

Dear dog lover,

The crew at The Better Companion would like to wish you, your family and your furry friend(s) a wonderful holiday season and a **Merry Christmas!** Thank you for allowing us to be a part of your life in the year 2008, and we hope you join us again for 2009!

We have some exciting crew-additions, which will ensure a flawless schedule even when Claudia and Frank are not available. You may already know the instructors Kat (agility) and Rose (behavior classes), and Cindi, my office assistant. Also joining are Krystal for day care, instructing and private lessons, and Karla for day care during the summer. Please give them a warm welcome when you meet them!

Please note, we're closed for Christmas Dec 21 until Jan 4. If you'd like to schedule daycare for the first week in January, call us! We'll check the phone, but not our emails during this time.

On another note, kennel cough is raving through the Valley. One veterinary clinic stated 5 new cases each day. We had a couple sick dogs at the facility as well. Please, make sure your kennel cough vaccine is up to date before you come to the facility! The nasal vaccine can give faster protection, but only for 6 months at-a-time.

Enjoy this month's edition,
Claudia

This month's story (at the end of this email): "A dog's job – fulfilling life!"

Thinking of any resolutions for 2009 about your dog's behavior? In need for that last-minute Christmas gift? Call or email us, we can help!!!

Mushing and Skijor seminars now scheduled! We'll take three Sundays in February to offer seminars in mushing and skijoring. You can sign up for single or multiple days in any combination.

Sunday, Feb 8: Mushing I - without your dog: \$55

- What equipment do I need? Connecting the dogs to the sled, the harness, booties, musher's gear
- Making your own lines from polyrope (material will be provided)
- The sled – parts, types, driving techniques
- Practical training – sled pulled by snowmachine

Sunday, Feb 15: Mushing II – with your 1-2 dogs: \$75 (Mushing I+II: \$120)

- Safely hooking up the dog(s), "Line Out!"-command
- Practice with your own dog team (1-2 dogs)
- Teaching the dog(s) to pull despite handler being behind them on the sled

- Safe mushing – uphill, downhill, curves, other teams
- How to teach directions
- After the run: checking the dogs for injuries – what if?

Sunday, Feb 22: Skijor Seminar: \$55

For intermediate cross-country skiers – one dog per skier.

- Learn to ski with your dog
- Teach your dog to run in front of you
- Part indoors, then outdoors on trail (at the dog training facility)

We still have room in some of the January and February classes: Puppy 1 – Preschool, Foundation Class (overflow class), and Elementary School in January, Puppy 2 – Kindergarten, Rally College and Agility (intermediate and advanced) in February.

Below you'll find:

- 1) Dates and times of upcoming classes
- 2) How to sign up for the classes
- 3) Information on the Open Play Times
- 4) This month's story: Poll: A dog's job – fulfilling life!

1) DATES AND TIMES OF UPCOMING CLASSES:

Behavior classes starting Jan 14th/15th:

Instructor: Claudia

All classes will run for seven weeks and end Feb 25th/26th.

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

Wednesday 6:15-7:15: [Overflow Foundation Class](#) (first week: 6-8:30pm without the dogs)

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

Thursday 5-6pm: [Overflow Puppy 2 - Kindergarten](#) FULL

Thursday 6:15-7:15: [Puppy 2 - Kindergarten](#) FULL

Thursday 7:30-8:30: [Elementary School](#)

Behavior classes starting Feb 2nd:

Instructor: Claudia

All classes will run for seven weeks and end Mar 16th.

Monday 6:15-7:15pm: [Puppy 2 - Kindergarten](#)

Monday 7:30-8:30pm: [Rally College \(or Rally practice\)](#)

Behavior classes starting Feb 7th:

Instructor: Claudia

All classes will run for seven weeks and end Mar 21st.

Saturday 10-11am: [Puppy 1 – Preschool](#) (first week: 10-12:30pm without the dogs)

Saturday 11:15-12:15: [Foundation Class](#) (first week: 10-12:30pm without the dogs)

Agility classes starting Feb 7th:

Instructors: Claudia/Kat

These classes will run for six weeks and end Mar 14th.

Saturday 1:30-3pm (including set-up): [Agility Puppy/Beginners](#) **FULL**

Saturday 2:45-4:15pm (including set-up): [Agility Intermediate](#)

Saturday 4-5:30pm (including set-up): [Agility Advanced](#)

Saturday 5:15-6:45pm (including set-up): [Agility Advanced Trial](#)

Mushing Seminar Feb 8th + 15th:

Instructor: Frank – two time Iditarod finisher

Sunday, Feb 8th, 10am-2pm: [Mushing I – without dogs](#)

Sunday, Feb 15th, 10am-1pm or 1-4pm: [Mushing II – with 1-2 dogs](#)

Skijor Seminar Feb 22nd:

Instructor: Kirsten – member of the US National Skijor Team

Sunday, Feb 22nd, 10am-2pm: [Theory and practice – for intermediate skiers](#)

Also coming up 2009:

High School (Canine Good Citizen) in March

More agility classes in April

Tricks 'N Clicks Class in May

2) HOW TO SIGN UP FOR THE CLASSES:

It's easy now!!! 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**. After clicking on "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.

Please note **our registration policy: Only the payment will hold your spot.** Spots are reserved in the order I 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. If I can't get you into that class, your payment will either be used for the next available class, for another class you wish to join instead, or fully reimbursed!

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 filled out the registration form, you can email me the number of the voucher, mail the voucher to us or drop it off at the facility.

Reserve your spot! 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 fully reimbursed 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 started. **We now can take credit card payments over the phone and at the facility.**

3) SOCIAL HOUR - OPEN PLAY TIMES:

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. First-timers: bring your vaccination papers, in case we ask for them!

Fee: \$7 at the door, punch card \$35 for 6 visits. Vaccinated dogs only (5-way/DHPPi, dogs over 6 mo: Rabies, Bordetella).

Every Tuesday AND Friday:

5-6pm: toy and small dogs up to 30#

6-7pm: puppies and adult dogs 40-60#

7-8pm: Adults over 60#

If the discrepancy between sizes/temperaments of dogs is too big within one group, we will either have a special section fenced off for the smaller/ more timid dogs of the group, or divide the dogs into indoors and outside play (if weather permits). This is to assure that everybody has fun and nobody gets overpowered.

We also give Canine Good Citizens a discount:

Is your dog a Canine Good Citizen? If your dog passed the CGC-test within the last 3 years, we'll give you a \$5 discount on your punch card for Open Play Times!

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).

4) A DOG'S JOB – FULFILLING LIFE!

Most of the over 400 dog breeds have been bred to be more than just a companion – they've been bred for a purpose, a JOB! They were bred for herding, hunting, protection, freight pulling, and all the varieties thereof. If you look up your dog's breed (or breeds, if you have an "all-American"), you can find out what your dog was originally bred for.

Very few dog breeds are bred for companionship only, but we all want our dogs to be just that. If you got your dog, (e.g. an Australian Shepherd or a Labrador Retriever) from a reputable breeder, chances are that you got a very healthy and energetic puppy. The "good" lines are the lines still bred for the original purpose, with a sound structure as described in their breed standard, that supports their strength in their field, for their JOB.

Why am I talking about all this? Because we often forget that our dog was bred to have a JOB. We expect our dogs to behave well around us, around kids, around other dogs, we expect them to stay on a ½ acre property that's not fenced, even while we're inside, and we believe they get everything when we walk them on a leash twice a day for 30 minutes.

Then we wonder why all of a sudden we need obedience classes, play times and daycare for our dogs, even though we remember the old times, where a dog was "just" living with us, without any of that, and seemed to be just fine! But, in the "old times", the neighbor was 40 acres away, the dog got to run ½ mile along with each car that came or left before reaching the property line, the dog spent outside all day hunting mice, rabbits and squirrels, or helping with the livestock like sheep or horses. They had their job, and often people were happy that their dog announced a visitor by barking loudly.

Nowadays, on smaller properties, with neighbors nearby, the kids busy with other activities than playing with the dog all day, some of our dogs are still looking for that job, how to stay busy, how to 'fight boredom'. That's when they develop habits we don't appreciate: barking at every noise and shadow, running off (after

something or nothing), “going up the walls”, and “always looking for trouble” are all typical behaviors for a dog without a JOB.

But if we don't have room or time for a flock of sheep for our herding breed, or don't want to go hunting with our hunting breed, or don't want our dog to announce each airplane as an intruder? We just need to find another job for them, something they can focus on instead. A good job gives the dog plenty of mental and physical stimulation, where the dog needs to solve problems, or concentrate on something, and hopefully uses his body as well, so that in the end the dog is plain tired – body and mind.

Last month's poll results gave you maybe already some ideas on how to keep your dog busy through the winter. Here's what I do with my dogs:

1) Sally, the Aussie/Husky-mix:

- To cope with her Aussie-related herding desire, which requires running, tight turns, fast reaction to the sheep's moves, and good off-leash control by the handler, we compete in agility. The sport of agility was invented for herding breeds, to test their skills in drive, speed, control, distance control, tight turns, and agility in uneven terrain.
- For the Husky in her, I taught Sally to either pull a tire/sled by herself, or to be in a small sled dog team. She now can run with my other two sled dogs in a team, or she pulls our firewood to the house, or our water. Sally also pulls the Christmas tree out of the woods, and if something is too heavy for her alone, either me or one of the sled dogs will help her.
- Since Sally is mostly too rough in her play with other dogs, I taught her to run along the outside of our fenced area, while other dogs are inside. She's not allowed to show any fence aggression, just running along and getting treats after each round. Then the other dogs run safely along the inside, having fun, too.
- When we go on camping trips, Sally gets to run along the snowmachine or Argo, which covers her old wolf-desire of running long distances, sometimes up to 50 miles in one weekend. Not only the running, but the experiences and stimuli along the trail tire her out and balance her moods.

2) Lucy, the Jack Russell Terrier:

- We allow Lucy to live her job as a protector of the territory, warning us about intruders by barking. She learned the command “quiet”, to keep the barking limited to real “intruders”, and to a short time. She gets treats for being quiet about an airplane, and for running to us away from the door after notifying us of a visitor.
- I also allow Lucy to hunt for mice, squirrels and sometimes rabbits or spruce hens. She gets high rewards for coming to me away from a hole or a track, and as long as she obeys, she's allowed to live her job

as a vermin hunter. We praise her highest when she catches a shrew in the building!

- Lucy's biggest 'job' is to keep us warm, and she cuddles with us under cover and in the sleeping bag 😊. This job is unfortunately not very tiring, but she enjoys staying warm with us. 😊
- For tiring her out, Lucy also got a 'job' in agility competition, even though she's not bred for actions like those specifically. That's one reason why she posed rather a challenge in agility training 😊. We conquered the difficulties, and have a little 'Speedy Gonzales' on the course now! Her natural talent would be earth dog training and lure coursing, and when I have time, I take her to lure coursing practice.

Both dogs enjoy walks through the neighborhood, some jogging or bicycling in the summer time, and learning new tricks in the evening at home. When Sally gets antsy, I feed her with a food dispenser toy, that keeps her busy for a little while.

I hope you got a little interested in researching your dog's natural talents and jobs, and if you need help in finding ways how to allow your dog to have a JOB, just email or call us, and we'll brainstorm with you!

Happy holidays,
Claudia