

FOUR RIVERS PONY CLUB

Information for Prospective Members

Background:

The Four Rivers Pony Club (FRPC) is affiliated with the United States Pony Club, Inc., (hereafter USPC) a national non-profit youth organization dedicated to developing self-confidence, leadership, moral judgment and responsibility through equestrian activities. The FRPC began in 1990 and was founded by Marta Clark, DC, Bill Sampson, Jt. DC, and Anne Sacora, Secretary-Treasurer. Meetings were initially held in Murray, Kentucky at Sampson's Stables. When Bill returned to MSU to get a Master's degree in teaching, the club began meeting at a variety of other locations. Bill Sampson is currently in charge of the Agriculture program at Calloway County High School and continues to do farrier work for some club members.

Meeting Locations:

The club has been fortunate to have been offered facilities at a variety of locations for meetings, through the generosity of many farm owners or other venues. Locations have included Carson Park, Peck's Arena on Clinton Road in McCracken County, Tom Goodner's arena on Contest Road in McCracken County, Fox Run Farm near Cadiz (Elizabeth Englert), MSU arenas, and Joint Venture Farm near Water Valley in south Graves (Pat and Chris Clark). At times parents of members have offered facilities at their farms including the Gholson farm in Ballard (cross-country course), the McColgin-Kennedy farm in north Graves (for ratings, games practice, drill team, and horsemanship camps), the Alaya farm in Trigg, and for many years regular instructional meetings at Sugar Creek Farm near Lovelaceville in McCracken (Carolyn Homra). Most recently, the beautiful new Four Rivers Sport Horse Center complex on Lovelaceville Road in McCracken county, has been made available by the Love family, who currently have one child in Pony Club. The club has been very fortunate to have had access to all these facilities and options. Special clinics may be held at regional facilities such as Dunnabeck in Carbondale, the Kentucky Horse Park or Masterson Station in Lexington, or Percy Warner Park in Nashville. Unmounted meetings separate from the mounted meetings may be held at local libraries, member homes, or most recently the Hancock Biological Station near Murray.

Geographic Area Served by FRPC:

Members of the club come from a fairly large geographic region and have included members from Henry and Obion Counties in TN, Massac County in IL, and Hickman, Fulton, Carlisle,-Calloway, Trigg, Graves, Ballard, Marshall, and McCracken Counties in Kentucky. The nearest other clubs are two in southern Illinois (Boskeydell PC in Carbondale, Southern Illinois PC near Goreville) and a new club in Clarksville, Tennessee. The Pennyrile Pony Club, which used to serve Evansville/Henderson/Hopkinsville has moved its base to serve primarily Owensboro.

Organizational Structure:

The local club, in this case FRPC, is the core of Pony Club activities. All local clubs are assigned to a region. The region for FRPC is called Midsouth and encompasses all of Kentucky and Tennessee, as well as portions of Southern Illinois, Southern Indiana, Southern Ohio, one club in West Virginia, and two clubs in Alabama. It is the largest region by far within the national organization. The local club is given a lot of autonomy in how it develops its programs, as long as the emphasis is on instruction and all instruction conforms to the Standards of Proficiency which encompass the Pony Club curriculum (described below). The region offers regional competitions and clinics and provides support to local clubs through a Regional Supervisor, Vice-Regional Supervisors, and Instruction Coordinators. You can learn more about the region by visiting www.midsouthponyclub.org.

The national organization is a complex and multi-faceted organization that you will come to know gradually as you become familiar with Pony Club. Visit www.ponyclub.org and you can begin your education.

All clubs are run by Sponsors, adults who are interested in the affairs of the club and who have paid the annual Sponsors' fee to FRPC (currently \$2). The club is led by the District Commissioner (DC), who has complete oversight and responsibility for the club. One or more Jt. District Commissioners can also assist in this function. Other officers include Secretary and Treasurer. All Sponsors, as well as any non-sponsor parents that will be attending meetings with their child, are assigned to a committee to assist with running the club. This is a requirement due to insurance regulations of national United States Pony Clubs, Inc. All parents of members are entitled to become Sponsors and are encouraged to do so. Any other adult wishing to become a Sponsor may request permission from the DC.

Meetings:

Each year the DC develops a calendar of activities, in consultation with the Sponsors. Presently, mounted meetings are generally held twice monthly March through November and once a month in January and February, weather permitting. The meetings must be scheduled according to the availability of the professional instructors and the facility and may be on Saturday, Sunday or occasionally both Saturday and Sunday. Mounted meetings generally last all day, and will include unmounted instruction, but members can arrange to have their lesson time around other activities if needed. Younger members generally will not have the attention span or stamina to stay all day, but older members are encouraged to stay and help, particularly with instruction and preparation of younger members for their riding lesson and with unmounted instruction.

Meetings may consist of instruction designed to cover the Standards of Proficiency skills, more focused preparation for ratings tests, and focused preparation for rallies, which are mounted competitions (described below). However, many other mounted activities may take place at a mounted meeting that are related to these goals. For example, playing games on horseback, riding in drill teams or doing musical rides alone or in a group, are activities that help develop a well-rounded rider. If there is a special interest group that develops, such as a group that wants to practice games regularly, this group could arrange to meet more often as long as appropriate supervision is provided, e.g. a qualified adult coach.

Members meet every weekend in January and February to study unmounted horsemanship units of study, such as health and veterinary knowledge, nutrition, anatomy and lameness and other required topics. Many of those who attend the study sessions will use this time to prepare for Quiz, which is an unmounted competition in which members demonstrate their academic knowledge much like an academic quiz bowl competition.

Attendance is required at only 4 meetings per year to remain a member in good standing. It is understood that many youths may not be able to attend regularly. However, to obtain the maximum benefit from Pony Club, regular attendance is recommended. The more you put in to the club, the more benefits you will reap. At each mounted meeting there is a safety check before members are allowed to ride. There are also usually more formal inspections for cleanliness and progress in learning proper turn-out. There may be inspections after the member rides to see if they have properly cared for the horse or pony and the tack. These are called “turn-backs”.

Instruction and the Standards of Proficiency:

Instruction follows the guidelines of the USPC, utilizing the Standards of Proficiency as a curriculum guide. The Standards of Proficiency provide nine levels of skill development in an orderly progression. Each child progresses at his/her own rate through the standards. Each child is evaluated with Ratings tests when they have accomplished all of the skills at a given level. The levels are D-1, D-2, D-3, C-1, C-2, C-3, H-B, B, H-A, and A. The Standards of Proficiency are designed to develop a well-rounded rider and cover 4 basic areas: riding on the flat, riding over fences (jumping), riding in the open (often called “cross-country”) and horse management (unmounted knowledge such as bandaging or nutrition) All members begin as unrated and generally after the first month are rated to D-1. You must be a member of USPC for at least 30 days before taking a ratings test. Those with prior riding experience and/or lessons may rate to a higher level at this time, or within the first few months, such as D-2 or D-3, or even C-1. The D level provides a basic foundation of simple riding skills and knowledge of horse care. The C level is for those who wish to pursue more advanced riding and competition skills, and offers 3 levels. The D-1 through C-2 tests are administered by the local club.

The C-3 through A levels are considered to be the upper levels of ratings and the exams for these are administered on a national level. The C-3 and H-B (horse management and teaching for both C-3 and B level riding tests) levels are for more advanced riders who are also developing teaching skills and more advanced competition skills. The C-3 is considered the “gateway to advanced riding.” The B, H-A and A levels are for those who may be interested in pursuing a professional career involving riding instruction or running a stable.

It is not necessary to aspire to the upper level ratings in order to benefit from Pony Club. The majority of members of Four Rivers Pony Club have participated only at the D level. But for the dedicated horseperson, the upper levels provide an avenue for growth and skill development.

You will be receiving more information about ratings as you begin to participate in club activities and will have opportunities to have your questions answered about the details of ratings and preparation for ratings.

Instructors:

Instruction is provided by local and regional professional instructors. Upper level Pony Clubbers, generally C-2 and above, also provide mounted instruction to D level members. C-1 level Pony Clubbers may assist with mounted instruction.

Unmounted instruction is provided by professionals in the community such as farriers, veterinarians and feed store owners, as well as by upper level Pony Clubbers. Four Rivers has been extremely fortunate to have been able to obtain the services of highly skilled professional instructors with an extensive Pony Club background. These instructors enjoy teaching here and may travel long distances. The professionalism of the club, the willingness of the members and parents to follow the USPC policies and respond positively to the instructor are factors that keep these instructors coming back. Most recently the club has had the good fortune to have the expertise of Kathie Robertson, who has been a Vice President of Instruction for USPC, Chair of the Standards and Curriculum Committee and is currently a National Examiner for the B and A level testings.

Regional and National Activities:

Members are encouraged to participate in regional and national activities. There is a regional “mega-rally” at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington the third week of June every year. Mega-rally consists of a series of competitions offered back-to-back including Tetrathlon, Show Jumping, Dressage and Eventing. The D-level Pony Clubbers compete on days separate from the C and up riders for Eventing. The Eventing Rally for C level and up riders is currently a USEA sanctioned horse trial with levels from Beginner Novice thru Preliminary offered. The Rallies typically begin on Saturday with Tetrathlon and end on the next Sunday with the last day of Eventing.

There is usually a Games Rally, which is very good for younger members or beginning riders. This rally has most recently been held in May at the lovely Paxton Park in Batavia Ohio. There has also been a fall Polocrosse rally. Members must cover the cost of attending the rallies including entry fees, lodging, meals, and horse transportation. When possible, the Four Rivers Club has helped with a portion of the rally fees, depending on the budget and funds available. Rally preparation activities may include extra lesson meetings, trips to Lexington for schooling, or day camps. You will be receiving more information about rallies as you begin to participate in club activities. You can learn about each of the horse sports mentioned, such as Games, Eventing, and Polocrosse by reading the New Member booklet that you will receive from USPC when you join. Or feel free to talk with current members and ask them about the sports or go observe some competitions.

The Midsouth Region also occasionally offers clinics for members. National competitions are for older, upper level Pony Clubbers in general. Younger members (10 years and up) are eligible to attend nationals in Games and

Quiz if they qualify. There are specific criteria for attendance at Championships for each discipline. The discipline rulebook includes these criteria. All discipline rulebooks are available online at www.ponyclub.org.

National USPC also offers a large national championships and festival camp at the Kentucky Horse Park every three years. Members can attend a camp and attend clinics with nationally recognized instructors at Festival, and those qualifying for Championships join with both the East and West groups for a unique competition.

International opportunities are available for advanced Pony Clubbers. There are frequent exchanges with other “Pony Club” countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia.

Costs:

Members are expected to pay all dues and lesson fees in a timely manner. The current fee schedule is currently available on the club website. Members are not required to own a horse, but are expected to have access to one for meetings. Arrangements for a horse (for those who do not own horses) are made privately by the member, and cost will vary according to the lease agreement. Be aware that a leased pony may not always be the best match for your child, and ideally you should seek out a mount that meets your child’s needs, and suits his/her personality and ability level. Please consult the D.C. for advice on leasing a pony. Additional costs would include the cost of attending rallies, purchase of appropriate clothing for riding, books and study materials, and equipment for horse care, such as tack, tack cleaning supplies, buckets, etc. An SEI/ASTM approved equestrian safety helmet is required, as well as appropriate boots for riding. Club members also like to have additional items such as club t-shirts, helmet covers etc. The club does furnish matching saddle pads for team games competitions and quadrilles or drill team presentations.

Membership requirements:

There is no minimum age requirement at the present for the Four Rivers Pony Club. However, it is unusual for a child to have the maturity and physical stamina for many of the activities prior to age 6 or 7. Mounts should be suitable to the age, size and experience level of the youth, and may be ponies or horses. Stallions are not allowed, and mounts must be at least 5 years of age. The mount is considered 1 year of age on January 1st the year after foaling. Any mount that presents a significant safety problem for the member or other members may be denied permission to participate in club activities. Please review the national USPC policy on mounts if you have any questions about this. B, H, H-A or A level members may use a 4 year old mount at non-competitive instructional activities.

Members are expected to have the horse receive regular wormings and vaccinations. They are expected to have clean, safe tack and clean, neat, appropriate attire for lessons. A Coggins test for Equine Infectious Anemia is required annually. A current Medical Release for the member must be on file with the club.

Membership fees are due at the time the member joins, and the member may not participate in mounted meetings until the dues and Membership Application are received by the USPC National Office. Lesson fees are due at the time the member joins and annually thereafter on March 1st.

Questions?

If you have any further questions, please contact the District Commissioner. The current D.C. is:

Kelly Azar , phone: 270.443.2676, [email: kelzar@bellsouth.net](mailto:kelzar@bellsouth.net)

Please review the Procedure for Admission of New Members if you are interested in joining our club. If you decide to join, your next step is to read the file: "I'm Ready to Join: What Do I Do Now?"

All members and their parent/guardians are required to sign a USPC membership form that states that they are familiar with USPC, regional, and club policies and agree to abide by those policies. There is required orientation so that members can become familiar with these policies and give informed confirmation when they sign. You will learn more about the orientation and specific steps in completing your paperwork in "I'm Ready to Join".

Pony Club is a wonderful, fun, and educational experience for young people. They will learn many important life lessons as well as have the opportunity to share their love of horses with a peer group. This is in addition to all the wonderful educational opportunities that will help them develop into competent, well-rounded horse people. We look forward to hearing from you!

Happy Trails!

Website: www.fourrivers.ponyclub.org

Regional: www.midsouthponyclub.org

National: www.ponyclub.org,