



Central California club and its members represent the future of national organization.

Black Oaks Pony Club has a long history in the Paso Robles area and it also reflects the future of the U.S. Pony Club's effort to expand its membership base. Eventing has long been the competitive discipline most associated with Pony Club, but the organization now offers "certifications," formerly called "ratings," in show jumping, hunter equitation, dressage and even western.

Black Oaks represents the new national direction in that its District Commissioner, Sarah Dubost, is a hunter/jumper trainer. Looking for a way to get her students and other area riders a well-rounded horsemanship education, Sarah took on the DC post at Black Oaks. She didn't have a Pony Club background, but she has a big edge in having Nancy Pittman as Club secretary. Nancy is actually president of the U.S. Pony Club nationally, bringing many years experience with Pony Club practices and educational methods, not to mention a ton of infectious enthusiasm. They make a powerful pair and Black Oaks has been growing at a good pace. That's important because much of the learning happens when older kids teach younger members, learning more themselves in the process.

For more information on the Black Oaks Pony Club, visit www.blackoaksponyclub.org . DC Sarah Dubost can be reached at

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. And, Nancy is happy to answer questions about Black Oaks or other Pony Club related subjects. She can be reached at

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All three of our featured Black Oaks riders train with Sarah, out of her Dubost Equestrian in Templeton.



Jesse Starkman

Ten-year old Jesse Starkman is busy filling big shoes. His late mother, Jill Weaver Starkman, was an accomplished trainer and his grandmother, Linda Starkman, has contributed to the sport as a rider, owner, breeder and owner/developer of the super-popular Paso Robles Horse Park. Following in the footsteps of his siblings, Sophia and Max, Jesse is taking it one happy stride at a time as a Black Oaks member for about one year.

With his pony Right On Time, he's focused on cantering and completing a full jumping course. He enjoyed competing in a mock rally recently and appreciated that "the girls helped me a lot. It was very fun!"

Jesse started under his mother's tutelage. "She started me on a pony that bucked me off twice in one day!" he recalls proudly. "She was a great teacher and she made you do it all, including mucking!" Olympic gold medal show jumper Will Simpson is a family friend that Jesse has special admiration for. "He is so much fun!"

He also loves soccer, which makes for some busy afternoons trying to practice both sports. Homework adds to the challenge of fitting everything in. Happily, there is free time for trail rides with his dad, Chris, on "Nana's ranch," in Paso Robles, where the family keeps their horses.

July 2017 - Youth Spotlight: Black Oaks Pony Club

Written by CRM
Thursday, 29 June 2017 20:54



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