

WIT Scholarship Report

This past year, 2022, I had the amazing opportunity to be a part of the D4K WIT program. Being a part of the WIT program taught me a lot. It was the best step I have taken to move closer to my goals of becoming a professional dressage trainer. I gained a lot of invaluable knowledge and experience that have helped me grow and will continue to help me as I move forward.

A good family friend of mine, Lyn Kendall, generously allowed me to bring her horse named Chanel No. 5 (Coco), a 14 year old Oldenburg mare. Coco was schooling some of the pieces of third level, but we had to work through quite a bit of tension. Lendon and I worked together to help her be happier and more relaxed in her work. In the 3rd week of WIT, Coco managed to injure her leg in her stall. Luckily it was superficial and healed within a few weeks. In the time she was off, I was able to ride Allyssia Timberlake's mare Lacey for a couple of days. I really enjoyed riding Lacey and am so thankful to Allyssia for allowing me to do that. After Coco was back in work, she excelled. All of the movements that we were working on started to really open up and become stronger and more relaxed. I learned how to do some therapeutic work with her that I think really helped. The deep tissue massage gun was easy and effective, and I found someone in the area that does micro-fascial release on animals. Together, they helped support her body so that Lendon and I were able to access different parts of her body during daily training to build strength.

As "WITees," we were given lots of educational opportunities. The first lecture that was in the program was about caring for horses in south FL. Dr. Christine Machin really expressed the importance of keeping your horse clean and dry in order to prevent fungus and other issues. More specifically she also talked about another common problem, hives. She said that it was a reaction that could be reversed with antihistamines, but she emphasized that it is also very important to find the source of the problem as well as treating the symptoms. Dr. Machin also

talked about anhidrosis (lack of sweating) in horses and how to manage/treat it as this is common for horses that aren't used to the environment in FL.

Towards the beginning of the program, we all had the opportunity to audit the Robert Dover Horsemastership Clinic. The clinicians this year were Jan Ebling, Olivia Lagoy-Welts, George Williams, and Sabine Shute-Kerry. I loved being able to listen to these professionals teach in person rather than online. You can learn so much more when you can see the horses biomechanics in person and the details that the clinicians see. Additionally, we went to watch Debbie McDonald teach lessons and watch Adrienne Lyle school her horses in and out of the ring. It was interesting to see how she breaks up each session with her horses. We saw her come in to work with a horse, then about half way through, take them outside to walk on the path, then come back in to finish the session. It was clear that her horses enjoyed their work with her and I really admired that. We also visited Shayna Simon's stables where we met two of her top para-dressage riders. It was incredibly humbling listening to their stories and how they have overcome their challenges. We were able to watch schooling sessions and see how they work behind the competition scenes, which was a treat to see and very educational.

Another activity that was part of the program was choosing someone to interview that has had an impact on the sport of dressage. I chose to interview Lisa El-Ramey. She is an FEI 4* judge in Loxahatchee, FL. It was so interesting to hear her perspectives and ideas. She talked about how she came to be a judge, and why she chose to continue her judging education beyond the L program. She also talked about what keeps her motivated. She told me that her motivation is generally her students, and her students' successes. She is mentored by Bettina Drummond, and spoke of her with incredible respect.

I have always been interested in equine bodywork, so I was enthralled with both Hillary Clayton, and Sal Salvetti's talks that we sat in on. They both spoke about the thoracic sling in the horse. I had never really learned about the thoracic sling before, but after hearing their explanations and research, I have started hearing it being brought up more often in training. It

turns out that the thoracic sling is a very important piece of the horse's biomechanics. Because the horse doesn't have a collarbone, they rely on the strength and support of this group of muscles and ligaments to support their shoulders and topline. Sal Salvetti had some interesting techniques for working on strengthening and lifting the thoracic sling, and Hillary Clayton showed us her research and her diagrams.

Of course, there are many other things that we were able to experience and learn, but those are some of the ones that have stuck with me the most. In just three months, I feel that I have grown so much not only as a dressage rider, but as a horseman and being educated on the care of these athletes to help them perform to their best. The knowledge that I gained is invaluable and will always help me in the future in my career.