



## Houston Dressage Society Believes Kids Count

*Houston, Texas - (April 21, 2017)* - The future of dressage rests on Junior and Young Riders and the Houston Dressage Society (HDS) is intent on providing a portfolio of opportunities for area youth to grow in the sport. Whether it's the HDS schooling show program, their commitment to providing classes for kids at their USEF/USDF recognized shows, the education and scholarships they offer, their fundraising efforts, or their Year End Awards program to recognize Juniors and Young Riders at both schooling shows and recognized show levels, the HDS is committed to area youth and the results prove their efforts are working.



HDS knows that show success begins at local barns and the HDS schooling show program offers Junior and Young Riders a chance to shine at the grassroots level. Results from the registered events qualify participants for the annual year-end Schooling Show Championships.

At their USEF/USDF recognized shows, including a CDI2\* and the USDF Region 9

Championship show, HDS has been innovative in reaching out to its youth. They were the first in the United States to offer the FEI Children's Division (CDICH) at the Katy, Texas, CDI. They also host three National Championship qualifying shows for their youngest riders so they can have a shot at the North American Junior and Young Rider Championships (NAJYRC), the USEF Dressage Festival of Champions, and the USEF Dressage Seat Medal Finals. HDS also offers Junior and Pony division classes for Training Level through Grand Prix at their shows, and includes pony measurement at every recognized show.

Allison Cyprus, 18, came up through the Houston Dressage Society system and is the HDS Junior Board President. Among her myriad of wins, awards and honors, she claimed the inaugural USEF Pony Rider Dressage National Championship in 2011.



*Allison Cyprus and Madoc Gareth competed against the professionals in the Open classes as a 17-year-old at the U. S. Dressage Finals in Kentucky.  
Photo by Sue Weakley.*

"I've been showing here since I was 9 or 10," she said. "I started Training Level on the first pony I ever had here and I've shown all the way through Prix St. Georges. They recently opened the Children's Division in the CDI and they were super, super cool to start that." The Katy, Texas, CDI offers the full complement of FEI (international) Divisions for young riders including Children (CDICH), Pony (CDIP), Junior (CDIJ), Young Rider (CDIYR) and Under 25 (CDIU25). "Competing in a CDI gives Region 9 riders a leg up because they learn the FEI rules prior to competing at the NAJYRC, which is an international competition. CDIs are also a good way to introduce a future pathway for riders who may want to be a dressage professional or a trainer."

Cyprus is majoring in agricultural leadership at Texas A& M University and she wants to be a trainer. She is working at Grand Prix with Madoc Gareth, her mother's 12-year-old Welsh Cob gelding (Sydenham Henry-Okeden Mai), and hopes to bring him out in the Under 25 division. She will travel to South Florida from mid-December through mid-January to work with Pam Goodrich. She

especially enjoys working with kids and loves seeing the light come on when something clicks and she can see the results in the show ring.

"I never thought I would be interested in teaching, but since I have started doing it, I absolutely love it and I'm having a blast with it."

HDS is also keen on providing educational and scholarship opportunities for its youngest members including a 2016 clinic with the USEF Assistant Dressage Youth Coach, Charlotte Bredahl-Baker, and Emerging Dressage Athlete Program (EDAP) clinics with Olympic athlete Lendon Gray. They encourage participation with movie nights, pizza parties, scavenger hunts at shows and unmounted clinics with equine sport professionals.

The group also provides funds for local juniors as well as Region 9 NAJYRC efforts through a variety of fund-raising efforts. From silent auctions, raffles, a used tack sale, and a Battle of the Barn Basket auction, they brainstorm to find fun ways to involve kids and adults in raising awareness and funds for clinics and scholarships. At the October Region 9 Championships, participants could buy two tosses of a rubber duck thrown over the spectator railing into a hula-hoop in the arena for \$10. Half of the money raised went to the winner and the other half went to the HDS Juniors' fund.



*Although Kalie Beckers is from Louisiana, she is an active participant in the Houston Dressage kids programs. Photo by Susan J. Stickle.*

Kalie Beckers, 21, has been the beneficiary of HDS fundraising. She said HDS raised money to help her attend the 2014 USEF Dressage Seat Medal Finals

at Lamplight Equestrian Center in Illinois.

"They are always really supporting and motivating," she said. "They emailed me and congratulated me, and wrote an article and put it on their website."

Beckers also won the JR/YR High Point Award at the 2016 National Dressage Pony Cup July 8-10 in Kentucky on her mother's 8-year-old Welsh Cob mare Madoc Mari (Lidgette Meredith-Madoc Gwyneth) with a 73.645 percent, the highest score of any pony at the show. She and Mari also claimed the overall Welsh breed award at the Pony Cup. They also won the Southwest Dressage Championships (SWDC) Training and First Level Pony Championships Oct. 7-8 and the GAIG/USDF Region 9 Training and First Level Junior Championships Oct. 8-9.

Although she hails from Independence, Louisiana, a six- to seven-hour drive from Houston, she participates in HDS shows frequently and appreciates that the HDS provides opportunities to show with competitive classes in her Young Rider age division nearly every month.

"It's really beneficial," she said. "You can get qualified and you can get the experience you need because they have so many shows. It prepares you more for Championships. Having that competition in every show you come to down here pushes you to work harder and it's going to help you."

Beckers plans to go professional soon and said she's nervous about making the jump. "The junior classes are big here, but you look at the Open classes and they're three times as big!"



*Eden Wyker. Photo by Susan J. Stickle.*

Eden Wyker, a 17-year-old high school senior at Boerne High School near San Antonio, Texas, said she also travels to attend Houston shows.

"Coming here, there are a lot more competitors my age," she said. "At the local shows, I'm the only one in my class and it's really kind of hard to figure out where I am when it comes to kids my own age."

Wyker was a member of the 2016 Region 9 NAJYRC Team and trains with Pati Pierucci. She is now competing in Prix St. Georges and Intermediaire-I classes but is waiting to decide her college plans before she moves up to Grand Prix.

The club and Region 9's focus on Juniors has yielded success by garnering many national awards for its youngest riders. They have clinched the USEF Dressage Seat (equitation) Medal Finals Championship or Reserve Championship nearly every year for the last 10 years. In 2016, Allison Hopkins from Dallas rode Royal Falcon to win the 2016 Medal Championship for the 14-18-year-old division with an 87.00 percent on Michael Mayes' 2005 German Sport Horse gelding. HDS riders have netted several NAJYRC Junior Team bronze medals in the past and in 2016, the Region 9 Young Rider NAJYRC Team won their first bronze medal. Finally, HDS proudly claims the youngest USDF Silver Medalist in U.S. history at 11-years-old and the first CDICH (FEI Children Division) rider in the U.S. as one of their own, Emma Claire Stephens.



*Emma Claire Stephens. Photo by Susan J. Stickle.*

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