

Sisters youth excels in dressage

By Jodi Schneider McNamee
Correspondent

When 9-year-old Lauren Martin asked for riding lessons at a small dressage barn in Salem three years ago, she had no idea that her love of horses would lead her on a whirlwind journey of events that would change her life.

Today, at 12 years old, Martin is an accomplished dressage rider with local, regional, and national honors to her credit.

Dressage is a French term meaning “training” and its purpose is to develop the horse’s natural athletic ability and willingness to work, making him calm, supple, and attentive to his rider.

“It was my friend from school and a neighbor that were taking riding lessons that inspired me to do the same,” Martin said.

Then after taking riding lessons for about a year Martin connected with her aunt, Tina Billings in Tumalo, at her cousin’s wedding.

Billings’ background centers around horses and riding dressage.

“Lauren and Tina had so much in common about horses. They really hit it off,” said Nichole Martin, Lauren’s mother.

One month after the wedding the Martins received a phone call from Billings. She

had found a horse that might be perfect for Martin to ride.

“Tina and I bought the rescue horse,” Nichole said. “It was a spontaneous decision and I didn’t tell Lauren right away. The Arabian pinto horse stayed at Tina’s barn and we named him Charlie, since Lauren always wanted a horse with that name.

Billings and Martin hired a trainer that was willing to work with Charlie.

“We wanted to make sure he would be safe for Lauren to ride.”

During that year, the Martins met Natalie Perry, a professional dressage trainer in Tumalo, who really fit the bill for young Lauren.

“I asked Natalie if she would train Lauren in dressage,” Martin said.

Although Perry does not have many junior riders, she saw potential in Lauren.

Martin was attending elementary school in Salem at the time and they drove over two hours to Tumalo for lessons with Perry and drove back.

For six months the Martins commuted, and then last year Nichole made the decision to move closer to Tumalo so her daughter could continue with her career in dressage.

In March 2015 Martin found an apartment in Sisters. And Lauren began her journey testing the waters in the world

of dressage with Charlie.

“Perry began getting Lauren’s feet wet by taking her to some local dressage shows in Central Oregon. Then her dressage training began, but last May with the season opener less than a week away Charlie broke his leg and we had to put him down,” Martin said.

However, one month prior, an owner of a retired Friesian dressage horse named Pyter came to Perry’s barn in Tumalo looking to sell him. Perry took into consideration that Pyter might be the perfect horse for Lauren since he was experienced in dressage.

“Natalie and I bought the horse to help teach Lauren more about dressage,” Martin said. “It was all very strange how things turned out. We all tried to focus on the positive.”

The Martins were faced with a tragedy and Lauren chose to keep on going.

“Mom called the show manager and they switched the horse that I was to ride to Pyter. I had only ridden Pyter eight times, but I took him to my very first local show in Tumalo, the ‘Spring Fling’ season opener, last minute,” Martin said.

It was her first big win. Not only did Martin win her class, but had the highest



PHOTO PROVIDED

Pyter and Lauren victory lap in Devonwood Northwest Championships.

score for the whole season for the local chapter of dressage for junior young riders.

Pyter became her closest companion, and she spent four to five hours a day in the barn training and has continued with bigger dressage shows with Perry as her trainer.

“Lauren is committed to the sport of dressage and her horse. She puts in time and energy in and out of the barn, which helps her become a

better rider and partner with Pyter. She is driven to become the best she can be while maintaining the health and comfort of her horse, which will make her more successful in the dressage arena,” Perry said.

Martin has been home-schooling Lauren since moving to Sisters to continue her rigorous training schedule.

See DRESSAGE on page 26

CLEANING SERVICES
Specializing In:
Window & Screen Cleaning
Home & Rental Cleaning

CALL FOR YOUR FREE ESTIMATE!
JEFF BLAKE • 541-549-0897

BLAKE, SON & COMPANY
INSURED, LICENSED & BONDED

Our Gift to You!
Complimentary scalp massage and hydrating hair mask with any service.

R
Salon Renaissance
541-588-6611
220 W. Cascade Ave.
Come in, Relax, Enjoy!

Book Now to GLOW For The Holidays

Hair • Facials
Nails • Massage
Makeup

541-549-1784
161-C N. Elm St.

Metamorphosis

Gift Certificates Available!

Make Reservations for Christmas Day Brunch.

LAKE CREEK LODGE
— EST. 1935 —

541.516.3030
lakecreeklodge.com

Find us on Facebook

Food for Furry Friends!

Support Furry Friends Holiday Food Drive with special deals on Integrity dog and cat food from Sisters Feed! We’ll even handle the delivery for you!

50# DOG FOOD \$22⁹⁵
20# CAT FOOD \$13⁹⁵

SISTERS FEED & SUPPLY
102 E. Main Ave.
541-549-4151

EMPLOYEE BOUTIQUE

Wonderful hand-made gifts and Christmas decorations crafted by the Stitchin’ Post Elves.

Don’t miss out on the beautiful creations by our employees. Available until Christmas.

Stitchin’ Post
541.549.6061 | 311 W. CASCADE AVE., SISTERS