



The Contact

FALL 2020

INSIDE:

- 2 Virtual (Convention) Reality
- 4 2020 Year-End Awards & Banquet Changes
- 6 Quarantine: A Blessing in Disguise
- 7 Schooling Show Championships
- 8 Reflecting on Reflection on Equestrian Art
- 10 NDA Youth Clinic with Missy Fladland & Junior Corner
- 11 Scholarship Report
- 12 Calendar of Events & Classifieds

A Year of Change

So far, this year has been full of finding new ways to connect with our friends and family amid a crazy landscape. This also includes our barn families and riding buddies!

With show cancellations or changing venues, while other shows moved online, NDA wants to thank you for adapting with us as we navigated truly uncharted waters this fall. It has been such a blessing to be able to stay connected with all of you virtually, and also through this newsletter.

There will be lots of info in the pages to follow about the big events for our region moving virtual, providing us all with even more ways to stay connected from afar.

Please continue to stay tuned to our emails and Facebook page as we continue to send updates on these final events of the year!

Hoping to ride with you all again soon,

Michaela Schieffer

NDA Editor

Virtual (Convention) Reality

Article from Sept/Oct 2020 issue of *USDF Connection*, by Stephan Hienzsich



What comes to mind when you think about the Adequan/USDF Annual Convention? Perhaps it's the opportunity to visit an exciting locale and to enjoy the company of friends and dressage colleagues old and new. Maybe it's your chance to help steer our sport into the future, by participating in committee meetings and making your voice heard at the Board of Governors General Assembly.

When it became clear that the traditional in-person convention could not take place in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the USDF Executive Board voted to hold a virtual convention in its place. Instead of gathering in Omaha, Nebraska this December, we'll be meeting in a virtual environment. Although organizing a virtual convention has its challenges, we're discovering that it also presents some new and unique opportunities.

Going virtual produces the unprecedented opportunity for members to partake in the convention and what it has to offer, while also revamping the event format for a new audience. Although at press time we were still ironing out the details, USDF participating, group, and education members are eligible to register for the 2020 convention at no cost!

The 2020 convention will include the traditional USDF business- and, thanks to the virtual-meeting platform, we will also be able to host webinars, panel discussions, and special presentations. Through our virtual meeting dashboard you will be able to maintain your schedule, and organize all of your meeting links, download any reference documents, and connect with other attendees socially, all in one place.

You'll want to attend as many live sessions as possible because we will be featuring some surprises and giveaways. But if you can't make it, forums and education sessions will be recorded and made available for on-demand viewing so you can learn at your convenience. We'll collect questions and answers for certain speakers in sessions, both live and on demand, with follow up responses to be published on

USDF's website YourDressage.org.

Replicating the social aspect of the convention is a unique challenge in a virtual environment, but as many of us have learned in quarantine, online parties and happy hours can help us stay connected. Welcome presentations and virtual socialization opportunities will be offered to maintain the social aspect that many attendees look forward to at the annual convention.

As each year and each USDF convention draw to a close, we take time to recognize the outstanding efforts and lifetime contributions of our members, competitors, volunteers, and other luminaries. By going virtual, more USDF members will have the opportunity to join in the festivities to provide all of these individuals and horses the recognition they so deserve. By going virtual, more US DF members will have the opportunity to join in the facilities to provide all of these individuals and horses the recognition they so deserve.

In 2020, for the first time ever, you'll attend the USDF convention via your computer, tablet, or smartphone -- putting the future of dressage, quite literally, in your hands. Folks who have never been able to travel to the convention will now have the chance to join us, and we are excited to introduce as many members as possible to everything the USDF convention has to offer. Start by following USDF on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter and by visiting YourDressage.org for the latest pre-convention news and information, coverage throughout the event, and post-event content.

We hope that you will take advantage of this extraordinary opportunity to experience US DF governors in action, as well as to take part in the celebration of the year that was. The 2020 Adequan/USDF Virtual Convention promises to provide an unprecedented experience that you won't want to miss. Join us this December as we connect while we're apart.

Stephan Hienzsich
USDF Executive Director

You Spent All Year Training for This
You Spent All Year Working To Pay His Vet Bills
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ANNOUNCEMENTS

2020 Year-End Awards & Banquet Changes

2020 has been a strange and challenging year for all of us. Like so many other groups across the country, NDA has been forced to make some difficult changes to our regular plans and put some of our goals on hold.

It is with a heavy heart that the NDA Board of Directors made the difficult decision to cancel our yearly Year-End Awards Banquet, with the safety of our members in mind. There was no reliable way to safely conduct an in-person event in November, so we have opted for virtual solutions for all aspects of the event—details below!

NDA Annual Meeting

While we cannot gather together in person for this year's year-end banquet, we will still conduct our annual meeting, open to all NDA members, on **November 15, 2020, at 1:00 pm via Zoom videoconference.**

Members are invited to join the meeting to hear reports from all our officers, the results of the 2021 Board of Directors election, the discussion of any old business and any new business, and the results of the 2020 NDA Virtual Show Awards Series.

A link to the Zoom videoconference will be posted on the NDA website well in advance of the meeting, and it will be also communicated to our members via email. If you have any questions about this videoconference, please contact Melissa Ward.

Year-End Awards

After a lengthy discussion of the best course of action for NDA Year-End Awards under the unique and limited circumstances of showing in the 2020 show season, the Awards Committee has concluded that it is best that we defer our awards season to 2021. The committee came to this conclusion because:

- There have not been many horse shows at any level at which members can earn scores.
- A desire to keep the standards for earning Year-End Awards consistent across the years (not making

confusing one-time changes to the awards program).

- Many members made a conscious decision NOT to show because of concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic.

For those who have been competing at in-person horse shows at any level this year, the Awards Committee (with the full support of the NDA Board of Directors) will apply scores earned in 2020 to the 2021 Year-End Awards season. Scores earned between 10/01/2019–9/30/2021 will all count for awards in November of 2021. This does not affect the 2020 Virtual Show Awards Series. This program is separate from the NDA Year-End Awards Program. Results from this series will be announced at the NDA Annual Meeting videoconference on November 15, 2020.

If you have any questions about year-end awards, please email the NDA Awards Committee.

Board of Directors Election

Since we don't have the opportunity to cast in-person written ballots at this year's Annual Meeting, NDA will be conducting this year's election online.

Prior to the election, as we do every year, NDA will send out an email containing the biographies of all candidates running for the 2021 NDA Board of Directors. Then, on November 1, the election will open for voting, and all NDA members will receive an invitation to participate with a link to online election software. You'll vote for your favorite candidates, or—like always—you may write-in a candidate. Votes may be cast up to the date of the NDA Annual Meeting, November 15, at which point the election will close and results will be announced at the meeting.

If you would like to run for the 2021 Board of Directors, please send us your biography (2-3 paragraphs and a photo) by October 20.

Silent Auction

In lieu of an in-person silent auction, NDA will be going virtual this year! We are currently putting together an

online auction that will be open to all NDA members for 2-3 weeks of bidding. It will be a great way to get some holiday shopping done, all while supporting NDA and your dressage community!

We are currently gathering donations for this auction! If you would like to donate an item or service to the auction, please contact Margo Hamilton!

More information will be coming in October, along with a link to the auction so you can start your bidding.

Renewing your NDA membership

We know that many of you rely on the NDA Year-End Awards Banquet to renew your NDA membership for the following year. This year, we encourage you to renew your membership online at our website. There, you can either fill out your renewal and make your payment online, OR you can download the membership and mail it in, along with a check.

Reminder: your 2020 NDA membership will expire on November 30, 2020, and your 2021 NDA membership will begin on December 1, 2020. ❖



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Quarantine: A Blessing in Disguise

by Simat Whipp

Whipp Stables is a small private barn located in Southwest Iowa. Horses have been a huge part of our family for over 4 decades. We enjoy hosting other riders and their horses when possible. It can give a young horse a little travel experience and an opportunity to work in a quiet place away from home.

It can also give novice riders experiences outside of their normal element, and sometimes it is just fun to haul and ride somewhere different. In addition, we offer equine massage. Simat is a certified Equine Massage Therapist and teaches an equine massage course through [horsecoursesonline](#). Our mission is to develop our horses into happy, healthy and versatile athletes.

The 2020 quarantine has been a blessing in disguise in terms of barn activity. Showing horses is fun, right?! Oh yeah, but what happens when a virus shakes things up and puts a stop to the show schedule? Well, one puts on their tall boots, schooling breeches and helmet and engages in more education. During this time of quarantine, clinics and lessons have become a priority at Whipp Stables. The opportunity to learn and improve on basic skills without the stress of showing has proven to accelerate learning for both horses and riders in our little corner of the dressage world.

The “stay at your barn” time has afforded the opportunity to host a few educational clinics while maintaining social distancing. Riders have had the opportunity to work their

horses in a quiet new venue, while receiving great instruction from quality instructor Angie McClelland.

We have also been given the opportunity to produce educational videos, narrated by Ms. McClelland, for the Iowa Saddle Horse Association, the American Saddlebred Horse Association and a youth lesson facility in central Iowa. The focus of the educational videos has been to illustrate how dressage can benefit all disciplines of riding and how any breed of horse can become schooled in the art of dressage.

Some of the specifics outlined in our tandem video series include:

- Conformation best suited for dressage
- Building blocks of creating good musculature through training
- The mental and physical health benefits of dressage for the horse
- The dressage training scale
- The overall philosophy of using the elements of dressage in developing impulsion

The 2020 season has also been a blessing in terms of focusing on better conditioning as well.

Trail riding and hill work complement traditional arena work to improve the strength, confidence and demeanor of all our horses. This may be true of other dressage barns as

Schooling Show Championships

well, as many people have posted photos on social media of taking their horses out for long walks and going on group trail rides while maintaining social distancing. The horses truly seem to love it!

The lack of shows has nudged us away from ribbons and towards a fundamental return to more education.

In light of a year that has been challenging in so many ways, this quarantine period has provided some incredible growth opportunities for both horses and riders. The variety found in clinics, extra lessons, trail riding and conditioning has seemingly had a positive effect on horse and rider partnerships, at least in our neck of the woods. The quarantine time has spurred some new ideas, helped us to be creative through video technology and been a great reminder of why we all ride:

We ride because we love horses. We ride because it lifts our spirits. We ride because we enjoy the challenge of improving our skills.

Quarantine time has provided a unique opportunity to slow down in order to better accomplish our riding goals.

I love this proverb: “The Wind Of Heaven Is That Which Blows Between A Horse’s Ears.” And it was Winston Churchill that said, “The best thing for the inside of a person is the outside of a horse.”

Learning never stops. Our horses have a great deal to teach us. ❖

This has been a year that required thinking outside the box and relying on your friends.

Fortunately, NDA has some very generous friends.

The competitions committee was proceeding with planning to hold the show at the Lancaster Event Center. Though it’s a very convenient facility, it’s also a bit pricey for a small show.

Enter Laura Stueck and Char Cole who offered their beautiful facility, Still Waters Equestrian Academy, for the show. It was perfect! And they also provided perfect weather, well, maybe a little extra wind.

We had nearly a full day of competition. The results appear on the NDA website. Everyone wore their masks without question and had an enjoyable day. Becky O’Bea is an encouraging judge of both Classic and Western dressage.

Special thanks, again, to Still Waters and to Anna Barnes who put together the bags for competitors and prizes for winners. Numerous volunteers also helped to complete the day.

Here is hoping for a healthy, happy 2021 competition year!

Laureen Van Norman



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Reflecting on Reflections on Equestrian Art, Part 2

by Mel Policicchio

If you missed part one, the gist is this: I've joined a dressage book club and it's forcing me to think critically about my dressage training and understanding of theory more than ever before and I'm here to write about it because, well, that's what I do!

The second half of Nuno Oliveria's book *Reflections on Equestrian Art* discusses dressage movements and the correct training and execution required to do them. If you're looking for succinct, yet highly valuable thoughts on piaffe, passage, flying changes, and collected/extended movements, I highly recommend the back half of this book. (Also, if I didn't mention before, this is a rather short, easy read, so it's great for a busy equestrian!) This is also where I learned that there is such a (horrifying) movement as the "canter to the rear" which to me looks like a horse with spider legs moving very unnaturally but to my husband, "looks like all the other insane things you dressage riders do."

I'll let you decide which camp you fall into.

Before I dive into the meat of this post (riding with feel and virtuosity) I had to share my fun lesson from book club: gymnastic exercises are not just for fences. Who knew! Oliveria mentions gymnastics in the book and I had assumed he meant cavaletti work because cavalettis are an important component of dressage training, at least in my eyes.

During our book club discussion, gymnastics came up and we all agreed that gymnastics are intended to create an exercise which shapes the horse, rather than the rider shaping the horse alone. However, the course of discussion soon revealed that the rest of the group was talking about things like serpentines and half circles, not bouncing through small raised poles. Of course, I've used flat gymnastic exercises thousands of times, but had never heard them referred to as such.

Thinking about them as gymnastics really helps me think about the movements differently, more for the purpose of shaping the horse than anything else, which I think makes the practice less intimidating.

Riding with feel and virtuosity

Now that the fun fact is out of the way, let's get thoughtful. On pg 61 (I'm pretty sure there's only one print version

of this book, so if you're reading along at home our pages should align), in the section about "A Supple, Correctly Worked Horse," Oliveria writes: "...it is evident that having obtained the required flexibility and suppleness, it is also necessary to ride with feeling, and even with virtuosity in order to obtain from the horse all that he can possibly give."

Of course it is fundamentally important both a horse and his rider be physically fit and capable of their dressage task at hand, but Oliveria once again pushes his riders further, demanding that we ride with feeling and virtuosity. The book club agreed this is a lovely sentiment but wanted to know: what does this mean?

Jane, our trainer and fearless leader, demystified the "feeling" by pointing out that, more often than not, we know from feeling when a canter depart goes wrong and is sending us into a rough canter. That, on a basic level of what we feel, is what it means to ride with feeling. Of course, this goes deeper into also feeling your horse's emotions and reactions and sensing their thoughts. It's important that riders constantly ask themselves why their horse does what it does, knowing that more likely than not, it's a reaction to something in their environment.

The group briefly touched on the idea of mindfulness during book club, and I'd like to linger on that a moment. Mindfulness has become a bit of a buzzword, which is a shame because its meaning is inherently important for healthy living. People will wax a lot of poetic about mindfulness, but to be mindful essentially means to be present.



Zack Hamilton

402.875.1433

The act and art of becoming present in your environment and entering a state where you don't fret over the past or worry over the future can be incredibly difficult. And while for me riding makes it easier to be in the present, it's still incredibly difficult not to bring baggage from past rides into the present one. Perhaps even more difficult is resisting the temptation to let our future goals interfere with our present rides.

It's so easy to get hung up on lesson plans and ideas for what we're going to do that day and forget that those plans are ultimately at the mercy of an animal that can't read a show schedule. This is where mindfulness comes into play, allowing us to better our feeling in (and out) of the saddle.

This month, I've begun practicing meditation to help cope with my anxiety. I started doing so when I realized that I'm horrible at being in the present and spend most of my time obsessing over the future. It's not a great way to live and I've heard that meditation can help this, and after a few weeks of practice, I can confirm it's starting to help. This is great at work or when I'm at home, but it also applies to the barn.

When I start thinking too far ahead during my rides and begin to get frustrated, it's getting easier to rein in those thoughts and remain in the present, with my horse, during the ride we're currently having. I think this is the "feel" Oliveria asks us to have, the sense that during the ride our energy is in the moment, with our horse, asking them to do what they're capable of in the moment.

The Skill Factor

Despite his strong belief in feel and virtuosity, Oliveria never lets his reader forget the importance of skill. A rider can have all the best intentions and all the compassion and mindfulness in the world, but that alone will not get one through a dressage test--at least not successfully. Both are important to the equestrian artist and both should be developed in tandem.

This is where education comes in, preferably in the form of a trainer. I've heard before--and was reminded during our discussion--that a skilled trainer and a balanced horse can help an unbalanced rider improve their skills, but an unbalanced rider left on an island with a balanced horse will end up with an unbalanced horse.

We as a group spent a bit of time discussing the importance of taking your development as a rider seriously, so I want to

end on a list of ways I've found that help me grow as a rider. If you have any I didn't name, drop them in the comments! Good development is an investment of time (and usually money) but it's an investment that pays off in dividends (or however that money metaphor is supposed to end...I've never had a good financial investment!)

- Ride with a trainer
- Ride in clinics
- Audit clinics
- Take notes
- Write blog posts based on your notes (heyyy)
- Talk to your friends who ride
- Explain concepts to your friends who don't ride
- Join facebook groups and follow discussions
- Ask questions endlessly ❖

To read more of Mel's musings on a equestrian things, visit her blog at: melonline.space/existentialventer

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NDA Youth Clinics

On Saturday, September 12, the NDA Education Committee paired with the Young Rider representative to hold the first of two Youth Dressage Clinics taught by Missy Fladland. Eight riders applied to ride with Missy in 45 minute individual lessons at Middle Cross Stables.

Missy is a talented horseman and communicator and has several national and regional championship titles. She has earned her USDF Bronze and Silver Medals on horses that she has trained. Missy loves the journey and the relationship that is developed between rider and horse, and she imparted this to each rider.

Riders and horses were schooling Intro through First Level. Each rider worked on helping the horse understand how to engage the horse's inside hind leg to light pressure, explaining that this responsiveness is key to developing self-carriage in the horse. This energy is channeled into contact received in the rider's hand. And the addition of the outside leg helps the horse engage, working through the training scale. In addition, Missy worked with each rider to help them understand how to provide the clearest and kindest aids to the horse.

Not one to keep riders and horses on 20 meter circles, Missy employed ground poles and some jumps to help a horse and rider focus and relax.

It was a wonderful day of learning, with riders and their parents. We wish to express appreciation to the Urgent Care Clinic of Lincoln, Nebraska Equine Veterinary Clinic, Legacy Dressage, Angie McClelland, Heidi Helmer, and Missy Fladland for providing sponsorships for this clinic!! Huge thanks to Middle Cross Stables for providing their indoor arena.

The second clinic will be held October 24 at Coda Cavallo in Omaha. The clinic has already filled, and we will have ride times out shortly!! We are VERY excited for an additional opportunity to provide the youth dressage riders with an educational event!

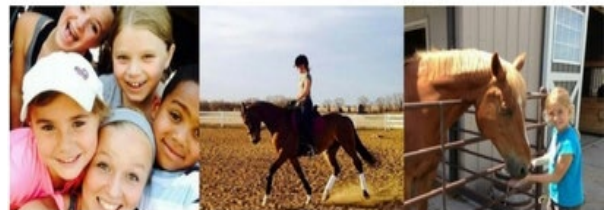
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SCHOLARSHIP REPORT

Dmitri Lombard

On March 15th, like so many Americans, I lost my job as soon as COVID touched down in my town. It would be weeks until the numbers ballooned and fatalities began to tally, but my employer saw the writing on the wall and decided to cut their losses in advance.

Like so many Americans, I was left with no income and no health insurance in the beginning of a pandemic which would sweep — and continues to sweep — the entire country.

So what do you do, when you're jobless, prospectless, in an international crisis?

I packed up and moved down to South Carolina to spend a year as a working student.

My days are bracketed by 7 am feeding and 6 pm turnout and stall cleaning. Daily chores typically include mowing and weed whacking, maintaining runs and paddocks, filling waters, feeding, mucking, and performing any routine medicating.

Less daily chores — fluctuating according to need —



include grooming, tacking and untacking horses much much taller than me, bathing, handling horses for the vet or farrier, loading and unloading horses, loading and unloading hay, setting jumps, taking down jumps, similar work at shows, videoing sale horses, and just being an extra pair of hands as needed.

The perks: free housing and utilities, riding lessons, and all the learning experiences one person can handle.

The most drastic change has been from handling 14 hand Quarter horses to 17 hand hunter/jumpers. At 5'2", the Quarter horses could already giraffe their heads out of reach if they really needed to. Now, I just get a stool.

Some of the cultural differences are extreme (going from hobby horses to purpose bred jumpers is quite a change in price point) but what I've found to be different is far less than what I've found to be the same.

Mucking stalls is the same, fundamental horse behavior is the same, and no matter where you are, or what kind of barn you work at, hay day SUCKS. ❖



Drs. Mike Black, Kim Conover, Amy Cook and Michael Thomassen
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Calendar of Events

- OCTOBER 3** Western Dressage Clinic & Ride-A-Test with Jenna Brumm, S&L Stables, Bennet
- 12** NDA Board Meeting, 7:00 via videoconference
- 24** NDA Youth Clinic w/Missy Fladland, Coda Cavallo Riding Academy, Omaha
- NOVEMBER 15** NDA Virtual Annual Meeting, 1:00 via videoconference
- DECEMBER 2-5** USDF Virtual Convention

Classified Ads

Do you have something to advertise?

Classified ads are \$5 for NDA members and \$10 for non-members. They will appear on this page of the website for 90 days, in addition to one issue of *The Contact*.

Advertising images, documentation, and any questions should be sent to the NDA Fundraising Chair at fundraising@nebraskadressage.org. Payment for ads may be completed with the PayPal button to the right (+\$1 processing fee). If you prefer to pay by check, please contact the NDA Treasurer at treasurer@nebraskadressage.org.

NDA makes no endorsements or representation in connection with advertisements placed in this section.

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Photo by Susan J Stickle:
Olivia LaGoy-Weltz,
2015 Lavell Advanced
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