

D4K Scholarship Report 2021 – Isabel Solano

This year, the scholarship from the Youth Dressage Festival was used towards a 3 day boot camp that my farm, Riding Right, holds before every YDF. This 3 day boot camp prepares us by providing book study time as well as having a judge watch and critique our dressage test. In the morning, we always started with stretching and mobility exercises. My favorite was the balimo stool, which allowed me to find my seat and get in tune with my hips. In canter, I always struggle with allowing my hips to flow so this tool helped me find my balance. Then on the first day I rode with my trainer, Hollie McNeil, and focused on the equitation part of my ride. We focused on my elbows, hips, and knees. In all three gaits I struggled with not locking my elbows. So in our ride, Hollie had me exaggerate flowing elbows to get the feel of what I should be doing. Towards the end of our ride my elbows were moving without me having to think about it. We also focused on my hips and knees during the canter. I always get stuck with an arched back that makes me bounce in my seat which then results in my knees pinching. Hollie had me tuck my pelvis, open up my chest, and keep my knees open. This helped my connection with my leg aids and after a couple of canters around the ring I could feel myself flowing with my horse's canter. The next day I rode with judge Krystal Wilt. We focused on my geometry with three loop serpentines and bend and connection in 20 meter circles. Krystal set up cones outlining a three loop, and we rode serpentines in both directions until my change in bend and flexion were coming almost naturally. Then with the same cones we rode 20 meter circles, focusing on bending my horse and keeping her round. Our circle work also positively affected the rest of our ride and I found that I had a much better connection with my horse. On the third day Eva Peterson, a massage therapist came in and worked with my horse, Roz. Eva found that Roz was very crooked, and her massage helped to rebalance Roz. The rest of the days were spending reading and study our required reading. I really enjoyed this study time because I got to work with my teammates and understand parts of the books that I didn't understand on my own. I truly appreciate this scholarship, as I wouldn't have been able to experience the boot camp without it. Boot camp expanded my knowledge, and I can now apply it to my everyday training. Working with both Krystal and Eva, I was able to gain a better understanding of myself as a rider and how my horse works. Thank you for this opportunity.