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Exhibitors have their

Terrific Travella!





The added value of training

IT CAN sometimes feel, and often be true that on a daily basis there are many competing demands made on us and our time; in addition we are encouraged to 'live in the moment' and not solely work for rewards and gains which will be experienced in the future.

These comments are also true when it comes to training our dogs, especially when we take on a new dog be it a puppy or an older rescue or rehomed dog; how do we find the time to ensure that we provide for that dog's needs, including ensuring good quality training and finding the right dog trainer who can help us achieve our hopes and goals.

It could be argued that training our dogs ensures that we do 'live in the moment' as training requires us to be totally focused on what we are doing and relate what we are doing to why we are seeking to achieve it, so that we do become absorbed and lost within the training experience – or is that only me?

Indeed when we successfully complete an aspect of training, the rewards, the satisfaction of that achievement is instant and apparent; in that the dog has acquired a new skill or a sequence of smaller behaviours has been successfully chained to produce a more complex action undertaken by the dog and the relationship between the dog and handler has been maintained and even built upon, the bond strengthened.

Training our dogs is about the here and now, it is about achieving something observable and tangible however, I have recently experienced a new, added value and outcome relating to training, which has helped me to firmly commit to ensure that the training I undertake with any dog, is 'the best that I can do' and is undertaken with likeminded people.

Presently my oldest dog, is a much loved 13year old golden retriever called Biscuit; she is an absolute delight and throughout her life has ensured that I have experienced a full range of emotions, ranging from despair to joy – despair when in our early days together, I have watched her follow a scent and disappear into the distance and joy when she came back! It is often said that not only do we seek to train our dogs but that they also teach us and as they grow

by
Debbie Cordingley,
*Senior Advisor Guild
of Dog Trainers*

ment, whether it was from a bird or a child's balloon which had come astray. Her instinctive response to act on her over active prey drive required me to formulate ways of working with her to ensure hers and others safety – training was the only way forward; the alternative, which was to simply to stop taking her out or to never allow her to free run, were unthinkable.

The training focused on strengthening our relationship, working on creating a trusting bond between us; achieved by working on her recall, training her in agility and working hard with her, all of which enabled us to so become members of the Cheshire Dog Display Team. Being a part of such a team placed Biscuit and I in many and varied settings; sometimes the display would be in urban settings, others in County shows. At times the crowd would be so close to us, whilst we were in the arena, the children could reach out and touch the dogs, at other times the crowds would be kept back and away from the dogs by metal barriers. There would be multiple distractions for all of the dogs – the scent on the grass, smells of hot food, the children calling out the dogs names as they ran past them on an agility line, in fact all of the noises and fun of the fair.

Prepared

For all of the handlers there were challenges, we constantly had to



Photo: Andrew Dawson

• Senior Advisor, Debbie Cordingley, made a visit to the OUR DOGS offices recently. She is pictured here with her Mum (who brought the biscuits) and Diane Webster and Ali Smith (who ate the biscuits!)

with their training toy or a choice edible treat.

As can be seen, my work with Biscuit was very much based on achieving positive change and helping her to grow in her own confidence and in her confidence to trust me; that I would not ask her to do something which was beyond her abilities or harmful to her. At the time and over those years, I did not once think how this might benefit me and her in the future. I did think about how working with her would help her physical health and how training her would offer her (and me) mental stimulation.

However, over these last few months I have seen the added value of that training, now that she is an older dog. She has been retired from the display team for approximately 6

up the stairs, in fact, our communication has evolved to allow her to indicate to me whether she wants to go upstairs to sleep over night; by placing her two front feet on the first stair or whether she wants to sleep in the lounge, when she simply goes into that room and lies down.

If she chooses to go upstairs, that is fine, our stairs are not wide enough for us to use a support strap placed around her back end, so I literally support her back legs and help her walk up the stairs and verbally praise her when she reaches the top. In the morning when it is time for her to come down stairs, the task is more challenging for her. Many aspects create this challenge – the angle of the staircase, the width of the stairs, light conditions vary and possible her declining eyesight.

LET ME introduce myself my name is Sue Williams and I have had the privilege of working professionally with dogs full time for twenty years.

Over this time I have gained a wealth of experience in dog behaviour and training successfully training pet dogs, some of the countries leading display dogs as well as many dogs which have appeared in the media. At the canine centre I have rehabilitated thousands of dogs with problems including many rescue dogs. I am an experienced breeder having bred working line GSDs and Belgian Malinois under the successful Shadowquest affix. Many of the dogs I have bred are operational police dogs, I am particularly proud to have bred a GSD and Malinois who represented

their regions in the prestigious Police Dog National Championship.

I am honoured to be the Chair Woman of the Guild of Dog Trainers. The organisation represents excellence in the field of dog training, bringing together the very best in our industries professionals. The Guild is committed to maintaining and improving standards in dog training. The Guild takes a leading role in pioneering advances in training as well as playing an instrumental role in educating dog owners.

I am passionate about training dogs and strongly believe that it is every dog owners responsibility to train their dog so they are socially acceptable, happy family pets. Having been brought up touring dog shows across the UK as a young child I recognise and understand the importance and influence the show fraternity has on the dog world as a whole. It is this knowledge which enables me to recognise the importance of this exciting opportunity of working in collaboration with OURDOGS, making me even more excited by this new regular column.

The vast majority of dogs in the UK are pets and this companionship role is arguably the most vital. My aim is to create a working partnership between breeders and trainers allowing us to pool our knowledge and use this to benefit companion dogs.

www.godt.org.uk

www.thecaninecentre.co.uk

Sue Williams Bsc, Chair Woman GODT (MT), MCFBA



time to ensure that she is in the right position and therefore able to take that first step, because once she has taken that first step she is fine and successfully walks down the stairs; that first step is the crucial one, the one she needs some reassurance she

This unexpected and very happily experienced added value to our earlier training is one which will always be with me and yes training is for the here and now but it is also for the future and should ensure that your and my dogs can continue to