

A Note to Our Members

Members of the WDCTA state board would like to extend our sincere apologies to two of our members for the actions taken by the 2009 state board led by then-president, Cindy Ruetten.

Sometime last spring, a grievance was filed against one member by Kathy Dunn. The bulk of her complaint was that this member resisted allowing Kathy free access to the checkbook. At the time, this member was the treasurer of the SW chapter. The SW chapter holds a long history of fiscal responsibility, and operates by a clear policy of reimbursement once receipts are submitted to the treasurer. For some reason unknown to the chapter treasurer or any of the SW chapter officers, Kathy felt she should be able to freely write checks directly for her expenses. Even though the state board ultimately concluded the chapter treasurer did nothing wrong and the issue should remain a chapter issue, the member's name continued to be aired in the newsletter and state board meeting minutes in the context of a grievance. These actions were irresponsible, unfair and not the actions that should have been taken by a prudent and reasonable board. This member has been an exemplary treasurer for the SW chapter, an outstanding leader and organizer for WDCTA, and continues to serve on the 2010 state board.

Also last spring, three grievances were filed against another member by Kathy Dunn, Brynn Hansen and Stephanie Morgan. The bulk of the complaints were she:

1. Had a conflict of interest volunteering to help with the L program,
2. Acted inappropriately by not moving when an instructor chose to sit next to her at one of the L program sessions during lunch,
3. Has inappropriate contact with one of the members who sits on the USDF L Education program committee,
4. Was somehow in the wrong by pointing out the liability involved in allowing names of trainers to be posted in the instructor listings without the trainers' permission.

Here are the facts related to the accusations above:

1. The instructor chairing the L Education program confirmed with this member and several others that the USDF encourages participants to volunteer for the L program sessions that are non-evaluative, which include the A, B and C sessions. This member helped organize the demonstration rider gift bags for the A and B sessions. It was also during the A session that an instructor chose to sit at a table where several participants, INCLUDING this member, were enjoying lunch. This instructor, and others on the L program committee, indicated there is no problem with this and, in fact, expressed that it is encouraged until the evaluative session which was scheduled for 2010.
2. This member has long attended clinics hosted by SW chapter, with an instructor who happens to sit on the USDF committee for the L program. This instructor has no influence on the evaluations eventually done by the faculty SW chapter has hired to teach the L program. Evaluations are shared with the committee, but are independently drawn up by the attending faculty member.
3. It IS against the law to list the names of trainers and clinicians in advertising such as the instructor listing without express permission from the individual. The 2009 state board adopted this as a new policy summer of 2009. This member was right.
4. This member was contacted by an L Education program committee member. This person shared that SW chapter L program part 2 would not be approved because of the poor interactions several people had endured with then-organizer, Kathy Dunn. This member immediately contacted the SW board to try to resolve the situation. The SW chapter officers—including Kathy Dunn, Caryn Vesperman, Dawn Main and Pam Doolittle—met to problem-solve the situation in a way that would not be embarrassing to Kathy but at the same time allow the L program to continue to completion for the registered participants. This member's actions were in the best interest of the association.

The 2009 state board did not conduct reasonable inquiry and failed to act as a prudent board. Even during the process, the state board neither followed WDCTA bylaws nor Roberts Rules in conducting the procedures. The procedure ITSELF was deemed confidential and SW chapter members, who tried to advocate for these two members, were either ignored or sent inappropriate letters and emails denying any information. For example, it is still unknown why there was never a choice on the ballot for board members to vote for one of the member's innocence. The only choices on the ballot were: "member in good standing—removed from the board for one year" vs. "not a member in good standing." As a consequence, this member has been maligned and falsely accused, which arose to several documented cases of libel and slander. Then-president Cindy Ruetten shared with several members NOT on the state board, after the grievance decision was announced, that this member "needed to be taught a lesson."

Instead of working toward resolution over these grievances, some members of the 2009 state board worked to split WDCTA. These state board members, including Cindy Ruetten, refused to resign their posts or work cooperatively with board members wishing to remain with WDCTA. Pam Doolittle tried to point out the conflict of interest several times, but was instead belittled at the meetings and discredited in meeting minutes.

It is not the duty of the board to teach lessons to our members, to act as a court of law, or belittle and discredit members because they hold a minority opinion. Two independent attorneys have reviewed the data and both conclude the 2009 WDCTA state board, at a bare minimum, failed to act within a reasonable standard of care and, more than likely, acted grossly negligent. Neither these two members took legal action against WDCTA and, in spite of the circumstances, were some of the first to come forward as contributing members to our organization in the wake of the split. We thank them for their long-standing service to WDCTA, their many contributions in bringing educational opportunities to our members and their positive promotion of the sport. What they endured should never happen to ANY member of our organization.

We would also like to apologize to our members who watched this murky drama play out in business meetings, casual conversations and official meeting minutes. We would like to assure you that the individuals who perpetuated the split are no longer members of WDCTA. The 2010 board is united in the spirit of remaining forward looking, transparent and positive. We will work hard to make much needed improvements to our policies and governance structure to reinstate WDCTA as a member-friendly, service-oriented organization. In the spirit of transparency, the two members have both agreed to make printed grievance documents retained in the historical files available for member review. Any member who would like more information regarding the grievances or the split, can contact Pam Doolittle, president@wdcta.org.

Sincerely,

Pam Doolittle, WDCTA President, and the 2010 State Board of Directors