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ARIZONA DRESSAGE ASSOCIATION
THECENTERLINE

SEPTEMBER 2026



THE NATIONAL STAGE

CELEBRATING ADA MEMBERS AT THE U.S. DRESSAGE FESTIVAL OF CHAMPIONS

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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 15th 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.*

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FROM THE EDITOR'S SEAT

September brings a renewed sense of energy to our Arizona dressage community as we celebrate recent accomplishments and look ahead to an exciting fall season.

In this issue, we're proud to recognize ADA members competing beyond our local arenas. *The National Stage* and *Travel Grant at Work* celebrate our riders who represented Arizona at the U.S. Dressage Festival of Champions and share their experiences on the national stage.

Closer to home, we highlight the horse-and-rider pairs who have qualified for the upcoming Arizona State Championships as we begin the countdown to Fall Fiesta in November. We also follow Ellis Venkatesh's journey to NAYC and proudly recognize ADA member Mariska Sherlin as a recipient of the USDF Shining Star Award.

From first goals to national stages, every journey reflects the dedication, learning, and partnership at the heart of dressage - and I'm honored to share those stories in *The Centerline*.

Callie Bonine
The Centerline, Editor

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Cover: ***Molly Martin & R U 4 Me - Developing Horse Grand Prix National Champion. Photo by:*** *Susan J Stickle Photography*

FROM THE PRESIDENT

As we head into fall, one of the busiest and most exciting times of the year for our Arizona dressage community is just around the corner. After a brief summer break, we're looking forward to bringing everyone together again for a season filled with education, competition, and opportunities to connect.

We kick things off on October 24 with our Janet Jones clinic, *Unlocking the Horse's Mind*. Janet will share fascinating insights into how horses think, learn, and perceive the world around them, helping us better understand and strengthen the partnership we share with our horses. We are also excited to have our fall Schooling Show Series confirmed for November 1 and 22 at Carefree Farms, providing riders with additional opportunities to gain experience, work toward their goals, and enjoy time in the show ring.

Then, help us kick off Fall Fiesta weekend with Arizona Dressage Association Night at Greenway Saddlery on Friday, November 6, from 4:30–7:00 p.m. We're grateful to Greenway Saddlery for hosting this special evening of refreshments, camaraderie, and shopping exclusively for our dressage community.

And, of course, we're counting down to one of ADA's biggest weekends of the year—*Fall Fiesta I & II and the Arizona State Championships*, November 7–8 at WestWorld. We look forward to welcoming riders, horses, volunteers, sponsors, and friends for another wonderful weekend of dressage.

Thank you for being part of ADA. I'm excited for all that's ahead and look forward to seeing you this fall!

Ann Damiano
President
Arizona Dressage Association

MEMBER VOICES

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

SUBMIT TO: centerline@azdressage.org



From Arizona to the National Stage:

Celebrating ADA Members at the U.S. Dressage Festival of Champions. August 24–30, 2026, at HITS Lamplight Equestrian Center, Wayne, IL.

Each year, the U.S. Dressage Festival of Champions brings together accomplished horse-and-rider combinations from across the country.

Reaching this stage represents far more than one weekend of competition. Behind every ride are months and years of training, qualifying scores, early mornings, setbacks, breakthroughs, travel and an extraordinary commitment to the partnership between horse and rider.

In this issue, we celebrate the ADA members who made the journey from Arizona to the national stage. Their journeys may have taken them to a national championship arena, but they began the same place so many dressage journeys do - one ride, one lesson and one goal at a time.

Congratulations to our ADA Community Participants!

Samantha MacDonald and Snapchat
Molly Martin and R U 4 Me
Taylor McAnally and Morrissey M
Anne Buchanan and Oxford B
Cyndi Jackson and Online H
Nicola Valentine and Everdeen
Kali Riddell and Galaxy Quest



Samantha MacDonald and Snapchat





R U 4 Me (bred by Hannah Heritage) was Highest Placed US Bred as well as Developing Horse Grand Prix National Champion. He has won two small Tour CDIs and is just stepping into the Grand Prix at age 10. The pair has been to Festival together 4 times.



Molly Martin and R U 4 Me

Professional Photos by: Susan J Stickle Photography



Taylor McAnally and Morrissey M

Morrissey M was 8th in the 4 year old during his first Young Horse Championships.





Thank you to everyone who helped make my first Young Horse Championships a success!
~ Taylor



Anne Buchanan and Oxford B

2026 was Oxford B's second trip to the Young Horse Championships, where he earned 10th in the 7 year old. He was 6th in the 4 year old during his first trip.

Professional Photos by: Susan J Stickle Photography

Nicola Valentine and Everdeen



5th place overall finish at Festival of Champions this year in the Young Rider division.





Cyndi Jackson and Online H

Kali Riddell and Galaxy Quest





8th place overall in the Young Rider division.

Professional Photos by: Susan J Stickle Photography

ADA Travel Grant at Work! The Road (and Sky) to Festival

By Rebecca Bruening

When people think about the Dressage Festival of Champions, they probably picture the horses and riders entering the arena at Lamplight Equestrian Center looking like they belong. They picture the immaculate horses, the riders in their fancy show coats, the tension of the final halt and ultimately, the scores.

I found myself fascinated by something that happened long before any of that...the logistics of getting my 7 year old Dolce (Online H), from Scottsdale to Illinois.

Dolce left Arizona on a Saturday, a full week before his first test. That wasn't because we were particularly eager to get him to the show. It was intentional. We wanted to give him time to acclimate to the humidity and the grounds at Lamplight before asking him to compete at one of the most important shows of his young career.

Getting him there was an adventure in itself.

We had to be at FedEx at Sky Harbor at 4:00am to load him for his flight from Phoenix Sky Harbor to Indianapolis. Unlike some major airports, there aren't equestrian facilities at Phoenix where you simply pull up with your horse and load directly onto the aircraft or at least have stalls for them to wait.





Instead, the process involved some ingenuity.

Dolce had to be transferred from my horse trailer into the aircraft's cargo trailer. We used the side doors of our trailer as barriers to create a makeshift loading chute. Once he was safely inside, the cargo trailer would be lifted into the back of the Fed Ex plane for transport.

And there was one other small consideration: Dolce is a lot of wonderful things, but a good traveler is not one of them. He has a tendency to "bronco" around in his stall when traveling, sometimes with such enthusiasm that he works himself almost to exhaustion. It's one of the reasons we decided flying was the better option so we could minimize the travel time.

So at four o'clock in the morning, before most of Phoenix was awake, the first part of his journey to the Festival of Champions was already underway.

There were two grooms assigned to Dolce. At first, that seemed like a luxury. As the owner of a horse who was about to board an airplane by himself, however, I quickly came to appreciate exactly why that mattered.

Both grooms had flown in the night before—one from each coast—and were at FedEx on time and ready to go when we arrived. They had traveled the world with horses. Flying horses was their job. What felt to me like a rather extraordinary event was, to them, essentially another day at work.

I didn't have much time to talk with them, but what little I learned was fascinating. One had spent years traveling internationally with horses before deciding to stop doing international flights and had probably encountered everything you could think of. The constant travel had begun to take a toll on his personal life, so he made a change: he would continue flying horses, but keep his work within the United States.

There was something about the two of them made me smile. To me, flying my horse from Phoenix to Indianapolis was an event that required planning, preparation and more than a little worrying. To him, it was simply a job he knew how to do exceptionally well.

And that was exactly what I needed. I was worried. Dolce was flying by himself, and knowing his travel habits it did not make me particularly comfortable with the idea. But then I looked at the two people standing there ready to load him. These weren't people who were figuring it out as they went. They were experienced grooms who had traveled internationally and domestically with horses countless times. They were prepared for the unexpected because, in their world, the unexpected is part of the job.

Knowing that our broker had selected two of the most experienced flying grooms available for Dolce didn't eliminate my anxiety, but it certainly helped.

The goal after landing is to get the horses unloaded as quickly and safely as possible and then head to Lamplight, four hours away from Indianapolis. But while the horses may be the stars of the operation, there is an enormous amount of equipment that has to travel with them. Tack trunks. Feed. Hay. Equipment. Supplies. Everything a horse and rider need for 10 days away from home.

And then you have to do everything in reverse to get them home. The driver came to our barn the day before the horses were scheduled to fly home so they could load everything in the plane before the horses arrived, and we would leave the minimal things needed until the next morning. He had already stopped



at another barn, and when he arrived at ours, his trailer was already carrying twelve tack trunks for just two horses, and there was only one of him. We tried our best to help, but once everything was loaded, he was back on the road to the next barn to do the same thing.

The following morning, he was back at 5:00 a.m. His job that day was to pick up six horses and safely transport them to the Fed Ex site in Indianapolis. The horses would then wait for several hours before boarding their flights, and even during that waiting period, the driver's job wasn't simply to park the trailer and wait. He made sure the horses had hay and water and checked on them throughout the wait.

It was another reminder that what looks like a simple transportation schedule on paper is actually a carefully orchestrated operation involving dozens of small decisions and responsibilities.

The return trip gave me one particularly welcome piece of news, Dolce wouldn't be flying home alone, he had a travel buddy. Considering his previous reputation as a less-than-enthusiastic single traveler, I was thrilled. And apparently, so was fate, because the trip home was completely uneventful.

I had become fascinated by the logistics of getting one horse from Phoenix to Illinois and back without my help. But somewhere along the way, I realized that I wasn't really fascinated by the logistics, I was fascinated by the people.

The biggest surprise of the entire week had nothing to do with airplanes, trailers or tack trunks. It was ALL the people at Festival. I expected to be surrounded by some of the best horses, riders and trainers in the country, but what I didn't expect was how

Continued on page 19

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Present, Positive, and Partnership: Ellis Venkatesh's Journey to NAYC

by Leslie Sherlin, PhD



Some riders grow up surrounded by horses from the beginning. Others find their way to the barn through a single unexpected moment that changes everything. For Ellis Venkatesh, that moment came during a family vacation to Sedona, when her grandmother Debbie suggested a two-hour trail ride. Ellis wasn't even sure she wanted to go. "At first, I didn't really want to go, but I ended up going, and I just fell in love with it from there on." What began as a reluctant yes on a dusty trail in the red rocks of Arizona became the defining pursuit of her life. Now 15 years old and preparing to compete at the North American Youth Championships, Ellis has grown from that hesitant trail rider into one of Arizona's most promising junior dressage athletes.

From Trail Ride to Dressage Arena

After returning from Sedona, Ellis began taking lessons, starting as a hunter jumper at around age nine or ten. The experience introduced her to the discipline and rhythm of riding, but it didn't last long. Her parents grew concerned about the frequency of falls that came with the territory of hunter jumper, and they made the decision to move her to a new barn where she began taking dressage lessons under trainer Dorie Vlatten-Schmitz.

The transition proved pivotal. Dressage suited her in ways hunter jumper hadn't, and she began to improve steadily. It was Dorie who recognized her potential and pushed her toward competition. "I think I improved, and then Dorie, my former trainer, she just was like, you need to start competing." The nudge came from the outside rather than from some burning internal ambition, but Ellis embraced it, and the competitive journey began in earnest.

Arthur, Louie, and the Road to AJ

Before Ellis found her current partner, she built her foundation through two earlier horses. Her first was Arthur, a Haflinger lesson pony she rode. Arthur introduced her to what it meant to care for and develop a relationship with a horse, though her work with him stayed mostly at the level of small schooling shows and seasonal fun classes. He was a beginning, an important one, but not yet the partnership that would carry her forward.

Next came Louie, whose registered name is Revolution, a half-Arabian with plenty of energy and opinions. "He was very hard for me to control, but I learned a lot on him. I learned all my fundamentals on Louie. He was such a great horse." Louie passed away about a year ago, and Ellis speaks of him with clear affection. He gave her something foundational: the ability to stay

soft and effective on a horse that didn't make things easy. Those lessons proved invaluable.

Recognizing that she needed a horse capable of taking her further in her development, Ellis acquired AJ, whose registered name is L'Aqiedo, about a year into her time with Louie. AJ has been her primary partner for three to four years now, and the story of their relationship is really the heart of her journey.

The Partnership That Took Time

Not every partnership clicks immediately, and Ellis and AJ are honest evidence of that truth. At her previous barn, the partnership never quite found its footing. "He wasn't really comfortable at my old barn, so he really never clicked there." Something kept both horse and rider from fully settling and growing together.

The turning point came when Ellis made the decision to move to Spear-Cross and begin working with trainer Missy Gilliland. It wasn't a reflection on previous barn or training. It was simply a recognition that something needed to change. AJ went into training with Missy first, and Ellis didn't ride him for nearly a month during that transition period. When she finally got back on him, the difference was striking. "It was like a holy cow moment. He was like a completely different horse, and the first thought I had was, could I now possibly try to be a junior?"

The new environment allowed AJ to let out his personality in ways that hadn't been possible before. He became less spooky, more settled, more confident, and more himself. "He has just let out his personality, and he's just been such a fun horse. He's very silly, he's very smart, and he knows everything about me, so he's a very special horse."



Ellis and aL'Aqiedo (AJ) Photo by Terri Miller

That mutual knowing shows up in small, telling ways. When Ellis arrives at the barn, AJ notices. Other people pass by his stall and he registers them calmly, but when Ellis appears, something shifts. "When I pass by, he's like, oh my gosh, there is my person. He always wants to know where I am in the barn." It's the kind of attentiveness that speaks to genuine bond, the kind that develops only through time, consistency, and care.

Missy Gilliland and the Confidence to Compete

Ellis is clear and generous in crediting the people who have shaped her path, and at the top of that list sits her trainer Missy Gilliland. When Ellis arrived at Spear-Cross, she was a capable rider with real potential, but her confidence in her ability to compete as a junior was fragile. "It just crushed my confidence, because I knew I wasn't good enough, and I just knew that I needed to move somewhere."

Missy provided something beyond technical coaching. She offered consistent, unwavering belief. "I've had so many conversations with her in the beginning about can I do this, can I do this, and she's put a lot of confidence in me. Yes, you can. It's going to be hard. You're very young, but you can do it." When rides didn't go well, when AJ didn't communicate clearly, when the path forward felt uncertain, Missy was steady. "After a bad ride, Missy was very supportive and very like, you can do this, you can be a junior. She was definitely my rock in that."

Along the way there were also practical challenges to navigate, including shoeing and soundness concerns with AJ that required X-rays and careful management. Through all of it, the combination of Missy's coaching and belief helped Ellis and AJ continue building toward a goal that once seemed uncertain.

The result of that partnership, all three of them working together, was qualification for the North American Youth Championships. "I would not be going to NAYC without her," Ellis says simply.

A Village Behind Her

Missy may be the technical architect of Ellis's development, but she is far from alone in supporting this journey. Ellis's grandmother Debbie, herself a rider and deeply active in the equestrian community, owns three horses including AJ and manages their care with exceptional attentiveness. "She knows everything about horses. I don't even think they would be as healthy as they are right now without her. It's kind of wild." Debbie's involvement means Ellis can focus on riding and developing her partnership with AJ, knowing the horses are in expert hands.

Her father Kris, takes on the role of groom at competitions, stepping in to manage the logistics and details that pile up on show days when Ellis's focus needs to stay on the task ahead. "I am very stressed out at shows, so he just takes over. That's very nice." Having a calm, competent presence handling the practical side allows Ellis to channel her energy where it belongs.

Her mother Shayla fills a different and equally essential role. "When I'm in a bad mental state, my mom brings me out of that." The emotional anchor that a supportive parent provides, someone who can read the moment and offer exactly what's needed, is something Ellis recognizes and values deeply.

Together, this team around Ellis reflects something true about what it takes to develop a young athlete in any demanding sport: the right trainer, the right family support, and the resources to make it all possible.

The Qualifying Journey

At 14, the minimum age to begin qualifying for junior competition, Ellis was still figuring out her path. The move to Spear-Cross and the transformation she witnessed in AJ opened a door she hadn't been sure she could walk through. With Missy's coaching and growing confidence in the partnership, she began working seriously toward junior qualification.

Qualifying for NAYC in California stands as her biggest competitive milestone to date, and she is honest about the doubt she carried along the way. "I was very doubtful if I could qualify, so that was definitely a big milestone." At 15, she is among the youngest competitors making this journey, a fact she acknowledges with quiet pride rather than bravado.

But if you ask Ellis what her most favorite moments on AJ are, the answer is less about the qualifying scores and more about something harder to quantify. "AJ knows if he's done well. He's very confident when he comes out of the arena, like, look at me, I did that. Those are definitely my favorite memories on him. It's just him being confident after I show." In those moments of shared satisfaction, horse and rider both knowing the work went well, the whole long journey feels entirely worth it.

Balancing It All

The commitment required to pursue dressage at the junior level while also attending high school is substantial on its own. Ellis adds volleyball to the mix, making her daily schedule a careful exercise in prioritization and time management.

She rides five times a week, with AJ getting two days off. The barn is an hour from her home, which means early mornings are a regular feature of her life. "Sometimes I get up at like five or four, go out to the barn, ride, then go to school, then go to volleyball after school. That's how I'll probably balance it." On volleyball days when waking before dawn isn't possible, she plans to have Missy ride AJ while she rides on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays.

Continued on page 24

USDF REGION FIVE

September 2026 Update

Hope everyone is staying cool! I am getting ready to schedule our Fall Region 5 meeting, stay tuned for more information. I'm aiming for October. We will also have another Regional meeting just before convention in November and a meeting at the USDF Convention.

Many, many applause for our Region 5 youth who represented us at the North American Youth Championships in Traverse City! Our Junior Team won the team Bronze Medal! Congratulations to Catherine Burlew on Hojgaardens Scirocco, Samantha MacDonald on Snapchat and Ellis Venkatesh on L'Aqiedo. Our Young Rider Team place 4th! Congratulations to Kali Riddell on Galaxy Quest, Nicola Valentine on Everdeen, Taylor Allen on Just Mickey and Bailey Armbrecht on Night'N Dale. Huge Kudos go to Katherine Nayak on Iniesto for finishing with the Silver Team Medal in the U25 division!

We have had a chance to watch some amazing competition this week as well at the USEF Festival of Champions at Lamplight in Illinois. We had folks in almost every single division and they all did really well! Several folks from Region 5 brought home top placings, super job! We are very proud of all of your accomplishments!

Good luck to everyone at the upcoming Regional Championships! Many thanks go to the Rocky Mountain Dressage Society for hosting Regionals this year. I will be at the Regional Championships, so if you have any thoughts, ideas or concerns, please come talk to me, I'd love to chat with you.

Till next month!

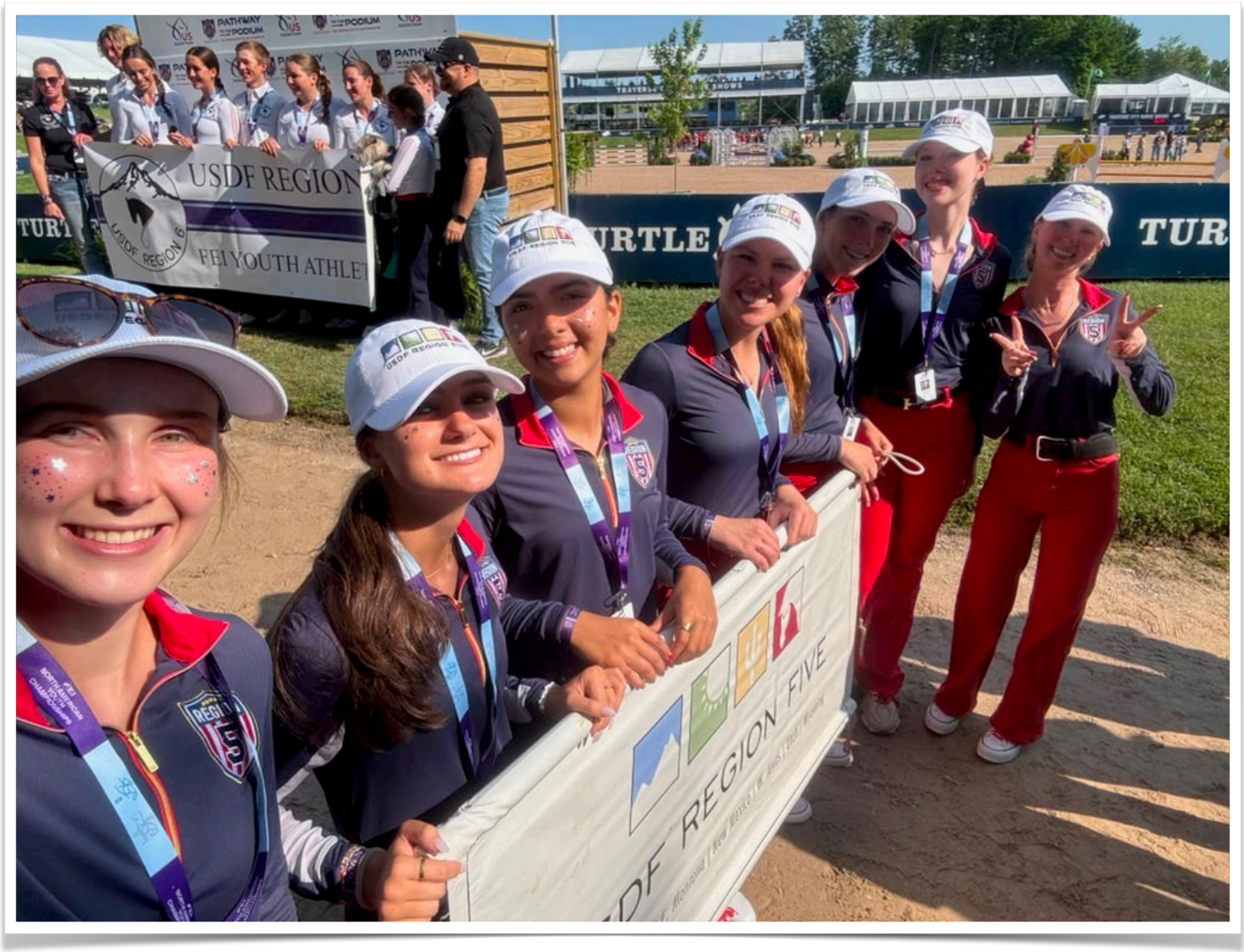
Heather Petersen

Region 5 Director

Congratulations

Region 5 NAYC & ADA Young Riders

On your success at the North American Youth Championships in Traverse City



USEF HORSE WELFARE

know the signs

GREEN — *no need for action*

Harmonious, in good cooperation
Understanding, sensitive
Confident and consistent
Technically correct application of the aids and auxiliary aids
Comprehensible and fair

YELLOW — *action may be required*

Forceful use of the rider's aids or techniques
Backwards actions with the hand or moving from side to side
Causing a tight head-neck posture - periodically
Inappropriate use of the whip and spurs
Bucking or rearing in response to the rider's aide

RED — *need for immediate action! contact USEF Steward to make a report*

Aggressive behavior
Inappropriate emotional outbreaks
Using techniques deliberately aimed against the horse
Prolonged backwards actions with the hands or moving from side to side *(sawing on the mouth)* restricting head and neck posture with hyperflexion
Rough and incorrect use of aids and auxiliary aids
Injury through spurs, whip, bit, equipment
Any use of force *(e.g. punishing horse with rough rein aids)*
Repeated bucking, rearing, bolting, or uncontrolled kicking in response to riders aids

Scan to report

US EQUESTRIAN

SIGNATURE EVENT

JANET JONES CLINIC

Event and books graciously underwritten by Kimberly & Carl Apicella

Saturday

October 24, 2026

1:00 - 5:00 PM

Troon Country Club

25000 N Windy Walk Dr, Scottsdale, AZ 85255

(no guard gate)

Light refreshments

$50 ADA Members

$60 Non-Members

SIGN UP NOW!

Spaces are LIMITED - Sign up early to reserve your spot!!



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Presentation One

Training by Non-Edible Reward

Q&A

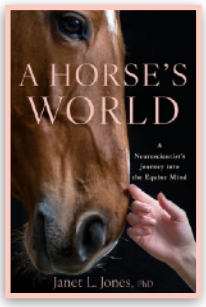
Break

Presentation Two

Horse Books, or Not? How and Why *A Horse's World* Came to Be

Q&A

Exclusive Book Signing



Each attendee will receive a complimentary copy of Janet's newest book, *A Horse's World*, and enjoy an exclusive book signing following the presentation.



SAVE THE DATE

May 1-2, 2027



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More details and rider applications coming in 2027

Festival Travel Grant Continued from page 9

many of those people would make me feel welcome.

As a first-time attendee of the Festival of Champions, I arrived very much as an outsider looking in. My trainer, Cyndi Jackson was there to do a job, and Dolce was there to compete. I was there as his owner and the default groom, trying to take it all in and understand what, exactly, I had gotten myself into.

What happened instead was an unexpected show of support from people I had met throughout the week. There were other professionals, trainers, breeders and judges. There was also one particularly exuberant mother of a professional rider who seemed to become our unofficial cheerleader whenever she wasn't busy helping her daughter. Her enthusiasm was infectious, and she seemed to have an endless supply of encouragement.

People I barely knew—or had only just met—were genuinely interested in Dolce, in Cyndi and, surprisingly in me, in how I was doing as a first-time Festival attendee.

I met people at the hotel bar. I met people sitting at our tables. I met people in the stabling area, including those whose horses were in Dolce's classes. Conversations that started casually often turned into discussions about horses, competition, breeding, travel, nerves, scores and the experience of being there.

And then something happened that I hadn't anticipated. I stopped watching only my horse. I started watching everyone else's. I found myself sitting on the rail cheering for horses and riders I had met during the week. I knew their stories.

Suddenly, I had a whole list of horses I wanted to see succeed. And honestly, it was much more fun than simply rooting for my own horse. There is something special about being at an event where everyone understands exactly how much goes into getting a young horse to that moment. The early mornings. The training. The travel. The preparation. The nerves. The hope that when horse and rider enter the arena, everything comes together for those few minutes.

I began the week thinking I was there for just Cyndi and Dolce. I ended the week cheering for an entire group of people and horses. That, perhaps more than anything, was the part of the Festival I didn't expect. The competition brought us there, but the people made us feel like we belonged.

So, how did the harmonious pair actually do in their seven-year-old classes?

Pretty spectacularly. Cyndi and Dolce ultimately finished third in the nation in the 7 year old Division. But the scores didn't quite capture what those rides meant to those of us watching.

The scores brought tears to my eyes and, of course, to Cyndi's too, especially on the last day. After everything that had happened, we finally got to watch the reason for all of it. And boy did Dolce deliver! The experience and confidence that Cyndi brought to the week allowed him to show his brilliance we all knew was in there. In both the Preliminary and Final 7 Year Old tests, he looked like the horse we had hoped he could become when he cantered into the arena.

For me, that was one of the most rewarding parts of watching Cyndi ride. There is a difference between knowing your horse has talent and watching that talent come through when the pressure was on.

By the time they entered the arena for the Final on Sunday, I wasn't thinking about airplanes or trailers or whether his gear had made it safely to Illinois. I was watching my horse compete at the highest level of his age group.

And then came the score that I'll remember for a long time, a total of 77.7 which put her in 2nd place for the day and 3rd place

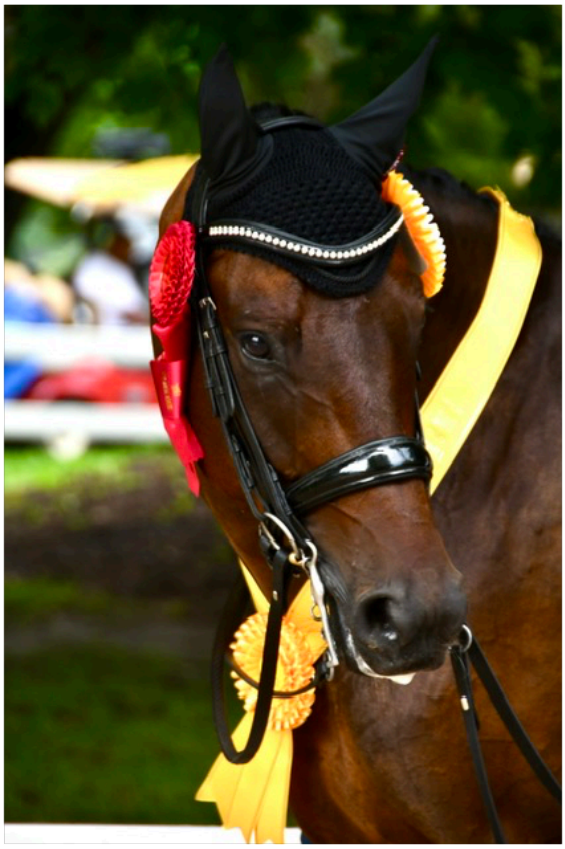
Continued on page 20

Festival Travel Grant Continued from page 21

for the week. His technical score that day was a 70, and his gaits were the highlight with an 8.8 for a trot, 8.1 for walk, 8.6 for canter, 8.6 for submission and 8.6 for perspective, which averaged to a 85.4 and we were thrilled!

For those of us who know Dolce, those numbers mean more than just another mark on a score sheet. It was another confirmation that the horse we had invested so much in, was on the right track with his training and has the beginnings of what it takes to move up to the FEI levels.

There were many things that I will remember when I think about the Festival of Champions. Obviously how amazing Cyndi and Dolce were together will stick in my mind, but it was the moment when all the pieces finally came





together - the horse, the rider, the preparation, the people behind them and the support of a community I didn't even know I would become part of.

And somewhere in the middle of all that, this first-time Festival attendee stopped feeling like an outsider and started feeling incredibly lucky to be there and ended up enjoying every minute.





Fall Fiesta I & Fall Fiesta II and Arizona State Championships

Saturday & Sunday
November 7 &
November 8, 2026 @
8:00am

WestWorld16601 N
Pima Rd, Scottsdale

Kick off the new competition year with ADA's Fall Fiesta I & Fall Fiesta II, two USDF/USEF-recognized shows held at the world-class WestWorld of Scottsdale.

This premier venue offers top-tier amenities, including climate-controlled arenas, permanent stalls, and a scenic desert backdrop that creates a memorable experience for horses and riders alike. As the first rated shows of the new season, Fall Fiesta I & II are the perfect opportunity to set the tone for your year, earn qualifying scores, and reconnect with the dressage community. Join us for a weekend of excellence, sportsmanship, and celebration of progress at every level.

Judges: Katy Barglow, David Schmutz, Donna Richardson
Technical Delegate: Victoria Powers

ARIZONA DRESSAGE ASSOCIATION NIGHT *at Greenway*

The first 20 attendees receive an ADA Gift!!

Refreshments graciously hosted by **Allen Kalchik**

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6TH
4:30 - 7:00 PM

Greenway Saddlery is happy to partner with the Arizona Dressage Association to celebrate the amazing horses and riders that make up our community by hosting a Dressage night.

Join us on **Friday, November 6th here at Greenway Saddlery** to enjoy a night of fun, refreshment, camaraderie, and savings between 4;30 pm and 7:00 pm.

Attendees will **enjoy 20% off** any regularly priced, in-stock items, **plus a chance to win items in our giveaway.**

Thank you for supporting local. We are truly inspired by your dedication to your sport and your animals.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Daniel & the Greenway Team











COME ONE, COME ALL!

Be sure to stop by after you get settled in at the Fall Fiesta. Not showing? No problem! This special evening is open to everyone!

GREENWAY SADDLERY
9380 E BAHIA DR A-103
SCOTTSDALE, AZ 85260



Arizona Dressage Association

SCHOOLING SHOW SERIES

Our one-day format includes all USDF and WDAA tests and offers a supportive atmosphere perfect for riders aiming to build confidence, get valuable feedback, and enjoy a fun day in the arena with their equine partners. Whether you're just starting out or aiming for your next milestone, these events are a great opportunity to ride, learn, and connect.

Enter at azdressage.org

CONFIRMED FALL SCHOOLING SHOWS AT CAREFREE FARMS

November 1, 2026

Judge: Carole Haney

Registration opens: September 28, 2026
Registration closes: October 26, 2026

November 22, 2026

Judge: Krista Peek

Registration opens: October 19, 2026
Registration closes: November 16, 2026

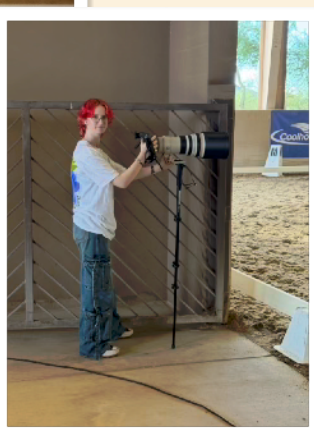
DON'T MISS THE OPPORTUNITY TO RIDE, LEARN & CONNECT!

Sponsored by:

SHERLIN CONSULTING GROUP • CLINICAL COUNSELING & SPORT PSYCHOLOGY •

The Arizona Dressage Association is proud to partner with Sherlin Consulting Group as the official sponsor of our schooling show series. This ongoing support helps create accessible, educational opportunities for riders at all levels to gain experience, receive feedback, and build confidence in the show arena. Sherlin Consulting Group is committed to promoting personal growth, peak performance, and well-being; all values that align naturally with the mission of ADA. Their sponsorship reflects a shared belief in the importance of community, development, and the lifelong journey of learning through dressage.





ADA Congratulates Mariska Sherlin on USDF Shining Star Award

The Arizona Dressage Association is proud to congratulate junior member Mariska Sherlin on receiving the USDF Shining Star Award. Presented by the USDF Youth Programs Committee, the Shining Star Award recognizes youth members who have demonstrated outstanding sportsmanship, specifically one witnessed act that goes above and beyond what is expected of all competitors. It is one of the more personal recognitions in the sport, because it cannot be earned through scores or placings. Nominees are considered on the basis of courage, integrity, kindness, perseverance, respect, responsibility, and self-discipline.

Mariska has also received the USDF Dressage Spirit Award (2025), a companion recognition that honors youth members who make meaningful contributions to their broader equestrian community. Where the Shining Star captures a single defining moment, the Spirit Award reflects a pattern of giving back: through volunteering, supporting fellow riders, building community, and helping grow youth involvement in the sport. Together, the two awards speak to both who Mariska is in a moment and who she is over time.

Adding to this collection of recognitions, Mariska has earned the USDF Youth Dressage Rider Recognition Pin for three consecutive years. This program acknowledges youth riders across all levels for their accomplishments in competition, education, and volunteer service each program year. She has also participated in the US Equestrian Interscholastic Athlete Program for three years running, earning what amounts to the equestrian equivalent of a varsity letter by meeting annual standards for competition and riding hours as a student athlete in grades five through twelve.

We encourage all junior and young rider members to explore the many programs available through USDF, USEF, and ADA that recognize and support your growth in this sport. These opportunities exist for you.

Thank you to USDF for this recognition, and congratulations, Mariska.

Journey to NAYC continued from page 11

What keeps her going through the early alarms and the long drives? Two things, she says. "I love sunrises, so when I get on AJ and I'm in the arena, it's the prime time for the sunrise, so I love to watch the sunrise when I'm on him. And also just getting up there to see AJ. I always look forward to that."

The busyness that might feel like burden to some has become, for Ellis, something closer to fuel. "I have just learned to be grateful for how busy I am, because I hate just sitting on the couch doing nothing. I love being active." She reflects that she used to be quite different, content to scroll her phone and sit still. The discipline of managing so many commitments has reshaped her relationship with productivity and presence. "A lot of people don't get that opportunity. I'm grateful to be able to do stuff that I want to do. I want to go ride. I want to go play volleyball. I get to go to school."

It's a perspective that sounds deceptively simple but reflects real growth: gratitude for the fullness of a life she has actively chosen.

What Comes Next

With NAYC immediately ahead, Ellis is focused on the present rather than getting ahead of herself. She is currently training at fourth level, and after NAYC she hopes to begin showing at that level, with an eye toward Prix St. Georges, Intermediate, Grand Prix, and Grand Prix Special in the longer arc of her development. But she's careful not to let the horizon crowd out the moment.

"I want to get there, but I just like to be in the moment, be in the present, and work on what I have to work on right then. I'm not going to be like, I have to work on this movement right now or I'm not going to get to Grand Prix. I need to focus on what I have to focus on."

At 15, she is among the youngest competitors making this journey, a fact she acknowledges with quiet pride rather than bravado.

Beyond riding, Ellis's dream is to attend Texas A&M University and pursue veterinary medicine. The school's veterinary program is among the best in the country, a fact she knows well. She loves all animals and can imagine working across species, though the decision of what to do with AJ and her riding during those years is one she hasn't fully resolved. "I don't really want to go so far from AJ. That's going to be a hard decision to figure out." It's an honest tension between two loves, one she'll navigate when the time comes.

Sportsmanship and Self-Comparison

When Ellis talks about what sportsmanship means to her, she lands quickly on encouragement. "Being a good sport in any sport is just being encouraging. That's really all you can do. You got this, you know?" She acknowledges the natural sting of seeing someone else perform well, but she places it in context. "Obviously you're going to feel jealous if someone beats you, but all you can do right there is be proud of yourself, because in the equine world, people are going to be riding way longer than you have. This girl may have been riding dressage for seven years, and this may be my third. You can't compare yourself to other people in the equine world."

This perspective matters especially heading into NAYC, where the team dynamic adds a layer of collective responsibility to what is otherwise an individual sport. Ellis understands that being a good teammate means holding onto her own focus while genuinely celebrating those around her.

The same philosophy extends to how she handles difficult rides. "When I have those off-rides, I am just proud of myself for showing up and being consistent. Everyone's going to have an off day, so it really doesn't get to me that much. I'm going to have an off day when I ride, so why can't my horse have an off day?" It's the kind of grace that is easy to say and harder to embody in the moment, but Ellis has found her way to it. Patient, consistent, forgiving.

Ethical Horsemanship and the Bedazzled Life

When asked what she would hope an observer notices

Continued on page 26

Journey to NAYC continued from page 25

watching her work with AJ, Ellis doesn't reach for technical vocabulary or competition results. She reaches for something simpler and more fundamental. "I love to give AJ praise. I give him breaks when he does something good. I never try to be harsh when something doesn't go right. I just hope they see that I'm a good rider to my horse and that I take care of him when I ride him."

This commitment to ethical, horse-centered riding reflects the values at the core of her approach, the understanding that the horse's experience matters as much as the score, that kindness and positive reinforcement build partnership more durably than pressure.

Away from the barn and the volleyball court, Ellis has a creative outlet that travels with her everywhere: bedazzling. She loves glitter and gems, decorates random objects with rhinestones, and plans to bring her bedazzling kit to NAYC. "I take that stuff everywhere, like on the planes with me." It's a charming counterpoint to the discipline and intensity of competitive dressage, a reminder that at 15, even the most accomplished athletes are still young people who enjoy sparkle and creativity.



"AJ knows if he's done well. He's very confident when he comes out of the arena, like, look at me, I did that. Those are definitely my favorite memories on him. It's just him being confident after I show."

Looking Forward

As NAYC approaches, Ellis carries with her everything she has built over the past several years: the fundamentals learned on a half-Arabian who didn't make things easy, the partnership forged through patience and a change of environment, the confidence rebuilt by a trainer who believed when Ellis wasn't sure she could, and the unwavering support of a family that shows up at every show, every early morning, every difficult moment.

She approaches the competition with the same mindset she brings to every ride: present, positive, and focused on what she can control. She'll praise AJ when he gets something right. She'll extend grace when the ride doesn't go as planned. She'll watch the sunrise from his back if the morning allows it. And when she comes out of the arena, whatever the score, she'll be looking for that quiet moment of shared confidence she loves most, AJ walking out with his head up, knowing he did something worth being proud of.

For the Arizona dressage community, Ellis's story is a reminder that the path to NAYC rarely runs straight, and that the qualities that matter most in a young competitor are not always the ones that show up in a scorebook. Gratitude, patience, consistency, and the willingness to give your horse a good day even on your own hard days: these are the things that build partnerships worth watching. Ellis and AJ are just getting started, and the journey ahead is bright.

ARIZONA STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

Qualified Horse/Rider Pairs by Class

79 total qualified pairs across 25 classes

ADULT AMATEUR

Training Level (13 entries)
- Abazarnia, Diane / Ima Hot Ducati
- Gross, Michele / Ixtapa
- Kline, Hallie / Fe In The Sun
- Lafferty, Ali / Indiano de JJ
- L'Heureux, Laura / Gallant Gentleman
- Lindley, Deborah / Patuco PG
- Lloyd, Tristan / Corazòn Valeroso
- Mucha, Susan / Primrose DF
- Sherlin, Leslie / Wynn Royalty Wins
- Smith, Sarah / Thistle Glen's Desperado
- Smith, Shawn / Nesquik
- Trollope, Cynthia / DP Hesa Shameless Bo
- Wolfe, Ashley / Reata Rose MGE

First Level (10 entries)
- Gross, Michele / Ixtapa
- Helton, Heidi / Iadro
- Kauffman, Laura / CBC Ryal
- Lindley, Deborah / Arion FM
- Montierth, Heather / Krystof
- Novakowski, Patricia / Mi Amor
- Pribble, Kimberly / Delta GSF
- Sherlin, Leslie / Wynn Royalty Wins
- Trollope, Cynthia / DP Hesa Shameless Bo
- Venkatesh, Debra / Sczarina

Second Level (10 entries)
- Berry, Bobbi / Frenchmans Keeper
- Boice, Lynn / Talisman
- Carden, Alana / Fiesta de Mayo
- Helton, Heidi / Iadro
- House, Sandra / Abbey Road
- Kalchik, Allen / Odín De Querencias
- Montierth, Heather / Krystof
- Murphy, Christine / Made You Look
- Swanson, Julie / Fenix EAS
- Trollope, Cynthia / DP Hesa Shameless Bo

Third Level (7 entries)
- Barngrover, Alyssa / Beniciano BG
- Barngrover, Alyssa / Furstinbella
- Buchanan, Anne / Oxford B
- Horton, Kelly / Roxstar WF
- Lindy, Rebecca / Fritz De Borrey
- McLaughlin, Erica / Formally Cooper
- Reed, Melissa / Zahon AB

Fourth Level (4 entries)
- Carson, Deborah / Bravo
- Carson, Deborah / Dansken
- Lent, Stacey / Galante Da Prata
- Musina-Sallus, Kadriya / Facetime

Prix St. Georges (2 entries)
- Damiano, Ann / Jetsetter EDI
- Lindy, Rebecca / Jeitoso XIV

Intermédiaire I (2 entries)
- Mayberry, Taylor Karrin / Last Chapter
- Mulcahy, Beth / De Niro's Black Shadow

Intermédiaire II (2 entries)
- Mayberry, Taylor Karrin / San Laurino H
- Riddell, Kenzie / Wallace G

ARIZONA STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

Qualified Horse/Rider Pairs by Class

79 total qualified pairs across 25 classes

Grand Prix (3 entries)
- Mayberry, Taylor Karrin / San Laurino H
- McHenry, Erin / Bailando
- Riddell, Kenzie / Wallace G

Freestyle – 4th Level (1 entry)
- Lindy, Rebecca / Jeitoso XIV

Freestyle – Intermédiaire (1 entry)
- Mayberry, Taylor Karrin / Last Chapter

Freestyle – Grand Prix (1 entry)
- Mayberry, Taylor Karrin / San Laurino H

JUNIOR / YOUNG RIDER

Training Level (6 entries)
- Atkins, Miriam / Primrose DF
- Creed, Willow / FHE Pirata
- Falconbridge, Abby / Hocus Pocus
- Harper, Hayden / Trinidad
- Natkowski, Brooklyn / Diestro XII
- Sherlin, Mariska / Electra KF

First Level (2 entries)
- Harper, Hayden / Trinidad
- Price, Lilah / Summer Solstice

Second Level (1 entry)
- Thunes, Felicity / Dartmouth

Third Level (1 entry)
- Venkatesh, Ellis / L'Aqiedo

Prix St. Georges (1 entry)
- Baughman, Lily / Bohemio XCVII

OPEN

Training Level (2 entries)
- Borghesani, Laura / MW Patriot
- Riddell, Wendy / Indiano de JJ

First Level (2 entries)
- Jackson, Cyndi / Bohemian Rhapsody R
- McAnally, Taylor / Dixie Paradise

Third Level (1 entry)
- Jackson, Cyndi / Fanfare HSR

Fourth Level (2 entries)
- Jackson, Cyndi / Online H
- Paglia, Paula / Rose Rhapsodie

Intermédiaire I (1 entry)
- McAnally, Taylor / B Rosalinde

Intermédiaire II (1 entry)
- Martin, Molly / R U 4 Me

Grand Prix (2 entries)
- Jackson, Cyndi / Florisson
- Paglia, Paula / Slipstream

Freestyle – Grand Prix (1 entry)
- Jackson, Cyndi / Florisson

Upcoming 2026 Board Meetings:

September 21
October 19
November 16

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

OPEN BOARD SEATS

Help Shape ADA's Future

Contact Karen M McGee
mcgee.karenm@gmail.com

ARIZONA DRESSAGE ASSOCIATION

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Sponsorship with the Arizona Dressage Association is a meaningful way to give back to the horses, riders, and community that make this sport so special.

Your tax-deductible support helps provide quality competitions, educational opportunities, and recognition for riders at every level -while keeping our programs accessible and thriving.

When you sponsor ADA, you're not just supporting an organization - you're investing in the future of dressage in Arizona.

Let's grow the sport – together!

VISIT OUR SPONSORSHIP PAGE HERE TO GET STARTED!

OR Contact us at: fundraising@azdressage.org

METAL SPONSORSHIPS

PLATINUM ~ $2,500

Full page ad in virtual program
enhanced digital recognition (website + social media), show signage recognition
1 banner, 4 class sponsorships, stall front choice/vendor space, flyer in show packet, vendor booth

GOLD ~ $1,250

Full page ad in virtual program, digital recognition (website + social media), show signage recognition, 1 banner, 4 class sponsorships, flyer in show packet, vendor booth

SILVER ~ $700

½ page ad in virtual program, digital recognition (website + social media), show signage recognition, 2 class sponsorships, 1 banner, flyer in show packet, vendor booth

BRONZE ~ $450

¼ page ad in virtual program, digital recognition (website + social media), show signage recognition, 2 class sponsorships, flyer in show packet, vendor booth

SUPPORT THE SPORT YOU LOVE. MAKE A MEANINGFUL IMPACT.

For every ride, every rider, every horse.

ARIZONA DRESSAGE ASSOCIATION

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

VISIT OUR SPONSORSHIP PAGE HERE TO GET STARTED!

OR Contact us at:
fundraising@azdressage.org

HOSPITALITY ~ $500 - $10,000 (Varies by show & # of entries)

Partial Sponsorships available; pls discuss with Fundraising Committee

Sample options:

- Snack / Breakfast Breaks - $500-$1,500
- Mixers (E.g. appetizers/snacks) - $2,500 - $6,000
- Full dinner with entrée - $7,500 - $10,000
- Wine/Beer/Specialty Drink Bar - $2,000 - $2500
- Additional event tickets - $35 to $80

CLASS SPONSORSHIP

Open Show Class $50
(when applicable/GAIG classes not available)
Championship Class $100
(when available)

A La Carte Sponsorship

Banner Display $50
Flyers in Show Packets (150) $30
(you provide flyers)
For custom sponsorship packages, please discuss with Fundraising Committee.

SHOW PROGRAM ADVERTISING

Business Card	$35
Quarter Page	$50
Half Page	$100
Full Page	$150
Cover	$175

SUPPORT THE SPORT YOU LOVE. MAKE A MEANINGFUL IMPACT.

For every ride, every rider, every horse.

2026 2027 CALENDAR OF EVENTS



OCTOBER

Oct 17-18: CARA Harvest Show

Oct 24: ADA Presents Janet Jones Clinic, Scottsdale

NOVEMBER

Nov 1: ADA Schooling Show Carefree Farms

Nov 7-8: ADA Fall Fiesta I & II & State Championships, Westworld Scottsdale

Nov 21-22: TDC Fall Festival at Circle D Ranch, Tucson

Nov 22: ADA Schooling Show Carefree Farms

DECEMBER

Dec 12-13: Dressage @ Spear-Cross Equine Center Show

2027

JANUARY

Jan 30: TDC at Circle D Ranch, Tucson

FEBRUARY

Feb 27-28: Dressage @ Spear-Cross Equine Center Show

MARCH

Mar 13-14: TDC March Madness I & II, Tucson

March 26-28: CARA CHAMPAGNE I & II @CARA

APRIL

Apr 10-11: Dressage @ Spear-Cross Equine Center Show

MAY

May 1-2: ADA Presents George Williams Clinic, Cave Creek

JUNE

Jun 12-13: ADA Summer Heat and ADA Some More Summer Heat WestWorld Scottsdale

Visit azdressage.org for the latest updates!



Next Issue: October

Call for Submissions

Centerline is built by our community - and we'd love to feature *you*!!

We're currently accepting:

- Show photos (candids, competition, behind-the-scenes)
- Rider stories & personal reflections
- Training tips or "lessons learned"
- Horse spotlights

Submit to: centerline@azdressage.org
Deadline for October Issue: October 15, 2026

ARIZONA DRESSAGE ASSOCIATION
100 Easy St., Box 2855
Carefree, AZ 85377

REPRESENT ADA WHEREVER YOU GO

& GIVE BACK WHILE YOU SHOP

Shop official ADA logo gear from barn essentials to everyday favorites.

For illustration only. Kim's shirt is an ADA Core Transformation Series II participant shirt - not available through ADA's Saddlethreds shop.

Every purchase gives back to the Arizona Dressage Association.

SHOP THE COLLECTION











