

June/July 2026

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CENTERLINE



President's Message

Summer has officially arrived, bringing warm weather and an exciting season of dressage! CDA's show season is in full swing, and we've already enjoyed a wonderful start. We recently hosted a successful CDA Schooling Show at Weatogue Stables, as well as our final CDA Virtual Show in partnership with Spotlight Horse Shows.

Be sure to mark your calendars for our upcoming schooling shows:

- **August:** CDA Schooling Show at R Folly Farm
- **September:** CDA Schooling Show at Sperry View Farm
- **October:** CDA Schooling Show at Belle Free Farm

In June, we were delighted to host a USDF-sponsored clinic with Bill Warren at Sperry View Farm. Over three full days, riders from Training Level through Grand Prix participated in lessons. The response was overwhelmingly positive, with participants praising Bill's thoughtful, encouraging instruction and leaving with valuable insights and practical tools to continue developing both horse and rider. A heartfelt thank-you to USDF for its generous support in making this outstanding educational opportunity possible.

Looking ahead, CDA will host a Working Equitation Clinic with Stephanie Hayes on **October 17, 2026**, at Connecticut Equestrian Center. Additional details will be shared soon, so stay tuned! For information on all of our upcoming programs and events, be sure to check the Omnibus and visit our website.

A sincere thank-you goes to our incredible volunteers. Your time, dedication, and enthusiasm are what make our shows, clinics, and events possible. We also extend our appreciation to the farms that so generously host our programs throughout the season.

We're always looking for new volunteers, fresh ideas, and member input. Everyone is welcome at our monthly meetings and we'd love to have you join us. If you're interested in getting involved, please contact me at blasivalerie@yahoo.com or Fern Feldman at fernfeldman@gmail.com.

Wishing you and your horses a safe, successful, and enjoyable summer.

Best regards,

Valerie Blasi | President, Connecticut Dressage Association

Are You Breaking the Rules? Check USEF Banned Substances

Every year, new substances are added to the USEF Banned Substance List. These substances may be found in over-the-counter supplements or medications prescribed by a veterinarian. Your veterinarian should be the first point of contact when determining whether a medication or supplement is prohibited. However, owners and riders also share responsibility for understanding the status of any substance they administer to their horses.

Keeping track of permitted and prohibited substances can be challenging. Make it a yearly practice at the start of each competition season to review the [Drugs and Medications Rule](#) and familiarize yourself with the latest treatment recommendations for horses competing under USEF regulations. Be sure to share any updates or insights with fellow competitors and your veterinarian.

By staying informed and sharing knowledge, we can help ensure compliance and protect the welfare of our horses and the integrity of the sport.

Member Spotlight

Brooke Klenk
Sunflower Equestrian Center

Q: You received the Vista Vintage Award for 2025. Can you tell us a bit about the horse you won the award with?



Zip In The Money and Brooke in a WDAA test

Absolutely! I won the 2025 Vista Vintage Award with my father, John Hurst's horse, Zip In The Money. Zip is a 23-year-old Quarter Horse who was actually my dad's very first horse! We've had "Zippy" since I was 10 years old, and he's been a huge part of our family and our farm ever since.

Although Zip has done everything from ranch riding to Hunter Under Saddle, showing dressage was a completely new adventure for him. He's proven that age doesn't limit a horse's ability to learn something new or excel in a different discipline.

Q: Any comments on working with older horses?

I think older horses are often underestimated. Some of the horses with the biggest hearts are the ones with the most years behind them. I currently work with horses ranging from yearlings to 25 years old, and every stage of their lives has something to offer. With the right care and conditioning, senior horses can continue to thrive, enjoy their work, and surprise you. Winning this award with Zip made the experience even more special.



A Millions Plenty "Ben" also a senior horse at MVHC

Q: When did you start riding?

I began riding at the age of 6. I had always had a love for horses and constantly had my parents stopping to feed carrots to the horses that lived down the street from us. For my 6th birthday they enrolled me in some lessons and then it spiraled from there... Now it's a family affair!

Q: Tell us a bit about your business! What type of training do you offer?

We started [Sunflower Equestrian Center](#) nearly 20 years ago, and over the years it has grown into exactly what we always envisioned. We specialize in dressage training with an emphasis on natural horsemanship and French classical dressage. My father and I have been fortunate to study under many of the same trainers, including Dominique Barbier, Mark Rashid, Dennis Reis, and Buck Brannaman, all of whom have influenced our philosophy of putting the horse first. Building a strong partnership between horse and rider has always been our priority, with competition becoming the natural result of good training rather than the primary goal.



Quixote XX and Brooke at HITS this year (Quixote is one of Sunflower's Lusitanos)

Our business has also expanded into our newest venture, Sunflower Lusitanos. We've always had a passion for developing young horses and for the Lusitano breed, and we're excited to have built a program centered around both. Today, we have eight Lusitanos in our barn, including our own horses, client horses, and horses offered through our sales program.

Q: What are the benefits of having a Western background while now working more in dressage?

I think my Western background has been one of my greatest assets as a dressage trainer. It taught me that timing, feel, balance, and building a true partnership with the horse always come first. Those principles carry over into every ride, regardless of discipline.

Western riding, especially at a higher level, is actually incredibly precise and requires balance, strength, straightness, and adjustability—all of which are fundamentally dressage principles. Because of that, the transition into dressage "full time" felt very natural for me. I also find that I continue to apply those same foundational ideas in both my Western and English riding today, particularly in developing softness, correctness, and true self-carriage in the horse.

At the end of the day, good horsemanship is good horsemanship, and the horse doesn't know what

discipline it's competing in—it only knows how it's being trained and communicated with.

Q: You mentioned having eight Lusitanos at your farm. What drew you to the breed?

I was initially drawn to the breed about 15 years ago when one came in for training, and I instantly fell in love with them. From there, my father and I purchased and imported our first Lusitano stallion, Esquilo, and that really became the foundation of what has grown into our program today.



Savido d'Noble and Brooke at Weatogue Stables' CDA show (Savido is one of Sunflower's Lusitanos)

I think Iberian breeds are often misunderstood as being “hot,” but in my experience it's quite the opposite. The Lusitanos we've worked with are incredibly brave, loyal, intelligent, and sensitive—yet very sensible and exceptionally rideable. They are also extremely comfortable to sit and train, which makes them a joy in both the developing and competitive stages. I often describe them as the sports car version of a good Quarter Horse, which is probably what initially drew me to them.

Beyond their rideability, I also really appreciate the depth of history and tradition behind the breed. That combination of talent, mind, and heritage is what makes them so special to work with.

Q: What are your 2026/2027 goals in dressage?

My current goals for 2026/2027 are centered around continued development and consistency across my program. I'm focusing on bringing along several young Lusitanos we started under saddle earlier this year and introducing them more into the dressage ring in a thoughtful, correct way.

I'm also working toward earning my USDF Bronze Medal with one of the horses I've been developing, which has been a long-term goal of mine. Alongside that, I plan to continue showing my more established horses, including Zip “Zip In The Money” and Ben “A Millions Plenty,” while keeping them happy, confident, and competitive.

If all goes well, I'd also love to aim for another trip to Regionals this season. Ultimately, my biggest goal is always to keep improving the horses in front of me while staying true to our horse-first training philosophy.

Q: What do you enjoy about being a CDA member?

I became a CDA member a few years ago after taking a break from showing during COVID, and one of the biggest reasons I've stayed involved is how welcoming and supportive the CDA community is. Some of my first interactions at my first CDA show—my first one since I was probably about 10 years old—were with Carol Mohyde and Amy Ravitz, and they were so kind and encouraging that it immediately set the tone for my experience.

That first impression really reflected what I've continued to find within CDA as a whole: a friendly, supportive community that genuinely wants to see riders succeed. I've truly enjoyed being a member and really appreciate how well-run the shows are, along with the consistent quality of judging and venues.

Opportunity for a CDA Youth to Apply for a D4K Sponsorship

Lendon's Youth Dressage Festival - August 7-9, 2026 - Horse Park of New Jersey, Allentown, NJ

For riders of all levels (from Leadline to FEI U25, Para, and Western), ages 4 through 25, plus alumni, also featuring a new Horseless Division for competitors without a horse.

We'd like to share an upcoming opportunity connected to D4K. As many of you know, CDA already supports this organization through our donations, so this feels like a natural extension of that relationship.

CDA will sponsor a limited number of CDA members who may be interested in participating. If there are families or youth who would like to be involved, we'd love to hear from you. Please let us know if your child might be interested in being part of a CDA-sponsored group.

More details will be shared soon. Thank you for helping us continue to support great organizations like D4K and for encouraging opportunities for our youth to get involved. Learn more at dressage4kids.org

An adult amateur rider, Carol's goal for the clinic was to gain guidance on Fourth Level Test 1. She left the session with valuable tools and a renewed sense of confidence.

"My ride with Bill was great!" Carol said. "He told me my seat had improved since the last time he saw me. We worked on bending to the right, which helped straighten Modico, and we did several transitions on a circle to improve his promptness to the aids. Overall, we had a really good ride, and I look forward to using the tools he gave us."



Carol DiCarlo with Modico, Christina DiTullio, Emily Emond, Christine Engel, Bill Warren, Fern Feldman and Val Blasi

2026 CDA Clinics

Bill Warren (S) Clinic - June 20-22 2026
Sperry View Farm, Bethany, CT

The clinic was an overwhelming success. There were 27 pairs of riders and horses over the three days. Bill is a kind and patient instructor. Adapting easily to each rider and horse combination and their level of training. Some of the takeaways:

- Turning is your friend; turn the saddle
- Let the exercise do the work
- The reins are attached to the seat, not the shoulders

Bill suggests asking yourself, "Where am I channeling the energy?"

Riders share their experience.

Carol DiCarlo rode her 20-year-old PRE gelding, Modico, who was trained and shown through Intermediaire I by Jessie Rizzi.



Jessie Rizzi and Suzanne Handler with First Love



Susan Sieber and Eastwood

Valerie Blasi shared her experience, "Bill was great. We really worked on position being more up right and using my core. And also not being so grippy and nagging with my legs. And it worked. Remy, a 27 year

old Dutch Harness gelding owned by Liz Doering, became much more relaxed and forward. It's all about the driver sometimes!"



Bill is an FEI 4* and USEF "S" dressage judge based in Wellington, Florida during the winter and in New England for the summer months.

[Photo Credit: Susan Stickle]

Stephanie Hayes Working Equitation Clinic

October 17, 2026

Connecticut Equestrian Center, Coventry CT

This clinic will include a dressage ride-a-test and lesson in the morning. Riders will then ride through the ease of handling obstacles in the afternoon in a semi private lesson. To learn more about the test patterns and obstacles visit the USAWE website:

<https://usawe.org/rules/>. This clinic is suitable for all levels and will be fantastic for horses and riders with

no previous working equitation experience. Auditors are welcome!

Stephanie Hayes from Johnson, Vermont, has been a professional in the horse industry for 35 years and involved in Working Equitation since 2017. She is a USAWE L judge, Recognized Professional Instructor, and serves on the Professional Development Committee. She is the co-founder of New England Working Equitation, a USAWE affiliate organization. Stephanie is also an alternate for the USAWE team at the 2026 World Championships.

Registration coming soon!

T.I.P. PROGRAM

The CDA is thrilled to participate in The Jockey Club Thoroughbred Incentive Program referred to as T.I.P.



A TB horse needs to be registered with the Jockey Club in order for the owner to obtain a TIP number. A TIP number is needed to be eligible for TIP awards at a show.

Provide T.I.P. Numbers with your entries. For more information and to see if your Thoroughbred is eligible, visit <https://tjctip.com/default>. Good luck to the Thoroughbreds and riders!

Members Share Their Appreciation of CDA Events

From CDA Member Liz Piacentini regarding the Working Equitation Show held at Sperry View Farm (Bethany, CT) on June 7.

I am thrilled to see Sherri's article and read about her exploration into Working Equitation! Thank you for including an explanation of this discipline, which I've found to be enjoyable for both horse and rider.

Hopefully, this information will spark more interest from fellow Dressage riders.

I hope CDA will offer more Working Equitation events next year. Hopefully, I'll be back in the saddle by then and able to participate once again. A non-horse related injury has kept me grounded for the past few years.

I wish Sherri all the best with the upcoming show.

CDA Recognizes Our Members 2025 USDF Achievements

USDF Gold Medalists

Stacey Daigle

USDF Silver Medalists

Danielle Dailey

USDF Bronze Medalist with Distinction

Megan Tursi

USDF Bronze Medalists

Debra Case

Brittany Curran

Ruby General

Alessandra Cockett

Heidi Ellis

Elizabeth Trotter

USDF Bronze Freestyle Bar Recipients

Megan Tursi

If we missed your name and accomplishments, please send it in and share a picture.

CDA Youth Connect News and Updates from Our Junior Members

Send us your stories and experiences.

General Announcements

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](#)

Quote for the Show Season

"The half halt is the key to shifting the horse's balance onto his hind end and lifting his forehand."

Kathy Connelly

Courtesy of Dressage Today

USDF Region 8 News

A Message from our Regional Director Helen Van der Voort

USDF and Dressage4Kids recently announced a partnership for USDF/Dressage4Kids U-13 Regional Merit Awards. These awards, presented at each of the nine Great American/USDF Regional Championships, will recognize the highest and second highest placing juniors, aged 13 and under, in the Training and First Level Junior/Young Rider Championship classes, for four awards total per region.

"We welcome every opportunity to better highlight the outstanding work of our junior riders, especially those who have worked so hard to qualify for the regional championships. With D4K's mission, long-standing dedication to the sport, and support for these new awards, partnering with them was a natural fit," enthused USDF President Kevin Reinig. Lendon Gray, Olympian, USDF Hall of Famer, and Dressage4Kids founder agreed, "We want to support the efforts of our youngest competitors and are delighted to recognize the hard work that these kids, and their wonderful instructors and parents, have done to get to their regional championships. We know they'll be role models for others who are working for similar goals."

For more information on the USDF/Dressage4Kids U-13 Regional Merit Awards, Great American/USDF Regional Championships, or other USDF youth opportunities and offerings, please visit www.usdf.org or contact regchamps@usdf.org.

Exciting news: Jordan LaPlaca (Ledyard, Conn.) and Gold Play, a 2015 Oldenburg gelding (Grey Flanell x Sir Donnerhall II) owned by Nancy Hutson and Jordan LaPlaca and cared for by Caitlin LaPlaca have been selected for the short list to compete on the US

Dressage team at the FEI World Championships at Aachen.

The deadline for qualifying scores for NAYC is June 22, 2026 – Good luck!

A reminder: This year's FEI Youth Clinic with George Williams will be held at Weatogue in Salisbury CT on October 24-25 with the application deadline of September 11. While this seems far, far away, the application process requires a video of a test. Information about the clinic and the application process is here:
<https://www.usdf.org/education/clinics/jryr/index.asp>.

There is some confusion about the 2026 Convention dates – after many, many comments, the Convention has returned to the 4 day format. It will be held again in Lexington KY December 2-5 with some new and special social events at a new (to us) hotel. Mark your calendars!

The full schedule of recognized shows can be found at <https://www.usdf.org/calendar/competitions.asp>. You will need to toggle to Region 8.

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 Scholarships

CDA offers one or more scholarships per year, per category for CDA members. Check out the details for 2026 on the [CDA Scholarship Webpage](#).

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 recognizes the best performances by our special senior horses. The Vista Vintage Award Program focuses on the success of 'senior' horses (18 or older). It consists of a \$150 cash prize and an award.

For more information contact Kari Bradshaw at rkhotshe3@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 warm-up 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.

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 Jen Corti at jencorti@gmail.com

2026 Calendar of Events

Next CDA Board Meeting
August 17, 2026, 6:00 pm at Fern's
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

[Click here for results](#)

CDA @ Virtual Show #2

[Click here for results](#)

CDA @ Virtual Show #3

[Click here for results](#)

CDA @ Sperry View Farm - May 2, 2026

Judge: Matthew Beasley "L" Graduate with Distinction

CDA @ Weatogue Stables - June 20, 2026

Please refer to Weatogue Stable prize list for details

<https://www.weatoguestables.com/services>

Judge: Stephanie Mason "r"

CDA @ R Folly Farm - August 9, 2026

Please refer to Abacus Events prize list in CDA omnibus for more details

<https://www.rfollyfarm.com/events.html>

Judge: Shelby Ballentine "L" Graduate

CDA @ Sperry View Farm - September 6, 2026

(opening date: 8/16/26 – closing date: 8/29/26)

Judge: Steve Ruggiero "r"

CDA @ BelleFree Farm - October 3, 2026

(opening date: 9/12/26 – closing date: 9/26/26)

Judge: Augusta Van Tongeren "L" Graduate