

Rory Pranchak  
Scholarship report

This year the Dressage4Kids committee granted me a scholarship. The scholarship was used towards a 3 day boot camp my farm holds in preparation for the youth dressage festival every year. During camp we study for the written exam, ride each day, and clean our horses/tack.

The first day of camp we started out with stretching. My trainer (Hollie McNeil) went through a series of exercises and stretches specific to areas of the body that would help with riding. This included walking on all 4 different parts of the foot (toes, heels, insides, and outsides) which helps with your feet in the stirrups, stretching and plucking your tendons specifically hip flexors for better movement while riding and many more exercises. She also made sure to work on specific parts of the body that everyone needed help on, In my case that was my heels and legs. After warming up everyone split into groups to work on different things. My group worked on studying for the written exam. Me and a couple other team members read through, discussed, and took notes on both *Know Better to Do Better: Mistakes I Made with Horses (So You Don't Have To)* by Denny Emerson and *The Essential Hoof Book: The Complete Modern Guide to Horses Feet - Anatomy, Care and Health, Disease Diagnosis and Treatment* by Susan Kauffmann and Christina Cline. I found going over the books as a group was very helpful because other people picked up on things I had looked over which helped while studying. Around noon we took a break from studying and had lunch. During lunch Hollie put on a series of videos from sports psychologist and former USET Olympic Team Sport Psychologist, Dr. Jenny Susser. Her videos are considered a “masterclass” and she shares techniques of the mind & body to help deal with the pressure and stress of riding specifically in shows. After lunch I had a 45 minute private lesson with my instructor to work on the equation part of the ride. Seeing as the equation was scored differently and included in the dressage test this year we worked on different aspects then years past. One of the main categories I needed to improve on was effectiveness of the riders aids. The horse I ride can definitely be described as lazy at times as he will not give you anything for free. I’ve had many lessons on this horse in the past but I'm very grateful to have had this lesson before the shows as it made a huge impact on my ride in the show. We ended the day with a group meeting and discussed all the things we learned.

The second day we also started out with very similar exercises and stretches as the day before. Even after one day I could tell I had improved and how much it had helped. After we warmed up I had a lesson with a dressage judge named Krystal. The first thing we did was run through the dressage test. After she watched the test we did specific exercises that would help improve my test score. The main thing we worked on was the bending and stretching of my horse's neck. The exercise she taught me she had apparently learned from a clinic with Charlotte Dujardin. The exercise consisted of a combination of straight parts and circles while changing between collecting your horse and allowing them to stretch down. We started on a walk and slowly worked up to trot. The exercise was extremely helpful and I was very appreciative to have learned it. I used this tactic in the warm up arena at the show and again it was very helpful. After

my ride we had lunch and finished up watching the Jenny Susser videos from the previous day. After lunch my horse had an hour massage with Eva Peterson. Eva is a licensed massage therapist who has done equine bodywork for over 40 years. She confirmed that my horse was more tense to the right side rather than left and also extremely tense in the head and neck. I finished off the day by taking a practice written test that a couple of parents graciously wrote after reading both books.

The third day The team was broken up into two groups. I was the latter of the two groups which meant I started out by studying. The first group started with a group lesson which was meant to imitate a warm up arena that we would encounter at the show. The point was to practice warming up in a safe productive way while having many other horses around you. After they were done group two did the same thing. I also find this helpful as it is challenging and you can't do certain exercersizes you normally would because of the compromised space. It also made me realize what aspects I really needed to focus on with the limited time given. After the ride I was taught by a previous professional groom. She helped trim the manes and fetlocks, cut the tails, make bridal paths, and most importantly taught us a new way of grooming that she called the three brush technique. She explained in detail what each brush did and how to use them in a way to really make your horse look cleaner and more shiny. During lunch we made stall cards and graded our practice tests from the day before. When we were done we all went and cleaned the tack. Hollie even made a fun competition for the best cleaned bridle and saddle. At the very end of the day we had a big meeting with the parents included. The meeting went over the plans for leaving to the show and all the preparation to do so as well as other general topics about the youth festival.

Thank you so much for the scholarship. The boot camp is always extremely helpful in preparation of the show and I definitely wouldn't have done as well without it.