



Gauteng Chairperson's Annual 2008/2009 Report

Presented at the AGM

On 11 October 2009

Gauteng region continues to face many challenges with a creative and entrepreneurial spirit. The process of transformation is painful at times, as progress involves change, making some calculated risks, and having to learn a great deal about assertive, respectful communication and transparency.

The 2008/2009 year has been characterised by growth and development in some areas, progress and expansion in others, and change in yet other spheres. We have been privileged to build on what has already been achieved by committed Pony Club officials of long standing. I would like to thank Myra Passmoor and Lauren Gander for their commitment to Pony Club and the advancement of its members, over many years of service.

I believe that we in the Pony Club in South Africa have a unique opportunity to teach, train and develop those involved in the care and riding of horses at a grass roots level. We offer a service that no-one else does.

The PDI Equine IQ clinic run at the Blue Moon Centre in January gave knowledge and practical skills to Pony Club members and their families, some previously disadvantaged, as well as to grooms from the local community.

We have increased the number of branches from 10 to 12. Our centre, one of two in the country at present, is going from strength to strength, encouraging us to open more in the coming year. Membership in branches where parental and community involvement is greater have increased, as have branches located further away from the demands of hectic show schedules.

Rand Hunt branch has stabilised due to the efforts of a dedicated and enthusiastic committee at the helm. Riverpark began as a centre, become a branch last year, and now like Blue Moon centre, are in the process of training and empowering members, parents and instructors to assist with the administration and running of their own activities and finances.



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The training of Pony Club officials and parents, in addition to members, was and remains, a focus point. I propose that we institute a branch committee and Pony Club helpers training programme next year, as they have in the UK. We have already identified the need to up skill our instructors, and the first aid knowledge of volunteers.

Branch officials were given the opportunity to find out more about the vision of Pony Club in South Africa and internationally, when Nikki Herbert visited all regions in September. The Chairman of Training of Pony Club UK, Nikki travels all over the world coaching PC officials.

Isabelle Weyer, our National SAPC Chairperson, enthusiastically compared how we do things in our country! Nikki's perceptions of the SAPC were interesting in relation to other countries she had visited. She found that the theoretical knowledge of our members was admirable, but that their riding and hands-on know-how needed more focus.

Gauteng, like the other regions, has an exceptionally successful Achievement badge and Efficiency test programme in place. We shall endeavour to implement Nikki Herbert's coaching and assessment techniques as we train officials to be facilitators rather than traditional lecturers or examiners.

The Interbranch Quiz and Looney Olympics were thoroughly enjoyed by those who attended, and gave branch members the chance to test their equine knowledge. Our regional photo competition gave members the chance to submit photographs epitomising what PC meant to them. Our winners received sponsored prizes, and their winning submissions were distributed to all members of the region via the Gauteng Newsbits newsletter sent out by the chairperson on a bi-monthly basis.

The Interbranch show gave us the opportunity to introduce many newcomers, their parents and potential members to competition, but in a relaxed, supportive environment. The spirit of Pony Club was exemplified by the encouraging and



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development attitude of the travelling inter-regional judges who officiated in the several disciplines.

We were thrilled to be able to present trophies and prizes to category winners, and rosettes to every participant.

The members of the Walkerville and District branch team won both the Child and Junior Utility team competitions, and the Tanner-Tremaine trophy for the winning branch. It was a very close call, with Riverpark branch only one point behind them!

During the year developmental clinics were run in two disciplines; Eventing and Dressage. Two totally different groups and levels of riders and Pony Club parents and volunteers attended. Each group were developed by experienced local instructors, at their different levels. Some far flung branches that do not always have access to top level instruction will be given assistance in the future via the Pony Club structure.

Dressage development at Blue Moon Centre began with building a dressage arena demarcated by poles and involved both theoretical and practical learning by both members and their parents. This input was so valuable that some members hacked to a local dressage show soon after the clinic, their parents called their tests, and one member was even placed!

Greater visibility and accessibility to Pony Club training and knowledge has been achieved through the development of a new regional website www.ponyclubgauteng.co.za. Using free software we are able to easily upload the latest news, information and photographs. One of our ex-Pony Club members is the sub editor of the newly launched HQ Pony magazine. Our Interbranch was featured in the launch issue, and SAPC has a regular slot in every issue from now on.

Members from three branches sold programmes for the Gauteng Horse Society (GHS) at the Avis South African Derby this month, displaying excellent manners, integrity and a strong work ethic as they handled in excess of R8000.00 in cash. Our commitment to change and upliftment has also been demonstrated by our support of the work of the Highveld Horse Care Unit.



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Various branches visited the unit this year, some branches did volunteer work there during the school holidays, others donated the proceeds of their horse shows to the HFCU and the region donated the entry money from the Quiz to them.

Although the bulk of our membership consists of new riders at the lower levels, many members excel at Sanef Schools and GHS levels too. The current National Schools Open show jumping champion is Teeghan Gander of the Timsrand/ Crowthorne branch. She is also a B test holder, and a junior branch instructor and examiner.

We are very proud of her achievements, and that of other members, whose continued commitment to Pony Club is to be commended. They assist in training the younger Pony Club members who love them because they encourage them to learn whilst having lots of fun. Many of our members have been granted opportunities in the equestrian world based on their sound grounding at Pony Club. Be it riding the Lipizzaners, show jumping against adults whilst still a junior, being invited to join a team of farriers during the school holidays for work experience or being given the chance to bring on a young horse for sale by one of our regular regional judges.

The committed Pony Club volunteers, branch officials and parents who embrace the vision of Pony Club in Gauteng support the journey of each and every member. Some members inspire us all as they follow in the footsteps other Pony Club graduates like Gail Foxcroft, Rogan Asken and Shaun & Gareth Neill, but **every** member makes a difference in the lives of the horses and ponies they have as partners and friends.

Michelle MacKenzie