



THE UNITED STATES PONY CLUBS, INC. PRESS RELEASE

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U.S. Pony Clubs Team Wins Nations Cup at Inter-Pacific Exchange Held in New Zealand

March 16, 2023 (Lexington, KY) — The United States Pony Clubs, Inc. (USPC or Pony Club) was proud to send a team to New Zealand to compete in the Inter-Pacific Exchange (IPE), held January 8–26, 2023. The USPC team joined Pony Club teams from Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, and New Zealand to train, compete, and experience the local culture. During the exchange, teams participated in a combined test and rode in the Nations Cup show jumping competition on horses provided by the host country.

“International exchanges such as this are just one of the many incredible experiences available to Pony Club members,” said USPC Executive Director Teresa Woods. “These programs are more than the trip of a lifetime—they bring out the best in teamwork, leadership, and sportsmanship, and offer a special connection across countries and cultures through a shared love of horses and the strong belief in good horsemanship that Pony Club represents internationally.”

The USPC team won with the lowest cumulative score of the top three riders in each round of jumping, claiming the Nations Cup. Team Australia finished second, followed by New Zealand in third, and Canada rounding out the fourth place slot.

USPC team members included Keely Bechtol (Midsouth Region), Nora Goldfarb (Middle Tennessee Pony Club, Midsouth Region), Sierra Shurtz (Piedmont Pony Club, South Region), and Emily Thomas (Greenville Foothills Pony Club, Carolina Region), along with alternate Alexis DiPasqua (Radnor Hunt Pony Club, Eastern Pennsylvania Region), and Team Manager Alex Ambelang, an H-A alum from the Big Sky Region. The team was coached by Jennifer Merrick-Brooks, an A-level Pony Club alum who teaches and trains in Michigan.

“The team [members] were very prepared, amazing, and coachable individuals, and our manager was truly an asset in completing the team,” shares Merrick-Brooks. “They were fantastic ambassadors for the USPC and their country. The team’s fundraising accomplishments were outstanding as well, fully funding their trip.”

To qualify for the team, members must be between 17 to 25 years of age, hold a B certification or above, and ride at Training Level Eventing or Show Jumping at 3'6". The B certification is in the uppermost tier of Pony Club's educational program, followed by the top-level A certification. Both require extensive knowledge and proficiency in riding and horse management.

Support for the 2023 USPC Inter-Pacific Exchange team was provided by many generous donors, including Kerrits, the official apparel sponsor of USPC; Divine Equine & Pet Supplies; the Dover Saddlery store in Brighton, Michigan; EquiJenn Equestrian International, LLC; Essex Classics; Equine Bonnets; Fairfax and Favor; FITS; Stockbubble; and Victoria Rose Equestrian Athletics.

The Inter-Pacific Exchange includes Pony Clubs organizations located within the Pacific Rim region, bordering the Pacific Ocean: the United States, Canada, Hong Kong, Australia, and New Zealand. During the exchange, teams compete for the Nations Cup. Depending on the host country, the competition may be either a Show Jumping- or Eventing-style competition. Countries take turns hosting the exchange, with the next one to be hosted by Australia.

To support the USPC International Exchange and Special Opportunity Fund, please contact Marian Wahlgren in the Development Department at (859) 254-7669 or email development@ponyclub.org. This fund supports USPC's participation in a variety of international exchanges, including Foxhunting, Inter-Pacific, Mounted Games, Quiz, Tetrathlon, and more.

Anyone interested in becoming a Pony Club member may join a local club or riding center in their area. Visit the Pony Club website to [learn more about membership](#) and [find a Pony Club or Riding Center](#) nearby.

[About The United States Pony Clubs, Inc.](#) — The United States Pony Clubs, Inc. (USPC or Pony Club) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational organization that builds the foundation of teamwork and sportsmanship through riding, mounted sports, and care of horses and ponies, while developing and enhancing leadership, confidence, responsibility, and a sense of community in its youth and adult members. USPC is proud to offer instruction and competitive opportunities in 11 competitive disciplines through hundreds of clubs and centers across the United States. USPC's educational standards continue to be instrumental in curriculum development for schools, universities, equestrian professionals, and organizations across the United States. Many of the nation's top equestrians, including Olympic team members, as well as successful business professionals and leaders in a variety of fields, have roots in Pony Club. For more information, please visit www.ponyclub.org.