



Founded in 2002, the Interscholastic Equestrian Association (IEA), with more than 12,500 middle and high school student-riders across the United States, has become the largest youth equestrian organization in the United States. The IEA was organized to promote and improve the quality of equestrian competition and instruction available to middle and secondary school students and is open to public and private schools and barn teams.

There is no need for a rider to own a horse because the IEA supplies a mount and tack to each equestrian for competitions. The non-profit organization's purpose is to set minimum standards for competition, provide information concerning the creation and development of school-associated equestrian sport programs, to generally promote the common interests of safe riding instruction and competition and education on matters related to equestrian competition at the middle and secondary school levels (grades 6-12/ages 11-19).

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The IEA currently offers Hunt Seat and Western competition. Next season (2016-2017), the 15th Anniversary of the IEA, a pilot Dressage program will be added during the competition year, in addition to these two existing disciplines.

While excitement builds for the 15th IEA season, the recently concluded competition year was special. After 753 regular-season horse shows, the IEA held combined National Finals at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, Ky., April 20-24. Nearly 600 youth-riders competed over five days in the Alltech Arena. In addition to the competition, the IEA offered a free Education Symposium to expand the attendees' equestrian knowledge. Highly experienced speakers discussed a number of topics geared toward IEA riders, parents, coaches, and equine professionals. The speaker line-up included Wendy Wills, Lisa Eklund, Candice King, Christy Landwehr, Sarah Coleman, Bernie Traurig, Diane Leshner, Robert Cacchione, Terra Schroeder, and Patti Colbert, among others.

During the year, the IEA also established a Youth Board. The IEA Youth Board includes rider members

from each of the eight zones and alumni representation. Sue Wentzel, IEA Education Committee Chair stated, "This gives adult IEA members and leadership an avenue to hear the youth voice and to offer an opportunity for leadership to IEA youth members."

All of the regular-season, regional, and zone finals shows are guided by an IEA staff Zone Administrators and volunteer Regional Presidents. The Zone Administrators also coordinate "best practices" across the zones with monthly meetings and a bi-annual strategy retreat.

Of course, moms, dads, grandparents, and friends all contribute to the wonderful "community" within the IEA, as well.

In addition to the USEF, the IEA is affiliated, and collaborates with, the following organizations:

- Intercollegiate Horse Show Association (IHSA)
- National Reining Horse Association (NRHA)
- American Quarter Horse Youth Association (AQHYA)
- United States Hunter Jumper Association (USHJA)
- Certified Horsemanship Association (CHA)

For additional information, visit rideiea.org.