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Long Beach Becomes More Dog-Friendly with New Positive Reinforcement Classes:

City of Long Beach Parks, Recreation & Marine Awards Contract
to
DogPACT Training & Behavior Services

Long Beach Parks, Recreation & Marine is partnering with Long Beach-based dog trainer Terry Long, CPDT-KA[1], to offer positive reinforcement dog training classes for the first time in the city's history. The classes will be taught by certified trainers in two city parks, Whaley and Los Cerritos, starting with the Winter class schedule that begins December 1.

"This is a very exciting opportunity," said Long. "I grew up in Long Beach and my family took all of our dogs to training classes through Parks and Rec. When I became a professional dog trainer in 1996, positive reinforcement training techniques were just becoming recognized at the educational conferences I was attending. When I saw how much fun the dogs were having—and still getting trained—I never looked back. I am very excited to be given this opportunity to bring positive reinforcement training to my own city."

When Long was growing up, she could often be found playing, not with the neighbor children, but with the neighbors' pets. Cats, dogs, birds, and rabbits—as long as it had fur or feathers, she was there. She soon expressed a natural talent for training the family's dogs, as well as those of neighbors and friends. Long, who spent eight years working for veterinarians and then 20 years in corporate America, turned to dog training as a profession in 1996.

"I was having the classic mid-life crisis," said Long. "I'd worked since I was 16, starting out as a veterinary assistant. I loved working with animals. One day, in my early 40s, sitting behind a desk as a management consultant in a high-rise in Woodland Hills, I remember thinking, 'I just want to work with dogs. I have to make that happen.' I heard about the Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT) and started attending conferences and studying."

Long opened her business, DogPACT Behavior & Training Services, on a part-time basis later that year. DogPACT has since grown into a busy full-time enterprise, with five certified trainers who provide basic pet manners, agility, and behavior modification for aggressive and fearful dogs. Long has even taken her training to Japan, where an interpreter was employed to translate her training instructions for Japanese agility and obedience students. Known nationally for her articles in *The Whole Dog Journal*, the *APDT Chronicle of the Dog*, and *Dog World*, she has been the recipient of awards for her writing on a variety of dog training topics, including the Dog Writers Association of America's coveted Maxwell Award. That first-place award was bestowed for "Shape for Confidence," the story about how positive reinforcement training was used to train a very fearful dog to overcome her fears.[2]

Unlike many services, dog training is an unregulated business. There is no state licensing required, which can make it a challenge for the public to know how to find a qualified trainer. The APDT undertook the development of the first certification process in the training industry. Now, that certification is overseen by an independent organization without ties to any particular trainer, training school, or retail organization. Recertification, through the acquisition of 36 units of continuing education, is required every three years.

Long, a proponent of the CCPDT certification process, was one of the first to receive certification in 2003. “I think the general public deserves better information about choosing a trainer. CCPDT certification requires that you demonstrate your abilities by acquiring at least 300 hours of hands-on experience training people and their dogs, and you have to demonstrate your knowledge of the science behind the training techniques you use by successfully passing a 200-question exam. You also need a client, a veterinarian, and another trainer—all of whom have seen you train—to write letters of reference. The CCPDT certification is objective and internationally recognized. Certification is not awarded by a private school with a vested interest in promoting its ‘certified’ dog trainers. This objectivity gives consumers at least a starting point in finding a trainer who has met minimum standards established by the dog training profession.”

Until the 1960s, most dog training techniques focused on physically dominating dogs through the use of punishment and intimidation. Then marine mammals began to be trained using positive reinforcement, which led to dog trainers using food rewards instead of physical corrections. In the early 1990s, the APDT, under the leadership of veterinary behaviorist Ian Dunbar, began educating its members about the effectiveness of positive reinforcement.

“It’s a very powerful way to train reliable behaviors,” said Long, “not just for service dogs, search and rescue, and dog sports, but for our family companion dogs, too. That’s why it is so exciting to see the City of Long Beach offer these new classes.”

Registration for the public group Pet Manners classes through the City program can be made through Parks, Recreation & Marine by calling 562-570-7171 or online at www.lbparks.org.

DogPACT continues to offer puppy kindergarten classes, individual pet manners training, and individual and group agility classes directly. For those programs, go to www.dogpact.com or call 562-423-0793.

[1]Certified Professional Dog Trainer-Knowledge Assessed. For more information go to www.ccpdt.org.

[2]"Shape for Confidence" (http://dogpact.com/Services/Editorial_Services/index.htm#Writing), scroll to bottom of the web page for the full article)

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