Championships East were held at the Tryon International Equestrian Center, July 26-30 with 371 competitors. The information booth was more staff-driven and there was a centralized coach check-in managed by Alyssa Sands and Melanie Stewart. This shift in responsibilities allowed the discipline organizers and Horse Management (HM) Staff to focus on competitors and preparations for the competition.

2024 USPC Festival Championships – The dates have been confirmed with the Kentucky Horse Park for July 15-22 with entries opening on May 1 and closing on June 24. Dressage, Eventing, Polocrosse, Mounted Games, Show Jumping, Tetrathlon, and Western Dressage will run concurrently July 15–19 at the Kentucky Horse Park along with Open Gymkhana and Trail competitions. Planning has begun with the Instruction Department on logistics and the Marketing Department regarding promotions not only for the USPC Festival but to also include USPC’s 70th Anniversary celebrations. The Guidebook will be brought back for the 2024 USPC Festival. Some organizers for Championships have been confirmed and calls will begin in December.

2025 and Future Championships – A Championship Focus Group was established after the May Board of Governors meeting to evaluate moving Championships from a yearly model (two locations for two years, third-year Festival at the Kentucky Horse Park) to an every-other-year model (Festival every other year at the Kentucky Horse Park). The Championships Focus Group gathered data and analytically evaluated various areas and aspects of Championships such as:

- Finances
- Members
- Experience
- Demographics
- Competitions/Rallies
- Championships/Competitions/Festival Survey

Only two years over the past six (including 2023) Championships Central/West locations have earned revenue. USPC has been conscientious of expenses and has cut back on awards, volunteer staff, and any other areas necessary to keep Championships within budget. East Championships has declined gradually but income plummeted in 2022 with inflation contributing to rising costs.

In mid-September, USPC sent out an email regarding participation in Championships, Rallies, and Festival. This is an overall analysis of the survey:

Our membership is attending rallies and earning eligibility toward championships; however, more members are choosing not to come to Championships mainly due to finances, and scheduling/dates, among others. Most members do not come to Championships year after year and plan to come when the location is at the Kentucky Horse Park, particularly because the Festival Education is a highlight after Championships.

Members who do not want to come to Championships, are missing programs to make them feel included at the national level. Parents are apprehensive about sending their members to Championships due to high-stress environments, finances, and the time it takes to travel.

Leaders are asking for guidance and help on rallies, and fear for the longevity of the organization if no change is brought forward.

If the restructuring of the Championships rotation is approved, new programs (Virtual Competitions and the USPC Points Program) can be implemented designed to support USPC's flexibility and sustainability as an organization as well as USPC's core value in education while getting members engaged.

The Board approved the restructuring of the Championship's current rotation to a Festival two-year cyclical rotation at the Kentucky Horse Park & approved two new programs, the USPC Points Program and Virtual Competitions.

Rulebook Updates

USPC has been looking at aligning our rulebooks with competition governing bodies to foster sustainability and flexibility between USPC and outside competition organizations.

Show Jumping - The names of the USPC divisions do not accurately reflect what the current divisions are in the Show Jumping world. The proposed name changes were approved by the Board:

- Intermediate Jumpers changed to 0.75m Jumpers
- Novice Jumpers changed to 0.85m Jumpers
- Pony Jumpers changed to 0.95m Pony Jumpers
- Low changed to 0.95 Jumpers
- Medium changed to 1.05m Jumpers
- High changed to 1.15m Jumpers

Polocrosse – The names of the USPC divisions do not accurately reflect the governing body of the American Polocrosse Association (APA). The following changes were approved by the Board:

- Walk-Trot changed to E Grade Novice changed to D Grade
- Intermediate changed to C Grade Advanced changed to A/B Grade

In addition, the USPC Polocrosse Rulebook will align more closely with the APA rulebook.

International Exchanges and Special Opportunities

2023 International Mounted Games Exchange – Danica Heeter, Lara Hubner, and Becky Smith will be traveling to Australia from November 7-19 for the Mounted Games Exchange and will be on a scramble team with New Zealand. This is a wonderful opportunity to show ambassadorship along with building relationships among countries.

2023 International Virtual Quiz – Australia is hosting the exchange on December 2.

2024 International Quiz Exchange – USPC is hosting the exchange in July 2024 during the USPC Festival.

The Special Opportunities Committee reviewed and updated the information in the International Exchanges Handbook regarding all international exchanges, which includes virtual exchanges.

Report of the VP of Regional Administration

The USPC Regional Administration Leadership Education Outreach program currently has new material that is more compatible with online outreach than face-to-face delivery as former materials still need to be reviewed and updated. In 2024, a schedule of regular Zoom educational/support sessions is being considered with limited sessions for regional leadership along with opportunities for all region and local leaders anticipated regularly.

Compliance currently experiences the typical pattern of completion rates at this time of year. Typically, it will increase between now and the beginning of 2024 as new leaders are identified. Since SafeSport™ Trained Core Course is required by all sports national governing bodies, we find it interesting and share-worthy that USPC volunteers have completed their training through many other organizations in addition to the US Equestrian Federation (USEF). These include American Youth Soccer Organization Archery, USA Cycling, USARS - USA Roller Sports, USA Swimming, USA Track and Field, USA Waterski & Wake Sports, US Gymnastics, US Hockey, US Polo Assn., US Rowing, US Soccer, and US Tennis Assn.

The Regional Resource Committee (RRC) focused its initial efforts on a review of the 2022 year-end summary information submitted by all Regions in the following areas – administration, member activities, and instruction. Each committee member initiated contact with their assigned Regional Supervisor in an effort to serve as a national-level representative to support them in their role.

The year-end reporting process for clubs, centers, and regions is underway. For clubs/centers, the deadline is November 15, and for regions, the deadline is November 30.

Regional Administration is preparing to transition to a new Vice President of Regional Administration (VPRA). Following the Board meeting, training of the new VPRA will begin so that they can be included in the USPC Convention education plans, general Regional Administration issues, and ongoing projects.

National Youth Board (NYB) Report

NYB member, Caroline Gibson, visited the Interscholastic Equestrian Association (IEA) National Western Finals in Fort Worth, TX in June to promote Pony Club.

NYB members Jocelyn Hunt and Lydia Eilinger attended the 2023 East Championships and acted as color guards during the opening ceremonies.

NYB Committee Updates

Marketing and Communications Committee – The committee has been actively providing content on social media after implementing a participation requirement that requires them to submit four items of content for marketing, two per year of their term. The “What is Pony Club” Ad Hoc Committee was absorbed by the Marketing Committee which has been actively contacting past NYB members, alumni, and other members to carefully craft a statement document that details what Pony Club has meant/means to the members, and what it has provided them with on personal and professional levels. The committee is looking to revive the Pin Promise by creating a special “Pin Promise Pin” that would be submitted showing that members/alumni were wearing their USPC pin during Pony Club activities.

Member Affairs & Networking Committee – The Committee began a History of the NYB project and then ran into some issues causing slow progress. The committee decided to refocus its efforts on a more tangible outcome and has decided to work on the website to create an NYB member display which has been completed and is currently waiting on approval to be added to the website.

Service Committee – The committee has spent the last several months investigating service projects during the 2024 USPC Convention in Reno, NV. They contacted the Bureau of Land Management and the National Forest Service but neither had a suitable project. The committee was successful in contacting the Reno City Parks and Recreation Management staff and is in the process of organizing a day of service in several of the community spaces that are key to the social engagement and health of the Reno area.

Regional Youth Board (RYB) Committee – The committee has finalized the brochure for websites and regional leaders which discusses the benefits of RYBs along with information to form one. A guide on how to start an RYB and a list of potential activities and structures are being developed.

Pony Club International Alliance Report (PCIA) Report

The PCIA Youth Council (YAC) was invited to attend the May PCIA Board meeting. YAC has social media accounts on Facebook and Instagram - @ponyclubinternational, which is intended to reach members and encourage PCIA countries to post. They are currently working on the following documents: Membership Initiative, Governance Document, and Looking at the Rotation of roles.

During the USPC Festival, the PCIA will host the first in-person meeting since 2018.

2023 Virtual and In-Person Exchanges

Virtual Show Jumping – The competition took place during September and October with the Australian Pony Club hosting.

International Mounted Games – The competition will be hosted by the Australian Pony Club November 8-19.

Virtual Quiz - Hosted by Pony Club United Kingdom (PCUK) on December 2

2024 Virtual and In-Person Exchanges

International Quiz Exchange – will be hosted by USPC during the USPC Festival.

International Tetrathlon Exchange – will be hosted by PCUK and the Irish Pony Club from July 27 – August 10.

International Mounted Games – Hosted by the Canadian Pony Club with dates to be announced.

Inter-Pacific – Will be hosted by the Australian Pony Club. They are considering the months of July or September for the competition.

Virtual Dressage – This will be hosted by USPC and the Hong Kong Pony Club in September/October. **Virtual Show Jumping** - Dates to be determined.

Information Technology (IT) Department

Textedly, the new texting platform was used for the 2023 Championships East at the Tyron International Equestrian Center. Though there were a few minor glitches on the first day of use, the platform performed better than expected.

The IT Department investigated several phone service providers that are cloud-based and have entered negotiations with RingCentral. With it being a cloud-based system, there will be no on-perm hardware – no more paying to reboot servers and phones being offline. The new system will be installed in the first week of December. RingCentral allows USPC to remove the need for Zoom conference contracts and also allows USPC to integrate mass-texting without another party.

New Website Development – The new Content Management System (CMS) is working with some minor styling issues that will need to be addressed. With minimal coding, we can now build pages with great new mobile-optimized layouts.

The new website is scheduled to launch in March/April 2024. The IT Department will continue to meet monthly with our developers at the United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) and will continue monthly throughout the launch of the website and beyond.

Board Committee Highlights

Safety: The Marketing & Communications Department asked the Safety Committee to write articles on different Safety topics for the Pony Club Blog. Eight articles written by committee members have been completed.

Tozuda Impact Indicators – Jessie Garcia, CEO and founder approached the Safety Committee about her product. It is an impact indicator light that is attached to a helmet and if the light goes off, then the person should be evaluated for a possible concussion. At this time, the committee has referred Tozuda to work with the helmet manufacturers and with ASTM to test their products as most helmet manufacturers will void any warranties if a foreign object is placed on the helmet.

Marketing & Communications: USPC was a top finalist in the American Horse Publications Equine Industry Vision Award and though we did not win, they encouraged USPC to enter again with the 70th anniversary next year, we think we have a chance of winning.

Young Rider Partnership – Through the partnership, USPC staff and volunteers had articles published in Young Rider Magazine on Wound Care, Halter Fit, and Prepping for a Horse Show. They will be publishing an article about Pony Club membership in early 2024. During Breyerfest, Young Rider placed USPC promotional material in their booth and reported they were popular among attendees. USPC also has a social media post swap with Young Rider magazine, which will help us market to their audience.

Development: The Regional Challenge Campaign kicked off on September 15 and concludes on December 4. This year the goal is \$60,000 and as of November 21, 2023, the challenge has reached \$41,207.

The 2023 Annual Fund goal is \$284,000 and as of October 10, the Annual Fund has reached \$126,446.

There was a total of 31 completed college scholarship applications received with all seven scholarships awarded to deserving Pony Club members.

Thank you to our 2023 Corporate Sponsors:

- Wintec Saddles and Accessories
- Kerrits Activewear
- Shapley's Grooming Products
- Triple Crown Nutrition
- Zoetis Equine
- The Horse

2024 USPC Convention Sponsors (to date):

Title Sponsor – Via Nova Training

Anatomy Lab Sponsor – Banixx Horse & Pet Care

Coffee Break Sponsor – Pressure Proof Coaching Academy -Daniel Stewart

Horse Management Hands-On Room – Kentucky Equine Research

Portfolio Sponsors – Banixx, Dressage4Kids, and Otterbein University

Research Project Fair Sponsors – Grayson-Jockey Club Research Foundation and Kentucky Equine Research

Leadership Training – Mattingley Leadership Training Fund

Pony Paddock Sponsors – Arabian Horse Youth Association and Santa Barbara Polo Club & Racquet Club
National Youth Congress Sponsor – Western & English Sales Association
Tote Bag Sponsor – Ram Tap Horse Park

The 2024 USPC Convention local organizing committee (specifically the workshop committee) is working hard to secure sponsorships for all the workshops. Workshop Sponsors (to date):

Shelia Larsen
Lone Tree Farm & Friends
An Anonymous Donor
Zoetis
Wintec
Triple Crown
Shapley's Grooming Products
American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP)
Santa Ynez Valley Hounds
Santa Barbara Polo & Racquet Club
The Interactive Wild Horse Experience
Gold Country Pony Club
USPC Special Opportunities Committee

Strategic Planning: Meeting goals in the Strategic Plan is well underway. Here are some examples:

- New website creation is a prime example
- Developed and continues to expand hybrid models for meetings, training, and competition.
- Educational materials are being evaluated and upgraded to reflect the current equestrian world
- Organizational Model ad hoc committee results

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility (DEIA): USPC has accommodations built into our SOPs. The committee would like to expand the knowledge and understanding of these accommodations. We are looking at what we already have and trying to get some education out to examiners and members so that this accommodation can be requested in a timely manner.

Governance: The new Technology Infrastructure Committee was added to Resolution #9, Standing Committees to the Board of Governors.

The Board approved the edits/clarifications to ByLaws for The United States Pony Clubs.

For the most updated policies, procedures, and By-Laws, click [here](#).

Report of the USPC Convention Committee

The 2024 USPC Convention will be held at the Peppermill Reno Resort, January 24-28 in Reno, Nev.