

Aug/Sep 2026

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CENTERLINE



President's Message

Greetings,

It's hard to believe it's September! As we look forward to cooler, drier temperatures and longer September days, there are a few more CDA happenings to get excited about.

Our final schooling show of the season is scheduled for **October 3 at Belle Free Farm**. We hope to see you there enjoying time in the sandbox with your horses!

Looking ahead, CDA will host a **Working Equitation Clinic with Stephanie Hayes on October 17, 2026, at Connecticut Equestrian Center**. Application and fee information is available in an article below and on our website.

Auditors are welcome!

Our Member Spotlight this issue shines on **Virginia Leary**. Read about her remarkable adventures and the rich educational journey that has shaped her life with horses.

Also new in this issue: a **podcast recommendation**, because apparently we can never have enough horse information!

A sincere thank you goes to our incredible volunteers and to the farms that generously host our programs. We're always looking for new volunteers, fresh ideas, and member input. We especially need volunteers for our schooling shows.

Everyone is welcome at our monthly meetings, and we'd love to have you join us. If you'd like to get involved, please contact me at **blasivalerie@yahoo.com** or Fern Feldman at **fernfeldman@gmail.com**.

CDA is committed to offering a variety of clinics and schooling shows across the state, providing valuable opportunities to learn, compete, and connect with the dressage community.

Thank you to everyone who gives their time and energy to make these programs possible!

Best regards, Valerie Blasi | President, Connecticut Dressage Association

What's in Your Ear? Podcast Suggestion

By Pamela Wilhelm

Earlier this year, I started driving a 1998 Toyota 4Runner. As you might imagine, its features are fairly primitive and some are no longer functioning, particularly the radio. I love listening to public radio, so I had to give that up during my commute to my part-time job.

As a result, I started listening to podcasts. Here's one I recently discovered that I found both colorful and informative.

On the Move with Ben & Joe | Episode #83

Dr. Deb Bennett - What Happens When You Bend a Horse?

Dr. Deb Bennett is the founder of the Equine Studies Institute. Her Ph.D. in Vertebrate Paleontology, combined with her lifelong passion for horses, has made her highly respected for her expertise in conformation and equine biomechanics.

Deb joins Ben and Joe to discuss her journey, her time spent with Ray Hunt and Tom Dorrance, and the ever-popular topic of bending a horse.

Dr. Bennett takes us on a winding journey through the history of equine evolution, weaving in numerous colorful and fascinating side stories along the way. I particularly enjoy her style and delivery. She presents herself as both a seasoned historian and a confident, engaging storyteller. Her references to trainers and horsemanship practices spanning centuries are remarkable and provide a fascinating perspective on the evolution of our understanding of horses.

Jan 23, 2024

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/83-dr-deb-bennett-what-happens-when-you-bend-a-horse/id1631913256?i=1000642612729&r=14.968>

Member Spotlight

Virginia Leary - Lost Run Farm

Virginia Leary is a former international level eventer who has coached riders at the advanced level. Virginia now shows and trains at the FEI level in dressage and is licensed to judge eventing dressage training level and below. She is in the small "r" dressage training program and is available for lessons, clinics and judging.

Tell Us About Yourself

I've been addicted to horses for as long as I can remember. I was born in downtown Philadelphia and, even then, dreamed of horses. When I was about nine, my family moved to the suburbs, next door to Mary Alice Malone (founder of Iron Spring Farm) who would become a lifelong friend. She had two donkeys, and that's where our riding adventures began.

When we got our own horses, we joined Bridlewild Pony Club because, in Gladwyne, Pennsylvania, that was what you did! Pony Club introduced me to eventing, which eventually led to my competing in Olympic selection trials around 1971. I finished fifth in the trials, but unfortunately, Jack Le Goff would not have women on the team, so that was that.



went on to compete at the Pan American Games and in Olympic selection trials.

Focusing on Dressage

As I got older—and, fortunately, lost some of my death wish!—I was looking for something new and interesting to do, so I decided to try dressage.

Through my friend Mary Alice and her Iron Spring Farm, I began working with warmbloods and gradually moved away from eventing. Ann Guptill was my first serious dressage coach, and I credit her with giving me a wonderful foundation and the basics that have stayed with me throughout my career.

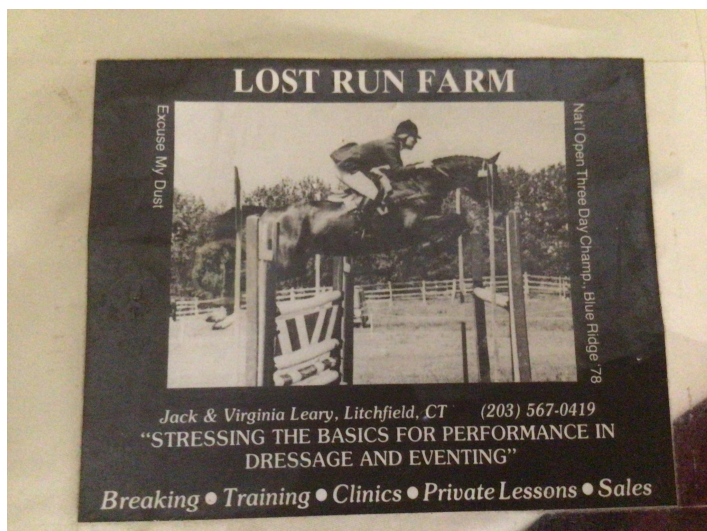
I was importing horses from Ireland when I first saw Kells, a four-year-old horse standing in a field. He became the famous Spottie—and truly was the **horse of a lifetime**.

Virginia & Table Tales at Radnor Two Star 1980's

Becoming a Trainer

I moved to Unionville and continued eventing, fox hunting, and training racehorses for second careers while managing a farm for veterinarian Dr. Elinor Jenny. I met Jack Leary, who later became my husband, while competing in the selection trials for the Lexington World Championships.

We eventually moved to Connecticut, where we ran Lost Run Farm as an eventing training facility. I had the great privilege of coaching students who





Virginia & Spottie

Spottie went to Germany with me, where we trained with Ulla Salzgeber for a winter. When I returned, I began taking lessons with Chris Hickey and went to Florida with Chris the following year. I would never have developed my two Grand Prix horses without those experiences. I was also fortunate to continue training with Ulla in Florida, and later worked with Morten Thompson and Bo Jena.

Along the way, I earned my Bronze, Silver, and Gold medals. I went through the USDF “L” program, and subsequently became very involved in judging.



Virginia & Galloways Demiro

Rider Biomechanics and My Work with Andy Thomas

In recent years, I met Andy Thomas and completed his coaches’ training in rider biomechanics and symmetry.

I’ve always believed that if I can make a rider more comfortable, I can make them more comfortable for their horse to carry. Good biomechanics and symmetry aren’t just about making the rider look better—they’re about creating a more balanced, effective, and comfortable partnership between horse and rider.

The Century Club



Recently, at the summer Sperry View show, I completed my Century Ride at Grand Prix on Galloways Demiro, my 26-year-old horse. It was a wonderful milestone and one that means a great deal to me.

A lot of people have told me they'd like to do a Century Ride themselves. My answer is always the same:

First, you have to get old. Then you need a sound, willing older horse!



Virginia Leary & Galloways Demiro | Grand Prix | Century Club Ride

CDA Sponsorships

Youth and D4K

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

Learn more at dressage4kids.org

In June, CDA sponsored a GMO High Score Award at the Northeast Multistate Dressage Show. The recipient of the CDA Overall High Score JR/YR Award was Sierra McCabe, riding O'Hara's Duarte, with a score of 68.077%.



GMO AWARDS		
NEDA MEMBER HIGH SCORE	Zoe Flannery Sonnet WPF	68.095%
NHDEA MEMBER HIGH SCORE	Emma Batchelder Gretzky SD	70.800%
SMDEA MEMBER HIGH SCORE	Margaret Bailey Kennebec Jester	64.231%
CDA OVERALL HIGH SCORE JR/YR	Sierra McCabe O'Hara's Duarte	68.077%

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR COMPETITORS,
VOLUNTEERS & SUPPORTERS!

2026 CDA Clinics

Stephanie Hayes Working Equitation Clinic
Saturday, 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, levels, and obstacles visit the US Association for Working Equitation (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 has competed successfully on self trained horses earning numerous National Leaderboard and Regional Championships in levels 1 through 7. She was awarded the Platinum Lifetime Achievement award on her Lusitano DEM Rayo in 2025.

Stephanie is currently ranked #41 in World Association Working Equitation international rankings and is an alternate for the USAWE team in 2026.

Here are some links to see upper level working equitation:

[Stephanie Riding a Master Level Ease of Handling](#)

World Champion [Pedro Torres Working Equitation](#)

[Clinic Registration](#) [Liability Release](#) [Photo Release](#)

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!

CDA Recognizes Our Members Achievements

Share Your Achievements—Big or Small!

We'd love to celebrate your accomplishments and share them here. If we missed your name or an achievement, please send it our way—along with a photo—and let us celebrate you!

Google Photo Album for CDA

If you are a CDA member and have competed, participated, volunteered, or simply attended an event this year, we'd love to see your pictures! Share your favorite moments with us to have them featured during our Annual Awards Banquet and in next year's omnibus*.

Thank you for helping us capture and celebrate another great year!

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/nPyJe8RdLbvzNq3p6>

**IMPORTANT NOTE: These pictures may be used in an end-of-year slideshow and in the CDA Omnibus. By submitting, you agree to this use.*

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](#)

Here's Something to Think About

"Many riders either hold their breath or don't breathe correctly. They breathe in and forget to breathe out. This causes you to stiffen in your shoulders, which causes your horse to get stronger, and in response, your legs stiffen. And on and on. Breathing deep and low gets your center of gravity low and helps with your balance. Then, it's easier for your horse to carry you."

~ Olympian **Adeline Cornelissen**

Courtesy of Dressage Today

USDF Region 8 News

A Message from our Regional Director Helen Van der Voort

August 2026 | Greetings Region 8!

It's that time of year again for your help promoting a few of our Youth Programs!

Please have the following programs on your radar:

- USDF Youth Volunteer of the Year (Ages 21 and under) – Nominations due August 31
- USDF Nomination for USEF Youth Sportsman's Award (Ages 17 and under) – Applications due August 15
- USDF Youth Convention Scholarship Program (Ages 21 and under) – Applications due August 31
<https://www.usdf.org/Convention/save-the-date.asp>

And don't forget the Youth Assembly at the 2026 Adequan®/USDF Annual Convention!

There is exciting news on qualifying for the USDF Finals.

- To simplify the entry process for the US Dressage Finals the declaration and nomination processes have been eliminated.
- The top four placed eligible horse/rider combinations will automatically be invited, provided the rider is a US citizen and has met the prerequisite score.
- Many of the wild card scores required to receive an invitation to the Finals have been reduced.

- See the US Dressage Finals Eligibility Document for more information.

The results for this year's FEI North American Youth Championships are in. Congratulations to the entire Region 8 Team, made up of Children's member Juliana Sardelli and her partner Cupid; Madeline Fasse and Zwingfly, Logan Green and Kaliber SP; Ellie Sloan with Bingotti in the Junior Rider Division; Young Rider London Morin on Izzy T and in the U25, Brenna Donovan on Scandal LWF.

Ribbons were flying as Region 8 had probably the best year yet! Juliana was especially busy in awards ceremonies as she placed 5th in the Prelim B test, 6th in the Team Individual Placing, 8th in the Children's Individual Championship and was on the bronze winning combined team. Ellie placed 4th in the Team Individual Placing, 5th in the JR Individual Championship and 7th in Freestyle, and Brenna placed 6th in Grand Prix and 6th in Freestyle. The athletes and parents all had a fabulous time. Special thanks go to Chef d'Equipe Bobbi Carleton and "Chef-in-training" Allison King!

Here is a wonderful article about Juliana and Cupid
<https://www.usef.org/media/newsletter/affiliate-news/juliana-sardelli-cupid-take-center-stage>

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. Information about the clinic and the application process is here:
<https://www.usdf.org/education/clinics/jryr/index.asp>.

Upcoming events:

Region 8 Championships at HITS Saugerties are September 17-20.

NEDA's Fall Symposium with Jan Brink is October 17 and 18 at Mount Holyoke. Tickets are now on sale and more information is available on their website at www.neda.org.

USDF Finals are October 29-November 1 in Wilmington Ohio.

The 2026 Convention is in Lexington KY December 2-5. More information here:
<https://www.usdf.org/Convention/save-the-date.asp>

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,

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 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 warm-up ring at shows (recognized and schooling) checking numbers and entries and letting riders know when they were "on deck".

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
October 5, 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

Opens 1/16/26, Closes 2/8/26, Videos Due 3/1/26, Results 3/12/26

[Click here for results](#)

CDA @ Virtual Show #2

Opens 3/13/26, Closes 4/5/26, Videos Due 4/26/26, Results 5/7/26

[Click here for results](#)

CDA @ Virtual Show #3

Opens 5/1/26, Closes 5/24/26, Videos Due 6/14/26, Results 6/25/26

[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