

Dear Dog Lover,

Our monthly story at the end of this email: “Maggie - Lessons From A Stray”

June has lots of activities to offer! Choose between Agility, Flyball or Nose Work, there’s something that fits YOUR and your dog’s schedule, interest and talent.

Agility is the first one to start June 4th, being held each Saturday. Beginner classes are at 10am, and as you move up the different levels, your class will move towards later. Agility classes are held year-round, but only two classes will be **held outside on the grass**, the June/July and the July/August classes. Six dogs maximum per class.

Flyball gives you the unique opportunity to check this sport out first in form of a **seminar, held Sunday, June 19th**, and then follow-up with the class on Wednesdays. With **four student dogs only**, this class gives you a ton of practice with your dog. We need **sign-ups for the seminar latest by June 12th**, so please don’t delay! We’ll also run Flyball practices for the graduates of earlier Flyball Beginner classes on Wednesday evenings. Time TBA.

Nose Work starts June 28th, running on Tuesday evenings. This is the newest fast-growing sport around dogs. Taking elements from detection work, dogs will learn to alert to a certain scent. This sport is **easy on the handlers**, no obedience is required, it tires the dogs out and can easily be copied at home. Six dogs maximum per class.

In July we continue our “summer series” of workshops with the long-awaited Recall-Workshop. Please check back with us about the details of this workshop, as they’re still in the making. Due to the high interest, we’re planning on allowing 10-12 working spots plus auditors, and making it an all-day event, about 5-6 hours. You can already email us your interest, and we’ll keep you posted personally.

The online calendar can look very confusing. Please don’t hesitate to call or email us with any questions about upcoming classes or practices

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

Enjoy spring time,
Claudia

Below you'll find:

- 1) Information on upcoming events/ workshops**
- 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: Maggie - Lessons From A Stray**

1) INFORMATION ON UPCOMING EVENTS:

Sunday, July 10th: Recall Workshop (R WS)

10am – 4pm, maybe longer... Fee: \$120 working spot, \$60 auditing spot. Including lunch.

Details TBA

Sunday, Aug 14th: Loose Leash Walking Workshop (LLW WS)

9am - 12pm, Fee: \$60 working spot, \$30 auditing spot.

Details TBA

Saturday, Sep 10: Responsible Dog Ownership Day at the Regine Dog Training Facility

We have lots of plans already – stay tuned for more info!

Some highlights: agility, nose work and other demos (who wants to demo???), swap meet, meet the breed, free hot dogs and cookies, ...

CGC-test, First Aid for Dogs class (fee applies).

September 2011: Delta Society Pet Partner Workshop and evaluation

Details and fees TBA

November 2011: TTouch Workshop

Details and fees TBA

2) DATES AND TIMES OF UPCOMING CLASSES:

Drop-in practices running right now:

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

Nose Work (maximum 6 dogs – please call or email to reserve a spot):

Supervisors: Claudia, January

- Beginners and Intermediate: **No drop-ins**. Now regular class, see below for start dates and times
- Advanced: Tuesdays 7:45-8:45pm –**starting May 31. Field trip on June 12.**

Rally Practice:

Supervisors: Claudia, Ella-Kate

- Rally Practice for Rally College graduates: **Three Wednesdays, 7:30-8:30pm: 7/20; 7/27; 8/3.**

Flyball Practice:

Supervisor: Karla

- Flyball Practice for Flyball Beginner Class graduates: **Four Wednesdays, time TBA: 6/22, 6/29, 7/6, 7/13.**

Agility classes starting June 4th:

Instructors: Claudia, Kat

The classes will run for 6 weeks, with a break on July 2nd (in observance of Independence Day) and end July 16th.

We might add a second beginners class, which will then shift the times around a little.

We'll try to keep them within 1/2hr of the times posted below.

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

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

Lunch break: 1-2pm

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

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

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

Puppy class starting June 19th:

Instructor: January

The class will run for seven weeks, with a break on July 3rd (Independence Day weekend), and end Aug 7th.

Puppy 1 – Preschool (first week: 6:30-8:30pm without the dogs): **Sunday 2-3pm**

Introduction to Flyball on June 19th:

Instructor: Karla

Sunday 10am-12pm: Intro to Flyball (without your dog)

Flyball Beginners Class starting June 22nd:

Instructor: Karla

The class will run for 4 weeks and end 13th.

Wednesdays 6-7pm: Flyball Beginners (with your dog, pre-requisite: student attended Flyball Intro)

Nose Work Classes starting June 28th:

Instructors: January, Claudia

The class will run for 6 weeks and end Aug 2nd.

[Nose Work Beginners](#): Tuesdays 5:15-6:15pm (starts WITH the dogs)
[Nose Work Intro to Odor](#): Tuesdays 6:30-7:30pm (starts WITH the dogs)

Recall Workshop July 10th:

Instructor: Claudia

The workshop will run for 6 hours.

[Recall Workshop](#): Sunday 10am-4pm

Behavior classes starting July 18/19th:

Instructor: Claudia

All classes will run for seven weeks, and end Aug 31/Sep 1.

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

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

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

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

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

Behavior class starting Aug 10th:

Instructor: Claudia

High School runs for 4 weeks and ends Aug 31st.

[High School](#): Wednesday 7:30-8:30pm

Upcoming classes:

This summer will be filled with more Agility outdoors, Nose Work and Flyball action besides our regular classes! We'll try to find room for **Rally and Flyball Practice** as well as **more workshops, like the leash walk training** Watch our schedule for upcoming classes and events.

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:

Daycare and Open Play are closed on Memorial Day, May 30, and on 4th of July!

For Labor Day weekend in September, we'll possibly cancel Open Play for Fri, 9/2 and Mon, 9/5. Daycare will be open on Friday, and closed on Labor Day, Sep 5.

Doggy Daycare: Our regular hours are now from 6am-7pm. That means NO SURCHARGE for drop-offs any time after 6am!

The fee for the monthly daycare is \$325. We need to know your dog before coming to daycare. Also appointments/ reservation are necessary. We're getting full on some days now, so please remember to

- 1) reserve your spot for daycare and
- 2) we might mark you off if you didn't show, if we had to turn away another dog that day.

Reminder: For all daycare participants the **worm status is only good for 6 months**. We ask everybody to either deworm their dog or have a fecal sample checked every 6 months.

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.

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 our 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: puppies, 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 adult dogs over 60# (indoors: 8 dogs max; outdoors: 10 dogs max)

8-9pm: By appointment only –for evaluations. \$35

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) MAGGIE - LESSONS FROM A STRAY

I started my dog experience by walking dogs for others. That meant in Munich, Germany mostly off-leash, therefore lots of obedience training. Then with my first own dog “Jumper”, a Collie-mix, at age 10 months from the pound, I also learned how to care for a dog full-time. Finding good food, the time to walk and train him, and people who can care for him if I would be stuck at college. I felt everything went very well and I considered myself a responsible dog owner. Going for 2 longer walks that ended with a feeding at home, 2 short potty walks in between and no feeding of table scraps, were all part of the well established routine.

My second dog “Maggie” came to me through an ad in the paper and was exactly what I was looking for – at least from the ad’s statement: Husky/Shepherd-mix, female, 12 months old, looking for a home. I was at that time already introduced to the mushing community, but was too scared to take on a full-blown Husky while living in an apartment and still going to school; so the mixture with a rather obedient breed seemed perfect. Already out of the puppy stages, but still formable, and a female were fitting my wish list perfectly.

When Maggie came to me, I learned that all these criteria weren’t enough to get “my perfect dog”. And it wasn’t easy to fill Jumper’s shoes anyway. First of all, Maggie’s legs were too short and her ears too big to resemble the athletic Husky I had in mind. She

looked very cute though, like a gremlin, and in the end that wasn't important either. But she was most likely older than 12 months, and a full-blown stray dog from Greece, knowing all the tricks of the trade to survive.

I tried for one full year to establish a bond with her. Took her everywhere with me, did my walks with her, fed her afterwards good dog food (I thought), and at some point even took her in bed with me in the evening for extra cuddle sessions. On our walks she kept trying to creep away from me and took off whenever I tried to have her off-leash. She could be gone for hours, until I found her again, either in the shelter or at other people's homes, where she got fed kitty food and turkey steak. My dog food couldn't compete with that.

She actually disliked my dog food so much, that when I mixed a bowl of cooked rice with exactly 20 kibble, there'd be exactly 20 kibble left in the bowl, but not one corn of rice. It took me months to find the brand she'd finally eat, since I still felt she shouldn't eat table scraps or human food at all

My summary after one year was this: She somehow accepts me in the leadership position, showing respect by leaving the couch as soon as I sat on it, wanting to go through doorways after me, not before me, and keeping a respectful distance to me, accepting my evening cuddling sessions, not enjoying them. The missing part was a bond. I felt like a stranger lived in my apartment. When we'd leave the house, it was as if she wanted to say: "I don't care what you're doing now, but I need to go and search for some good food. See you later!" Without a leash I just couldn't keep her with me, and with a leash it felt like a huge punishment to her.

I found a friend of mine on home vacation, who was willing to house Maggie for his remaining 3 weeks off his job, to help me figure out what to do about Maggie. Re-home her? Bringing her back to Greece to freedom and starvation and risk of getting caught and killed or shot? I was at my wit's end. I couldn't find anyone who wanted a leash-dog, and Greece wasn't a good option either, so I took her back.

While my friend had her, he never walked her off his property. He had an old Siberian Husky, and spent all his time in his home or yard, doing some hobby carpentering. His pockets were always full with Frolic, a cheap semi-moist dog food, and whenever he felt a wet nose at his hand, it went in the pocket and came out with a couple pieces. An all-day buffet for the dogs. When some neighbor kids came and asked to walk my Maggie, she didn't want to go with them! She didn't want to leave her steady food source.

Maggie came back overweight, but happy. She was for the first time really happy to see me! So she must have missed me somewhat? Maybe there was a bond I couldn't see? I started changing my routine: From now on she got table scraps during the day, dog food BEFORE any walk, and I took treats or semi-moist dog food with me on our walks. Our relationship changed. Now I had something valuable for her: food! And I could compete to some degree with what's to be found out there.

Maggie still liked wandering off and never became a reliable off-leash dog. Too often did she get highly rewarded for her straying behavior: besides her love for hunting squirrels, mice, rabbits and ducks, she would pick to follow people home who'd give her canned cat food, pork ribs from the grill, turkey steaks freshly cooked just for her, hamburger from the lunch wagon, and once she crashed a wedding party at a Greek restaurant and received plenty of their BBQ'd piglet. Since dogs are allowed in restaurants in Germany, nobody was worried about the dog being there for 3 hours, before they found out there was no owner...

But we bonded!!! I taught her that if she'd bring back a tennis ball, that was worth FOOD. So she started to retrieve them, to get her exchange. We worked on some obedience, lure coursing and then lots of agility. She excelled at the latter two. The plastic bag at lure coursing would always bring Maggie back to me, and this was the most exciting activity of her life. And even though she never got any special MACH title or higher level agility awards, she excelled in my eyes, because in the end I could trust her off-leash in the ring, even if a squirrel would appear in a tree nearby! Every picture of Maggie during agility shows her head turned towards me – I had her full attention the whole time!

Until she passed away at age 14 or so, we enjoyed the mentioned dog sports, mushing, hiking on-leash, and eating together (me the meat, her the scraps ☺). Until she passed away, she never enjoyed cuddling, but endured it for the following reward. She would lie on the couch next to my husband Frank, but as soon as I would come, she'd leave. As she lay in the truck between me and Frank on her last trip to the vet, she still tried hard to curl up so that her head wouldn't fall in my lap, and I'd struggle between enjoying her head in my lap because she was too weak to lift it off and helping her to be comfortable by keeping her head off my lap.

She was the dog I learned a ton of lessons from. How to read a dog's body language to determine ranking, how to spoil a dog rotten just to compete with the real world out there, how to train a dog by finding what IS rewarding for THEM, and how to have realistic expectations of the dog's behavior. Maggie was a fine dog, and I'm proud to have been part of her life.

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