



Aerial view of Dancing Horse Farm in Lebanon, Ohio. Photo by Janet Riccardella.

Jennifer Truett:

owner of Dancing Horse Farm, A Dressage stable

by Jane E. B. Simmons © 2018

Jennifer Truett opened Dancing Horse Farm 11 years ago in Lebanon, Ohio, along with her Aerospace Engineer husband, Dr. Lenny Truett.

This 1970s former commercial race horse facility for Thoroughbreds and Standardbreds was found with the help of Jennifer's parents, Lynda and John Sappington, who checked out a long list of possible Ohio farms sent to them by their daughter to narrow down the prospects.

At the time, Jennifer and Lenny were living in the Washington, D. C. area where he was a Research Analyst for the think tank The Institute for Defense Analyses.

As soon as Lynda saw the property, she knew it was the right one.

"I sat down on one of the mounting blocks, immediately called Jennifer, and said: 'Found your farm,'" she said.

The couple opened their horse business without any outside investors, building their business from the ground up.

"They proudly say that they survived the 2007 economic crash and are now at near stall capacity," Lynda said.

Today, Dancing Horse Farm has close to 40 horses on the property, including Jennifer's Grand Prix winner, Taffy. Most of the horses are actively involved in the training program or lessons offered by one of the four on-site instructors. Some go to the shows during the year.

On her show calendar every winter is the Global Dressage Festival in Wellington, Florida.

"I take horses and several clients and their horses to Florida each winter, usually staying in Loxahatchee Groves, which is an easy drive from Wellington," Jennifer said. "I try to limit our shows to one a month, unless there's a really important show later in the month."

The other major shows she does with her clients are the Regional and National championships, Dressage at Devon, and the Concours de Dressage Internationale (CDIs) in Florida.

Riding in an International Horse Riding Event (CDI) "is a very big deal because a rider often competes with Olympians from the USA and many other countries," Jennifer said.

Among Jennifer's many clients who have moved up the levels and won lots of ribbons, are these four riders who have earned United States Dressage Federation (USDF) medals: Helen Pianca, Silver Medal; Julie Christie, Silver Medal; Jeanne Brose, Bronze Medal; and Sheila Wilson, Bronze Medal.

"I am very proud of their winning these prestigious awards," Jennifer said. "It takes a lot of time, dedication, and perseverance to win a USDF medal because to qualify one is required to achieve a certain

number of scores in specific USDF tests under different judges."

Also, one must be a member of the USDF and one's horse must be registered with the USDF to achieve the USDF scores.

To get a Gold Medal, one needs two scores of 60% or higher at both Intermediaire and Grand Prix. For a Silver Medal, two scores of 60% or over are needed from two separate rides before two different judges in Fourth level and Prix St. Georges (PSG). A Bronze Medal requires two scores of 60% or higher from two different judges in two separate rides in First, Second, and Third Levels.

Jennifer Truett herself is a star in the USDF world by virtue of her medal accomplishments.

"I am one of the lucky few to have earned all six USDF medals, and to be a member of an even smaller number of those of us who earned all of the medals on self-trained horses," she said.

The six medals Jennifer has won are: Bronze, Silver, Gold Rider Medals, and Bronze, Silver, Gold Musical Freestyle Bars.

Each year, the medals are awarded at the USDF annual convention, which this year is November 28 through December 1 in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The success of the USDF medal attainments by riders at the Dancing Horse Farm comes from the training program Jennifer developed.

Jennifer calls her training method "Dare 2 Dream" through which she teaches riders "to 'notice' what is going on and use a learned skill set to make positive changes in coordinating their body and the horse's body in the same way that 'talented' riders do unconsciously."

The components of her Dare 2 Dream training program, she explained, are:

"Communicate more effectively with horses using the language of 'horse'; reduce reaction time lags so that learning moments aren't missed; develop a vocabulary to describe what the riders are feeling in both their own and their horse's bodies while riding; understand their own and their horse's responsibilities; improve physical and mental control and coordination; increase body awareness, core strength, and multitasking capabilities; and develop the ability to focus on, and simultaneously process, both internal and external stimuli while riding."

The bottom line, she explained, is "once a horse understands what you want, he can comply with your wishes, and then both the horse and you, the rider, are happy."

She said that the students start getting higher scores and can move up the levels, "once they understand