



# Midwest Dressage Association

February 2023 Newsletter

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## The President's Paragraphs



My predecessor, Susan Roth, did an amazing job as President of the Midwest Dressage Association in 2022. She kicked off the year in January 2022 with a promise to focus on COMMUNICATION. And she delivered on her promise through quarterly Newsletters and additional emails delivering special announcements and notices. She was diligent at responding to member questions and concerns on Facebook, and used her position at a local retail saddlery to have conversations with members whenever possible. I'm in awe of Susan's accomplishment of making every member of MDA feel empowered to keep communication lines open.

I, however, am not a people person. Small talk just isn't my thing. Nor is Social Media. I am not on Facebook, nor do I plan to be. Fortunately, my fellow board members, Shari Wolke and Jen Beyers, will be handling the MDA Facebook page this year. I do promise to respond to any member emails or texts I receive as quickly as I can. And if I can't immediately answer a question, I will still respond with an estimate of how long the answer may take. So, please send me a note! Your thoughts, frustrations, dreams... The board is made up of 10 completely different people with unique personal, professional and equestrian backgrounds. We're very creative and dedicated, but our vision for MDA and where we should focus our energies won't align with your expectations unless we know what you expect.

I'm going to reserve my Presidential Declaration of Purpose for the next Newsletter. Our first meeting with the new board is February 19. That's when each committee will lay out their plans, objectives and milestones for the year. Then I can determine where my energy can create the best value for you, our membership. Look for those highlights in the next Newsletter. Until then, stay warm. Keep riding and dreaming about Spring!

Best Regards,

Holly Zecchin  
President  
Midwest Dressage Association

## **2023 Midwest Dressage Association Board**

The Midwest Dressage Association is pleased to announce its 2023 Board of Directors:

### **Officers**

Holly Zecchin, President  
Shari Wolke, Vice President  
Jennifer Beyer, Secretary  
Cheryl Figures, Treasurer

### **Directors**

Ashley Baker  
Leah Melichar  
Alexandra Pollack  
Mykal Roth  
Beth Schaub  
Olesya Stadnik

## **2023 Active Committees**

Executive Committee/Nominations Committee (MDA Board of Directors)  
Banquet (TBD)  
Communications, Newsletter, Website & Social Media (Jennifer Beyer, Leah Melichar)  
Education (Olesya Stadnik, Mykal Roth, Shari Wolke)  
Historical (Beth Schaub)  
Membership (Cheryl Figures, Olesya Stadnik, Alexandra Pollack)  
Redbook (Beth Schaub)  
Volunteers (Ashley Baker)  
Year-End Awards (Leah Melichar)

## Upcoming Events

### Free Scribing Clinic

Date: February 11

Time: 10 a.m.-Noon

Location: Zoom

[Register Online](#)

Attend GLASS-ED's free Scribing Clinic on February 11 via Zoom (10 a.m.-Noon). Shari Wolke & Stephanie Likens (L Graduates) will review basic tasks for scribes, tips and tricks for scribing, and answer common questions. They will judge a few video tests to allow participants to practice scribing in time with a judge.

This is a virtual clinic. The Zoom link will be sent to registered participants prior to the clinic.

### Winter Doldrums Dressage Clinic

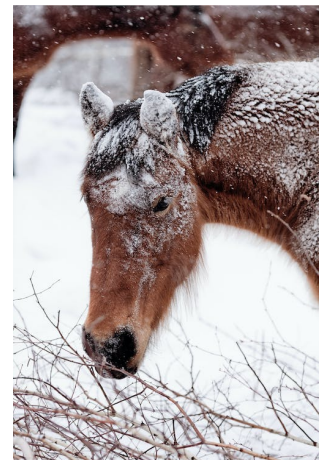
Date: February 18-19

Location: Morgenstern Farm, 3760 E Oakwood Road, Oxford MI

Cost: \$180

Contact: Marie at 248-840-0795 or Holly at 248-802-4809 for more information and to register.

Semi-private Saturday sessions using poles, cones, and other confidence/balance building tools. Learn exercises to take home and continue developing through the winter. Private Sunday sessions focusing on rider position and aids. May involve work on the lunge and/or video. The aim of both days is to have fun with fellow dressage riders, as well as gain tools, and the confidence to apply them, for use at home. Clinic cost includes lunch both days. Limited overnight stabling available. Day stalls available.



## **Webinar: Saddle Vet from a Vet's Perspective**

Date: March 1

Time: 5:30 p.m.

Location: Zoom

Cost: Free for MDA members

Email [education@midwestdressage.org](mailto:education@midwestdressage.org) to register. The Zoom link will be emailed to you before the webinar.

Join us for a webinar with Jane Manfredi, DVM, PhD, to talk about the importance of good saddle fit. Dr. Manfredi is also a USDF Bronze, Silver, and Gold Medalist.



## **2023 New Test Clinic**

Date: March 11, 2023

Time: 9 a.m.

Location: Nancy G. Held Equestrian Center at Albion College  
(11039 29 Mile Rd, Albion, MI 49224)

Instructor: Maryal Barnett

Cost: \$65.00

[Register Online](#)



GLASS-ED and the MDA invite you to our 2023 New Test Clinic! Through classroom discussion and demonstration rides, we'll review changes to the tests through each level.

Registration includes a boxed lunch, coffee, tea and water.

## MDA Grant Applications due March 1

Grant applications are being accepted through March 1, 2023. MDA offers up to three, \$500 grants. These grants are awarded to each of the following membership categories per calendar year:

- Open
- Adult Amateur
- Junior

[Visit our Education Grant Program website](#) to learn about approved educational opportunities, how to apply, applicant requirements, and additional information.

## Consider Scribing

Scribes are essential at dressage shows. They get a front-row seat at dressage competitions assisting the judge and providing competitors with important comments.

You can learn more about becoming a scribe by:

- Attending GLASS-ED's free Scribing Clinic on February 11 via Zoom (10 a.m.-Noon). More information is on the [GLASS-ED website](#).
- Reading [USDF's Scribing 101 article](#)
- Reviewing [USDF's Guide for Scribes](#)

## Training Tip: Using Changes of Bend and Flexion to Address Straightness

By Shari Wolke-Masi

While certainly we've all heard "needs more bend" on circles and through turns from the judge in a dressage test, did you know that there's more to the story of bending and straightening than circles and turns? There's always more!

Many riders should hear "bend your rib cage" or "turn your shoulders" through circles and turns in their lessons and training, so that the horse turns their shoulders on the circle. After all, the horse is our mirror and always mimics the work that we do. If we are absolutely straight in our upper bodies and hips, of course the horse will never be able to achieve the correct bend on the circle and through turns. And the reins cannot EVER create the bend, as the reins only move the horse's head and neck. Try it yourself- try to move your shoulders, rib cage and hips by moving your neck side to

side- it doesn't work! Of course then with the horse, just using the reins to create the bend and flexion doesn't work.

That's why working on changes of bend and flexion on the circle and throughout the arena can demonstrate for the horse and rider whether they are achieving the goal of a round, correct circle from the correct aids.

Here's what you do: starting on a 20-meter circle tracking right, turn your hips, shoulders and head to the right while adding inside leg so that your horse doesn't fall in on the right shoulder. You'll catch the excess energy from that inside leg pressure, if you apply too much, with the outside rein.

The degree to which you turn your shoulders is dependent upon your horse's training. Upper level horses are trained to turn onto a 20, 15, 10, or an 8-meter circle with varying degrees of turning of the rider's hips. After having established the angle with which to turn your body based on how responsive your particular horse is, track the other direction and attempt to turn your shoulders and hips to the exact same degree in this direction. If you feel a pull in your hip flexors or your horse throwing their shoulder to the outside, you've come across a hole in your training.

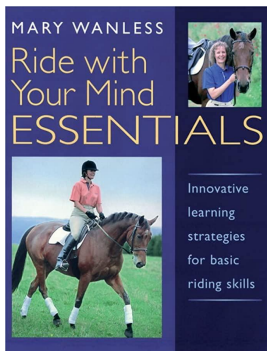
Many right-handed riders are tight in their right hand, making them also tense the right hip, which throws their horse onto his outside (left) shoulder when tracking to the right. If you find that the horse is drifting to the left when tracking to the right, check to be sure that your right hip and hand aren't tight and pulled back, causing your horse to throw his shoulder to the left.

Once you are aware of your ability to move your shoulders and hips evenly to influence your horse's shoulders and hips, now it's time to test your ability to maintain the bend without the reins' influence. Start on a 20-meter circle with bend to the right. Keeping your hips and shoulders even, walk a full circle in a working walk with the bend coming from the degree of turn established before. Then, without changing the degree of turn of your shoulders and hips, change the flexion of your horse's poll and the bend of the neck to the outside (left) with just your reins. Then change back to the inside bend without changing the shoulders (or your shoulders and hips). You should be able to change the flexion right and left with the reins while still maintaining the correct arc of the circle. If you cannot, there is another (very large) hole in your training.

Then try tracking to the left, working toward establishing the same bend that you had on the original 20 meter circles, but with flexion alternating to the right and left every

few strides. Use this exercise to keep your horse supple and soft in the poll and not fixed in a “frame” (a negative term in dressage) when moving through circles and turns. You will find that when you return to true bend, your horse feels softer, lighter and less “fixed” in the poll positioning. Happy riding!

## Book Review



### ***Ride with Your Mind Essentials: Innovative Learning Strategies for Basic Riding Skills* by Mary Wanless**

*Review by Leah Melichar*

Mary Wanless' *Ride with Your Mind Essentials* breaks down the essential skills of riding in this easy to understand book. She reveals the skills that top riders may not be able to articulate to help “the rest of us” become better riders. She addresses issues including alignment, connection, breathing, circles, and an independent seat.

Each chapter provides a brief explanation of rider biomechanics, steps to take to fix the issue, how the issue affects your horses, how to troubleshoot, and on- and off-horse exercises to help you improve. Wanless also stresses that progress is made in small increments and the importance of making small changes that eventually become habits.

I found the chapter on “Security, Strength and Power” helpful as I have a hard time activating the correct core muscles to stay connected to the saddle. Wanless provides directions on how to activate these muscles for riding. Instead of simply encouraging the reader to engage their core, she tells her reader they can find the correct abdominal muscles to activate by clearing your throat or blowing your nose. This imagery, along with the content in the chapter, have helped me find a more secure seat.

## **MDA Member Profile**

This year we will be featuring member profiles in the Midwest Dressage Association newsletter. [Complete the MDA Member Profile Form](#) to be included in a future newsletter.

## **About MDA**

### **About**

The Midwest Dressage Association (MDA) Inc, founded in 1969, is a charter group member of the United States Dressage Federation (USDF). MDA is an organization whose purpose is to promote and encourage a high standard of accomplishment in dressage in the general area of the midwestern United States, primarily through educational programs. MDA welcomes all horse enthusiasts, whether they ride or not, to be members. We are one of the largest one of the largest Group Member Organizations (GMOs) in Region 2. We are strictly a volunteer run organization headed by an eleven member Board of Directors. We hold monthly Board meetings which are open to everyone. Our committees, chaired by Board members, welcome all MDA members to participate. Volunteers are a very valuable resource to MDA as it takes a whole stable of workers to ensure that our shows and events remain successful.

### **Contact Us**

[Our Website](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Find Us on Facebook](#)

## **2023 Recognized & Schooling Shows**

Additional 2023 recognized and schooling shows will be included in future newsletters.

Information about MDA's Competitive Programs for shows can be found in our [2023 Redbook](#).

## Schooling Shows

### [Wyn Farm](#)

May 6 & 7  
June 10 & 11  
July 15 & 16  
August 12 & 13  
September 9 & 10

## Barn Directory

Aberdeen Farm  
3500 7 Mile Road  
South Lyon, MI 48178  
Contact Donna Donaldson 248-347-4411  
[www.aberdeenfarm.weebly.com](http://www.aberdeenfarm.weebly.com)  
Lessons and training  
Arena rental by the hour indoor and outdoor  
MDA and USDF participating schooling shows  
Available for clinics

Brek-n-Ridge  
Andrew Figures  
7359 S Lake Shore Dr,  
Harbor Springs, MI 49740  
231-242-0012  
Boarding, lessons, Clinics, Rehab, Training

Freestyle Farm  
Erin Miles  
1730 N Oxford rd.  
Oxford Mi 48371  
248-326-5885

We are a full care boarding facility for dressage riders. We offer lessons, showing (schooling and recognized) and clinics. Our facility offers rolling green pastures, trails, indoor and outdoor arena and oversized stalls. Stalls cleaned and fresh water daily. Grain twice a day, hay fed 3 times a day.  
Find us on Facebook and Freestyle Farm

Kathy Card

4364 S. Mackinaw Rd

Bay City, MI 48706

989-239-9363

Boarding, Training for horse and rider, Hunt seat, Jumping, Dressage, Western

Rivendell Stables

Linda Cooper

11555 W Grand River Avenue

Lowell, MI 49331

(616) 897.8976

<http://www.rivendellstable.com>

Boarding Lessons Training

Dressage, Eventing, and Show Jumping

Royal K Riding Center, Kate Westfall

17026 J Drive North,

Marshall, MI 49068

616-706-5049

I offer boarding, lessons and training.

Sue Hughes

8788 Joy Road,

Plymouth, Michigan 48170.

234-604-2439

email [prideandjoyfarm@yahoo.com](mailto:prideandjoyfarm@yahoo.com)

No Boarding, Trailer in for lessons or will travel to clients. R judge in English Dressage  
R judge in Western dressage. Enjoys giving clinics from the very beginning through  
third level English and 5th level Western. Youngster clients 12 year of age. No limit  
above that.

## **Classifieds**

MDA members may place classified ads in our monthly newsletter. Email

[leah@midwestdressage.org](mailto:leah@midwestdressage.org) to place an ad.