

Dear Dog Lover,

Our monthly story at the end of this email: “Mushing and Skijoring – Winter Recreation with our Pet Dogs”

Weather was good to us and dropped some more snow on our house-trail, to cushion the way for the attendees of our Skijor Workshop. Every single dog ended up being a skijor dog, and made his or her handler a proud skijorer mom or dad. The same happened the week before, when we taught regular pet dogs to pull a mushing sled. All the dogs did really great, especially the ones with the pre-requisite of having attended our weight pulling class last fall.

If you'd like to join those classes next year with your dog over 1 year, make sure to check our schedule for the weight pulling class, usually coming up some time in Oct, maybe late September already.

March offers our popular Tricks 'N Clicks class, during prime-time from 7:30-8:30pm, on Wednesdays. If you'd like to improve your clicker skills, or your dog's retrieving skills, this is your class! Teach your dog to bring the slippers instead of chewing them, to collect and clean up the toys instead of spreading them all-over, to show off with neat tricks like roll-over, jumping through a hoop, or whatever else you have in mind. Are you a lazy trainer? Most of the exercises can be taught from the lazy-chair or couch!

We added another P2 class starting in April: Due to the high demand, we added a Tuesday evening P2 class from 5-6pm, starting April 6th, 2010. This class is for Puppy 1 graduates only.

At this time of the year, **we highly recommend Bordetella-vaccines for all dogs visiting us.** The kennel cough is usually raging through the Valley at this time of the year, and our facility won't be left out. Without vaccination, your dog will more likely need medical attention (including antibiotics) and could be sick for three weeks, with the vaccine, usually no medical attention is needed and it's over within 1 week, if not faster.

Like last time you'll find all changes from the February 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 snow, and the increasing daylight with every day,
Claudia

Below you'll find:

- 1) Information on upcoming events**
- 2) REVISED: Dates and times of upcoming classes**
- 3) How to sign up for the classes**
- 4) Information on the Open Play Times**

5) This month's story: Mushing and Skijoring – Winter Recreation with our Pet Dogs

1) INFORMATION ON UPCOMING EVENTS:

No event is planned for the next couple months.

2) DATES AND TIMES OF UPCOMING CLASSES:

Behavior classes starting Mar 10th/11th:

Instructor: Claudia

All classes will run for seven weeks, and end Apr 21/22.

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

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

Wednesday 7:30-8:30: [Tricks 'N Clicks](#)

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

Thursday 6:15-7:15: **FC or P1** (first week: 6-8:30pm without the dogs)

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

Agility classes starting Mar 27th:

Instructors: Claudia/Kat

These classes will run for six weeks, with a break on Apr 24 (Agility Trial) and end May 8. (Agility trial May 15 ☺)

The following times could still change, depending on which classes we'll need to offer double.

Saturday 10-11:15am (including set-up): [Agility Puppy/Beginners](#)

Saturday 11:15-12:45pm (including change): [Agility Puppy/Beginners](#)

Saturday 12:15-1:45pm (including set-up): [Agility Intermediate](#)

Lunch break: 1:45-2:30pm

Saturday 2:30-4pm (including change): [Agility Intermediate](#)

Saturday 3:30-5:30pm (including set-up + change): [Agility Advanced](#)

Saturday 5-7pm (including set-up + take-down): [Agility Advanced Trial](#)

Behavior classes starting Apr 6th:

Instructor: Claudia

All classes will run for seven weeks, and end May 18th.

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

Tuesday 6:15-7:15: [Puppy 1 – Preschool](#) (first week: 6-8:30pm without the dogs)

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

Behavior classes starting May 12th/13th:

Instructor: Claudia

All classes will run for seven weeks, and end June 23/24.

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

Wednesdays 6:15-7:15: **FC or P1** (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: [Rally College](#)

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

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

Agility classes starting June 5th:

Instructors: Claudia/Kat

These classes will run for six weeks, with a **break on July 3rd (4th-of-July-weekend)** and end July 17.

Possibly new times:

Saturday 10am-12pm (including set-up and change): [Agility Puppy/Beginners](#)

Saturday 11:30am-1pm (including change): [Agility Intermediate](#)

Lunch break: 1-2pm

Saturday 2-3:30pm (including change): [Agility Intermediate](#)

Saturday 3-4:30pm (including set-up): [Agility Advanced](#)

Saturday 4:30-6pm (including set-up + change): [Agility Advanced](#)

Saturday 5:30-7:30pm (including set-up + take-down): [Agility Advanced Trial](#)

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**. 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 number of the voucher, 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) 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. Vaccinated dogs only (5-way/DHPPi, dogs over 6 mo: Rabies, Bordetella). We also recommend having the dog dewormed or a fecal sample checked.

At this time of the year, **we highly recommend Bordetella-vaccines for all dogs visiting us.** The kennel cough is usually raging through the Valley at this time of the year, and our facility won't be left out. Without vaccination, your dog will more likely need medical attention (including antibiotics) and could be sick for three weeks, with the vaccine, usually no medical attention is needed and it's over within 1 week, if not faster.

First-timers: bring your vaccination papers, we want to see them! Dogs over 6 months, please for the first time 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) 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 up to 25#

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

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

8-9pm: Large Dogs over 60# (if needed)

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) MUSHING AND SKIJORING – WINTER RECREATION WITH OUR PET DOGS

I'm now a recreational musher, using three sled dogs and my pet dog to get around. This hasn't always been that way. I actually started out with pet dogs only. I followed the mushers to their races, helped them getting their teams ready, and once the race was over, I borrowed a sled, another pet dog, and off we went. Just two dogs, both 100% pet dogs, were hooked up to a sled and we traveled over the shortest race loop, usually about 3 miles.

I remember one time, when I had my Maggie, the stray dog from Greece. I borrowed another pet dog, I believe it was some Border Collie or mix thereof, pretty laid back, but still eager to do something. The sled I borrowed was 'naked', without a sled bag, start-line, or snow hook. Maggie already had an idea of staying in front, lining out, pulling a little at the beginning, and Gee and Haw (right and left). She just needed a supportive puller, otherwise she'd stop after 500 yards.

I hooked the dogs to the sled, and told them to Sit-Stay. Both knew that command from their pet dog training. That gave me enough time to walk back to the runners of the sled, before I'd release them with the "OK" and tell Maggie to "Mush!". She started pulling the sled and her neighbor forward, and it didn't take long until he understood the principle of staying in front of me, leaning into the harness and running. Maggie soon laid back a little and left 75% of the pulling to him, the stronger dog.

I continued following the sprint races, because they offered the best trails for mushing. The mushers soon asked me to take their retired sled dogs with me, and I often had four dogs in my team, to get more dogs exercised. Their owners loved it. For the fairness of the trail organizers, I had to officially enter the race, to pay my dues for using the trail. I didn't care about my finishing placement, and often ended last or just before last. At one race, the retired sled dogs were so overwhelmingly fast, that I had to put Maggie in the sled, because I couldn't slow them down enough for her. Then the next race I got big-headed, left her at home, and raced with retired sled dogs. We finished ninth out of over 40 teams, pretty remarkable.

But I felt bad for having deserted my pet dog, who was the reason why I wanted to mush, and from then on picked the dogs I would take to fit her energy level and speed, so that I could for sure take Maggie with me and make it fun for her. I'm truly a pet dog musher, and the racing bug never got me again. Maybe I just never had the right pet dog for that. 😊

My pet dog Sally didn't like being hooked up with our sled dogs when she was young. She behaved like a donkey, choosing free-running over being clipped into the harness.

But I couldn't allow her to free-run with the team, because she distracted our puppies in their training, and we met other teams on the trail, which Sally loved to visit, instead of ignoring them. I could control her when I walked her on the trails, but not when I was busy running a team.

The choice now was to either just keep walking, or to not take Sally. I didn't like either. I started working with her one-on-one pulling a tire, then a sled with just one other dog. She finally understood, that we would actually get to go further as a sled dog team than through walking alone, and that I wouldn't push her to go with a team averaging 10mph. We averaged 6-7mph, that was a speed Sally accepted. We actually helped some sled dog puppies overcoming their fears by taking them into our slow and small team, and some of those puppies ended up being in the Iditarod team of another musher later.

Now I have three real sled dogs, can hook up my Sally with them, and we go out on the trails. We take Lucy with us riding in the sled, and can mush 10-15 miles in one stretch (with short breaks). We're out for about 2:15hr for 10 miles, averaging a little less than 5mph, including the rest times. Sally doesn't really pull much, but enjoys the scenery ☺.

Thinking that other pet dog owners would enjoy that as well, we offered a mushing workshop to our clients.

And it was a huge success! We helped 6 owners of pet dogs to turn their dogs into sled dogs. All dogs made huge progress. Sure most of the dogs were northern breeds, from the Siberian Husky to the Malamute and a couple Husky- or Malamute-mixes, but we also had a pure-bred Aussie and an Aussie-Collie mix performing well. Some of the dogs learned by themselves, some we paired with one of our sled dogs, and they learned from them. We also found a good source for sleds in Fairbanks, for recreational purposes and affordable.

Trail users watch out, there're several more mushers out there now!!!

Happy trails,
Claudia

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