

YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES

USDF offers much more than Jr/YR clinics. Discover our full roster of youth programs.

BY JAN SCARBROUGH



TAKE IT FROM THE TOP: Olympian and US Equestrian assistant youth coach Charlotte Bredahl-Baker visits with young dressage enthusiasts during a USDF Junior/Young Rider Clinic

Our children are 20 percent of our population, but 100 percent of our future.

—Richard Riley, former US Secretary of Education

Although Riley's quote is about the US education system, it can also be applied to the youth members of USDF. Youths constitute a small percentage of USDF's total membership—at the end of 2016, there were 17,564 participating members and only 1,965 youth participating members—but unless young dressage enthusiasts remain involved in the sport and the organization as they move into adulthood, American dressage will be sorely lacking in both athletes and leadership.

The USDF mission statement is “Dedicated to education, recognition of achievement, and promotion of dressage.” Youth programs, which are key components of the USDF Education Department, help develop youth members into competent riders and the sport's leaders of tomorrow. These programs include educational opportunities, awards and recognition, scholarships and grants, and competitions. Here's an overview of what the USDF has to offer.

Educational Opportunities

USDF's educational programs are aimed not just at teaching young people to ride better, but also at introducing them to other aspects of the equine industry and at helping to prepare them for a future in the dressage community.

For the aspiring dressage pro. The USDF/USEF **Young Rider Graduate Program** targets those young adults who are transitioning from the YR ranks to the professional world of teaching, training, managing a dressage business, and possibly international competition. This biennial program, which is designed for USDF members between the ages of 20 and 28, is a weekend classroom seminar focusing on topics of interest to those planning a career in the equine industry. The Dressage Foundation and US Equestrian provide funding support.

1 *Mark your calendar:* January 13-14, 2018, West Palm Beach, FL.

For the sport-horse enthusiast. USDF has developed a program for youth and young adults to gain sport-horse-related education at some of the nation's top breeding farms. These seminars, held over two days, incorporate aspects of mare and stallion management, the handling and training of foals and young horses, judging conformation and movement, and showing horses in hand.

1 *Mark your calendar:* Check the USDF website for upcoming opportunities in 2018.

For the FEI-level junior or young rider. The USDF **Junior/Young Rider Clinic Series** offers exceptional opportunities for Jr/YRs to work with such top instructor/trainers as George Williams, Charlotte Bredahl-Baker,

Anne Gribbons, and Jeremy Steinberg. Each clinic consists of two days of private lessons, theory sessions, and auditing.

1 *Mark your calendar:* The next Jr/YR clinic will be in Region 5 (Parker, CO), October 7-8, 2017, with George Williams.



TOMORROW'S PROS: 2016 USDF/USEF Young Rider Graduate Program participants group photo



TOP INSTRUCTION: Olympian and USDF Jr/YR clinic instructor Charlotte Bredahl-Baker works with Molly O'Brien on Telurico

For the kid who's getting started. The newest USDF youth program is the **USDF Youth Outreach Clinics**. The goal of this program is to introduce our “grass roots” USDF youth members who are dedicated dressage riders but not

Did You Know?

Many of USDF's educational programs, including the Junior/Young Rider Clinics, are open to auditors—of all ages, not just youth members. To learn more about auditing opportunities, visit usdf.org and click on the Education tab.

yet competing at the FEI level to the USDF “youth pipeline” and associated opportunities. Youth Outreach Clinics, which are held in conjunction with USDF’s Jr/YR clinics, offer a glimpse into the FEI and Jr/YR level of instruction and riding. Participants receive private lessons with the Youth Outreach Clinic instructor and also audit the rides and participate in the theory sessions of the Jr/YR Clinic.

1 *Mark your calendar:* Watch the Youth Outreach Clinics page on the USDF website (under the Education tab) for listings of upcoming events.

Awards and Recognition

Everyone likes to be recognized for outstanding achievements. USDF is pleased to be able to offer some special opportunities for recognition and awards to our youth members, who never fail to impress us!

For all-around achievers. The Youth Dressage Rider Recognition Pin Program was introduced in 2015. This program encourages youth members to participate in activities “outside the ring.” Earning a pin requires a GPA of at least 2.5, 16 hours of equine education, and 20 hours of volunteer service (not restricted to equine activities) as well as riding scores. This program proved quite popular in its first year, with 32 youth members qualifying to receive pins.

1 *Mark your calendar:* The program year runs from July 1 to June 30.

For exceptional sportsmanship. The Shining Star Award acknowledges those youth members who have exemplified “going above and beyond” the sportsmanship that is expected of all youth. The USDF Youth Programs Committee defines good sportsmanship as including the traits of courage, good judgment, integrity, kindness, respect, perseverance, responsibility, and self-discipline. Shining Star Award nominations must be based on one specific outstanding act of sportsmanship witnessed.

1 *Mark your calendar:* Nominations may be made at any time. Find the nomination form on the USDF website under the Youth tab.

For outstanding volunteerism. The prestigious national USDF Youth Volunteer of the Year award recognizes a USDF youth member who demonstrates a commitment to USDF’s mission through exceptional volunteer effort and dedication. Any current USDF participating or group member may nominate a deserving youth for this award. Nominees must be current USDF youth members.

1 *Mark your calendar:* Nomination deadline is August 31.



YOUTH VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR: 2016 honoree *Sophia Chavonelle* (left) with USDF youth committee reps *Roz Kinstler* and *Roberta Williams*, and USDF Youth Programs Advisory Subcommittee chair *Catherine Chamberlain*

For national-level sportsmanship and promotion of equestrian sport. USDF youth participating members may apply for the **USDF nomination for the US Equestrian Youth Sportsman’s Award**. The Youth Sportsman’s Award was designed by equestrian sports’ US national governing body, US Equestrian, to help develop leaders in the equine industry from all the US Equestrian breeds and disciplines, including dressage. Each year, the USDF puts forward a nominee for this national award, which annually honors a US Equestrian junior member who demonstrates an ongoing commitment and dedication to both US Equestrian and the breed or discipline affiliate organization through their promotion of the horse. In 2016, the USDF national nominee, *Brianna Relucio (CA)*, was named the reserve overall winner of the US Equestrian Youth Sportsman’s Award.

1 *Mark your calendar:* Apply to the USDF by September 5.

For artists and Pony Clubbers. In addition to the programs I’ve mentioned, the USDF offers youth members the opportunity to participate in the annual **USDF Arts Contest** and to earn **US Pony Clubs/USDF Dressage Recognition Awards**.

1 *Mark your calendar:* Arts contest entry deadline is July 1. USPC/USDF awards application deadline is November 15 (submit to the USPC national office).

Scholarships and Grants

Two USDF programs offer financial assistance to deserving youth members who seek to further their dressage educations.

For future dressage leaders. The **Youth Convention Scholarship** program encourages USDF youth participating members to attend the Adequan®/USDF Annual

Convention. Each year, as many as four scholarships of up to \$1,000 each may be awarded, to help defray the expenses associated with attending the convention. Recipients must each write an essay about the experience. Past recipients agree that the convention experience is memorable not only for the education, but also for the new friends they made.

1 Mark your calendar: Application deadline is August 31.

For Shining Stars. The **Ravel Education Grants** were developed as part of the USDF Shining Star Award program (described above). All USDF Shining Star Award recipients who are current USDF participating members are eligible to apply for these grants, which may be used to cover expenses associated with attending an educational dressage event of the winner's choice. Up to four \$500 Ravel Education Grants may be awarded each year.

1 Mark your calendar: Those eligible to apply will receive a letter and an application form (due September 30) from the USDF office.

Competitions

For team players. Youth Regional Team Competitions are open to anyone age 21 and under riding between Introductory Level and Grand Prix. These competitions feature

Excellence in Equitation

The purpose of the **USEF/USDF Dressage Seat Medal Program** is to promote and reward correct seat, position, and use of aids in dressage for youth riders. There are two ways a competitor can qualify for the USDF Dressage Seat Medal Semi-Finals: by earning one qualifying score of 70% or above in any open Dressage Seat Equitation class, or by qualifying for the Great American Insurance Group/USDF Regional Championships. The Semi-Finals are split into two age divisions: 13 and under, and 14 through 18. Riders may compete in any region, and the qualifying period for the Semi-Finals is August 1, 2016 through July 31, 2017. Riders placing in the top two in the Semi-Finals are automatically invited to the Finals. The 2017 USEF Dressage Seat Medal Finals will take place at the Lamplight Equestrian Center on August 24-27.

an educational component as well as fun team-based activities, such as stall decorating and costumes.

1 Mark your calendar: Check the USDF events calendar (online at usdf.org) for dates. ➔



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NAJYRC WINNERS: 2016 Young Rider Individual dressage medalists Rachel Robinson (silver), Nicholas Hansen (gold), and Lexy Donaldson (bronze)

For equitation enthusiasts. The USEF/USDF Dressage Seat Medal Program encourages excellence in equitation and strives to develop a solid foundation for future success in the international dressage arena. To qualify for the USEF Dressage Seat Medal Finals, riders must compete at a USDF Dressage Seat Medal Semi-Finals, held at a Great American/USDF Regional Championships. The top two from each of two age divisions receive invitations to the Finals.

1 Mark your calendar: The 2017 USEF Dressage Seat Medal Finals will be held August 24-27 in Wayne, IL. Semi-Finals held at this year's Great American/USDF Regional Championships will serve as qualifiers for the 2018 Finals.

For FEI juniors and young riders. Top juniors and young riders from the North Americas strive to qualify for their annual continental championships, the Adequan®/FEI North American Junior and Young Rider Championships presented by Gotham North. In dressage, US riders take part in the USDF North American Junior and Young Rider Dressage Championships portion of the NAJYRC, which also offers competition in the *Fédération Equestre Internationale* (FEI) disciplines of eventing, jumping, para-equestrian dressage, reining, and endurance.

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1 *Mark your calendar:* The 2017 NAJYRC dressage competition will be held July 18-23 in Saugerties, NY. Check the USDF website for rules and information about the 2018 qualifying period.

Get Involved!

We encourage our youth members, their coaches, and our local USDF leaders to check out all of these programs. The USDF would love to see even more participation in its youth programs, as we feel they definitely add to the development of our future leaders.

For more information about USDF's youth programs, visit usdf.org or contact the youth-programs liaison at youth@usdf.org or (859) 971-2277. ▲

Jan Scarbrough is a USDF senior education coordinator.

Podcast Alert



Listen to episode 158, the Youth Special Edition, with Adrienne Lyle, Catherine Chamberlain, and Christine Traurig at usdf.podbean.com.

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