

Lendon Gray Scholarship Report: EDAP Clinic at Heritage Equestrian Center

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On November 19th and 20th, 2016, I was able to attend the Emerging Dressage Athlete Clinic at Heritage Equestrian Center due to the generosity of Dressage4Kids. The clinic greatly aided my riding and gave me a push in the right direction. I am extremely grateful to Lendon Gray and the scholarship committee, for without this scholarship I would not have been able to participate in a clinic of this caliber.

The EDAP Clinic was unlike any clinic I have attended. First, the clinic was taught by Lendon Gray herself, which was an incredible opportunity. Before the clinic, my trainer had reminded me what an opportunity this really was, telling me to “bleed her dry” and learn all I could. Furthermore, the clinic lasted two days, allowing Lendon to really learn each rider’s situation. The riders were also required to stay for the entire clinic to absorb the knowledge from other clinics. The riders later in the day had no excuse if they did not know the answer to a question Lendon had asked earlier! Finally, specialized guest speakers were invited to teach riders about various facets of competition at lunch.

My lessons both days revolved around lateral work. I have been working on shoulder-in, leg yield, and a little haunches-in with limited success. My horse tends to get mentally tense in lateral work, and I often unhelpfully respond with physical tightness. Lendon was able to identify these problems and work through them with me. In the haunches-in, we worked on simply moving the haunches toward the inside of the ring, even if it meant my horse had no bend. Lendon instructed me to almost halt as we traveled down the long side and ask for one step of turn on the forehand. Every time I failed to prevent my horse’s haunches from falling back to the rail, I would repeat this. On the second day, we were able to progress farther to a moderate haunches-in with bend. I also attempted an “infant” half pass. I feel that my lesson has given me much to practice at home and improve. Another aspect of my lesson that I appreciated dealt with my frustration. As I got more frustrated that I could not get my horse to execute

a beautiful haunches-in, Lendon mentioned the fact that horses must think what we are asking is rather silly. Though this may seem an insignificant point, it has really helped my perspective on training because it forces me to recognize the fact that horses have no idea why we ask them the things we do.

On the second day of the clinic, the guest speaker was Anna Silverblat. Ms. Silverblat teaches choreography and performance at Brown University. A dancer, Ms. Silverblat helped the riders become aware of the way they carry themselves in the show ring. She demonstrates how looking down can make someone believe the rider does not know what he or she is doing, whereas holding oneself with confidence portrays an image of control and poise. She also emphasized the importance of recovering quickly and self-assuredly from a spook or mistake. One important part of that recovery is maintaining a composed facial expression. This gives an air of confidence and ability. As a rider who struggles with confidence and a dancer myself, Ms. Silverblat's message helped me greatly. I was able to connect my confidence onstage to presence in the arena. She helped me realize that a great deal of how others view me depends on how I carry myself. This is something I will remember whenever I am riding in front of others.

In short, the EDAP Clinic was an amazing experience. Because I fund most of my equine expenses, I would not have been able to afford this clinic without the help of the Lendon Gray Scholarship. I learned a great deal about riding lateral work from Lendon Gray herself, as well as about confidence and poise from a brilliant dancer and teacher. I am very grateful to have had the privilege of attending the EDAP Clinic at Heritage Equestrian Center.