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SMDA Newsletter

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SMDA News and Updates

Show Season!

Show season is underway! We had a great first show, with a full show and riders from Intro through Second Level. Our judge was Susan Edelen (L), who came up from Massachusetts to judge our show. The weather cooperated, and things ran smoothly thanks to the efforts of our Show Managers Kris Gould and Jane Tremlett. We also want to thank our Show Secretaries Nancy and Chrissy Smith, who processed the rider entries, ran the show schedule, and made up the rider packets. Good work everyone!

June is a busy month with two SMDA-affiliated shows: the SPHO Show at Hollis Equestrian Park on June 10, and the Life's a Ride Dressage Schooling show on Saturday June 30

Year End Awards Reminder: You need scores from four shows listed in the SMDA Equine Edition directory, and two of these need to be regular SMDA shows. The other two scores can come from one of the SMDA -affiliated shows.

Remember, the SPHO show is an affiliated show (June 10 at the Hollis Equestrian Park).

Reminder – No dogs on show grounds! We love dogs – but not at our shows. SMDA's insurance policy specifically states that dogs are not allowed on-site during any SMDA event. Please help us comply, and keep your dogs at home on show days. Thank you!

September Show – we need a Show Manager!

Speaking of Show Managers, we need someone to step up and volunteer to help run the September show, as our originally-planned Show Manager has a conflict on that date. The Show Manager job is not difficult, but does require organizing and attending to details - things like helping with ring set-up, being at the Hollis park first thing in the morning to open up, and cleaning up and closing down at the end of the day. With help from others on the Board, the Show Manager needs to organize the volunteers for the day (such as ring stewards and scribes), and makes sure the judge has everything she needs, coordinates lunch for the judge and volunteers, and makes sure the high point ribbons are given out. We have detailed instructions on everything, and one of our experienced Show Managers will work with you hands-on to make sure everything gets done.

If you've enjoyed participating in SMDA's shows in the past or plan to compete in the future, please consider giving back to SMDA and helping out with this important task. We really need for some new people to pitch in and join the team and make sure we are able to continue to host these shows that are a focal point of our Maine dressage community. Please contact Kris Gould if you're interested in getting more information.

SMDA's USDF/USEF Recognized Show

SMDA is once again hosting a USDF/USEF Level 1 Recognized Show at the Hollis Equestrian Park on Sunday July 15.

It's a lot of work to put on a recognized show, and this year we decided to hire a professional show secretary. It's a significant expense for SMDA, but processing the entries and filing the reports with USDF and USEF are time-consuming tasks and the rules are complex. We've retained the services of Liz Oertel Johnson of On the Bit Events. Liz is an experienced show secretary who will be able to ensure we have a well-organized show and meet all the USDF and USEF requirements and still have a fun and relaxing day!

The SMDA show is a Level 1 recognized show that is intended to provide an entry-level recognized show experience to our regular schooling competitors, as well as an opportunity for local Maine riders to earn a score towards Regional Championships or one of their USDF medals.

Opening date was May 29 so get your entries in! Make sure to use the Recognized Show entry form, which is available on SMDA's website. If you're not planning to compete, please consider helping out as a half-day or full-day volunteer. It's a lot of fun to watch some of the areas more serious competitors – if you're interested in



United States
Dressage
Federation™

Sunday, July 15

SMDA GAIG/USDF Recognized Show
Hollis Equestrian Park, Hollis ME

Opening Date | May 29

Closing Date | June 29

Secretary: Liz Johnson

Manager: Lisa Noonan

Judge: Charlotte Trentelman (S), FL

Technical Delegate: Sarah Hamilton, MA (r)

Organizing Committee: SMDA Board of Directors

SMDA Grant Program

Several years ago, SMDA instituted a program to provide Grants to SMDA members working to achieve dressage-related goals. Past recipients have been given scholarships to attend Lendon Gray's Winter Intensive Program in Florida, the Hollis Equestrian Park was awarded a grant to replace the fence rails around the main arena, and a grant was provided to help fund the first Dressage Dreams "away" camp experience.

The grant program was established to create a systematic and fair process, and it includes a formal application process and requirement for the applicant to have a history of volunteering for SMDA. In the past couple of years the number of applications has decreased and the Board has decided to review and overhaul the program to better suit our members needs. A subcommittee has been established to review the program and make recommendations for changes. If you have any comments or suggestions, or if you'd like to help please contact Kris Gould or Laurie Mason.

In the Community – Vienna Farm



“And you know that when the truth is told, you can get what you want, or you can just get old. . . . When will you realize, Vienna waits for you.”

It’s an old Billy Joel song, but it has special meaning for Tanya Rennie and Jim Jaeger of Vienna Farm in Gorham. “That song was about us, and we named the farm after it” says Jim with a smile. But Jim and Tanya didn’t wait for Vienna to come to them, they bought the farm almost 35 years ago and have invested a lifetime of hard work to make it one of the most successful dressage barns in Maine.

What is the secret to their success? Tanya cites their excellent staff and clientele, many of whom have been with them for 20 years or more. She believes the continuity has served them well, noting “Right from the beginning, it was Jim and me. We cared for the horses, did every night check, and kept things going with the help of our excellent team.” Tanya and associate instructor Amy Libby work with students of all levels to help them achieve their personal best. Tanya takes great satisfaction in having two students who have earned their USDF Gold Medal, and the barn is noted for having determined riders who work hard.

“Today a Rooster, tomorrow a Feather Duster” is an expression you might hear in the aisleway or arena. Dressage riders experience a roller-coaster of emotions, and Tanya counsels us to “Learn to love the middle. For every amazing ride you have, there will be another difficult ride and we need to smooth out the highs and lows. Amazing rides are great, but making the ordinary ride better and more enjoyable is how we progress.” Finding balance is important, as well as maintaining a sense of humor. “I’ve often noted that dressage is part sport, part art, . . . and part comedy!” Tanya laughs. “Maintaining humor and balance in our lives and riding will help us be our best.”



Member Profile – Gloria Steiger

It's great to see Gloria Steiger back in the show ring! After a hiatus of several years, Gloria has re-entered the SMDA show scene with her horse Casselberry Rio (Joey). Joey is a 5-year-old Dutch Warmblood x Welsh Cob that Gloria bought as a project horse. "He's so much fun to ride!" Gloria says with enthusiasm. "We're working on relaxation and acceptance of the bit. This year we plan to get out and gain exposure to different show situations – SMDA is a great venue for a young horse gaining confidence." Gloria is a thoughtful rider, and states her goal is to ride in the show ring with as much empathy as when schooling at home. Gloria works at Photo Finish Farm and is the mother of four nearly grown (!) children. She and her husband live in Buxton.



Elections

2018 is election year for SMDA. We'll be electing new Officers and Board of Directors this fall to serve the next two-year term. If you are interested in getting more involved with SMDA, please consider working with us. We have a great team and always appreciate new ideas and enthusiasm! Contact any of the current Board members if you are interested (contact information is on our website and in the Equine Edition).

SMDA Awards Program

SMDA has made changes to the awards program that began this year. This affects both how we pin the classes at our shows, and the Year-End Awards program. At the shows, each class (for example, Training -1) will be pinned for three separate divisions: Open, Adult Amateur, and Junior. At the end of the show, four High Point Ribbons will be awarded for the highest scoring Intro rider (all divisions), and the highest scoring rider for Training level and above for Open riders, Adult Amateur, and Junior.

Year-end awards will also be given for each division, but will be for each level (and not for each test like we have done in the past).

The change to the awards program was instituted after receiving member feedback that Juniors should not be competing against adults, and that amateurs should not have to compete against professionals. We're hoping the new system will address these concerns and make things fairer for everyone. All riders are welcome at SMDA, and we continue to encourage riders of all levels and abilities to come to our shows.



What is a Junior Rider? Riders are Junior riders through the year they turn 21. For the current show season, riders who are 21 or less as of December 31, 2018 are considered Junior Riders (year of birth 1997 or later).

What is an Adult Amateur (AA) Rider? AAs cannot offer riding lessons or training for any type of compensation. AAs may work as grooms, manage shows, work as show secretary, judge, and may board horses. The full details of the AA rules are found in USEF's rulebook Subchapter 13-B Amateurs and Professionals, GR1306.

President's Corner

Show season is in full swing, and we're all super busy with not enough hours in the day (even in June when it's light until 9pm!) But in your busy day, please make some time to help SMDA so we can continue to offer great shows for our local dressage community.

- If you patronize a business that has advertised in our show directory, please acknowledge that you saw the ad, and thank them for their support.
- Please help out at one of our shows. It's actually fun to spend a day or half-day at the show, catch-up with old friends, meet new members, and watch some great rides. We have a lot of new people in the club, and we need some new faces at ring setup and helping out on show day.

Have fun and be safe!

Susan



Connection with Your Horse – Clinic with Chris Lombard

Dressage riders constantly strive for a harmonious connection with their horses. There's a careful balance in the partnership, and the rider must have the confidence and skill to be the leader. And we must earn the horse's trust and respect.

Over the winter, some SMDA members had the opportunity to work with Chris Lombard to address issues with the relationship with our horses, including spooking, bucking, inattentiveness, and general tension. And in the process discovered these were all symptoms from a common root in the connection with our horses.

First we learned to listen to our horses, to understand some of the subtle (and not so subtle) signals they are giving us. In addition to their very expressive ears, we learned to recognize the signs of relaxation in the horse's eye blink rate, the relaxed drop of the neck, the licking and chewing of submission, and the ultimate sigh and shudder of a horse that's released all tension.

Then we taught our horses to listen to us. "You must become the most important thing in the room" Chris instructed us, as we struggled to gain and maintain our horse's attention through various distractions. We learned to watch the horse's ears, and to distinguish active ears from those of a distracted horse, or one who is mentally checked out.

We also learned how to alternate making a request (and even an emphatic request!), and how to quickly return to a quiet place once the correct response is given. "Wake him up! Then go back to the way you were," Chris instructed us, emphasizing the importance of being quiet in between requests.

We were given some tools for dealing with spooky horses, and learned the relationship between the rider's confidence level and the horse's ability to deal with scary things. We were all at least somewhat familiar with some of the desensitizing techniques he used (Hannaforb bag on a stick, anyone?), but gained a new level of understanding of our roles as confident leaders and how our horses will respond with a greater degree of calm and security.

"When things are easy, it's easy to be confident. But when we are faced with challenges, what's deep inside comes out. *This is where we learn.*" We are all on different journeys, but one thing common to all dressage riders is the awareness that this sport offers a lifetime of learning. Our clinic with Chris taught us the importance of a solid foundation of leadership and respect between horse and rider, upon which we can learn and grow together.

Chris Lombard's Four Keys to a Successful Ride:

- 1) Do you have the horse's attention?
- 2) Is he giving you his best try?
- 3) Is your horse afraid?
- 4) Are you afraid?

Always get the right answer to these 4 questions before you get on!



Chris has Vanadio's full attention, even without a bridle!



Soft eye, Slowly blinking.
Relaxed Lower Lip
Relaxed Ears

The Judge's Perspective – Stretchy Circle (Stretching the Frame)

One of the most important movements in the lower level dressage tests is the Stretchy Circle. It's a double coefficient score and the judge looks at this movement as a indicator of correct training. Here is our Judge's Perspective on the Stretchy Circle, with thanks to our contributor: L Graduate Jane Tremlett.

Purpose: To demonstrate the horse has accepted a steady contact with the bit and has confidence in the rider's hands. The horse should follow the contact and stretch to the bit when asked to do so. They should also accept the shorter rein after the movement without resistance. What I look for: Throughness: balance (the circle of aids...recycling the energy from the hind legs over the topline into a light receiving contact).

Self carriage: The rider not holding the horse up.

Contact and transitions: Elastic and consistent; not resistant.

Bend: Horse is bent to the inside of the circle.

Gaits: Steady tempo, at least level balance (not on forehand), tracking up (hind legs engaged).

Size: Accurate 20-meter circle (which means round and touching both long sides).

Visual: The horse's poll must be around withers height or his mouth around elbow height and his ears level. The nose should be on the vertical or SLIGHTLY behind (but not curled).

Remember to use more leg than hand (but don't throw the reins away). You must guide the horse tactfully. It takes practice! The stretchy circle can be done often during your schooling ride and eventually it will become easier.



Photo 1 – Horse is pushing off hind leg and not carrying. Hard to tell from this angle, but he is likely behind the vertical.



Photo 2 – The horse is seeking contact with an active hind leg and soft topline. Truly the circle of aids. This would be an 8 or 9 – IF the horse maintained this stretch for the whole circle.