

New England Dressage Association
Annual Report
President's Message
October 2012

NEDA has had a spectacular year! We launched with a series of volunteer workshops throughout the region, organized by Deb Carr-Kirk, in collaboration with local venues or dressage associations. The idea was to encourage a new cadre of show volunteers competent to do the various jobs required at a dressage show. Using a common format and curriculum, local speakers talked about the different jobs and gave participants hands on experience with scribing, scoring and other parts of volunteering at a dressage show. These were well attended and generally successful in generating new volunteers, both for NEDA shows and for events sponsored by our collaborators.

We held an outstanding spring symposium with Carol Lavell and Michael Poulin. Linda Mendenhall and her team made sure that the focus was on the learning experience for auditors, and auditors were not disappointed. Together Carol and Michael worked through training issues with horses and riders at all levels, discussing not only methods and exercises, but the whys and wherefores, with humor and perspective. As former teammates on the bronze medal 1992 US Olympic team (and friends ever since) and longtime NEDA members, it was fitting that they should launch our 40th anniversary year, and those in attendance were treated to a trip down memory lane during Sunday lunch with former NEDA Presidents Paul Cormier, Sybille Crafts, and Priscilla Endicott, NEDA's founder. Their discussion of NEDA's origins (did you know it is older than the United States Dressage Federation?) was accompanied by a wonderful slide show prepared by Carole MacDonald, NEDA's longtime photographer, who pored over her archive photos to show us pictures of NEDA's early days and some of us in our earlier days.

Our Spring Show was the best ever, and the weather cooperated for a change, apart from a bit of wind. A long wait list prompted show managers to add a ring by reconfiguring somewhat, and the show was able to accommodate nearly all riders who wished to enter. Manager Paul Cormier sweated over finding enough additional volunteers for the additional ring, but NEDA members came through. Actually, competitors liked the new configuration better than the old for several reasons, although runners and stewards found it a bit awkward to get used to. Lee Cullen and Sue McKeown put out an impressive show program, and Sue managed the Secretary's booth with her usual efficiency and good cheer. Our thanks to the many volunteers who make our shows happen.

One of the innovations from the NEDA education committee this year was the implementation of the NEDA Outreach Program. Anyone hosting a clinic or educational event can ask NEDA to assist with outreach for the program, using our social media sites, email newsletters and publications, in exchange for offering NEDA members a discount. It's a win-win. NEDA covers a large geographic region, and our members are always asking for more things in their area. Since our human resources are limited, this seemed a good way to insure that NEDA members were all informed of what is already going on in their area and got the chance for a discount to attend. For their part, clinic organizers get the benefits of our expanded membership and media resources to enhance the success of their program. Later in the year

the Education Committee expanded the outreach program to open up the possibility of financial support for clinics and symposia in the region.

Fall Festival was held for the eighth year at HITS on the Hudson in New York State. This show is now the largest in the nation, with nearly 600 horses stabled and over 1,500 rides scheduled. For the first time in ten years, the show took place in bright sunny weather for the duration. The main event at the show is the USDF Great American Insurance Group USDF Region 8 Championships, which comprised nearly two thirds of the rides, but the show also includes a CDI for high performance horses, and a smaller open show for any competitor. It also serves as the USDF Region 8 Breed Championships and an open breed show. In addition, there are NEDA Sweepstakes classes in both breed and dressage divisions. Sharing the enormous grounds with the also growing Marshall Sterling jumper finals has proved increasingly chaotic, and the NEDA Show Committee and Region 8 are finalizing plans to request USEF permission to move the NEDA show in 2013 to the following weekend when we could have the grounds to ourselves. But our show, actually four shows in one, has been ably managed by Beth Jenkins for more years than anyone, including Beth, can count, and her team of volunteers and Secretary Centerline Events. Full listing of winners and lots of pictures can be found on the NEDA Web site.

Finally, our culminating event this year will be our ever popular Fall Symposium, moving this year from western Massachusetts to the beautiful facility at Pineland Farms in southern Maine. The move does not seem to have dampened attendance, as we have the largest pre-registration ever for the exciting combination of Ashley Holzer of Canada and Stephen Clarke of Great Britain, which CLEANED UP at this year's Olympics! It will be interesting to hear some of their thoughts about the Olympics and watch them both work with our horses in a HEATED arena!

NEDA undertakes a number of other smaller, but no less valuable or important, activities as part of the range of services we offer to members. NEDA publishes the Omnibus directory of dressage shows in the region every year (the black book). Sally Davenport continued to manage our "L" judge program throughout the year with both learning sessions and scoring sessions at shows alongside licensed judges. These programs are in high demand all across the country, and ours was oversubscribed almost from the moment we announced it. Sally plans to repeat the program in the coming year. As I write this we are preparing for another successful outing at Equine Affaire, where Karin Swanfeldt and her team spend the weekend promoting dressage to the full range of equestrian enthusiasts who gather there from all over New England. Our Flextime Program, where trainers and instructors in the region donate lesson time to NEDA in support of the Region 8 Junior and Young Riders, has provided thousands of dollars to support their annual trip to nationals over the years. Finally, under Sue Edelen's longtime leadership, NEDA awarded several scholarships over the course of the year, and another grant cycle is currently underway. Our Scholarship Fund is very healthy, and we are looking for applicants interested in furthering their riding through scholarship opportunities. Thank you to those who regularly donate to the Fund.

And speaking of donations, we were overwhelmed to learn earlier this year that NEDA was the recipient of a \$50,000 donation from its founder Priscilla Endicott, to be used to advance the appreciation of dressage in the region through educational and other activities. We are in the process of making plans

to put those funds to good use. Priscilla had a vision in the early 70's when she founded NEDA to spread understanding and appreciation of the sport in its own right and as a foundation discipline for all horse training. She is pleased with how NEDA has evolved and wants to be sure that it has the resources to continue its important activities into the future.

All this success has come at a price. Our events and activities have grown steadily over the years in response to member interest and guided by passionate leaders who grabbed an idea and ran with it, to create a quality product that has become NEDA's hallmark. NEDA is an all-volunteer organization, with no office, employees or overhead. This helps to keep fees reasonable and the organization nimble and able to respond to member expectations and needs. But at the same time, the ability of our board members and leaders to devote the kind of time needed to run the events we have become known for is dwindling. While our events and activities have grown and expanded, societal roles for women have increased their access to careers without diminishing expectations on them as parents and caregivers. When you throw dressage training and horse ownership into the mix, there isn't much time left. Many of NEDA's longtime leaders and volunteers are ready to turn the reins over to a new generation of leaders, but there are fewer and fewer people there to take the reins. Leadership positions for many of the activities I've described above are open now, and we are having trouble filling them. NEDA is at a crossroads. Our events and activities have developed as a combination of member interest and the energy and passion of a person interested in making it happen. One direction we could go is to stop doing some of the things we do now, if there isn't someone with commitment and vision interested in taking over. Hopefully new leaders would emerge with ideas of their own about what kinds of educational and other events they would like to see in the region and the time and energy to bring these new ideas to fruition. Alternatively we could move more in the direction of paid support for our current activities. Over the years we have added professional expertise in places that would benefit the organization overall. Examples include professional bookkeeping services, professional layout and design for our print and online publications, and hiring Centerline Events to provide secretarial services at Fall Festival, which this year was the largest dressage show in the United States. We could add professional management for some of our other events to relieve some of the pressure felt by board members responsible for carrying out those activities. Of course, that would surely affect the price to participants. There may be other options.

We ask our members to join with us in thinking through next steps for NEDA and help us create a blueprint for its future. If you read this and want to help us chart NEDA's future, please contact me at president@neda.org and I will include you in our discussions that are taking place at the board level. I believe this will greatly impact the face of NEDA that members experience in years to come. If you have enjoyed NEDA events, competed at NEDA shows, benefited from a scholarship, or learned from reading our publications, then we'd love to hear your thoughts and ideas about what's most important to you about NEDA's presence in the region.