

On November 3-4, Northridge Equestrian Center in Gilbert, PA hosted a TEAM Clinic with Lendon Gray. I rode Perlita, a 11 PRE Pony Mare that is owned by Lendon.

On Saturday, we were working on keeping her reaching down into the connection, and pushing her forward when her head comes up because she has lost drive from behind, also keeping her bent (but not overbent in her neck). Lendon had me ride without stirrups for quite a bit of my ride to help me develop a better seat so I can sit Perlita's bigger gaits. We also worked on shoulder-ins, a few steps of walk half-pass, and trot leg yields. The exercise we did for shoulder-in was a 10m volte then shoulder in and shoulder in after another volte. The walk half pass exercise we did was to shoulder in on the centerline then push her to the bend a few steps. We also worked on leg yields. The exercise for the trot leg yield was to go sideways a few strides then go straight a few and leg yield again, that helped to get her crossing over better. Those exercises helped me in keeping Perlita straighter and improved our connection by pushing from her hind end, over her back, and into the connection by continuing to recycle the energy.

Our Saturday lunch speaker, Angela Brady, talked about traumatic care and symptoms of a concussion and the importance of wearing a helmet. She also talked about how you can also wear a vest to help protect your body more. I found these tips and this lecture interesting! Our Dinner lecture was from a WEG Endurance rider, Holly Corcoran. She talked about many aspects of endurance riding. I found it very interesting that after each 'Lap' they did a vet check and let the horses fill up on food and water. After that, we did a Q&A with Alexa Derr about WIT so we could ask questions about what the program while we ate delicious pizza provided by the Lehigh Valley Dressage Association.

Sunday morning started with Pilates with Fran Huber to warm up our cores and to learn a few exercises to do to help strengthen our cores. It was tough but I could really feel how Pilates helps to strengthen the muscles needed for dressage. At lunch, Alicia Pfaff talked about holistic health and preparing to be a successful competitor. Topics included getting on a 'sleep schedule' to help you to stay relaxed and be well-rested, a breathing exercise to help with nerves at a show or to help with falling asleep, nutrition, and also essential oils.

My Sunday ride went well, we still did the walk half pass exercise and leg yield exercise. Lendon reminded me that it was ok if she comes a little too deep, as long as it's coming from behind. Keeping her forward and bent is a MUST. I have developed the bad habit of wagging Perlita's head and Lendon helped me pay more attention to that so were having a much more consistent connection.

The Northridge clinic was really fun. I learned so much from my rides, watching other riders, and listening to the different speakers. I always love catching up with my D4K friends that I don't get to see very often, except at the TEAM clinics. I am so grateful to D4K for the opportunities that they make available for me and other youth riders! Thank you to the D4K Scholarship Committee for awarding me a scholarship to participate in this opportunity! Thank you to Northridge Equestrian, the Eick family and their clients for donating the facility for the weekend. Thank you to Angela Brady, Holly Corcoran, Fran Huber and Alicia Pfaff for sharing your expertise with us. Thank you Maria Barton and Emma Nasados for handling the food for the weekend (it was so good!). Thank you Kim Van Kampen for supporting the D4K TEAM program and youth dressage. Thank you to Lendon Gray for your expert instruction and always

pushing to get the best out of me. And a special thank you to Lendon and Kim for matching me up with Perlita and believing in our future. We are just 5 months into our journey together and we can't wait to make you proud of all we hope to achieve together!

