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Kyle Van Splinter Clinic

New Haven County

Susan Fino



An Introductory Natural Horsemanship Clinic took place at Halcyon Hill Farm, in Oxford, on Sunday, June 14. The guest instructor and trainer was Kyle Van Splinter, from North Salem, New York. Halcyon Hill's owner, Marc Deslauriers, with Tammy Ljungquist, hosted the event; Donna Collins and Cheri Cancelli, of Comet Oak Farm, Southbury, sponsored and organized the clinic.

Kyle's style with six-year-old Snowie's Gift, a.k.a. GiGi, was relaxed and almost playful. During

the morning session, she focused on engaging the five zones of a horse's body and explained how to work on each to help your horse achieve flexibility, cooperation, and trust. She also demonstrated the application of pressure in gradual stages, followed by examples of release and reward. The value of these lessons was evident as Kyle worked with GiGi on several ground exercises (such as side passing) and obstacles (tarp crossing and barrel jumping, for example).

After lunch, ten participants and their equine partners joined Kyle in the ring to try their hand at the techniques reviewed in the morning session. As each student received one-on-one attention from Kyle, a newfound appreciation and understanding between horse and handler became noticeable.

All of those involved in the clinic — participants and auditors alike — say they're now better horsemen and -women, and that their horses will be happier, more willing companions.