

A general letter to gmo's, delegates, members of Region 8:

PERSONAL THANKS

First of all, I'd like to thank you for electing me as Region 8 Director for another 3 years. As I've said before, USDF has made great strides in many areas, but I also feel that the future will see some major changes. Again, I want to stress the importance of USDF's move to the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, KY as the signature event of the last 5-10 years. The fact that we have built our own building—the National Education Center—there is huge, especially with the World Equestrian Games coming in September, 2010. Our presence indicates that we are a major force in the equestrian world, and the exposure that we will get from our presence in the horse park is enormous.

TRANSPARENCY OF USDF

There have been growing pains for USDF as well. (Why should the path of an organization be any different from that of any of ours?) USDF has grown over the last years, but it has also been subject to the same vicissitudes that we all have—especially because of the economic conditions. This has caused us to examine our budgets (how much do we have; how much can we spend) and our ways of doing business. A very positive result of this is the increased transparency that has evolved. Along with that, and really the positive side of that, are the communication avenues that have developed. Those who are involved in the governance of USDF are kept informed by information available on the website and with other forms of communication, such as e-mail. The Executive Board has been pushed to be more timely and thorough in our presentation of the business that we conduct. This is the business that is done during the convention in December, at our Executive Board meeting in KY in April, and during the year with our conference calls. Years ago, we would literally come to the convention, do our business, go home for half a year without much communication between those two times. Now, a great deal of business is conducted via conference calls, and all those minutes are posted on the USDF website in a timely fashion. All positive moves.

THE FUTURE -- THE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The future (really, the purpose of this e-mail): the **governance issue** for USDF and the **programs** of USDF and the **website** (and all it entails) of USDF. All three of these are related, so I'll be going back and forth as I discuss them. Whether or not we change the structure of the Board of Governors at some time in the future is still undecided. I'm not sure that the system is great as it is, but I also do not have any brilliant and definite ideas on how to make it better—at this point. So, I will wait for debate and suggestions on this issue.

COUNCILS/COMMITTEES/TASK FORCES

The Council and the Committee structure, however, is in need of improvement, and I do support many of the ideas that have been put forth by the ad hoc Governance Committee. Most importantly, however, is the fact that this will be a work in progress. There is no way that all the ideas will work initially; there

will be a learning curve; some things may very well backfire—BUT—the goal is to improve efficiency, transparency, and effectiveness.

A very active group, for example, is the judges. Some of us on the Executive Board may be very knowledgeable about what they do, what their issues are, and what they need. Others, not so. It would be helpful for the judges' "advocate" to be present when discussions occur about their issues, whether it be about judging at competitions, judges' education, or the L program. The relationship of judges' issues to so many areas speaks to the necessity of getting those people communicating one to another. Why are not the judges talking to the TD's; to the competition management people, and to the competitors themselves. I think the idea of ad hoc committees or task forces will prove much more beneficial than standing independent groups. Again, we are not sure how all this will work—but we do have a concept that provides for full discussion of issues from the various related constituencies. So, as we are already in January, 2010, the traditional assignment of council and committee chairs, coordinators for the councils from each region, and the committee members has been only started, and will continue to be developed.

I've already mentioned a couple of programs of USDF, mostly in their relationship to the Executive Board. However, USDF has developed some wonderful programs that still need to get stronger and more effective. USDF Instructor Certification is a good example. One of the goals of this program is to identify and "label" good instructors with a variety of titles (eg—Certified Instructor, Training-2nd Level). However, education is REALLY the backbone of this program (as in the L program). This program should be popular in all areas of the country as all riders want to improve their knowledge of riding. We may not all be teachers—but, in a sense, any time we ride our horses, we are teaching them something. Why not make ourselves as knowledgeable as possible—whether we are on or off our horses.

USDF has many programs. They need constant analysis and evaluation to make them as effective as possible and accessible to as many people as possible. That is a responsibility of the Executive Board and those who are leading those programs.

The website: I rarely hear compliments on the website. If I get comments, they are usually negative. I find this so frustrating. I do use the website, and can generally find what I'm seeking. I know that USDF does see the potential for the website—not only for informational purposes, but also for educational ones. The latter, to me, is the area with lots of potential. If we offer videos, lectures, etc.—is that something our members want? Would it be a way to attract new members? As other organizations and businesses get more proficient, will it be possible for USDF to still stay on the cutting edge? (Or, will YouTube take over the world!) I don't profess to know the answers to these questions, but we need to debate them. I'm sure there are many other issues that will surface that I have not even thought of.

A NEW ERA

January 1, 2010, we have a new president for the first time in nine years. George Williams will have to establish his own style of leadership and his own priorities. It will be exciting to share them with him and with the other members of the Executive Board (hereafter called the Board of Directors, I believe!)

Thanks again for your support. I look forward to three more years of working with all of you.

Fern Feldman

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