

My name is Olivia Smith and I am 15 years old. I am an eventer in USEA Area 1 but I also enjoy dressage and have been competing at D4k the past 3 years. I am also a C-2 in Pony Club. I ride a 6 year old Trakehner gelding that I began training a year and half ago. This is Der Romany's (aka Rom) and I first full year competing and we have been successful at the Beginner Novice Eventing Level and First level dressage. This fall we are planning on moving up to compete at the Novice level. I am working on building up our confidence in all three phases.

I applied for this scholarship to help pay for my entry to attend the Area 1 Young Rider Eventing camp at GMHA. This was a three day camp, where I received 2 one-hour mounted lessons each day. The instructors were Suzie Gornall, John Borgoine, and Jane Hamlin. The groups were broken down into groups of three riders.

The first day I rode with Jane Hamlin. We worked on riding our dressage tests which was cool because Jane just got back from judging at NAJYRC. My horse was extremely stiff in my lesson so Jane helped me ride him accordingly and helped me be more adjustable for him. One exercise that she taught me was instead of pulling back on the reins to "turn the key" with the reins when he locks on the bit. In my second lesson we worked on some really cool gymnastic exercises. The first thing that she made us do was jump a cross rail from what we considered the "Perfect Canter", and then jump it from a gallop and then from a collected canter LETTING our horse find their own distance without getting in their way. This exercise made us ride straight and let our horses take care of themselves and then every time they got the perfect jump. We also worked on changing striding between jumps. The biggest thing that I learned was to "put your hands in a work place and keep your upper body out of his".

The second day our rides were with Suzie Gornall. Our first lesson of the day was also a dressage lesson. We worked on riding our horses according to their conformation. Rom has straight stifles so he tends to trail with his hind legs and run too fast with his front. The first thing that Suzie had me do was take a contact, grab the front of my saddle and trot really slow on a 10 meter circle. She made me sit there and wait for him to balance himself and not wait for me to take care of him. She also taught me the best exercise that I have ever learned. My horse gets extremely distracted when I ride him and the more that I get after him the worse it gets. Suzie told me to do the exercise on the 10 meter circle and trot even slower until he stopped fighting and decided to listen. IT WORKED!!! I have used this exercise every time that I have ridden him since that lesson. My dressage scores at D4K this year went up at least 5 points from the schooling shows before. This has even helped my jumping. We also had a galloping lesson in which she made me work on the same thing that we learned in the last lesson while doing cross country.

The final day began with a show jumping lesson with John Borgoine. He focused a lot on straightness and my being still and getting off Rom's back between jumps. In the second lesson we worked on our cross country. We started off with basics and then schooled a ditch and built it into a coffin. It normally takes us a second try to get over ditches but when John had me sit and

let him look into the ditch it was nice and smooth. He had me do the same to water and down banks. After the coffin we schooled some combinations at the bank. This was good because it really made Rom think about his feet and listen to me. I learned that I need to sink my heels down even more and be able to give with my reins even when he scrambles. I need to let him do his job even when he gets silly.

Over this camp I learned a lot. The most important things that I learned are to be taller in my body, be stiller in my body, make my horse balance and then let him do his job, I have an amazing horse, and most importantly that I am VERY lucky to have such an amazing opportunity. I had an amazing time at camp and am now 10x more confident and competitive in each of the phases. I highly recommend this camp for anyone who events.

Thank you Lendon Gray and Dressage for Kids for this scholarship that allowed me to attend this amazing camp!

Olivia Smith and Rom





