



A quick poll of top riding schools spurred these suggestions for attracting and retaining new students.

Scouts & Parties

Birthday parties and Girl Scout events hosted by the Spring Down Equestrian Center in the Bay Area's Portola Valley on weekends are a big hit. Owner Carol Goodstein gives unmounted safety clinics on holidays like this month's Memorial Day, and a twice-a-year clinic visit from top hunter/jumper coach Nick Karazissis is a great way to help all the program's riders work toward new goals.

Fun Show Days & Collegiate Equestrian

Students at the Hansen Dam Riding School in the Los Angeles area's Lake View Terrace program jumped at the chance to participate in the Verdugo Hills Horse Show Series' first Sunday Fun Days, which include an arena dedicated to USEF Outreach and Riding Academy classes. Marnye Langer called it a "stunning success" with more than a dozen HDRS students competing and she encourages other riding school programs to join in. Held in conjunction with the open Verdugo Hills Shows, the next Sunday Fun Day is set for May 5 at Hansen Dam.



Hosting the UCLA Intercollegiate Horse Show Association equestrian team is another successful addition to the riding school model, Marnye reports. Taking advantage of the opportunity to train on different, top quality horses, UCLA's riders qualified two equestrians for the IHSA National Finals this month back East. IHSA competition involves riding unfamiliar horses and includes beginner divisions, so it's a great fit for riding schools and another way to involve those who may not own their own horses.

Summer Camps

"For me, these are the best way to attract new clients," reports Lisa Sabo of Sabo Eventing and the Newport Mesa Riding Center in Orange County's Costa Mesa. "They are hard to put on and take a lot of time, but most of my clients are attracted by them."



Pony Club!

"I can't stress enough what a difference being part of the United States Pony Club means to us," says Ruthanna Bridges of Bridges Equestrian in Orange County's San Juan Capistrano.

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“Offering the standardized curriculum and opportunities to our riders has been a game-changer for us. We don’t hit-and-miss with the horse management aspect. Pony Club lays it all out in order, so we don’t all of a sudden find a kid jumping in the Modified division who doesn’t know how to ice, poultice and wrap.

“For a riding academy, Pony Club offers the integrity of being part of an international organization and gives riders a way to study and progress in between their lessons. Now that Pony Club removed the age restriction, even our adults are enjoying time together learning the intricacies of the equestrian world. The adult component of USPC is just the same as the youth program, but we tend to hold our study sessions at wine and cheese parties!”

Ruthanna Bridges is a USPC board of governors member and member of its Riding Center committee. For more Pony Club information, visit www.ponyclub.org.