

Meet the Candidates

Get to know who's running for USDF Executive Board office

At the 2019 Adequan®/USDF National Convention in Savannah, Georgia, in December, the USDF Board of Governors will elect seven members of the USDF Executive Board: vice president; secretary; and directors of Regions 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9.

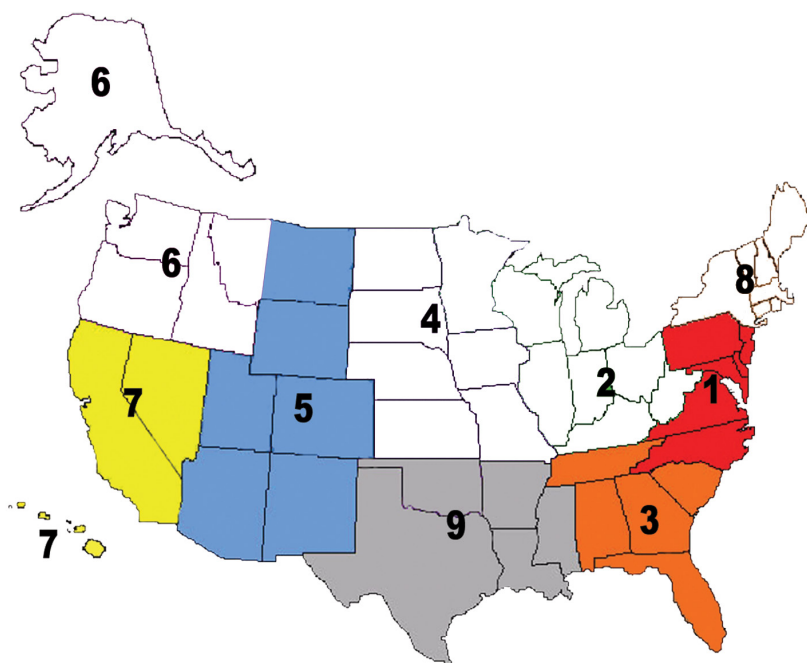
Interim vice president Terry Wilson, a former Region 7 director who was appointed to that position by USDF president (and former VP) Lisa Gorretta after Gorretta was elected president last year, steps down at the end of 2019. The USDF thanks Wilson for her willingness to step in to serve once again. Running to fill the VP's seat are two candidates: former USDF Region 2 director Ken Levy and California Dressage Society past president Kevin Reinig.

Current USDF secretary Margaret Freeman is running unopposed for reelection, as are the regional-director candidates, all of whom are also incumbents: Region 1 director Bettina Longaker, Region 3 director Sue Bender, Region 5 director Heather Petersen, Region 7 director Carol Tice, and Region 9 director Sherry Guess.

Like all organizations, USDF needs committed leadership in order to enjoy continued growth and thoughtful direction. The USDF Executive Board functions as a cohesive team and strives to further the organization's mission and goals. For the 2019 election cycle, the USDF Nominating Committee asked each candidate to submit a brief biography and to answer a series of questions. The candidates' responses are below.

Officer Candidates

The president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer are officer positions. The candidates for USDF vice president and secretary were asked to respond to the following questions:



TO BE DETERMINED: The USDF Board of Governors will elect a vice president and secretary as well as directors of the odd-numbered regions

1. *What special professional or technical skills would you bring to the Executive Board to help implement the strategic plan of the organization (e.g., financial, legal, business, management, technology, human resources)?*
2. *How has your involvement in local, regional, and national USDF activities promoted/enhanced dressage regionally and nationally?*
3. *What specific goals and objectives do you have for USDF?*
4. *How will you, as an officer, encourage greater member participation and help make USDF the "go to" organization for dressage in the United States?*

VICE PRESIDENT

Candidate: Ken Levy

I have been involved in equestrian sports for more than 30 years, training and competing in dressage and eventing. After focusing on dressage, I transitioned from an adult amateur to professional. I have competed through



Grand Prix, earning my USDF bronze and silver medals; am a US Equestrian “r” judge (currently an “R” testing candidate); and am a USDF-certified instructor through First Level. I am also a lifetime member of the Masters of Foxhounds Association. My wife, Barbara, and I own and

operate Legacy Farm, a 14-stall training and boarding operation in Noblesville, Indiana. Legacy has been operating continuously for over 20 years.

It has been my honor to have served on the USDF Executive Board for nine years as the Region 2 director. Additionally, I have led or sat on the following committees and task forces: USDF Membership, Marketing, Strategic Planning, and Programs Evaluation Committees; most recently, I led the USDF/USEF task force evaluating the junior/young rider divisions to help create a more level playing field for our youth. I have been a USDF GMO president (Indiana Dressage Society) and director for more than 25 years. Educationally, I have earned a PhD in pathology and an MBA and worked for an international medical company for 25 years. After I retired in 2012, I accepted a position as a part-time associate professor of medicine at the Indiana University School of Medicine, focusing on pharmacogenetic clinical research. If elected, I will do my best to serve our members’ best interests.

Responses to questions:

1. My corporate experience as a senior executive has helped me develop and establish a myriad of skills, including the following:

- Careful and respectful listening
- Ability to lead high-performance teams
- Deliver positive results in a timely manner
- An ability to understand and manage large, complex challenges and budgets
- Effectively negotiate, using a “win-win” approach
- Communicate clearly and concisely
- Excellent presentation skills for all levels of participants and group sizes.

2. As a competitor, judge, trainer, and barn owner, I have a holistic view of our organization and sport. As a past GMO president and current director, I understand the opportunities and challenges faced by GMOs today. As the regional director, I brought regional issues to the attention of the board and staff. As a member of the Executive Board, I provided regional input for initiatives that impacted membership, education and competition.

3. My goals if elected:

- Ensure open and timely communication
- Enhance GMO visibility and input to the Executive Board
- Support educational opportunities, especially those for adult amateurs
- Work with USDF staff to enhance the member experience when interfacing with the home office.

4. I will work collaboratively with the president, board, and staff to continue building relationships with other equestrian organizations. I support modifying and expanding our online presence and educational offerings, with emphasis on adult amateur and youth riders. I will support low-cost, local programs utilizing USDF-certified instructor/trainers. I will also continue to be a strong advocate for the use of social media to expand the reach of USDF’s mission.

Candidate: Kevin Reinig



My wife, Ericka, and I own and operate KEFA Performance Horses in Wilton, California. We train horses and riders of all levels, traveling to shows throughout the year, including the Markel/USEF Young Horse Championships and the US Dressage Finals.

I began eventing when I was 13, and two years later became an auction groom at a Hanoverian breeding farm. I spent summers working with mares and foals and helping with breeding. I became assistant breeding manager, working my way through high school and college. After earning a degree in finance, I worked for a community bank that focused on agriculture.

I enjoyed my work at the bank, but I missed the horses. After two years, I returned to the breeding farm. When the owners retired, Ericka and I established our own dressage training, sales, and breeding business. We started young horses for sale and competition, cultivated business relationships with partners in Germany importing horses for sale, and managed a breeding program. After ten years, we decided to focus on training dressage horses and riders.

For the past nine years I have been a member of the Executive Board of the California Dressage Society (CDS), including serving as president from 2013 to 2018. As a board member, I chaired the Budget and Finance Committee and the Championship Show Committee; I also served on or oversaw many other committees. During this time, I also worked at horse shows throughout California, including many CDIs and the

FEI World Cup Finals in Las Vegas, giving me the opportunity to meet directly with many CDS members.

Responses to questions:

1. I bring a strong background in finance and business management to the Executive Board. I have worked in the horse industry for over 29 years.

2. My work on the CDS board and as CDS president, along with the work I do at the shows in our region, keep me in touch with what is going on in the sport of dressage, including the direction the membership would like to see the sport develop. I am constantly looking for ways for the local GMOs to support the national programs and to work with other GMOs across all regions to coordinate the promotion of dressage.

3. I want to work to promote the growth of dressage, both locally and nationally, with education and competition opportunities.

4. My mission is to keep people focused on the fun in the sport of dressage. Keeping people focused on this idea stimulates excitement and participation. I want to work to improve the lines of communication between USDF and the membership to allow the Executive Board to advance the sport of dressage.

SECRETARY

Incumbent: Margaret Freeman



Margaret Freeman is a USEF Senior ("S") dressage judge living in Tryon, North Carolina. She has been showing

dressage as a member of USDF for 45 years and has been a judge for three decades. She is a freelance writer/edi-

tor for horse magazines, has covered the equestrian events at seven Olympics for the Associated Press, and is on the editorial advisory committee of *USDF Connection*. She's on the committee of the Youth Dressage Festival (New York) and was on the founding committees of CDCTA (Virginia) and Dressage at Devon (Pennsylvania).

Margaret was born and raised in Portland, Oregon. She has a bachelor's degree in dramatic literature from Mills College in Oakland, California, and a master's degree in journalism from the University of Missouri in Columbia. She's lived in five different USDF regions (and belonged to nine different GMOs) as she and her husband, Henry, moved to work at various newspapers around the country. They settled in North Carolina in 2012 after spending two decades in the New York/New Jersey area.

Responses to questions:

1. My extensive background in writing and editing provides the skills appropriate for the office of USDF secretary. I have wide experience in show organizing and in public speaking. I understand dressage shows and US dressage organizations from every angle and level. My travels around the country as a judge have helped me gain perspective on regional differences and current concerns that need to be addressed further in the next three years.

2. In addition to my two terms as USDF secretary, I've served on several ad hoc USDF committees and on the boards of several GMOs. I've helped Dressage4Kids for two decades in a variety of educational programs, in addition to the Youth Dressage Festival. I believe the strength of the USDF lies in the health of local GMOs and that dressage enthusiasts should promote local unity through GMOs.

3. I want membership in USDF

to grow, of course, but it's also important to serve the members we already have, to encourage them as both supporters of the federation and of dressage in general. We need to devise programs at every level that members can find useful and enjoyable. I would encourage programs that expand the understanding of dressage to other riding disciplines, as well.

4. One priority is to help GMOs attract members locally. USDF is a federation, an organization of organizations. GMOs should be a resource that anyone in a specific locale finds helpful in their riding lives and thus also gathers dressage enthusiasts together.

Regional Director Candidates

The candidates for regional director were asked to respond to the following questions:

1. *What special professional or technical skills (e.g., financial, legal, business, management, technology, human resources) would you bring to the Executive Board to help implement the strategic plan of the organization?*

2. *How has your involvement in local, regional, and national USDF activities promoted and enhanced dressage, both regionally and nationally?*

3. *What specific goals and objectives do you have for USDF and your region if you should be elected regional director?*

4. *How will you, as a regional director, encourage greater participation by each member within your region?*

REGION 1 DIRECTOR

Incumbent: Bettina Longaker

Bettina Longaker has over four decades of experience in horse

ownership, riding, competition management, and GMO leadership. Her history includes running unlicensed USDF Youth and Adult Team Competitions, FEI North American Youth Championships, Great American/USDF Regional Championships, and US Dressage Finals. She has also served as president of two Virginia Dressage Association chapters and of VADA itself.

Raised in New York, Bettina's formal training as a rider started at Cornell University with Charles Lent. He hired her when she was 17, making her the youngest instructor in the Cornell Equitation Department.

After moving to Virginia in 1976, Bettina earned a BS in information systems from Virginia Commonwealth University. Her training in dressage ensued, and she earned her USDF bronze medal in 1985 and became an L graduate with distinction in 1993. Also in 1993, she volunteered to work as secretary at one of the largest East Coast dressage shows at that time. The experience paved the way for many more years of volunteering.

Bettina lives in Somerset, Virginia, where she operates her business, Scripts & Rides LLC. When asked if she wanted to continue as Region 1 director, she responded, "Yes! I feel like I've just figured out the position. Being on the USDF board is very different from other positions I have held, and I hope to contribute even more to the region during my next term."

Responses to questions:

1. By background in IT both professionally and within my dressage work, I have honed my skill of working with different personality types. This gives me invaluable insight into the confusion that many feel with the never-ending evolving technology.

2. For the last four decades, I have run the gambit of shows,

from schooling shows to the US Dressage Finals. Involvement from the ground up has helped me to understand the needs of the varying levels of dressage riders across our nation. We have to remember that as show management, we are service providers who have the responsibility to help our riders understand their obligations to themselves, and to understand the requirements they must fulfill to succeed in their dressage endeavors.

3. I have two large concerns: "Who will take over for the aging generation?" and "Are we doing enough for the everyday competitor in today's world?" I will continue to solicit from my region's members their views and opinions and share their views at the Executive Board level.

4. Everyone one says it: Communication is the primary tool we have to get participation. In this busy world of e-mails, texts, and numerous online methods of reaching out, I have tried to communicate efficiently without bombarding my region's members to distraction, while always being available for their inquiries.

REGION 3 DIRECTOR

Incumbent: Sue Bender



I grew up in the Northeast doing 4-H, hunter/jumpers, and then intercollegiate before switching to dressage after graduating with a business degree. After that I met my husband, an Army officer, and moved around the world for the next 28 years, working as an Army auditor and on spouse club boards while riding in my spare time. We had six assignments in Region 3,

and at the first were asked to attend the USDF convention in Texas in the 1980s. It was a blast, and I felt totally welcomed and at home in the region. With the next five times in the region, I became more involved as a GMO board member, served on regional and national committees (including chairing the USDF Historical Recognition Committee), participating-member delegate, coordinator and *chef* for numerous North American Youth Championships teams, worked on the first USDF convention in Savannah, and was Region 3 director. I have been an active competitor as time allowed and earned my silver medal in 2000. In 2002, I took time off to support my husband's assignment in Germany for a few years. I have bred several horses, with one doing the Young and Developing Horse programs, and learned a lot from the experience. We are now settled on our farm in Aiken, South Carolina, with our three generations of mares, seven rescue dogs, and four barn cats. Now I am finally competing as an adult amateur with my mares, but still juggling daily life.

Responses to questions:

1. As an internal control auditor, I am able to analyze things to determine the condition, cause, and effect, and then work to create a strategic plan.

2. Starting at the grass-roots level, I have been involved in numerous programs, either participating or helping to create. This gives me a better understanding of what works and the areas that need improvement. By doing this and then talking with all different types of members, you can make improvements to current programs and create new ideas that can be implemented. An example is getting our youth involved at the convention, so in Savannah we established the Saturday-morning youth session. ➔

3. Region 3 is unique within the organization, and in the region we have areas that are also unique. The goal is for all of us to talk and work together to make improvements for all, from the grass roots to our elite riders. We need to understand one another and be considerate. While we cannot always please everyone, we need to listen and work to balance needs. An important thing is to praise members' amazing accomplishments and be head cheerleader.

4. I hope members see me as an individual who leads by example, having no problem doing the smallest task, like mucking stalls. Then I try to listen to everyone. And finally to try to get members to understand that there are programs out there for them and to help them understand the rules so they can succeed.

REGION 5 DIRECTOR

Incumbent: Heather Petersen



Heather Petersen was born and raised in Dubuque, Iowa. She attended Iowa State University, earning

degrees in music (oboe performance) and animal science. Heather met and married her husband, Michael, during college and moved to Colorado soon after. They have two children, Elizabeth and Sarah, and a menagerie of animals on their farm. Before working in the horse show industry, Heather worked in restaurant management with the McDonald's Corporation and private franchises.

Heather is an active dressage competitor; the mother of two active Jr/YR dressage competitors; a USEF "R" technical delegate; an FEI Level 1 steward; a current or past member

of several USDF and USEF committees; and manager of USDF Regional Championships, Rocky Mountain Dressage Society Championships, and CDIs. She is the secretary/manager for many other successful national competitions, schooling shows, local shows, and horse trials; and a past president, education chair, and current secretary for the Rocky Mountain Dressage Society. Heather has organized USDF L programs, USEF "r" dressage judge programs, and several educational symposiums. She has also served several years as the USDF Region 5 Young Riders team *chef*.

In her spare time, Heather loves to ride her horses, read lots of books, throw darts, and hang out with her family and animals. She has enjoyed getting to show in other parts of the region in recent years and connecting with the Region 5 membership.

Responses to questions:

1. While on the board of the Rocky Mountain Dressage Society, and in my previous terms serving on the USDF Executive Board and several other large nonprofit organizations, I've worked through budgeting, restructuring, long-term planning, and membership retention. Running restaurants and my own horse-show-management business has given me experience in management, cost analysis, and budgeting, as well as an awareness of the importance of teamwork.

2. Having served and currently serving on quite a few USDF committees, I have helped to provide valuable resources for dressage competitions and competitors. By organizing judging programs and other educational programs, I have worked to increase the dressage knowledge base. I've enjoyed working with our juniors and young riders, helping to grow the sport and creating potential open and adult-amateur competitors.

3. I would like to see the USDF maintain and develop more diverse educational programs to meet the changing needs of our membership. Marketing has improved recently, but we need to make sure we are continuing to offer desired programs.

For our region, I will focus on keeping up good communication, finding more potential venues for our Regional Championships, and helping our diverse membership meet their goals.

4. I will continue to encourage more involvement in USDF regional and national activities as well as GMO programs. I'm excited to promote the new USDF Regional Schooling Show Awards Program and feel it will serve a new portion of our membership and help with growth and retention, as well. The USDF offers many programs, and there is something for all of our members.

REGION 7 DIRECTOR

Incumbent: Carol Tice



I started in dressage to improve my Western horses and never left! My lessons started with a local person

who was recommended by the instructor at my soon-to-be husband's boarding stable: Sherry Guess. Her tutelage and recommendations on continuing my dressage and riding education continue today. Through Sherry, I became involved with my local chapter of the California Dressage Society (CDS). Since then I've been volunteering in every aspect of producing a show, on my local chapter board, on the CDS Executive

Board as a regional director, vice president, and president. When I was not to continue on the CDS EB, I found myself being more involved with USDF than just being on the GMO Committee: I was elected Region 7 director.

My days are normally busy with shared duties alongside my husband, Jim, taking care of our riding-school horses, his hobby farm of registered miniature Herefords, and our pet pigs and goat, along with the two dogs and two cats.

I have been the volunteer coordinator for the four-ring Del Mar National Dressage Show for many years and am the current VC for the USDF Region 7/CDS Championships. I've used dressage theory for all of my students, both English and Western, for my over 30 years of teaching beginners and competing riders. While my dream of riding a Prix St. Georges test has yet to be realized, my horses are happy learning and moving up the levels using the training scale, albeit in a Western saddle these days.

Responses to questions:

1. I have been involved with managing and running a small business that my husband and I own for 35 years. Prior to working with my husband, I was an outside sales rep, which required finding and keeping new clients.

2. My involvement with my chapter of the California Dressage Society (CDS) started, and continues, as a volunteer at shows. Through the years I moved up to being on the chapter board and then onto the CDS Executive Board. I have been a chapter chair, a CDS regional director, CDS vice president, and CDS president. I have worked as the volunteer coordinator for the CDS Championships/USDF Regional Championships for the last two years.

3. My goal is to help increase GMO members within my region and to work on the communication lines between GMO members and USDF. The cost of showing has seemingly had an impact on USDF/USEF shows, but the implementation of the USDF Regional Schooling Show Awards Program could be a benefit to all organizations.

4. Considering that many members are comfortable with the status quo of programs and offerings by both USDF and their GMOs, I'd like to continue work on committees that develop new and update current member programs.

REGION 9 DIRECTOR

Incumbent: Sherry Guess



Growing up in southern California, I was introduced to dressage activities through the California

Dressage Society (CDS). Grateful for the education provided, I felt a need to give back to the sport. Within the Pomona Chapter of CDS I served as newsletter editor, show manager (back when you didn't have to be a professional manager to do it!), and president. Later, I served on the CDS board before moving to Oklahoma.

In Oklahoma I have served on the board for many years, several of them as president. For approximately two decades I have organized volunteers for our recognized shows and am highly interested in providing educational opportunities for our members. I have earned my USDF bronze medal and am a USDF-certified instructor and an L graduate. I have served for six years as USDF Region 9 director.

I attended my first USDF convention in Lincoln, Nebraska, and was able to visit Boomer Printing, which at that time housed the "closet" from which Lowell Boomer, aided by Ruth Arvanette, ran USDF! USDF is truly an organization of volunteers, and they are to be highly prized.

I served as chair of the USDF GMO Committee for 12 years and in 2010 was presented with the USDF Volunteer of the Year award.

Responses to questions:

1. Although I originally worked as an educator, I have been involved in the equine industry for more than 30 years, running my own training facility and now a private barn. Although this doesn't directly relate to the USDF strategic plan, it has taught me how to organize and manage events, activities, and personnel.

2. As noted in my bio, I have worked through USDF on the chapter level as well as with GMOs on both the West Coast and the Midwest. On the GMO Council, I worked with GMOs across the nation to resolve problems and produce a satisfactory outcome.

3. I plan to use live streaming to make our regional meetings more accessible. I hope that more familiarity with the process will lead to members' feeling able to participate. We are very proud of being able to host the only CDI not on a coast. Participation by our GMOs is crucial to the process. We hope to encourage other regions to work together on projects of this type.

4. I will continue to work with the Region 9 GMOs on an individual basis to encourage greater involvement of their membership in our regional activities.

