

CLUB PROGRAMS FOR THE UPPER LEVEL CHILDREN

QUESTION: What do adults and teenagers all want and need?

SOME THOUGHTS:

- They need a sense of belonging to something greater than themselves
- They need a sense of purpose
- They need to feel that they are valued by the group that they are associated with the most and that they care about the most
- They need to feel that they have something to contribute to the good of the group

QUESTION: How do we meet these wants and needs on a local level?

THOUGHT #1: Involve them in a well grounded PC educational system (always done under an adults supervision). Look through the standards.

- The teaching begins at the C1 level by explaining the reasons for a safety and tack inspection.
- By the C2 assisting D1 and D2 in preparing for turnout and helping with unmounted instruction to D's. Hence the flow charts and block checker system.
- By the C3 they are assisting in mounted instruction for D's.
- By the time they are C3's they can do there own safety checks (under supervision) and be teaching unmounted to D's (supervised).
- By the time they are B's, they can be teaching mounted and unmounted lessons to your PC.

Now comes the fun part – if you invite them into your program. Your club and the older Pony Clubbers will all benefit.

- Your instructor will be able to go to the bathroom during PC sessions.
- Your older PC'ers will start to see what we as instructors see - in the other children in the arena.
- They will begin to:
 - discuss theory of dressage and jumping
 - they will begin to understand the relationship between the rider and the instructor as well as the relationship between what an instructor sees and then what they teach,
 - They will learn jumping distances as they help the instructor set jumps,
 - they will relearn all the D parts of the horse, (so that when they go to do conformation – they remember where the gaskin is located),
 - But most of all they will begin to understand the processing of information instead of must memorizing for a PC rating.

The next thing that happens is that they feel that they have a purpose, they feel included in the educational process, they feel valued by the younger Pony Clubbers and the adults, and that they are contributing back to the process.

QUESTION: How do we manage that on a local level?

THOUGHT #2: Have someone that understands the Pony Club philosophy and the educational aspects of Pony Club to be your instructional coordinator.

- Have them find out what the calendars are for your region: school, USEA, USDF, Jumper Assoc., etc. and plan the instructional calendar to work as best as possible for all the Pony Clubbers, including new older ones that need to plan around jobs, etc.
- Involve the older Pony Clubbers into the instructional calendar. This can be the beginnings of a good Junior Board that they then take to the regional level.
- Encourage all your Pony Clubbers to feel needed and to ask lots of questions. Let this be the place that they feel free to ask all the questions.
- **HIRE A GOOD TEACHER FOR YOUR PC INSTRUCTION.**
- One that engages the kids (and the adults, also if you can do it), one that can teach - not instruct your kids - your older kids will know the difference, someone that encourage everyone to learn, ask questions and want to return the next week.

QUESTION: How do we get the older ones engaged and involved in this process?

THOUGHT #3: Find out what is an interest, a hobby, of each of your older PC'ers.

- Once you have found out all of their skills - ask them to use those skills to make Pony Club a real and tangible process for them and for the lower rated Pony Clubbers.
 - How many times have you heard people say that they have to do something the PC way. They say that because no one has made the rule make any sense to them in their daily life.

The movie *Mary Poppins* made a silly word understandable to everyone who saw the movie. Well if we can understand a word that most of us can't spell, then surely we should be able to make horsemanship words, phrases, theory and safety understandable to our PC'ers.

Examples: Bad conformation can be related to a poorly built house or structure. Show them how to make a tooth out of styrofoam! (Find the arts and crafts Pony Clubbers and Moms to help).

- Show them how to problem solve in PC and you will give them skills that they carry over to school, life and jobs later.

QUESTION: How do we keep the older Pony Clubbers in the Club when there is so much going on in each discipline through USDF, USEA, etc.?
THOUGHT #4: Offer things that will be beneficial to the upper level children and their learning.

- Offer much more for the C's that they can not get anywhere else. Get together with other clubs to host things.
- Offer them clinics on multiple subjects with GOOD TEACHERS in various disciplines and subjects. Clinics in : Dressage, SJ, Eventing, lunging, teaching, HM that is engaging and hands on - (parts of the horse by a Vet with real horse parts!)
- Take them on tours to training facilities, Vet Schools, international competitions
- Plan some Pony Club parties so that they can be together and enjoy each others company without the work involved in lesson days. Plan a bowling party, volleyball, pizza party, crochet, holiday parties, etc.

***CASE IN POINT THE AREA VII YOUNG RIDERS TEAM -
PC BASED AND ALL WORK AS A TEAM -
THAT IS WHY THEY ARE SO SUCCESSFUL.***

QUESTION: What else can we do to keep our upper level Pony Club children?
THOUGHT #5: Look into getting the kids credit for their Pony Club participation.

- High School sports letter for their riding
- Physical Education credits for their lessons
- College scholarships to riding programs and schools (Title IX and the NCAA has opened up new opportunities for schools and riding.
- Science Fair projects based on their studies that they already do for their ratings
- English credit for lesson plans for HM for D's, for essays on diseases, etc.

IN MY EXPERIENCE:

Pony Club with its educational system trains young people to become horseman.

Pony Club also allows them to grow into strong individuals that work harmoniously in a group, and have a profound sense of belonging and self worth.