

Internationally renowned horsewoman Linda Allen to conduct clinic in Aiken

UPDATED: 12/18/2011 12:05 AM

By BEN BAUGH - Staff writer - email:bbaugh@aikenstandard.com

Internationally renowned horsewoman Linda Allen will be conducting a two-day clinic in Aiken Feb. 18-19. The clinic will be held at a private facility on Steifel Road.

The Federation Equestre Internationale certified course designer is being brought to Aiken by professional trainer Ann Thal's Snaffles, INC. The clinic will be in a 100 foot by 200 foot covered ring, with state of the art footing. There will be off-site stabling at Highfields Event Center and Full Gallop Farm.

"My goal is to bring international riders and clinicians to teach," said Thal. "I brought in Kathy Kusner and Melanie Smith-Taylor, and there are plans to bring both of them back to Aiken again. I'm very excited to have Linda here."

Allen is an incredibly gifted and versatile horsewoman. An internationally renowned official, she has been a trainer and competitor, and continues to be one of the world's most sought after officials as a judge, course designer and technical delegate. A woman of many accomplishments, Allen is also an author and a columnist for the Chronicle of the Horse. The veteran horsewoman has more than 45 years of experience and has worked with a variety of riders, helping them to upgrade their skills and achieve optimal results when competing.

A professional in every sense, Allen likes to teach on an individual basis, and gives the riders some homework to help improve their riding. Allen works with hunter/jumper riders, young riders who are working toward improving their equitation and eventers as the stadium jumping phase is becoming increasingly more technical.

"I really enjoy teaching," said Allen, in a phone interview Wednesday afternoon. "Most people have professionals that they work with, and the clinic will give them a different voice, a different perspective."

Clinics can be a valuable resource, and Allen having been a rider and trainer before concentrating on her career as an official, has a wide breadth of understanding of what is necessary for a rider and their horse to achieve their absolute best.

"I can offer a different perspective in analyzing course walking and courses prior to competing, and give insight into what the course is asking," said Allen, who is a four-time winner of the United States Equestrian Federation's Walter Cox trophy for Course Designer-of-the-Year. "The same with hunters and equitation. I work with people on how to present themselves, so that they make the best impression on the judges in order to get the best score possible."

Allen, the inaugural winner of the Chronicle of the Horse's Show Jumping Horseman-of-the-Year in 1989, will place an emphasis on the basics during the clinic,

When Thal first began bringing clinicians to Aiken, the horsewoman's intention was to have them here for her own students.

"When I was still jumping, I was always working with other people to become a better teacher, to become a better rider," said Thal. "I always had my trainers work with my students to give them a better perspective. My thought was, if I started to bring people of this level here for them, maybe there would be other trainers and other riders who would share that interest with me."

A good horseman is learning all the time, said Thal.

The clinic is a two day format, and participating groups won't exceed five riders. The sessions will last 1 hour and 45 minutes. The groups will be based on the riders and horses level of abilities, and will start at 2 feet and six inches, with the most advanced session being at three foot six inches and up. The cost for the clinic for both days is \$400. The facility is located at 1170 Steifel Road, Aiken.

Aiken Saddlery will be sponsoring breakfast Saturday morning.

The auditing fees proceeds are being donated to Friends Of The Animal Shelter, said Thal. The suggested donation to audit the clinic is \$25.

"I'd like for anyone who wants to listen, learn and watch, not to let finances get in the way from them coming," said Thal. "The auditing fees are by donation only. The suggested donation is \$25. Some people will give more and others less. There's been a lot of interest in the clinic, and I anticipate it filling up quickly. We're hoping for a lot of support, so the educational opportunities will continue."

For more information, contact Ann Thal at (941) 730-1165 or you can e-mail at athal10961@aol.com.