

**RS/VRS/DC/JtDC/CA/ACA Leadership Education – Marriott Lincolnshire Resort, Lincolnshire, IL**  
**Thursday, January 29, 2026 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM CST**

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|                             | GRAND BALLROOM A - E   |   |  |
| 8:30 – 8:45 AM              | All RS/VRS/DC/JtDC/CA/ACA – <i>Welcome to the 2026 Convention</i> – Vice President of Regional Administration (VPRA) Rae Birr welcomes all local and region leaders to Lincolnshire to begin a fun and informational weekend.  |   |  |
| 8:45 – 9:45 AM              | All RS/VRS/DC/JtDC/CA/ACA – <i>Ribbons, Rallies, and Riding On</i> – Join USPC Vice President of Activities Jan Whitehouse and Activities Director Gillian Stover for 2026 updates on Championships, rulebooks, and rally reporting, as well as USPC membership opportunities available this year.   |   |  |
| 9:45 – 10:00 AM BREAK       |  |   |  |
|                             | GRAND BALLROOM A - E   | GREAT LAKES 1   |  |
| 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM         | DC/JtDC/CA/ACA – <i>The “Kitchen Table Talk”</i> – Sarah Pence, Midwest RS and DC of Horse and Hound Pony Club will share how a good “kitchen table” conversation with a potential member (or their parents) can make or break a Pony Club family’s chance of success (and impact the club or center’s culture.) Spoiler–discussing the club or center expectations and learning what a prospective member’s goals are prior to joining will lead to greater retention and overall satisfaction, even without the table.   | RS/VRS – <i>Region Engagement Panel Discussion</i> – Meet members of the Regional Resource Committee, including facilitator Lorelei Coplen (Maryland Region) and panelists Cheryl Clark (Capital Region), SueAnn McClelland (Northwest Region), Julie Mowbray (Northwest Region), and Bo Varnado (Southern California Region), as they discuss best practices and share ideas from across the country. There will be time for Q&A and audience participation. |  |
| 11:00 – 11:15 AM BREAK      |  |   |  |
| 11:15 AM – 12:00 PM         | DC/JtDC/CA/ACA – <i>Equestrian Safety and USPC</i> – USPC Safety Committee Chair SueAnn McClelland with Committee Member Kimberly Chick will share this year’s important safety updates, including a useful new helmet fit guide, proper incident reporting, and other topics during this session.   | RS/VRS – <i>Meeting Regional Members Where They Are</i> – Cheryl Clark, Capital Region RS, discusses why it is essential to consider challenges and thoughtfully address barriers when planning regional activities striving to foster inclusive participation, ensuring a full experience in Pony Club.  |  |
| LUNCH BREAK 12:00 – 1:30 PM |  |   |  |
|                             | GRAND BALLROOM A - E   |   |  |
| 1:30 – 2:15 PM              | All RS/VRS/DC/JtDC/CA/ACA – <i>Do You Have a #HappyHealthyHorse? USPC and Horse Welfare: An Update from the USPC Equine Welfare Task Force</i> – Join Heather Bell and Chris Keim as they share an overview of what the Task Force has accomplished since it began its work just over a year ago, introduce the Five Domains model upon which we are structuring the enhanced curriculum, and detail what we hope is to come. There will be time for leaders to discuss the obstacles/challenges they see to implementing some of these initiatives and make suggestions for required resources.                           |   |  |
| 2:15 – 2:30 PM BREAK        |  |   |  |
|                             | GRAND BALLROOM A - E   | GREAT LAKES 1   | GREAT LAKES 2  |
| 2:30 – 3:30 PM              | DC/JtDC – <i>Many Hands, One Pony Club</i> – USPC Board Member and Regional Resource Committee Chair Bo Varnado – Pony Club depends on volunteers, but sustainability depends on systems. Hear various strategies to recruit, support, and retain volunteers while reducing burnout and planning for succession, and share your ideas.   | RS/VRS – <i>Supporting New Leaders</i> – Julie Mowbray, Northwest RS – Healthy clubs lead to healthy regions, but thoughtful onboarding can often be overlooked. Beginning with why it matters, this presentation examines the key question of “How to build and sustain healthy clubs?” to provide support and direction to new and returning DCs.   | CA/ACA – Marlie Nauta, owner and CA of Misty Morning Farm Pony Club Riding Center since 2017 will facilitate this <i>Open Discussion Forum</i> where center representatives are encouraged to ask their questions, share stories, and network with others. |
| 3:30 – 3:45 PM BREAK        |  |   |  |
| 3:45 – 4:30 PM              | RS/VRS/DC/JtDC – <i>Difficult Circumstances (DCs), Rough Situations (RSs), &amp; Really Intimidating Conversations (RICs)</i> – USPC Board Member Sedate Kohler – The great part about taking on club and regional leadership is the impact you have on members’ lives, but it can also be tough to navigate the potential impact. As stewards of the Pony Club program, we must recognize the power held in shaping the experiences and impressions of those in the organization. This session will help local and region leaders in practicing these skills, which are most often developed right after they are needed. |   |  |

Thursday, January 29, 2026, continued:

**BREAK**

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| Thursday 5:00 – 9:30 PM | <b><i>Separately Ticketed Leadership Event, PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED – Please bring your dinner ticket!</i></b><br>Socialize and unwind for the day with your fellow leaders at a relaxing dinner in the Three Embers Restaurant and then enjoy the musical, <i>Little Shop of Horrors</i> , in the acclaimed Marriott Theatre onsite. <b>Dinner at 5:00, show starts at 7:00.</b> |
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**RS/VRS/DC/JtDC/CA/ACA Leadership Education**  
**Friday, January 30, 2026 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM CST**

|                             |  |  |
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|                             | <b>GRAND BALLROOM A - E</b>  | <b>GREAT LAKES 1</b>   |
| 8:30 – 10:30 AM             | <b>DC/JtDC/CA/ACA – All Things Instruction</b> – Connie Jehlik, Instruction Director, will present instructional topics to help you with planning your instructional calendar, how to set up a local-level testing, the importance of the Standards of Proficiency, plus website resources for examiners and instructors. A guest appearance by the D & C Curricula Committee will provide an overview of new instructional tools/resources for the local leadership and how to use them.  | <b>RS/VRS – National Examiner and Examiner’s Committee Co-chair Christina Keim, along with VP of Instruction Sarah Andres</b> present <b>National Testing Results, Questions, and Regional Support.</b> This two-hour discussion will cover the successes of the 2025 testing year, areas of strength and weaknesses of candidates, and how the regions can support their members and create learning opportunities. |
| 10:30 – 10:45 AM BREAK      |  |  |
|                             | <b>GRAND BALLROOM A - E</b>  |  |
| 10:45 AM – 12:00 PM         | <b>All RS/VRS/DC/JtDC/CA/ACA – Growing a Pony Club Presence in Your Community and Beyond</b> – Presented by USPC Board Members Heather Rosenker and Asia Thayer. This session will delve into the importance of partnerships and outreach to strengthen your club/center/region brand while increasing broader awareness and understanding of USPC. Heather will begin by exploring opportunities for collaboration through communication and presence in the community. Asia will then discuss how Pony Club fits within the broader equestrian system—different—yet as a complement to competition organizations.  |  |
| LUNCH BREAK 12:00 – 1:30 PM |  |  |
|                             | <b>GRAND BALLROOM A - E</b>  |  |
| 1:30 – 3:30 PM              | <b>All RS/VRS/DC/JtDC/CA/ACA – Shaping the Future Together: Designing the Next Era of USPC</b> – Presented by Tim Burcham, with an introduction by USPC President Jennifer Sweet, President-Elect Deb Kirsch, and Executive Director Teresa Woods. As USPC enters a pivotal moment that demands bold thinking and modern systems, this session brings leaders together to build on the organization’s strengths, explore the new 2026–2028 Strategic Transformation Plan, and identify the structural, operational, and technological priorities that will strengthen capacity, improve efficiency, and position USPC for long-term growth.  |  |
| 3:30 – 3:45 PM BREAK        |  |  |
| 3:45 – 4:30 PM              | <b>All RS/VRS/DC/JtDC/CA/ACA – Pony Club for Everyone: Creatively Including Members of Varying Backgrounds and Resources in Your Pony Club Program</b> – Are you looking for ways to be more inclusive in your Pony Club programming? Do you sometimes find yourself unsure of how to accommodate members without an appropriate mount? Or are you interested in ways to engage adults in the community with your membership? In this session, Brandi Richwine, Heartland Region Secretary, Big Walnut Creek Pony Club Treasurer, Professional and Participating Member, will share her club and region’s successes and facilitate a brainstorming discussion to spark ideas for everyone in 2026. |  |
| 4:30 – 5:00 PM              | <b>All RS/VRS/DC/JtDC/CA/ACA – The Power of Affiliation</b> – Kelly Lenaghan, DC of Big Bay Pony Club, Lake Shore Region, will share her inspiring journey that developed a sense of community and belonging through Pony Club. Together we are greater and together WE are Pony Club!   |  |