

Dec/Jan 2025

CENTERLINE



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President's Message

Happy Holidays!

I hope the holiday season was joyful and relaxing with family, friends, and of course, your equine partners. CDA is looking ahead to an exciting 2026 with great offerings that support our goals and help improve the lives of our horses.

I can't believe a full year has already passed since I began serving as your president! It's been a busy and rewarding year, with so many wonderful events. Such as, our always popular ride critique with Bobbi Carleton, Kendra Clarke dressage simulator clinic, the Patricia Norcia in-hand clinic. Look for sign ups in 2026 for these three. CDA also hosted a mounted clinic with Lisa Schmidt, and the CDA USDF sponsored Kathy Connelly Clinic for riders and auditors. Thank you to everyone who participated and helped make these events such a success. Looking ahead, we have a fantastic lineup planned, including several schooling shows, three virtual shows, and a two-day riding clinic with Bill Warren. Something new for 2026, we are excited to add a Working Equitation Clinic with Stephanie Hayes.

Congratulations to all of our year-end award winners! We're looking forward to celebrating together at our Annual Awards Banquet on Sunday, January 25, 2026. Please RSVP to Fern Feldman at fernfeldman@gmail.com with your name and number attending. Expect good food, raffles, awards, and lots of fun. I can't wait to see you there!

Our member spotlight this month features Alessandra Cockett. Read on to be inspired by this young rider's story, detailing the challenges she's faced, the rewards she's earned while advancing through the levels, and her unwavering dedication to the sport.

The 2026 CDA Omnibus is in the works. If you'd like to sponsor, place an ad, or submit a prize list, please reach out to Carol DiCarlo at carol@cheshireequestriancenter.com or Megan Clarke at megan.clarkeCDA@gmail.com. An easy online submission form is available and we'd love to feature our members, so please send along your photos!

Remember 2026 membership is open, for ease applications can be submitted online! Be sure to become a member to take advantage of all our wonderful opportunities.

It has truly been an honor to serve as president of this wonderful organization and to work with such an amazing board and group of volunteers. Thank you to our members, host farms, and the CDA Board for your continued support and enthusiasm.

Here's to a great 2026!

Val Blasi | blasivalerie@yahoo.com



CDA YEAR END AWARDS BANQUET

January 25, 2026 | 3:00 - 6:00
pm

First year CDA will be awarding
Western Dressage Awards!

Lakeview Lodge
265 Beacon Road, Bethany CT
RSVP by January 22, 2026

email ONLY to fernfeldman@gmail.com
Name and Number attending
\$20.00 per person
BYOB
Raffles, Food, Awards, and Fun!

UPCOMING ELECTIONS FOR CDA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

According to the CDA by-laws, adopted February 11, 2006, the membership of CDA must now elect approximately half of the Board of Directors for a 2-year term. Of those adults listed below, a total of NINE WILL BE ELECTED at the annual meeting planned for January 25, 2026. We are listing the proposed slate of Directors in this issue of Centerline for your consideration.

If you have questions, or would like to be put on the ballot, contact me, blasivalerie@yahoo.com, and we will add your name*. There will be an opportunity to write in additional candidates on the ballot.

Thank you for your participation in the governance of CDA.

Valerie Blasi, President

PROPOSED SLATE OF DIRECTORS FOR CDA (Up to 9 adults will be elected)

VALERIE BLASI

**ROBERTA CARLETON
DENISE CLARK
CAROL DICARLO
LIZ DOERING
CHRISTINE ENGEL
PATRICIA NORCIA
AMY RAVITZ
PAM WILHELM**

**YOUTH REPRESENTATIVES - TWO
YOUTH CAN BE SELECTED:
ELLIE JOHNSON**

*Nominations sent to blasivalerie@yahoo.com
will be accepted as long as the person nominated agrees
to the nomination and is a current member of CDA.

Board members with another year of service: Heather Ashe, Kari Bradshaw, Fern Feldman, Judy Lieberman, Carol Mohyde.

Member Spotlight



Alessandra Cockett

Above picture is Flamerous, Alessandra is 7 years
in 2018 - CHSA Derby

Interviewed by Pamela Wilhelm

Tell us about yourself. How old are you? What grade are you in? Do you have any family pets?

My name is Alessandra Cockett. I am 15 years old and in tenth grade at The Williams School. I joined Williams in ninth grade and have loved the school and its environment ever since. I have one dog, Zade, I've had him for four years. I've taught him everything he knows, and he's truly the best dog ever. I also have two cats, Tikka and Thali, that I've had for thirteen years.

When did you start riding, and which discipline did you begin with?

I first started riding when I was two years old at Whitney Ridge. I always had the choice between western or English lessons, and I would always choose English. I loved it so much that I moved to a trainer where I could compete and progress more quickly. Diana Schafer King was one of the most encouraging trainers I've ever had. With her, I learned how to jump, competing in short stirrup and qualifying for CHSA and CHJA, as well as the reindeer series, where I achieved Grand Champion.



Jackson MG (me 14 years old) 2025 - Competing in .85 divison

When my pony's lease ended, my mom bought a horse trained in dressage, and I had the opportunity to ride him. I decided to switch disciplines and quickly fell in love with dressage. Once my parents saw how passionate I was, they got me my first dressage pony,

Palermo Van de Beekerhide. He took me from Intro Level all the way to schooling Third Level.

Unfortunately, Palermo struggled with lead changes, so I then competed Third Level with Cor De Lys and earned my USDF Bronze Medal.

After that lease ended, I decided to return to jumping, not hunters, because after dressage, I wanted to fly. I now ride with JJ Lavari and am currently competing in the jumpers.

When did you decide to pursue a USDF Bronze Medal in dressage?

It was never my main goal to earn a Bronze Medal, but as I moved quickly through the levels, I ended up achieving it in the summer of 2024 with Cor De Lys.



Cors De Lys (me 13 years old) 2024 - Competing in 3rd Level Test 1

You were invited to attend the 2025 Adequan USDF Annual Convention in Lexington, KY, to accept your Bronze Award. Can you share that experience?

Unfortunately, we weren't able to attend the convention because my dad had to work and my mom needed to stay home with my brother.

In addition to school and riding, you served as the CDA Schooling Show Secretary. How did you take on that role, and what was it like?

A show secretary was needed for the Connecticut Dressage Association schooling shows, and I was asked if I would be willing to take on the role. I agreed, even though I didn't fully know what I was signing up for at first. With the help of Hannah Calcagni, we have successfully run many shows.

Through this responsibility, I've learned how to schedule shows, prepare the tests for judges and scribe, and scoring tests. My experience with CDA has taught me valuable skills like organization and communication that I know will benefit me in many areas of life. I'm grateful for the opportunity and excited to continue serving as the CDA Schooling Show Secretary.

Which horse has been your favorite so far, and why?

My favorite horse I've ever had was my first pony, Palermo Van de Beekerheide. He is a 15.2 hand German Riding Pony who I rode for four years. Palermo took me from Intro Level through Second Level, and I taught him fun tricks like how to bow, kiss, and hug.

I remember when I would say his name he would put up his ears, neigh, and gallop towards me from the field. He qualified me for Nationals in the 13-and-under Dressage Seat Equitation division with an 81% at Regionals.



Palermo Van De Beekerhede (me 13 years old) 2023 - Reserve Champion Dressage Seat Equitation Regionals

Although we chose not to compete with Palermo at Nationals due to the long trailer ride to HITS Chicago and concerns about his comfort. He will forever and always be incredibly special to me as he played a huge role in my riding and taught me how important the connection with your horse is.



Leased horse (me 13 years old) - Competing in Dressage Seat Medal Finals 13 and under

When you're not at the barn, what else do you enjoy doing?

When I'm not at the barn, I stay very active. In the winter, I ski, and I am the girls' basketball team manager. In the spring, I play varsity lacrosse for my school, and in the summer, I enjoy spending time with my friends.

**The USDF Bronze Medal is a prestigious dressage rider award from the United States Dressage Federation, recognizing consistent high-level performance by achieving specific scores (e.g., 60%+) at First, Second, and Third Levels from different judges over time, signifying a major milestone in a dressage rider's journey toward advanced training and collection.*

2026 CDA Clinics

Dressage Simulator with Kendra Clarke March 14, 2026

Bobbi Carleton Ride Critique Ride Clinic April date TBD

Bill Warren Clinic June 20- 21 2026

Working Equitation Clinic at CT Equestrian Center in Coventry, CT Saturday October 17, 2026 with Working Equitation Specialist Stephanie Hayes

More info to come soon!

UNITED STATES DRESSAGE FEDERATION CONVENTION, 2025 —FROM A DELEGATE'S POINT OF VIEW

By Christine Engel

This past December I was privileged to attend the United States Dressage Federation Convention at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Lexington, KY, representing CDA. I enjoyed it thoroughly. The convention ran from December 3 - 7.

I arrived on Wednesday, the 3rd, and my only responsibility for that day was to register and set up a display of the gift basket that CDA donated as a door prize.



Everything was made in Connecticut with the exception of the book, LEXINGTON, but considering the subject and our host city there were enough connections to make it appropriate to include.

On Thursday, there were Administrative, Technical, and Activities Council Forums which were open to all. In addition, there were presentations and discussions on Emergency Preparedness and Managing Degenerative Joint Disease. For Thursday afternoon, a discussion of trending topics and USDF rule changes. There were several rule changes but, forgive me, the only two I recall are shock wave therapy which must be at least three days before a competition and ear plugs and ear muffs are now permitted.

Friday morning's agenda included David O'Connor and Sonja Keating discussing the social license to operate and regulatory processes. SafeSport was mentioned often and both speakers emphasized the need for concern, vigilance and, if necessary, reporting instances of abuse of horses and riders. This is a large topic and anyone with a need for more information is urged to contact USDF. I am jumping ahead a bit here but there was a separate presentation on Saturday afternoon by two attorneys from USEF about SafeSport and the disciplinary process.

Friday morning there was a discussion of social media and how GMO's can use it to their advantage. The clear messages were to post often, post as much news about your group as you can and whenever possible post photographs. The morning also provided opportunities for GMO's to meet and discuss their own issues, their successes and not so successful initiatives and to share recommendations for activities.

The Board of Governors meeting began Friday afternoon. The big issue in the afternoon and the one that drew the most raised hands and comments was the convention itself. Is it too long, too short, too expensive? Should there be more educational programs or fewer? Should USDF invite vendors? An often repeated complaint was that the convention is too long and too expensive. The President explained that next year's convention, also booked for Lexington, will be in a different hotel, presumably less expensive and will be one day shorter. A substantial number of

people were not happy with that stating that they would not spend so much money for a short trip. Apparently it is difficult to please everyone.

Friday ended with a program hosted by Janet Foy, William Warren and Jane Manfredi called "You Be the Judge." Participants were invited to judge several horses performing a piaffe and a pirouette and then the real judges would evaluate. My scores were very close to the professionals but for all the wrong reasons! When examining one horse's piaffe, in which the horse broke the rhythm and moved forward, Mr. Warren suggested that he tried to score the movement first with what was good about it and then make deductions for faults. Interesting because I admit the first thing I noticed was the flaws.

On Saturday the Board of Governors meeting concluded with the treasurer's reports and election of officers, including our new Vice President, Debra Reinhardt (Region 8). Congratulations to Debra!

Thereafter it was on to Toni Sandoval who discussed the Assessment and Training of the Dressage Athlete. He meant the riders. Mr. Sandoval is an engaging speaker and can inspire even a couch potato to exercise. The last discussion in the afternoon was the USDF book club. Beth Baumert described her book HOW TWO MINDS MEET. If you want to further your equestrian education at very little cost I recommend you join the book club on the USDF website. There are no firm dates for book discussions for 2026 as of this printing but information will be available soon. I will be signing up.

The USDF Convention is a wonderful opportunity for you to spend several days with people who love the same things as you. You can be as involved as much or as little as you wish. Either way, you will come away with a deeper commitment to your chosen sport.

Send us your stories and experiences.

CDA Donates!

CDA is a non-profit organization, and the board recognizes the importance of supporting other non-profits in our community. Below is a list of the recipients of our 2025 donations, along with a letter of appreciation from the recipient D4K.

- High Hopes
- Little Britches
- Mitchel Farm
- D4K - Dressage for Kids

December 3, 2025

Dear CDA Board,

On behalf of Lendon Gray and Dressage4Kids, I would like to thank you for your generous donation. Your donation is a testament to your kindness and willingness to support others. Your choice to support D4K is wonderful, and we are very grateful. Deserving kids are the beneficiaries of your generosity.

With 2025 finishing up, we've done so much with our programs both mounted and unmounted. For a remarkably small group of volunteers, we seem to accomplish a great deal! It's so wonderful that each of us contributes in ways that are important to us personally. It does seem like the possibilities are endless, but it is so gratifying to be part of Dressage4Kids.

We're looking forward to continuing our programs and feel very lucky that we have donors like you. So, thanks again. It is wonderful to know that the benefits from Dressage4Kids can continue. Again, thank you for your support with this kindness that you have conferred on Dressage4Kids. Your loyalty encourages us to believe in what we do.

General Announcements

CDA Youth Connect **News and Updates from Our Junior** **Members**

Volunteer Information -

If you are interested in volunteering with us: Email Carol Mohyde carolmohyde@gmail.com or Amy Ravitz amy.ravitz@yahoo.com

Opportunity to 'Shadow' a Volunteer

— Ask Carol or Amy

Earn USDF Volunteer Recognition – See more at [GMO Volunteer Incentive Program Hour Log](#)

Thank you to all of our 2025 volunteers!

QUOTE From Dressage Today, May 12, 2025

“Evenly distributing weight across the balls of your feet in the stirrups will help ground your seat, and the more weight you put into the stirrups, the taller your upper body becomes. Stretching your legs down and growing tall at the same time demonstrates the concept of sitting deep and light on the horse.”

~ Susanne von Dietze

USDF Region 8 News

A Message from our Regional Director

Greetings Region 8!

November 2025

Greetings Region 8!

First, big congratulations to Steve Ruggiero for attaining his “r” judge’s license – a well-deserved achievement!

The FEI Youth Clinic was held at the beginning of the month with Sabine Schut-Kery and was a great success. Sophia Forsyth, Madeline Fasse, Emily Jackowski, Finley Peterson, Logan Green, Isabella Thorpe, Ruby General and Liv DaCosta-Robinson and their equine partners had two days of lessons and discussion with Sabine. Madeline Fasse said that “it was so great to be able to talk to Sabine about personal vs. work life” and Ruby added that “the experience was awesome”. Sabine’s lessons were consistent but tailored to each rider. Thank you again to Weatogue for hosting.

On the 8th, we had the Regional Meeting with a good attendance. Lendon Gray gave an update on several D4K programs. She emphasized the TEAM clinic – an opportunity for riders at any level on any horse or pony to spend two days riding, hearing relevant lectures and viewing demonstrations. Lendon would like to see more of these clinics offered in the Northeast as we are lagging behind other regions. Let me know if you would like to host one. She also introduced the D4K ACT (Advocacy, Community, Team) Program that gives young dressage riders the opportunity to give back to the community through volunteering. Susan Rizkalla floated the idea of creating a committee to look at issues that all of our GMOs face and share solutions. If you are interested in being a part of this, please drop me a line at the email below.

The 2025 USDF Dressage Finals are a wrap and they were incredible. The **huge** WEC facility in Ohio was the perfect venue for the occasion – beautifully decorated, and more important all indoors as it was cold, windy and rainy the first several days. Congratulations to all who made it there! Region 8 had great representation with about 50 competitors (apologies to those who arrived after the photo was taken). Thank you to Susan Stickle for the fabulous photo!

Please forward me any information about show and clinic schedules and I will be sure to include it in my newsletters.

All the best,
Helen
vandeh13@gmail.com

CDA Membership for 2026!

[Click here](#) to see all the fantastic benefits of membership and to renew!

CDA Sponsorship Opportunity in the 2026 Omnibus

Please consider sponsorship in the 2026 Connecticut Dressage Association Omnibus. The CDA Omnibus is an annual publication that is distributed to 175+

members. The Omnibus is an invaluable reference used by our members to get information about not only shows and events in our region, but professional goods and services for equestrians and their horses.

CDA is a not-for-profit organization, and your sponsorship revenue helps to defray the cost of producing the Omnibus. If you have any questions about omnibus sponsorship, please contact Megan Clarke at megan.clarkeCDA@gmail.com with subject heading "Omnibus Ad".

We appreciate your consideration and generosity.

CDA Sponsors – Connecticut Dressage Association (ctdressage.org)



Vicki Hammers-O'Neil

FEI Trainer and USDF Instructor Certification Faculty Member
203-213-2798 • fourtempis@aol.com • www.vhodressagellc.com

instruction that comes to you, with a focus on horse well-being and rider education
lessons • all-day/partial-day clinics • coaching at shows • instructor certification prep

TRAVELING THROUGHOUT CONNECTICUT, AS WELL AS NEW YORK & MASSACHUSETTS

CDA Scholarships

CDA Scholarships for Youth & Amateurs

Vista Vintage Educational Scholarship

CDA offers one or more scholarships per year, per category for CDA members. Check out the details for 2025 on the [CDA Scholarship Web page](#).

The Vista Vintage Educational Scholarship

Through the continued generosity of Vista Vintage Award founder, Ted Plaut,



CDA stewards the Vista Vintage Educational Scholarship.

The Vista Vintage Award singles out the best performances by our special senior horses. These are the equine partners who demonstrate that age is no barrier to competing and earning scores to make any rider proud.

The Vista Vintage Award program focuses on the success of 'senior horses. It consists of a \$300 cash prize and an elegant special award.

For more information contact Kari Bradshaw at rkhotshoe3@gmail.com.

Philla and Charlie Osborne Volunteer Award

Each year, CDA has the option to give a Volunteer of the Year Award for special service to CDA.

History: The award is named in honor of Philla and Charlie Osborne who donated hours and hours of service to CDA in the 80s and 90s. They were always found at the practice ring at shows (recognized and schooling) checking numbers and entries and letting riders know when they were "on deck". Philla and Charlie also rode for many years with Vicki Hammers-O'Neil and today, Philla owns a horse that is being trained and competed by Vicki.

CDA Rider Achievement Awards

An annual CDA Rider Recognition Program focusing on Juniors and AA's. Qualifying rides must be completed within the current competition year and can be achieved at either schooling or recognized shows.

Scores can be achieved on multiple horses. Training through 4th level. 3 scores, minimum 62% for schooling and 60% for recognized.

Follow CDA on Facebook

CDA Facebook Page



CDA Facebook Pictures Needed
Please submit pictures for the CDA Facebook.
(The submitter needs to own the picture or copyright of the submission.)

Send to Jessica.amber77@gmail.com

Opening date – closing date TBD

2026 Calendar of Events

Next CDA Board Meeting January 12
6:00 at Fern's in person
Zoom Meeting will start at 6:30 pm
Contact Fern Feldman:
fernfeldman@gmail.com

*Please check the Website regularly for the status
of events Ctdressage.org and eligibility criteria.

CDA sponsored Shows

CDA @ Virtual Show #1

Opening date January 16 2026
Closing date February 8, 2026
Video due: March 1, 2026
Judging and results by March 12, 2026
[Click here for prizelist](#)

CDA @ Virtual Show #2

Opening date March 13, 2026
Closing date April 5, 2026
Video due: April 26, 2026
Judging and results by May 7, 2026
[Click here for prizelist](#)

CDA @ Virtual Show #3

Opening date May 1, 2026
Closing date May 24, 2026
Video due: June 14, 2026
Judging and results by June 25, 2026
[Click here for prizelist](#)

CDA @ Weatogue Stables TBD

Opening date – closing date TBD

CDA @ Sperry View Farm - May 2, 2026

Opening date – closing date TBD

CDA @ R Folly Farm - August 9, 2026

Opening date – closing date TBD

CDA @ Sperry View Farm - September 6, 2026

CDA @ BelleFree Farm - October 3, 2026

Opening date – closing date TBD