Chairperson’s Annual report presented at the regional AGM on 28th October 2012 (incorporating the PRO report)

As with any Pony Club year, in 2012 we have experienced breath-taking peaks and deep, depressing pits! I prefer to focus on our highlights and successes as a region, but still share our failures and remain transparent about the areas which still need attention and work! It has been an extremely challenging year for each of our regional executive committee members, so I’d like to thank Rosemary, Leann and Chanty for their unfailing support, and unwavering commitment. Running our region is not a one-woman show, but rather, the coming together of a number of different branch committees and representatives with complementary skills, knowledge and experience.

I’d like to welcome our new DCs and branch committee members to the fold, and congratulate you for having survived your first term of office! A special word of welcome to our ‘soon to be ratified’ Pretoria East branch representatives too; remember that you are not on your own! Our region works as a team. So get to know fellow DCs, and call on them for ideas or support. Run joint rallies or testing days, and involve your members in regional activities which give them (and their parents) a wider perspective on the Pony Club movement.

National SAPC AGM and our March regional meeting
Leann and I joined Rosemary and Maggie at the National SAPC AGM in February 2012 in Paarl a little later than planned. At the meeting we managed to retain the services of our National Chairperson, Rob Pickard, and the Vice Chairperson, Isabelle Weyer, for just one more year! They have served the organisation for many years, but would like to train some ‘new blood’ into these positions. It will be our turn to host the AGM in February 2013, so we are searching for a Gauteng venue to rival the wine farm in the Cape...

At our first, very well attended, regional meeting in Skeerpoort, we planned our Inter-branch Mounted Games competition and show. Due to heavy rains we postponed the games, and ended up running the events at the Inter-branch show.

Inter-branch and inter-regional 2-day show in May
Our hosts, Eric and Jennifer Bianchi of Southern Equestrian Centre, south of Johannesburg, were generous, supportive and professional on all levels. Rogan Asken gave his services as commentator for the duration of the show for free. His warm, knowledgeable and positive attitude epitomised the atmosphere of the show, and the quality of our ‘PC-friendly’ judges and officials. He presented Life membership awards to Rosemary Tanner-Tremaine, Des Patterson and Mandé Siderfin for their years of committed long service to the SAPC. Laurel awards for member dedication were presented
to Annemie de Beer and Meggan Marr of Medunsa branch. Pony Club colours were awarded to Open Child and Junior riders in every discipline except Children’s dressage.

Inter-regional classes at both Novice and Open levels were adjudicated by the national travelling judges on the Sunday, followed by the Inter-branch Games. Our inter-regional riders were considered to be up the level, and acquitted themselves well. Although riders and their mounts were very tired by the end of the weekend, the overwhelming majority loved the venue, the sleepover and the chance to get to make friends with riders from the 5 participating branches.

**Regional exchange visit to the KZN Inter-branch**

Five Junior Open riders were identified at the Inter-branch/inter-regional show to take part in the regional exchange with the KwaZulu-Natal region of the SAPC. We had voted on it at the March regional meeting, and all branches present supported the idea. It was also identified as an ideal B test training opportunity. However, the logistics closer to the time proved to be problematic, creating an opportunity to learn about different things! The challenges created by fundraising for travel, living expenses etc, different school terms, matric school commitments and SA Pony Champs resulted in four riders declining the opportunity. The offer was extended to the Novice Junior inter-regional team, and only one was able to take up the opportunity.

At the June regional meeting it was agreed that although our region was unable to field a complete team that the two Walkerville branch riders would still be encouraged to participate. The chairperson took the riders down as Chef d’équipe. Several branches contributed to the exchange, the region paid for lime green and black numnahs and golf shirts to be made, and levies paid. KZN region waived stabling and entry fees and the Walkerville branch, in conjunction with the families and community, raised the money to send the Chef d’équipe, a Junior Open rider, Junior Novice rider and a Children’s Welcome rider from the branch as groom. Our webmaster flew down to join us on our fact finding mission; how do the KZN region manage to host a four day show with hundreds of Pony Club riders?

We were warmly welcomed, supported every step of the way, included in teams and ceremonies and even consulted several times, since we had already run our show. The Gauteng & Limpopo contingent returned inspired and eager to try out a number of things KZN did.

**Highlights**

- Courtney and Donnelly were able to try out every discipline on offer, including the Jumpkhana and Eventing!
- Riders of all levels tried out the Eventing disciplines; dressage, show jumping and cross-country. The fact that there were so many riders meant that the low entry fees and range of classes on offer encouraged greater numbers.
Competition between the Open riders was particularly noticeable. This is the region’s way of motivating riders to participate, as well as retaining top riders, and creating genuine all-rounders in the process.

We stayed at Shongweni Game reserve only 10 minutes away from the Durban Shongweni Club (DSC) where the horses were happily accommodated in brick stables.

The show was very well organised, the facilities super, and the people were friendly and helpful. The need for the right venue and a large team of volunteers and experts to judge, advise etc was highlighted.

Courtney was invited to join a combined branch Junior Open Show jumping team, which won the Inter-branch competition!

Courtney also qualified for the KZN inter-regional equitation team!

Many of the KZN riders brought grooms to assist them, the Gauteng team did everything themselves.

The lime green and black kit looked awesome; we have 10 numnahs to use for future teams and exchanges.

Running the show during the school holidays worked really well.

Areas we can learn from

- KZN have their parade at the end of the show; it’s very formal, with invited dignitaries etc. They hand out all trophies and inter-regional rosettes from the previous year. It simply took too long; horses and riders were agitated or bored. Many had hours of travelling ahead of them. I still prefer our shorter version.
- Riders did not stay over at the DSC this year; hence they were not totally responsible for the care of their mounts. I feel that the horsemanship component is essential to cultivate in our region.
- I was disappointed by the lack of support from some G&L branches for the exchange; one branch stated they unable to raise the money for their own rider to participate. Other branches simply stated they would not be raising a mere R250 to support the riders representing our region, despite the region providing the means through a photo competition.
- It is pricey to transport, accommodate and feed a team of riders; hence we need to decide in 2012 whether we support the exchange idea for 2013, decide when we shall run our own Inter-branch show, and begin fundraising. The KZN region would like to send an exchange team to participate at our Inter-branch show next year.

SANESA Regional and Nationals

We are extremely proud of the number of Pony Clubbers chosen to participate at both regional and national schools level! Lebohang Litha of the Witpoort branch took the initiative to book a Pony Club.
PRO stand at the SANESA Gauteng finals at Maple Ridge. Branches created stunning collages, we printed flyers and door hanger adverts, and had SAPC promotional stock on sale. Despite the enthusiasm of Pony Club parents and riders the inclement weather, Lebo’s migraine and the fact that people were running around competing and supporting, meant that the stand didn’t have much success. However, we would like to show you the awesome material our artistic members generated!

**Inter-branch quiz in September**

Four branches sent teams to Walkerville to participate in the quiz. The PowerPoint slideshow format worked really well as all questions and answers were displayed for competitors and supporters alike. The teams acquitted themselves well, and the very close final results were determined after a sudden death round! Riverpark 1 beat Walkerville into 2nd place, dethroning the defending champions, Benoni.

**Joint efficiency testing**

Walkerville branch hosted a very successful efficiency testing day at the beautiful Krupke farm. Nichole du Toit of Kliprivier branch joined Walkerville examiners to test D, D+, C and C+ candidates from Benoni, Sedibeng and Walkerville branches. (The Witpoort pony would not load, so a further testing date will be set for those candidates.) All candidates passed, and it was a good learning opportunity for newer branches to observe the testing methodology of the 2010 tests.

**Avis South African Derby in October**

Ten volunteers from Irene-Midrand and Walkerville branches braved the intense heat of the final Derby day to sell programmes for GHS. It was hot, challenging work, but the girls were excellent advertisements for Pony Club, bringing in R12 940.00, and had tons of fun doing it! Chanty and Michélle have overseen this work for many years now, and are looking for two branch/regional committee members to take on this role next year. In addition to lunch being provided for the volunteers, we sat on the Rider’s grandstand to watch the show jumping final!

**Benoni North branch ratification request**

One of my first duties as newly elected Gauteng & Limpopo regional chairperson was to mediating a Benoni branch committee meeting in March 2010. Concerns and differences between committee members, parents and members came to a head this year when a number of the committee resigned and sent an inappropriately worded letter requesting the region grant their request to re-open the defunct Benoni North and ratify the new committee.

I sent the the letter out to all branches, asking for your opinion, whilst doing some research on the people involved. A long history of very ‘un-PC’ behaviour emerged at branch, regional and national
level. I consulted with both current and former National and Regional SAPC chairpersons, as well as our executive committee in making our final decision. (The full response is attached in Appendix 1.)

The summarised decision is as follows:

‘The region is in favour of ratifying a Benoni North branch, in the interests of the riders and in favour of retaining members...This being noted, the region has placed two conditions on the ratification application of the Benoni North branch:

1. That Phillip Roberts and Gideon Murray may not be involved in the running, hosting, administration, finances, instruction or in any other capacity, of this branch either as committee members, as co-opted volunteers or as paid external experts.

   a. In addition, that both these men are not permitted to be involved in the SAPC in any branch within the Gauteng & Limpopo region, and in any capacity, for the reason that both men have through their actions and words, both verbal and written, brought the SAPC into disrepute, on numerous occasions, over many years.

The region was also very taken aback by the insulting and disrespectful tone of the e-mail proposal sent by Nicole Taylor to the regional and national chairpersons on Thursday is' August 2012, signed and supported by the prospective new committee. The SAPC is an organisation, not an individual, and it is inappropriate to slander all and sundry, and then ask for a new branch. Hence the second condition has been placed on the branch ratification, based on the defamatory verbal comments, on Facebook, on e-mail and via SMS by Justine Harpin (ex-Regional Chair & vice-chairperson, and ex-Benoni branch committee member) and Nicole Taylor (ex-Benoni branch DC.)

2. The Benoni North committee may submit their application for ratification to the regional committee at the next meeting, but they shall be given a probation period in which to prove that they are capable of running a branch.’

This was a highly unpleasant and extremely stressful decision to make in the best interests of the organisation and our members.
Looking towards 2013

I’d like to encourage branches to:

- Combine forces to run joint branch activities and rallies
- Participate in regional activities, possibly:
  - the Quiz early in the year
  - an exchange team going to the KZN Interbranch show in July
  - running a longer Inter-branch show, possibly later in the year, including Eventing
- We would like to begin intensive B test training from January next year, and would like a co-opted team comprising of representatives from each branch with potential candidates to plan the programme this year.

Thank you so much for the hard work you, your committees and your members have put into Pony Club, we hope you enjoy the gift of a 2012 HQ calendar (with the CD of photos) donated by Panorama Publishers! Please join us at the Children’s Hunt at ICB on 9th December 2012, and have restful holiday!