



D4K Celebrates Horses and Horsemanship as Part of D4K Lendon's Youth Dressage Festival 2026 Special Awards

At Dressage4Kids, horsemanship is about always putting the horse's well-being first – always prioritizing the welfare of the horse through thoughtful horsemanship and care and respect for the horse.

The Clovis Horsemanship Award, the Jill Bertolini Furlan Memorial Award, and the Umego Perpetual Trophy, presented at the 2026 D4K Lendon's Youth Dressage Festival, all celebrate remarkable horses – and the riders who care for them.

Meet the 2026 Honorees

The Clovis Horsemanship Award



Amelia LeSieur and Dora

The Clovis Horsemanship Award recognizes horses who have overcome significant medical obstacles and the riders who play an active role in helping them recover and continue as healthy, happy horses. The award celebrates not just overcoming adversity, but the thoughtful horsemanship that makes a horse's continued well-being possible. The Clovis Horsemanship

Award is generously sponsored by Triple Crown, Cherry Ridge Dressage, Spa Equine Sports Medicine, and Friends of Clovis.

For Amelia, horsemanship has meant learning to listen closely and trust an instinct when something doesn't seem right. Dora, a fifteen year-old Lusitano came into Amelia's life in December 2025 and the pair bonded immediately. Unfortunately, just a few months later Dora was diagnosed with a severe uterine infection that ultimately required specialty treatment at Rhinebeck Equine. During her treatment, veterinarians also diagnosed her with Cushing's disease, complicating her recovery. Multiple hospital stays and follow-up visits later, Dora is now doing much better. Dora has taught Amelia to look beyond a behavior or symptom and ask what the horse may be trying to communicate. "I truly believe the most important thing for any horse is their comfort," she said. "We are lucky to have each other, and I want to continue to support her in everything she needs." As Dora began feeling better, more and more of her personality also started emerging. The mare blossomed into a "goofy girl" who loves trails, going new places, meeting new people, jumping, and plenty of before-and-after ride cuddles. "Dora really loves to smile and give kisses, especially for a treat, but she also loves to sit in the pasture and be doted on by a girl who loves her," writes Amelia. "I'm grateful to Dora because through thick and thin she stayed kind and patient. I am grateful she is kind, forgiving, and enjoys being silly." Amelia also credits the many people who have helped her and Dora through the journey, including her parents, Katie Rodriguez, Mollie Bachner, and all the vets.

Jill Bertolini Furlan Memorial Award



Harper Higgins and Fiona

The Jill Bertolini Furlan Memorial Award recognizes the highest-scoring rider competing with a rescue horse. The award celebrates the second chances that can transform a horse's life – and the riders, trainers, and support staff who invest the time, patience, and care necessary to help these horses flourish. The Jill Bertolini Furlan Memorial Award was donated by Kirsten Gray and is generously sponsored by the Conlin Family.

Fiona's story is one of second chances, growing confidence, and a partnership built over time. Purchased from an auction by trainer Natasha Rutherford, Love's True Form (aka Fiona)

arrived at Sterling Hill Stables green and a little apprehensive. Little was known about her earlier life, though it was known that she had had at least one foal. When Fiona and Harper were first matched together, they had to learn to trust one another – and even then, maintaining a canter was a challenge for the pair. Two years later, Fiona and Harper have both become more confident and have progressed to Training Level. But Fiona’s impact on Harper has reached far beyond the ring. Harper shares, “Fiona has taught me so much in the short time we have been partners. She has taught me to have confidence in myself, to work hard, be independent, and to always show up, even on bad days. Fiona pushes me to be a better rider and shows patience with me. I can’t wait to continue to grow with her. She’s my heart horse. I am very grateful to the sponsors of this award and hope to pay it forward someday. I’d like to also thank my parents and my trainer for all they do for me and Fiona. None of this would be possible if it wasn’t for them.”

Umego Perpetual Trophy



Arianne Fournier and Gemini, photo credit: Siri Ingebrigtsen

The Umego Perpetual Trophy, donated by Joni Cherbo, honors the highest-scoring rider competing with a schoolmaster. Schoolmasters hold a particularly important place in equestrian sport. These experienced horses are teachers in their own right, helping riders develop feel, confidence, knowledge, and skills. Through this award, D4K celebrates not only the rider’s achievement, but also the extraordinary contribution of the horses who teach us.

Gemini, owned by Carolyn Healy, is a schoolmaster with extraordinary patience, kindness, and ability to teach. Gemini came to Avant-Garde Farms as a weanling in 2009 and was developed through the FEI levels by Siri Ingebrigtsen. Arianne began riding Gemini in 2021, when Arianne was barely riding at Training Level. Gem became the horse who taught her everything from true connection to her first flying change and eventually tempi changes. “Gem has been one of my best teachers for being patient with me and allowing me to make mistakes and learn from them,” shares Arianne. “He always does movements well if I ask correctly.” Today the pair competes at Fourth Level in Canada – a milestone Arianne credits in large part to Gem. He has helped teach her how to manage her own stress, care for a horse at a higher level, persevere through setbacks, and think creatively when something isn’t working. Outside the arena, Gem is a beloved “sweet goofball” who likes to remind everyone that age is just a number. “I wouldn’t be where I am today without him,” says Arianne. “He is so giving and kind, and such a good teacher.”

Behind every rider’s journey is a horse who has taught them something.

These awards are a tribute to the horses: the partners and friends who give us so much and shape the horsepeople we become.

About Dressage4Kids

Dressage4Kids, Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization incorporated for the express purpose of providing educational and competitive opportunities for youth riders and the adults who support them.

<https://dressage4kids.org>

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