

Seneca Valley Pony Club Guide for New Members

Welcome! SVPC reached its 50th anniversary in 2011, and is the largest club in the Capital Region. Currently there are over 50 riding members in SVPC, ranging in age from 7 to 24. There are 13 clubs in the region, which stretches from Pennsylvania to Prince George's County in Maryland.

This short guide provides a quick overview to the major opportunities offered by the SVPC and USPC. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask people listed here. An important element in Pony Club's success is the network of people working to support and advise each other – with more experienced members and families supporting newcomers.

Opportunities – a non-exhaustive list

Bittersweet Field. SVPC members can use the lovely field on Partnership Road with fellow members and/or a trainer, at any time. Guests are welcome on the weekend with prior approval and signed waiver and Coggins. Riders should wear a pinny (obtainable from Annette Chong). The field should not be used when conditions are bad, and within the two weeks prior to the spring and fall horse trials. SVPC utilizes the field for various events in addition to the horse trials, including for lessons, fun days – both of which are advertised via the lessons website at www.svpc-lessons.com – and the annual dressage/show jumping days.

Lessons. SVPC offers a whole range of lessons series throughout the year focused on different disciplines, often oriented to an upcoming rally, ratings and/or championships. These lessons utilize the services of the most well-qualified local trainers and are normally subsidized at the rate of 40% and are advertised via email and on the lessons website. Some lessons are also offered in the format of multi-day clinics (which have the objective of enabling the kids to get together for longer periods of time, providing a broader experience than when they trailer in and out).

Rallies. An important part of the SVPC calendar is the series of rallies which mainly take place in the spring and summer -- for quiz (knowledge), games, polocrosse, tetrathalon, show jumping and eventing, as well as dressage. There is an individual parent member responsible for SVPC participation in each rally.

All levels are welcomed at rallies – for example, you do not have to be dedicated to and fabulous at dressage to have fun at dressage rally. Rallies are normally all-day affairs, and the kids interested in participating are formed into teams. Teams include a stable manager, who is unmounted but fulfills an integral role in a smooth running team. Sometimes SVPC members are scrambled into teams with kids from other clubs. It is necessary to participate in a rally in order to qualify for championships. SVPC pays 50% of the cost of rallies for its members. The other point to note is that there is no parental assistance during rallies after the initial set up, which encourages independence.

All rallies involve an important element of horse management, which is also scored. There are broadly two parts – equipment and turnout. This can be welcomed as an opportunity to get your gear clean!

Championships. Every summer USPC hosts a championship, covering all disciplines, in either Lexington Virginia or Lexington Kentucky. The event typically goes for three days; families stay at nearby hotels and the kids have lots of fun. It is necessary to qualify at a rally in order to participate in champs – the difficulty of doing so varies across disciplines and across years. SVPC members form part of the Capital Region team. It should be possible for any enthusiastic member to find a way to participate. Again SVPC pays for half the cost.

International exchanges and other opportunities. Some disciplines, including games and polocrosse, have regular opportunities to represent the US on overseas exchanges. There are various other opportunities associated with specific disciplines – such as pony jumpers.

Certifications. USPC has developed a system of certifications to recognize achievements and encourage members to gain confidence, independence and safe riding habits. There are riding and knowledge elements at all levels. The first certification is D1, the highest A. Certifications D1, D2, D3 and C1 are administered by the club; C2 regional, and C3 and up is national, administered by National Examiners. A very useful way to get an overview of ratings and standards is to attend the annual Ratings and Standards Clinic, typically offered in February. Detailed descriptions of the ratings are available at <http://www.ponyclub.org/?page=LocalLevelTesting>

D Camp. This camp runs for 5 days, usually in June or early July, at Bittersweet Field, and is a very popular tradition among all members. Daily instruction, knowledge sessions, crafts and trail rides provide a fun and educational learning experience. It is run largely on the basis of parental volunteers, with a nominal fee. SVPC has also run a separate camp for A, B and C rated members.

Volunteering. As with many membership based organizations, volunteers are critical to the success of SVPC. All the activities – from lessons to rallies -- are run by volunteers, and anyone interested should please raise their hand! Volunteers are essential to run SVPC's biannual horse trials that every member is encouraged to participate in the execution of the events and to learn about how a horse trials is run.

Social events. The main social events held annually are the holiday party and awards dinner. Everyone is encouraged to participate to celebrate the kids' achievements over the year.

Governance and Resources – an overview.

SVPC is headed by a District Commissioner, who is elected annually. The current DC is Leslie Case. She works closely with Joint DCs and the Advisory Council, which meets monthly. If any member wants to make a suggestion or bring a matter to the attention of the Council, please do not hesitate to do so. Likewise if you have any questions, please do ask ! The club is here for you.

There is also a junior council, which includes any interested members who would like to discuss and suggest activities, ways to improve the club, and so on. Please contact the DC if interested.