



Volunteers Update Dog Behavior Info

By Caryn Pola, ESRA President

ESRA has some of the greatest volunteers in any rescue. Our volunteers care about dogs, care about rescue, and are proud of ESRA. Many volunteers contact the board of directors with suggestions for improvement. Recently, Nancy M. Kelly and Dee McLaughlin contacted me and said the adoption application and owner assistance pages on our website needed an update. I asked Dee and Nancy if they were willing to work together to make the changes needed. I was so impressed by the great work they did, that I thought I would share it with all of you. First off, they gave us these references on dominance theory:

American Society of Veterinary Animal Behavior Position Statement on the Use of Dominance Theory in Behavior Modification of Animals: http://www.avsonline.org/avsonline/images/stories/Position_Statements/dominance%20statement.pdf

Association of Pet Dog Trainers Position Statement on Dominance and Dog Training: <http://www.apdt.com/about/ps/dominance.aspx>

The UC Davis Clinical Animal Behavior Service has adopted the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior's position on dominance. It is a wide misconception that problem behaviors in our pets are due to dominance. On the contrary, most problems have a strong underlying motivation of fear and anxiety. <http://behavior.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/topics.cfm>.

Dee and Nancy also created the following goals for ESRA in the area of training and behavior:

- To present on our website the most current, well-documented information on training and behavior that is available;
- To rely on sources that are respected in the science-based behavioral community to ensure the documentation of said information;
- To present a variety of respected sources in order to enhance the probability individuals searching for help will find a perspective that works for them;
- To encourage owners and fosters to choose training techniques that are most likely to result in a better relationship between dog and owner;

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ESRA is a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation. Our all-volunteer organization works with love and passion for English Springer Spaniels in need.

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Join Me in 'Strut Your Mutt'

By Charlie Sprague



Toby, the dog who usually writes a column in this space, is on vacation. I'm Charlie, and I'm filling in for him with help from my (human) dad, Terry Sprague. Terry and my mom, Belle, usu-



ally take me to the "Springer Nationals," where there's a big booth, a dinner, and auction that raise lots of money for ESRA. Because it's in Rhode Island this year, we aren't going, and other Springer rescue groups located in the northeast will benefit instead.

As long as it helps my breed, I'm okay with it, but ESRA really needs money, too! That's why we're doing Strut Your Mutt on September 24.

What is Strut Your Mutt? Best Friends Animal Society wants to create a world with no more homeless pets. They put together Strut Your Mutt to raise awareness of rescue organizations across the country. ESRA is recognized as one of these rescue groups, and has been designated as a Network Partner. We would like to thank Carolyn Molloy for working with Best Friends to get this designation last year.

How does it work? Each rescue group forms a Dog Pack, and people sign up to become Dog Pack members. The cost to register as a walker in the Los Angeles event is just \$30, plus you get a very cool T-shirt. Virtual participation for people in other parts of the country is free. All participants set goals of how much money they think they can raise — \$50, \$100, \$1000, or more.

It really is easy to raise the money. Get your family members to contribute to you. Ask former adopters, friends, neighbors, and work colleagues to donate. Are you on Facebook? Post a link to your member page and ask your friends to repost on their pages. You can drop flyers off at your vet's office, groomer, and the pet store. Terry even gives out business cards to other people with dogs when we're out for a walk.

Where does the money go? Because we are a Network Partner, all the money goes to ESRA except for the credit card transaction fee, which is a standard 2.2% plus \$0.30 for each transaction. On \$10 this would be \$0.52; on \$100 it would be \$2.50.

ESRA's vet expenses across the country average \$30,000 per MONTH; and on most dogs, adoption fees don't completely cover outlay.

Strut Your Mutt provides an easy and cost-effective way to raise a lot of much-needed money with no overhead, no shipping costs, and no work (for the humans) setting up and tearing down that merchandise booth.

Fund raising this way is fun and community building — with friendly competitions between individuals and teams; setting personal goals, and watching the meter rise (literally a "whistles and bells" thing!).

Terry and Belle's grand-nieces and grand-nephews, aged four to seven, have signed up to walk, and are collecting bottles and cans to recycle.

They're also going to hold a garage sale and donate the cash to Strut Your Mutt. See how easy it is?

We have been working hard to get the word out. We have to. The dogs and our organization desperately need the money. Join the ESRA Dog Pack or make a donation today at: www.strutyourmutt.org/team/esra.

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ESRA News is always looking for Springer-oriented articles for future issues. To submit an article, please contact Shelley or Linnea at the e-mail addresses listed above.

Teaching Reactive Dogs A New Habit

By Nancy M. Kelly

Is your dog reactive to exciting stimuli? Does she bark and lunge at kids on skateboards, people on bikes, or other dogs? Do any of the following descriptions apply?

- Your dog is great at home, but barks at people when you take him out in public.
- Your dog is fine outside with you while you work in the yard, but forget it if a bicycle goes by!
- Your dog walks great on a leash, unless someone else with a dog comes along.

None of this means that your dog is a bad dog, but she does need to learn a different behavior to perform when stimulated by one of these events. We can change her behavior by changing our own behavior when confronted with the stimulus that can cause our pleasant pooch to turn into a raving maniac.

We can use the “Open Bar” technique to desensitize and counter-condition a dog’s response when he’s developed a habit of barking and lunging. The idea behind “Open Bar” is that when your dog senses a dog, bicycle or skateboard nearby, something that can elicit barking and lunging, he gets lots of treats — and he gets them before he reacts, but after he notices the stimulus. In other words, when the “cue to react” is present, the treat bar is open. Once the cue to react is gone, the bar closes and you are nonchalant, not paying much attention to the dog. Hence, your dog learns to notice a cue to react and look to you for good things and guidance, remaining calm; this behavior replaces the previous behavior of barking and lunging.

It’s essential for you to be aware of the cue to react before your dog is, so that you are prepared to train. When you go for a walk, be prepared with a bag of fabulous

food treats — treats your dog will do anything to get — broken into bite-size pieces.

Here’s what you’ll do: Stroll along with Rufus. When you see Mr. Smith and Fido turn the corner and approach you on the other side of the street, reach into your treat bag, grab a handful of roasted chicken bits, happily say, “Rufus, Look at that dog! It’s your lucky day!” and begin feeding Rufus one treat at a time as fast as you can. Pay full attention to Rufus until the dog passes by, praising and feeding him while you continue to walk. Focus completely on Rufus. He’ll be focused on you, his mind happily on scarfing down treats. Ignore Mr. Smith! You can’t take time to chat right now because you’re training your dog. You can explain later. Once Mr. Smith and Fido have passed, and you’ve put enough distance between yourself and the cue to react, stop feeding Rufus and go back to walking nonchalantly. You and Rufus know what enough distance needs to be: “enough distance” means how far Rufus has to be from the distraction before he becomes calm again.

The onus is on you to notice the dog before Rufus does. You can’t wait until he is already amped-up before opening the bar. A dog who is in the midst of reacting isn’t open to learning a new behavior. If he starts barking and lunging, abort! Your best bet is to get out of there; turn around and leave. If your dog is smaller, you can pick him up and carry him away, reminding yourself to pay closer attention next time. Remember that every time he practices barking and lunging, he gets better at it, and the habit becomes more ingrained. You’d rather he practice the behavior of looking to you for super-awesome treats when he sees another dog, and with practice, he will.



“Look at that!”

“Good Boy, Rufus!”

The Joys of Adopting a Senior Springer...

Senior To Senior Adoption

By Julie D.B. Grant

It was no ordinary day. Sitting with my robe splattered with dog slobber and canned dog food, no shower for two days, and my teeth still in their cup in the bathroom, I wasn't depressed, I was a dog owner times two!

With three days from diagnosis, my beautiful Greyhound girl had crossed the Rainbow Bridge after only a year of love. Now, *that* was something to be depressed about; however, a few days later, I was asked to pick up two Springers from animal services in a town about 30 miles away. This is my business – transporting pets. Little did I know that ordinary days were behind me.

When two owner-surrendered Springers were brought out from the dark caves of doggie never-never land at the animal shelter, I knew these were no ordinary dogs. In beautiful liver and white, these pups looked as young as four, but were 11 years old. Full of energy and smiles, it was evident they were ready to go with anyone who would take them. The trauma of suddenly losing their family didn't seem to have caused any lingering effects. I was completely smitten.

Stepping into chest harnesses, they jumped into the van without hesitation. I watched them in the rear-view mirror cavorting in the back – jumping up and down, playing with each other, and occasionally calming down enough to sit and watch the scenery go by. I became aware that this was no ordinary day.

After few miles, I dialed Beth Maryan, ESRA's coordinator in Dallas, Texas. "These are mine!" I said. "What?" she asked, knowing I never became emotionally involved in my transports. She suggested fostering until I was sure. Reluctantly, I delivered the dogs as Beth explained the Senior to Senior Program, stating I would be notified when they received my application.

Each day I called and she'd reassure me it had been received and that the dogs were in "vetting," needing attention to ear infections, kennel cough, etc. She said when the dogs were ready, they would be released to my care.

Mattie and Nelson are doing just fine. Me? I'm happy to be a 71-year-old senior who's found two Springers. The Senior to Senior program was the catalyst to pull me out of bland ordinary days. Starting out as a foster mom gave me the understanding needed to care for two active senior dogs that needed me as much as I needed them.

With snores at 2:00 a.m., poop in the yard, and bath

time spraying water all over the walls, the compensation I receive from their snuggling up to my side with those big brown eyes and smiles cannot come in any other form but two wonderful senior Springers, who make every day an extraordinary day.



Three happy seniors: Julie with Maddie (left) and Nelson

Angel Riley and Her Rescue Adventure

By Helen S. Gibbons

After having Springers for more than 30 years, my husband Rich and I retired to North Carolina. When our Punky went to the Rainbow Bridge in 2007, things were very quiet and sad for a few months. Then we decided to check out ESRA – and boy, did that change the action around our house!

We started as a foster home, and after a few fosters we met Angel Riley. She had been in a kennel awaiting a foster home. Angel lived with a family for her first 6 years 8 months. They loved and cared for her, but family circumstances caused them to relinquish her to ESRA.

It was love at first sight for Rich and Angel. We were going to foster her but we failed: we went straight to adoption, even though I wanted a younger dog. She taught me a lesson I will always remember: she taught me to love. Our love grew stronger each day. We were mature girlfriends and our relationship blossomed.

Our house is boot camp for dogs. We live on a lake and playing becomes your job. A leash walk before breakfast is the norm. Since the backyard is fenced, except the lake frontage, there is plenty of frolicking most of the af-

The Joys of Adopting a Senior Springer (continued)



Dock Dogs Angel Riley, Pumpkin, and Butch show off ribbons from the Lee Regional Fair.

ternoon. Swimming and dock dog activities are a must.

Angel Riley went from a 76-pound couch potato to a 55-pound muscular, Carolina Dock Dog. Everyone said she had such a sad face but a happy inside. She won the tail-wagging contest at the Spay and Neuter fundraiser. She was very obedient, never chased a squirrel, loved to chase balls and Frisbees, and loved to swim and dock-dive after her tennis balls. On her 9th birthday she made the finals at a Carolina Dock Dogs event. She got her title in Junior Big Air last year.

Two weeks after we adopted Angel Riley, we got nine-month-old Pumpkin, her precocious, but tolerable “little sister.” Then Butchie Boy, age four, came to live with us, and Angel Riley found a ball-crazy, dock-jumping buddy. They fed off each other’s adrenaline, and were the best of work-out buddies.

Angel Riley was living proof that dogs, just like people, can undergo a tremendous transformation with a bit of coaching and motivation! What a treasure –maybe that is why she was a pirate for Halloween and an Angel the year before at a rescue event!

Well, Angel Riley had a seizure this spring and went downhill rapidly. She had several symptoms indicative of a brain tumor, and had to be put to sleep, just short of 10 years old. My eyes are filled with tears as I write this. In a sympathy card, our vet said Angel Riley won the lotto when she came to our house, and the lake was the icing on the cake. I think it was the other way around, we won

the lotto when we got Angel Riley, with ESRA’s help. She was a giver — a giver of love and happiness.

We lost a great girl, but her memories live on in our hearts. Rescuing an older dog has so many pluses...they outweigh the negatives. Angel Riley probably would not have been easily adopted, so we were happy to have her for a little over three years. Our new foster pup is already getting his daily swimming lessons and going after the ball. And so goes the cycle of Springer love!

Hamlet’s Short Story

By Dave Brandt

It is a fact that when you take a dog into your life, you will in all likelihood outlive your companion. It is just part of the relationship between dogs and their people.

There has been a Springer in my life since I was about 16, now I am just a stone’s throw from 50. Of the nine Springers that have taught me so much, five are no longer living. As hard as it has been each time one of our dogs has reached the end of their time, I could not imagine my life with out a dog to look after me.

Perhaps this is why Jane and I decided to provide a foster home for unwanted Springers. Fostering has been a rewarding experience for us. When the foster dogs move on to a new home, there is not a feeling of loss for us, but one of joy for the dog.

Hamlet was the second elderly Springer that we had fostered. We knew very little about his past. He came from a shelter in Wisconsin and was thought to be about 13 years old. He needed a foster home and we were happy to provide one.

Hamlet fit in well with our other dogs and soon found his place in the “pack.” He enjoyed walks and playing with toys. He was always at the door to greet me when I got home, his un-docked tail banging joyously away at whatever was close by. He sought out and enjoyed human company; he liked having his ears rubbed and getting snacks.

We do not know what caused the internal bleeding that led to his sudden death. Although Hamlet was only with us for a couple of weeks, his death has left me with the same feelings that I have felt at the loss my other dogs.

Hamlet was a good boy, I don’t know what his life was like before he came to live with us, but I do know that during his time with he was loved and happy.



ESRA's Behavior Resources Updated Online (*Continued from Page 1*)

- To help owners keep their dogs, and dogs keep their homes;
- To develop better foster homes that can rehabilitate a dog, get him/her into an appropriate forever home, and be willing to take on another foster dog;
- To be an organization that consistently produces adoptable dogs in great behavioral shape and ready to stay in the first adoptive home they go to, thereby reducing the number of dogs returned to rescue.

Contemporary, science-based information on the topics of adoption, behavior and general care of dogs can be found at the following websites, and these links are now on ESRA's website:

The American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior (AVSAB) Pet Behavior Articles: AVSAB is a group of veterinarians and research professionals who share an interest in understanding behavior in animals. AVSAB is committed to improving the quality of life of all animals and strengthening the bond between animals and their owners.

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Pet Care: <http://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/>

San Francisco Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Dog Owner Resources Library: <http://www.sfsPCA.org/resources/library/for-dog-owners>

Dr. Ian Dunbar's DogStarDaily: <http://www.dogstardaily.com/>. This is a free website for dog lovers—a daily magazine with news, blogs and articles about dog behavior; a comprehensive digital dog training textbook, with everything about raising or training your puppy or dog, and especially, how to prevent or fix most common problem behavior problems. They believe that puppy husbandry and training information is so important that it should be freely available to all, with the hope that dogs (and their humans) will be happier and healthier because of it.

Open Paw: <http://www.openpaw.org/index.html>. Open Paw is here to give you and your pet the tools you need to build a lasting and successful relationship with one another and with your community. Here you'll find expert information to help you BEFORE you choose a new pet, AFTER you bring your new dog or cat home, and DURING your ongoing relationship with your companion animal.

Veterinarian and Animal Behaviorist Dr. Sophia Yin: <http://drsophiayin.com/resources>. Her mission in life is to improve our understanding of animals and their behavior so that we can care for, appreciate and enjoy our time with them better.

Association of Pet Dog Trainers Information for Pet Owners: <http://www.apdt.com/petowners/default.aspx>

Shirley Chong's Leading The Dance - Building A Better Relationship: <http://www.shirleychong.com/keepers/dance.html>. Shirley Chong has been training dogs since 1982 and started using clicker training in 1992. Clicker training is based on the principles of operant conditioning and uses positive reinforcement to help the dog learn behaviors. She has rescued and re-homed over 60 dogs of many breeds. Shirley has continued her dog behavior education by studying with some of the respected researchers and trainers in the field.

dogPACT / Terry Long: <http://www.dogpact.com>. DogPACT (People and Animals Communicating Together) is committed to the highest standards of professional training practices and methodologies. Thus, you can be assured that its programs are based on solid science, the input of veterinary and applied animal behaviorists, and hundreds of hours of continuing education.

Great job Nancy Kelly and Dee McLaughlin — you are both ESRA heroes. We are so grateful for all your hard work making ESRA up to date, current and professional. Live links for all of these resources can be found on our Owner Assistance page, <http://www.springerrescue.org/helpkeep.html>.