Vol. 25 ISSUE 12 DECEMBER 2025

ARIZONA DRESSAGE ASSOCIATION
THECENTERLINE

It's in the Judge's Hands

by Michell Combs

The November 1-2, 2025, ADA Fall Fiesta horses show at West World included a group of six large R (Registered) apprentice candidates and Hilda Gurney, of Keenridge Farm, who is a two-time Olympian, trainer, coach, and judge. She is one of the most respected names in dressage. Hilda was brought in to be the mentor and evaluator of our apprenticeship group. The candidates came from California, Oregon, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Arizona.



The USEF/USDF large R program is designed to educate and evaluate candidates to see if they are qualified to judge Third and Fourth level at USEF licensed dressage shows. Hilda told the group, "It's in the judge's hands if this sport survives." She's very clear, direct and supportive of horses, riders and judge candidates. Our learning from Hilda comes from such rich experiences that she so readily shares.

There are many requirements to fulfill within the program, and part of the apprenticing requirements include judging a certain number of rides and classes at a minimum of three licensed, open-breed dressage shows. To encourage rider participation at these levels, the group offered a financial incentive for the top combined percentage for the two competition days for Third level test 3 and Fourth level test 3.

"Our words should build up riders"

– Hilda Gurney

Some gems shared from Hilda's education were:

- It's our job to encourage riders to build our sport.
- The riders are only doing the HARDEST sport there is.
- Discern if the rider was helping the horse enough.
- Our words should build up riders, that's what helps them be more effective.

Continued on page 3

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ARIZONA DRESSAGE ASSOCIATION
100 Easy St., Box 2855
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Your Voice Matters—

Earn Volunteer Hours by Contributing to *THE CENTERLINE!*

Are you passionate about dressage, love to write, or have barn news to share? *The Centerline* newsletter is looking for AZ dressage community members—riders, trainers, and horse lovers alike—to contribute articles, opinions, updates, and tips.

SUBMIT TO: centerline@azdressage.org

**The deadline for submission is the 20th of the month.*

Ideas for Submissions

Letters to the Editor: Submit your comments, suggestions, or opinions relating to the sport of dressage. The Centerline Editor reserves the right to edit submitted content for clarity, tone, and space.

Barn News: Trainers would you like to let us know about the recent accomplishments of your clients or introduce new clients and horses? Would you like to update readers about barn improvements, or talk about any other news of interest to the membership.

Member Submissions: Submit an article and photo of you and your horse on a topic of interest, a clinic or show experience. Submit your favorite barn and horse care tips, or review clinics. We'd love to hear from you! NOTE: *If the photo is a riding photo, a helmet is required.*

***Product Endorsements/Advertising** In most cases, products and services are considered paid advertising. Articles that are negative in nature concerning a particular product will not be considered for publication.*

Continued from page 1

- Riders should not be bouncing so be sure to teach more no-stirrup riding.
- Where can we direct the rider's attention: seat stability, following mechanics, preparation for movements? We might need to say on the rider's test "needs to be more impactful on helping the horse through this test".
- What is the root problem of what we see?
- Try not to only see the results of the problem but try to observe the *why*. For example, if we don't see enough collection think about the root cause – is it from the lack of impulsion, or maybe the lack of straightness? What is the basis of the problem?
- The horse's balance affects the quality of the gaits.
- If the rider is riding the correct energy and balance, the gaits will be improved.
- You can do this sport your whole life (note that Hilda is in her 80's and rides 8-10 horses every morning before teaching the rest of her day).
- It takes less time to become a doctor, lawyer, or most any other highly educated profession than it does to become a USEF licensed S (Senior) dressage judge.
- Make comments that help riders, in a positive way, understand and improve their riding skills when they make mistakes.
- Be cognizant of how much time and money goes into developing an upper-level horse and becoming an upper-level rider.

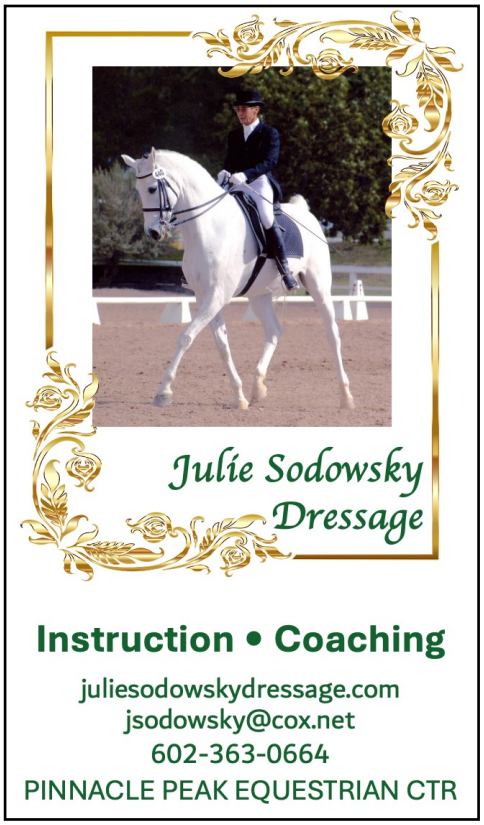
"It takes less time to become… most any other highly educated profession than it does to become a USEF licensed S dressage judge".

– Hilda Gurney

The candidates in our apprenticeship group express a very appreciative **thank you** to the owners, riders, and, of course, horses that were in the third and fourth levels classes at this show. We give a warm thank you to the scribes that volunteered their time to spend with us. Many said they enjoyed it and learned a lot from our group. **Thank you to the Arizona Dressage Association and the show management for their continued support to promote judge's education.** I personally always enjoy being around Hilda Gurney and learning from her. Thank you to Hilda Gurney, and her helper for the weekend, Mary Zhou. Welcome back to Arizona any time!

More information about Hilda Gurney can be found at www.hildagurneydressage.com

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LOCATION:
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David O'Connor
Chief of Sport, US Equestrian

FREE Webinar:
"Social License to Operate" in Equestrian Sport

February 2, 2026
6:00 - 7:00 pm MT

SIGN UP NOW!

Register to Attend Social License to Operate Webinar

We hope you will join us for this meaningful conversation and lend your voice to the ongoing effort to ensure that dressage—and all horse sports—continue to thrive with the full confidence of the public.

We are pleased to invite you to an important and thought-provoking webinar on Monday, February 2, 2026 at 6 pm -7 pm MT, featuring **Olympic gold medalist and USEF Chief of Sport David O'Connor.** He will lead a timely discussion on one of the most pressing topics in modern equestrian sport: **Social License to Operate.**

As equestrians, we are all stakeholders in the future of our sport. "Social license" refers to the public's acceptance of horse sports—an acceptance that must be continually earned. O'Connor challenges us to examine how our training, competition practices, and daily interactions with horses are perceived both within and outside the equestrian community. He reminds us that if you can't explain what you're doing in the middle of Central Park, you actually can't do it—a powerful call to transparency, accountability, and horse-centered decision-making.

During this session, O'Connor will explore:

- How the public forms opinions about equestrian sport
- Why our communication—verbal, visual, and behavioral—matters more than ever
- What it means to demonstrate, not just claim, that horse welfare is our highest priority
- How riders, trainers, officials, and organizations can work together to strengthen the long-term viability of our sport

This webinar is especially relevant for equestrian athletes, trainers, parents, volunteers, and anyone who cares deeply about the future of equestrian sport in the United States. It promises to be both provocative and inspiring, offering a framework for how we can collectively safeguard the integrity and sustainability of our sport.

Presented by: US EQUESTRIAN FEDERATION · USDF REGION FIVE · ARIZONA DRESSAGE ASSOCIATION

A Legacy in the Saddle: Felicity Thunes and Three Generations of Pony Club

By Leslie Sherlin, PhD



Some equestrian journeys begin with a single riding lesson. Felicity Thunes' journey began long before she was born, woven into the fabric of her family's history across continents and generations. As a third-generation Pony Clubber with roots extending back to England where Pony Club originated, Felicity carries forward a legacy while forging her own path in the dressage world.

A Family Tradition Across Oceans

Felicity's fourth birthday brought a gift that would shape the trajectory of her life: a riding helmet from her grandmother. "My family has quite deep roots in the equestrian community, especially on my mother's side," Felicity explains. Her grandmother was among the early Pony Club members in England, "when it was first only in England, before it actually branched out."

This heritage continued through her mother, Clair Thunes, who achieved her Pony Club B certification, demonstrating proficiency across all aspects of horsemanship. When the family moved to Arizona and found that the existing Pony Club chapter was too far away for consistent participation, Clair founded a local chapter (Salt River Pony Club), ensuring Felicity could continue the family tradition.

Starting riding lessons at age four at a local eventing barn in California, Felicity quickly immersed herself in the horse world. "I joined Pony Club, and I'm a third generation pony clubber," she says with evident pride. This maternal lineage runs deep with equestrian knowledge and passion, creating a foundation that has shaped Felicity's entire approach to horses.

Discovering Her Path Through Multiple Disciplines

Felicity's equestrian education has been remarkably diverse. "I've kind of switched disciplines a whole lot," she notes. Beginning with eventing, she competed in her first Pony Club shows before gravitating toward the jumper side of the sport. When the family relocated to Arizona, she continued with hunter-jumpers, though her pony Bentley "didn't have a change," which limited their options in the hunter ring.

The transition to dressage came gradually, born from practical necessity. "I started doing more flat work to help develop a basis for my jumping," Felicity recalls. Her introduction to competitive dressage came through IEA (Interscholastic Equestrian Association) during her last year of junior high. From there, the focus shifted decisively toward dressage, though she maintains her jumping skills with what she humorously describes as "backyard jumping in a dressage saddle" over makeshift jumps built from poles set on barrels and cones.

The Education of Bentley and Felicity

Bentley, Felicity's pony of six years, has been both her greatest teacher and most consistent partner. "He was the first horse and at this point, only horse I've ever owned," she says. From the beginning, Bentley established clear standards for his young rider. "He's not gonna do anything unless you tell him to do it and tell him to do it correctly."

This demanding partnership proved invaluable for Felicity's

Continued on page 8

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- Application may not have previously received an ADA scholarship in the prior 2 years
- Sharing your experiences in the Centerline
- Must have a qualifying activity/event selected

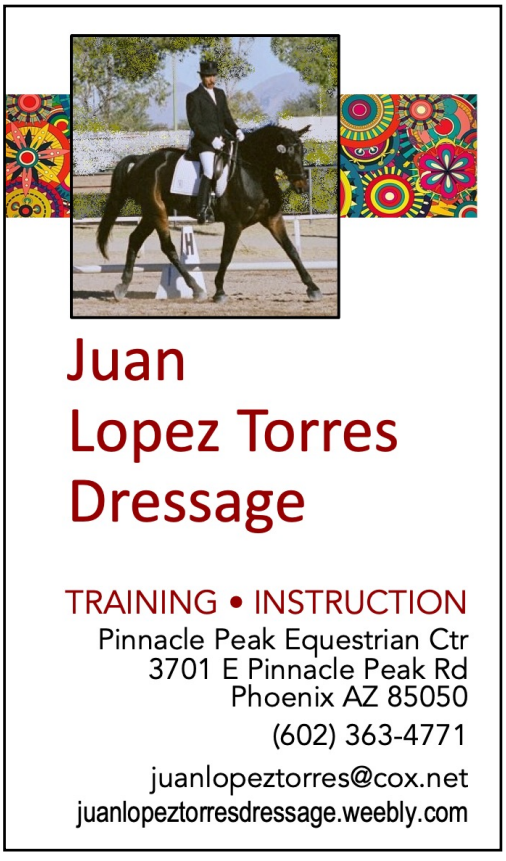
https://azdressage.org/scholarship

Continued from page 6

development. "He really kind of set a foundation of, that's not how you ask for that, let's do it this way." While Bentley proved willing to jump anything pointed his way, his true gift was teaching precision and correctness in the fundamentals.

One of Felicity's proudest achievements came unexpectedly: winning the Central Arizona Riding Academy's Joachim Spindler Training Level High Point Trophy at the end of her first competitive year with Bentley. "I was not expecting to win it at all. Suddenly I got kidnapped by my mother to go to the awards table, and I was presented with this trophy." The recognition proved transformative for her confidence. "It kind of pushed my mental ability to be like, oh, I can actually do stuff. I actually have the capability to go places, even if right now it's only training level."

Yet when asked about her most memorable moment, Felicity doesn't cite any competitive success. Instead, she recalls a quiet moment at Pony Club Championships (where her team was National Champion) when "Bentley laid down in his stall and let me sit with him, and he completely collapsed and put his whole body weight, or at least all of his head's weight, in my lap." This moment of complete trust encapsulates what she values most: "I'd say just generally, the best thing about riding is just the bond and the connection with the horse, because you don't really get that anywhere else."



Perseverance Through Challenge

Perhaps no story better illustrates Felicity's determination than her three-year struggle to achieve consistent canter work. "For three years I struggled with my canter departs and keeping the canter for prolonged periods of time," she recalls. During this frustrating period, her entire riding goal simplified to a single objective: "For a while, my only goal in my riding was to be able to canter down the long side of a dressage arena."

Her mother Clair remembers that specific goal from a clinic with Lendon Gray in October 2022. Telling the story that it seemed like it would never happen, even Lendon struggled to fix it. Early in their second lesson they got a perfect canter depart and Clair recalls Lendon saying "well now you have a decision to make, you can choose to move on to something else or try again, which is always a risk because it may not go well." Feeling elated, Felicity chose to try again but was not successful and learned a valuable training lesson, to not be greedy. The breakthrough finally came in January at a CARA show, after Felicity began working with trainer Molly Martin, "Molly definitely gets the trainer credit for figuring out what the issue was".

During this challenging period, clinician Daniel Stewart introduced Felicity to a helpful framework: the ladder of learning, where riders cycle through stages of not knowing what they don't know, discovering what they don't know (frustration), struggling to achieve it (more frustration), finally mastering it (bliss), and then encountering the next challenge.

"I think that analogy does definitely help, because it is just a ladder in the end," Felicity reflects. Her mother's support proved crucial during this time. "A big part of it was my mom just kind of pushing me to, 'no, just keep going', because she's also been there."

In just over a year of working with Molly, Felicity earned that unexpected training level high point trophy. "If I had told myself a year in the past, oh, you're gonna go and get a training level high point trophy, I wouldn't have believed myself."

Building Toward FEI Competition

While Bentley has reached his current ceiling at approximately first to second level, Felicity's competitive aspirations have grown. Her goals include qualifying for the FEI Junior Championships (North American Youth Championships) next July, which requires a horse rather than a pony.

Enter Cooper, officially named Dartmouth, who was "a purchase for my mother" though Felicity adds with a knowing smile, "deep down, it probably was also a purchase for me." Currently competing at second level with plans to move up to third level in

Continued on page 10

USA DRESSAGE

DRESSAGE RIDING STANDARDS GUIDELINES

Anatomy of a Successful Experience: Determining If You Are Ready to Move Up a Level

Basic questions to ask yourself as a guideline on whether you're ready to compete at the next level.

- If you practice a movement that is new to the next level, are you able to consistently meet the requirements of the movement directives as stated on the test?
- On average, are you and your horse reasonably confirmed at the current level you are competing with a final score reflecting competency such as a 63% or higher?
- Does your horse willingly cooperate in the performance of the movements required for the level at which you are considering competing?
- Are you familiar with all the new movements asked for at the next level up and the characteristics that define them? Consequently, are you and your horse proficient and confident in performing the movements as they are required in the test?

Strategies for a Successful Experience

- As a general rule, follow the adage of competing at the level below which you are training.
- Read the test directives to ensure you know what factors the judge(s) will be taking into consideration when determining a score for each movement.
- As you move up the Levels, it can feel like the movements come very quickly - one after another. Before competing at a higher level, practice the test at home enough times so that you feel you have time to prepare for each movement.
- Know what core movements "define a level." These may be underlying what is described in the Purpose. For instance, at First Level Test 3, the 10m circles and broken lines test acceptance of the aids used for bending and turning. Second level introduces collection and the movements that help to develop it, such as shoulder-in and turn on the haunches.
- At the end of your show season, first make sure you can answer yes to all of the questions posed above. Then make a thoughtful evaluation of your success. Consider both your strengths and areas in need of improvement. The next level will not only have new test movements, but also a heightened expectation of your horse's balance, engagement and self-carriage which requires time and strength building. Make a training plan that takes advantage of educational and observational opportunities such as ride-a-tests and schooling shows. When you feel your horse is confirmed in the daily work and believe they fulfill the Purposes defined on the next level's dressage test, you can be confident that you are ready to begin competitions at the new level.

Are both you and your horse ready to move up?

Continued from page 8

the spring, Cooper represents the next chapter in Felicity's competitive journey.

However, she's quick to credit Bentley for making her current success possible. "I wouldn't have been able to ride Cooper as well as I am able to without the help of Bentley. The foundation that I set for my riding on Bentley has really helped me be a better rider for future."

The Role of Trainers and Mentors

Felicity's training path has been unconventional, shaped by geography and circumstance. After early lessons in California that she doesn't remember clearly due to her young age, she received considerable coaching from her mother and family friend and trainer Shauna Diller. Upon moving to Arizona, the family surveyed multiple barns before settling on Allison Kerivan's hunter jumper facility.

At Allison's, Felicity was introduced to a mare named Paris for her trial lesson. "She was really, really sweet. But after the first 3 rides, a little bit less sweet." Paris joined Bentley in teaching Felicity crucial lessons. "She was also one of the horses that really taught me to have a seat".

In fall 2021, Felicity joined IEA Dressage, where she was coached by Allison and Wendy Riddell. The following summer as Felicity's interest in dressage developed, Clair learned of a Grand Prix dressage trainer who was teaching in Gilbert twice a month, and a connection was made with her current primary trainer, Molly Martin, "Molly has definitely been the trainer that I've had for dressage for the longest," Felicity says, noting Molly's role in teaching her independence. "She has pushed me to become my own trainer, in a sense, and to not rely on somebody else telling me what to do." Felicity notes that she is lucky to not only have Molly but also Wendy, who additionally coaches her when Molly is unavailable.

Currently, Felicity boards at a barn with no resident trainers, which has necessitated creative solutions including virtual lessons. Yet this independence, coupled with Pony Club's comprehensive education, has developed her ability to self-assess and problem-solve.

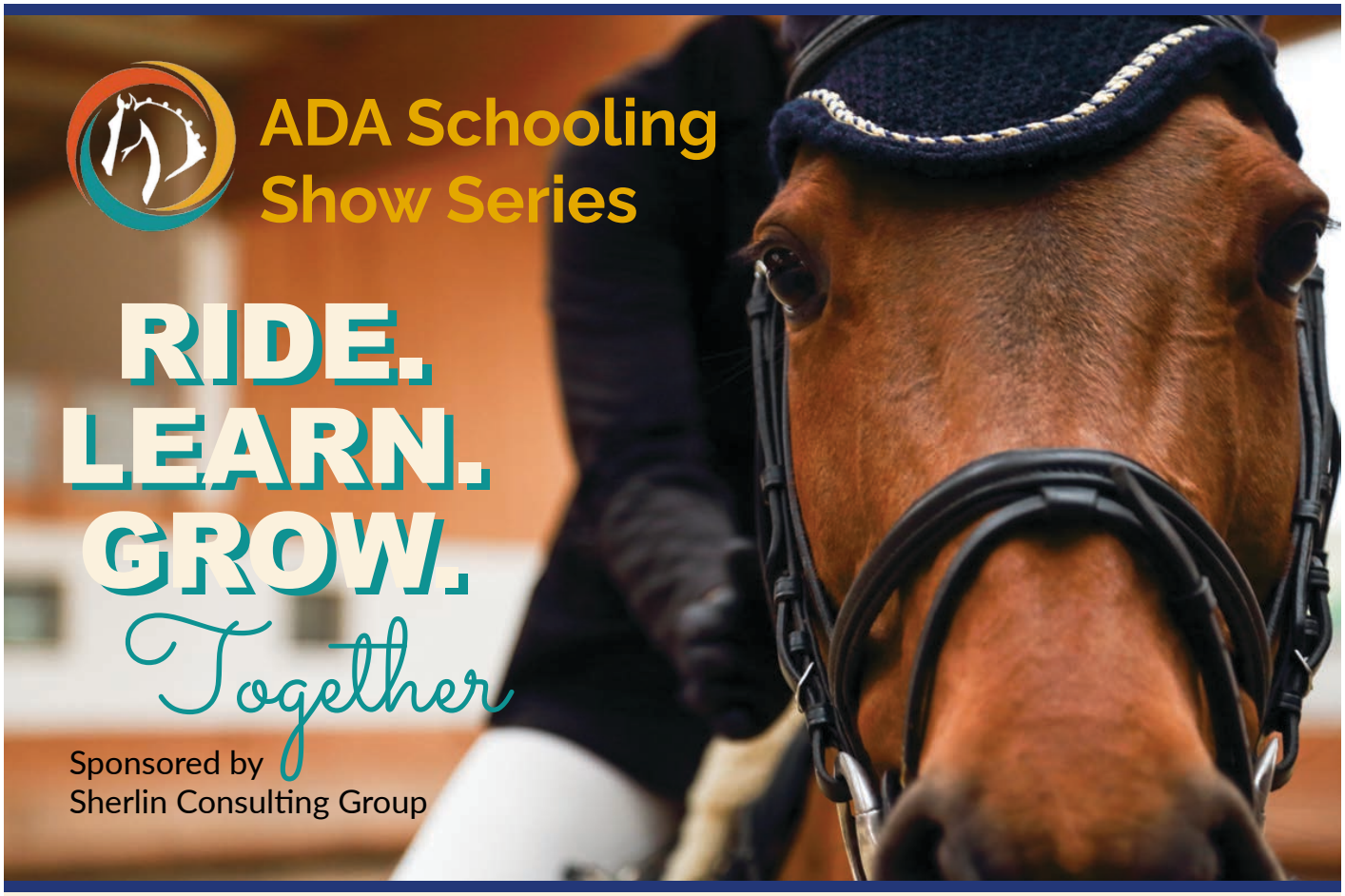
Balancing Horses with Academic Excellence

As a senior in the International Baccalaureate Diploma program, Felicity carries a significantly heavier academic load than typical high school students. "A lot of my time is spent either writing research papers or doing homework at the barn," she notes. She's actively involved in multiple school clubs, including recent volunteer work with Key Club caroling and decorating cookies with elderly care home residents.

Her IB program also requires students to coordinate community service projects, and Felicity has embraced this requirement by helping organize a joint Arizona Dressage Association schooling show and Pony Club dressage rally scheduled for January 2026 at Dale Creek. Working alongside fellow Pony Club members and ADA's Junior/Young Rider Committee, she's helping coordinate this collaborative event that will serve as a fundraiser for educational programming for junior and young riders. The project demonstrates how her equestrian involvement and academic requirements can align meaningfully, creating opportunities that benefit the broader riding community.

Continued on page 12





The Arizona Dressage Association is proud to partner with **Sherlin Consulting Group**, the official sponsor of our **Schooling Show Series.**

Their support helps create accessible, educational opportunities where riders of all levels can gain experience, receive constructive feedback, and build confidence in the show arena.

With a shared commitment to personal growth, peak performance, and lifelong learning, Sherlin Consulting Group and ADA are united in supporting the development of our dressage community.

2026 Events

JAN 17	Dale Creek Equestrian Center, West Valley
FEB 15	Carefree Farms, North Valley
MAR 15	Carefree Farms, North Valley
APR 12	Central Arizona Riding Academy, Queen Creek

Please note updated dates; Queen Creek was unavailable earlier in April.

Join Us for the Fun & Experience! **azdressage.org**

Continued from page 10

Despite these demands, horses remain central to her college planning. Pursuing biomedical engineering, she's evaluating schools based on academics first, but also "how close is it to a barn?" Even if she can't bring her own horses, "being able to go and just be with horses or at least have some escape back to a barn" remains essential.

"The barn is kind of a happy place," Felicity explains simply. "Even if school's stressful and there's a whole lot of things on my plate, the barn is always just a great place to be."

She anticipates that horses will "ebb and flow" throughout her life, with the intensity of involvement fluctuating based on academic and career demands. But their presence remains non-negotiable. Even barn chores feel different from regular work. "It doesn't feel like chores," she laughs.

Wisdom Beyond Her Years

When asked for advice to other junior riders, Felicity offers perspective earned through experience. "Don't compare yourself to others is definitely a big one. People have been doing it for longer than you have, and you just kind of have to start being comfortable with where you are."

She cautions against the perfectionism that plagues many young riders. "A lot of people, especially young riders, put a whole lot of pressure on themselves to just be amazing and they have to be perfect at everything they do." Her response is to maintain perspective by reflecting on personal achievements: "It's generally really helpful to just sit back for a second and just take a look and say, well, I've already accomplished this." These accomplishments may be things that others haven't had the opportunity, willingness, or perseverance to achieve, making each rider's journey unique and worthy of recognition.



On perseverance through difficulty, her advice is simultaneously practical and philosophical. "Sometimes it sucks, but at the same time, it might suck for a month, it might suck for a year, but maybe after a year and a half you'll finally hit the button that presses the right neural link, and you're like, oh my god, I can actually do a shoulder-in, that's amazing!"

The key, she emphasizes, is accepting uncertainty. "You'll get there, it might take a little while, but you'll get there and you just have to keep putting in the time."

Partnership Over Performance

When asked what she hopes observers would notice spending a day watching her work with Bentley and Cooper, Felicity immediately focuses on relationship. "Probably the horsemanship aspect of really looking after your horse." While acknowledging she too has days of rushing through grooming, she emphasizes the importance of the relationship "the mutual respect that you develop, especially after knowing your horse for a while."

Six years with Bentley has taught her to read his every signal. "Over time you just start to know them. You start to figure out exactly what they're gonna do. They pin their ears, oh, they're looking at that thing over there." This deep knowledge extends to physical feel. "Being able to see and feel what's wrong based on what you've been feeling for a while."

Most importantly, she wants people to understand the nature of the partnership. "The big thing is

Continued on page 15

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Full Mission Statement at *www.azdressage.org*

Continued from page 12

developing a bond with your horse and realizing that they're a partner, they're an equal party in everything you do, and if you don't get along, then you're not gonna go very far."

She summarizes it perfectly: "You can't just mold them to what you want them to be, you have to work with them on what they can be instead."

Carrying the Legacy Forward

As Felicity navigates her senior year of high school and looks toward college and beyond, she carries forward not just technical skills but values passed down through three generations. From her grandmother in England to her mother founding a local Pony Club chapter and working as a professional in the equestrian community to her own emerging competitive career, the through-line is clear: horses as partners, comprehensive horsemanship over quick results, and the understanding that success is measured in relationships as much as ribbons.

Her journey from a four-year-old receiving her first helmet to a young woman preparing to compete at FEI levels demonstrates both the power of family legacy and individual perseverance. Whether navigating three years of canter challenges or balancing IB coursework with competitive riding, Felicity approaches challenges with the same steady determination her grandmother and mother modeled.

For the Arizona dressage community and Pony Club alike, Felicity Thunes represents the best of both worlds: classical comprehensive education meeting modern competitive ambition, all grounded in the fundamental understanding that horses deserve partners, not just riders. As she works toward NAYC qualification and beyond, she carries with her not just her own dreams but the accumulated wisdom of three generations who understood that true horsemanship transcends any single discipline, any single competition, any single achievement.

The helmet her grandmother gave her thirteen years ago set this journey in motion. Where it leads remains to be seen, but one thing is certain: it will be traveled with the same integrity, perseverance, and partnership that has defined the Spackman-Thunes equestrian legacy across three generations and two continents.





Spend Time with Your Horse & Friends: Enjoy a Schooling Show!

By Christa Severns

Karen McGee wanted to take her new horse, Kasch out for ride off property. She didn't have a full weekend to spend competing, but she did have a morning. So, she loaded up Kasch and took him to an ADA schooling show at Carefree Farms in the north valley. She unloaded him, tacked up, and went to warm up.

One hour later she had showed Kasch for the first time. She had valuable remarks from the dressage judge, and she had her first dressage test under her belt.

She then loaded up Kasch and was home by lunch. "We had a great time," Karen said. "I was able to learn how Kasch would react in a show environment, think about my warmup routine and watch friends and fellow competitors in their classes. We had a great morning, and I still had time to take care of all the other things I had to do over the weekend."

Maybe you want to take your horse to your first dressage show, or maybe you want to try showing at the next level. Schooling shows are a fun way to experience dressage in a fun and affordable way. to spend time with your friends and horses.

Cost Effective and Friendly

Riders can bring their horses to a new setting and ride a dressage test for $40 per class plus a $10 office fee. All tests and levels are available. Riders can try an introductory level that includes just walk and trot, or you can try western dressage class.

Leslie Sherlin, whose company Sherlin Consulting graciously sponsors ADA schooling shows Leslie talks about why he and his family like schooling shows. "We started going to schooling shows because we wanted to do stuff with our horses. We wanted to show off!" he laughs. "It's like the piano recital you did when you were a kid. It's to show off what you've learned and get feedback and all that kind of stuff." He adds, "plus, something to do with your horse. It can be boring just to go to the barn, do the chores, ride your horse, put them away."



Learning From the Unexpected

Then there are the experiences you don't expect that make schooling shows valuable. Leslie describes such moment. "On the day of the November schooling show we had a young horse that said, 'no, I don't think I want to get in that trailer.' I'm thinking okay, now what? We gotta be somewhere!"

Eventually their horse did get in the trailer and because the schooling show atmosphere can be less rigid than a recognized show, the show was able to accommodate the late arrival. "If that had been a recognized show imagine the pressure. That experience would have gone so differently."

Schooling shows give horses a chance to experience new things without the added pressures. Leslie added, "it's just about all those training opportunities, like, the things you don't think about."

Opportunities and Practice

It is common to see riders and their trainers working together in the warmup arena. Schooling shows are a great opportunity to practice your new skills in a new environment, and sometimes it is the first time horse and rider get to ride in real dressage arena.

Bringing your baby horse (baby = horses under saddle) to ride them in a schooling show is a great way to get them acclimated to a new

Continued on page 17

MEMBER VOICES

We want to hear from you! Please share your stories and build real connections with our community.

SUBMIT TO: centerline@azdressage.org

Continued from page 16

environment that does not get compounded by stress of a more formal event. Plus, everyone loves to see babies. Especially baby horses!

Valuable Feedback

Schooling shows are judged by L Graduates. These are USDF members who have completed the rigorous two-part L Training Program and have gained deep insight into judging dressage. L Graduates with Distinction can enter the pathway to become official licensed judges. ADA is blessed to have several L Graduates, and they are eager to share their insight and help others. Schooling shows use current USDF dressage tests and the L Graduates provide comments like recognized judges to help riders see how they are progressing through the movements.



Come Join Us

Schooling shows are designed to help all horses and riders at all levels. These shows embody the Arizona Dressage Association Mission: "Advance the art and sport of dressage by supporting riders, trainers, and horses through inclusive education, ethical horsemanship, and a vibrant, connected community." Schooling shows are designed to share the love of dressage so that we can build great partnerships with our horses. If you have not had the chance to experience one, please enter or stop by one of the four we are having this spring. We have chosen venues throughout the valley so that we can make shows accessible to everyone.





We hope to see you and your beautiful horses out there in 2026!

Spring 2026 Schooling Show Dates

For more info https://azdressage.org/compete/

- January 17th, Saturday at Dale Creek Equestrian Village, West Valley
- February 15th Sunday at Carefree Farms, North Valley
- March 15th at Carefree Farms, North Valley
- April 12th at Central Arizona Riding Academy, East Valley, Queen Creek

Author: Christa Severns is the Co-chair of the ADA School Show Committee. She is an owner amateur with an 8 year old gelding named, Bo.

USDF REGION FIVE

We have just wrapped up another fun, educational and successful USDF Convention! It was great to see our Region 5 folks! I have enjoyed getting to sit and talk with everyone, attending the Awards dinner and having great conversations in our Regional meeting during the convention. Many thanks to everyone who attended the Convention this year.

During the USDF Convention, we pass the 2026/2027 USDF budget, but there was very good discussion regarding several aspects of the budget. I listened intently and I, along with many others on the board, have asked our staff for greater breakdowns of several categories. The future format of the convention (including more open meetings) is going to be explored in-depth as was asked by the Board of Governors. The elections went well, all positions (odd Regional Directors, VP and Secretary) were uncontested except for the Director for Region 3. Thank you for supporting me for another term as the Regional Director for Region 5.

There are several very good educational presentations during the Convention. I had an opportunity to present at the Youth Assembly and it was wonderful to see soooo many kids participating! I'm hopeful about the future of our sport. I also attended many other sessions, including the USDF Book Club presentation with Beth Baumert. If you aren't participating in the Book Club, please consider joining us.

Congratulations to everyone who won awards with USDF this year! We had fun at the Awards Gala, cheering on our Region 5 folks as well as Pamela from Alaska who sat with us, she was lovely. The USDF Horse of the Year, Indian Rock, even showed in Region 5 this year!

Ann Damiano is working hard with USEF and David O'Connor on a Zoom presentation for Region 5 of a new program that David presented at the USDF Convention. He discussed the new equine welfare initiatives for the warm-up arena that involve Green/Yellow/Red behaviors and how they will be handled. Look out for Facebook posts regarding this presentation and stay tuned to the January newsletter for the Zoom login so that you can join us!

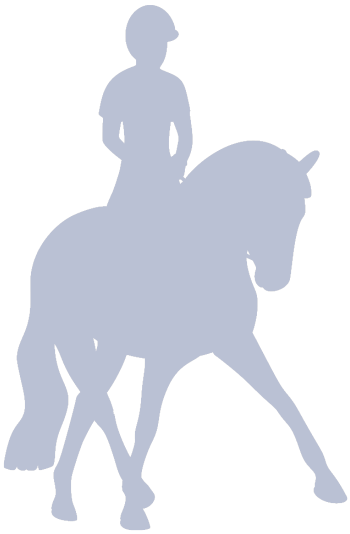
Several rule changes have taken effect December 1st. Perhaps the most important to remember is the microchip rule. All horses at USEF competitions need to be microchipped, including those in Intro and Opportunity classes, so pass the word. If you do not know your horses USEF Horse ID, you can check under the Your Horses section of your USEF member dashboard or you can search for the horse using the USEF horse search (https://www.usef.org/search/horses). The horse search will display your horse's microchip if it has been reported to USEF. If there is no microchip displayed you can use the online microchip reporting tool (https://members.usef.org/horses/microchip-search) to add the microchip to your horse's record. If you have any questions on these new rule changes, please don't hesitate to reach out.

I hope everyone has a great Holiday Season!

Till next month!

Heather Petersen

Region 5 Director



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Upcoming Board Meetings:

ARIZONA DRESSAGE ASSOCIATION

Meeting Schedule for 2026 coming next month
(All meetings are virtual)

If you would like to attend, please contact Ann Damiano
a.damiano@azdressage.org

HORSESHOE SPRINGS

KIM J. YACOBUCCI, TRAINER
28635 North 53rd Street · Cave Creek, AZ 85331
602-370-4039

Board of Directors
Regular Meeting

November 17, 2025
Minutes

Date: November 17, 2025 Time: 6:00 PM Location: Zoom
Call to Order
The Board meeting of the Arizona Dressage Association was called to order at 6:00 PM by Ann Damiano, President, with Kelly Stapleton, Secretary, present.

Roll Call
Members Present: Ann Damiano, Rebecca Bruening, Rebecca Lindy, Kelly Stapleton, Michell Combs, Susan Skripac, Erin McHenry, Karen McGee, Leslie Sherlin, Christa Severns, Tracy Case, Guests: Cathy Jones, Cindi LaCroix and Tristan Lloyd (NAC Chapter). Absent: Jaime Pollack

Approval of Previous Minutes
The minutes of the previous meeting held on October 20, 2025, were approved as read and will be submitted to Beth Martinec for publishing in The Centerline.

Officer Reports
President's Report - Ann Damiano opened with thanks to all for the hard work performed by everyone. There will not be a December Board meeting. Janet Jones clinic is well on its way and will likely be sold out. They will be making rider selections for the Mike Oskinski Clinic

Vice President's Report – No Report

Treasurer's Report - Rebecca Lindy reported a net surplus of $51,000 through October on a cash basis, though this figure will be adjusted once show expenses are accounted for in December. The organization has approximately $145,000 in available funds, including $40,000 in CDs and $20,000 in fluid cash. The board agreed to conduct a comprehensive financial review in February, after year-end transactions are completed.

Rebecca also stressed the need for advance notification of large expenses to ensure sufficient funds are available. She requested that checks be prepared a week before events for easier distribution and addressed concerns about debit card usage, acknowledging the need for better oversight and approval processes. A February finance review meeting will be scheduled after the books are closed.

Continued on page 21

Financial Overview

EOM Cash Balance Trend

	Jan	Mar	Jun	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Notes
xx1521	$ 8,011	$ 26,400	$ 35,377	$ 44,203	$ 73,535			
xx6796	$ 5,215	$ 4,682	$ 2,334	$ 3,189	$ 9,401			Debit card & Paypal link
xx9563	$ 66,622	$ 66,623	$ 36,624	$ 26,741	$ 26,742			September added another $10k to CDs
CDs	$ 23,580		$ 30,000	$ 40,233	$ 40,233			Rolled over CDs 9/25 and added $10k from savings
Petty Cash	$ 400	$ 400	$ 400	$ 400	$ 400			
Total	**$ 103,828**	**$ 98,105**	**$ 104,735**	**$ 114,766**	**$ 150,310**			
Inflows include								
Show income				$ 10,488	$ 47,000			Fall Fiesta entries & Sponsorships
Clinic income				$ 27,933	$ 10,000			Title Sponsor paid in October
Expenses include								
Markel Annual Comml Premium								
Y/E Award banquet		$ 2,800						Caterer, Facility deposits and awards
Outstanding CORE expenses		$ 3,951						Horseshoe Sprgs, Exp Reimbursements
June show expenses			$ 10,945					Westworld and some contractor checks cleared in July
Foy/Peters Expenses					$ 27,300			Approx-Final Los Cedros, Bar, Food, Clinicians
Catch up- CenterLine management				$ 2,800				
Interest earned on 5-month CDs as of 11/14/25 is $194.16								

Committee Reports

Northern Arizona Chapter Report Tristan provided updates on NAC activities, including upcoming biomechanics clinics, schooling shows, and a Dolly Hannon clinic. She reported that Sue Crampton has resigned as show manager, but will stay on as treasurer, with Lisa Darling assuming those responsibilities. The board discussed potentially consolidating insurance coverage across events to reduce costs, with Tristan agreeing to investigate current insurance arrangements and report back.

Education Committee Cathy Jones reports the Janet Jones event is nearly sold out with only two seats remaining. The forecast for the Core Transformation Series II shows a projected surplus of $15,600. Based on survey feedback from the prior clinic, the committee plans to enhance the attendee experience by providing signed books, blankets, and other amenities at the remaining two clinics. Osinski would like Junior and Young Rider participation, with Cathy sharing this with the JR/YR Chair, Leslie Sherlin

JR/YR Committee Leslie Sherlin reported he is putting together an education program for 2026 with regular events, including an online JR/YR path and what that looks like.

Recognized Show Committee Kelly Stapleton reported the revised Judges contract (recognized show) is still under review and consideration. Susan Skripac would like an agreement or a contract for schooling judges. The board approved the Recognized Show Committee's proposal to hold two one day USEF licensed shows for the Fall Fiesta.

Schooling Show Committee Christa Severns presented the schooling show schedule, which now includes four shows. The committee is finalizing facility agreements with various venues and is addressing payment coordination. The committee discussed creating educational content to help encourage new participants to understand the schooling show format and time commitment. Christa will draft a new schooling show judge contract/agreement. The committee is exploring the possibility of holding a member-only show at West World and will review previous event financials to determine viability.

Volunteer Coordinator Tracy Case received praise for excellent volunteer organization at the Fall Fiesta. Tracy is researching volunteer sign-up platforms for 2026 and investigating USDF/USEF national volunteer award nominations. She's also developing year-end recognition for volunteers.

Futurity Committee Susan Skripac reported low participation in the Futurity program. The committee is brainstorming ways to increase appeal. Susan will lead efforts to revamp the program for next year.

Continued on page 22

Awards Committee Ann Damiano in Jaime's absence requested assistance in organizing the year-end awards event, with Christa's involvement for the schooling show. The committee is developing plans for the awards luncheon format and venue.

Membership Committee Michell Combs reported that 2026 memberships are already being submitted. Board members were reminded that their renewals are due by December 1st. The membership website payment issues have been resolved, with Discover card payments now functioning properly. Leslie confirmed the system updates are working as expected. Karen McGee has joined the Membership Committee.

Nominating & Governance Committee Karen McGee announced that the new website Terms of Use is now live. She's developing a digital board manual and encouraged board members to contribute content. Karen will work with Tristan to distribute the ADA Board Code of Conduct to NAC board members for signatures.

Scholarship Committee Karen McGee continues to promote scholarship applications at events. Cindy Hitchcock's scholarship expense documentation will be sent to Rebecca for payment. It was reported Kadriya's Sallus lesson series successfully completed. Karen also shares the NAC President is considering offering additional scholarships and Karen will be meeting with them to review terms and timing. Karen will create promotional materials to increase scholarship awareness.

Communication Committee Erin McHenry presented the committee's accomplishments for 2025, including improved event calendars and messaging, given they touch every aspect of the organization. The committee will complete their 2026 goals before year-end.

Fundraising The fall fundraising campaign raised almost $16,500, exceeding expectations. The committee will evaluate strategies for 2026 fundraising efforts.

New Business Karen is organizing a social event for early January, potentially on January 3rd or 4th, focusing on locally owned restaurants. Details will be finalized and communicated to the board soon.

Next Meeting The December meeting has been cancelled. The next regular board meeting will be held in January 2026, with date to be determined. Members interested in attending should contact A.Damiano@azdressage.org.

Adjournment The meeting was adjourned at 7:56pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Kelly Stapleton

Secretary



The **Northern Arizona Chapter of the Arizona Dressage Association, NAC of ADA**, is a 501c3 Nonprofit Organization comprised of members in the quad-city areas of **Prescott, Chino Valley, Verde Valley, Prescott Valley, Dewey-Humboldt and beyond!**

2026 Schooling Show & Clinic Dates

April 18th - Schooling Show, Michell Combs 'L' (Freeman Farms)

May 30-31st - Clinic, Dolly Hannon

July 18th - Schooling Show, Dori Vlatten Schmitz 'S' (Imperio Acres)

Sept 5th - Schooling Show, Ellie Stine Masek 'S' (Freeman Farms)

NAC of ADA Officers/Board 2025

Beth Mulcahy, President
E: beth.rosekrans@gmail.com

Lynne Trenery, Vice President
E: Lynne@freemansaddlebreds.com

Annie Kuchler, Secretary
E: annie.kuchler@gmail.com

Sue Crampton, Treasurer, Show Manager
E: susancrampton1@gmail.com

Lisa Darling, Education and Clinic Committee Chair

Theresa Reese, Director

Tristan Lloyd, Director

Kate Goshorn, Director

Sabine Preisinger, Director

Kay Turner, Director

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JAN	9: ADA Clinic - Refine Core Skills with Mike Osinski	17: ADA Schooling Show, Dale Creek Equestrian Center, West Valley	
FEB	15: ADA Schooling Show, Carefree Farms, North Valley	21-22: Dressage @ Spear-Cross Equine Center Show	21-22: NAC Biomechanics Clinic with Heike Barrett
MAR	7-8: TDC March Madness, Pima County Fairgrounds	15: ADA Schooling Show, Carefree Farms, North Valley	27-29: CARA Champagne Show
APR	4-5: Dressage @ Spear-Cross Equine Center Show	12: ADA Schooling Show, Central Arizona Riding Academy, Queen Creek	18: NAC Schooling Show, Freeman Farms, Michell Combs 'L'
MAY	30-31: NAC Clinic - Dolly Hannon		
JUNE	13-14: ADA Summer Heat, Westworld Scottsdale		
JULY	18: NAC Schooling Show, Imperio Acres, Dorie Vlatten Schmitz 'S'		
AUG			
SEPT	5: NAC Schooling Show, Freeman Farms, Ellie Stine Masek 'S'		
OCT	Oct 31-Nov 1: ADA Fall Festival & State Championships, Westworld Scottsdale		
NOV			
DEC			



ARIZONA DRESSAGE ASSOCIATION
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