



The United States Pony Clubs, Inc. E-News from National

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More information is needed:

Why Change Letter 2

Please help us by sharing your opinion regarding the following questions. Send your responses to communications@ponyclub.org with the subject: **WHY CHANGE 2?**

1. MEMBERSHIP DEMOGRAPHICS

Currently, at least 70% of our membership at any time are Ds and unrated. Over half of our members do not progress beyond their D ratings. The average member spends 2-3 years as a member, so most of our members don't get to participate in most of the rating and rally experiences that we broadly consider our program.

- **WHAT DOES THE LOCAL MEMBERSHIP & VOLUNTEER KNOW ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION BEYOND THE CLUB?**
- **WHAT DO PARENTS WANT FROM PONY CLUB BEYOND WHAT THEY ARE GETTING FROM THEIR CLUB TODAY?**
- **WHAT DO MEMBERS WANT FROM PONY CLUB BEYOND WHAT IS CURRENTLY AVAILABLE TO THEM TODAY?**

2. USPC PROGRAM

Most small clubs (10 or less members) are not delivering the full USPC program; by program we include the peer-to-peer shared learning experience; the depth and length of exposure to all rating levels and ages; regular rallies, ratings and clinics; and unsupervised "together time" in the barn & around horses with friends.

- **HOW CAN WE PROVIDE MEMBERS FROM SMALL CLUBS THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN AND BENEFIT FROM THESE ESSENTIALS OF THE PROGRAM?**

3. CLUB SIZE

- a. One third of our organization is made up of small clubs. Leaders of these clubs tend to believe that 10 is the maximum number of young members they can handle. They do not want more volunteers to manage or more financial resources which would engender the duty to provide more program content and experiences. In the past twenty years, we have doubled the number of regions and more than doubled the number of clubs, yet overall membership has hovered around 10,000. The costs of administering this proliferation of clubs and regions have increased substantially. Dues cover only a little more than one third of membership costs. The annual fund has to make up the difference, yet donations to the annual fund are small with regard to average gift size and with regard to percentage of member families who participate.
- **TODAY'S PARENTS ARE UNCOMFORTABLE WITH UNSUPERVISED PLAY FOR ALL AGES. THEY HAVE LITTLE EXPERIENCE IN MENTORING GROUPS OF YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH LOOSE OVERSIGHT THAT ALLOWS THE GROUP TO MAKE MISTAKES & RIGHT ITSELF. HOW DO WE CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE KIDS GET THIS CRITICAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE AND ADULTS LEARN HOW TO MANAGE IT PRODUCTIVELY WITHOUT INTERFERING?**

- b. Gatekeeping – limiting who and how many can join a club – is a definite threat to the entire organization. We have been losing an average of 2% of our traditional members a year since 2000, and, for the first time in the organization’s history, we have been losing the 10-14 year-old members. (Ages 10-14 are what many USPC graduates define as having been the critical years for their participation in the organization – the years that USPC had the most impact on who they became as adults.) Both the fact that the members we are losing are not being replaced, and that club membership is being restricted, prevent our organization from reaching out to and enrolling new members from perhaps untraditional backgrounds. This also limits the opportunities for current members to have a true peer-to-peer learning and team experience. Limiting club membership contravenes such core values of the organization as making opportunities for learning and the Pony Club experience accessible and available to the larger community. Gatekeeping extends to volunteers, graduates and the larger horse community. It excludes kids and families who would otherwise make good members and benefit from membership.

- **WHY ARE THOSE WHO STAY STAYING AND THOSE WHO GO GOING?**
- **WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP VOLUNTEERS DEAL WITH THE CRITICAL MASS OF YOUNG FOLKS IN A MANNER THAT ALLOWS THEM TO PROBLEM SOLVE, DEVELOP ORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS, AND INCLUDE MEMBERS AS PART OF THE CLUB AND REGIONAL STRUCTURE?**

4. TEAM EXPERIENCE

Team play and teamwork are repeatedly defined by our members and their parents as being among the most valued experiences that PC offers. This means that rallies and teambuilding at the club level are essential to implementation of the organization’s mission and core values. But, if many clubs cannot provide these opportunities, then we must find alternative access to teamwork experiences for our members.

- **HOW DO WE FOSTER RALLIES CLOSER TO HOME AND MORE FREQUENTLY IN THE YEAR TO GET MORE MEMBER PARTICIPATION AND LESS TRAVEL COSTS?**
- **ARE THERE WAYS THAT WE CAN OFFER TEAM BUILDING AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPING ACTIVITIES IN ADDITION TO RALLIES THAT CAN BE COST EFFECTIVE AND REACH A LARGER PORTION OF OUR MEMBERSHIP?**

Thank you so much for your input.

Please respond via email to:

communications@ponyclub.org

*using the subject line WHY CHANGE
or in writing to Peggy Entrekin, Executive Director,
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Lexington, KY 40511.*