

Dear Dog Lover,

**Our monthly story at the end of this email:** “Happy Tale from Alys and Ryder”

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

Stay safe,  
Claudia

## **Our February Newsletter:**

### **PART I: News**

1) Longer winter days make for more outdoors fun!

### **PART II: Events - 2014**

2) Therapy Animal Handler Course: Feb 2

### **PART III: Classes + Workshops**

3) Treibball + Freestyle for Beginners: start Feb 11

4) Skijor Workshop: Feb 2

5) Mushing Workshop: Feb 9 + 16

### **PART IV: Open Play Time and Daycare**

6) Next scheduled closures

### **PART V: Class Schedule**

### **PART VI: Monthly Story**

7) Happy Tale from Alys and Ryder

## **PART I: News**

 **Longer winter days make for more outdoors fun!**

As our days are getting longer and warmer (not too warm hopefully), we can now start enjoying winter activities with our dogs out in the snow.

**The trails are in** and can be used not only by **mushers** and **snowmachiners**, but also for **snowshoeing** and **skijoring** - **sports you can include your dog in!** Have you skied but never took your dog with you? Our [Skijor Workshop](#) (see below) can help you! Do you have one very powerful or two or more dogs and skiing with them seems too dangerous? Then join our [Mushing Workshop](#) (see below).

Do you prefer **activities in your own yard and home** and you're looking for more ideas besides throwing the ball over and over? Come to our **Treibball** or **Freestyle** Beginner class and get more ideas on how to keep your active dog busy and have fun doing it!

## **PART II: Events**

### **Therapy Animal Handler Course: Feb 2**

**The Pet Partners® Therapy Animal program** is a volunteer program that trains the handler side of the therapy animal team and also screens and registers volunteers and their pets for visiting animal programs in hospitals, nursing homes, rehabilitation centers, schools and other facilities.

For those interested in volunteering with their pets and for professionals wanting to incorporate their animals into their work, this class fulfills the **handler**-training requirements for the volunteer Pet Partners® Therapy Animal Program.

**For Handler Course pre-requisites:** [www.petpartners.org/volunteer](http://www.petpartners.org/volunteer)

**Obedience Training Club of Chugiak (OTCC)/Chugiak Benefits Association (CBA)**  
Building 18606 Old Glenn Highway, Chugiak, Alaska

**\$100.00** - includes Pet Partners Student Handler Guide, snacks and pizza.

**Human End of the Leash Training, no pets please**

**Pet Partners Instructors & Evaluators:** Terry Yeomans and Pete Klebes

**Please Note: After the training, complete the screening!**

Individual screening of teams is done by licensed **Pet Partners** Team Evaluators. Teams (animals and humans) are evaluated for skills and aptitude for visiting animal programs. Teams who take the handler training and pass the screening can register to be **Pet Partners Therapy Animal Teams**. Animals in this program **cannot** be fed a **raw protein diet**.

**For additional info, contact, Terry,** email [luv2labs@gci.net](mailto:luv2labs@gci.net), 907-694-4777, cell 973-513-0103 or

**Pete,** email [aktherapydogs@gmail.com](mailto:aktherapydogs@gmail.com), 907-727-8633

## **PART III: Classes + Workshops**

### **Skijor Workshop: Feb 2**

We have again invited **Kirsten Ballard** to instruct our **annual Skijor workshop** at the Regine Dog Training Facility! Kirsten has competed in national and international races inside and outside Alaska in the US and Canada. She'll help you **get started with your pet dog**, explaining the variety of equipment available and then helping you and your

dog on our own groomed track, practicing either with our loaner gear or bring your own gear! **We sell everything you need for skijoring** except the skis! Your own skis and intermediate skiing skills are required.

**Skijor Workshop: Sunday, Feb 2, 10am - 1pm; pre-registration: \$65** (until Jan 19)

** Mushing Workshop: Feb 9 + 16**

**Teach your 1-2 pet dogs** how to pull you on a **lightweight mushing sled!** Learn about the mushing equipment, make your own lines for the sled and learn the tricks of the trade from experienced **Iditarod musher and tour guide Frank Sihler!** This 2-day workshop on two consecutive Sundays is the only mushing school available in Alaska for pet dogs! Only offered once each winter! This workshop will help you understand much better what Iditarod mushers and 'recreational' mushers experience when out there with their teams. We call our own trail here around our facility the 'micro-Iditarod' trail 😊.

**Mushing Workshop Part I: Sunday, Feb 9, 10am - 2pm;**

Theory; making lines; driving the sled (pulled by snowmachine) - without your own dog(s).

**Pre-registration: \$110** (until Jan 26); **Part I + II pre-registration: \$190** (until Jan 26)

**Mushing Workshop Part II: Sunday, Feb 16, 10am - 1pm;**

Teaching your dogs to pull; how to teach directions; checking your dogs for injuries; trail etiquette.

**Pre-registration: \$110** (until Feb 2)

** Treibball + Freestyle for Beginners: Feb 11**

These are both fun activities that can be easily practiced at home, to exercise, entertain and enjoy your dog daily and not only train once a week at class. They require little space to practice the beginner's skills and tricks taught in the class. You choose to practice - when, if, how often, indoors, outdoors, ... no equipment required that you don't already have in your household! This is the last opportunity to start these sports until fall! Check out our **Facebook page 'The Better Companion'** for samples of (beginner) Freestyle and our **YouTube channel 'The Better Companion'** for Treibball videos! I won't link to them anymore - that caused trouble with the last newsletter!

**Treibball: starts Tuesday, Feb 11, 5-6pm** (6-week class)

**Freestyle: starts Tuesday, Feb 11, 7:30-8:30pm** (6-week class)

## **PART IV: Open Play Time and Doggy Daycare**

** Next Scheduled Closures**

OPT every Friday evening

Next scheduled closure: **May 23 (Memorial Day weekend)**

DDC every Tuesday and Thursday

next scheduled closure: **Thanksgiving?** ☺

## PART V: Class Schedule

Listed are start dates. The classes will run one hour, once a week for 6 weeks unless otherwise specified. A **“maybe” for a class means YOU can tell us** if you want this class to happen. Enough student interest could put it on the schedule! ☺

Click [here](#) to view the online calendar by month. To see who's instructing the class you're interested in, go to our online [calendar](#) and click on any week of that class to see the details.

Click [here](#) to register for a class.

Already registered? Click [here](#) to pay for a class.

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

<u>CLASS</u>	<u>Feb 2014</u>	<u>Mar 2014</u>	<u>April 2014</u>	<u>later</u>
<b><u>Behavior Classes</u></b>				
Puppy 1	Mon 2/10	Thu 3/6	Mon 4/7	May 2014
Foundation Class	Mon 2/10	Thu 3/6	Mon 4/7	May 2014
Puppy 2		Wed 3/5	Tue 4/8	May 2014
Elementary School				May 2014
High School				Jul 2014
<b>CGC-test (one day)</b>		Sun 3/9		Sep 2014
C.L.A.S.S. - BA				<b>May 2014</b>
<b>CLASS Evaluation</b>				Jun 2014
Tricks 'N Clicks				TBA - fall?
<b><u>Sports Classes</u></b>	<u>Feb 2014</u>	<u>Mar 2014</u>	<u>April 2014</u>	<u>later</u>
Rally College		Thu 3/6		TBA - fall?
Rally Practice				TBA

Freestyle	Tue 2/11			TBA - fall?
Nose Work Beginner		<b>Maybe</b> (If no Odor)		May 2014 (if not March)
Nose Work Odor		Wed 3/5		May 2014 (if not March)
Nose Work Practice	Wed 2/5	Wed 3/5	Wed 4/2	summer 2014
Treibball Beginner	Tue 2/11			TBA - fall?
Treibball Intermediate			Tue 4/8	TBA - fall?
Treibball Practice	Tue 2/11	Tue 3/4	Tue 4/8	May 2014
Flyball Beginner				Summer 2014?
Flyball Practice				Summer 2014?
Agility Puppy/Beg		Sat 3/8		July 2014
Agility Skills		Sat 3/8		July 2014
Agility Sequencing		Sat 3/8		July 2014
Agility Trialing		Sat 3/8		July 2014
Weight Pulling				Fall 2014

You can check our web page [www.bettercompanion.com](http://www.bettercompanion.com) for info on classes, doggy daycare, Open Play Times, our 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](mailto:info@bettercompanion.com), (907) 357-2521.

## **PART VI: Monthly Story**

### **Happy Tale from Alys and Ryder**

Ryder, Border Collie  
Attended Foundation Class (November 2013)

I waited ten years to take a class with Claudia Sihler. As I often told friends, the only thing I lacked was a dog. I did have another dog, a Montana Cattle Dog, but Rainbow

(then age one) decided that if she was to do agility, that we'd all have to play by her rules. So we instead took to running and skjoring, which has worked out just fine.

However, Rainbow sparked an interest in my mind in dog cognition. I began reading widely on the subject, and learned about some of the theory behind the practice of positive reinforcement, and what went with this, that is clicker training. For example, I read books by (among others) Jean Donaldson, Patricia McConnell, Suzanne Clothier, Temple Grandin, Karen Pryor, and Jon Katz. All are good writers – articulate, thoughtful, use stories to make their points.

My acquiring Ryder (an eight-month old Border Collie) was a matter of happenstance. In August her former owners left her at the Coyote Meadows trailhead. We were there, horse trekking. After talking about the pros and cons of our traveling up the Alcan with this dog, we decided to attempt to bring her home with us. The trip home went fine. She was a good car traveler. We stopped and had Ryder spayed in Butte, Montana.

While in Butte we called Claudia and by phone signed up for the Foundation Class. This turned out to be good timing, for our little dog had (we think) never before been inside a house. Hence, she had no house manners. For instance; one of her favorite activities was what I called the stair leap. She would jump off the stairs leading to the upstairs of our cabin, land on the kitchen table, and send things flying. Once we even found her sleeping on the kitchen table. She also decided to pee in the living room, and when it suited her, jump on people. And oh yes, Ryder also tried her hand at counter surfing.

Claudia's class proved to be ideal for Ryder and I. Her directives were clear and concise. And the foundation manual, with its included instructions, provided me with a great deal of useful training information. I cannot say that Ryder is now a model dog, or that she always does as told. But her batting average is on the upswing. She now knows her name, good dog, up, down, stay, come, leave it, and drop. And she's shown an interest in sheep herding. Every day, we take her for long walks. And in the evenings we play tug of war with her. (The foundation manual has an excellent write-up on how to do this).

Yes, Ryder has learned to be a better pet companion. However, as importantly, I have learned to be a better human companion. I would have been happy, just learning how to put positive reinforcement theory to practice in working with dogs. But, surprise, I have learned how to put positive reinforcement theory to practice in working with humans. For instance, I now think twice before "correcting" other people. And I'm putting a more positive spin on my requests to others. This is because Claudia, in her classes, makes a point to model this behavior. Less no, more yes. This seems to now be my motto. This all has been a huge life lesson that you can't put a price on. Already, I'm looking forward to taking the next course, which for us will be Elementary School.

Alys & Ryder

Alys, thank you for allowing me to share this happy tale with other dog owners! Ryder has also started to practice with the local Search and Rescue group. We at The Better Companion wish you the best for your future endeavors with Ryder and look forward to seeing you both again at class!

Claudia Sihler, CPDT-KSA  
(Certified Professional Dog Trainer - Knowledge and Skills Assessed)  
APDT C.L.A.S.S. Evaluator  
AKC CGC® and STAR® Evaluator  
Member of The Dog Gurus

Your BetCo Team at  
**The Better Companion - Regine Dog Training Facility**  
Claudia Sihler, CPDT-KSA  
Frank Sihler, Iditarod Finisher  
Deb Frost (office)  
Robin Jacoby (office)

(907) 357-2521  
[betco@mtaonline.net](mailto:betco@mtaonline.net)  
[www.bettercompanion.com](http://www.bettercompanion.com)  
1400 E Regine Ave, Wasilla, AK 99654