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March 9, 2011

The Apprentice; Participating In A 2011 USEF Stewards Clinic

By: Melody Taylor - Scott



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Karen Golding and David Distler give a jumper schooling supervisor demonstration at the U.S. Equestrian Federation Stewards clinic.

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The U.S. Equestrian Federation Stewards clinic, which was held at the Palm Beach International Equestrian Center in the West Palm Beach suburb of Wellington, Fla., was a truly unique experience.

The clinic is a requirement for all USEF Stewards and is also a continuing education requirement for maintaining your USEF license. It's only held three or so times a year in various areas of the country, but attending one during the 11-week long FTI Winter Equestrian Festival was just too hard to pass up.

Many horse show people don't realize how important the USEF Steward is to operating a smoothly-run competition. They are the liaison between the horse, exhibitor, competition management and the USEF. They look out for the interest and welfare of all. Overseeing the safety of horse and competitor and helping to assure the correct application of USEF rules and regulations helps to make a consistent horse showing experience at all USEF-recognized competitions.

Panelists Larry Langer, Bev Bedard and Sue Halpern, who are all well respected USEF-licensed officials, presented the C1 or hunter/jumper portion of the clinic. Their combined years of experience offered a vast wealth of knowledge to the clinicians. The clinic agenda covered a solid three days of interactive lecture, including case studies, Power Point slides, several hands-on sessions measuring ponies out on the show grounds and a jumper schooling supervisor demonstration with David Distler and Karen Golding held in one of the warm up rings on the show grounds.

Over 20 C1 applicants and licensed stewards attended the first day's schedule, the classroom portions of which were held at the White Horse Tavern, with continental breakfast and buffet lunch provided. Covering the gamut of steward duties in depth, the days were a full eight hours of learning. On the second day the additional C2, or breed stewards, were instructed by USEF R/C2 & C1 Steward, Cindy Reid at a different location on the grounds. Day 3 combined the nearly 40 attendees for measurement evaluation, and on day 4 just the C2 applicants were required to attend their classroom education with Cindy Reid.

Saturday was the dreaded "Measurement Evaluation Day." All attendees were required to complete a simulated official live pony measurement. Prior to the actual measurement, attendees began by finding a level place to stand the pony, assembling the measuring stick

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correctly, documenting accurately (both verbally and artistically on the measurement form) every white spot, ermine spot, scar, whorl and cowlick on the entire pony's body. The general consensus among the newbie apprentices was that it's very difficult to get two directional level bubbles to center up, find the highest point on the withers of a wiggling pony and accurately read to 1/8 of an inch on the measuring stick with shaking hands--all while the USEF equivalent of "The Donald" is evaluating your every move.

This part of the clinic was the real deal, a pass or fail situation that would require repeating the evaluation at another clinic if you didn't get it right. The panelists could not have been more encouraging and patient, constantly reminding you to take your time, take a deep breath and read the measuring stick correctly. Show horse measurement is serious business. It can mean the difference between a fabulous big money large pony and the low-valued, smallest horse in the division. Once the official measurement is given, it cannot be 'done over'. So you better get it right!

1 | 2 | next >

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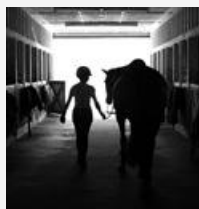
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- **Benchmark Program Debuts In Southern California**
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job description of a USEF Steward gained from attending the clinic will definitely make you a better apprentice.

Taking the clinic is only part of the requirements for gaining a USEF Steward's license, which include documented hours as an apprentice or learner stewarding with licensed officials at USEF recognized competitions, being an active USEF member in good standing and the return of a minimum of 15 written references; a number of them required from USEF licensed officials. Since only a few of these official clinics are held around the country each year, it might seem logical to complete all the other requirements first and then attend the clinic. However the in-depth insight into the full

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