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## Spring Kick-off!

Starting spring off in early April we had the pleasure of presenting an obstacle training demonstration as part of the Region 2 In-service 4H training hosted at Wicked Way Stables in East Bloomfield. 4Her's from nine counties were invited to watch four different presenters offering a variety of knowledge. Ronnie Bartholomew, Cazenovia College Equine Business Management graduate, gave a fine critique on what the judge is looking for in Hunt Seat Equitation. Dru Malavase, well known dressage judge and extensive contributor to many horse organizations, shared her extensive expertise on bits and bit usage. Debbie North, helmet safety advocate, gave a strong talk on helmet fit and

usage based on her personal experiences. Lastly, Joann Long from Gentle Dove Farm was proud to present a demonstration on horseback about developing the Horse and Rider Partnership through obstacle training mounted police style.



We began with a demonstration with our police horse, Shamrock, exhibiting the ultimate goal of trust while taking guidance from his rider with imperceptible cues. In fact, the audience observed a

bridleless performance to exemplify the ultimate in control and precision Joann uses in advanced obstacle training. When competing nationally, it's not enough to have a brave horse, there has to be clear, consistent communication between horse and rider at that level. Using rider seat and legs only, Shamrock responded and maneuvered at all gaits, forehand and backhand turns, side pass, stop, and back for the audience's pleasure.

The demo included carrying a flag, dragging an object, picking up and carrying an object, traversing a tarp and bridge, opening a gate, backing and side passing, passing by scary objects, as well as standing for a gunshot. Ok, was the audience ready to get their horse and perform the course? Smiles and laughter gave the group a good-natured atmosphere. The audience was then invited to ask questions. How do I train my horse to drag? How



do you get a horse to go over the tarp? Joann explained some fundamental building blocks and strategies. Everyone can train for obstacles and achieve individual success using specific mounted police style strategies. Each question was broken down into the smallest steps and she shared her philosophy on building trust while using patience, technique consistency, timing, and reward. The presentation concluded with everyone receiving gifts from the generous sponsors of Gentle Dove Farm.

A big thank you to everyone who came, the 4H Region 2 for inviting us, and the host farm for providing an excellent venue. 4H provides our youth with many wonderful educational programs and our equestrian community benefits from their dedication and efforts!