

Meet Our Members

## DAUGHTERS' RIDING LESSONS SPUR CAREER CHANGE FOR BLYTHEWOOD TRAINER

**Editor's Note:** Thanks to Susan Todd for providing this retrospective of how she came to be a SC dressage trainer. "Meet Our Members" is an occasional series where SCDCTA members can relate their equestrian experiences. Tracking Up welcomes stories such as this; it's fascinating to see the paths our members have traveled to get where they are today. And this feature is not just for the pros; the journeys of kids and adult amateurs are sought, as well! Not confident of your writing ability? Don't worry; put your tale down on paper and rest assured I will make your prose shine! Send your stories to [editor@scdcta.com](mailto:editor@scdcta.com).

A self-described "late bloomer" in the equestrian world, Blythewood-based dressage trainer Susan Todd said she owes her current career and vocation to blatant exploitation of her role as a parent.

Like many young girls, Todd said, she had always been interested in horses, but had little opportunity to be around them, except for special events, such as a fair. "I do remember making friends with a classmate in the sixth grade, a girl I didn't even like, just so she would let me ride her horse sometimes," she recounted.

This changed in her late 20s, when she took her two then-elementary school-aged daughters to a nearby stable for riding lessons. "My agenda here soon because obvious: I wanted to hang around the horses, too," she said.

### Change of Course for Horses

Soon enough, Todd was the only adult in the riding program and hooked on horses, to the point that she quit her job in favor of volunteering at the lesson barn. There, she shadowed instructor Harriet Peterson, taking lessons and learning as much as she could about riding and stable management.

With this newfound enthusiasm, of course, came Todd's first foray into horse ownership. She and her daughters shared a horse and took turns showing him.

"In Harriet's words, I actually started showing long before I could ride," she said. Eventing became Todd's discipline of choice; she continued working with



**Susan and Sasha. Photo courtesy of Susan Todd.**

Peterson and occasionally took clinics with others, including Denny Emerson.

By 1985, Todd and her husband had built a farm in Blythewood, and she began giving riding lessons while continuing to event several horses throughout the Southeast. Her focus switched from dressage to eventing after a 1999 clinic with esteemed international trainer Gunnar Ostergaard. Todd sold her event horse and, with the help of new trainer Ostergaard, purchased the Danish warmblood mare Sasha Krogager, who carried Todd to PSG. In 2007, a new horse, Danish gelding Geyser, became Todd's competition partner; Geyser is currently training at Third Level.

"With opportunity and hard work, anything can be accomplished," Todd summed up her experience in going from lesson mom to dressage trainer, also crediting her "great instructors."

*Todd, a USDF Bronze medalist and ARIA-certified dressage instructor, owns and operates Hidden Creek Dressage, LLC (Blythewood; [www.hiddencreekdressagellc.com](http://www.hiddencreekdressagellc.com)), where she works with students on their own horses or her lesson horses; she is also an SCDCTA-recognized schooling show judge. Susan is a long-time SCDCTA member, and served on the board for eight years, including stints as president and vice president.*