



Helping to Make Your Rescue Dogs Adoptable

By Faye Wilhite

As members of Carolina Dog Training Club (CDTC), Greensboro, NC (www.carolinadogtrainingclub.com – see our ad on page 39), we often get asked about how and when to train rescue dogs. The question usually comes from the adopter, but sometimes from fosters who want to help their dog have the best chance for finding a forever home. So let's approach this from two angles. First, those dogs in shelters or foster homes that need a family. Second, what to do once you have a new rescue family member.

CDTC, like other local clubs, welcomes rescues and often discount classes for them. We offer group classes, which include Puppy, Manners, Beginner I and II, Canine Good Citizen, and competition classes such as Rally and Beginner-Novice.

There are few books or articles on training dogs still in shelters or foster homes – how to improve the first impression the dog has on a potential family. Sue Sternberg has a recent book out entitled “Train to Adopt – Humane Guidelines and a Training Program for Dogs in Shelters”. She is an innovator in the field of shelter dog welfare and prolific author of books for all of us (www.greatdogproductions.com – click on Books, Videos, DVDs, then on Books). Section One of the book talks about improving quality of life for dogs and cats in shelters, I will let you discover her wisdom on that issue. Section Two discusses “Training and Enrichment for Dogs in Shelters”. With her permission, I would like to discuss a few exercises she recommends that you can teach your rescue dog to help them attract potential families. Anyone working in shelters or fostering dogs should purchase this book.

As with all obedience training, sitting at attention is a critical base for good behavior in general. Following her instructions, you teach the dog to offer sit-with-attention to anyone holding the leash, then to offer the behavior

on his own, followed by teaching him to sit and stare, waiting and wagging his tail while anyone holds the leash. The next lesson teaches the dog to take a treat nicely instead of lunging and grabbing it out of your hand. Imagine how impressive this will be for potential adopters.

It would be nice for shelter dogs to accept being patted on the head, as most people seem to want to do. Sue shows how to get the dog to accept this using lots of treats (remember, the dog now is sitting nicely and taking treats gently).

The fourth is teaching doorway manners. We teach this in our Beginner I classes where the goal is to have the dog sit nicely at the door and wait there until we release him, after we have stepped out the door. This teaches the dog self control and, we believe, respect for the human. It turns out to be very useful in many situations around the house, getting in the car, going to the vet, etc. Recently we had a 10 month old golden that jumped and bit frantically whenever anyone new came in the home. After we taught him to sit and wait at doors, we could ask for this alternative behavior around doors. It was the only way we could get him to stop his frantic behavior – he calmed himself down when taken to a nearby door and was told to sit/wait.

There are two other exercises that Sue recommends that I will let you discover for yourself in her book – well worth the price I guarantee!!

Lastly, let's talk about when to start your newly adopted dog and you in training classes or in sessions with a private trainer. We usually suggest that you spend the first few months establishing a consistent routine and bonding with your dog. Most important is establishing a daily exercise routine – that means more than letting him out in the backyard. Be with your dog, play games, have fun, take walks in different places, meet new people, explore his new world with him!! Once you enroll in Beginner I class, you are on your way to building the



relationship even more. Group classes teach you how to help your dog learn to focus on you and, although he can be aware of and look briefly at the other dogs, he learns to pay attention to you and do the exercises. We help you make training fun and show you how to use positive reinforcement methods to build on the good behaviors and remove the unwanted behaviors (think jumping!). Essentially, anything you would not want your children to do, you don't want your dog to do either (knocking you down going out the door, snapping at food, ignoring you when asked to do something...). The investment and time in this effort will reward you all the years to come with your new family member. Private trainers (vs. clubs like CDTC) can also be extremely useful and worth their weight in gold, especially to solve particular problems (aggression, fears, uncontrollable behaviors, and more). Some also give group lessons and can ease an aggressive or fearful dog through one-on-one training into more distracting environments such as group classes.

So, just get out there and do it! Help the shelter/foster dogs be more adoptable. Teach the dogs Sue's six basic commands to make them more impressive. Help your adopted rescue settle into your home and continue training to make your relationship stronger. Make your goal a canine good citizen!

■ Training Your Pet

Learning to Focus

by Pat Muhammad, Carolina Dog Training Club

As a dog trainer at Carolina Dog Training Club (CDTC), I have heard the phrase, “My dog always does this at home,” thousands of times, but at home it is just you and your dog in your normal surroundings. The benefits of training classes is that your dog will be in a group with other dogs and because dogs are social animals, they can learn from each other. In class, your dog must learn to pay attention to you (focus) in a group situation which includes distractions of other dog’s scents, barking and even treats or toys. The fact that your dog pays attention to you with all these distractions can give you a real feeling of accomplishment. We help you achieve this by using a command to help your dog focus on you. We provide distractions, as well as how to accomplish this feat with your dog.

Having your dog focus on you when you are away from home can be very important. Consider the trip to the dog park when your dog is much more interested in another dog than he is in you. By giving your dog the command to focus on you, you might be able to eliminate a confrontation. If your dog happens to get loose, your dog will know the command for focus and this might keep him from getting run over.

In a class, you have the support of fellow classmates who are doing the same exercises that you and your dog are. In a class, you don’t feel like you or your dog stand out with any problems since others have some of the same issues. Not only do you learn how to take care of your problems, but you’ll also hear explanations on how to handle other problems that people experience with their own dogs. A class also gives you and your dog a chance to be around all types of dogs, large and small.

Originally, CDTC classes were oriented toward individuals wanting to show their dogs

in Obedience trials, but in the past few years our classes have moved more toward the “everyday” or “family” dog. We want our dog owners to learn what is necessary to co-exist with their dog so that both the dog and the owner are happy. We always hope that our students will go on to compete, but are happy with whatever they decide. Our main objective is to have a happy, well-trained dog.

Dog obedience is a team sport, the team being you and your dog. Obedience exercises are a great way to spend time with your dog and get a real feeling of accomplishment as you bond with your dog. We as a Club are always as excited as the owners when our “four-legged” students graduate along with their “two-legged” owners. Your dog will always be your best friend and favorite teammate. Following are a few of the classes that we offer:

Our Puppy classes are designed to learn appropriate puppy socialization while also covering the basic obedience commands.

The Beginner I classes are for older puppies and dogs that have not had prior training. This class focuses on building the bond between owner and dog by learning how to get and keep your dog’s focus, as well as a series of obedience commands.

Manners class is for dogs that may need a bit more individual attention and a lower stress environment in order to forge the owner/dog bond. This is a wonderful course for people who have acquired an older dog from a rescue or shelter and are having difficulty gaining their new addition’s trust and building a bond. It is also good for owners that are having some mild behavioral issues such as a nervous or shy dog.

The Beginner II class is a continuation of the basic obedience skills learned in



Beginner I class. It is always fun to return to the Beginner II class and see your fellow classmates from Beginner I.

The Canine Good Citizen class is designed to cover the exercises required for the AKC Canine Good Citizens certification. This class also addresses situations we run into in everyday life, such as meeting another person and their dog in the park and what to do in that situation, or taking your dog to be groomed or to the veterinarian without them being anxious.

Rally class is an introduction to AKC Rally obedience where a handler reads signs set out at different places around the ring and shows their dog what to do at each sign.

We also offer advanced classes oriented toward qualifying in different areas of AKC obedience trials.

CDTC has been in existence for over 75 years. We have worked with all types of breeds including pure breeds and rescues in all sizes and ages. We have had thousands of individuals and dogs participate in our classes. CDTC is an AKC affiliated club and holds a two day trial in March each year. We also offer a fun match each year, which allows dog handlers the chance to practice with their dogs as if they were at a real Obedience or Rally trial.

CDTC offers classes four times a year. Our next session begins on October 2, 2012. Applications are currently being accepted. You can obtain an application, as well as additional class and event information at our website, www.carolinadogtrainingclub.com. We look forward to seeing you in one of our upcoming classes.

AKC Obedience & Rally Trials

No Longer Just for Purebred Dogs

by Pat Muhammad,
Carolina Dog Training Club

Every year in mid March, Carolina Dog Training Club holds a 2-day Obedience trial and a Rally trial. CDTC has been putting on yearly trials for over 50 years and up until about 5 years ago, the only dogs that could be entered in either trial were purebred dogs. However, with more people adopting their new dog from rescue groups and shelters, the AKC has now created an opportunity for these dogs to compete too!

Depending on your situation, you can obtain two different AKC registrations:

(1) Purebred Alternative Listing/Indefinite Listing Privilege (PAL/ILP). This program allows unregistered dogs of registrable breeds to compete in AKC companion events. Visit AKC.org for requirements and to download the required application.

(2) AKC Canine PartnersSM program. This program is for ALL dogs, including mixed-breeds and dogs that are not eligible for AKC registration. All dogs in the AKC Canine PartnersSM program must be spayed or neutered. Visit AKC.org for requirements and to download the required application.

Obedience trials offer a way to take your dog's training to a whole new level. These trials involve several different levels in which dogs must follow their handler's commands, however, there is no talking to your dog during obedience exercises. The **NOVICE** level involves heeling on and off leash, a figure 8, a recall, a stand for examination, sit stays and down stays. The **OPEN** level involves these same exercises along with dumbbell retrieval, jumping, and out-of-site sit stays and down stays. Most exercises are done off leash. The **UTILITY** level involves heeling, directed retrieval, directed jumping, scent discrimination, all being done off leash. In obedience the judge tells you when to do each exercise. The team must receive 3 qualifying scores under 2 different judges to receive an obedience title before moving on to the next level.

Rally also has several different levels and was designed with the pet owner in mind. It's a great way for your dog to enter the world of sports and offers challenges in every level. The handler and their dog work as a team in following signs such as 360 degree turns, sits, downs, left turns, right turns, about turns and weaving around cones. The signs are numbered to make it easy to find the next station. The handlers are allowed to encourage their dogs by talking to them. All this is timed just in case there is a tie in the scores. In the **NOVICE** level all exercises are done with the dog on leash and consists of 10 to 15 signs. The **ADVANCED** level is performed off leash with 12 to 17 stations and includes a jump. The highest level is **EXCELLENT** and includes 15 to 20 stations. In Rally the judge tells the handler when to start and the handler must follow the signs at their own pace in order to complete the course. The team must receive 3 qualifying scores under 2 different judges to receive a rally title before moving on to the next level.

The benefits of obedience and rally trials are immeasurable. They reinforce good behavior in your dog, helping him or her to become more obedient whether in the home or out in public. These trials can be fun, yet challenging, offering a wonderful bonding experience for you and your pet.

All this being said, please join CDTC at our March 16th and 17th Obedience and Rally trials. Obedience trials will be held from 9am to 1pm both days, while Rally trials will be from 1-5pm on March 16th only. Remember that you must have some kind of AKC registration number in order to enter our trials or any other AKC trials. Please note that only dogs entered in the trials are allowed on the show grounds. Please visit our website at www.carolindogtrainingclub.com/akcobediencetrialinfo.html for more information.

