

Region 9 Report

Director: Bess Bruton, TX

2026 Spring Executive Board Meeting, April 9-11, Fort Worth, TX

First & foremost...Congratulations Sarah Jane Martin, for receiving the very prestigious USDF Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2025 Salute Gala. Sarah Jane has been actively involved in dressage & USDF for 50 plus years, as an AHSA (now USEF) Licensed Technical Delegate, and Judge, past USDF Executive Director- in a time when USDF was in major transition, past USDF Region 9 Director & USDF Executive Board member, past GMO board member, longtime & current Region 9 Board Member, and a founding member of the Southwest Dressage Championships. She has planned, held, managed, and been secretary for shows, clinics and other events. And she is still going strong today...as chair of the Southwest Dressage Championships, an active USEF Licensed Technical Delegate, USEF Licensed Judge, FEI Stewart, Secretary of Region 9, and a member of the Region 9 Financial Working Group. She has served for many years, and is still both a Region 9 PM and GMO Delegate to BOG.

Please read all about Sarah Jane's attributes/accomplishments on the USDF Region 9 website.

We truly appreciate Sarah Jane's dedicated devotion to dressage, USDF and Region 9. Her passion burns brightly. Thanks for giving your all for 50 + years.

Once again- a possible early arrival of spring in Region 9, following a terribly severe ice storm in January. An event we hope we don't see for another 50 years.

Shows, clinics, and seminars are already underway. Arkansas Dressage Society is hosting a Musical Freestyle Seminar with Joan Darnell, re-scheduled for May. Many other excellent educational seminars by the GMOs are being offered this year.

Our yearly Region 9 Summer (in-person) Meeting will be July 17- 19, 2026 in San Antonio, Texas- on the River walk. It is hosted by Alamo Dressage Association. A networking/meeting session will be held on Saturday. And several fun events are being planned. We also hold a coveted annual Region 9 T-Shirt Design Contest, with the winner selected at our summer meeting.

The following information can be found with more detail in the Region 9 Omnibus (electronic version) on the Region 9 Website: including shows, past and present award winners, list of judges, TD's, L Grads, Certified Instructors, R9 Board members, GMO Presidents, etc.

43 recognized shows this year, with several new Sport Horse/ breed shows.

Of those the Houston Dressage Society (HDS) 2026 CDI2*/1*/Am/YH/Y/J/PCH and Spring Classic is the only CDI in our region. We appreciate HDS and the enormous effort to hold such a prestigious event. HDS also hosts the Great American Insurance Group/USDF Region 9 Dressage Championships and SWDC Championships & HDS Autumn Classic. To be held October 1-4, 2026 This is another huge undertaking, and we truly appreciate and respect all who help to make it a success...from the volunteers, the facility staff, show management, officials, riders and grooms. It takes a village.

Of the 19 Region 9 board member positions, we welcome Christina Harmon as a new board member for both Technical Delegates and Nominating. Also, Leslie Rohrer is our new Regional Championship board member.

We want to recognize Carolyn VandenBerg, who retired not only from two positions on the Region 9 board, and as a member of two USDF National Committees, but also as a USEF Licensed Technical Delegate after over 30 years. Carolyn has served both locally, regionally and nationally...in 4 different regions, for eons. Her lifelong service has helped dressage grow and flourish. Luckily she is remaining as the chair of the Region 9 Horse Person of the Year, which is part of the R9 board, and an active board member with Alamo Dressage Association.

We have thirteen GMOs - of those we welcome one new president- Nicole Riffe with Oklahoma Dressage Society. Thanks to Kay Kamish, the outgoing president for her years of wonderful service.

R9 has 11 USEF Licensed Judges, and 5 USEF Licensed Technical Delegates. Recently one of our USEF Licensed Judges moved to Florida...Julie Madriguera, and her husband Lyndon Rife, a prominent trainer/instructor. We miss them. And wish them well in their new home.

We are graced with 30 USDF L Graduates in our region, of which 7 are new: Alexandra Medina, Colleen Akin, Emily Roy, John Mason, Lindsey Parker, Lisa Rush, and Sandy Venneman
And the region is also proud of the 10 USDF Certified and associate instructors.

Since the 2025 R9 Fall Report, we held a regional Zoom meeting in November, with 19 attending. We discussed the upcoming convention. Several reports were given. All of our regional meeting minutes are located on our Region 9 website, along with both regional board reports, and GMO reports. Nicole Miller gave the Region 9 eNews stats... approximately 600 subscribers, with a 50% open rate. Nicole also manages the Region 9 Facebook page and website. I send out emails to the GMOs, updating them on information of interest for their members.

At the 2025 Region 9 Championships, we recognized our 2025 Region 9 Horse Person of the Year- Barbara Lewis. She is on the Dallas Dressage Club board. Has served for many years as both a PM Delegate and GMO Delegate, and as a past Region 9 board member. Barbara is always willing to help. Her dedication to dressage spans 30 years. And she is still helping and volunteering.

In November 2025, Anne Gribbons came to Paragon Farms in Magnolia, TX, as instructor for the USDF Region 9 FEI Youth Clinic. Everyone learned a lot and had fun.
Marsha Lewis, our Region 9 FEI Youth Coordinator, is busy planning the 2026 FEI youth clinic that will be held in the fall. And coordinating a 2026 USDF Region 9 Youth Outreach Clinic.
Marsha is the go-to person for the North American Youth Championships (NAYC) (coordinating, helping the riders, etc.). She also supervises fundraising for both the Region 9 FEI Jr/ YR's and youth, including the famous Battle of the Barn Baskets at the Region 9 Championships in Oct. Marsha sends out a R9 Youth newsletter, is administrator for the R9 Jr/YR Facebook page, and has some new ideas for educational opportunities.

The USDF Convention in Lexington was fun and educational. We held a 21 in-attendance, in-person Region 9 meeting. Our 2025 Region 9 Finance Working Group was elected: Becky Brown, Elizabeth Clifton, and Sarah Jane Martin. Most of the meeting was convention information and discussion about the items coming forward for a vote at the Board of Governors (BOG) meeting. There was discussion about the other convention meetings and educational seminars being offered as well.

We held the drawing for the "omnibus incentive" winner... Central Plains Dressage won a free ad in the 2027 Omnibus. Thanks to all who sent in their 2026 omnibus ad/payment on-time...so they could be included in the drawing.

We appreciate our R9 convention attendees giving a total of \$2000. to the new TDF/USDF Education Fund. Four Region 9 members won GMO Baskets during BOG- Becky Brown- Alamo Dressage; Natasha Fernandez- Deep South Dressage; Bess Bruton- New England Dressage; Donna Meyer- New Mexico Dressage.

Five Region 9 PM delegates represented us at BOG: Arlene Gaitan, Barbara Lewis, Betty Beebe, Christina Harmon, and Sarah Jane Martin. Our GMO delegates were Christina Harmon, Leah Stephens, Anne Kuhns, Natasha Fernandez, Barbara Lewis, Jody DeStefanis, Becky Brown, Betty Beebe, and Sarah Jane Martin. We appreciate all of our delegates.

Christina Harmon our new region's Nominating Committee representative, is busy looking for PM delegates for the 2026 convention to be held in Lexington, Ky., and will be contacting the GMOs later in the summer for their delegates.

With the new year comes new members to the USDF national committees. New this year is Betty Beebe on the Historical Recognition Committee; Arlene Gaitan on the Technical Delegate Committee; and Christina Harmon on the Nominating Committee.

Alecia Daniel is the new chair of the national USDF Nominating Committee.

Other members of the national committees include: Bess Bruton - Bylaws Committee; Jennifer Jarvis – GMO Committee; Leslie Rohrer - Regional Championship Committee; Marilyn Kulifay – Competition Management and Technical Delegates Committees; Tina Wentz - Para Dressage Committee; Sarah Denham

– Adult Programs Committee; Elizabeth Clifton – Awards Committee; Marsha Lewis- FEI Youth Committee; and Regina Milliken - Sport Horse Committee.
Last but not least, Carol Tice is the new USDF Secretary.
Thanks to all these members who help USDF forge a promising and bright future.

The Dressage Foundation (TDF) is an important source of funds for both our GMOs and members. Every year we turn to them for help. We had several Century Club riders inducted this past year, along with recipients for both GMO and individual grants. Congrats to all!
TDF helps with two major Region 9 grants. Evie Tumlin Memorial Fund for Region 9 Adult Amateurs, (congrats to the 2005 recipient- Dawn Petraitis). TDF also has the Region 9 Teaching Excellence Award for instructors. Information about TDF is published in our monthly regional e-newsletters.

Also in our monthly newsletters we help our youth stay informed by providing information to encourage them along their journey. Included is the Dressage4Kids calendar and updates.

Our Region 9 Omnibus is the region's best fundraiser, supporting many grants and monies for the region GMOs and members. Due to its 30 years of publication, the region is very financially stable. We are very appreciative of the many sponsors and advertisers who support and have supported us through the years. Thank you!!

Some of the regional funds available include: Adult Education Fund for GMOs, Youth Education Fund, Jr/ YR Fund, Travel Funds for smaller GMOs, and members to attend the summer meeting and national convention.

It takes dedicated volunteers to put together the omnibus. We are already working on the 2027 edition, which is due out in October 2026. The 2027 edition will continue to expand on the "Region 9 History Section" of the 2026 Omnibus 30th Anniversary Edition.

We are always excited when our members and GMOs achieve recognition through individual and GMO awards. The 2025 USDF Region 9 GMO Volunteer of the Year was awarded to Claire Womack from Franklinton, LA. (SEDA).
SEDA won 1st place GMO Website Award, and Honorable Mention Newsletter Award- GMOs with 75-174 members.

Several of our members attended and did well at the 2025 US Dressage Finals held in Lexington, KY. Congratulations to everyone! And I had the good fortune to attend & volunteer for a second year in hospitality. It was fun and rewarding.

Recognizing all our volunteers in all aspects of our sport is important. Without volunteers there would be no GMO's, no shows, no clinics, no seminars. They are very much needed & appreciated. Please be kind and thank them !!!

Respectfully submitted,

Bess Bruton
USDF Region 9 Director