

Dressage 4 Kids Christian Kennedy Young Adult Scholarship Letter

Dear Dressage 4 Kids Supporters,

This past winter has been life changing for my horse and I. I would have never imagined that I would have been given the opportunity to train in Wellington, FL with Oded Shimoni. I learned so many things but above all how to be a good trainer.

When I first arrived in Wellington, FL I was a bit nervous. I bought my horse, Louie, when he was six months old. He was bred and born in Maine and I'm from a small town in New Hampshire. The caliber of horses and riding in Wellington was incredible, I knew Louie and I had a lot to live up to. After the trip, Louie had contracted shipping fever and he had time off for a couple weeks to recover. During that time, I stayed pretty busy helping with the Dressage 4 Kids Winter Intensive Program. Louie made a good recovery with the help of Atlantic Equine Services and then we started taking lessons with Oded three times a week.

I was very nervous for my first ride with Oded. The farm was absolutely gorgeous, and the horses were magnificent. I remember one of the first things Oded told me was to ride proud, to ride like I'm very proud to be on my horse. So I worked on my timid position and tried to emulate the rider I aspired to be. I found a lot of my lessons incorporated my own state of mind and sport psychology. Before riding with Oded, I never thought how important the rider's psyche is in training. I remember him saying during one of my rides, "You need to be on Wellington speed." I needed to step up to the plate and adjust to the fast pace, high performance environment that was around me and not stay in the comfortable mindset I had riding back home in New Hampshire. If you stay in your comfort zone, you'll never make progress. It was incredibly rewarding when that progress was made.



One of the biggest goals I had with training with Oded was to start the flying changes with Louie and prepare him for Third Level. Before we could work on the changes, Oded said we needed to work on the thoroughness and go back to basics. "Every aid given needs to have a response, otherwise it isn't an aid." I learned I had to be more determined, more driven in order to get the job done especially on a lazier horse. Many quick transitions and making sure there was a true response to the half halt helped develop the thoroughness. Day by day Louie was changing the way he would go. He gained more swing and more impulsion, that he started to look like a different horse.



When the basics were good we would school Third Level movements. One of the memorable quotes Oded told me about lateral movements, in particular the half pass, is that the impulsion and forward energy should build throughout the movement. By the end of the half pass, you should have more impulsion. The day came when we worked on the changes. We got clean changes right away because the basics were good! On days when something was lacking in the basics, the changes weren't good. I really learned to be thorough in order to get to the bigger picture. If a step in the training scale is missing progress can't be made.

After my time training with Oded Louie and I have shown Third Level and I earned my USDF Bronze Medal. It wouldn't have been possible without the help of the D4K Christian Kennedy Scholarship! I will be forever thankful for the amazing education and lessons I learned during my time training with Oded.

Sincerely,

Alicia Aiyawar