



Midwest Dressage Association Newsletter

January/February/March 2025

From the Board

Hello members! I hope your 2025 is off to a great start. It's hard to believe that we're already in February. The weather has been keeping us on our toes so far, between the warm and cold snaps. I hope everyone is staying warm and your horses are tolerating the weather changes.

It was wonderful seeing so many of you at the banquet last month. We hope that you enjoyed the change of scenery and the delicious buffet provided by Zehnders. As Holly mentioned in her remarks, MDA is in a bit of a weird spot at the moment. Membership has remained stable over the past few years, but volunteers are down significantly. We have funds available to help support programs put on by our members, and we are always looking for volunteers to join the Board or for events and shows as they come up. If you're interested in volunteering, please reach out to a current board member.

I'm looking for members that are interested in writing! In order to continue to provide you with a newsletter, I'm looking for anyone that might be interested in assisting with content. Do you have a passion for something horsey? Tell us about it! Did you go to an awesome clinic this year and want to share what you learned? Let me know! The newsletter is here to provide a space for our members to share their wins, educate one another, and so much more.

Our goal is to provide you with content that is helpful, enjoyable, and educational. I welcome your feedback, good, bad, or otherwise, as we continue to develop the newsletter across this year. If there is additional information or content you'd like to see, please let me know. If you are interested in contributing an article or would like to be featured in one of the sections, please reach out to Holly Zecchin at holly@midwestdressage.org.

Meghan Connolly
Treasurer

2024 Year End Awards

The 2024 Year End Awards were held at Zehnder's of Frankenmuth earlier this year. Thank you to all who attended, participated in the silent auction, and volunteered your time. Overall, it was a wonderful success! We are looking forward to celebrating again with you next year. Please check out our Facebook page for photos from the event.





Congratulations to our winners!

RE COGNIZED SHOWS

Training Level

OPEN

Champion	Eleanor Vargo	Flirtatious MRF	76.333
Reserve	William Davis	Valentijn	68.505
3rd	Shari Wolke	Aurora HOF	67.800
4th	Kimberly Robbins	DIF Aftensang	66.463

ADULT AMATEUR

Champion	Heather Vitta	Laird	69.009
Reserve	Nicola Tucker	Pandora	68.267
3rd	Amy Hanney	Harmonie TOF	66.400

JUNIOR/YOUNG RIDER

Champion	Isabella Ray	Goliath	67.000
Reserve	Avery Duncan	Mr. Personality	65.200
3rd	Teresa Golip	Ali	64.264

First Level

OPEN

Champion	Eleanor Vargo	Jack Call	68.194
Reserve	Hilary Clayton	HM Napoleon	63.207

ADULT AMATEUR

Champion	Christina Hamilton	Galassia	68.634
Reserve	Lucia Barber	Gigant E	67.723
3rd	Heather Marion	Tackmann's Dark Moccachino	65.863
4th	Brian Bates	Irish Whiskey	65.787
5th	Valyn Dall	Paddyngton's Golden Glory	62.361
6th	Kelly Gilbert	Killala Bay	61.975

Second Level

ADULT AMATEUR

Champion	Jennifer Clooten	Winhorses' For Amour	71.317
Reserve	Kennedy Parker	Leeuw	70.326
3rd	Christina Hamilton	Galassia	69.206
4th	Stephanie Mussmann	Siglavy Aga	67.238
5th	Valyn Dall	Paddyngton's Golden Glory	60.976

6 th	Holly Bordeau	Landella BSH	59.937
JUNIOR/YOUNG RIDER			
Champion	Laura Gutierrez Fernandez	Dario-Martinus	67.230
Reserve	Candace Hearn	HS Wremington	62.540
3rd	Avery Popejoy	Edmond	58.889
<u>Third Level</u>			
OPEN			
Champion	Kathleen Card	Royal Dancer	62.342
ADULT AMATEUR			
Champion	Marcia Riehl	CF Double Dare	65.917
Reserve	Kennedy Parker	Ijsdraak	65.500
3rd	Michelle Davidge	Faisca SW	64.417
4th	Janice Laquiere	Risonho	61.292
JUNIOR/YOUNG RIDER			
Champion	Noelle Licari	Sandro Dee	66.063
Reserve	Candace Hearn	HS Wremington	59.042
<u>Fourth Level</u>			
OPEN			
Champion	Janelle Deisig	Pair A Dice	62.037
ADULT AMATEUR			
Champion	Kelsey Lawrence	Jimmy Choo W	65.044
Reserve	Iris Foote	E-ROS	63.524
<u>Prix St Georges</u>			
OPEN			
Champion	Eleanor Vargo	Colmenar	64.927
ADULT AMATEUR			
Champion	Kelsey Lawrence	Hashtag TOP	70.147
JUNIOR/YOUNG RIDER			
Champion	Londyn Pachota	Samurai V	68.186
<u>Intermediate I</u>			
OPEN			
Champion	Eleanor Vargo	Colmenar	67.525
ADULT AMATEUR			
Champion	Andrea Bruce	Wicked Games	66.716
<u>Intermediate II</u>			
OPEN			
Champion	Kelly Levasseur	Luminus	62.745

Grand Prix

OPEN

Champion	Chloe Fullar	Uprising	62.454
Reserve	Leah Majkrzak	JP Orion	62.246

National Freestyle

OPEN

Champion	Kelsey Lawrence	Hashtag TOP (4 th Level)	72.708
Reserve	Christina Hamilton	Galassia (2 nd Level)	70.325
3rd	Noelle Licari	Sandro Dee (3 rd Level)	68.113
4th	Iris Foote	E-ROS (3 rd Level)	68.088
5th	Valyn Dall	Paddyngton's Golden Glory (1 st Level)	66.000
6th	Michelle Davidge	Faisca SW (2 nd Level)	65.687

FEI Freestyle

OPEN

Champion	Eleanor Vargo	Colmenar (Intermediate I)	71.358
Reserve	Chloe Fullar	Uprising (Grand Prix)	65.867

SCHOOLING SHOWS

Introductory Level

OPEN

Champion	Kimberly Robbins	DIF Aftensang	74.313
Reserve	Erin Gauss	Private Idaho	67.333

ADULT AMATEUR

Champion	Kathryn Souders	Whiskey Chase	71.458
Reserve	Paige Forth	Landino	70.333
3rd	Amanda Leitch	Ranger	69.209
4th	Paula Kotowski	Once Around Zippo	66.292
5th	Alexandra Pollack	Dynamic Rabbit	66.146
6th	Denise Arbaugh	Bella Fortuna	65.375
<i>Certificate Only</i>	Dawn Jones	Smoke's Bailey McCue	
<i>Certificate Only</i>	Carolyn McKay	Hidden Treasure	
<i>Certificate Only</i>	Valerie Pfiesser	EA A Major Elagenz	

JUNIOR/YOUNG RIDER

Champion	Lena Whittaker	Viking	69.667
Reserve	Myla Rau	Designed to Reign	67.000
3rd	Alexandra Elton	Tanya Tooker	66.250
4th	Olivia Kanzler	Master H	63.583

Training Level

OPEN

Champion	Kimberly Robbins	DIF Aftensang	73.228
Reserve	Brittany Weber	Trademark Troublemaker	61.624
<i>Certificate Only</i>	Erin Gauss	Royal Dhream	

ADULT AMATEUR

Champion	Katie Bratschi	RG Chief Red Cloud	71.507
Reserve	Nicole Stilson	Rock on Raven	71.319
3rd	Nichole Wilkinson	Tantivy	70.085
4th	Heather Vitta	Laird	69.853
5th	Ashley Ross	Mischief Managed	69.615
6th	Christy Wicke	Dazzling Star	69.448
7th	Jennifer Hope	Jazzy Jaguar	66.018
8th	Kathryn Dicea	PJ Maximus	65.161
9th	Mary Ray	Fhlawless Ruby	65.010
10th	Donna Genyk	Kinley	64.947
<i>Certificate Only</i>	Leslie Kot	Chewbacca Sable	
<i>Certificate Only</i>	Paula Kotowski	Once Around Zippo	
<i>Certificate Only</i>	Amanda Leitch	Ranger	
<i>Certificate Only</i>	Nicole Wozniak	Tranquillitas	

JUNIOR/YOUNG RIDER

Champion	Juliana James	Cinderella	73.782
Reserve	Breanna Nowakowski	Assendruplunds Cameroun	71.533
3rd	Isabela Stawiarski	Designed to Reign	68.908
4th	Alexandra Elton	Tanya Tooker	64.474
<i>Certificate Only</i>	Avery Duncan	Mr. Personality	
<i>Certificate Only</i>	Olivia Kanzler	Master H	

NOVICE HORSE

Champion	Cindy Rushbrook	Marschtritt	68.280
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NOVICE RIDER

<i>Certificate Only</i>	Amber Buhl	Louie Be Leapin'	
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First Level**OPEN**

Champion	Mykal Roth	Leonida's Windfall	66.325
<i>Certificate Only</i>	Erin Gauss	Royal Dhream	
<i>Certificate Only</i>	Hillary Clayton	HM Napoleon	

ADULT AMATEUR

Champion	Jordan Irwin	Tullamore Dew	68.796
Reserve	Kelly Gilbert	Killala Bay	67.346
<i>Certificate Only</i>	Katie Bratschi	RG Chief Red Cloud	
<i>Certificate Only</i>	Marcia Riehl	Full Moon Rising Cuervo Gold	

JUNIOR/YOUNG RIDER

Champion	Galina Kuzara	Ineke HVF	71.204
Reserve	Daphne Rasegan	Elton J	67.701

Second Level**ADULT AMATEUR**

Champion	Shannon Dempich	Maximus Malin	66.445
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JUNIOR/YOUNG RIDER

<i>Certificate Only</i>	Galina Kuzara	Le Jewel	
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WESTERN DRESSAGE

Introductory Level

ADULT AMATEUR

Champion	Amanda Cramer	Mighty Big Flirt	66.402
Reserve	Veronica Kohler	Maxemilio Al Ex	63.361
<i>Certificate Only</i>	Erica Kapolnek	Tamin Nejm VF	

JUNIOR/YOUNG RIDER

Champion	Annalisa Wilkinson	Cameo of Maidenview	69.352
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Level One

OPEN

Champion	Bonnie Hazen	Eden	71.172
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SPECIAL AWARDS

JEAN BROWN MEMORIAL AWARD

Jean Brown was a tireless worker who contributed her time and energy to all of MDA's programs and events, including serving as the editor of the Midwest Dressage Association Newsletter from November 1971 until July 1979. Following her untimely death, Jean's family chose to honor her memory with a perpetual trophy to be awarded annually to a member of the Midwest Dressage Association. This award recognizes the invaluable contributions of our members who volunteer their time and skills to support the Midwest Dressage Association and its activities. This award is presented to the MDA member with the greatest number of recorded volunteer hours in the current year.

Congratulations to our 2024 recipient **Erin Miles!**

VI HOPKINS TROPHY

This perpetual trophy was donated by Chris Snow in 2003 to honor Ms. Violet Hopkins for the significant role she played in the development and growth of Dressage not only here in Michigan but across the country. Violet Hopkins was a longtime dressage enthusiast, charter member of the Midwest Dressage Association, judge and instructor. Many of today's top dressage professionals were brought along via her unyielding commitment to the classical training of both horse and rider. She generously established a trust fund for the endowment of the USDF/Hopkins Dressage Seminar for instructors that evolved into the USDF Dressage Symposiums. The early annual Instructor's Symposiums included lectures, mounted sessions and demonstrations and were held at Ms Hopkins Tristan Oaks Farm in Union Lake, Michigan. Internationally renowned instructors including Major Andres Lindgren of Sweden and Sally Swift of the United States made up the prestigious panel of instructors.

The Vi Hopkins Trophy is presented annually to the MDA Adult Amateur Training Level Rider with the highest average percentage from scores received at USDF Recognized Shows. This trophy can only be won once by the same rider and horse combination.

Congratulations to our 2024 recipient **Heather Vitta and Laird!**

ROSEMARY HERMAN MEMORIAL AWARD

This annual award has been created in memory of Ms Rosemary Herman who passed away in December 2010. Rosemary was a founding member of the Midwest Dressage Association and served as its first Treasurer. During subsequent terms on the MDA Board of Directors, she served as Vice President and Chairman of the Rules Committee. She became an American Horse Show Association steward in 1966 and later became a Technical Delegate in 1973 which fit into her interest in rules of organizations and competitions. We will always have memories of her sitting at the Win-A-Gin Farms “In-Gate” snack bar during the MDA Schooling Shows with a smile on her face, enjoying every minute of the competition.

This award will be presented annually to a Midwest Dressage Association member who is at least 50 years of age with the highest qualifying average at MDA Participating Schooling Shows. The average can be received at any level, but can only be won once by the same rider and horse combination.

Congratulations to our 2024 recipient **Kimberly Robbins** and **DIF Aftensang!**

Welcome New Board Members

The Board is excited to welcome two new board members for the 2025 membership year. Please give a warm welcome to Jordan Irwin and Valyn Dall! You can read more about them below.

About Valyn:

Valyn is delighted to be joining the Midwest Dressage Association’s board in 2025 and looks forward to supporting the association’s mission while contributing to the community. She began riding as a member of Purdue University’s hunt seat team through IHSA and later explored jumpers and saddleseat before focusing primarily on dressage. After taking her first dressage lesson on her retired saddleseat American Saddlebred, she understood why people say, 'Dressage is for every horse.' With her current American Saddlebred, Paddyngton’s Golden Glory (Teddy), she is working toward her USDF Bronze Medal and Freestyle Bar (halfway there!). A longtime advocate for American Saddlebred versatility, she also serves on the American Saddlebred Horse Association’s Disciplines Committee. She looks forward to connecting with members—feel free to reach out at valyn@midwestdressage.org or say hello if you see her and Teddy at Albion or Waterloo! Valyn currently resides in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Upcoming Grant Deadlines

The MDA, Dressage Foundation, and USDF offer several different grants available to riders. Be sure to check out Facebook for posts about some of the upcoming deadlines for the Dressage Foundation and USDF.

The MDA will be offering 3 up to \$500.00 Grants. One Grant will be awarded to each of the following membership categories per calendar year.

1- Open
1-Adult Amateur
1-Junior

The maximum of each grant will be \$500.00

Rules and How to Apply

Grant Applications will be accepted **Dec 1 – 12PM April 1st** each year and the MDA Board of Directors will award said grants at the April meeting.

Approved Educational opportunities would include the following:

All dressage related clinics, seminars, and educational programs offered and or sponsored by the following Midwest Dressage, the United States Dressage Federation, and the United States Equestrian Federation. And those Educational opportunities brought before and approved by the MDA Board of Directors on a case-by-case basis.

- No one person shall receive an MDA Educational grant in consecutive years.
- Should the recipient fail to attend the specified event all grant moneys are to be returned to the Midwest Dressage Association within 30 days of the event date.
- Additional funds may be placed or added to the Grant program fund through donation, fund raisers, etc.

Requirements of Eligibility

- 2 years consecutive membership with the Midwest Dressage Association.
- A minimum of 4 hours of Equine/Dressage related volunteer time, within 12 months prior to the application for the grant. If volunteer time is not with MDA, please forward record of volunteer time and contact number with application.
 - or commitment to write an article for the newsletter, draft due with receipts and expense report 30 no longer than 30 days after the event
 - or willing to give a short presentation at the year end awards banquet, brief outline of presentation due with receipts and expense report 30 no longer than 30 days after the event
- A letter of recommendation from a professional Horseperson (Trainer, Instructor, Technical Delegate, or Judge)

- A completed Grant Application, outlining Education event, date, location, estimated expenses.

Recipient's Responsibility

A complete detail expense report must be furnished to the Board no later than 15 days after the event and must include all original receipts and documentations supporting the amount awarded or spent. Unspent funds must be returned to the MDA no Later than 30 days after the event. All recipients will be Acknowledged in the Newsletter and on social media.

2024 USDF Convention-An Overview

By: Mykal Roth

The 2024 USDF Convention was hosted in Houston, TX over multiple days the first week of December. It was a week of discussions, meetings, and educational seminars. The main topics repeatedly discussed centered around our “social license to operate” and the rising costs of competitions. There were several rule changes surrounding approved tack, and tack inspections at shows. Top names within the USDF, like Lendon Gray, Roz Kinsler, George Williams, Janet Foy and Lilo Fore, participated in multiple sessions ranging from training techniques to the future of the sport.

The biggest issue that was discussed was the “social license to operate” and abuse allegations within the sport. “Social license to operate” is defined as the ongoing acceptance of a company or industry's standard business practices and operating procedures by its employees, stakeholders, and the general public. What does this mean for dressage? It means that if the participants, volunteers, managers, and the general public lose confidence in the sport's governing bodies to protect the welfare of both the horse and rider, we could lose the right to rule ourselves and the US government could step in. This has already happened in Denmark due to severe abuse allegations that were going unchecked. The sport of dressage is on the line light right now and not in a good way. If actions aren't taken to change the way dressage is perceived by the public, we could be headed for a change in governing bodies.

Regarding the abuse allegations, the USEF and USDF have initiated rule changes surrounding tack and inspections at recognized shows. Crown pieces that have two separate pads instead of one continuous piece of leather will not be allowed in the show ring. Any bridles (except Nirak and Micklem) without a throat latch will also be illegal. *[Editor's Note- the reference to Nirak and Micklem as an exception is only for the throat latch. The bridle will still need a continuous crown piece]* Tack inspections will no longer be visual only. Tack will be inspected at the show ring as well as in the stable area. The technical delegate will retain the right to inspect all tack in the stabling area at will. All rules and changes can be reviewed at the USEF website and on the

USEF rules app. Do not forget that all competing horses must be microchipped to compete as of December 2025.

We also discussed the ever-increasing costs of competing. It was brought up in almost every meeting that dressage is pricing out the youth and amateur riders. While there was no real conclusion as to how to reduce costs, ideas included reducing the requirement of competing in multiple shows to qualify for awards, and teaching new show organizers how to put on one day, level 1, recognized shows. The USDF is aware of the dwindling attendance at recognized competitions and clinics due to the increasing costs to attend. Even schooling shows are not exempt from reduced participation. Show managers discussed the difficulties of finding affordable and qualified judges, and filling riding slots, though the sheer number of available schooling shows may be the reason for dwindling participants at any one show. Please reach out to the USDF with any recommendations or discussion topics.

There were multiple sessions focusing on specific training issues and veterinary research. One session done with Lilo Fore focused on training the flying change. While the discussion was very enlightening, it was also incredibly frustrating to hear that the counter canter should not be trained until the horse has confirmed flying changes. Lilo Fore, Janet Foy, and multiple other Grand Prix riders expressed they do not do any counter canter until changes are confirmed. Why is that frustrating? Because counter canter is called for in every second level test, while the flying changes don't begin until third level. This has left many who trained the counter canter for second level in a perpetual state of flying change hell. It is important to note that Lilo Fore and Janet Foy are both on the test writing committee. When asked why they have the tests set up this way, Janet Foy explained that the counter canter work was originally used for horses that did not have quality canters. The counter canter was used to help develop a balanced, supple gait. This is not necessarily the case now, with the increase in breeding quality. This begs the question, why have the tests not been updated to reflect the changes? Updated tests are scheduled for release in 2026. If you have suggestions for changes you'd like to see made with the tests, please email the USDF, Attention "Test Writing Committee". <https://www.usdf.org/connect-with-us.asp> will link you to the USDF contacts page with specific email addresses for each group.

The biggest take away I gleaned from the convention is that there is a huge network of dressage enthusiasts that are ready to help the sport and its members succeed. The people we encountered were amazing and the MDA forged new alliances/friendships. The Dressage Foundation is giving out thousands of dollars in grants to members seeking financial support to organize or attend clinics and even compete. The USDF has committees for virtually everything and if you have a question or want to help, they can point you in the right direction. The USDF and USEF are listening, please reach out with any concerns or questions.

This coming year's USDF convention is going to be held in Lexington, KY.
Road trip anyone?

2025 Year End Awards

We have some exciting updates and additions coming to our 2025 Year End Awards program. Be on the lookout on our website and Facebook for the changes. Coming soon!

2025 MDA Board of Directors

President- Holly Zecchin

Vice President- Mykal Roth

Secretary- Katie Bratschi

Treasurer- Meghan Connolly

Additional Board Members- Alexandra Pollack, Valyn Dall, and Jordan Irwin.