



USPC[®] FACTS

Some facts about The United States Pony Clubs, Inc.

Pony Club is a misnomer; it is not a club for ponies. It is a non-profit organization that teaches horsemanship and the care of the horse to young people through the age of 21. Pony Club is a worldwide educational organization that originated in Great Britain in 1928. The United States Pony Clubs (referred to as Pony Club or USPC) was founded as a non-profit national youth horsemanship organization in February 1954. (The USPC was and is independent from Pony Club in Britain.)

Today, there are over 625 Pony Clubs nationwide - including Alaska and Hawaii -with over 13,000 members. Generally, Pony Club members range in age from as young as 5 to age 21. There is no absolute minimum age, although a youngster must be old enough to safely ride and participate in activities and competitions. And members don't just ride ponies. Often the younger, smaller ones do, but older members usually ride horses. There is a maximum age: The year a Pony Club member turns 21, he or she "graduates" as of Dec. 31. Many Pony Club graduates become volunteers and adult members.

Through the USPC formal instructional program, members learn more about horses and their care than do members of any other American horsemanship organization. Riding activities include Combined Training (dressage, stadium jumping, cross-country), Mounted Games, Show Jumping, Dressage (as single activity), Vaulting (horseback gymnastics), Polo, Polocrosse (combination of polo and lacrosse), Foxhunting, and Tetrathlon (riding, running, swimming, shooting). Although USPC emphasizes instruction over competition, members do compete with one another at club, regional, and national rallies. Most USPC competition is team competition, so members learn the importance of cooperation and friendship. At rallies, there is no help from parents. Youngsters help each other (with qualified adults nearby). An important part of rallies is horse care, which is judged and is highly competitive. Pony Club members learn to ride and care for their mounts safely and well and become good, responsible people - and have fun.

One of America's outstanding writers wrote in a 1993 national-magazine article that there is no other instructional system like the Pony Club way, that there are few teaching organizations of any kind as effective as Pony Club. Officials at colleges and universities with riding or equine programs and at the American Association of Equine Practitioners know that Pony Club members are good - often outstanding - learners and leaders, and are excellent riders. The AAEP and numerous colleges offer scholarship programs for Pony Club members.

Pony Club members progress through a standard rating system (something like Boy and Girl Scouts' ranks) that requires them to learn more and more about horses and their care and to become increasingly accomplished riders. The Pony Club member who reaches the "A" rating - the ninth and highest, reached by only a small percentage of all members - is a highly competent and knowledgeable young horsewoman or horseman. The many thousands of former Pony Club members are successful in all walks of life - accountants to zoologists, laboratory researchers to Pulitzer Prize winner. Many, no matter what rating they reached, continue to keep, ride, and enjoy horses. Among those who are professional horsemen and horsewomen, over 30 have been members of U.S. Olympic Teams as equestrians. Others are nationally and internationally known equestrian instructors, trainers, and competitors.

Due to the emphasis on teaching and giving back to others, older Pony Club members very naturally become volunteers in their local clubs and communities. They provide much of the educational base for younger members in their own clubs and also volunteer regionally and nationally to share the knowledge they have earned. This makes for a self-perpetuating organization that hopefully will be active throughout the 21st century.

For more information about The United States Pony Clubs, Inc., visit our website at www.ponyclub.org or call our national headquarters in Lexington, Kentucky at 859/254-7669.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: The United States Pony Clubs, 4041 Iron Works Parkway, Lexington, KY 40511 (859) 254-PONY (7669); fax (859) 233-4652; e-mail: uspc@ponyclub.org
Website: www.ponyclub.org