

Meet the Candidates

Get to know who's running for USDF Executive Board office

At the 2017 Adequan®/USDF National Convention in Lexington, KY, in December, the USDF Board of Governors will elect three members of the USDF Executive Board: Administrative Council at-large director, Activities Council at-large director, and Technical Council at-large director.

Kevin Bradbury, the incumbent Administrative Council ALD, is running for reelection, as is Activities Council ALD Susan Mandas. Technical Council ALD Carolyn Vandenberg is preparing to step down at the end of this year, and the USDF is grateful for her service. Three candidates are running to fill that Executive Board seat: Jayne Ayers, Debbie Bowman, and Sue McKeown.

Like all organizations, USDF needs committed leadership in order to enjoy continued growth and thoughtful direction. The USDF Executive Board functions as a cohesive team and strives to further the organization's mission and goals. For the 2017 election cycle, the USDF Nominating Committee asked each candidate to submit a brief biography and to answer the following questions:

1. *Why do you wish to run for the position of (Administrative, Activities, Technical) Council at-large director?*
2. *If elected, what do you wish to accomplish?*
3. *With so many diverse committees within your council, how will you support and represent each committee chair on the Executive Board?*
4. *How has your involvement in local, regional, and national USDF activities promoted and enhanced dressage both regionally and nationally?*

The candidates' biographies and responses follow. Nominations for At-Large Directors are put forth only by the committees within their respective council and are not accepted from the floor of the BOG.

Administrative Council

Incumbent: Kevin Bradbury



Kevin began riding horses at a young age, and he rode and competed through college. He combined his interest in horses with his software-development and database-design knowledge, and in 1995 he began managing horse shows using a system he developed.

He managed his first recognized show in 2001 and has continued to expand the number of shows he manages, including several Great American/USDF Regional Championships. He also manages the technology for the US Dressage Finals. In the equestrian industry, Kevin has blended his unique knowledge of technology and horses to bring innovation to the horse-show world.

Responses to questions:

I am the current at-large director from the Administrative Council and a member of the Membership Committee and the Competition Management Committee. I feel my strong background as a show manager and secretary has enabled me to make positive contributions to the USDF Executive Board.

I see the fundamental role of the at-large director as one of an advocate for the committees, increasing communication both among the committees and among the committees and the Executive Board. I feel the committees can

provide useful input in a guidance role, helping focus on the strategic direction in which the organization wants to move. I also feel there should be more joint projects, as there is often overlap among the committees as well as common interests. The group can be more effective when it works together. I would also like to use my background in working with diverse groups to encourage membership involvement in USDF governance. I feel one of the most important aspects of this role is to increase membership involvement, and I would like to work on including more people so they can assist in shaping the future of the USDF.

Activities Council

Incumbent: Sue Mandas



Having been blessed with the world's best parents (My dad was an "S" dressage judge), I began riding as a child—saddle seat, then hunter/jumper, then eventing before focusing on dressage. I have been involved in the sport of dressage for more than 48 years

(not old, just started very young!) as a competitor, trainer, instructor, and judge. I have earned my USDF bronze, silver, and gold medals as well as my silver and gold freestyle bars, all on horses I have trained. My first Grand Prix horse I also bred. I have been champion or reserve at every level from Second through Grand Prix at Regionals—including some before they were Regionals—and made the US Equestrian Team long list twice. I became a judge in 1991 and am currently an "S" dressage judge and a "R" dressage sport-horse breeding (DSHB) judge. I have been a member of the USDF Sport Horse Committee for many years and attended my first convention in 1978 in Milwaukee. I currently live in Centerville, OH, where I ride, train, and teach. I enjoy traveling around the country judging and teaching clinics. I cannot imagine a life without horses!

Responses to questions:

1. As I first joined USDF when it was created in 1973, I have very much enjoyed learning more about and being involved in USDF governance.
2. I hope to continue to facilitate communication and the

sharing of ideas among the committees on my council and between these committees and the Executive Board.

3. With equal respect and consideration to the mission and goals of each committee.

4. I have been involved at the local, regional, and national levels as a trainer, competitor, coach, and judge for more than 40 years. I have conducted many USDF continuing-education programs and benefited from attending many USDF symposiums and Trainers Conferences. I am proud to have been a part of the emphasis that USDF places on education and rewarding accomplishment, which I feel has grown and improved the sport of dressage.

Technical Council

Candidate: Jayne Ayers



I have been actively involved with USDF for more than 40 years, serving on the Executive Board in the 1970s, first as treasurer, then secretary. As an active competitor, I earned Horse of the Year awards at many levels and coached students who did the

same. Over the years, I have been involved in many key projects: co-developer of the weekend workshops for instructors (pilot for the current Instructor/Trainer Program), original faculty member of the L Program, first chair of the Sport Horse Committee, and member of numerous ad hoc planning committees and standing committees. In addition, I served on the US Equestrian Federation Dressage Committee for more than 25 years, chairing and then co-chairing the committee from 2008 to 2016.

In addition to my volunteer work, I have owned a dressage stable for 40 years, actively teaching and training, as well as breeding Westfalen horses. I judge nationally and internationally as a 4* FEI judge and a US Equestrian "R" DSHB judge, and train judges at all levels for both. Though never involved in horse activities, my husband has supported all this since the start. We have managed to raise two delightful children, and now enjoy grandchildren, too. ⇨

Responses to questions:

1. US Equestrian (formerly the US Equestrian Federation) is making major changes to how it operates. Much of its traditional role in dressage, such as the training of judges and technical delates, writing the tests, and evaluating competitions, will probably be reassigned to USDF. Greater USDF input on rule changes may also be sought. This restructuring offers an enormous opportunity to improve our sport and provide balanced input from all stakeholders. The process also has many pitfalls. I would like to use my experience with both US Equestrian and USDF to help guide this transition.

2. In Executive Board matters, I want to ensure that the voices of all members are heard clearly and given weight in decision-making. Our programs should focus on supporting pathways to success for all members, from beginners on up. We need to recognize the many reasons our members join USDF and find ways to best serve the diverse needs of the membership.

3. Through my committee work, I have been closely involved with the concerns of all parties that make up the Technical Council. Also, my years as a professional instructor and involvement with shows as a judge and competitor have given me insight into the ground-level issues with which all parties deal. I know and communicate well with key people from each group.

4. I have been a member of my GMO, the Wisconsin Dressage and Combined Training Association, for decades. To better understand the concerns of members throughout the country, I have also been a longtime member of the California Dressage Society, as well as shorter times with the Northern Ohio Dressage Association, the Midwest Dressage Association, and the New England Dressage Association. I believe I understand how dressage works on many levels through these clubs. I have been involved in too many activities to list at the club and national levels, both as a volunteer and as a professional. I hope my years of service have helped strengthen and improve the sport at all levels, from the grass roots to international competition.

Candidate: Debbie Bowman

My formal training began in 1973 in England as a working student for Jennie Loriston-Clarke, where I gained considerable experience riding, teaching, competing, and managing breeding stock. Jennie's unwavering passion and dedica-

tion to the care and training of her horses instilled a strong work ethic and high standards.

In 1975 I moved to Germany and worked for two years before beginning a three-year apprenticeship with Karin Schlueter. Upon completion, I became the first American-licensed German FN *Bereiter*. I then apprenticed with the late *Reitmeister* Herbert Rehbein, who was truly inspirational. Returning, I produced competition horses, many of which became national champions, including most notably Falstaff. Together, Falstaff and I were selected as alternates for the 1984 Olympic Games, and the following year we won the team gold medal at the North American Championships. We were short-listed for the 1986 World Championships (now known as the World Equestrian Games) when Falstaff was sold.

Since 1986 I have continued to train dressage horses and riders full-time. I became involved with the USDF Instructor/Trainer Program in 1991 and have been active as a certification examiner ever since. I chaired the USDF Junior and Young Rider Program from 1995 to 1997, and also graduated from the USDF L program with distinction in 1998.

For almost five decades, I have dedicated my life to developing the next generation of knowledgeable, sensitive, and educated riders and trainers who will carry on the traditions of classical dressage.

Responses to questions:

1. I am running for the position of ALD for the Technical Council to be better able to help direct the sport of dressage in the US. Together, the members of the Executive Board embrace the concerns and challenges facing the many committees and their program implementation.

2. If elected, I hope to promote continued prioritization of valuing classical and humane guidelines for the training and showing of dressage horses.

3. By reaching out and engaging with the chairs of each committee in the Technical Council, I would be able to get a clear understanding of their suggestions and concerns for current and future development of programs and present them to the Executive Board.

4. Having been an instructor-certification examiner since 1991, I have contributed to the development of the program's guidelines and curriculum. I have conducted nu-

merous instructor workshops and exams nationwide. As a former member of the USET, I have participated as a demo rider in many national symposia.

Candidate: Sue McKeown



When I was in my twenties, I set three long-term goals for my life. One was to be in a good and happy personal relationship; one was to do well at my job; and the third was to earn my USDF gold medal in dressage. I found a wonderful man in my husband, Brian. I spent 30 years at the same company and retired as director of services at Hewlett Packard. And when I earned my gold medal, I realized that I had only reached a plateau in my relationship with dressage and that the more I learned, the more I wanted to get more involved with the entire dressage community. So I became a horse-show secretary and now am secretary to more than 15 shows a year in the New England area as well as assistant secretary at the US Dressage Finals. I became a USDF GMO delegate and a participating-member delegate, then served on the Competition Management Committee, which I now chair. I have been put on the USEF Competitions Working Group of the US Equestrian Dressage Sport Committee. Now I am putting myself forward and asking you to elect me as the Technical Council at-large director so that I can continue to serve the dressage community that has given me so much joy.

Responses to questions:

1. I want to help and be part of the future direction of dressage in the United States. I would do that by representing the committees that are part of the Technical Council on the Executive Board, and also by bringing my varied expertise in management and strategic planning to the board.
2. I would like to continue to see more shows across the US be well managed, and to bring the ideas and practices of one area to the visibility of other areas. This would include focusing on meeting the needs of competitors, officials, show management, and the USDF and US Equestrian.
3. Listening to and understanding each committee's issues would be key. I would attend as many of their conference calls and meetings as possible, and discuss with the chair any specific concerns they would want taken to the other councils and the Executive Board. I would also want to be known as a person whom any USDF member could contact with questions or concerns. I would respond promptly and ensure that issues were raised to the appropriate forum.
4. I have managed and/or been secretary for more than 100 recognized dressage shows in the New England area as well as in Virginia. As chair of the USDF Competition Management Committee, I have organized and helped teach training sessions at USDF conventions. I have volunteered at many schooling shows in our region to encourage growth in dressage, starting from the lowest levels. ▲



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