



## **FEI Pony, Junior and Young Rider Divisions**

In 2004, the Youth Dressage Festival offered competition at the FEI (Federation Equestre Internationale) levels, thanks to the generous sponsorship of Hermès.

### **To whom are the FEI-level Championships targeted?**

By offering competition at the FEI levels, the Youth Dressage Festival serves as a development tool for Pony riders and top-rated Junior riders, for whom there are few championships in the U.S. at the international level. And for Young Riders with horses that don't qualify for the North American Young Rider Championships and for foreign national Youth riders residing in the U.S. who are ineligible for the NAYRC, the FEI division championship at the Youth Dressage Festival provides a chance to compete at an important international-level competition.

Highly ranked riders who easily qualified for the NAYRC have competed at the Youth Dressage Festival's Hermès FEI Division Championships. Most notable among them has been Elizabeth Austin, who in 2006 won the inaugural Brentina Cup, a USEF championship program designed to assist and encourage U.S. Young Riders aged 18-26 in making the transition to Senior Grand Prix competitor.

### **Why is it important to offer FEI divisions?**

Offering the FEI divisions continues the progression that was started in 1999 when the Festival was inaugurated and offered competition through Fourth Level. Lendon Gray wants to provide an important competition goal for riders who had advanced to the international levels. By including foreign riders or teams, the international quality is added. Riders are members of a national team and represent their country, instead of just riding for themselves. It is also important to Lendon to provide for the youngest riders role models at the show, whose presence says: *"This is what FEI looks like and where you can go if you work hard."*

### **How are the FEI championships contested at the Youth Dressage Festival?**

Competition at the FEI-level is three-phase. Competitors ride the FEI Team dressage tests, show in the group equitation class of their level and take a written exam. A panel of three FEI judges officiates these divisions.

### **What is the difference between the FEI and USEF levels?**

In general FEI Youth tests are more intricate than the comparable USEF tests. Also, FEI Youth tests assess the riding ability of the rider more than the brilliance of the horse, by, for example, requiring far more transitions. The FEI Pony test, for riders between 12 and 16, is similar to the Third Level Test 1, featuring collection, half-passes, many simple changes and counter canter. The FEI Junior test is equivalent to the Fourth Level Test 1, and the FEI Young Rider test is even more difficult than the USEF Prix St. Georges test.

