Scholarship Report from Katie Moran

Dear fellow dressage riders,

First and foremost, I want to thank Dressage4Kids for assisting me to better educate myself as a dressage rider. I have been pursuing my goals in dressage for a couple of years, and my family cannot provide the financial support to really enhance my training. However, I know I am not alone in this situation. I will try my best to let this letter be an inspiration to others who are held back due to finances. I know that feeling of frustration when you try your hardest and put all efforts into making your dream happen, but still it doesn't feel like enough. I encourage everyone to keep working at it, and I personally promise that your goals are not unreasonable with effort and some help from organizations such as Dressage4Kids.

For the past two years I have volunteered at the Fall Festival in Saugerties, New York. I stay in the hotel with all of the other volunteers and work from sunrise to sundown for three or four days straight. I also work off my board for my leased Hanoverian mare, Goldstaf, and ride four or five times a week. I am in National Honor Society and do after school activities for my high school. I am not telling you all of this to boast, I am writing this to talk about my character. I am extremely passionate about riding and those are the types of activities it takes to make it to college with as much financial aid as possible. I don't believe anything should hold someone back from their dream, especially a poor economy and financial situation. However, I also understand that sometimes all of this work feels like it's going nowhere and is hopeless.

It was during one of these pessimistic times that I received a phone call from Jennifer Dillon, a coordinator from the New England Dressage Association. She informed me that I was invited to ride in a private clinic with Christoph Hess during the two days following Spring Fling. The riders were chosen because of our volunteer work with NEDA and dedication to the association. Finally, my hard work has paid off. The clinic was not cheap, though, so I applied for the Lendon Gray Scholarship to cover the entry fee. Due to my lease situation and classes

I couldn't miss, I only did one day of the clinic. But the things I learned in that one hour lesson easily outweighed what I would have learned in school; just don't tell my teachers that.

My mare can be weak and lazy behind, so Christoph had us work on going forward and staying forward until I ask for otherwise. There are no excuses; a horse must go on their own without the rider nagging every stride. Golda looked like a whole new horse. She was using her whole body and really showed her talents. Christoph revived my confidence in my seat and natural riding abilities, something every rider can benefit from.

Mr. Hess had me give up most of my contact at first and solely focus on going. Golda had to move forward and stay going forward through corners and longsides until I asked her to transition. Mr. Hess had us bending a little bit, but her roundness was not a concern throughout most of the ride until we had a gas petal that worked. After she was really swinging her back and using her whole body, we then started picking up more contact and asking her to supple through her neck and mouth more. He had me shorten

my stirrups a couple of holes to keep my leg bent and still, and he had me shorten my reins more then I'm used to. We also used the whip on her shoulder, not just behind my leg. This was used just to ask her to stay forward, and it worked surprisingly well. I know in hunter/jumpers we used crops on the horses' shoulders, but I had never thought to do the same in dressage. My trainer, Doris Carlson, now uses this technique with her other students as well as with her horses.

My advice to others is to continue to work hard through bad times. Good things really do come to those who wait and have the good character to lend a hand and work towards their dreams. I plan to feed my motivation and keep at my dream of riding in the Olympics.