



## **Grand Valley Dressage Society (GVDS) 2024 Year In Review**

GVDS had another busy and successful year with shows, education and fun. As I just returned from the USDF convention as a Participating Member, Delegate, some of my comments will include highlights from the convention as well as how our sponsors have helped us in our many activities. Three big themes from the convention this year were the welfare of the horse (you'll hear more about this in the coming months), the cost of showing and how to engage our youth. I think we are starting on the path with all of these.

Before we talk about that, I'd like to thank our sponsors for 2024. Without them, we are a stagnant club. Our schooling shows break even at best, and our recognized shows are usually a loss, but to serve all members, we need to have both. While at convention I learned that "S" judges have only increased their rates by \$100 over the past 10 years and big and small "R" judges and TDs have had no rate increases in the past 10 years. However, it's the other ancillary costs that have increased, such as travel and lodging for officials, paying for an EMT (which we might have to do this year), prizes, and of course all the fees to the organizations for which we provide show recognitions to our exhibitors. Judi DeVore works very hard to find a variety of judges that can serve both our English and western dressage riders, which is no small feat. She thinks carefully about the associated costs before she books a judge.



Many thanks to our horse show related sponsors:

- Alpine Bank for the Summertime Shows sponsorship.
- Greenie Mountain Dressage for providing lodging for officials.
- Rocky Mountain Farriers Association for providing the recognized show's farrier services.
- West Slope Farm and Ranch for providing and delivering shavings to the shows.
- And we are excited to welcome Stirrup Cup Farm as our Welcome to Spring show sponsor for 2025, 2026 and 2027!
- This year we added the National Dressage Pony Cup (NDPC) recognition to all recognized shows for ponies and small horses and NDPC awards at the schooling shows for ponies and small horses, all sponsored by Karen Harkin. For 2025, we are pleased to again offer these awards, with GVDS sponsoring the awards at the recognized shows and Hughes Excavating Company providing the awards at the schooling shows.
- We will be looking for other show sponsors for 2025 and beyond. It's a great way to get your business' naming rights on an event.

One of our goals for members is to help them be lifelong learners in the discipline of dressage as well as horse care. This year our emphasis was more on horse care. Providing education for members is not inexpensive. As much as possible, we rely on our very educated and passionate members to share their knowledge, but it still costs money. It was also



disappointing to note how few members attended these events. If you have ideas for clinics, please let Judi know.

We hosted several free events:

- Zoom session on *Understanding Your USDF GMO Benefits*.
- Zoom session on *Scribe Training* with great statewide participation.
- Hosted an in-person *Cavaletti Play Day*.
- Hosted an in-person *Working With Your Farrier* with Bill Heflin, AFA Journeyman Farrier.
- Many thanks to in-kind sponsor Jennifer Hibpshman and Roy Yates Horse Training for providing her facility for the in-person events.

Other events required a fee to get these high-quality clinicians.

- Zoom session with Jec Ballou on *Winter Fitness For Horses*.
- Hosted an in-person *Bit Fitting Clinic* with Kim Gentry.
- Although participants were charged a fee, it was greatly off-set by these sponsors:
  - Jeffie Pike CPA
  - Fidel's Cocina
  - Roaring Fork Equine Medical Center
  - Mike's Auto
  - Hughes Excavating Company
  - Betsy Small
  - Equine Performance Massage



- Integrative Care
- Megan Bretey Dressage
- Fagan Farms LLC Equestrian
- BuyABiggerHorse.com
- Performance Equine Integrated Therapies, who have already committed their sponsorship for 2025
- Without our sponsors, the education, year-end awards and holiday party would not be possible.
- Thank you to our outgoing sponsorship chair Inka Spatafora and welcome to our incoming sponsorship chair Michelle Ruyle.
  - If anyone would like to commit as a sponsor for 2025, Michelle is happy to talk to you tonight.

Continuing the theme of education,

- GVDS was pleased to award four youth scholarships this year. These lovely young ladies were frequently seen at the horse shows as well as contributing to other activities for the club.
- Krista Nobilo was awarded the RMDS Barbara H. McElnea Scholarship for 2024.
- And many thanks to Julie Burt and Stephanie Stokes for spearheading a new RMDS scholarship, the SB Percy Sledge Memorial Scholarship and funded it with over \$12,500.
- To close out the education, I am excited to announce a freestyle symposium coming to GVDS in April. Conducted by none other than



the Queen of Freestyle, Dolly Hannon, you must be an RMDS/GVDS member to ride but can ride English or western. Non-members can audit but will be unable to ride, so get your membership in now. Based on the interest in our club in freestyles, both western and English, this should be an amazing event.

Engaging youth was a big theme at the convention this year. While youth camps are floundering in other areas of Colorado and the US, GVDS presented its inaugural youth camp under the amazing tutelage of Barbara Progross and the many tireless volunteers.

- This three-day camp would not have been possible without the generous support of Moonrider Farm. Moonrider has committed to sponsor the 2025 camp, so many thanks for that.
- Ten campers participated over three days of learning, fun and games. Members were the instructors and oodles of volunteers helped, donated their horses, tack and equipment.
- Plans are underway for another June camp. More information on the camp is coming soon.

I would be remiss without highlighting a few other really cool accomplishments:

- Two members and one educational event were USDF GMO winners, which were presented at convention this week:



- Arlene Rhodes won Best First Person Experience Article for her Online Horse show article. I wish Arlene were here so I could present her with this plaque.
- Krista Nobilo won Honorable Mention in the General Interest Article category for her Microchipping article.
- GVDS's Dressage for Newbies won Honorable Mention for Creative GMO Sponsored Program
- GVDS were the only submissions from RMDS and all were winners. Wooahoo!

We also had several members achieve some outstanding USDF accomplishments this year. Congratulations to all of you.

- Several individuals were in the top 15 for USDF level awards and All Breeds Awards.
- Krista Nobilo earned her Bronze Medal.
- Judi DeVore earned her Bronze Medal with Distinction and her Bronze Freestyle Bar.
- Those who earned Silver Medals:
  - Carol Cunefare
  - AimeeDenman
  - Ammie Lords

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We are grateful for the many wonderful volunteers that we have, some are members other non-members. There are a few that I would like to mention



Members giving more than 20 hours are:

- Aila Blakie – 21 hours
- Arlene Rhodes – 34 hours
- Judi DeVore – 58.5 hour
- Inka Spatafora – 70 hours
- Pat White – 75 hours
- Karen Harkin -76.5 hours
- Barbara Progress – 78 hours

Some generous non-members are:

- Sharon Bradshaw – 10 hours
- Darrell Schweitzer – 19 hours
- Stella Ledbetter – 20 hours
- Destiny Anderson – 22 hours
- Michelle Edmonds – 27 hours
- Sara Peterson – 50 hours

Thank you all. I appreciate you and I'm sure everyone else here does as well. I challenge every rider here tonight, to thank our volunteers, when you leave the warm-up ring, complete your tack check, see a runner taking a test to the office and those in the office doing their thing. A smile and a "thank you for volunteering" or "I appreciate you for volunteering" goes a long way to make someone want to come back and volunteer again.



I wanted to say a special thank you to several individuals for their outstanding volunteerism.

Over the years, I think we have all participated in 'parenting' this amazing young man. We've watched you grow from a goofy, silly kid who always had a smile to share into a wonderful person, who is kind, generous and willing to give 103 hours of his time to GVDS, even though he is not a member. Elijah Savoca, please accept this small token of our appreciation and friendship. (present gift)

It is true that it takes a village to get anything done successfully, but every successful village has a mayor. Barbara Progress was our mayor, the visionary for our inaugural youth camp. She developed a plan, organized an amazing team which she orchestrated to execute the plan and created an outstanding and fun learning experience for young riders. We are excited that Barb has already started planning the 2025 camp which I'm confident will be just as wonderful. Since Barb rejoined the horse show ranks this year in her very touching Century Ride, we hope this gift will help jump-start her showing endeavor on her new horse. With much love and many thanks.

Three special people were unable to join us this evening for medical reasons. Please keep Arlene Rhodes, Shellie deVergie and Donna DuBois in your thoughts and send them prayers of healing.





Before we start into the awards portion of our program, I'd like to thank the excellent officials that not only judged our shows but provided thoughtful and useful comments with fair scores, the clinicians and members who willingly shared their knowledge to encourage us to be lifelong dressage learners, and our sponsors and supporters who helped make it happen. And of course, thanks to our beloved steeds that enable us to do the sport that we love, be at a show, on the trail or just hanging around our barns.

We're looking forward to another great year in 2025.

Karen Harkin

GVDS President