

DOG SPORTS & TRAINING SINCE 1940

**PCOTC**

**PORT CHESTER OBEDIENCE  
TRAINING CLUB**



# Sit 'n Stay

Quarterly Newsletter of PCOTC • Spring 2023

## Calendar of Events

Events are held at the PCOTC facility unless otherwise noted.  
For more details: <https://www.pcotc.org/events>

- Sat, June 3 **First Aid for Your Pet and Canine Athlete Workshops**  
10:00 am - 2:00 pm
- Sun, June 11 **PCOTC Open House**  
12:00 pm - 4:00 pm
- Sun, June 18 **Obedience Run-Thrus White Plains Weekend**  
9:00 am - 2:30 pm
- Sun, June 25 **Controlled Unleashed for Agility with Bronagh Daly**  
10:30 am - 2:30 pm
- Sun, June 25 **PCOTC Club Meeting Annual Meeting**  
5:30 pm - 7:30 pm  
In Person and Online via: Zoom
- Sat, July 15 **Samantha Scicchigno Rally Workshop**  
8:30 am - 1:00 pm
- Sat, July 29 **AKC Rally Trial**  
8:00 am - 5:00 pm
- Sun, July 30 **AKC Obedience Trial**  
8:00 am - 5:00 pm



### *Let's Parkour!*

PCOTC hosted an Intro to Dog Parkour Workshop on April 2nd presented by Kate Naito. What is Parkour? It's a fast-growing, non-competitive, fun activity that combines elements of tricks and agility, that you can do with your dog anywhere! Once you learn the basics of Parkour, you will easily spot elements wherever you are.

The exercises involve jumping, balancing, crawling, and going around various objects. This can build trust and teamwork and help dogs overcome fears. The only equipment needed to get started is a harness and leash.

To title, simply make a video of your dog doing the required exercises and send it in. If your video passes, you earn a title!

This is a wonderful activity to either start getting involved in dog sports, or a new way to engage your sport dog.

Check out [dogparkour.org](http://dogparkour.org) and stay tuned for upcoming seminars with Kate Naito!

*More photos on page 3*

## Port Chester Obedience Training Club

AN AKC MEMBER CLUB

220 Ferris Avenue. White Plains, NY

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### Sit 'n Stay

*is a quarterly publication of Port Chester Obedience Training Club. Articles of interest to the membership are welcomed and encouraged. The editor reserves the right to edit all material in the interest of space constraints and appropriateness.*

*Sit 'n Stay is produced for online delivery.*



## April 16th Trial - A Great Success!

PCOTC's AKC Scent Work Trial on April 16th was a great success. There were so many entries and extra runs an additional judge had to be added!

A huge thank you to the volunteers that made the trial run smoothly. Special shout outs to Christine, who had to make an unexpected Home Depot run, Jackie who organized our first volunteer raffle, Margaret and Kathie who were using a new trial program to enter and keep track of scores, and finally to Mary and Kathy who donated their judging services to the club at no charge.

Everyone is looking forward to the next AKC Scent Work trial in October!



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Board of Directors Minutes can be found here:  
<https://www.pcotc.org/minutes>

General Meeting Minutes can be found here:  
<https://www.pcotc.org/member-minutes>

# Intro to Dog Parkour Workshop with Kate Naito



*Fun was had by all at the Intro to Parkour Workshop. Check out [dogparkour.org](http://dogparkour.org) and watch for another upcoming Parkour Workshop at PCOTC with Kaite Naito.*



# PCOTC's AKC Agility League teams crushed it this winter season!

By Marcy Rauch. Photo by Debbie Poe



PCOTC just completed its second round of AKC Agility League. And again, fun was had by all. We saw enormous progress in all teams, and the camaraderie couldn't be beat!

This time, PCOTC fielded THREE teams:

Senior team:

**PCOTC Powerhouse**, with Marcy Rauch/Hex and Annika, Mitch Bernstein/Nova and Echo, Alisa Greenwald/Zoe, Gale Nardi/Jett. Team captain was Marcy.

Freshman teams:

**PCOTC Jump Junkies**, with Kassi Pickel McCombe/Bennett, Rob Kiessling/Pirate, Priscilla Rahner/Gizzmo, Anik McGrory/Loupiot, Renee Mininni/Halo, and Krystina Murawski/Jaxston.

**PCOTC Party Animals**, with Sharon Ripps/Leo, Barbara Baltz/Tyler, Renee Ehle/Skye, and Ro Kinzler/Zoe.

Both freshman teams were captained by Kassi.

This season's results were fantastic for PCOTC! Our freshman team, PCOTC Jump Junkies ranked 4th and the PCOTC Party Animals ranked 13th. Our senior team, PCOTC Powerhouse, made a strong showing of 12th in a large and competitive field. Plus, the majority of our competitors were in the top ten in their classes.

Our "Podium Placements" for the season were:

- 16" Veteran Senior - 1st place: Marcy and Hex
- 20" Regular Freshman - 3rd place: Priscilla and Gizzmo
- 20" Preferred Freshman - 3rd place: Barbara and Tyler
- 24" Regular Freshman - 2nd place: Rob and Pirate
- 24" Regular Senior - 1st place: Mitch and Nova

And let's not forget our "Clean Sweep" winners. Those are the teams that were able to submit clean run scores all season!

## PCOTC Powerhouse:

Marcy and Hex  
Marcy and Annika  
Mitch and Nova  
Alisa and Zoe

## PCOTC Jump Junkies:

Kassi and Bennett  
Priscilla and Gizzmo

## PCOTC Party Animals:

Sharon and Leo  
Renee and Skye  
Ro and Zoe

A VERY SPECIAL thank you goes out to our judge for the entire season, Debbie Poe and our mascot "Chunk!" We couldn't have done it without you.

Don't forget... League Spring/Summer Season starts soon!

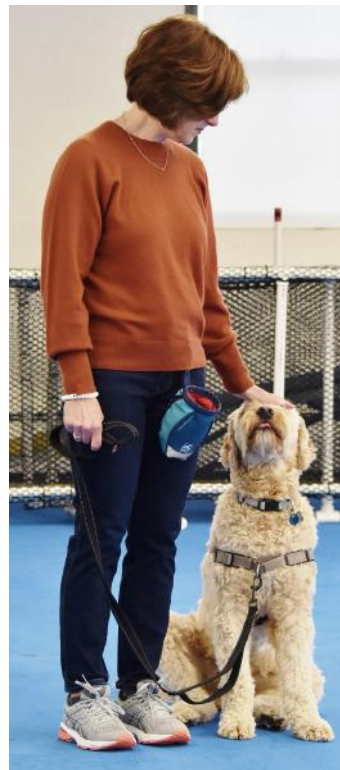
The season opens on May 15 and will continue for 12 weeks until August 6. It will be the last chance to qualify for the first-ever AKC Agility League Championship that takes place September 2-4 at Purina Farms in Missouri.



# Sam Scicchigno's Intro to AKC Rally

Photographs Courtesy of Morgaána Photography

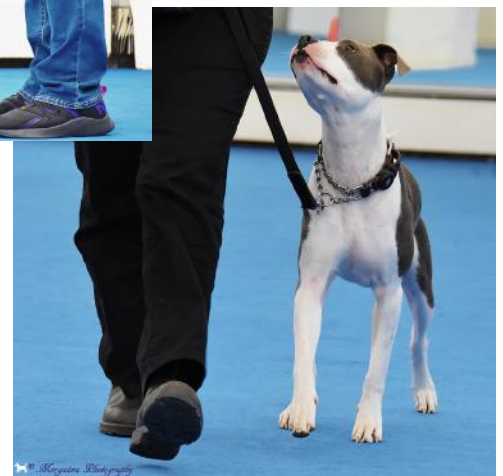
On Saturday, March 25, 2023, PCOTC hosted Samantha Scicchigno. Sam has been teaching the sport of Rally Obedience since 2013. She has competed successfully at every level of AKC Rally.



All the participants had a wonderful day of learning and as you see in these photographs created a beautiful working bond with their teammates.

PCOTC is excited to offer another Rally Workshop with Sam Scicchigno on Saturday, July 15th. Watch for more details.

These action-packed workshops focused on Intermediate and Advanced team-building exercises in the morning session and foundations of AKC Rally Novice in the afternoon.



# Michele Ellertson Container Workshop

Reported by Karen Reilly, CPDT-KSA, CNWI, Nose Work Instructor



Participants enthusiastically describe the value this seminar brought to them. Here are some of the comments:

*I enjoyed learning from Michele and from the workshop participants who put her techniques into practice, and I came away with a new perspective for working with my dog. Thank you for providing this excellent resource to the PCOTC members.*

– VC

Michele is a respected Nose Work instructor, Certifying Official for NACSW, Nose Work Camp Instructor, owner of Dogs Pace, behaviorist and an all around dog person.

Containers has the lowest pass rate in NACSW trials; and we all question why? After the seminar all who attended had a better understanding of how to start out dogs for success and how to have continued success during trials.

Very important in Michele's presentations, the desire to care for the dogs first and then the humans. She was attentive to each dog during their run and adjusted the exercise accordingly. All were most appreciative of her awareness of the dogs' needs.

Some of the things Michele stressed during the workshop were:

- The key to good training is identifying what your dog is naturally good at and what needs to be worked on.
- Your role as a handler is to build your dog's confidence, not deteriorate it.
- Predictability can be a powerful tool for a dog that lacks confidence.

Everyone came away with great ideas for their container journey. We appreciate everyone who came with their pups allowing us to watch and learn. Thank you to the auditors who came with their questions.

Of great importance, thank you to the volunteers who kept things moving smoothly; Jeanne Turschmann, Kevin Crimmins, Helene Rubinstein and Demetria DaSarno.

*I took my baby dog to the containers seminar at PCOTC expecting to get in some quality training for his young mind. Instead, I received container enlightenment. Michele's systematic and logical training made me rethink how I have trained containers and ask myself why I never thought of this myself. I wish all of my dogs had the benefit of this training (and all future dogs will). Thanks so much!*

– JS

*You wouldn't think that a full day of auditing and watching dogs find a cookie in a box would be interesting, but it really was a day of learning how to talk dog since this is a dog driven sport and it was fascinating!*

– MM

*Hope you invite Michele back for more workshops. She is awesome!*

– J



# PCOTC Rally Match!

Co-Chairs: Fran Hellman and Taylor Lewis

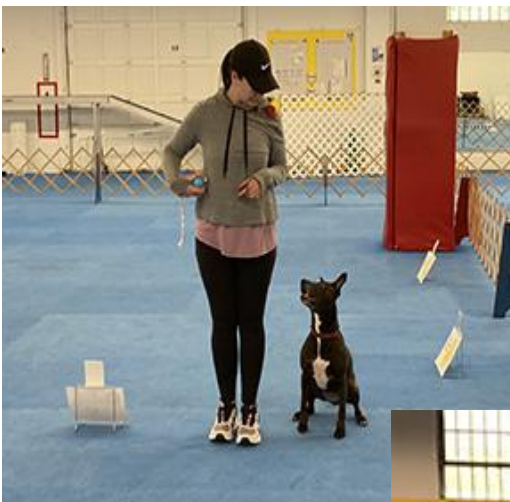
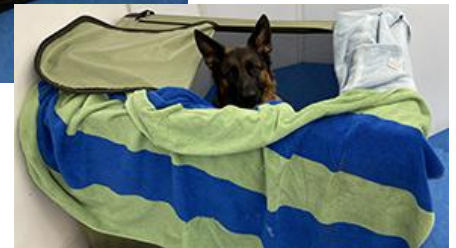


With the help of our amazing volunteers, PCOTC ran a very smooth and fun Rally Match, on May 7th. Those folks were, left to right – Beverly Pietrucha, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, Fran Hellman and her CKCS Rumor, Mike Jones, Dr. Lu Lu, Taylor Lewis, and CJ Wagenstsein-Vega. Not pictured: Nancy Field.

The dogs were awesome! They practiced hard along with their owners, but when waiting their turns, they enjoyed their comfy crates.



Sabrina DeVito, Doberman, and Kiki Danziger, German Shepherd



Left: Taylor Lewis and Tilly, the All American

Right: Denise Devito and Sabrina, the Doberman

Center: Mr. Lashley and Gem, the Toy Poodle



All Rally levels were provided for exhibitors to practice their Rally skills. In Ring 1 we had Master, then Excellent followed. In Ring 2 we had Advanced, Intermediate, then Novice.



Taylor and I were happy to chair this event, and hope that all who attended were pleased with their experience.

Reported by Fran Hellman, CPDT-KA, PCOTC Rally and Breed Handling Instructor

# Club Members News

## Happy Tales and Sad Tales

Topsy (Flat-coated Retriever CH Quillquest U R Unstoppable RE, NAP, NFP, NJP CGC) has just earned her Distinguished Therapy Dog title, THDD. She has been a therapy dog at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center since 2015, having completed over 400 visits. We've worked on almost all the different units in the hospital, including almost a year visiting patients and their families in the Intensive Care Unit. Right now we are helping to motivate post-operative cancer patients to start walking by accompanying them as they walk around the unit. Topsy's quiet calm and warm, soft coat bring comfort to staff as well as patients.

– Mary Jane Koren



Sally (Lightfoot's Bright Lights, Big City RN) my Peter-Pan-like Flat-coat succumbed to lymphoma in March. She was always up for anything and tried obedience, barn hunt, agility and nose work with great enthusiasm. She was the life of the party with her licky, waggy happy presence. Things have gone quiet without her. Topsy and I miss her ever so much. – Mary Jane Koren

Thank you to Kathe Baxter and Ashlin Cooke for a wonderful trial in Plantsville, CT. And to the volunteers, CO's and judges, thank you! Shakespeare earned his ELT-CH, Elite Champion, in front of a "home town crowd," despite his nervous mother. So glad we could be with friends to celebrate this special day with a dog who is very special to me.

– Kathie Nurena



Kanc and Dahra at play.  
Doing agility has its benefits!

– Ebba Grumieaux.



## Club Members News – continued



Starting the Disc Dog Season in style. Versatility Performance Boxer, “Sirrocco's Song Of The Sea,” Rhoswyn Fae, earned her AKC UpDog Challenge Silver Disc Title with her co-handler Robert H. Menzel, aka Bobby Knickers.

Rhoswyn is a Boxer and as true to her breed, has a great sense of humor and makes those around her laugh every day. The sport of DiscDogging is challenging for Boxers and she is one of the very few in the United States that competes in the sport. She is a brachycephalic breed, meaning she has a short nose, so it is not easy to get the bite just right for a speedy retrieve, but Rhoswyn never gives up on trying to chomp that disc at just the right angle for a solid catch!

Rhoswyn has a lot of natural drive and loves to compete with her dad. Rhoswyn has earned many titles in different disciplines and qualified for Nationals in AKC Rally Obedience and UPDog International Finals in Men's Far Out, Four Way Play, Greedy Game, and Time Warp. - *Morganna Menzel*



Introducing Zephyr!

Zephyr is a sports mix pup who came home Thanksgiving weekend. She is very bright and loud and small, and will play with toys all day and all night. Here she is at 9 weeks and 6 months. Looking forward to our journey together, which I can tell will have its full share of challenges! - *Sarah Johnson*

Welcoming a new Border Puppy into my household!  
Meet Zuri! She is a red merle BC. Plans are for her to do agility and some obedience competitions!  
Here she is pictured with her FAVORITE Holey Ball at the age of 5 months! Already she LOVES doing agility foundation!  
- *Mary Elizabeth Simpson*



## Club Members News – continued



Introducing Abington's Bandit Steals the Show! Bandit's future includes Conformation, Nose Work, Herding, Fast CAT, Farm Dog, Tricks and more!

Bandit won the Nutmeg Cluster Puppy Herding Group pictured on the left.

On the right with his muddy buddy and partner in crime, Aero!

– Kathie Jochen



## OPEN HOUSE at PCOTC

Sunday, June 11, 2023  
1:00 PM - 4:00 PM

PCOTC's Lower Level  
See website for details  
<https://www.pcotc.org/events>



## PCOTC Club Meeting Annual Meeting

Sunday, June 25, 2023  
5:30 PM - 7:30 PM

Hybrid Meeting:  
In person in PCOTC's Lower Level  
and Online via Zoom

## Have you been looking for volunteer opportunities, but don't know where to find them?

Check out the regularly updated listings on our website - <https://www.pcotc.org/volunteer-opportunities>.  
Or look under the Membership tab, you will find "Volunteering Opportunities" there.

# Our Stars

## New Titles and Honors Reported by Our Members

From July 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023

### CONFORMATION TITLES

*American Kennel Club (AKC)*

#### AKC Grand Championship (GCH)

3/25/23 Katherine Jochen, CGH CH DejaBlue Alexandra The Great FDC ATT, "Alex," Old English Sheepdog

### OBEDIENCE TITLES

*American Kennel Club (AKC)*

#### Beginner Novice (BN)

7/31/22 Jeanne & Michael Turschmann, Blulake Isleof Innisfree, CGC TKN ORT BN "Ronan," Kerry Blue Terrier

*American Kennel Club (AKC)*

#### Companion Dog (CD)

1/25/23 Kathleen Foley, CH Destiny Fireheart's Celtic Magic, CD BN RN RA AX AXJ BCAT SWN SCC SIA SBA RATS CGC, "Lorna," Scottish Terrier

*American Kennel Club (AKC)*

#### Canine Good Citizen (CGC)

8/8/22 Katherine Jochen, Saxen Farm's I'm Not That Girl FDC BCAT THD CGCA CGCU TKN ATT, "Marlo," Old English Sheepdog

*American Kennel Club (AKC)*

#### Community Canine (CGCA)

10/25/22 Katherine Jochen, Shaggebark I Am Not A Mini Cooper THDX CGCA CGCU, "Cooper," Old English Sheepdog

11/15/22 Katherine Jochen, Saxen Farm's I'm Not That Girl FDC BCAT THD CGCA CGCU TKN ATT, "Marlo," Old English Sheepdog

*American Kennel Club (AKC)*

#### Canine Good Citizen Urban (CGCU)

8/12/22 Katherine Jochen, Shaggebark I Am Not A Mini Cooper THDX CGCA CGCU, "Cooper," Old English Sheepdog

11/15/22 Katherine Jochen, Saxen Farm's I'm Not That Girl FDC BCAT THD CGCA CGCU TKN ATT, "Marlo," Old English Sheepdog

### RALLY TITLES

*American Kennel Club (AKC)*

#### Rally Intermediate (RI)

7/17/22 Denise DeVito, Kalora's A Bewitching Kiss UD VER RI SCA, "Sabrina," Doberman

*American Kennel Club (AKC)*

#### Rally Advanced (RA)

4/9/23 Kathleen Foley, CH Destiny Fireheart's Celtic Magic, CD BN RN RA AX AXJ BCAT SWN SCC SIA SBA RATS CGC, "Lorna," Scottish Terrier

### AGILITY TITLES

*American Kennel Club (AKC)*

#### Novice Agility Jumpers (NAJ)

10/21/22 Jane C. McLoughlin, Tucker creek's Intel @ Limrick, "Tellie," Australian Shepherd

#### Novice Agility (NA)

11/12/22 Jane C. McLoughlin, Tucker creek's Intel @ Limrick, "Tellie," Australian Shepherd

#### Novice Fast (NF)

11/12/22 Jane C. McLoughlin, Tucker creek's Intel @ Limrick, "Tellie," Australian Shepherd

#### Agility Excellent Preferred (AXP)

11/6/22 Sarah Johnson, Mitey Hazel Nut, "Hazel," Mitey Nut

#### Agility Excellent Fast Preferred (XFP)

3/11/23 Sarah Johnson, Mitey Hazel Nut, "Hazel," Mitey Nut

#### Master Agility Champion 3 (MACH 3)

12/3/22 Jane C. McLoughlin, Limerick's Fair Dinkam Cadence, "Cadence," Australian Shepherd

#### Master Jumper Gold (MJG)

8/10/22 Jane C. McLoughlin, Limerick's Fair Dinkam Cadence, "Cadence," Australian Shepherd

#### Master Century Agility (MXC)

9/17/22 Jane C. McLoughlin, Limerick's Fair Dinkam Cadence, "Cadence," Australian Shepherd

### AGILITY TITLES

*Canine Performance Event (CPE)*

#### CT-ATCH Enthusiast Agility Trial Champion

10/9/22 Sarah Johnson, Mitey Hazel Nut, "Hazel," Mitey Nut

#### Speedway Elite

7/9/22 Janet Metzger, Safranne's Rascal of Redding, "Rascal," Miniature Poodle

### NOSEWORK TITLES

*National Association of Canine Scent Work (NACSW)*

#### NW3-C

9/24/22 Carolyn Ripps, Reinwood Hearts Entertained, "Frodo," Pembroke Welsh Corgi

#### Elite 1 (ELT-1)

7/24/22 Heather Emmel, Shabani's Star of the Show, "Bisa," Rhodesian Ridgeback

## Our Stars – continued

### NOSEWORK TITLES

*National Association of Canine Scent Work (NACSW)*

#### Elite 3 (ELT-3)

11/21/22 Country Line's Who Wouldn't Want to Be Me, "Nyah,"  
Rhodesian Ridgeback

#### Elite Champion (ELT-CH)

11/19/22 Heather Emmel, Country Line's Fly So Free, "Asha,"  
Rhodesian Ridgeback

#### Level 2 Containers (L2-C)

3/26/22 Heather Emmel, Shabani's Star of the Show, "Bisa,"  
Rhodesian Ridgeback

### BARN HUNT

*Barn Hunt Association (BHA)*

#### Crazy 8s Platinum 4 Bronze (CZ8P4B)

7/9/22 Jeanne Meldrim, D'Meldrim's Axe du Dantero, "Axe,"  
Belgian Malinois

#### Crazy 8s Platinum 4 Silver (CZ8P4S)

3/3/23 Jeanne Meldrim, D'Meldrim's Axe du Dantero, "Axe,"  
Belgian Malinois

#### Barn Hunt Elite Master Champion (REMX5)

11/19/22 Jeanne Meldrim, D'Meldrim's Axe du Dantero, "Axe,"  
Belgian Malinois

#### Barn Hunt Rat Champion 10 (RATCHX10)

10/22/22 Jeanne Meldrim, D'Meldrim's Axedu Dantero, "Axe,"  
Belgian Malinois

#### Barn Hunt Rat Champion 11 (RATCHX11)

3/4/23 Jeanne Meldrim, D'Meldrim's Axedu Dantero, "Axe,"  
Belgian Malinois

#### RAT INSTINCT (RATI)

2/18/23 Jeanne Meldrim, Hop River's Lucifer's Seraphina,  
"Seraphina" Dutch Shepherd

#### RAT NOVICE (RATN)

3/4/23 Jeanne Meldrim, Hop River's Lucifer's Seraphina,  
"Seraphina," Dutch Shepherd

### FARM DOG

*American Kennel Club*

#### Farm Dog Certified (FDC)

9/18/22 Katherine Jochen, GCH CH Deja Blu Alexandra The Great  
FDC ATT, "Alex," Old English Sheepdog

9/18/22 Katherine Jochen, Saxen Farm's I'm Not That Girl FDC  
BCAT THD CGCA CGCU TKN ATT, "Marlo,"  
Old English Sheepdog

### TEMPERAMENT TEST (ATT)

*American Kennel Club*

8/19/22 Katherine Jochen, GCH CH Deja Blu Alexandra The Great  
FDC ATT, "Alex," Old English Sheepdog

8/19/22 Katherine Jochen, Saxen Farm's I'm Not That Girl FDC  
BCAT THD CGCA CGCU TKN ATT, "Marlo,"  
Old English Sheepdog

### THERAPY DOG (THD)

*American Kennel Club*

8/8/22 Katherine Jochen, Saxen Farm's I'm Not That Girl FDC  
BCAT THD CGCA CGCU TKN ATT, "Marlo,"  
Old English Sheepdog

### DISTINGUISHED THERAPY DOG (THDD)

*American Kennel Club*

3/30/23 Mary Jane Koren, CH Quillquest UR Unstoppable RE  
NAP NJP NFP CGC, "Topsy," Flat Coated Retriever

### TRICK DOG

*American Kennel Club (AKC)*

#### Trick Dog Novice (TKN)

8/10/22 Barbara Newman, Parishill Velvet Visionary RE CGC,  
Watson, Standard Poodle

### STOCKDOG

*Australian Shepherd Club of America (ASCA)*

#### Open Sheep Trial Dog

7/9/22 Jane C. McLoughlin, Limerick's Fair Dinkam Cadence,  
"Cadence," Australian Shepherd

### HONORS:

#### AKC Triple Q Excellent

8/11/22 Jane C. McLoughlin, Limerick's Fair Dinkam Cadence,  
"Cadence," Australian Shepherd

#### WHWTCA Versatile Dog Award

1/12/23 Kathleen Foley, CH Spirit's Changing of the Guard, RN  
DCAT SWN CGC, "James," West Highland Terrier

#### STCA Superior Scottish Terrier Performance Award

1/25/23 Kathleen Foley, CH Destiny Fireheart's Celtic Magic, CD  
BN RN RA AX AXJ BCAT SWN SCC SIA SBA RATS  
CGC, "Lorna," Scottish Terrier

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## Welcome PCOTC New Members!

**Alina Kuznesova** - "Zinga" - Rhodesian Ridgeback

**Diane Anderson** - "Fern" - German Shepherd Dog

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# 10 ways to be a great student, team player, AND get the most out of performance classes!



*by Marcy Rauch*

1) Come to class on time. That means you should get to class a few minutes early, but not too early to disrupt the previous class. Come in quietly, set up and be ready to work at the start of class time.

Also leave when your class is done so you don't infringe on the following class's time.

2) Help set up if needed. The more people that help set up ahead of time and during class, the more floor time and instruction everyone gets.

3) Distractions = Less Learning

Make sure your dog is crated and out of the way when you're not running. They don't belong wandering at the end of a leash or sitting on or under the table by the ring gates. It can be distracting for you and your classmates as well as possibly being unsafe for your dog.

4) Set yourself for success. Pay attention even when it isn't your turn on the floor. We all learn by watching others. Plus, it fosters camaraderie.

5) To get the most from class, each and every student should have the instructor's undivided attention when it's their time on the floor, so please don't monopolize the instructor's time when it is not your turn. We're all "guilty" of it from time to time, so let's all try to stay aware.

6) If you have questions about your own time on the floor after the fact or get stuck understanding an idea, note it and ask the instructor at the end of the class. Many instructors ask if there are any questions, so that's the best time to ask. Just finish up before the next class starts, or contact your instructor privately.

7) Keep your chatter to a minimum. You may want to discuss what's happening with a classmate, as discussing what's going on in class can be a learning tool. Just don't distract others.

8) Actively listen to your instructor! If they have a suggestion, TRY IT! It may not be in your comfort zone, or how you'd normally choose to do something, but it might be a great addition to your "Tool Box."

And if they're shouting "Reward Your Dog," DO IT! We sometimes get stuck in our own heads and forget to reward in a timely fashion.

9) Take notes if applicable, or record your floor time. Sometimes we forget the seemingly simple things. Revisit your notes before you work again (whether in the same class or next class, at a run-thru, or trial). And if there's homework, jot it down!

10) Things don't always go as planned. Don't dwell on the negative. Always try and come up with three good points from your time on the floor.

# The New PCOTC Agility Curriculum: The Why, the How, the Who and the What

By Deedie Domenicali

How did the new and exciting agility curriculum come to pass? When we started, the agility class listing on our website had over 50 classes, many of which had not been offered in years. Over time, classes with a similar purpose had different names. Subsequently, there was no clear path for students to follow as they pursued excellence in agility. We were also aware that classes often had teams with very different skill levels, making it more challenging for instructors to plan a lesson that met the needs of all their students. There were a lot of issues to grapple with. But our agility instructors were ready for the challenge!

- Make the course descriptions more explicit about what each class offers and be consistent with class titles and descriptions
- Better define the skills required for a team to take the class
- Define a clear path for students' journeys as they learn and improve their skills in agility as a team

To accomplish these goals, our agility instructors created a FaceBook Messenger group and welcomed me into it. This became our primary communication channel. Stephen McKay, Heather Witt, Lisa Topol and Misa Martin all jumped in to start working. We then created a Google document which everyone could edit. There were many discussions about what the best title was for a class, what should be taught at each level and what skills were required for each level. While the instructors had somewhat different points of view at times, they all approached the project with passion, a sense of ownership in the outcome, and a strong commitment to improving our program.

In order to develop a clear progression for students, we created four levels. These levels represent the type of skills a team at that level needs to work on. Any time you aren't sure of what level your team is, please feel free to reach out to any of the instructors. They can guide you best.

**Foundation** classes are for newbies, who have either never done agility or have a new teammate who is just starting out in agility. The Foundation level consists of Foundation Essentials, the beginning class, followed by four Foundation Concentration classes: Jumps, Contacts, Weaves and Teeter, and Handling. The skills being developed here build the foundation upon which all further progression will depend. The stronger a team becomes in these skills, the faster they will progress in their journey and the more effective a team they will ultimately be. There is no shortcut to excellence and the skills learned here are critical to future success.

**Beginner** classes follow **Foundation**, when the team is familiar with and can do all the obstacles, but is not totally and reliably

proficient at them. For example, they may need to use guides on the poles, or open them up, or jump at a lower height. Shorter sequences will be used to help develop handling skills, but basic skill help is also available. Here, too, getting these skills right provides the building blocks that a team needs to be really proficient – ensuring that as they progress, they can work on more complex skills. If these skills aren't strong, the team will have difficulty with more complex skills.

**Intermediate** is for teams that are proficient on all obstacles at full height, but who are not ready to compete at the Masters level. Our instructors believe that teams should train for Masters at the get go, so these are not “remedial” classes. Intermediate is for teams that are still working on coursework and refining their handling and distance skills.

**Masters** is for teams that can run AKC master level courses, whether they are trialing or not. There are still many skills that need to be learned, refined and strengthened at this level. Agility is so much fun because a team never stops learning and progressing. There is no such thing as 100% perfect in agility.

Once the design phase was complete, we began implementation. Stephen, Heather, Lisa and Misa reviewed each of their teams' class enrollment history and modified it based on their knowledge of the team's skill level. We then worked with Registration to enter prerequisites into the registration system. Debbie Poe worked tirelessly to enter all the prerequisites! We heard from many students as they were notified of the level for which they were preapproved, and adjustments were made in advance of registration wherever appropriate. Registration went flawlessly on Wednesday and Thursday.

Knowing what class to take next will give our teams a sense of progress and accomplishment. Having teams of roughly the same levels in classes will make everyone's experience so much more effective. We want our instructors to be able to plan a lesson for the class with appropriate challenges, design a course to practice those, and assist teams in mastering the

## The Class Schedule

We are also using the data we get from our registration system to track which classes fill or consistently have wait lists to guide us in making adjustments to our offerings. Both our Foundation and our Masters classes have wait lists, so in the May/June session, we added a Masters class and are working on offering additional Foundation classes on weekends.

We hope that all of our agility students will have a better understanding of where they're going on this fun and challenging journey we all undertake as a team with our pups.

# Living Peacefully in a Multi-Species Home

By Misa Martin, PCOTC Agility Instructor

One evening towards the end of the summer of 2022, the excellent Parrots Confidential documentary popped up in my streaming feed. At the time I first watched the film, I wasn't fully aware of the magnitude of the number of unwanted parrots, but my resolve to help just one bird grew as I watched the stories of the various sanctuary birds unfold. That night, I began researching local rescues and sent in adoption applications for a few birds before the film had ended.

Having worked in local animal shelters for years, I felt confident as I hit "send" on these applications. Many went unanswered, and I was left to wonder if this was because of my 2 dogs : Ipso Facto, a 4 year old JRT, and Jambo, an 8 yr old Chi mix. There were no overt statements about adoption policies re: dogs in the home on the rescues' "About" pages - could a tragic history of adopter mismanagement be the reason why no one got back to me? A quick review of bird groups on social media revealed too many hair-raisingly unsafe photos and videos of "cute" interactions between pet birds, pet dogs and - strangest of all - pet cats. Less frequent were the tearful admissions that such interactions had gone terribly wrong. I may not have been sure what kind of bird would be a good fit for my home, but I was clear about one thing : I had no intentions of ever introducing my dogs to any pet bird I would ever have.

After I recorded a virtual home visit for the kind folks over at CT Bird Rescue, a meet and greet was arranged for me and a Green Cheeked Conure in need of a new home.

In order to prepare for my bird's arrival, I devised a training plan for my dogs that incorporated management first, and the Control Unleashed pattern games created by Leslie McDevitt.

Crating at home was enough of a lifestyle change for Ipso and Jambo that I felt I needed to start with lots of reinforcement for them for being crated while newly-named Maraca was out free flying. My dogs' fondness for remote treat dispensers became useful in marking and rewarding quiet behaviors as they spent time crated. Providing lickimats and stuffed toys for them in their crates after a few rounds of Nosework and beach running in the morning were a no-brainer; useful trained behaviors that Ipso and Jambo already knew, had practiced, and could apply to having Maraca in their space such as the Control Unleashed were essential.

## Pattern Games:

### Look at That, Mat Work, Take a Breath

Both Ipso and Jambo were familiar with the Look at That game as a go-to for on leash reactivity towards dogs while out and about. Their proficiency with LAT was exactly what I needed in my home - marking and rewarding my girls' choice to not charge or bark at Maraca as he zipped around his cage. Thankfully, this went very smoothly and we spent the first days of Maraca's arrival practicing LAT just as they had done with oncoming dogs and distractions outside. I used the 1-2-3 pattern game when I felt that their attention was drawn too much towards their very distracting new roommate.

Though I often taught other CU relaxation games with my clients as a professional dog trainer, I had not specifically worked with my own dogs on two important CU foundation games : Mat Work and Take a Breath. In training them to notice Maraca's movements and vocalizations as context cues to settle on their beds, I continued to use LAT - but over the first days that Maraca was in my home, I adjusted my focus to concentrate on the goals of the Control Unleashed exercises: to help dogs to master being calm.

To that end, I used Take a Breath to enhance relaxation time for my dogs. This game is tricky at first as you need to watch for very small nose movements from your dog - and I am one of many people who find that hard to see! Many times, I was able to time the beginning of one of these training sessions with an uptick of activity from Maraca. Take a Breath often served as a pause in between games - here, I was using it as part of breaks between Look at That and Mat Work. One particular advantage of using the Control Unleashed games is that many of them are designed to produce calm default behaviors in whatever size space you happen to be working in.

Training for Maraca started with reinforcing quiet. Conures are notorious, vociferous screamers. As it turned out, part of easing his transition to the activity level of my home meant providing plenty of enrichment for him. At the time, the Avian Behavior Lab just happened to be offering an online workshop for reducing screaming behaviors

# Living Peacefully in a Multi-Species Home – continued

through enrichment, which helped immensely. It's amazing what can be done with some Kraft paper and a few safflower seeds! As I watched Ipso and Jambo learn to ignore Maraca, I was also mindful of their comfort as I rewarded Maraca for the quiet vocalizations he made and introduced interactive, shreddable toys. It was easy to find reinforcers for Maraca. However, he is the only pet I've ever had who will swat an unwanted food item away and then nip at me for my trouble.

## 1-2-3 Pattern Game with Beak Press: An Alternative to Biting

I knew that Maraca had had very little interaction with humans in his previous home. I wanted a stress free way to get started with training and enrichment, so I continued to mark and reward any quiet vocalization from him. As soon as he began to associate the presence of my hands with seeds, I slowly introduced his chopstick target, since anything encroaching on his space had clearly been aversive.

Maraca readily took preferred reinforcers from me within a week of his adoption, and was always ready to eat. However, it was disheartening to experience the bites that, at the time, were his go-to for human interactions. It took a lot of dexterity to isolate his choice to press his beak to an extended finger, rather than bite. After several successful rounds of this, I then asked for an extension of that behavior by playing the 1-2-3 game with him, backchaining the count. This pattern game made it easier to reward for more extended holds. He learned this in a few days - not too shabby for a hand shy Conure!

## Maraca's Beak Press



My goal to create a quiet household, free of conflict from Ipso and Jambo behaving inappropriately towards Maraca was not only an issue of quality of life for me, but for all of them as well. I appreciated the time I spent with my own dogs as we learned new Control Unleashed games together.



Teaching my own students about this experience addresses the very real issue of living in a multi-species home peacefully, as well as addressing realistic expectations of companion animals. My other takeaway from the last 9 months of living with Maraca has been how very rewarding it is to see him become more confident as he learns new behaviors.



## Spring has sprung!

*Tilly is planted in her garden and Alex poses among the flowers!*

