



The Importance of the Small Donor

By Beth Baumert, President & CEO of The Dressage Foundation

The toughest part about the sport of dressage has nothing to do with riding skill--it's the finances. That's why The Dressage Foundation (TDF) exists--to help. TDF has been referred to as the sport's bank. When TDF accepts donations, not only are the funds invested wisely in the traditional sense, but we consider our grant recipients as an investment in the betterment of dressage in this country at all levels--from the young rider to the adult amateurs, to the instructor-trainers, to the judges, the breeders and the high performance riders. TDF has grants to fit every category.

The mission of The Dressage Foundation is to fundamentally change the game on all levels of the playing field. (See "What's In It for You?" for a list of some of the benefits you can derive from The Dressage Foundation.) But, like every good story, there's a problem. If TDF is like a bank, money goes in and out. The "out" part is fun and gratifying, but gone are the days when Lowell Boomer, founder of both USDF and TDF, is covering the day-to-day expenses that are required to run a non-profit corporation.

People think TDF is all about the big donor. That's a misconception. It's true that The Dressage Foundation gives away about \$200,000 each year, but those funds are designated, and they don't operate the non-profit organization that manages the funds. This misconception persists.

Someone recently said to me, "Oh, I got that appeal in the mail from TDF, and I put it aside because I thought, 'I can't give enough to make a difference.'" I understood her attitude because before I became involved with TDF, I also thought TDF was all about big donors. In the old days, it was, but giving is less attractive for big donors than it used to be. That said, TDF has had its share of them. The big donors are like the Generals and the Colonels of our little army. Anne Ramsay, Carol Lavell and her remarkable father, Gordon Cadwgan, Renee Isler, Ralph Dreitzler, Lowell, John and Lynn Boomer, Violet Hopkins, Maryal Barnett and there are others.

Without the Generals and the Colonels, TDF wouldn't exist, but without the foot soldiers, nothing works. We can't operate on a day-to-day basis without foot soldiers--without friends. Since the advent of Facebook, it's become socially acceptable to say we want to have more friends, and we do. We want more friends.

As I learn more about nonprofit organizations, I'm learning about the importance of the small donor. If everyone in USDF gave \$5, TDF could move mountains. But that doesn't happen. The small donor is important. It's much easier for 1000 people to give \$25 than for one person to give \$25,000. TDF appreciates small gifts. We're a sport of passionate people who are givers. At the GMO level, there is always a strong core of people who give of their time, their energy and their money. Many of them move into action at the Annual USDF Convention, and it is clear that they are the foot soldiers who make the wheels turn in this sport of dressage that we love. Please ask what your GMO can do for The Dressage Foundation. And, to all those small donors out there who are already our friends, THANK YOU!

Beth Baumert

President, The Dressage Foundation