

Caitlin Allen

2017 Lendon Grey Scholarship Report
Furthering Education with Adrie Hoogsteen

In 2015, I had competed at the Dressage4Kids Festival at HITS Saugerties with the Eastern States Dressage and Combined Training Association at Walk/Trot/Canter, not even placing that weekend. I was disheartened, but determined to one day make it with my limited funds in the dressage world. I unfortunately had a rough beginning in the riding world, I only started when I was 11 and rode western at a barn that taught me a mix of “cowboy” riding methods and overall poor horsemanship. At age 13, I finally switched to dressage with Adrie Hoogsteen at Nearfield Farm in Califon, NJ and forever changed my life.

Following the Dressage4Kids Festival, I began to ride more than once a week and show a lot more due to being able to go to the barn more to work off lessons and coaching fees. I also had gotten a part time job to fund my riding due to my parents now having to save for college and my two brothers. Within those 2 years, I have jumped to First Level and am finally working my way up in the dressage world. But riding comes with a heavy cost, and one that even a part time job and working student position cannot supplement. I applied for this scholarship believing that there was very little chance of me receiving it due to my level and limited ability to show, only to graciously be awarded it to allow my to further my education with Adrie Hoogsteen so I could begin my USDF Bronze Medal and finally earn my scores to finish my ESDCTA Bronze Medal. I would like to thank Dressage4Kids, Lendon Grey, and all that have donated to fund this scholarship. I truly have been given the leg up I needed to start my journey into higher level dressage, excellent horsemanship, and go onto to complete my long term goals of riding for the Region 1 Young Rider Team and one day the US Team.

Under Adrie Hoogsteen, I have learned how to “Ride with a capital R” and not be passive anymore. I learned to use my body when I ride, such as engaging my core so my horse can engage his. This concept has taken me months to develop, especially since my horse easily becomes high and tight, hollowing his back to throw himself into a false frame, which has reflected in my scores. One exercise that has helped me with this has been learning to properly lunge a horse. Lunging has helped me become aware of how my body works and has allowed me to understand that you don’t need to be in the saddle to be able to have your horse go over his back, forward, and listen to your cues. With learning to lunge multiple horses, I saw my ability to consistently with my horse and begin to understand the importance of forward riding.

In the beginning of the summer, I was a very tight rider that held my horses back, this is seen on Legata, a 17 year old Danish mare by Rambo. “Bunnie” is a very tight horse, and is one I struggled to ride in the past two years due to being sensitive. Tightness caused her to drop her back and raise her head and completely “flip upside down”. The first thing I learned is to relax and trust my trainer. I would hear what my trainer was saying but do the complete opposite. To work through this we worked on just improving the trot and trying to canter Bunnie. This photo is from our first ride under the scholarship where we worked on relaxing.



Another lesson I learned was how to stretch my horses and get round from that. Crown Royal, an 18 year old Canadian Sport Pony, is my main show mount that I was paired with in January following the death of my other mount. “Roy” was a former FEI Pony in Canada and has shown through third level, he knows his job but also likes to be high and tight. He loves to passage, except its high, tight, and in a false frame. His high set neck does not help, so we started from the beginning and I rode everything in stretchy trot. I learned to push him forward and into my aids with my core, calf, and how to properly half halt. Although we need a bit of work in the canter, we have improved. In the show ring we will continue to work on remaining calm to prevent compromising the stretch.



Roy was bought with another pony named Silver Lining. “Chase” is an 18 year old Thoroughbred x Welsh that is a bit greener and is “the most marish gelding we know”. He is super sensitive and likes to have a bit on a tantrum when I first get on. In the show ring, he gets very forward, and I was new to riding forward and could not seem to switch from riding forward to holding him back. We would jet through show rings, round and over his back, but way too fast. He also would pop some bucks and has a preference for his right lead, giving us some interesting comments. If I learned anything with Chase, one thing would be not to put your leg too far back, especially with spurs. Also, how to ride forward when needed. I do not need to push a forward horse forward, I just need to keep them over their back, round, and keep the “good forward” as I called it. I learned to use my core over time to hold back Chase while keeping him moving with my calf. He is a lot easier to keep round and easier to keep round and lower in the canter, however he has his quirks which we continue to work on as we plan to show First Level with both Roy and Chase. Lunging Chase more has taught me more about handling him and using my body to keep the good stuff and improve it.



Another horse I rode was 9 year old Danish mare, Lady Luck, by Sinatra Song. “Lady” and her siblings all out of Sinatra Song are all very willing horses in my experience, however they have a lot of power and sometimes struggle with how they move their legs. I am working on showing Lady in the upper levels due to not having been in the show ring. Lady required a lot of core, which was something I worked on with Adrie.



As I continue my riding education, we will continue to refine my learned skills. Tipping forward and putting my leg too far back are equitation flaws I am now aware of and how they affect my ride. I am currently away at college and will be working with greener horses owned by my friend. However, this summer was the most meaningful to me, I experienced so much, learned so much, and earned my regional bronze medal and have begun my journey to completing my USDF Bronze medal. I saw my scores drastically improve and I was able to debut First Level at USDF recognized shows. Once again, thank you to Lendon Grey and the Dressage4Kids Inc. for funding my riding education this summer and allowing me to focus more on my riding and less on my finances.

