

I had a wonderful experience at The Atlanta Youth Dressage Festival with Lendon Gray and Dressage 4 Kids. I learned so much throughout the weekend and am looking forward to returning next year.

In my first lesson, Lendon and I worked to achieve a higher degree of collection in my horse, a ten year old Perchon Cross by the name of Darby. We worked on lifting his withers and having more sit though his hindquarters to allow him to achieve more lift. One of the extremely useful exercises we did was to push him forward to a medium trot between two letters and then between the next two letters almost walk to get him to understand my seat aids better. Another exercise we did was halt, rein back, and immediately trot to help him become sharper to my aids.

In my second lesson we continued the work we had accomplished in the previous lesson. We used some of the same exercises but also introduced some new ones to build on. We started with cantering on a circle in working canter and then we did one stride collected with a large emphasis on the release of the half halt. "A half halt is only a half halt after the release." This exercise allowed me to get a feeling for the collection without overphasing my horse.

Continuing on from my lessons, I am working at home to achieve collection over a longer period of time such as two or three strides in the trot and canter. These exercises will continue to get better the stronger he gets.

After our two lessons, we also competed in the Atlanta Youth Dressage Festival on Sunday. First, at 8:00 AM we took our written test. For my written test I had to read two books, Know Better to Do Better by Denny Emerson and The Essential Hoof Book by Christina Cline and Susan Kauffman. I scored 97% on my written test and tied for highest written test score. I then competed in my dressage test where I did 2nd level test 2 for a score of 63%. I placed second in my division of 2nd and 3rd level riders. Then we went on to our equitation test where I placed 3rd against some very competitive riders.

I want to thank Lendon for being the main instructor for the weekend and creating such a wonderful organization, Elizabeth Molloy for organizing a wonderful event and to all the volunteers that helped the event run smoothly.

