



Karen O'Connor (center, left) and host trainer Jennifer Rousseau (center, right) with a group of upper level riders.

Olympian Shares a Lifetime of Knowledge

BARRINGTON HILLS EQUESTRIANS WELCOME FIVE-TIME OLYMPIAN
KAREN O'CONNOR TO SHARE HER KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE
WITH FUTURE OLYMPIC HOPEFULS AND THEIR COACHES

Equestrians from across the Midwest flocked to Barrington Hills last month to listen and learn from one of the icons of Team USA: Karen O'Connor. She has competed at the 1988, 1996, 2000, 2008, and 2012 Olympics, earning Team Silver and Bronze Medals along the way. She won the Individual Gold Medal at the 2007 Pan American Games, the Individual Silver Medal at the 2003 Pan American Games and was a member of the USA Bronze Medal Team at the 1994 FEI World Equestrian Games.

She is arguably the most experienced and most decorated three-day event riders the United States has ever produced. In 2018, she was inducted into

the United States Eventing Association (USEA) Hall of Fame and has won that organization's Leading Lady Rider award a whopping 10 times. To say we were in the presence of greatness during her recent visit to Barrington Hills would truly be an understatement.

Local trainer and eventing coach Jennifer Rousseau of L'Esprit Equestrian LLC works with equestrian athletes of all levels and aspirations. "Eventing", one of the Olympic Equestrian competitions, is known as the "Triathlon" of horse sports, as horses and athletes must compete in and complete three different phases of the competition: Dressage, Cross-country, and Show Jumping. For

the second year in a row she organized and hosted the three-day educational extravaganza. She and O'Connor first worked together through their mutual interest in training and certifying qualified instructors through the USEA Instructor Certification Program (ICP). Rousseau is one of a few Level III certified professionals in the Midwest, serves as an advisor for the ICP program, and has been instrumental in bringing opportunities to participate in the program to Midwest coaches and trainers. O'Connor is a founding member of the ICP Advisory Board and a strong advocate for the standardization of coaching and training techniques for the sport of Eventing.

OLYMPIC LEVEL TRAINING IN BARRINGTON HILLS

Day One, “Pro Day”, was dedicated to professional riders, trainers, and coaches. O’Connor spent the day “teaching the teachers” at Rousseau and L’Esprit Equestrian’s home base, Snow Angels Farm. Fourteen professionals participated in a full day of intensive and extensive learning while mounted on their horses. Many more professionals attended to audit the experience. O’Connor took a two-pronged approach with the “Pros”; helping them hone their own riding skills while making them think about different ways to teach those techniques.

Day Two brought the start of a two-day clinic for riders of all ages and levels. O’Connor focused on the foundation skills needed for Cross-country and Show Jumping, working with four groups of six riders ranging from the Beginner Novice Level through International Federation Level (FEI) riders and horses. Local equestrian Christine Cressey opened the doors of her beautiful Cresswood Farm as the venue for the day’s instruction, and with the lovely, large indoor arena available there both the riders and O’Connor were spared the blustery and cold weather of the day.

The third day featured Cross Country riding at L’Esprit Equestrian’s schooling field. The schooling field boasts regulation ditches, drop fences, up-banks, a water complex, and many replicas of the types of obstacles found at National and International competitions. O’Connor’s unwavering attention to every detail, her commitment to the safety of both the horses and the riders, and the width and breadth of her vast knowledge and experience made for an extraordinary educational event for those who had the good fortune of participating.

“The level of talent and enthusiasm for the sport I have experienced here is almost unparalleled. It has been a pleasure to work with such a dedicated group of riders, trainers, and coaches,” O’Connor said. Rousseau and O’Connor are in discussion on possible dates for 2020, as well as possible expansion of the event, and riders are already signing on for a repeat opportunity to participate in a Master Class for the Olympic Sport of Eventing here in Barrington Hills. U

Jackie Knoop, a lifelong equestrian enthusiast, grew up in Barrington and has lived here for the past 25 years with her husband Steve and four children. She may be reached at: jknoop@comcast.net.



The L’Esprit Equestrian Cross-country schooling field allowed for great training experiences for riders of all levels.

Future Training Opportunities

Karen O’Connor is currently based in Ocala, Florida where she resides with her husband, Olympic rider and coach, David O’Connor. Together they teach and coach the sport of Eventing, working with current and future Olympic team members and hopefuls at their O’Connor Eventing Training Center. For more information, contact Jennifer Rousseau and L’Esprit Equestrian at lespritequestrian@gmail.com, through their website at www.lespritequestrian.com, or connect with them on Facebook.

FRVPC Horse Trials Celebrates 50 Years

To watch the sport of Eventing live in Barrington Hills, mark your calendar for June 25–28, 2020 and be a part of the 50th anniversary of the Fox River Valley Pony Club Horse Trials. For volunteers, participants, and sponsors, visit frvpchorsetrials.org.