

Dear Dog Lover,

Our monthly story at the end of this email: **“Mushing with Pet Dogs”**

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

If you receive this email in full html, you can just [click on the events underlined and in blue](#) to get to the correct page on our web site!

Happy Holidays!!!

Check out our store for any doggy gifts for your dog-loving friends and family. Harnesses, snowsuits, toys, treats, or just a **gift certificate** for either the store or even any of our services!

We'll be closed Dec 19th - Jan 1st.

➤ **Open Play Time in 2011/2012:**

Monday and Friday OPT will run until Dec 16, before we **close down for the holidays**. Starting January 2012 we'll offer OPT only on Fridays. The added “Stop and Go” has already helped tremendously to keep the dogs from getting too aroused during play, and improved the recall in all the dogs.

- **Skijor Workshop**: We're now ready to take sign-ups for our Skijor Workshop Feb 5th 2012. Learn the tricks of the trade from one of the best skijor racers of Alaska and let us help you to teach your dog to run ahead of you. For the Skijor Workshop you'll need your own skis and poles and should be an intermediate skier. We have limited loaner equipment and also harnesses, skijor belts and lines for sale, if you want to reserve yours for the workshop.
- **Mushing Workshop**: Take your pet dog(s) out for a ride! Read more about this in our **monthly story** below.
Mushing Part I on Feb 12th 2012, 10am - 2pm: Make your own lines; driving a sled - practice
Mushing Part II on Feb 19th 2012, 10am - 1pm: driving a sled with your own dog(s) - practice
All equipment provided - just try this out!

➤ **Classes Feb/Mar 2012:**

- **Treibball** and **Nose Work** will move from Tuesdays to Mondays in February. **Starting February 6**, we'll offer TB Intermediate and NW Beginners and Practice. Both are **wonderful activities** to carry over to your home **requiring only little space**.

- **Does your dog have C.L.A.S.S.?** Practice real-life skills in our CLASS-BA Course **starting March 6**, then test your dog to earn a Bachelor's degree! B.A. skills include wait at the door, come and leashing up manners, loose leash walking and attention, meet and greet (people), leave it, wait for the food bowl, stay, and settle. This course is a 6-week class, with maximum 6 dogs. All exercises will be practiced in form of games and role plays, including some higher level (M.A., Ph.D.) exercises each week as well. Taking the ES or HS class in January can help preparing for this class.

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

Enjoy the snow,
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: **Mushing with Pet Dogs**

1) Information on upcoming events:

Skijor Workshop: \$60 or pre-registration \$55

For intermediate cross-country skiers.

- 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, or if conditions require outdoors at Knik Lake)

Mushing Workshop: \$140 or pre-registration \$130

Mushing I - without your dog: \$70 or pre-registration \$65

- 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

Mushing II – with your 1-2 dogs: \$80 or pre-registration \$75 (

- 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?

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. One card for all practices!

 Nose Work Advanced For 'Intro to Odor' Graduates:

Supervisor: January

Until January 2012 on Tuesdays, time and location TBA per weekly email. No Sunday practice at this point.

Dates for practice are: Dec 6, 13, Jan 3, 10, 17; **No practice Dec 20 - Jan 1.**

From February 2012 on Mondays, 7:45-8:45 at the facility

Dates for practice are: Feb 6, 13, 20, 27, Mar 5, 12.

Reservation preferred.

 Flyball Practice:

Supervisor: Karla

No further practices planned so far.

If the demand is there for some **indoors box work** at our facility, Karla can set something up for a Tuesday on or after Nov 29 around 7:45-8:45pm. **Contact us or Karla if you're interested!**

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2012 !!!

Behavior classes starting Jan 11/12th:

Instructors: Claudia, January

High School will run 4 weeks and end Feb 2nd. All other classes will run for six weeks, and end Feb 15/16.

Puppy 1 – Preschool: Wednesday 5-6pm

Foundation Class: Wednesday 6:15-7:15 (Instructor: Claudia)

Foundation Class: Wednesday 7:30-8:30pm (Instructor: January)

Puppy 2 - Kindergarten: Thursdays 5-6pm

Elementary School: Thursday 6:15-7:15pm

High School: Thursdays 7:30-8:30pm

Behavior classes starting Feb 5th:

Instructor: January

The class will run for six weeks, and end Mar 11th, 2012.

Puppy 1 – Preschool Sunday 5-6pm
Foundation Class: Sunday 6:15-7:15pm

Sports classes starting Feb 6th:

Instructors: Karla, January

The classes will run for six weeks, and end Mar 12th, 2012.

Treibball Intermediate: Monday 5:15-6:15pm (set-up starts at 5pm; Instructor: Karla)

Nose Work Beginners: Monday 6:30-7:30pm (Instructor: January)

Agility classes starting Feb 11th:

Instructors: Claudia, Kat

The classes will run for 6 weeks, and end Mar 17 (unless we cancel one of the classes for a trial...).

Agility Puppy/Beginners: Saturday 10am-12pm (class 10:30am-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) - if at Sirius Ranch, we'll start at 4:30pm

Agility Trialing 2: Saturday 5-6:30pm (class:5-6pm) - if at Sirius Ranch, we'll run from 5:30-7pm (for 6-9 dogs)

Upcoming classes:

We'll work on offering Mushing and Skijoring again this winter, coming up Jan/Feb 2012.

Feb: more agility classes, Nose Work beginner, Treibball Intermediate

Mar: C.L.A.S.S. - BA courses on Tuesdays! Rally College on Wednesdays

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. Please note that **some workshops have their own cancellation policy**, even though they use the same registration form as the classes. Take advantage of our **pre-registration fee** by signing

up a minimum of **14 days before the start of your class**. Different deadlines might apply to some of the workshops and seminars.

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 six 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 can take credit card payments over the phone and at the facility.**

4) Doggy Daycare and Open Play Times:

Doggy Daycare: Offered on Tuesdays and Thursdays 6am-7pm, with their playtime ending at 5pm, at which time they'll be kenneled if not picked up before.

Open Play Time: **Canceled for Dec 19 - 30 (Holidays)**

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 (large dogs) is limited to 8 dogs, and reservations can be made in advance. Just call us and we explain the details.

Every Monday AND Friday until Dec 16, after Jan 1st 2012 on Fridays only:

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 our web page www.bettercompanion.com for info on classes, facility, and schedule, read testimonies from other students, print out the registration form and more.

Or contact us by email or phone: info@bettercompanion.com, (907) 357-2521.

5) MUSHING WITH PET DOGS

I always liked to cover more ground than what I could with just walking when taking my dog out for a stroll. And I had a dog (my greek stray Maggie) I couldn't trust off-leash, and needed more activities for her. In the summer, I'd use my bike, sometimes taking dog and bike further out of town with the Metro (S-Bahn in Munich) and bicycling there, or bicycling from home until we all got tired, then taking the S-Bahn back home.

Then winter came, I was stuck with walking again. That was until I got involved with the mushing community, took a mushing weekend course, and helped as a veterinarian at some of the sprint races. And through a house-sitting job I found a retired musher with two old Siberian Huskies, of which I could loan one (Blackie) to have a two-dog team! I started bicycling with him and my dog Maggie on cooler summer and fall days, until the snow came. I didn't have a sled though, and no skis either. I never was a good skier, so I liked the sled version way more from the beginning. It gave me more control, especially about the slowing down and stopping the dogs. Which might be no problem if you can ski a little better than me 😊.

One time I took both dogs (Blackie and Maggie) with me to one of the sprint races, not entering them though. The smallest class is a 4-dog class on about 4 miles, and the slowest team entered would still be at least double as fast as my 10yr old Blackie and Maggie. But I was able to loan a sled from one of the mushers and drive down the trail for the 4-dog teams after the Saturday heat was over. They almost started a search crew, it took me that long! I had fun! I was out and about, faster than walking pace, and easier, too. We took lots of breaks, enjoyed the scenery and I pedaled along with them, being the third dog of the team.

I kept loaning a second dog for my Maggie to mush the trails after a race was over. I had to go to the races, which were often 100 miles away, because in Munich we wouldn't have the snow coverage. We had soggy winters, and trails were often rather muddy. Most mushers trained with carts then, that were too heavy for a 2-dog team. Bike riding on those trails wasn't fun either. And it was humid cold. So I'd just follow the races wherever they were offered.

Besides my 10-yr old Siberian Husky loaner dog, I also loaned other pet dogs from people that wanted to have me try out their dogs. By that time Maggie had learned to

stay in front of the sled and to start pulling on command, but she wouldn't pull for too long. She showed the other dog how it's done, and then held back a little to let the other dog do the work. I still pedaled as the third dog, and got my exercise that way. One time I loaned a well-behaved Border Collie to pull the sled with Maggie. That dog had no idea about staying up front while I walk back to the sled. She wanted to follow me. So I when in front of the team again, told both dogs to Sit and Stay, and voila, could get back to the sled to release them from there. Maggie knew to shoot forward, and pulled the BC with her. Soon the BC started pulling and enjoying the run.

After about 1 mile I saw that the BC had to eliminate and she didn't know what to do about it. She had a good recall and I could trust her off-leash. So I stopped the sled, then went up front to unhook her, and off she went to do her business. Then I called her back, hooked her up again and with another Sit-Stay, we started up again and finished our round.

When I got better on the sled and more comfortable, I started loaning retired racing sled dogs for my team, and up to three dogs. Now with a complete 4-dog team, I had to enter the race, to pay my trail user fee (and I could have done that with 2 dogs as well). One time the other dogs were so fast, I had to load Maggie on the sled after the first ½ mile of the 4-mile track. Another time I knew the other dogs would be too fast again, and left her in the car. I became 9th of over 40 mushers, racing with the dog-of-the-year from the last year, just having been retired after a winning career as a leader in the 6-dog class. It was fun, scary and a blast, but I also realized, it was without Maggie. That wasn't my initial intention, and I never raced again with dogs that were too fast for Maggie. I went back to two dogs again, rather taking another pet dog whom Maggie could train and then let do the pulling work.

When my husband Frank started training for and participating in the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race, we'd sometimes have dogs that recuperated from an injury or puppies that were a little scared in the bigger teams. I'd happily run them as a 2 to 4-dog team with my Maggie, and could help Frank getting puppies more confident and healed dogs back on track with the training program. Eventually we'd have some retired dogs I could take, and I ended up having my own little yard of 3-5 dogs. The most dogs I ran on a sled were 9 racing-age dogs (not Frank's dogs), and I dislocated my shoulder on that run. I dislocated it again later with 6 of our dogs, then had surgery. After that I never ran more than 5 dogs and preferably the retired ones, not the ones at prime age.

Now that Frank has quit mushing and sold the kennel, I'm the 'main musher' in the house and I have three sled dogs left, two retirees at age 11 and one younger one with 6 years. I load them all in my car, together with my pet dogs Sally and Lucy, load the sled on top and drive to a trail to go mushing. Lucy (Jack Russell Terrier) is the mascot in the sled and gets tired from balancing and watching. She's often too bundled up to get out and walk. I make sure the team doesn't get too fast for Sally, my bigger pet dog (Aussie/Husky). And sometimes I can let Sally run free with the team, when I can see far enough to get a hold of her before another team passes by.

I have found other mushers with small teams of up to four dogs, and since we introduced other pet dog owners to mushing through our [Mushing Workshop](#), I have met with them as well for an outing together. I can show them the trails I know, and have been introduced to trail sections I didn't know about. When I meet with another owner with just one pet dog, or 1-2 dogs that still need some help, we first try if they'll be willing to follow my team, and often I give them one of my dogs to run with their dog(s). I can mush with only two of my sled dogs and Sally easily, and my sled dog can teach a pet dog the rhythm of running.

I enjoy the outing, no matter if we get to go 2 miles or 10 miles. It's a fun activity, and I love sharing it with other pet dog owners, hoping I can spread the word about this great opportunity to get out on the trails with our dogs. I'm proud to be able to say that I drove sections of the Iditarod trail, in Knik as well as in Willow. The professional mushers will be happy to share those trails with us, having the dogs confined along the ganglines and not loose; and having us be on a sled, not putting holes in the trail by walking on it.

See you on the trails,
Claudia

Claudia
Claudia Sihler, CPDT-KA
(Certified Professional Dog Trainer)
APDT C.L.A.S.S. Evaluator
AKC CGC® Evaluator
