

D4K

Christian Kennedy

Memorial Fund Scholarship

2024

D4K CHRISTIAN KENNEDY YOUNG ADULT SCHOLARSHIP TO TRAIN WITH
ODED SHIMONI



Picture Credit: Mary Livernois

Table of Contents

About the Christian Kennedy Memorial Fund Scholarship	3
About Me	4
Thank Yous	5
January	7
February	12
March	17
Final Thoughts	21
More Photos	23

About the Christian Kennedy Memorial Fund Scholarship

“This scholarship will be awarded in memory of Christian Kennedy. As a young rider, Christian was known for his kindness, his horsemanship, and his joie de vivre. Dressage4Kids, Christian’s family, and the equestrian community have chosen to remember Christian through programs and scholarships that reflect and recognize his own understanding that horsemanship means much more than simply riding.

The D4K Christian Kennedy Young Adult Scholarship will be awarded to promote, train, and inspire young riders through a special winter training grant to train with Oded Shimoni. The scholarship will fund one advanced rider, age 18-26, for the 2024 winter season, January through March 2024.

The scholarship recipient will need to travel to OS Dressage twice weekly for lessons. The scholarship will provide funds up to \$15,000 towards transportation to/from Wellington, stabling (recipient must make their own stabling arrangements), training, showing expenses (if applicable), and living expenses (recipient must find their own housing).

We are indebted to Oded Shimoni for his continued willingness to donate his time to work with the recipient of this scholarship” (Dressage4Kids).

To learn more about D4K or the other numerous opportunities this organization provides,

go to <https://dressage4kids.org/>

About Me

My name is Quinn Ridgway and I am from Bordentown, New Jersey. I am 21 years old. In the fall semester of 2023, I graduated from The College of New Jersey with a degree in marketing and have recently applied to obtain my Masters in Business Administration, with a specialization in strategy, innovation, and leadership.

I have been riding my horse Dramatika V (aka Chessie) for slightly over four years. With the incredible guidance from coach, Nicole DelGiorno, parents, and friends, I was able to attend the Festival of Champions and place tenth overall in the FEI Jr division in 2020. In 2021, I was fortunate enough to compete at North American Youth Championships (NAYC) where we placed 6th in the Young Rider Freestyle. Last year, I was lucky enough to have the star align again, and I was able to compete at NAYC where our combined Younger Rider team of Region 1,2, and 9 placed third overall. I have also had the wonderful opportunity to attend numerous D4K clinics and last year's FEI Youth Clinic.

At home in New Jersey, my family owns Greymare Farm, a small boarding facility. Our farm holds a total of 13 horses, 6 of which my family owns—we have collected numerous ponies over the years! In addition to working at our family farm, I worked for several years at Ariston Farm, a local farm which specializes in breeding and developing sporthorses.

Thank Yous

This once in a lifetime opportunity would not be possible without the endless generosity of numerous people.

Dressage4Kids and Lendon Gray have brought so many kind hearted people together all bearing a similar mission in mind: make a pathway between the numerous roadblocks facing youth and young adult dressage riders. The organization is filled with dedicated and hardworking individuals all seeking to give opportunities that youth and young adult riders may not have otherwise.

This scholarship is in memory of Christian Kennedy, who left behind a legacy of kindness, ambition, and horsemanship. Thank you Anne Baber Wallis for your continued support and for allowing for Christans legacy to live on. I am honored to be riding in memory of Christian and I hope that I made you both proud this season.

Oded, your wisdom and generosity will not be forgotten. I thank you for sharing your endless knowledge despite having an extremely busy schedule. Your methodology and ability to transfer your insight to your students is inspiring. I am grateful to say that I have walked away from our training sessions with numerous new tools. I am very excited to continue to apply them.

It goes without saying that my coach, Nicole DelGiorno, is one of my inspirations both in and out of the saddle. She has been my coach for over 7 years and I could not be more grateful to have someone as knowledgeable, dedicated, or driven to look up to. Even through the many bumps in the road that horses, and life in general, lead us down, Nicole never stopped believing in me, even if I didn't always believe in myself.

The clique saying, "teamwork makes the dreamwork" holds so very true, especially when it comes to horses. My family at home, with the help of many friends, are picking up my slack

since I am not there to work. I've left them in the cold (literally) as I moved to sunny and warm Florida for several months. Many friends have generously gone out of their way so that my parents were not left overwhelmed with the farm work. To say that they are supportive is truly a massive understatement. They are the foundation to my ability to be able to benefit from opportunities like this.

To the barn family that I made in Florida, I thank you both for your unwavering kindness and encouragement that allowed me to stay another month. This would have never been possible without their help. I am forever indebted to you guys and I hope to see you again soon!

My vets and farriers, both at home and in Florida are truly wonderful. They have kept Chessie happy and healthy. They are a pivotal point to our success.

And last but certainly not least, Chessie, you are seriously a warrior. Your kind heart and willingness to try is just a small testament to your character. I have dragged you around for numerous adventures, and everytime, you make me so proud. You are a horse of a lifetime, a queen in my eyes.

January

The first week in Florida was a bit hectic trying to get everything organized and my horse settled. The small farm I was keeping my mare at, Murray Acres in Loxahatchee, was wonderful as it was very quiet and peaceful with lovely people.

As I expected, turnout for Chessie (pictured below) was a little bit challenging in the beginning. At home, Chessie was lucky to be bug-free since it is winter. I knew taking her down to Florida would be a bit shocking as she was finally able to escape the dreadful flies during the winter. Given her perpetual fear of bugs, I dressed her up in a fly sheet, fly mask, traffic cone, orange fly boots, and a fly mask with fringe. She was looking like a real warrior ready to combat any flies. After the first several days of her



panicking as a result of her coming to the realization that her new home was warm, and hence there were going to be some bugs, she began to be much more accepting. However, I still do not

trust her enough to leave her outside without me somewhere in the barn.



After a few days of settling in and becoming acclimated, I gave her a few light rides just to check in. She was fabulous and loved the footing in the area. She also got clipped for the first time since I owned her.

In addition to taking care of Chessie, I audited the Robert Dover Horsemastership Clinic held at Global for several days. Firstly, Global is absolutely mesmerizing. It is gorgeous and I am excited for the CDIs to begin. It was inspiring to see so many amazing clinicians and riders under one massive roof. It was equally as fun to be there in-person as I would normally watch the USEF livestream. More notes on this are available below.

The second week in Wellington was equally exciting as the CDIs at the Adequan Global Dressage Festival began. Watching Friday Night Lights in person was extraordinary. To see top horses from various countries compete in one area was so very inspirational. They make it look effortless. In addition to watching Friday Night Lights, I went to WEF to watch the jumper compete. It was such a different atmosphere than Global. The atmosphere was comparable to a football game but conservical take, horses are so much more exhilarating than football!

However, even more compelling, lessons with Oded began. I can not give enough thanks to Oded for generously donating his time to work with me. His barn is stunning and his staff and grooms at the barn are equally as kind.

Robert Dover Horsemastership Clinic

During my time here, I was determined to take advantage of every opportunity. For many years, I have watched the clinic via USEF's livestream. Since I was down here, I was very excited to watch it in-person as much as possible. It's such a rare opportunity to see so many outstanding trainers and brilliant riders under one arena. Below are some of my takeaways:

- Basics are fundamental to your horses success - think of the training pyramid
- Before you move up a gait, your horse must be forward
- Think of canter as a wave - when it draws back, you have influence

- In the canter, when the foreleg is up, half halt on the outside
- Don't ride preventally, allow the horse to make a mistake so you can teach them by correcting it
- Pull your pubic bone up to you, tailbone under, and in the one stride that you are perfectly still, that's your half halt
- In the extended gaits, the neck must also extend forward to allow for the horse to balance
- Believe in training - it takes time
- Teach one tempis without stirrups so you become the balance point for your horse and to prevent the rider from getting too desperate when they start swinging the legs
- To help find cadence in the trot, be sure to feel the swing and pull your pubic bone up to you

Dressage4Kids Field Trip to Ali Brock's Farm

- Do things in steps in a methodical way for the horse
- Even something simple as bridling
 - Teach the horse to drop its head - don't want to have the reach to put the bridle on
- Before you even get on the horse, do some basic ground work - if it's not happening on the ground, it likely is not going to happen in the saddle
 - Be able to drop the neck, back up easily, turn shoulders, back up in a small circle, etc
 - If the horse does not back up, vibrate the contact and put the whip in front to put more energy towards him
 - Be able to send the horse sideways with good alignment and good crossing both ways

- Check for what kind of response you have on the bradoon - do they quietly yield or do they lean and pull
- Pay attention to where the hoses feet are
- Teach them or correlate each rein with the front leg
- Don't accept what they give you - It will never improve

Lessons with Oded

During our sessions, we worked on keeping Chessie in front of the leg and receiving honest reactions from her in both the trot and canter. He emphasized the importance of a small touch meaning something, and to be insistent, even if something does not happen the first time. He simplified it by saying that you are the trainer of your horse, and you must train them to get



Picture Credit: Mary Livernois

the right answer. If you allow for nothing to happen, then it will continue and while it may not be a huge problem now, it will certainly creep back in the future as training progresses. For example, even when walking on a long rein, as Oded says, “do not let them walk like a bum”!

We worked on half passes in both the trot and the canter. In the trot, it was important to get the feeling of an extended trot through the half pass and to use the inside leg to get the lift in the front and to allow the bend to happen by not blocking with the outside rein. Maintaining cadence was also key in finding the proper swing

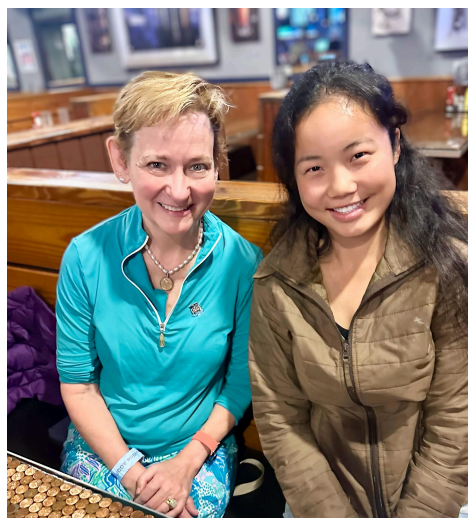
through the back. In the canter, a similar approach was taken. Oded explained that the first step out of the corner must be sideways. That's how to impress the judges!

As our sessions continued, I tried to be much more diligent in holding myself accountable for being persistent in getting the right answer. I should feel like she is taking me somewhere. In this session, we addressed the canter pirouettes - my least favorite, most anxiety producing movement. Oded explained that the most important part of the pirouette is the prep: approach the pirouette in a forward canter with jump in shoulder-fore, 2 strides out, collect on the spot, then turn. If prepared properly, the turn should be easy. I was getting a bit stuck in the pirouette especially going to the left, so he coached me through and told me to think, one step turn, one step forward, and repeat. It made a huge improvement in my ability to control all aspects of it and my ability to get in and out of it. He explained that it takes time to get comfortable with such a degree of collection and the “sitting”, as it can easily be interpreted as the horse being behind the leg. But for working pirouettes, it is important that the rider allows for the horse to take weight behind and not chase them off the hind legs.

February

By February, Chessie was very happy and settled into her new home away from home. By this time, Chessie was well versed in our routine of trailering in for lessons two days per week. I was initially worried about going myself with regards to loading and unloading but Chessie was an absolute star. She quickly learned to load quickly, stand on the trailer, and self unload. Prior to coming to Florida, Chessie refused to stand on the trailer and struggled to even get on!

Additionally, I was able to solidify several part-time jobs. They were a bit hard to find as they had to be flexible enough to allow for me to take lessons with Oded twice a week, and allow for me to care for my horse.



However, the positions I found were absolutely wonderful and they were very kind to work with my crazy schedule. One of my jobs even included riding the sweetest chestnut pony, Bird. He was a sales pony and I was lucky enough to ride and show him until he was sold at the beginning of April.

Throughout the month, I also continued to watch Friday Night Lights and watched several of the jumping competitions at WEF. Although rare, if I had any extra time, I went to Global to watch some rides! Without a doubt, Wellington is never boring! There is ALWAYS something to watch and learn from.

To top the month off, I had the wonderful opportunity to meet Anne Barber Wallis (pictured above), who began the Christian Kennedy Scholarship to carry on her son's legacy.

Lessons with Oded

- The swing in the extended trot should also be in the half pass and shoulder in
- Don't ride the horse to your lack of abilities - you and the horse will never learn
- Shorten rein up toward the neck
- Warm up should have bending lines; straight lines do not really help, especially in the warm up which should prepare the horse for the rest of the session



Picture Credit: Mary Livernois

- Shorten the outside curb to lower the neck and when the horse softens, immediately release
- At every and anytime, the horse should be ready for anything - changes, pirouettes, halfpass, etc
- You should have the ability to lower and length the neck just as much as you are able to shorten and bring the neck up and out
- The ability to go towards a gallop in an instant is not only good for schooling the reactions but also good to get the horse truly pushing from behind
- Don't quit until you get the right reaction
- If you touch the horse with the leg/whip, make sure the horse giving the feeling it is taking you forward, not just for a stride or 2
- Don't be humble- if you think the trot is a 7, think how can you get more swing and ride to a 7.5

- Allow the half halt to come through that you don't chase them off the hind legs
- When thinking about the horse being in front of the leg, it's not necessarily about going faster but quicker
- Get the feeling that you can make them quicker at any time; think that you're able to do any movement at a moments notice simply because they are always ready

Horse Shows

Although my main goal was to focus on training, I wanted to take advantage of the local show grounds. Hence, one of my numerous goals for my time in Florida was to show at the infamous Adequan Global Dressage Festival. Prior to the show, we did quite a bit of preparation both in and out of the saddle. Oded suggested that I read the book *A Golfer's Mind*, spectacularly written by Dr. Bob Rotella. The mental aspect of sports is so invigorating and important to understand. More on this book can be found in the next section.

For the riding aspect, we schooled the entire test several days before. The portions or movements that we found challenging were repeated until no more mistakes were made. Oded explained that if at home everything is "perfect" the show should be no different as you tend to fall back on what you have practiced. He explained that we must stick to the same routine.

Upon arriving at Global, I was absolutely petrified. Scared I was going to be late, worried about parking, and most of all, nervous that I was not going to perform well. I was lucky enough to have some friends come to help so that made things much less stressful!

Chessie was such a brave girl riding in a massive atmosphere. I could not have been more proud. We finished with 69.7%.

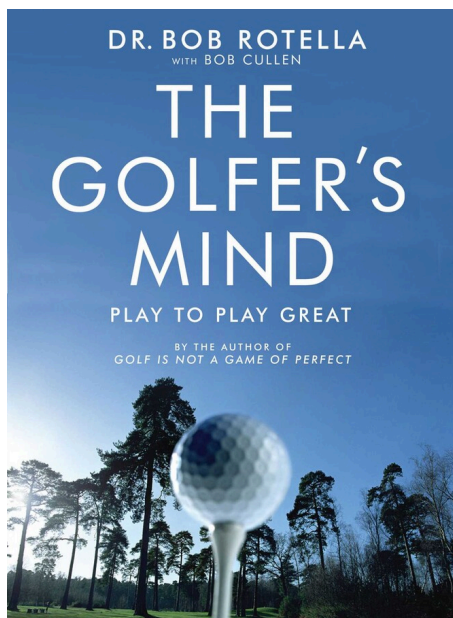
In addition to showing Chessie, I had the opportunity to ride and show a sales pony named Bird (pictured right). Bird was fabulous at White Fences and scored a 67% at Training level. It was his first dressage show and he was a complete angel.



A Golfer's Mind

I am not a huge reader, but I must say, this book was helpful in understanding the mental preparation that makes up for 50% of the challenges associated with horse shows.

- Your muscles alone will not “remember” unless your mind tells them what to do so no matter the number of repetitions there is so such thing as muscle memory
 - You will never have complete control of the horse but you can control your attitude
 - Don't let the result dictate your attitude- don't be passive- have discipline to control your thoughts and think about the outcome you want
 - The question is it whether you have great talent but rather are you willing to put in the time and effort to develop the talent you have
 - If your too concerned about being good, you may miss being great



- Your subconscious affects how you're riding it affects your image if you give yourself a conscious stream of positive self talk
- In stressful situations the body brings the subconscious back to its comfort zone ensure helpful thoughts dominate your thinking
- The subconscious tries to accommodate the conscious mind and tries to give back what the conscious mind wants
- You can train yourself to have the kind of memory a rider needs - enjoy and congratulate yourself - imprint the moment in your memory - forget the bad when it happens - forget a move on - consider quickly what you can learn from to make the next better and move on
- Butterflies are not to be scared of but when you let the fear of the butterflies control you the calmer and clearer you can keep your mind the more under control the butterflies will be. This could mean taking a deep breath or visualizing what you want.
- If you're patient and do the right things, success will come
- Learn to attach the same amount of intensity and desire to every movement not just in the ring
- Allow your inner voice to be kind to yourself think like you are talking to your child
- Visualize in great detail - improve your ability to focus under pressure

March

March was filled with so much fun and chaos! I was planning on it being my last month there so I was determined to do as much as possible with the little time I had left. In addition to working several part-time jobs, I had the opportunity to groom for a friend of a friend at Global for the week. Although it made the week absolutely crazy, I could not say no. I always enjoy grooming at shows. It is so gratifying being a small part of someone's success. The horses were so great and it was a fabulous experience.

Horse Show

I was lucky enough to be able to show again in March. As previously mentioned, when coming down, my goal was to focus more so on training rather than showing. However, Wellington makes it so easy to show with numerous show grounds within 15 minutes. I took Chessie to show the PSG again at White Fences. The quality of the trot work improved



greatly however, the canter work suffered as a result of my mistakes. I allowed her to get quite

behind the leg after the walk tour, making the balance in the canter a bit downhill, resulting in her becoming slightly behind the vertical. However it was a very good learning experience and showed the areas



where I really needed to address. In addition to showing Chessie, I was lucky enough to show Bird again. He was fabulous at First Level and made me so very proud.

Lessons with Oded

During March, our sessions focused on keeping Chessie up and out to the bit. When I initially started working with Oded, I struggled to have adjustability of the neck while maintaining the balance. I could keep the neck up but had a very difficult time lowering it and making her deep. However, now I had the opposite problem as I sought to bring the neck up and find a frame that was working more towards the Grand Prix. It was certainly a feeling that I initially struggled to find. Even more so, I initially struggled to recognize when she started to drop too low.

By the end of March, I was proud to see that the quality of the gaits and movements greatly improved, I found Chessie's "second trot", and I was able to have significantly more control over the pirouettes which I struggled with. We even began schooling the one tempis!

- When schooling your horse, try to work in a sequence that mirrors a dressage test
 - Work the trot, then walk, and then canter: This may not work for all horses but it is good to know how/if working in that sequence changes your horses gaits since there is no dressage test that waivers from that method (not including freestyles)



Photo Credit: May Livernois

- Be systematic in the training:
 - properly prepare the horse for the show ring
- Pirouette exercise
 - Ride a square, making quarter turns at each of the four

corners - Maintain the collect canter throughout

- Keep reins shorter than you would expect when working towards a Grand Prix frame; even if it initially feels slightly uncomfortable
- When asking yourself is the horse in front of the vertical, look for the crown piece on the bridle
- Be impressionable to the horse; in other words, do not allow a correction to be lost
- Think of attaining the swing and impulsion of the extended trot prior to riding the shoulder ins and half passes to improve the expression within the lateral work
- You must have control of the neck; the height should not change the balance
- While it is fine to start the horse long and low, but you must then be able to pick the neck up and keep the poll the highest point

D4K Training4Teaching with Ali Brock

- Coaching focuses on “what”
- Teaching focuses on why, why, and how
- Be mindful of people’s feelings
 - You don’t want to make anything personal
 - Always encourage trying
 - If not feeling encouraged, people will eventually stop and give up
- Be aware of using the word “don’t” when teaching as the brain is unable to process that word
- Instead tell the student what you want them to do as the brain only processes a directional statement

- Be aware of your facial expression as studies show it can have a major impact on your students
- If not about what you are teaching but more so about what they are retaining
- The trainer knows when information has landed when it is repeatable
 - For example, being able to teach a horse flying changes verses knowing flying changes
- Poor prior planning makes poor performance
- When things don't go well in the ring, and at some point, they probably will since we are working with live animals in an uncontrollable environment use the phrase "We'll fix it"

Final Thoughts

Having worked with Oded for nearly four months, I am pleased to look back on our progress and how far we came. My three goals coming down were achieved: Pirouettes became much more rideable, the trot quality improved greatly, and the connection felt significantly more secure. In general, Chessie gave me a much better feeling: one where I felt that I had control of every step. Oded taught me to hold both myself and my horse to a higher standard, to make it right the first time, and to not over prepare and thus override each movement.

But beyond the undeniable fabulous training, stunning facilities, and outstanding horses, I was most unprepared for the sheer generosity and kindness I was met with. Coming down for three months alone was slightly nerve wracking as I did not know many people.

However, several months later, I can say that I met some of the funniest, compassionate, and hard-working people. They have all given me so many opportunities that I would never have received without them. It is truly amazing how in only a few short months, people who you have just met become family. Perhaps it's because of our mutual love for horses or rather the fact that we all spent quite a bit of time together but either way, I am so grateful to have met so many people who left a huge impact on me.

I have to admit, leaving was the most challenging of all. I was heartbroken but excited to come home to see everyone there. Nonetheless, I keep reminding myself that "if something is sad when it ends, it must have been pretty wonderful while it was happening". And that it was.

Thank you again to everyone who made this adventure possible. It was truly a life changing experience - one that I'll never forget.

To Next Year's Recipient...

- Be the hardest working, most respectful, and gracious person in the barn
 - You will receive more opportunities
- Say “YES” to everything
 - It's an opportunity to learn and grow
- Make connections with as many people as you can
 - Be kind and introduce yourself
- Ask questions and be curious
- Take notes from lessons
- If possible, have someone go with you to video the lesson
 - It is very helpful to be able to watch them back
- You can learn something from everyone
 - Take what you can, apply it to your training program, and add it to your tool box
- Be flexible and understanding of schedule changes and last minute decisions
- Have fun and enjoy the beautiful scenery and horses - It's truly a once in a lifetime opportunity so take advantage of it!

More Photos



