

This winter I was generously granted a Lendon Gray scholarship through Dressage4kids. At the time I had just received my D4K horse, Poppy, and felt extra lessons would be great to prepare for the up and coming show season. Poppy was a big, bold, Rhineland mare that was wise beyond her years, and had so much to teach me. My mom, Lisa Herman, is my trainer but it's always great to get a second set of eyes so I chose to take extra lessons with Molly Maloney, a professional in my area whom I look up to very much. Unfortunately I only got the chance to take a few lessons with Poppy before tragedy struck...I ended up losing my sweet Pops to an extremely rare medical complication. This left me completely heartbroken, and horseless. I was left with the only choice to pull my old horse out of semi-retirement life, start to bring him back slowly, and see what I had. After about seven weeks he was finally back at a fitness level I felt comfortable taking him for a lesson with Molly, and it was magical! Molly couldn't believe the difference in his changes, and we did a lot of pirouette work with her. He feels and looks better than he ever has and at nearly twenty years old, his love for his job is increasing everyday. Even though Poppy and I deserved so much more time together, I am realizing she was teaching me so many things without me even knowing it. Especially when it came to our changes, a weaker point for both of us. When I started doing more with Val I could really feel what I had learned on her and was able to apply it to him. Val and I are still successfully working with Molly, and we have big plans this year. She is one of the most patient and positive trainers I've ridden with and always pushes us to be the best we can be. I'm eternally grateful to the Dressage4kids organization for everything they do. Especially for creating programs like this, allowing us up-and-coming young riders continue on the path to achieving all our goals.

- Katie Decker