

## National Youth Congress 2008

My name is Amanda S. and I am an HB member of the Forty-Niner Pony Club. I attended the 2008 USPC Annual Convention and Meeting where I was a delegate to the National Youth Congress (NYC). I would like to tell you about the NYC, how I was selected, what we did, the Academy of Achievement and USPC alumni, as well as how I was influenced by the program and why it such an important program.

The USPC National Youth Congress is comprised of delegates (Upper Level Pony Clubbers) from every region in the country. Delegates gather with Committee Members and Pony Club alumni for two days of fun, workshops, and lectures during the Annual Meeting and Convention. This year the Meeting was held in Boston on January 23rd-27th.

The opportunity to participate in this program became a possibility when a call for NYC applicants was posted on the Sierra Pacific website. Usually an applicant must be at least 18 years old and a C3. The opportunity was then opened to HB's so my mother, who was also my DC at the time, put my name forward. I filled out an application and sent it to the RS. At the Regional Council Meeting of DC's, the applications for NYC delegates were reviewed. The DC's voted and selected Anna D. and me to represent our region.

Before leaving for Boston, delegates were asked to complete an assignment to be turned in to the Board of Governors. This involved topics in Pony Club about which the Board wanted input on from actual pony clubbers. The questions were as follows: 1) How should Pony Club handle cell phones at rallies? 2) How can the education part of horse management be enhanced and how can the judging system more relevant and less picky? 3) What leadership skills does PC develop in its members and what leadership skills would you like to see the organization do more to help you master? 4) Do you feel that PC provides sufficient opportunities for you to a) get instruction and learn from older/upper level members? b) teach younger/lower level members? c) have enough team experience outside competition? d) is your club club/region organized in such a way that kids get a say about how things work?. Lastly we were asked to write our thoughts about what a new pony club member, a C member, and a member going for a National Rating would experience in the "Perfect Pony Club Year". We were also asked to think about project ideas to take back to our region as well as ideas for new Pony Club Policy.

Upon arrival in Boston on Wednesday night we checked in and registered. We then attended a meet- and-greet ice cream social where all the delegates got to mingle and get to know everybody. We also were introduced to the NYC Committee members that organized the NYC and who would be running the two days of Congress, as well as to a select group of alumni. These alumni had been nominated to the Academy of Achievement, and would be our "mentors" for the Congress. Thursday was a very busy day. We did a personality profile in order to understand how different personalities interact and adapt. This is a very important exercise for developing leadership skills to

take back to our clubs. Next we discussed morals and role models. The reason we did this I think was to keep those morals in mind when developing our projects and policy ideas. Then after lunch we had a discussion with representatives for the Board of Governors. We further discussed our assigned questions as well as additional topics. Next we had a physical activity to mix it up from sitting in a room all day. After that we did a session of project planning and policy discussion. Between all of these sessions the alumni would give a presentation about their life, career, pony club experience, and most importantly how the skills they learned in pony club lead them to success in real life. The alumni were also sitting in on all our discussions to assist us with formulating our ideas and giving us feedback. They were very helpful and fun to listen to. That night we walked approximately a mile to a local restaurant where we had dinner. After dinner we broke up into teams and went on a scavenger hunt through the local area. It was so much fun! The next day was mainly devoted to project development and policy development along with more alumni presentations. In groups we completed our project proposals. Then in groups we began the final policy development session. Each group came up with a few ideas then after explanation of each idea we voted on the winning policy idea to be taken before the Board of Governors for consideration. That concluded our two days of Congress.

Friday evening was the last night of the NYC and it ended with an awards banquet honoring the NYC delegates and the alumni. The banquet was attended by the Board of Governors, the NYC committee, the NYC delegates, the alumni along with other guests. I personally sat a table with the current USPC President of the Board Art Kramer and his wife Annika. At the banquet the alumni were inducted into the USPC Academy of Achievement, kind of like a Pony Club Hall of Fame. The Academy honors Pony Club alumni. The alumni came from all walks of life: Russell Gilfus, a local Boston lawyer who earned his B rating and never owned his own horse; Kevin Price, a job-training specialist who owns his own farm and is still very active in horses and Pony Club; Erick de Papp, a local Boston small animal vet who was a very active Pony Clubber and eventer and Sharon Turner, a woman who holds a PhD and works for the US Patents office, as well as being an active dressage rider and breeder. Another alumni, Dr. Carey Williams, is a professor at Rutgers University and heads equine nutrition research, she currently is riding a young thoroughbred. The last alumni, Liz Halliday, is a professional racecar driver, TV correspondent, is developing an eventing career, and is a woman! After the alumni received their awards, the delegates were called one by one to receive a certificate commemorating our participation in the USPC National Youth Congress.

The Congress was a very long, tiring, and rewarding two days. I met so many amazing people that I will never forget. Each of us stayed in a hotel room with two other delegates so we all got to know our roommates very well. I became especially close with one of my roommates who lives in Maryland. We became almost inseparable from the start. Aside from the quickly formed friendships and experiencing people of the same age from every region in the country, I was instilled with a new love of Pony Club and desire to improve my pony club. I feel that through the NYC I was inspired to be a better leader, to improve my decision-making skills, and to reach out to my community

for support. This inspiration came from the exercises and discussions, the other pony clubbers as well as the alumni and committee members.

I wish to thank the Regional Council for allowing me this great opportunity.

Amanda S.