

This summer, I was fortunate to have been selected with my PRE Pony mare, Perlita, to participate in the Dressage4Kids' Horsemastership clinic (July 19-23, 2021). The instructors were Olivia Lagoy-Weltz, George Williams, Lisa Schmidt, and Linda Zang. This clinic was generously hosted by Riveredge Farm and Yellow Wood Dressage/Ashley Madison.

We arrived on Sunday afternoon, and had a light schooling ride, then went for a hack around the ½ mile track at the farm. Monday morning (and every morning) started with getting to the barn at 6:30AM for barn chores which included feeding my horse, cleaning her stall, and handwalking. We then had opening remarks with Lendon in the lounge, followed by fitness (core and cardio). Then, Ashley Madison shared about her journey and the importance of working hard and being open to whatever opportunities are presented. Then, lessons began. I rode with Olivia, and we worked on how my position can affect Pia's connection and thoroughness, so she had me sit slightly forward so that I would bend more in my joints. While this was different from how I typically ride, it was helpful to understand more about how my body influences my horse.



PC: Mary Livernois

On Tuesday, I rode with Olivia again, and we continued to work on my position, with me sitting forward to help with bending my joints more. We added in some canter work, and I was really working on keeping my leg on so that Pia wouldn't break to trot.

This was helpful because I was able to feel more of how to keep her in the canter away from home, which has been a challenge. After lessons had concluded for the day, we had a vet speak to our group about what they look for in an annual exam. We also discussed ways to help our horses recover after working, and to sweat during work. This was particularly interesting to me, as Perlita sometimes does not sweat as she should. We then had a Zoom lecture with Clair Thunes, M.S. Ph.D, on the Equine G.I. Anatomy and how to feed our horses to keep them healthy and performing at their best.

Wednesday was field trip day! Since there were no lessons this day, we did our barn chores and went for a long hand walk around the track. Our first destination was Fair Hill Equine Therapy Center. We were able to see all of the rehab equipment such as; the aqua-pacer, hyperbaric oxygen chamber, cold saltwater spa, solarium therapy, dry salt therapy, and the vibration therapy (basically a stall with a theraplate floor). Our next stop was Hilltop Farms, Inc. to learn about conformation, and how to match the best stallion to improve our mares. We were able to discuss the strengths of several stallions that stand at Hilltop. We were also able to meet the 2021 foals. They were adorable and spunky. This visit really helped to develop my eye about considerations when breeding horses. We also visited Select Breeders Services, where we learned about the stallion collection and shipping, as well as breeding mares. We also had the opportunity to go to Silver Fern Farm to learn about free jumping, standing horses up, and trotting the triangle.



On Thursday, we had a lecture with Adrienne Harris, about how to create a business plan, as well as both business and personal finances. Since I am planning to have a business when I'm older, this was very helpful in learning how to manage finances. We also had a lecture with Lisa Schmidt, about test riding and some simple ways to improve test scores, like riding accurately and using the corners to help set up your next movement. We switched instructors today, and I rode with Linda Zang. She noticed that I often collapse my body to the inside. She had me look to the outside, so that I was sitting on my inside seat bone as well as staying up on the inside instead of collapsing. It was amazing how such a minor change could make such a big difference in Pia's way of going.



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On Friday, in my lesson with Linda, we again worked on my position, looking to the outside. We carried this into the canter work and lateral work. Pia was very tired, so the canter work was challenging, so we only did a little canter in both directions. Making sure I was sitting upright and even in the lateral work was extremely helpful, and made the lateral work much better. We didn't have a lecture today, but we needed to get packed, clean the stalls, and prepare to drive home in the afternoon.





I'm so grateful to everyone who made this clinic happen! One of my favorite parts of these clinics is catching up with other D4K riders and making new friends. Thank you to D4K for the scholarship, as well as making these clinics possible! To the Malones of Riveredge, and to Ashley/Yellow Wood Dressage for allowing us to use the facility!



Four of the horses at the clinic were donated to Dressage4Kids