

Dear Dog Lover,

Our monthly story at the end of this email: “A Dog Is A Dog”

First of all I want to thank everybody who came out to our Responsible Dog Ownership Day!!!

Thanks to our volunteers who made it a smooth operation; to the presenters of the various demonstrations, who gave us a good insight about the different dog sports; to our vendors who added color, good spirits and grounds for doggie and other conversations; and to all the visitors who enjoyed our four-legged companions with us while understanding the importance of responsible dog ownership. THANK YOU ALL!!! We enjoyed the day as much as everybody else!

We have changed the date for our **Dog First Aid seminar by the American Red Cross**. You can still join the seminar, now being held **Sunday, Sep 26th, 10am-12pm** at our facility.

We'll change the fee and time structure of the Doggie Daycare slightly – please read below, it might be **more affordable** for you now! Some fees will drop instantly, some will increase by Oct 1st. Get your payment in before Oct 1st and save!

We're now ready to take sign-ups for our **Weight Pull Workshop in November**. Read more below in the class section.

Like last time you'll find all changes from the Sep newsletter in **RED** below. Please, even if you're already signed up, check the schedule below to see if your class is affected.

Enjoy the beautiful fall, get out with your dog(s),
Claudia

Below you'll find:

- 1) Information on upcoming events**
- 2) New classes and workshops: Dates and times of upcoming classes**
- 3) How to sign up for the classes**
- 4) Information on the Doggy Daycare and Open Play Times**
- 5) This month's story: A Dog Is A Dog**

1) INFORMATION ON UPCOMING EVENTS:

Sep 26th: Dog First Aid seminar

10am-12pm, at the training facility. People only, don't bring your own dog into the building.

Pre-registration: \$40, day of seminar: \$45. You can sign up online. If you come with a second person and want to share one book, the second person pays only \$25 pre-registration or \$30 at the spot.

Sep 25/26: 2010 WDMA (Willow Dog Musers Association) Symposium in Willow

We've been asked to give a demonstration on **Saturday at 11:15am** about the new dog sport Nose Work.

Read more about this two-day event at their home page,
<http://www.willowdogmusers.com/>.

2) DATES AND TIMES OF UPCOMING CLASSES:

Drop-in classes running right now:

Instructors: Claudia (NW, RP), January (NW)

Weekly every Tuesdays we can offer 2 classes back to back.

Indoors or outside – please bring clothes accordingly. Punch card available online.

Tuesday 5:15-6:15pm: Nose Work (maximum 6 dogs – please call to reserve a spot)

Tuesday 6:30-7:30pm: Nose Work (maximum 6 dogs – please call to reserve a spot)

Only one hour of Nose Work on Oct 5th due to the seminar for P1 starting at 6:30pm.

Tuesday 7:45-9pm (including set-up): Rally Practice (maximum 6 dogs)

Rally Practice will only continue until 9/28, then we'll use this time slot for our upcoming Puppy class.

Agility classes starting Oct 2nd:

Instructors: Claudia, Kat, Heather

The classes will run for 6 weeks, and end Nov 6th.

Saturday 10am-12pm (class 10:30-11:30am): Agility Puppy/Beginners

Saturday 11:30am-1pm (class 12-1pm): Agility Skills Training

Lunch break: 1-2pm

Saturday 2-4pm (class 2:30-3:30pm): Agility Sequencing

Saturday 3:30-5pm (class: 4-5pm): Agility Trialing 1

Saturday 5-6:30pm (class:5-6pm): Agility Trialing 2

Behavior classes starting Oct 5th:

Instructors: Claudia and Heather

The classes will run for seven weeks, and end Nov 16th.

Tuesday 8-9pm: Puppy 1 – Preschool (first week: 6:30-9pm without the dogs)

Behavior classes starting Oct 27/28th:

Instructor: Claudia

All classes will run for seven weeks, have a break for Thanksgiving on Nov 24/25, and end Dec 15/16.

Wednesday 5-6pm: [Puppy 2 - Kindergarten](#)

Wednesdays 6:15-7:15: [Elementary School](#)

Wednesdays 7:30-8:30pm: [Rally College](#)

Thursday 5-6pm: [Puppy 1 – Preschool](#) (first week: 6-8:30pm without the dogs)

Thursday 6:15-7:15: P1 or FC overflow class (whichever will be needed)

Thursdays 7:30-8:30: [Foundation Class](#) (first week: 6-8:30pm without the dogs)

Weight Pull Workshop Nov 13/20th:

Instructor: Kat

Each of the two sessions will be 1.5 to 2 hours, depending on the number of participants.

Dogs need to be 1 yr or older.

Saturdays, 1-3pm: [Weight Pulling](#)

Upcoming classes:

Nov 27: Agility classes

Nov 30: Puppy 1

Jan 2011: Mushing and Skijor Workshops

3) HOW TO SIGN UP FOR THE CLASSES:

It's easy!!! On our webpage www.bettercompanion.com, use the menu bar on the left. You'll find a button "Classes", with the subtitle "Registration", which brings you directly to the **one registration form for ALL classes and workshops**. After clicking "enroll" at the end, you'll get to the pricing and payment page, which explains all payment options, policies, and allows you to pay online, too. You can also check out the pricing page first, to learn about prices, payment and cancellation policies. Take advantage of our **pre-registration fee** by signing up a minimum of **14 days before the start of your class**. Please read our cancellation policy on the pricing page – you almost can't lose!

[Puppy 1 Preschool clients](#), please remember you can also purchase the **Puppy School Packet**, including P1 and P2 class. You only have to commit to the seven weeks of P1 class, and will receive a voucher for P2, valid for 1 full year! For [P2 voucher holders](#), the voucher will be your payment. After you fill out the registration form for P2, you can email us the voucher number, mail the voucher to us or drop it off at the facility.

Reserve your spot! Please note **our registration policy: Only the payment will hold your spot.** Spots are reserved in the order we receive payment for them. **Always sign up for the class you want to join**, even if it could be full. Only the payment will keep you on the waiting

list, in case somebody else drops out before the class starts. **Your payment is never lost**, even if the class is already full. Your payment will 1) save you a spot at the class, or 2) save you a spot on the waiting list, or 3) can be carried over to a later class, or 4) can be refunded if I couldn't get you in the class you chose, or 5) can cause me to open an overflow class ☺. Just as a note: I sometimes get up to three dogs per class moved in from a waiting list before the class even starts. **We now can take credit card payments over the phone and at the facility.**

4) DOGGY DAYCARE AND OPEN PLAY TIMES:

Doggy Daycare: Due to the high request of early drop-offs we decided to **change our regular hours from 7am-8pm to 6am-7pm. That means NO SURCHARGE for drop-offs any time after 6am!** This will be valid as soon as you purchase your next punch card or pay for a single day. No refunds for surcharges you've already paid for.

The fee for the monthly daycare will increase from \$275 to \$325 on Oct 1st. **You can purchase one monthly pass for \$275 before Oct 1st** for your dog, as long as you **start the month by Nov 1st.**

BetCo will be closed Dec 18 - Jan 2

Last Daycare Friday, Dec 17th, 2010

Daycare resumes Monday, Jan 3rd, 2011.

If you get a monthly pass that starts after Nov 18th, we'll add 14 days to make up for that time.

Open Play Time: Come with your dog for one hour of dog play and dog owner social time. Each dog must be supervised by an adult handler, one dog per handler only. **Vaccinated dogs only** (5-way/DHPPi, dogs over 6 mo: Rabies, Bordetella). We also require having the dog dewormed or a fecal sample checked.

BetCo will be closed Dec 18 - Jan 2

Last Open Play Time Friday, Dec 17th, 2010

Open Play Times resume Monday, Jan 3rd, 2011.

First-timers: bring your vaccination papers, we want to see them! Dogs over 6 months, please for the first time make an appointment with us to come on a Friday, when Claudia and Frank are managing the play times. After that, we'll discuss with you which hour will be best and if you can come Mondays as well.

Fee: \$7 at the door or punch card \$35 for 6 visits.

Our Open Play Times (indoors + outdoors) have become a safe playground for dogs of any size due to the newer size restrictions for each group. Only timid and absolutely non-reactive dogs can be slightly heavier than the group limit. The group from 7-8pm is limited to 8 dogs, and reservations can be made in advance. Just call us and we explain the details.

Every Monday AND Friday:

5-6pm: toy and small dogs and puppies up to 25#

6-7pm: puppies and medium adult dogs 30-50# (giant breed puppies can be heavier)

7-8pm: Large adult dogs over 60# (indoors: 8 dogs max; outdoors: 10 dogs max)

8-9pm: By appointment only

You can check the web page www.bettercompanion.com for info on classes, facility, and schedule, read testimonies from other students, print out the registration form...

Or contact us by email or phone (see below).

5) A DOG IS A DOG

What is a dog doing when it's not sleeping or eating? It's behaving like a dog! It might spend some time on grooming, but sure not as much as a cat would. It prefers to dig, hunt, chase anything that moves, wrestle with pack mates... You get the picture.

All these behaviors are mostly unwanted behaviors. We don't want them to dig in the flowerbed, run away after a rabbit or moose, chase cars, kids or bicyclists, or play rough with the kids, mouthing or even nipping them, knocking them over, jumping up on people.

We wanted a dog, but not that dog! Some breeds have less hunting instincts than others, less desire to jump or wrestle, less desire to chase and run away. Those are bred as pet dogs for a long time already, as companions. Still, a majority of the breeds people want, are bred for a job, either somewhere in the field of hunting (Retrievers, Hounds, Beagles, Terriers...), or in the field of herding (all Shepherds, Corgis, Sheepdogs...), which still means chasing something.

Often working dogs are bred to be able to make decisions independent of their owner. Shepherds work the herd often for miles by themselves, hunting dogs will stay with the Raccoon for days to keep it on the same tree, Terriers don't need to be told and supervised while hunting for vermin in the barn, and Huskies need to find the best way through the snow storm or over thin ice, having better instincts than the musher.

That independent mind and 'working attitude' are wonderful traits of these breeds, which a hunter, shepherd or musher will keep breeding for. When a pet dog owner discovers these traits, they're bad habits. Still, a dog bred for a job can also be a good pet dog as long as his/her owner understands: A dog is a dog. What does this mean?

- Have reasonable expectations:

Don't expect your dog to stay in an unfenced ¼ acre yard with wild rabbits roaming the neighborhood while you're inside the house or even gone. The same

applies if your neighbor's yard is busier (= more interesting) than yours (kids, dogs...). You'll need to contain your dog either with a tether or a fence.

It'll take a little longer to train your dog not to run after a moose, bicycle or car, or not to jump up on people. Until then, you need to contain your dog to avoid mishaps. Supervision is good, control is better. Keep your dog on a leash or tether.

When out on a walk, be aware of your surroundings. Are there roads nearby that pose a danger if your dog follows a squirrel? Until you can trust your dog that you can call him/her back on time, he/she should stay on leash. On time means before the road, and could also be after he/she followed that rabbit into the woods first. Will your dog come back from a rabbit hunt?

- Allow your dog to follow his instincts – under your supervision

In certain situations, it might be easier to allow the dog to chase a squirrel up the tree or into the hole. Squirrels don't go far, and so will your dog. I actually take part at the mouse hunting with my dogs, showing them a potential fresh track or hole in the ground. That way they're more likely to come to me, because I could have valuable information for them for a hunt. And mice travel less far than squirrels!

You can use the dog's instinct to chase by playing fetch. Another wonderful game is 'hide and seek'. One person holds the dog, the other person hides. You can play this game first on leash, until you know the dog will go and search. The hiding person can reward the dog with lavish praise, delicious cookies, or another game of fetch, if the dog is ball or Frisbee-driven.

Find a class or activity in your area that suits your dog's instincts and breeding purpose. The Valley offers lure coursing, hunting training, herding, agility, nose work... all kinds of activities to channel the dog's energy and allow him to live out his drive.

- Allow your dog to be a dog

When you see an unwanted behavior in your dog, don't jump to the conclusion of your dog being "bad". Your dog is just a dog. Think about how you can help your dog to live out that doggy behavior without annoying you or other people around you.

If your dog likes to dig up your flowers and veggies, give her an area where she can dig. Confine her to that area with a tether or fence when you can't supervise her, even bury treats or other objects in that area, to encourage her digging there. It'll be easier for you to then teach her not to dig in your garden while you supervise her.

If your dog likes to chase, take your dog to lure coursing or herding, or play extensive fetch with him. The goal is to get your dog so tired, that he'll choose a treat from you over chasing a car. Eventually, that routine will stick with your dog even when he's not so tired anymore.

When you take your dog out to an open area with few distractions, maybe together with a buddy for your dog who is well-behaved and obedient, there's nothing better than off-leash exercise. Allow your dog to be a dog, romp around, even if it's a little further away from you. Some dogs seem disobedient because the owner expects them to stay close, and all they need is a little more space to run, and they won't take off. Don't forget to bring delicious treats with you, to reward your dog for checking in and sticking around with you. That reward will make your dog stick around closer automatically without much work.

When your dog just started playing with his buddy, don't expect him to turn on a dime for your first recall. Give him several minutes to play and romp before you even consider calling. They're not machines that have to come at every single given second of their lives. We can choose to let them be dogs first, and call them when it's more reasonable, because they now got the edge off, start to be more relaxed and less wound up.

- A dog trainer's dogs are also just dogs

I let my dogs off leash on most of our walks. Sometimes we go to Anchorage and they can run free in one of the parks. I still like to have some surprise cookies on me, in case my dogs offer some exceptional obedience to me. They're now 6 and 9 years old, and stay with me on my walks. But every once in a while, there's that squirrel too close or that rabbit track too fresh to be ignored. One dog runs, the other sees and follows. In the woods they disappear. I wait a little, then I call them. I whistle (with my fingers), and usually don't continue my walk much further until they come out of the woods again. I praise them lavishly when they show up, no matter if it's seconds or minutes. If it's only seconds, I'll give them a cookie, too. Then they probably did turn around on a dime for my call.

We also go up to Hatcher Pass. They love to chase the ground squirrels there (although they never caught one as far as I know). I sometimes go on a trail, then I expect them to stay in sight so that I can see they're coming along with me. I use plenty of Yummy Chummy or table scraps to reinforce their checking in with me by themselves and coming to me immediately when I call. Sometimes I just stick around at Summit Lake area. I have two choices when I do that: either keep my dogs on leash (which I do on a Sunday), or allow my dogs to disappear out of sight for their hunt. When I allow them to disappear, I still wander around to keep an eye on the area in which they're busy. They usually stick in the same hill-side for a while. Then I only call them infrequently to check in with me, to go with them for a water break at the lake and a cookie break. If they get too wound up about the ground squirrels, I give them a break on leash or in the car.

It's actually quite interesting for me to just observe my dogs on their venture, to see how far each of the dogs is even willing to get away from me, finding out that my Aussie/Husky Sally has a wider range than my little Jack Russell Lucy, and that Lucy in the end will stay closer with me. I always thought Lucy would at some point get so wound up that she'd stay at or in a gopher's hole, where I maybe wouldn't even find her anymore, and she'd stay there for three days. That's what a typical Jack Russell would do. I'm glad to see that Lucy in the end is more interested in staying with me than hunting gophers. Both my dogs will come to me instantly, especially if I time that recall just right, when they're ready for a break anyways 😊. That's how I enjoy my dogs.

I did have one dog (Maggie), with whom I could never achieve that relationship out in the wilderness. She in 11 years was only reliable off-leash when on an agility field or in lure coursing. All other attempts to give her more freedom failed. She was a stray-dog from Greece, and independent enough to stay out there alone without me for not only hours, but days.

So yes, it doesn't work with ALL dogs, but with MOST dogs to allow them to be a dog. If you have any question on how to achieve that trust-relationship with your dog, to feel comfortable giving him/her a little more freedom, contact us about the options for your situation!

Happy training,
Claudia
Claudia Sihler, CPDT-KA
(Certified Professional Dog Trainer)

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