

BONNIE JENKINS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF USET FOUNDATION

The United States Equestrian Team (USET) Foundation is the non-profit organization that supports the United States equestrian athletes and teams. Bonnie Jenkins, executive director, says, "It is truly a dream job. Because of my deep-rooted love for equestrian sport and having grown up riding and competing on a national level, I understand the dedication and commitment it takes to excel in an equestrian discipline. So many young athletes dream of going to the Olympics. While this was not my path, my unwavering passion for the sport and my profound sense of patriotism have allowed me the privilege of following my dream by being part of the United States equestrian team in a different capacity." Bonnie's efforts help raise

the money that is critical to preparing up-and-coming and elite athletes as they progress along the pathway to success on the most significant international stages, ensuring they have access to high-performance coaches, programs, and international competition opportunities. She adds, "Ultimately, my goal is to help support these athletes on their journey to potentially representing the United States at the pinnacle of sport, the Olympic and Paralympic Games. It's a fulfilling way to combine my personal passion and commitment to our nation's athletes and equestrian teams."

Over the last 20 years, the (USET) Foundation has contributed over \$55 million in grants to help support the country's equestrian athletes, teams, and programs thanks to the leadership and generosity of the (USET) Foundation Board of Trustees, their passion and investment in the sport, as well as the thousands of donors who make the (USET) Foundation one of their important charitable contributions each year.

Jenkins grew up in Massachusetts and fell in love with

riding at summer camp. "My first pony was named Farnley's Blueberry Waffles," she laughs. "He was a terror. When I stayed on him, which was about 50 percent of the time, we had some success in local pony hunter classes. He taught me perseverance and tested my love of the sport. Following Waffles, I was fortunate to have some lovely show hunters that brought me success in the Junior Hunter divisions. In my final junior years, I was perhaps the luckiest junior hunter rider alive to have been able to have the iconic hunter, Gozzi, who had been ridden by professionals Kenny Wheeler, Bucky Reynolds, and Bernie Traurig, and he dominated the Working Hunter divisions. His success continued by winning championships at the Winter Equestrian Festival, Devon, and the National Horse Show with me along for the ride. It was truly a time to remember and is, without a doubt, my biggest accomplishment and claim to fame in equestrian competition.

"While I was not a jumper rider, I was surrounded by friends and stablemates of talented show-jumping athletes

who went on to have great success in international competition. It was exciting to see their dreams come true by representing the United States around the world. This gave me a first-hand glimpse into what 'riding for the team' really meant."

Bonnie's entire professional career has been involved with equestrian sport and its governance. In 1985, after graduating from college, she worked for the sport's then-governing body, the American Horse Shows Association (AHSA), in an entry-level role and eventually became executive director in 1992. In 1999, she became assistant executive director of the United States Equestrian Team (USET) and executive director in 2001. In 2003, the USET transitioned to the USET Foundation.

"With the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris, France, and the home games in Los Angeles, California, in 2028, on the horizon, we have our work cut out for us," she says. "American equestrians and fans of the sport have a great sense of pride for our United States equestrian teams, and I know that will allow us to continue a legacy of excellence."

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Bonnie Jenkins

Bonnie Jenkins with Rowan O'Riley and Celene Oken, above, and McLain Ward, center.