

*Inspiration*

# A HORSE RESCUE TRAINER'S

to

World Equestrian Center – Wilmington

By

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To onlookers, HH Hadwin, aka Hadwin, seems like his pony peers. The 13.2-hand pony cross gelding—who competed at World Equestrian Summer III Show Series held Aug. 10-14, 2022, in Wilmington, Ohio—is fit, his coat gleams, and he has a twinkle in his eye that is typical of many show ponies.

But Hadwin's path to the show ring is far from typical. He was once likely destined for slaughter before his journey led him to Days End Farm Horse Rescue (DEFHR) in Woodbine, Maryland, where his now-owner, Leigha Schrader, works as the organization's assistant trainer.

*Photo: Winslow Photography*





### A Fateful Partnership

A nine-year-old Hadwin arrived at DEFHR in November 2019 by way of the Maryland Equine Transition Service (METS), a statewide equine safety-net initiative that provides responsible alternatives for horses needing homes and assistance to owners who need help selecting the best transition for their horses. Though the details of Hadwin's early life are murky, it's believed he was in line for slaughter when a horse broker purchased him in hopes of making a buck. The broker sold Hadwin to a family in Maryland who was tricked into thinking he was child-safe. Quickly realizing Hadwin was not the beginner-friendly pony they anticipated, the family was relieved to find METS, which was absorbed by DEFHR in January 2022, to assist in finding a more fitting home. Due to his lack of training and experience, Hadwin proved difficult to rehome so METS tapped DEFHR to provide the pony with the training and skills he'd need to be adopted.

At DEFHR, Hadwin entered into a training program with Schrader who recognized that patience would be key for the gelding. "When I started working with Hadwin, he was terrified of people," Schrader explained. "It seems so small, but his biggest victories were learning how to do basic tasks."

By the summer of 2020, Hadwin had blossomed in his training. Schrader was riding him under saddle and Hadwin had grown to trust Schrader. Around that same time, an in-utero foal Schrader had purchased was lost. "I was devastated but I knew in my heart that this change of events meant that I was supposed to take Hadwin home, and we made it official in September 2020," she shared.

### A Whole New World

From the moment Schrader laid eyes on Hadwin, she could see the possibilities. "He had a lovely trot, flowing gaits and natural athleticism," she noted. "A hardy, chunky pony, yes, but I knew he had the potential to go far."

"Growing up, I always had the dream of attending [US Equestrian's] Pony Finals, but it never happened," she continued. "When I adopted Hadwin, I dreamed of giving a junior competitor the opportunity to ride in the rated pony divisions."



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Photos: Winslow Photography







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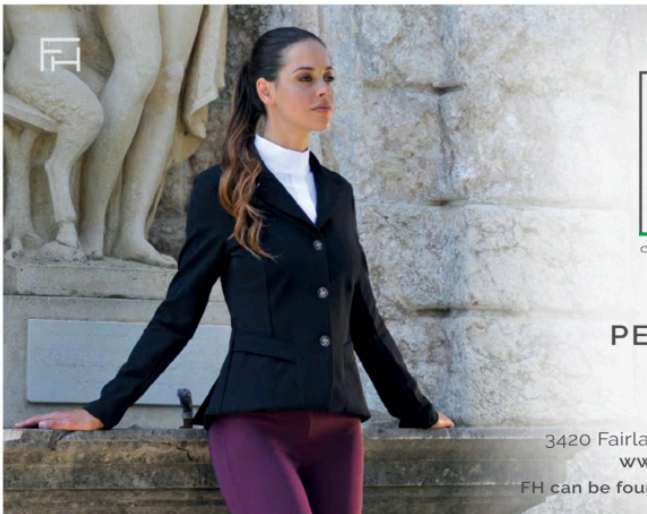
Photos: Winslow Photography

Currently, Schrader trains an 11-year-old student who competes on Hadwin locally with plans to move up to the rated pony hunter divisions. Schrader also competes him and was thrilled when she had the opportunity to show at World Equestrian Center – Wilmington for the first time. In addition to showing, Schrader and a small team from DEFHR traveled seven hours to share the organization's mission of ending equine abuse and neglect with competitors and fans. During their visit, Schrader introduced DEFHR through a liberty performance with DEFHR



equine ambassador Vinni the Mini and taking over WEC's Instagram account to give followers a peek at a first timer's experience.

“I was amazed at how big everything was. The facility is incredible,” said Schrader. “Everything is thought out, from the layout to the amenities offered. Even though there were hundreds of horses showing throughout the week, it never felt crowded.” Schrader also found WEC's atmosphere hospitable. “I did not know what to expect in bringing a rescue pony to compete at WEC,” she said. “Would I be judged or looked at funny? I definitely wasn't.



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Photos: Winslow Photography

From the WEC staff to the other competitors, everyone was incredibly friendly and extremely supportive. It was refreshing to be at such a large venue and feel so welcomed."

Like Schrader, Hadwin experienced his own firsts. Thanks to his trust in Schrader and their years of hard work, he took everything in stride and proved rescue ponies can do it all.

"I was so proud of Hadwin," added Schrader. "It was his first overnight show and his first rated show. We did some of the USHJA open hunter classes, as

well as the .65-meter open jumpers for fun. Neither of us had done jumpers before, so it was just for the experience and to get him over different jumps. I wasn't expecting much, but we ended up with a blue-ribbon round on the first day!"

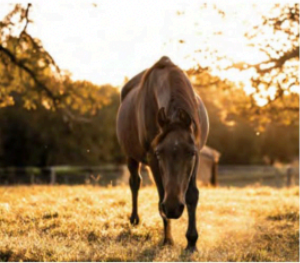
Competing at WEC in addition to sharing DEFHR's mission and sparking happiness was icing on the cake for Schrader. "One of my favorite experiences at WEC was showing in the Sanctuary," she explained. "Jumping over the same jumps and courses later used in the grand prix and higher-level classes was super cool. Another favorite

moment was sharing Vinni the Mini's rescue story. Vinni brings joy wherever he goes and performing with him [at WEC] was extra special for me."

Schrader's advice for someone visiting WEC for the first time? "Enjoy it and make sure you look for all the small details that makes WEC's show experience outstanding. From the outdoor pavilion for horse shade, to the WEC truck for photo ops, the ride-through Starbucks coffee, and Vendor Village, you don't want to miss all that WEC has to offer!" ☺



## EVERY HORSE DESERVES kindness



Days End Farm Horse Rescue (DEFHR), based in Woodbine, Maryland, is a nationally renowned nonprofit organization dedicated to the rehabilitation and transitioning of horses in need and educating the community on equine welfare and advocacy. The 33-year-old organization has rehomed approximately 3,500 horses to date.

DEFHR staff believe that every horse deserves kindness, and it's our responsibility as a community of horse advocates to give a voice to those who cannot speak for themselves. By creating a culture of humane care and compassion for all equines, DEFHR is committed to ending the abuse and

neglect of animals. DEFHR welcomes horse lovers of all ages to be part of the solution by helping them become equine advocates through extensive hands-on educational programs including volunteer opportunities, internships, youth camps, clinics/workshops, daily farm tours and more.

The organization has a generous and loyal network of donors and volunteers, but more help is needed to make an even bigger impact as they look to reimagine the future of equine welfare.



At DEFHR, support comes in many forms. As a privately funded organization with exceptional financials, there are a number of ways you can help make a difference in the life of a rescue horse such as participating in DEFHR's Equidopt Grooming Sponsorship, helping to fund a special project such as the construction of the organization's rehabilitation and training arena or intensive care unit, donating stock investments, shopping at the facility's store Tink's Tack & Treasures, giving an in-kind gift of goods or services and more. To learn more about all of the ways you can show your support, visit [DEFHR.org/other-ways-to-give](http://DEFHR.org/other-ways-to-give).

Photos: Bethany P Photography

