

Eliza Windsor

November EDAP Clinic Reflection

After attending three incredible EDAP clinics this year I understand how much Lendon Gray has to offer to each student and each lesson. Whether you are watching or riding you can discover new exercises or confront your bad habits. In the spring I rode with Lendon for the first time. Those two days, but more specifically my rides, confirmed my passion for dressage. I knew that each time I went in front of Lendon that I had to have improved. I didn't want to be the student that had messy braids, sloppy polos, made her repeat things or made her frustrated. I wanted to impress her and to be someone that she enjoyed teaching.

About a year ago I was lucky enough to get a horse from D4K. I am currently learning how to ride him properly. He knows the movements but tends to be very tense and struggles with rhythm. This makes it very difficult for me to achieve connection or collection. It starts with the very basics, as Lendon has focused on with us. We spent a large portion of my first ride at this clinic working on going from a free walk to a medium walk. The moment I asked him to leave his relaxed and stretching free walk and go into a medium walk he would start bobbing his head up and down, ready to go. We did it a few times to make sure he was understanding that the medium walk was not just in between free walk and trot, but was its own important gait. "You just need to do it more until it's comfortable," Lendon told me. It made me realize that he wasn't being bad or naughty when he went behind the leg and threw his head up when working on our medium gates; he was overwhelmed and uncomfortable.

The following day we worked on more advanced movements like changes and half pass. She explained how a change should have no bend. You adjust your new outside leg back, bring your previous outside leg to the girth and give your new inside rein. Before I rode, I was able to watch Lendon teach a rider the same lesson. I watched her get the rider to the point where she could get the change with an exaggerated counter bend to prove that the bend was unnecessary. Watching this before my lesson was very helpful to understand the proper way it should look and the exact aids required.

It was also very interesting and helpful to watch how Lendon teaches younger, more inexperienced riders. As someone who is interested in potentially teaching, it was really helpful to learn what Lendon looks for in her younger riders. She focused on diminishing bad habits that they had in their positions, aspiring for them to sit in the center of the saddle. Also, to make sure they are following with their arms and seat. One thing that she worked on a lot was punctuality throughout. There was a particular exercise where she counted and every time she hit a certain number, whichever gait the rider was in, had to change. This exercise, although beneficial to a younger child, could also be used in a more advanced version to my benefit like collected to medium canter or skipping a gait. However it was able to grasp the child's attention and focus her onto the horse.

I can not thank Lendon Gray and Dressage For Kids enough for giving me the opportunity to improve my riding and expand my knowledge. I will bring all that I have learned from these clinics to my day to day riding as I work to progress with my horse.

Thank you!
Eliza Windsor