

Riding School Comes to Bridgeport

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Seville kicked up thick clouds of dirt during each slow gallop. In an arena that split logs enclosed, the 11-year-old warm-blooded horse pranced about in a circle.

Instructor Herbert Seiberl spoke into a microphone attached to his short-sleeve polo shirt so that Janelle Tuck could hear his voice as she rode the dark-brown animal.

Seiberl, 30, a member of the Spanish Riding School of Vienna, Austria, is conducting the first dressage horse clinics on Saginaw County soil through today at Blue Water Stables, 5917 E. Curtis in Bridgeport Township.

Starting at 8 a.m., Seiberl will host up to 12 half-hour lessons daily. Participants are paying \$175 per lesson. Clinic observers must pay an admission fee of \$20 to \$25 per day.

Jorie Sligh, a horse rider from Holland, said she has organized clinics in Battle Creek, Saline and Spring Lake in addition to Bridgeport during the past year.

The number of interested riders and the Blue Water Stables made Bridgeport an ideal location for a clinic, Sligh said.

Sligh said dressage clinics of this sort [taught by Bereiters from the Spanish Riding School] are rare in the United States. Dressage is a "systematic training of a horse which develops them physically and mentally to their highest potential," she said.

Riders learn how to handle a horse's tempi changes, when it switches from starting off on its right leg to the left every three gallops. Seiberl coaches participants on posture and body positions and movements necessary to train the horse.

"The experience in teaching the clinics helps me a lot, because I learn something from every rider and every horse," he said.

Tuck, 24, of Birch Run spent \$525 dollars for her three lessons and said they are worth every dollar.

"The experience is phenomenal, amazing and refreshing," Tuck said.

Sligh, who said 16 people have signed up so far, gives credit to the Spanish Riding School that Seiberl attended in Austria.

The school is the best in the world at teaching a classical dressage technique, Sligh said. Riders begin their lessons at the Spanish Riding School as young as 15.

The Vienna school admits only one or two students every few years, and after 10 to 12 years of lessons, 85

percent of the students will not survive the examinations, Sligh said.

Sligh described Seiberl as one of the best instructors the school has to offer.

"Attending these clinics under the instruction of Seiberl is like Michael Jordan coming to coach your basketball team," she said.

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