



The 2024 USPC October Board of Governors meeting was held at the National Office in Lexington, Ky.

## **Upcoming National Events**

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2025 USPC Convention - Grand Traverse Resort and Spa, Acme, MI, January 22-26.

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## **General Comments**

### ***Comments from President Jennifer Sweet***

President Sweet acknowledged the efforts of Sandhills Pony Club and the Carolina Region for helping victims of Hurricane Helene. They raised a considerable amount of money, secured significant donations, and helped their community by delivering much-needed supplies to those in need.

After attending the USPC Championships in Tryon for the last two years, President Sweet attended the 2024 USPC Festival at the Kentucky Horse Park for the first time. She acknowledged the coaches, parents, officials, staff, and volunteers who worked to provide an incredible experience for our members.

President Sweet joined the USPC Board of Governors in 2012 and has been part of discussions, decisions, and changes USPC has made in trying to adapt to the world as we know it. The changes in effect were the USPC's Board of Governors' attempt to increase and retain USPC's membership and simplify the jobs of our leadership and retain them. Below is a short list of the changes she remembers over those 12 years:

- Became a cradle to grave organization when we changed age limits
- Integrated Horsemasters members into our regular membership
- Developed new membership categories: National, Online, and Professional
- Added the following disciplines: Hunt Seat Equitation, Western Dressage, and Western.
- Revised rally formats to Standard and Modified to offer more members the opportunity to compete at Championships and to align our age groupings to be more in line with outside organization's competitions
- Began offering new rally opportunities in Gymkhana, Trail, and Western Dressage
- Entered the world of "virtual" competitions
- Revised Championships schedule and location to allow for extra help for clubs and regions in the off years
- Identified Horse Management as our "core activity"
- Renamed Testings to Certifications
- Reviewed and revised Standards of Proficiency and the certification process, making it possible to test portions of tests instead of the whole test at once at local and national levels
- Approved a Horse Management Track only
- Added Background Checks on Board members all the way down to club instructors
- Adopted SafeSport as our Member Protection Training for volunteers and members
- Simplified our policies and procedures by reviewing and revamping them
- Identified and secured a Centralized Financial Reporting System for use by clubs and regions

- Developed a fully mobile website
- Purchased a Learning Management Software program
- Provide ENews to our members and volunteers
- Revamped our Activities & Instruction Committees structure and duties
- Developed leadership training programs
- Simplified club duties and responsibilities
- Making centers members of Regional Councils

USPC has made many positive changes over the past 12 years to make the organization better, but membership continues to decline. USPC is an “Educational Organization” and membership should not dictate the health of the organization. USPC needs to begin exploring, planning, and acting on things it can do outside of increasing membership that the organization could benefit from. USPC has outstanding educational programs and we need to educate outsiders, including schools, colleges, states, and counties about it. USPC’s Horse Management at the upper levels could be considered college-level material.

Currently, President Jennifer Sweet and Executive Director Teresa Woods are investigating firms to help how USPC can market and sell itself. They will bring their findings back to the USPC Board of Governors at the May Board Meeting.

### ***Comments from Executive Director Teresa Woods***

Please welcome two new staff members who joined the USPC National Office team: Meg Finn, who joined USPC in September as the Testing and Instruction Coordinator; and Lizeth Musa, who joined the staff in October as the Administrative and Financial Compliance Coordinator.

The 2024 USPC Festival had its highest participation since 2017, with 723 registrations for Championships and 330 registrations for Education. Most of the feedback received from the post-event survey was positive, but there was also valuable feedback on ways USPC can improve in the future.

USPC also hosted the Pony Club International Alliance during the 2024 Festival. Chairmanship of the alliance rotates every three years among the PCIA nations (Australia, Canada, Ireland, United Kingdom, the United States, South Africa, Hong Kong, and New Zealand) with the baton traditionally passed to the country that hosts the in-person PCIA business meeting. This year, USPC is honored to accept the chairmanship role from Australia for the next three-year term.

The United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) IT Department, which built our database and website and currently hosts our database on its server, will no longer support web development and programming for organizations that are not affiliates of USEF. USPC will be transitioning away from USEF in 2025.

### **Report from the Treasurer/Finance Committee**

The 2025 Operation Budget was approved.

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## **Report of VP of Instruction**

**Examiners Committee Update**—Committee members are looking at late February/early March 2025 to schedule the virtual National Examiners seminar. The pre-test Zoom meetings with Examiners and candidates were well attended.

**National Testing Curricula Committee Update**—The committee is working to update the H-A documents that needed adjusting. H-B documents are finished, and the committee is looking for a new chair.

**Regional Instruction Committee (RIC) Update**—The committee has pivoted from monthly virtual meetings to quarterly meetings, plus a newsletter. The committee is currently looking for new RIC co-chairs. The RIC committee will be meeting on Friday, January 24, during the 2025 USPC Convention, where they will review resources.

**National Youth Congress (NYC) Committee Update**—The National Youth Congress will be held during the 2025 USPC Convention from Thursday evening through Friday to better integrate with the convention. Fees for NYC delegates are increasing from \$200 to \$250, and they will be required to register for the convention and banquet. The committee is seeking recommendations for sponsors for the NYC program, as well as new committee members.

**Horse Management (HM) Committee Update**—The committee is working on a few Horse Management Handbook changes, such as removing the offside billet of an extra western saddle. They are also working on ideas for members who do not have a horse. Two new Provisional Chiefs were approved on the September committee call.

**D-1-C-2 Curricula Committee Update**—The committee checked the new website to identify and fix broken items and links that have now been corrected by the National Office. They are working on developing a teaching toolbox for HM lessons using everyday items (e.g., sticky notes, painter’s tape. etc.). The committee is developing a teaching matrix -Standards of Proficiency, resources, and lesson ideas through the C-2 level.

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## **Report of VP of Activities**

The 2024 USPC Festival had 723 Championship entries, which is the largest since 2017 and the member experience was reported higher than previous Festivals.

The USPC Member Achievement Program will open for sign-up on January 1, 2025. Members can begin recording points upon signing up. For more information about the USPC Member Achievement Program, please click [here](#).

Beginning in 2026, USPC will offer the Starter Level in Eventing during the 2026 USPC Championships at Festival.

Three teams have been invited to the Equestrian Events, Inc. Mounted Games Invitational, which occurs during the Defender Kentucky Three-Day Event. The teams are the Bravacados, Full Throttle, and the Hot Rods.

## 2025 USPC Convention

The USPC Convention will be at the Grand Traverse Resort and Spa, Acme, Mich., January 22–26. Registration opened on October 1 with late registration occurring after January 3, 2025. Please click [here](#) to register or for more information about the 2025 USPC Convention.

## Committee Updates

- Education Committee—All discipline education documents have been reviewed by the Activities Department, and it has been determined that more content is necessary for them to be considered a published document.
- Competitions Committee—The committee reviewed the discipline rulebooks and will be looking over the Quiz questions to make sure they are adjusted for the 2025 competition year. The Board approved rulebook edits, with none undergoing major changes. All edits are either to align USPC with outside organizations, bring procedures closer together for a more streamlined process, or adjust for a better competition experience.
- Special Opportunities Committee—The committee has been working hard to raise funds for the International Exchanges and Special Opportunities Fund along with supporting International Exchanges during the year.

### 2024 In-Person International Exchanges

During the 2024 USPC Festival, USPC hosted the International Quiz Exchanges with teams from The Pony Club (United Kingdom), the Canadian Pony Club, Pony Club Australia, and New Zealand Pony Club. The USPC team members were:

Laura Chin – Eastern Pennsylvania Region  
Anna Jacobs – Midsouth Region  
Mason Konesky – Great Lakes Region  
Lillian Weidner – Virginia Region  
Ann Hill – Team Manager

The International Tetrathlon Exchange took place in Ireland and Great Britain from July 23 through August 8. USPC team members were:

Annie Rogers – Eastern Pennsylvania Region  
Michaela Frye – Midwest Region  
Robin Wherry – Team Manager

The International Mounted Games Exchange was hosted by the Canadian Pony Club from August 28 through September 8. USPC team members were:

Stella Rosen – Sunshine Region  
Mariana Racine – Sunshine Region  
Riley Fitzpatrick – Tri-State Region  
Claire McMillian – Maryland Region  
Laura Gorrell – Team Manager  
Lara Huber – Team Coach

### 2024 Virtual Competition

Pony Club International Alliance (PCIA) Virtual Dressage—230 entries have been submitted from 11 countries. For the first time, USPC has members competing in all divisions.

## **Report of the VP of Regional Administration**

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Healthy Region Project Update—A spreadsheet template was developed to evaluate each region. The evaluation will produce useful data to develop individualized support plans for each region or group of regions to maintain or improve the health of those regions. General training areas that will be useful to all regions will be identified. From that data, the Regional Administration Department will be able to produce material for those areas. The overall steps of the Healthy Region Project are:

- Baseline evaluation indicating the health of the region (based on Healthy Region benchmarks developed in May),
- Targeted training,
- Re-evaluation and continued support, and
- Potential consolidation with another region or regions.

The goal is that this process is helpful and productive for the region in its path to provide the Pony Club program and the best member experiences.

Returning presenter Jay McChord is scheduled to present the Professional Development session during the 2025 USPC Convention on Friday, January 24. His presentation will be on Relevant Leadership - *Leading & Communicating More Effectively in Our Unique Times*.

## **National Youth Board (NYB) Report**

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The NYB has been reviewing and revising its procedures. They have expanded the maximum number of board members from 14 to 16 to begin in 2025. Board members will now have the option to stay on the NYB for a third year and will need to declare this by the time NYB applications are due for new members.

The NYB also updated its Mission Statement, which now states, “It is the mission of the National Youth Board (NYB) to act as a liaison between the youth membership and the Board of Governors of the United States Pony Clubs (USPC) by communicating the needs, ideas, and concerns of the Pony Club youth to governing officers.”

The NYB is working on holding a Youth Summit during the 2025 USPC Convention, which will be for members ages 13–18 years old to provide an introduction to leadership principles, member opportunities, and a forum for youth membership feedback.

### NYB Committee Updates

The NYB Marketing and Communications Committee is revising the Pin Promise with the help of Jocelyn Hunt as she handed out USPC Alumni pins to alumni competing at the MARS Maryland 5\* and 3\*. Alumni pins have also been handed out during the Kentucky Three-Day Event in the past, and it is being considered for a project in 2025.

The Member Affairs and Networking Committee has been actively collaborating to generate innovative ideas for submission to the National Office. The committee has not made progress toward its SMART goal related to horse welfare. Discussions have been ongoing about potential initiatives that would represent NYB and the wider Pony Club, but the committee has struggled to finalize a clear direction. There are plans to discuss these topics during the monthly NYB board meetings/calls.

The Service Committee organized a national fall food drive, which is still ongoing. The Delmarva Region was the first region to participate, and all regions are encouraged to host food drives at any event, such as rallies, camps, clinics, or meetings. The committee is working on the service project that will be during the 2025 USPC Convention in Traverse City, Mich. While the details are still being finalized, potential partners include animal shelters, the Boys and Girls Club, and mental health organizations.

The Regional Youth Board Committee continues to streamline and promote regional youth boards. The goal is to hopefully create strong groups of youth leaders who will serve as role models for younger members as well as to inspire riders in the western and hunter/jumper disciplines to join USPC. The committee finalized revisions to the document, which outlines regional youth board structures and is now available on the website and provides a clear and organized guide for regions to follow. The committee has updated the brochure that raises awareness about establishing youth boards. By strengthening and streamlining regional youth boards, we aim to position USPC as a leader in fostering the next generation of young equestrian role models. There will be a workshop during the 2025 USPC Convention about the structure and importance of regional youth boards.

### Pony Club International Alliance Report (PCIA) Report

USPC hosted the first in-person PCIA meeting in six years during the 2024 USPC Festival. PCIA members from The Pony Club (United Kingdom), the New Zealand Pony Club, the Canadian Pony Club, and Pony Club Australia. At the beginning of the meeting, Pony Club Australia turned over the Secretariat duties to USPC for the next three years. Many topics were covered during the meeting, including horse and rider welfare, land conversation, education, activities beyond competition, international exchanges, and the PCIA Youth Advisory



Council (YAC). The next in-person meeting will be in 2027 and hosted by Pony Club Australia with the New Zealand Pony Club becoming the Secretariat.

## 2025 Virtual and In-Person Exchanges

- The Inter-Pacific Exchange will be hosted by Pony Club Australia sometime in late September/early October.
- International Mounted Games will be hosted by The Pony Club (United Kingdom, July 27–August 10).
- Virtual Show Jumping – New Zealand Pony Club and South African Pony Club will host.
- Virtual Quiz – The Canadian Pony will host in November.
- Virtual Dressage – USPC and the Hong Kong Pony Club will host in May/June.

## Board Committee Highlights

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**Governance:** The Safety Committee submitted proposed changes to Policy 0810, Safety Requirements for Helmets, and Policy 0830, Safety Requirements for Body Protection Vests. The committee reviewed and approved the proposed edits, which the Board approved. Please click [here](#) to view the updated policies

**Safety:** Recently, there have been safety concerns about the use of peacock stirrups. Several articles, including one in [The Chronicle of the Horse](#), have recently been published, and we have received firsthand reports where people (mainly children) have been injured while dismounting. The Safety Committee recommended that peacock stirrups no longer be permitted as there are other safety stirrups available. The Board of Governors approved the decision to no longer permit the use of peacock stirrups, as of January 1, at the October board meeting.

The Safety Handbook was reviewed and revised and will reflect the wording changes made to Policy 0810, Safety Requirements for Helmets, and Policy 0830, Safety Requirements for Body Protection Vests.

**Marketing & Communications:** USPC was promoted at the following events this year:

- Equine Affair Ohio
- Interscholastic Equestrian Association (IEA) Western National Finals
- Retired Racehorse Project's Thoroughbred Makeover
- Western Dressage Association of America World Championship Show (WDAA)
- Liberty Festival
- Defender Kentucky Three-Day Event

Clubs and centers can receive promotional materials, including brochures, discipline rack cards, back issues of the magazine, and prospective member booklets/postcards in a promotional packet upon request (at no cost). Complete the Request for Promotional Materials form to receive materials before your next event. A tabletop display is also available (for a rental fee) by request. Please click [here](#) for information on promotional materials.

**Development:** Thank you to our 2024 Corporate Sponsors:

Shapley's Grooming Products - Official Grooming Product Sponsor  
Triple Crown Nutrition - Official Feed Sponsor  
Wintec - Official Saddle Sponsor  
Kerrits Activewear - Official Apparel Sponsor  
Zoetis Equine – Official Equine Health and Wellness Sponsor

The Regional Challenge Campaign kicked off on September 17 and runs through December 6. The goal of the challenge is to raise \$70,000 to celebrate 70 years of Pony Club. All donations made through the Regional Challenge will support the overall Annual Fund goal of \$330,000.

2025 USPC Convention sponsors

*Banquet and Keynote Speaker Sponsor*

Via Nova Training

*Tote Bag Sponsor*

Saginaw Valley Equine

*Anatomy Room Sponsors*

Michigan State University – Title Sponsor

Riverside Animal Clinic

*Coffee Break Sponsors*

Daniel Stewart / Pressure Proof Academy

*Workshop Sponsors*

Kentucky Equine Research (2 workshops)

*Pony Paddock Sponsors*

Arabian Horse Youth Association

*Portfolio Sponsors*

Kentucky Equine Research

The Equestrian College Advisor

Otterbein University

Dressage4Kids

*Research Fair Sponsors*

Grayson-Jockey Research Foundation – Title Sponsor

Michigan State University

Kentucky Equine Research

The Equine College Advisor

**Strategic Planning:** The committee's primary tasks since the May Board meeting have been to identify key performance indicators (KPIs) that are measurable, attainable, specific, and relevant to driving success in our strategic goals.

**Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility (DEIA):** The committee will hold a general DEIA workshop during the 2025 USPC Convention



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**Technology Infrastructure Advancement:** The committee has begun exploring options for a centralized payment processing system, and there was a demonstration of one of the options. This research and the central rally registration platform have been delayed due to refocusing the committee’s attention on securing our next iteration of hosting and supporting USPC’s database as USEF will not provide support for outside organizations beginning in 2025.