



Dedicated to Promoting the Equestrian Sport of Dressage in USDF Region 8

The Central Vermont Dressage Association

www.cvda.org

The Half Halt

The Newsletter of the Central Vermont Dressage Association

November 2023

Happy Holidays from CVDA!

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President's Message

Closing Out 2023

First, thank you to all who voted in our recent board and officer election. We appreciate your effort and your trust in us to steward CVDA throughout the next year.

Our 2023 season certainly had its ups and downs. Our show venue, GMHA, was flooded not once, but twice. The second flood forced cancellation of our July Development Day and Schooling Show. Our September Development Day and Show were held at GMHA's heroically-rebuilt Upwey Arena but our numbers were a bit low. Riders may have given up on the rainy season or were cautious about the footing. (It was great, thank you GMHA!) We filled two clinics, bringing Kathy Connelly and Jane Karol to work with a wide range of riders, from professional to youth to adult amateurs. To close the season, we held our first remote annual meeting. A small, but congenial group gathered to celebrate CVDA's year-end awards and our new and retiring board members.

In addition to the challenging weather, this season was a reminder that we are still very much in changing times. Nationally, communities (including the CVDA community) were challenged by the Covid pause on in-person gatherings. As we resume gathering, we also have many new on-line communities to join and spend time with. These many choices make some of CVDA's in-person events harder to plan. For that reason, we'll be sending out a CVDA survey by the end of the year to ask for your input as we plan events going forward. Think about what you like and don't like about our offerings, and please suggest new ideas! CVDA is first and foremost an educational group for all levels of riders, and a vital pipeline for introducing riders of all ages to the joys of dressage. With your help and input, we will continue to fulfill our mission.

2023 CVDA Year-End Awards

CVDA presented its customary Year-End Sportsmanship and Volunteer of the Year awards this fall, but also added two special awards: Lifetime Achievement and Horsemanship.

Sportsmanship Award: Shelby Ballantine

Shelby is the owner and head trainer at Ballantine Dressage, which operates out of Winchester Stables in Newfane, VT. She has consistently brought an enthusiastic group of juniors to the CVDA development day and schooling show weekends for several years. Her students are well-prepared, thoughtful and handle whatever comes their way with grace. Walking by their stalls, the comradery and good spirits are evident. This is a direct result of Shelby's attitude and hard work of instilling the important qualities of sportsmanship in her students.

Volunteer of the Year: Lynn Freeman

Lynn has been a stellar volunteer not only in 2023 but for many years! As a former Board member and Volunteer Coordinator, Lynn supported CVDA's mission by volunteering her time and encouraging many others to do the same. Who could say no when she asked you to help out at a show? In addition, over many years, Lynn has furthered dressage education by generously hosting CVDA clinics at her beautiful farm and offering CVDA her thoughtful feedback and ideas.

Horsemanship Award: Shiane Wheeler

Shiane just completed her last year as a junior competitor and is a regular at CVDA shows. She can often be found competing on young Gypsy Vanners; she does a lovely job turning them out for show, including braiding all that hair in a double braid if needed! She can also be found helping the younger kids, on the ground and in the saddle, while modeling the qualities of a true horsewoman: patient, curious, persistent, empathic, and genuinely loving the horses without conditions.

Lifetime Achievement Award: Sue Schwaiger

The CVDA Board voted this year to give a special award to a special person. It was an easy decision, as, to many of us, Sue Schwaiger will always be considered a pillar of CVDA. Sue has given her time, energy and dedication to CVDA for decades. Here are a few highlights:

- Sue served on the CVDA board for over 20 years. She added a thoughtful voice, a strong work ethic and wisdom of the sport and of the organization.
- Sue was known as half of the "Dream Team" when she co-managed the CVDA Spring Show with Judy Cummings. Their efforts made the May Show stand out in terms of the professionalism and extra touches they always included. As Volunteer Coordinator for Dressage Days back in the "good old days," Sue recruited and oversaw volunteers for eight rings over three days while making volunteers feel appreciated and welcome.
- Sue volunteered for CVDA in every position there is – from scribe to parking to ring stewarding.

The combination of Sue's positivity, civility and love for the sport of dressage have made her such an exemplary volunteer and member that it is time we honor her with this Lifetime Achievement Award. – Terri Satterlee



CVDA member and artist Lisa Curry Mair painted this beautiful saddle to present to Sue. A horse of Sue's is painted on each flap.

Congratulations!

CVDA 2023 Fall Show and Season Highlights

Year-End High Score Winners

With our abbreviated show series, we only have three CVDA Year-End High Score Winners this year. (The other two who were high score were unfortunately not members.) Winners received an embroidered saddle pad and a High Score Ribbon.

Shiane Wheeler - Training Level Junior
Gudrun Eriksson - First Level Senior
Lisa Curry Mair - Second Level and Above

Fall Show High Points

Intro Jr: Abigail Bross & Doodlebug 69.375%
Intro Sr: Robin Gregg & Swift Diamond River 72.188%
Training Jr: Shiane Wheeler & Gitt N Deja Vu 70.345%
Training Sr: Nancy Case & Cobblehill Aarvak 65.962%
1st Level Jr: Shiane Wheeler & Quinn 71.481%
1st Level Sr: Penny Williams & Oscar 66.528%
2nd Level & Above: Lisa Niccolai & KCs Celtic Karakter 70.429%
Western Dressage: Calsey Grant & Boogers Song and Dance 69.000%
Eventing: Rachel Noyes & Rocco 68.529%

If you picked up a Strafford Saddlery Discount Coupon at our Fall Show, don't forget to use it by its December 31, 2023 expiration date – and before the shop transitions from retail store to saddle fitting/sales, and consignment. Many thanks to Strafford for sponsoring our Fall Show's First Place prizes, and for their steadfast support of CVDA through the years.

Fall Show Volunteer Thanks

Development Day

Co-Managers: Shannon Hemingway, Amy Bresky
Secretary: Shannon Hemingway
Scribes: Patti Kuzmickas, Marianne Rousseau, Sheila McLevedge, Mary Gulbrandsen
Ring Stewards: Finley Peterson, Rebecca Darling
Runner/Hospitality: Cecilia Hoyt

Schooling Dressage Show

Co-Managers: Shannon Hemingway, Amy Bresky
Secretary: Shannon Hemingway
Scribes: Amy Plavin, Barbara Maletz, Rebecca Darling
Ring Stewards: Jim Calabro, Katherine Roe, Kathy Feehery
Runner/Hospitality: Cecilia Hoyt
Office/Scorer Assistants: Kathy Feehery, Rebecca Darling

High Score CVDA Members

Fall GMHA Dressage Show

Training Level, Open – none; AA - Robin Gregg, Swift Diamond River; Junior/Young Rider – none
First Level, Open – none; AA - Sara Smith, Vojenslund's Dragon Fly; Junior/Young Rider - none
Second Level and Above, Open - Carole Ann (Pinky) Tullar, Hercules; AA - Elizabeth Mirra, Laredo; Junior/Young Rider - Finley Peterson, Mystic Max

Jeanne Woodward-Poor and Longtime Partner Miacomet Achieve a Century of Horsemanship

Congratulations to Jeanne and her homebred mare Miacomet, who rode the coveted Century Ride at CVDA's Fall Show on September 10, 2023. The Dressage Foundation's Century Club has been in existence for 25 years, recognizing horse and rider partners whose combined age totals at least 100 years. The Club requires no dues, no meetings and has no agenda other than to celebrate this accomplishment. And it is an accomplishment! We all know that maintaining the health, happiness and partnership of ourselves and our horses throughout the many challenges of life is no small task.

Jeanne has a long history with CVDA, as past president and board member as well as attendance at clinics, camps, and shows. Comet was her mount for many of those years. The mare has been happily retired to the occasional trail ride for the past nine years, but in preparation for the ride, Jeanne rode her for 30 minutes three times a week for a month. And look how great they look! Here is Jeanne and Comet's story, in her own words:

"So many of the wonderful biographies in the Century Club News are stories of long-time relationships between people and horses. There is a heartwarming thread to them that touches anyone who has owned and loved a horse. This one is no different.



Comet (Miacomet, Sire Moreno Hanoverian X Dam Speedy Tour Thoroughbred) was born in my barn in 1995. Her mother, Speedy, was a lovely mare, but starting to have health problems so my vet and I thought breeding was a good option. I had never bred before, but being a novice, I plunged right in. I was able to raise, train and show her until she was 17 at which time, she was retired to a loving family farm with four people to spoil her.

I am lucky to live in an area where there are wonderful trainers, and we took advantage of many of them. They know who they are, and I silently thank them whenever I think of all the

lessons they provided. We focused on dressage but did some cross training; both trail riding and very small jumps. My goal was always to get my Bronze Medal, which we did in 2012. Just for fun we developed a Free Style and performed that at many shows.

Comet was always a willing partner, and our Century Ride was no exception. After years of trail riding and having fun with her retired family, I started schooling her again to prepare for our ride, and I could tell she was completely into it. The day of our ride, she backed off the trailer, took one look around, and I could see her say, "Oh, yeah, I got this!" And she did. What a good mare!

No journey like this is ever accomplished alone. In a 28- year relationship, there are so many people to thank: my family, who always supported me in my riding, my horse buddies, the many trainers and barn owners over the years and of course Comet's new retirement family whose dutiful care of her for the last nine years made this day possible."

And now Jeanne has a new horse, Kier, a 13-year-old Connemara/Oldenburg X. *“He is making me a better rider as his idea is that I either ride correctly or he doesn't play. Period! Comet was always willing to compromise, not so much Kier. But I have become a better rider and continue to improve, and that's what it is all about. I'd love to get him to 3rd or 4th level, but I am not interested in showing any more. Right now we are solidly at second level and when I ride him well, he can be quite fancy. He certainly thinks he is anyway!”*

Good luck to Jeanne on this new journey, and to any of the rest of us who are lucky and persistent enough to travel the road to our own Century Ride.

- Lisa Geovjian, DVM

Setup for Success

Introducing Young Riders to the Show Ring

(CVDA schooling shows are a wonderful way to introduce young riders to their first show experience. I recently asked two trainers who have frequented our shows with the “littles” to share their wisdom on a successful first show ring experience. Heidi Hauri-Gill and Shelby Ballantine both very generously answered my questions. Many thanks to you both! – Katherine Roe)

1. Starting back at the barn, how do you provide a healthy environment for the kids around learning, competition and supporting each other?

SB: Our barn values focus on the good of the horse, the belief that everyone is trying their best, and clear communication. We have all levels, ages and goals, which I love. Myself, my assistant, and the more educated riders at the farm make it clear that we are constantly challenging ourselves. We all build each other up when needed and trust each other to provide support when we put ourselves out there with new skills and goals. We also acknowledge our strengths and weaknesses. I believe that when my young riders grow up seeing this, it helps them learn to be comfortable being vulnerable themselves. This confidence lets them allow the joy in this journey to take its place front and center. I also encourage as much teamwork as possible at the farm. We offer horsemanship clinics of all kinds: mindfulness, groundwork, veterinary, nutrition, saddle fitting, etc. These are wonderful learning opportunities that also bring students together and build the teamwork atmosphere. When riders want to compete, having a trusted team to lean on makes an enormous difference.

HHG: You have a huge responsibility as a trainer of horses and humans. When you are trainer of kids, that responsibility gets even bigger. My first priority was safety. Safe horses, safe tack and equipment and a well-maintained facility all minimize the risk of injury and bad experiences that could create fear. My second priority was to make sure that everyone felt welcome. I referred to my barn community as “family,” and offered many group activities to build that feeling. We had clubs of different disciplines and age groups and offered group lessons to allow kids to meet each other. We had cook outs, newsletters highlighting student achievements, barn project days and ran small shows with volunteers from the barn community. Our “barn rat” program allowed kids to learn more about horse care in a relaxed atmosphere. Finally, I felt like it was my responsibility to lead by example. I did not insult my riders or horses and I did not tolerate anyone doing that in my presence. If a young student did not like a horse, we would have a conversation about what lessons that horse could teach the student. The conversation itself, and the realization that each horse has something to offer, was often a growth opportunity for the student.

2. Is showing for everyone? How do the kids let you know that they would like to try it out?

SB: I would say showing is definitely not for everyone. Every single student has a different reason for their journey in the horse world. Some find peace and fulfillment just brushing the horse on the ground. That journey should be no less important than the rider looking to compete and qualify for Finals. Part of our barn culture is constant communication. We discuss goals and options going forward on a regular basis. There is never a hurry and my riders know that they are growing at their own pace. My newer riders come along to shows to volunteer and groom for competing riders so that they can get a sense of the different journeys available and the requirements involved. We make a point to attend events that are confidence building at that stage, like the CVDA Development Day and schooling show weekends. The buildup of a Friday lesson with myself on the grounds, followed by a Saturday Ride-A-Test format and lesson with the judge, followed by the Sunday schooling show is a fabulous confidence builder.



Cuteness alert! Shelby prepares to enter the intro/lead line class with her student at the CVDA Fall Show.

HHG: For me, it is hard to remember that many people ride just for recreation. But, guess what? They do! About half of my regular and very committed clientele was there for recreational reasons. When I had a rider come to the farm for their introductory lesson, I would ask a lot of conversational questions to try to get a feel for what brought them there. That wasn't a time to judge what they wanted because they probably didn't know! But it gave me a place to start. Some who were initially terrified or had trouble controlling their body on the horse dug deep and became fantastic riders and horse people. Then there were the ones who had so much talent and confidence, but they would lose interest because other things called them. It really taught me that you cannot decide and that you need to put your efforts into all riders and let time unfold.

3. What kind of off and on-farm activities help prepare your students for showing?

SB: To set showing students up for success, we make sure to break the process down into as many baby steps as we can. They are partnering up with a living, breathing flight animal that has to emotionally regulate just as much as its human does. We prep with as many varied types of events as possible. And, we do our best to make these events no big deal - they are just another question that provides feedback to you and your four-legged partner. Had trouble with something? Excellent, let's go home and work on that specific hole. We are careful to limit the number of new skills being challenged at any one time. For example, if a student has not handled horses off property before, they would not go to a show and handle for the first time. We would have them groom at an off-farm event to get comfortable with the scenario before they are the ones showing. And we always show a level below what we are schooling. A rider who is insecure schooling canter departs should be showing walk/trot.

HHG: I first suggest that a student watch a show and then volunteer at one. We held schooling shows at the farm and went to them off-farm, and did the same with clinics. Of course, my favorite place to introduce a rider to the show ring were the CVDA Development Days. They are a safe way to get riders into the show ring and

help them see that the judges were just people who could help them improve their skills. It was also important to make sure that riders could handle the warm-up arena before they went to a show. We had a very busy program, so it was fairly easy to have our riders experience groups of riders in the arena. I am not sure that anyone is prepared for the warm-up arena at a busy show venue until they actually feel it, but we sure tried!

4. At what age/stage do your students typically start showing?

SB: I am happy to get riders out there at any age and any level. Obviously, the rider needs to be able to independently and safely stay in the saddle, even for lead line. But, we can bring the level of showing down to almost any ability to give the horse and rider a positive experience. My goal is always to focus on “how does your horse feel? Do you think he had a good experience and wants to come back tomorrow to do it again?”

HHG: Riders want to start showing at all ages. In my opinion, kids can show at any age and experience as long as you can keep them safe. At our farm’s schooling shows, we always offered lead line classes because I believed that a show should be part of daily horse life. You can learn so much from a show! Moving beyond lead line meant that my students needed to be able to handle all the unexpected things that can happen with horses, especially at shows – spooks, others’ loose horses, open arenas, etc. If they were able to manage these things, I would take them.

5. Do you have any tips for parents and others who accompany their kids to shows?

SB: The hardest part of this journey is the mental side of it. “Failing forward” is part of this life and one that builds resiliency and capability. I truly do not want my riders who are new to showing to come away with blue ribbons, as it can create false expectations and future disappointments. A student’s parents can be a true asset at shows if they are involved in the learning journey back at the barn. These parents understand the challenges and successes, and are able to help reinforce realistic expectations. I caution that parental support is a wonderful thing, but let the trainer take the lead. My hopes for parent responsibilities are the following: help the rider prepare any needed clothing and supplies well ahead of time, support healthy sleep habits leading up

to the show, feed and water the young riders the day of, be close by to be an extra set of hands and be a listening ear.

HHG: Parents of very young riders often know the physical work required to ride as their child probably enlisted their help at the barn with heavy tack, picking hooves and scraping mud off of a dirty horse! These skills are also helpful at shows – if welcomed by the rider. One of my biggest show “rules” was that if you and your child get stressed at shows, trade kids. Some kids like parental help, but that was not the norm. If a parent was new to horses and shows, I asked that they stay on the sidelines until they saw a job they could do well. I also encouraged parents to help all kids, not just their own. On coaching, I asked that parents not do it. They might



CENTRAL VERMONT DRESSAGE ASSOCIATION Development Days & Schooling Shows

*Make a weekend of it at the beautiful GMHA
showgrounds with stabling available*

May 4th & 5th

Judges: TBD

July 20th & 21st

Judges: Keith Angstadt (MA) “r”, Lynda Angstadt (MA) “L”

Sept 7th & 8th

Judges: Catie Waterman (VT) “r”, Meg Hilly (VT) “L”

Saturday Development Day: Two rings - ½ hour with judge, Ride-review or Ride-review-ride, your choice

Sunday Schooling Show: Two rings - Intro – GP, Eventing, Western, Freestyle, Para

Enter online at cvda.org, opening date six weeks prior.

know to say “keep your heels down,” but at that particular moment, I might be working on something more important and their well-intentioned input could be counter-productive.

6. Finally, what are your thoughts on ponies vs. horses for the “littles?”

SB: I would give anything for a good pony for all of my littles instead of the horses. But, young riders don’t make good horse trainers and the reality is that it is very difficult to find a good pony whose training has been kept up by adults. They are worth their weight in gold! I think we have to put our young riders on whatever mount is the safest for them to learn skills on and often those are the horses. Conformationally, this isn’t ideal, but safety and confidence need to take priority. We are very, very lucky to have a wonderful 12 hand pony in our program. However, he is long-lined as often as he is ridden and has had many, many miles put on him to make him safe enough for my newer young riders.

HHG: I would far rather have a little person on a larger horse that is safe than have them on the ideally sized pony with Napoleon syndrome. Riders need to ride the horse or pony that checks off the most boxes starting with safety and enjoyment and ending with the visual. It takes a lot of time and money to find the rare gems that are safe even though they are too small for the average trainer to get on and school. Most of my beginner kid horses were around 14-15 hands. They were super good souls though, even if the little kids’ feet couldn’t get below the saddle flap!



Heidi Hauri-Gill currently resides in Wellington, FL, where she operates HHG Dressage. Previously, she and her husband, Bob, owned First Choice Riding Academy in Enfield, NH. Heidi guided many First Choice students, JR/YR and AA alike, to Region 8 Championships and year end awards. Heidi and her students made yearly trips to Lendon's Youth Festival, at first in Darien CT, and then in Saugerties, NY. Over the years Heidi has trained many youngsters from the beginning stages of riding to becoming true horse professionals.

Shelby Ballantine is based at Winchester Stables in Newfane, VT, where she operates Ballantine Dressage. Shelby works with riders as young as three years of age, and is able to take students from first ride through the levels to become competent, self-sufficient, and empathic partners to their animals.

In Memory of Wendy Hunter Higgins

Wendy Hunter Higgins, 71, a long time CVDA member and Board Officer, recently passed away at home while under hospice care. Many of you knew Wendy through CVDA, as Secretary for the GMHA Dressage Shows, or simply through living in South Woodstock.

Wendy was known for her quick wit and sense of humor, her composure, and her deep dedication to CVDA. I was lucky to count her as a close friend for years, both in and out of our horse lives.

Wendy joined CVDA when she moved to Vermont, in order to be part of its dressage community. She rode at Birch Hill Farm in South Woodstock for many years, as a student of Jane Ashley’s with her OTTB Cee Cee.

Wendy’s numerous contributions to CVDA have had an exponential impact on the organization. She was humble and always tried to “fly under the radar,” but her dedication, professionalism and artistry consistently benefitted CVDA. She was the person who changed the "face" of CVDA by giving us an increased professional appearance

through her graphic design skills. She created the all-important Omnibus pamphlet that we all relied on for over a decade. She rebuilt the CVDA website into a much more professional site, earning CVDA three USDF National



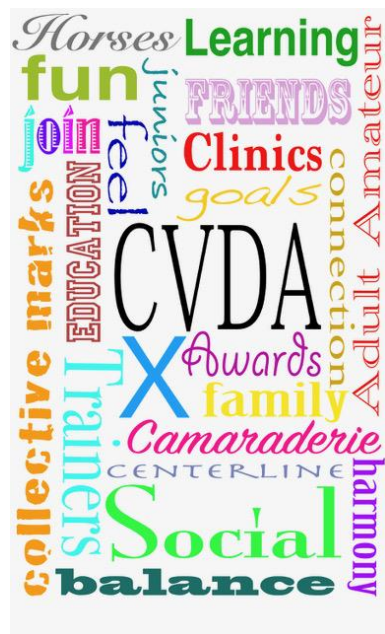
Wendy in an undated photo.

Website of the Year Awards for GMO's of 175-499 members in 2010, 2011 and 2013, spending countless volunteer hours in the effort. This, in spite of the fact that her day job, HorseInk, had her in front of her computer as well, designing websites for equestrian businesses. She deservedly received recognition as Region 8's USDF Volunteer of the Year award in 2014. Wendy's pride in her work was as obvious as was her generosity to our organization. Our members benefitted from her contributions, which also brought admiration from those viewing our organization from a distance.

Wendy's passing is a stark reminder of how quickly life passes. She was always fit and vital, walking miles every day with her dogs. She is survived by her husband, Chris, and daughter, Eloise. Her many friends and admirers will miss her, but we were lucky for the time we had had with her.

-Terri Satterlee

Don't Forget: Renew Your CVDA Membership



CVDA's membership year runs from November 1 to October 31 each year. You may renew your membership online at [CVDA \(cvda.org\)](http://CVDA (cvda.org)). If you prefer to mail a check, you can find contact information and membership level costs on our online membership form.

Your CVDA membership includes a Group Membership in the United States Dressage Federation. (USDF). As a USDF Group Member you have many USDF benefits including:

- ✓ Compete in USEF/USDF sanctioned shows
- ✓ Earn USDF Rider Awards such as the Bronze, Silver & Gold medals
- ✓ Receive the *USDF Connection* magazine
- ✓ Earn USDF University credits
- ✓ Receive member discount rates for USDF events
- ✓ USDF Group Membership (December 1st - November 30th)
- ✓ Eligible for Dressage Foundation grants requiring USDF and GMO membership

Thank you!

Special *Half Halt* Thanks

Former CVDA board member **Marin Haney** kindly proofreads each issue of the *Half Halt*. Her suggestions are always spot on – any mistakes are completely the editor's fault!

Thank you, Marin!

Thank You and Welcome

CVDA bid goodbye to board members **Laurie Hall**, **Dinah Rojek** and **Pinky Tullar** this month as well as our President, **Shannon Hemingway**. We thank them for devoting so much time, energy and good ideas to CVDA over their multiple years of service! Your new officers are: **Katherine Roe**, President, **Sheila McLevedge**, Vice-President, **Amy Plavin**, Treasurer and **Wendy Currie**, Secretary

New board representatives **Wendy Currie**, **Heather Gallagher** and **Sarah DeGrasse** were elected, as were returning representatives **Amy Bresky** and **Terri Satterlee**. Look for new board member introductions in our next issue.

Thank you 2023 CVDA Sponsors!

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