

To: USDF EXECUTIVE BOARD
From: USDF Staff
Date: October 2, 2024
Re: Activities Report

ADMINISTRATION

GOVERNANCE:

- Upon Region 7 Director Carol Tice's resignation and the interim appointment of Regina Antonioli to the position, the following steps were taken:
 - The Nominating Committee was informed and made aware there would be a special election for Region 7 Director at the 2024 Board of Governors (BOG) meeting.
 - An e-mail was sent to all Region 7 members addressing Carol's resignation and Regina's appointment. Additionally, Region 7 members were informed that nominations for the position were open for the special election to be held at the 2024 BOG meeting. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor of the BOG meeting.
 - The information shared in the abovementioned e-mail was also included in the Region 7 eNews, as a reminder for Region 7 members in the general USDF eNews, under "Announcements" on the USDF website, and in the USDF Delegates Facebook Group.
 - Updates to the Executive Board listing in *USDF Connection* and on the USDF website were made.
- A communication from George Williams was sent to USDF's governance representatives outlining the steps that have been taken to date for USDF to become the para dressage affiliate to the USEF, and what delegates can expect at the 2024 BOG meeting to make it official. This was also shared in the Delegates Facebook Group.
- The following information is posted on the USDF Governance Discussion Topics page, the USDF website, and in the Delegates Facebook Group.
 - "Meet the Candidates" – 2024 Executive Board nominees' bios and Q&A.
 - 2023 Draft Board of Governors (BOG) meeting minutes (for approval at the 2024 BOG meeting)
 - Link to the Executive Board meeting minutes on the USDF website
 - USDF Bylaws
 - USDF Policies and Procedures
- On the [Governance page](#) of the convention website, information about BOG delegates, what they do, and how they can be contacted can be found. Other governance information such as the elections to be held at the BOG meeting and a listing of those in leadership within USDF are provided.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE:

- PM Delegates
 - Candidates, the Executive Board, and the Nominating Committee were notified of the PM delegate election results on July 10th. Only Region's 2 and 9 had more candidates than they were allowed to elect, making for a true election.
 - The percentage of PMs that voted in the PM delegate elections was 21.52%, which is within the normal participation rate of 20-21% we normally see.
 - Invitations were sent to the newly elected PM delegates in July to join the Delegates Facebook Group.
 - The USDF website has been updated to show the newly elected PM delegates under the "Current PM Delegates" link on the "Nominations and Elections" page (<http://www.usdf.org/about/about-usdf/governance/nominating/Delegates.asp?Type=PM>). *You must be logged in to the USDF website to view the listing.*
- GMO Delegate/Proxy Appointments
 - GMO presidents received e-mails on August 14th and September 16th requesting they submit their GMO delegate/proxy appointment(s) to the USDF office. The request was also posted on the GMO

Officials Facebook Group and was included in the August GMO Officials eNews. Reminders will continue to go out to GMO presidents and officials via these avenues in the months leading up to the convention. As was approved by the BOG in 2023, if the USDF office has not received a GMO's delegate/proxy appointment by October 31st, the GMO president will be recorded as the delegate by default until USDF is notified otherwise.

- Nominating Committee representatives are reaching out to GMOs in their respective region encouraging them to submit their delegate/proxy appointment(s) to the USDF office as soon as possible.
 - Invitations to join the Delegates Facebook Group. are being sent to GMO delegates and proxies as appointments are received.
 - A listing of the GMO delegate/proxy appointments received to date can be found at <https://www.usdf.org/about/about-usdf/governance/nominating/gmobogdelegates.asp>.
You must be logged in to the USDF website to view the listing.
- Executive Board Nominations and Elections
 - Executive Board elections for President, Treasurer, and Regional Director in Regions 2, 4, 6, and 8 are being held at the 2024 BOG meeting. Nominations for these positions are now closed, but will be accepted from the floor of the BOG meeting. There will also be a special election for Region 7 Director. Nominations for this position are currently open (as of August) and will be accepted up until the convention and from the floor of the BOG meeting.
 - Current candidates for the Executive Board can be found on the website at: <https://www.usdf.org/about/about-usdf/governance/nominating/BODNominees.asp>.
 - The "Meet the Candidates" article with bios and Q&A from the Executive Board nominees was published in the September/October issue of *USDF Connection*, is posted on the USDF website, the Governance Discussion Topics page, the USDF convention website, and in the Delegates Facebook group.

MEMBER SERVICES

MEMBERS SERVICES DEPARTMENT:

- SmartPak will again partner with USDF to offer an incentive for early, online Participating and Business Membership renewals for the 2025 membership year.
- Registration for the 2024 Adequan@/USDF Annual Convention is now live.

GROUP MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS COMMITTEE:

Carol Tice stepped down from the Group Member Organizations Committee. Regina Antonioli is filling the Region 7 position for the remainder of the year.

MEMBERSHIP DUES INCREASE:

Applications and renewal notices are being prepared for the 2025 membership year, which will include the dues increase that will be effective December 1, 2024.

COMPETITIONS

GREAT AMERICAN/USDF REGIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS:

- The following staff have or plan to attend the following regional championships this year:
 - Region 1: No staff representative this year
 - Region 2: Lacy Jinks
 - Region 3- Krystina Wright
 - Region 4- Lacy Jinks
 - Region 5- Stephan Hienzsich
 - Region 6: Stephan Hienzsich
 - Region 7: Krystina Wright
 - Region 8: no staff representative this year

Region 9: Krystina Wright

- Management from the Great American/USDF Region 2 Championships (held at the Kentucky Horse Park) hosted a competitor party at the USDF office during their September show.
- Effective 2025: Neither the Junior nor the Young Rider Team tests will be included as regional championship classes; however, both tests may still be ridden as regional championship qualifiers. The Junior Team may be ridden as a qualifier for Third Level and the Young Rider Team may be ridden as a qualifier for Prix. St. Georges.

COMPETITION MANAGEMENT & TECHNICAL DELEGATES (TDs):

The summer edition of *Competition Contact* went out in July with reminders about fee increases (non-member and regional championship qualifying), new USEF rules approved for 2025, prize list submission guidelines for USDF, guidelines for FEI Children Tests, and Tips from TDs to beat the heat.

US DRESSAGE FINALS:

There are 38 organizations participating in the 2024 US Dressage Finals High Score Breed Awards, an increase of five from 2023.

AWARDS COMMITTEE:

A tutorial was created regarding how to navigate awards information provided on a members USDF dashboard. The brief tutorial is approximately three minutes and includes marked up screenshots of the USDF website, narrated by Amy Bradley, Awards Committee Chair. The tutorial has been promoted on *YourDressage* and social media and will be placed on the USDF Awards Resource Guide.

EDUCATION

ADULT PROGRAMS COMMITTEE:

- GMO Education Initiatives (GEI)
Between April 1 and September 30, 2024, the following GEI events have taken place:
 - Central Texas Dressage Society: Equine Conditioning for Performance and Soundness
 - Instructor: Jec Ballou
 - Funds granted: \$792.79
 - Attendees: 20
 - Oklahoma Dressage Society: Spring Symposium
 - Instructor: Shelly Francis
 - Funds granted: \$1,000 - \$500 early dispersal, \$500 final
 - Attendees: 32
 - UPCOMING: Indiana Dressage Society Adult Dressage Camp, October 4-6, 2024
 - Instructors: Kate Fleming-Kuhn, Karen McGoldrick, Jennifer Grant
 - Funds granted: \$500 early dispersal, eligible for up to \$500 after event
- Virtual Education Series
 - May 7, 2024 – Fitness Routines for Dressage Horses with Jec Ballou
 - 56 attendees
 - Now available for on demand viewing
 - September 23, 2024 – New Rules for Equipment Checking with Jean Kraus
 - 84 attendees
 - Will be available for on demand viewing
 - Upcoming: Developing and Effective Warmup
 - Presenters: TBD – 2 Instructor/Trainer Development Faculty members
 - Date: TBD – January 2025

NATIONAL YOUTH PROGRAMS COMMITTEE:

- Completed Youth Outreach Clinics to date: Region 9, June 29-30, 2024, at Rolling Ridge Stable in Manor, TX with Nancy Hinz. There were eleven applications received and eight riders.

- Upcoming Youth Outreach Clinics:
 - Region 5, October 5-6, 2024, at Central Arizona Riding Academy in San Tan Valley, AZ with Brandi Roenick.
 - Region 6, November 2-3, 2024, at DevonWood Equestrian Centre, Sherwood, OR with Benjamin Pfabe.
 - The committee liaison reached out to several companies who are showing their support for our clinic series by providing the following items as part of the “swag bag” for these clinics:
 - Big Dee’s Tack & Vet Supply – drawstring bags
 - Buckeye Nutrition – one pound bags of peppermint bits and flyers
 - Grayson Jockey Club Research Foundation – Horse Vital Cards, etc.
 - Platinum Performance – brushes and flyers
 - USEF – cell phone card holders, pins and rubber bracelets
- A USDF/USEF Young Rider Graduate Program Virtual Education Session was held September 24, 2024, at 8 pm. Angela Jackson and Benjamin Pfabe discussed the difference between coaching at a show and everyday training. It will be available for on demand viewing.

FEI YOUTH COMMITTEE:

- Completed FEI Youth clinic to date:
 - Region 4, July 6-7, 2024, at Providence Farms in Palmyra, NE with Sabine Schut-Kery. Ten applications were received, eight riders participated, and there were nine auditors (seven members, two non-members).
 - Region 8, June 29-30, 2024, at Weatogue Stables in Salisbury, CT with Lilo Fore. Six applications were received, six riders participated, and there were no auditors.
 - The committee liaison reached out to several companies who are showing their support for our clinic series by providing the following items as part of the “swag bag” for these clinics:
 - Big Dee’s Tack & Vet Supply – drawstring bags
 - Buckeye Nutrition – one pound bags of peppermint bits and flyers
 - Grayson Jockey Club Research Foundation – Horse Vital Cards, etc.
 - Platinum Performance – brushes and flyers
 - USEF – cell phone card holders, pins and rubber bracelets

EDUCATION INITIATIVES:

USDF hosted or supported 63 educational opportunities between April 1 and September 30, 2024. This is a mix of live and virtual events, both USDF and GMO hosted.

- Education Survey Interactions – Between April 1, 2024 and September 30, 2024 fourteen surveys were deployed and 412 responses collected.
- Education Spotlight Articles – Average views per education spotlight item were 54.
- Online Education Modules – USDF members have access to:
 - 31 online courses
 - 8 on demand viewing modules from the virtual education series
 - 14 virtual events; these are on demand viewing modules created after selected USDF hosted live events.
 - 5 modules on general education
 - 3 Instructor/Trainer Development modules; these are created based on the content of the program. These modules are under review, and it is anticipated new modules will be added in late 2024 and 2025
 - 26 short courses by topic
 - 10 TD learning modules; the TD Committee is developing two additional modules to be added in late 2024.

LICENSED OFFICIALS’ EDUCATION INITIATIVES:

- In 2024, the following have received their USEF Judge, TD, or DHSB Judge License, following the completion of their training program and exam with USDF:

- 20 'R' Dressage Judges
- 2 'S' Dressage Judges
- 2 'R' Dressage TDs
- 4 'r' Dressage TDs
- In addition, the following have completed their training program and exam and will be reviewed by the LOC at their next meeting.
 - 8 'r' Dressage Judges
 - 3 'r' Dressage TDs

MARKETING

The marketing team has been hard at work over the past several months in preparation for the swell of events that occur end of summer and into the fall, while also providing exclusive Olympic and Paralympic coverage on *YourDressage*. Additionally, as most sponsors have opted to go to a yearly contract, renewals for 2025 are well underway, with many already in place. Here are updates from specific areas within the department.

IT/WEB:

Since the spring meeting, the updated website menus and homepage layout have been implemented to what seems to be an overall positive reception. In addition to the updated menu and homepage layout, internal protocols have been put in place to ensure any updates are evaluated and lineup with the current logic of the menu structure.

Currently, programming is being updated for the impending close of year-year award standings and all other end-of-year applications. Additionally, as each regional championship concludes, the qualified list for the US Dressage Finals is processed and invitations distributed based on declarations and results.

ONLINE STORE:

Total Store Sales are down slightly over the same period last year, mostly accounted for by the additional World Cup sales during this period in 2023. When factored out, sales have held mostly steady with average monthly sales around \$4,900.00. Store order numbers peaked in August, with our top selling items including Rider Lapel Pins, Underfoot, Rider Lapel Pins with Distinction, test booklets, and Freestyle Lapel Pins.

Returning customer rates are up 38.9% indicating that people are interested in new merchandise, and the cart reminder e-mails have resulted in a 180% increase in people coming back to finish their purchase.

VIMEO:

As expected this time of year, as the competition season is winding down, Vimeo sales were down very slightly (38 overall sales, with 33 being On The Levels). While this trend is likely to continue the further into the test cycle we get, viewership of the videos has remained high, with the most watched video from March to September being the *Purpose of the Levels* videos.

SOCIAL MEDIA (FEBRUARY 15, 2024-SEPTEMBER 15, 2024):

Facebook followers increased by 1.24% (from 67,252 to 68,089), with posts to the USDF Facebook page having a total reach of 2,173,877 during this time period. This is especially high for us, due in large part to *YourDressage's* coverage of the Olympic and Paralympic games and #DressageForEverybody campaign. Our exclusive daily coverage of the games was extremely popular, with our peak day being August 31 where we reached 387,438 users in a single day (383,750 of which were not current followers of our page). Also, stories from the #DressageForEverybody campaign, which promoted size inclusivity and stories from plus size riders, as well as a giveaway from our sponsor SmartPak, was even more popular this year than it was in 2023. The campaign was originally intended to run through the month of July, but due to the high number of quality stories submitted, we extended the campaign into August, with some stories even spilling into September. The prize drawing will be held September 30. Other social media coverage included the always popular FEI North American Youth Championships, and U.S. Dressage Festival of Champions.

Instagram followers increased by 3.01% (from 26,600 to 27,400). Instagram also saw huge boosts in engagement with our Olympic/Paralympic coverage and #DressageForEverybody campaign.

Due to continued problems with the X (formerly Twitter) platform, USDF has decided to focus our efforts more on Facebook and Instagram, while continuing to use X for breaking news and press releases. Follower count on X remains steady at 12,200.

HALL OF FAME, LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT, MEMBER OF DISTINCTION AWARDS:

The following USDF members were proposed by the Historical Recognition Committee and approved by the Executive Board as 2024 recipients:

- Hall of Fame – Carol Lavell
- Lifetime Achievement – William (Bill) C. Woods

Both will be recognized at the Salute Gala and Annual Awards Banquet held during the Adequan®/USDF Annual Convention in Houston, TX.

PUBLICATIONS:

As the contract with our current publisher (KODI) expires at the end of December, USDF has been collecting bids and quotes from publishers for 2025. The first round of interviews with the new potential publishers have occurred with secondary interviews to include more of the team are being scheduled with our top contenders. Provided all details can be ironed out in time, the goal will be to have the January/February 2025 issue of *USDF Connection* be the first with our new publisher.

YourDressage continues to maintain high traffic numbers, 70,000 active users over the last six month period, with the vast majority being from the US, followed by the UK and Canada rounding out the top three. Over this time, a few articles resulted in especially high engagement spikes; [Aloha, E Komo Mail](#) and [The Ex-Hunter Princess and the Pea-Sized Pony](#) on May 15, and [Olympic Dressage Deconstruction](#) on September 6. Additionally, the *YourDressage* Breed of the Month series has continued its popularity, with USDF's social media followers very involved in submitting photos for galleries and stories highlighting the specific breeds. Breeds featured since the last report include Holsteiners, Connemaras, and Pony Power (celebrating ponies of all breeds), and Welsh Ponies and Cobs. We also held our #DressageForEverybody month celebrating size inclusivity in the sport of dressage.

The 2025 US Dressage Finals program is fully digital this year. This transition will not only create more allowance for edits and updates up to the show opening, but also increase revenue due to new ad sale opportunities without the cost of printing. Discounted advertising opportunities have been offered to trade fair vendors for the first time this year, along with new ad sizes that may appeal to smaller businesses.

- American Horse Publications:
The 2024 American Horse Publications (AHP) Equine Media Conference was held in Lexington, KY in May. USDF entered the following pieces of media for consideration in the AHP Equine Media Awards:

USDF submitted ten nominations on behalf of *YourDressage*, and were recognized in the following categories:

- First place - Breaking News or Investigative Reporting Single Article for “Unforgettable Moments from the FEI World Cup Finals Omaha 2023” by Chelsey Burris – <https://yourdressage.org/2023/04/09/unforgettable-moments-from-the-fei-world-cup-finals-omaha-2023/> *

*This was especially significant as this was the first (of we hope many) first-place awards given to *YourDressage*.

- Second place – Association/Organization Publication Equine Media Feature Single Article for “The Branches, The Roots, and The Banner” by Natasha Rombeck - <https://yourdressage.org/2023/06/28/the-branches-the-roots-and-the-banner/>
- Second place – Human-Animal Bond Article for “Bringing Back Their Smile” by Jason Webb - <https://yourdressage.org/2023/10/30/bringing-back-their-smile/>
- Second place – Editorial Action Photograph for “Altitude” taken by Jason Hekkert Photography and submitted to USDF by Annette Spinetti-Duncan - <https://yourdressage.org/2023/05/12/altitude/>
- Third Place - Editorial Photograph for “Golden” taken by Sara Shier and submitted to USDF by Rise Above Equestrian - <https://yourdressage.org/2023/06/23/golden/>

USDF submitted eleven nominations on behalf of *USDF Connection*, and were recognized in the following categories:

- First place - Editorial Event Coverage Single Article for “Made in America” by Jennifer Bryant, published in the July/August 2023 issue
- Second place – Association/Organization Publication Equine Media Horse Care Single Article for “Tummy Troubles” by Natalie DeFee Mendik, published in the November/December 2023 issue
- Third Place - Freelance Writer Feature Single Article for “Off the Track and Into the Ring” by Kara L. Stewart, published in the September/October 2023 issue

END OF REPORT