GOOD DOG WILLOW
by Roni Henning

My dog Willow ( a tri-color female Collie ) is a Good Dog. Now I know everyone thinks their dog is a good dog, but Willow is part of The Good Dog Foundation. This organization, founded by Rachel McPherson, provides therapy dog services to people in health care, social service, educational, and community facilities in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Massachusetts, as well as in disaster sites around the country. This all volunteer service brings animals and people together to help them heal.

Willow and I visit Beth Israel Hospital in Brooklyn on a monthly basis. The patients we visit are all ages and conditions. Some have had operations and are recovering and others are suffering with a variety of illnesses. When we began visiting over a year ago, people were startled to see a dog in the hospital. But now when we arrive I hear shouts from the staff, nurses and doctors of “Oh, Willow’s here! Hi, Willow.” I think we cheer them up as much as the patients.

A typical visit consists of us walking down the hall and stopping at a patient’s room. “Hi! I say looking into the room. “I’m here with my dog Willow, Would you like to meet her?” If the patient is interested we go in and depending on their condition, Willow will either move close to the bed so she can be petted or if that’s not possible I have her do tricks to entertain them. She can give her paw, bow, spin, sit, and lie down. Just asking Willow to sit impresses people.

Therapy Dog Willow practicing her “stuff” in Prospect Park.

One woman who was recovering from foot surgery and in a lot of pain started to cry. She said it was wonderful to see Willow because she made her forget about her condition for a short time. This woman spent a lot of time petting and hugging Willow. That was what she wanted and that was what Willow gave her.

Not everyone wants a visit. As I approached one room the young woman cried out “Oh, not here. I don’t like dogs.” “Ok, I understand, you must be a cat person.” “No”, she replied, “I don’t like animals.” Willow, being the good dog that she is, sat down quietly. But as we were about to leave, the young woman said “Bring her in a little closer.” In no time she was petting Willow. We even did a few tricks for her.

Many times relatives and friends are visiting patients and they love having a diversion for them. Even the best hospitals can be depressing so we bring something from the outside in.

The Good Dog Foundation is always looking for more dogs to enter their training program. They can be reached at (718) 788-2988 or www.thegooddogfoundation.org. Today, there are 350 Volunteer Good Dog teams, and have made 77,500 visits to people in the last year.

GOT A STORY SHARE?

Send your photo and story to FIDO SPEAKS at bob@eXiffive.com
INTERSPECIES MOTHERHOOD: A Love Story

by Theresa Mancuso

When my German Shepherd dog, Abby, neared the end of her life, she was surrounded by a loving brood of felines that she herself had raised from infancy. One day, when Abby, afflicted with a deadly osteosarcoma, was no longer able to jump up on to my bed, she lay in her open crate while I was dressing for work. I turned to get something and glanced down at Abby, Marmaduke Rodgers, a four-year-old red tabby cat, himself a rescue from death in a local shelter, sat in Abby’s crate with her holding Abby’s head against his heart with both Kitty paws locked around her head. The tenderness of that moment was unforgettable.

Abby grew up with two cats, a Siamese named Maximus and a Tonkinese named Nikki. When they had long passed into kitty heaven, Abby’s real work began. Somehow or other, I had gotten myself involved in feline rescue and gradually, kitten by kitten, our family grew. Each time a new kitty arrived, I would hand the infant creature to Abby.

“Here’s your baby, Abby,” I would say placing the tiny feline before her. With infinite tenderness and gentleness befitting the kindest mother, Abby would gaze at the little critter and begin to wash it ceremoniously, licking it from head to toe and toe to head. Her great German Shepherd nose would nudge the baby over on its side so that she could continue her ministrations until the new kitten was completely hers. Never did I worry that Abby might harm a new-comer. Her instinct for motherhood was greater than anything I have ever witnessed in animals — or in people. She cared for them, even to the point of sharing her daily meals.

Often, I would spread a clean towel on my bed and pour out a pile of kibble with bite-sized pieces of fresh meat. Together, dog and cats munched away, neither species contending obstreperously for its food, each seeming to trust that safety was ensured and enough was there for everyone.

Abby welcomes a new six-week-old rescue kitten into her maternal care.

Some stray kittens came into our family right off the street after a brief veterinary interlude. Charlie, for example, a large black and white tuxedo, was but a wisp of fur mewing in the shadows one Thanksgiving morning, well before dawn, when I was walking Abby along Ocean Parkway. I scooped up the stray and put him into my coat, but not before offering Abby a good sniff.

“Let’s take him home, Ma,” Abby’s eyes spoke. Charles Andrew Shen joined the pack.

Little Red Fred was the last rescue that Abby mothered. A tiny waif found somewhere on East Fifth Street in the Kensington neighborhood where we live, Little Red Fred entered our lives, and Abby immediately bonded with the smallest kitten we ever had.

After Mikey eye surgery, Abby cradled the red cat on her front paws, licking his face but carefully avoiding the bandages that covered his evacuated eye socket.

At eight and a half, Abby was a reliable and beautiful German Shepherd female. Never a mom, having been spayed in her youth, Abby actualized all of her maternal instincts through the interspecies motherhood she nurtured each rescued kitten as it joined our pack.

We humans, who find it so difficult to accept one another as we are, can learn a lot from our furry friends, especially the love of family and the tenderness of caring for each other.
GUARANTEED RESULTS BUT NOT MIRACLES
An Interview with dog trainer, Tyril Frith, Part II

by Jennifer Rose Kagan, Continued from Winter 2007

In the last issue Tyril began to explain his three-step dog training philosophy. Once the dog has successfully learned the concept with inducement we move onto the Correction Phase.

**JK:** What do you exactly mean by correction?

**TF:** Correction is vastly misunderstood and often a controversial topic. Many people cringe when they hear the word correction. Remember we are only using correction once the dog understands the concept. If you correct the dog without the Learning Phase it is abuse. Now, when we talk about correction we are talking about all methods of correction verbal, leash, coins in a can, keys or other of the many methods. Remember you must be flexible and versatile in your training. That is where many people fail. There is no one size fits all in the world of dogs. If you correct the dog without the Learning Phase, it is abuse. A good correction is one that is done without emotion. Your emotion is what scares the dog. In this phase the dog already understands what you are asking him so you correct the dog when he doesn’t perform the behavior. Correction teaches the dog that there are consequences for certain behaviors and praise for others. Now, many people might feel that correction causes a negative reaction in the dog. It is not the correction that causes the negative reaction. It is the emotional state of the owner that causes the reaction. You cannot take it personally, this is the biggest mistake I see. The dog gets scared and exhibits avoidance behavior because the owner is angry. If you correct the behavior without emotion and then praise the dog and I guarantee that within seconds the dog is all over you with kisses. That is called balancing the training. This is key to maintaining a good chemistry between you and the dog and the key to success. I often see these two mistakes; people either don’t correct at all or they go way too negative. Going overly negative with no balance of praise scares the dog. This kind of training goes nowhere. If you get upset, stop the training and take five.

I have to say that if you are the type of person who never corrects you have to be extra careful. This type of person will only correct when they have worked themselves up into a fit. The dog isn’t used to seeing you angry. So now he’s really nervous and downright scared. Your dog cannot learn in this environment. This person immediately decides, “I’m never correcting my dog again. It scares her.” The dog was scared of your emotion not the correction. It’s your behavior that will lead the dog towards having a positive or negative experience. You can end up doing more harm than good and it will take much more work to clean up the mistakes, so take a break.

I’ll let you in on a secret. A dog loves you when you are in control and he feels safe. So you must be honest with yourself, consistent, repeat, be clear, correct for behavior the dog understands and don’t ever take it personal. You will begin to see results, guaranteed.

So far we have talked about the Learning Phase where the dog is taught to understand the concept using inducement for desired behavior. Once the dog understands the concept we move into the Correction Phase. Many dogs are highly food motivated. But when you bring that dog to the park he takes off for the chicken bones, right? I’m sorry to say it’s not him it’s you. Inducement isn’t working 100% of the time. You can’t pigeonhole yourself into one method and then blame the dog when it doesn’t work. Start at home with a long lead and a piece of chicken. When the dog goes for the chicken
bone correct and say “NO!” Do this until the listens to you and not his desire to eat the chicken bone. I guarantee you will be able to bring him to the park any season.

JK: Do you think a dog should respond 100% of the time no matter the situation? Is that even possible?

TF: Yes! It’s called proofing the dog. That means that the dog will respond to a command in a highly distracted environment i.e. food, squirrels, cat, other dogs, balls. And let me say that a dog is not trained if he is not proofed. Your goal is 100% of the time regardless of distraction. If your dog sees something he wants, why should he get to do what he wants when he wants? Wouldn’t you rather be on a sunny beach than stuck at work? Look, we live in an urban environment. It’s not just you and your dog anymore. Once you bring the dog out into the public, your dog’s behavior affects other people. It’s irresponsible to think your dog should be free to behave in anyway he desires.

A well-trained dog is a happier dog and you are a happier owner when can take your dog anywhere in any situation. Isn’t it better to have a dog that will behave in any situation than a dog that restricts your life and activities?

JK: My dog knows what I’m asking but sometimes she is just not listening to me.

TF: Right. She is not trained, I’m sorry to say. She is only doing what you have taught her. You need to proof the dog. It’s not her it’s you.

JK: I can always depend on you to be honest.

TF: In my world, honesty is the only policy. If you want to fix that problem you must proof the dog and then you will be at 100%. You must be consistent and patient. Patience is key. Everyone wants it to happen overnight. In order to have success, we must always take into consideration the BIG 5: Genetics, Breed, Disposition, Respect and Laying the Foundation before starting the training. Then there must be consistency and repetition. You must be honest with what is working and be versatile in your approach. You must see what is real and not what you want it to be. With all that I guarantee results but not miracles.

JK: At times I have become very frustrated with my dog and fear that her behavior will never change and that I will just have to live with it.

Tyril is very quiet for a moment and then he starts to softly sing.

TF: “Don’t you worry, every little thing is going to be alright.”

And it has.

“We need another and a wiser and perhaps a more mystical concept of animals... In a world older and more complete than ours they move finished and complete, gifted with extensions of the senses we have lost or never attained, living by voices we shall never hear. They are not brethren, they are not underlings; they are other nations, caught with ourselves in the net of life and time, fellow prisoners of the splendour and travail of the earth.”

- Harry Beston, The Outermost

Max Discovers T.D.I.

by Theresa Mancuso

John Felman and Max are a new therapy team. They just “graduated” at Therapy Dogs International (T.D.I.)

Therapy Dogs International (TDI) is a non-profit organization that requires no payment for persons visited by TDI dogs. Funds are derived from membership dues, but donations are welcome. TDI volunteers and their dogs (both purebred and mixed breeds) come from throughout the U.S. and Canada. They are tested and evaluated by Therapy Dog international to determine suitability for therapy dog service. The standards are high, but the rewards are great. Dogs bring comfort, companionship, and warmth to individuals in hospitals, nursing homes, and other institutions where confinement is an added suffering and loneliness a real problem.

Additional information may be obtained from TDI at 88 Bartley Rd., Flanders, NJ 07836. TDI may also be reached by telephone at (973) 252-9800, email: tdi@gti.net or website www.tdi-dog.org.
Fido, C.M.D.*
by Maureen Sanders

The dog is a thaumaturge
Whose aim is to purge
Our human discomforts.

The dog is a healer,
A helper, a feeler,
A Mother Teresa of sorts.

He's proud of his mission,
His therapy sessions,
His time with the old and the ill.

He's proud that his owner's
A compassionate donor.
He's proud of his consummate skill.

* Canine Medical Doctor

"Until one has loved an animal a part of one's soul remains unawakened."
-- Anatole France
Mission Accomplished?

In 2002 our mission statement read:

Dogs
- provide extra garbage pails to help prevent the easy access of dogs to unhealthy picnic debris.
- adapting water fountains so that dogs may drink without offending human users.
- develop a solid network for the placement of homeless dogs, and make every effort to reunite lost dogs with their owners.
- get off-leash hours and locales extended.

Owners
- educate people on topics important to the health and happiness of dogs.
- provide information concerning local dog-related services and products.

Prospect Park
- fill in holes that are likely to have been dug by dogs.
- exploring group health insurance for pets.
- sponsor social events, including night walks in the park with our dogs.
- participate in park fundraising events
- maintain open communication with the park and with other park constituencies.

2006 - 2007
Throughout the battle to make off-leash legal, Prospect Park was continually cited as the crowning example of what responsible off-leash could accomplish. A big thanks to all of you out there for making off-leash work.

Prospect Park’s traditional 5pm hours must be reinstated. Only then will our Mission truly be accomplished...

“Dogs are our link to paradise. They don’t know evil or jealousy or discontent. To sit with a dog on a hillside on a glorious afternoon is to be back in Eden, where doing nothing was not boring -- it was peace.”

-- Milan Kundera

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Spring 2007
MORE THERAPY DOGS OF PROSPECT PARK

Left: Denali, a handsome Italian Spinoni, when not dragging his daddy around Prospect Park, does his therapy work at Methodist Hospital. Right: This handsome Beagle, Shiloh by name, is an experienced therapy dog who may be temporarily “unemployed” after lifting his leg nonchalantly in the wrong place. (We love you, Shiloh!) If YOUR DOG is a therapy dog, please do send us a photo of your pup for publication in a future issue of Fido Speaks. Thank you and keep up the good work! We’re proud of all of all of you!

Spring Calendar

Coffee Bark - Sat., March 3rd
Coffee Bark - Sat., April 7th
Coffee Bark - Sat., May 5th
Coffee Bark - Sat., Jne 2nd

00th Coffee Bark/Event - Sat, July 14th (moved to avoid July 4th Weekend)

Memorial Service for Our Departed Dogs -Sat, May 19th

Fido in Prospect Park

Speaks

is a seasonal publication of the Prospect Park FIDO Community

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