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Christian Kennedy Unicorn Scholarship

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Never in my life did I think I would have such an amazing learning opportunity. This past month I was chosen to go to Wellington for the Dressage 4 Kids Christian Kennedy Unicorn Scholarship. After a lot of preparation and anticipation, I was off to Florida to experience Wellington for the first time. It was an eye opening experience to see what Wellington has to offer for equestrians. There are many unique learning opportunities for people to excel in several disciplines such as clinics, shows and lectures from knowledgeable people.

The first day, I watched a polo match and got to learn how the game is played. It was interesting to see how different polo is from other equestrian disciplines. All of the horses were well cared for and loved the sport. They were extremely athletic and knew exactly what to do for their rider. Hundreds of people gathered to watch the match, just like a soccer or basketball game. It was inspiring to see the horses' energy and learn more about polo.

In the mornings, I had the opportunity to watch Lendon Gray, the trainer of the Winter Intensive Training students, teach lessons. Through observing, I learned several techniques on how to work with different horses to meet their needs. By the end of each lesson, it was rewarding to see how much improvement was made in such a short time. On Thursday after lessons, I watched riders at Global school in preparation for the competition. I was in awe to see the high level horses schooling all of the movements for their tests. At the end of the week, a few of the riders from the Winter Intensive Training program participated in a show followed by a clinic. The clinician worked with each of the riders to improve their riding skills. It was incredible to see and learn about the differences in each of the horses after these clinics.

Dressage 4 Kids also holds lectures for the students each week. I was so thankful to have the opportunity to listen to a lecture by Paralympian, Sydney Collier. She told us her story and how she never gave up even when it was really hard learning to ride. It was so inspiring to

hear how she kept reaching for her goals and was able to reach them after countless hours of hard work and commitment.

During the week I had the opportunity to take a few lessons with Laura Ashley Killian. From all of the lessons, I took away countless tools which I can continue to use in the future to improve how I ride. I learned how to ride half-pass for the first time, and she also discussed how to specifically ride each movement in second level, which helped me immensely. I also got the chance to take two lessons with Marcia Kulak. It was a great experience to see how she works with horses and how she teaches her students. She helped me work on my jump position and gave me several tips that I can apply while working with my horse. Each lesson, she quizzed me about different riding aspects which challenged me to better evaluate my riding.

At the barn I was staying at, I did chores every morning and evening. It taught me what it is like to run your own barn and complete all of the tasks to keep all of the horses happy and healthy. Laura has several client horses, from young ones just learning groundwork, up to the high levels of dressage. It gave me a sense of what it is like to be a trainer working with all different levels of horses. By watching her work with young horses and train them for clients, I learned that it takes a lot of hard work and time, but it is so rewarding to see their progress after just a few days.

I learned a lot during the week in Wellington. It is like another world of opportunity for riders to improve in this sport. I enjoyed getting to learn from the knowledgeable instructors, whether it was taking lessons or watching them teach students. It was amazing to see Wellington and Dressage 4 Kids, with all of the opportunities they have to offer.

