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Dressage4Kids Calendar

<https://dressage4kids.org/news-events/event-calendar.html>

June

June 7-8 D4K TEAM Clinic at Meadowbrook Equestrian Center in Naples, Maine

June 14-15 D4K TEAM Clinic at Cadence Ranch in Hutto, Texas

June 15-21 D4K ACTION Week

June 17-19 D4K Horsemastership Clinic at Hilltop Farm in Coloma, Maryland

June 21-22 D4K TEAM Clinic at Riding Right Farm in Buskirk, New York

June 21-22 Region 1 Youth Dressage Team Challenge at Rose Mount Farm in Spotsylvania Courthouse, Virginia

June 28-29 D4K TEAM Clinic at Rancho Santa Fe in Bloomingdale, Michigan

July

July 2-29 D4K Summer Intensive Training Program at Hampton Green Farm in Fruitport, Michigan

August

August 8-10 D4K Lendon's Youth Dressage Festival at the Horse Park of New Jersey in Allentown, New Jersey

D4K ACTION Week June 15-21

ACTion Week will help to promote the ACT Program and allow ACT members to volunteer individually as well as in groups.

1. Find a volunteer opportunity in your community - lend a hand at a therapeutic riding or rescue center, help a show organizer, raise money for a worthwhile cause - and make a difference
2. Grab a friend or 2 or 3
3. Log your volunteer experience and hours [HERE](#)
4. Share your summer D4K ACTION with us on social media and tag @dressage4Kids

Let's show

Let's show the power we have as youth riders in ACTION and share the positive impact we can have on communities across the country!

Not a D4K ACT member yet? [Register here!](#)



Meet Youth Dressage Festival Competitor
Arianne Fournier

Arianne Fournier was the winner of the First Level Division Ages 15 and Up with Molinaro Anna.

Q: How many years have you competed at YDF?

Arianne: I have competed 4 incredible years at Lendon's Youth Dressage Festival.

Q: What was your favorite part about YDF this year?

Arianne: My favorite part about YDF this year was to still see everyone joyful and cheering even with the pouring rain.

Q: What was your reaction when you found out you were Division Champion?

Arianne: I was shocked. I am so happy and proud of my mare.

Q: What are your future riding goals/plans?

Arianne: One of my top goals would be to show the atypical breeds and do well up the levels with them to prove that with love and patience they can also do it.

Q: Are you planning on returning to YDF next year?

Arianne: I am certainly planning on coming back and hopefully with a couple more of my students.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about your horse?

Arianne: The mare I rode is owned by Marie Gravel. Molinaro Anna was a skinny, injured OTTB that Marie bought in 2018. She took about 2-3 years to recover mentally, and from injuries, and gain enough weight to start a new riding career. Once started, she wasn't the easiest to work with because of the mistrust in her past. Yet, after almost 4 years of work and patience, she is now an amazing, trusting mare that gives her heart out.

Q: Are there any funny quirks about your horse?

Arianne: She is a brilliant mare that likes to play some tricks on you when you try to catch her. She was also very scared of white poles when she first arrived.

Q: What's your horse's favorite treat?

Arianne: She loves anything sweet or minty.

Q: Does your horse have a favorite class at YDF?

Arianne: I would say the First Level Division since she can really show off.

Q: What's your horse's favorite dressage movement to perform?

Arianne: I would say she loves to stretch.

Q: What was your team like this year? Any favorite team moments?

Arianne: We had an amazing team this year, everyone was very helpful and very cheerful. I always love doing the parade of teams with the team.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Arianne: I would highly recommend YDF to anyone. I want to thank all of the volunteers who make these shows and programs possible. I also would like to say a huge thank you to the owner, Marie Gravel, who trusts me with all of her horses and allows me to have all these amazing opportunities. Also a huge thank you to Lendon for the last 3 summers of guidance through SIT (D4K Summer Intensive Training Program) and for always being there supporting us. And last but not least, a huge thank you to my amazing mentor Siri Ingebrigtsen for believing in me from day one and for always giving me these amazing opportunities and supporting me through them. I couldn't do it without an amazing support team.

For more information about the upcoming 2025 Lendon's Youth Dressage Festival, go to:
<https://dressage4kids.org/d4k-festival/>



Lendon's Youth Dressage Festival D4K Scholarship Nominations due July 1

Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, Dressage4Kids is able to offer one scholarship in the amount of \$250 for one young rider to attend Lendon's Youth Dressage Festival at the Horse Park of New Jersey in August 2025. Trainers must submit the below nomination form, nominating a rider whom they would like to receive a scholarship. Nominees (riders) must be 25 years old or under (FEI age rules apply) and

have either participated in a Dressage4Kids, Inc. program or assisted with a D4K program as a volunteer.

For more information, including the nomination form, go to:

<https://dressage4kids.org/scholarships/lendons-youth-dressage-festival-scholarship-nomination-form.html>

Lendon's Youth Dressage Festival Entries Are Open!

Entries are open!

Prize List: <https://dressage4kids.org/d4k-festival/show-info/prize-list.html>

Entries: <https://www.horseshowoffice.com/hso/enter2.asp?ShowID=5&cid=81>

Norwegian Fjord Horse Alliance Wendy Luscombe Memorial D4K Scholarship Applications due July 1

The Norwegian Fjord Horse Alliance (NFHA) is offering a \$500 scholarship to support a youth rider competing on a Norwegian Fjord at the 2025 Dressage4Kids (D4K) Youth Dressage Festival, held at the Horse Park of New Jersey in Allentown, NJ.

For more information, including the application form, go to:

<https://www.fjordalliance.org/wendy-luscombe-scholarship>

Matchy Matchy Salute to Dressage FUNdraiser hosted by Carrollton Farm

We all have those moments in our riding career when a lameness episode sidelines our training and even our dreams of competition. Yet loving and interacting with our horses is a commitment that can be full of gratification even when we cannot be in the saddle.

Join us for the first annual “Matchy-Matchy Salute to Dressage” FUNdraiser hosted by Carrollton Farm to benefit Dressage 4 Kids. From now through July 15, 2025, spend some time grooming and enjoying your horse. Get out your favorite dressage clothes, saddle pads, ear bonnets, the works.

Register you and your horse for our fun competition so that you can enjoy and celebrate dressage even when your horse may not be ready to be under saddle (or if you have outgrown your heart horse but still enjoy spending time with them).

How to participate:

Make at least a \$10 donation to D4K(<https://dressage4kids.org/donate/>) and take a screen shot of your receipt.

Get your horse show ready and enjoy the glamour.

Have someone take a brief video or still shot of you and your horse doing one of the following:

1. Standing in hand, at the halt, with the rider next to the horse offering a salute
2. Walk your horse down the center line in hand, halt and salute.
3. Not ready to head to the arena to work? That is ok. Work from home. Have your rider stand next to your beautifully groomed horse or pony, and go for that matchy-matchy award.

Send your photos and videos to Karen Conlin of Carrollton Farm via ketheobald@aol.com. Include in your email your proof of donation, rider's name and age, horse's name and breed, and a mailing address for any potential award.

Top three winners in each category will win a ribbon and the bragging rights of "Matchy-Matchy Stars of 2025".

Carrollton Farm is a supporter of Dressage4Kids and will make a matching donation of \$500 to match the first 50 participants. ** One entry per \$10 donation.



D4K Horsemastership Clinic Participants Announced

Dressage4Kids is hosting a Horsemastership Clinic with guest instructor Olympian Ali Brock at Hilltop Farm in Colora, Maryland.

Riders selected to participate include:

Logan Green, RI

Hannah Irons, MD
Ryleigh Koch, PA
Emelia Lewis, PA
Ben McWhorter, LA
Genevieve Oliver, PA
Tegan Pedigo, VA
Madeleine Perry, VA
Finley Peterson, VT
Quinn Ridgway, NJ
Sophie Rutherford, PA

Auditors are welcome to attend on June 18th and June 19th.

For more information about auditing, go to: <https://dressage4kids.org/programs/d4k-2025-horsemastership-clinic.html>

D4K SIT - Auditors are Welcome

The Dressage4Kids Summer Intensive Training (SIT) Program will take place July 2-29 (with options to extend to August 17) at Hampton Green Farm in Fruitport, Michigan.

We welcome auditors! If you would like to stop by the program, please contact Lendon Gray at graydressage@gmail.com.

To learn more about the SIT Program, go to:
<https://dressage4kids.org/programs/summer-intensive-training-program.html>

D4K TEAM Clinics - Hosting a Clinic

Would you or someone you know like to host a D4K TEAM Clinic? Contact Mary at d4k.org@gmail.com for more info.

D4K WIT Applications are Open

The Dressage4Kids Winter Intensive Training (WIT) Program provides an overall educational program for riders of all levels, ages 25 and under. Participants have a full schedule of learning that includes fitness, theory, tests, riding lessons, field trips, and lectures on many pertinent subjects. It involves three months of pure growth and first-hand experience to open the young rider's eyes to how they can best reach their full potential as a dressage rider.

WIT Applications (for WIT 2026) are open.

To learn more about the D4K WIT Program, including how to apply, go to:
<https://dressage4kids.org/programs/winter-intensive-training-program.html>

D4K Winter Intensive Training Program Interview with Lauren Sprieser

As part of the Dressage4Kids 2025 Winter Intensive Training Program founded and coached by Lendon Gray, participants are given the opportunity to interview an equine professional. Alexa Clegg recently interviewed Lauren Sprieser, a successful FEI competitor, sought-after trainer and clinician, and frequent blogger. Lauren is a USDF Bronze, Silver, and Gold Medalist with Distinction and the founder and head trainer of Sprieser Sporthorse LLC. Sprieser Sporthorse is based in Loxahatchee, Florida, in the

winters and Marshall, Virginia, during the rest of the year.

Excerpts from the interview:

What does a week in your training program look like for your horses, your students, and your employees?

So, Mondays are our “day off”. Everyone staggers their days off, so I and my assistant trainer Ali have off on Monday and so do the horses. Right now, the working students stagger their days off on Wednesday and Thursday so that we always have coverage. Tuesday through Saturday, generally speaking, are either lessons or training rides. We only do full training board, so everyone here is in a full training program and that’s the only way we offer. That way is two lessons and three training rides a week. Clients can convert training rides into more lessons for an additional fee, so that if they want to lesson up to five days a week they absolutely can. Sunday is our hacking day, but we also have workarounds for that. Down here during season, I don’t have any clients with a “job job”, but in Virginia I do, so if I have a client with a Monday through Friday job, we can hack their horses on Thursday so that they can come lesson on the weekend. I think that hacking is so important for the horses to have a break and a little mental stimulation, and it is also good for the ladies to get out of the damn arena. But, sometimes they come with us and sometimes they don’t.

For the young horses, there’s a trope about three-year-olds working three days a week, four-year-olds working four days a week, five-year-olds work five days, and so on, and I kind of work with that. But work can also have different meanings. Somedays, “work” might be mounting block practice, or trailer loading practice, something which we never do enough. And I am generally inclined to work them a little less mostly because my horses are very big, and I am very big—I’m five foot ten. I prioritize “work” that helps them feel secure, gives them a good feeling, and educates them well.

I am also a big sports psychology person, so I have two different professional coaches that I make my clients work with. Last year, one of them did a group session with everyone that was really fun. And then we also talk a lot about reasonable goal setting. One of my clients used to be really nervous about showing, but now she goes to shows—when she gets panicky now we reflect on how just the fact that she is here is huge! And then you just have to be nice. There is a way to deliver bad information, like “hey, let’s video this, and then you see it yourself.” Something I have also learned over time is when to say, “hey, it’s ok, you can do this—or, hey, it’s ok, we don’t have to do this.” And the “when” of that delivery is so important—for example, not when they are leaving the show arena. We have a running gag around here that no one gets fired until Tuesday—horses, riders, saddles, farriers, whatever has caused the show to go wrong, does not get fired until the Tuesday afterwards so everyone has a moment to breathe.

How did you get to Europe?

I called. I called Monica Theodorescu. I had bought one of my Young Rider horses from her, and I literally called her up and asked if I could come work and shovel manure for her. As it turns out, being willing to work will basically open up any door for you. And you can’t have an ego. By the time I went there I had already done the Young Riders, I had ridden Grand Prix, and I had already been a working student for Pam Goodrich and Carol Lavell. And I had been cleaning stalls everyday for zero dollars. And I would do it again in a second. Now, the world was a little different when I was a kid, and I didn’t have health insurance until I was an adult, but I would still do it the same way again. Work does get you where you want to go.

You have a popular social media platform that is great, and I have been following it for a while. Do you do all of your own social media (posting, editing, etc.)?

I do none of my own social media. Anything that is longer than three sentences, I did probably write; although the girl that does my social media’s “Lauren Impression” is getting pretty good. But I am a terrible photographer, and I am a garden-variety videographer, so I pay a very nice millennial to run my socials for me. And that is the best money I have spent—she has quadrupled my social media following in five years. Running people’s social media is definitely a job that you can have.

What are a few things about the way you have set up your business that are different from other trainers?

I had amazing mentors who took me under their wings, and I'd love to be able to pay that forward. I am very proud of my own riding accomplishments, I feel that I have done some cool things, and that's great for me, but watching them succeed, either my clients or my students, is actually better. That's a huge thrill for me. So that's one thing, kind of keeping that mentoring culture, that's probably different. This is the first year that I've set up a 401K for my employees, which I know is definitely not the norm, and it's scaring the hell out of me. And it only took seventeen years to be able to afford to do it. I'm hoping that will be able to help with employee retention. I don't expect working students to stay forever, but I'm hoping it will help by keeping the adults a little easier.

Do you ever outsource issues that come up with horses or clients? Do you hear from other trainers about their issues?

Outsourcing stuff with horses, absolutely. We don't do dangerous things. I rode a lot of scary things as a kid, and with some of them I wonder how I made it through. So if there's ever a question with a horse, they're out. I use sports psychology people for my students a lot. I can't be their riding coach and their therapist at the same time, that is an impossibility. I also bring in a couple of my own coaches for my clients because sometimes it's about hearing the same information from someone else, even when it's under the best of circumstances and there is not a problem. I still have to be my own HR department, so I have to do all the firing of the people. Ali, my assistant trainer, is going to be the first one where we start horses in house, because she's willing to do it. That was never a part of my early education, and I'm too old now. I'm going young horse shopping this summer and I'm hoping to get some really cool ones that are already under saddle, but I'm also hoping that there's a little money left to get a two-year-old or two and Ali will back them. Then we will pick which one to sell to fund the rest and go from there.

As you've developed your career, can you talk about some pivot points you've had over the years?

I don't think I've ever had a moment where I was like, I'm going to consciously change the way I do things. I came to Wellington as a professional running my own stable for the first time, for, I think it's been fourteen years now. And I started by sending one horse into training with the person I was riding with at the time and I commuted back and forth. The next winter, I came down myself with three horses but commuted back up on a regular basis. The winter after that, it was five, and I commuted up a lot less. I had an assistant trainer at that point to run the show. And then the clients started wanting to send horses. Four years ago, in 2021, almost everybody wanted to come. I said OK, and that then meant I had to shut the barn down in Virginia. That was a real big turning point, because that meant I became a trainer for people with the resources to come to Florida. We have to normalize talking about money, so we are going to talk about money. There are a lot of people who have a lot of money that are amazing. Amazing, fun, hardworking, diligent people who either earned the money themselves the hard way, or who in spite of having it, are really hardworking and awesome. But not everyone. I have been approached by people who wanted to come join my business, who had a lot of money, but did not fit the ethos here. And sometimes it's really hard to turn that money down because it can be a lot. But corporate culture is more important to me. I also had to turn my back on people who could not afford to come, and who I really really liked, and that sucked. The virtual lesson thing has been a gamechanger, we can talk about a turning point there. The pandemic that killed a lot of people's livelihoods also made us get serious about virtual lesson technology. I've kept the barn open this winter for the first time in several years because I can support and keep people going there virtually. I can keep my clients who have their horses at home or at boarding stables because I can help them virtually. Right now, it's probably a fifty-fifty split between in person and virtual lessons that I'm teaching. The rest of the year, it's more like two-thirds in person and one-third virtual. But that's a gamechanging amount of money every winter, and that's how I bridge the divide and am able to keep my clients of more normal means that way. I do miss the people that I wasn't able to bring along when I did make the transition to fully coming to Wellington. My mom was a big corporate success, and I remember her telling me as a kid to keep as many doors open as possible, but that there are also going to be days that you have to close some.

There's been a lot of talk about the direction in which our sport is headed. In your opinion, what are some areas that our industry really needs to address?

Oh boy, where to begin. I think it's really important that anyone who has a horse needs to recognize two things. One is that we should always be policing ourselves to be doing it better, kinder, fairer. And two not all conflict is cruelty. In fact, almost no conflict is

cruelty. I am writing a book, and I'm mostly done, but the working title is *How to Train Your Horse without Being a [insert four-letter word]*. I don't think it will keep that title, much to my dismay, but I think it's funny. And the gist of this book is if you want to not be mean to your horse, then train it well. That includes setting boundaries, early. Clear boundaries with livestock that kick each other in the field. All that said, we can do it better. I don't know what the answer is as far as educating the public. I used to be really game for educating the public, but then the social media comments about the fact that I'm abusing my horse because I use a noseband...I try not to go down that road, I try not to let those comments get to me, but it's impossible. The "gotcha" culture of the internet goes way beyond the horse industry. And we are all way less nice to each other than we were before social media. Or at the very least, social media has made it way easier to be mean to each other. And I don't know the answer to getting the entire world to hold hands. Something I do try to do in my own social media is be really honest about the fact that it is not all moonbeams and puppies. In my book certainly there is going to be more than moment about if your horse plants his hind feet, threatens you physically, and tells you no, you might have to speak to him in a language that he understands. And his mother would kick him. The average kickforce of an unshod horse is two thousand pounds per square inch. You really think I'm torturing him in a snaffle? I'm not. But if you put stuff like that on the internet, they are coming for you. So I don't know the answer. For sure, we all got a real wakeup call about our equipment. And I know I was too casual with nosebands, I was too casual with my spurs. I know I have been too casual with a stick. I got into very low-level, rudimentary natural horsemanship, the same way that everyone gets into natural horsemanship, because I had a horse that scared me and I had run out of ideas. I had no idea how much kinder I could do it, and I felt so terrible about the horses I had before—I could have been so much better to them. I think we need to be talking about that online, that would be great, because I hope that would show younger horse trainers that yes, you should be trying to do it better, but also don't beat yourself up if you screw it up. It would be so great if we could have every horse not bite their tongues for like three years, even though we all know that's a thing that happens. I don't know how I feel about five-year-old videos of someone making a bad decision surfacing. I know the USEF talks about doing better in terms of certifying instructors and having instructors meet some academic requirements. How's that for a very broad answer?

The Dressage Foundation Grants

The Dressage Foundations offers a wide range of grants and programs to meet the needs of dressage enthusiasts across the board, including adult amateurs, breeders, instructors, judges, technical delegates, FEI/High Performance, para-equestrian, show management, Western Dressage, and youth and young adult riders.

To access their grant calendar, go to: <https://www.dressagefoundation.org/grants-and-programs/>

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>

Check out our videos on YouTube

Dressage4Kids | d4k.org@gmail.com | dressage4kids.org

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