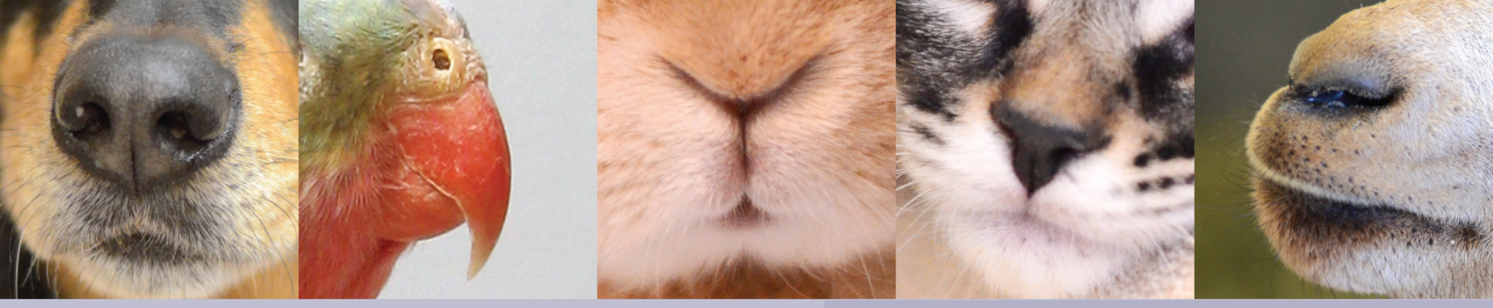


The Noseletter

May 2020
A Behavior & Training Communiqué from Dawn Kovell

Virtual Dog Training

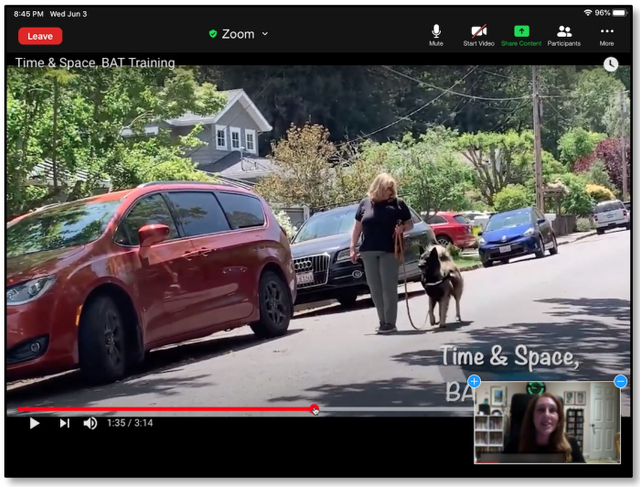
By Karen Schuerholz

When the global pandemic hit and shelter-in-place orders were issued, the dog training world was put on hold. All dog classes were canceled. Meanwhile, many people thought that adopting a dog while sheltering in place was a good idea. So the need for dog training didn't go away. How could we teach all the dogs if we couldn't be there?

Welcome to the world of virtual dog training! The Zoom app became an exciting and valuable tool for training pets. Though Zoom had been around for a while, not many of us had been videoing our work and presenting on camera. As a trainer it takes some courage to go live on camera and walk people through what they need to do. There's a learning curve on both sides. Would the public accept this? I was about to find out!

The first step was to learn the technology involved. Since I had to suspend working with clients in person, I definitely had some free time for learning. I had never used Zoom, but after studying the ins and outs I was willing to try it with a real client and lesson!

My first client was an 8-week-old puppy who was quite timid. He was the smallest of the litter and worried about everything. Virtual training was a good opportunity for me to help him and his guardians in his home environment without him acting differently in my presence. Sometimes a worried dog is concerned with a stranger being in the home. Now, without being physically there, I could still help him and his guardians.



Karen Schuerholz appears in the picture in a picture of a Zoom training while sharing a training video.

Virtual training can be challenging to the trainer; you have to be very observant and clear with your instructions. A trainer may easily observe the nuances of a particular situation, whereas the guardian may not. For example, I observed the puppy's tail going under and asked the guardians if they thought their dog was worried. They didn't think so, yet further talking revealed that the puppy was usually not allowed on the couch, but they had positioned him there for better viewing during the training session. If he's not normally allowed on the couch he shouldn't be on the couch during a training session. That's why he was worried! It is important to give clear signals and not mixed messages to your dog.

As a trainer, your goal is to have your client looking forward to each training session. You must be patient, understanding and diplomatic. Most trainers teach by demonstrating with a client's dog – now you can't do that. You must use your verbal skills and provide precise direction. You can't take the leash or put something in the dog's mouth or help with the jumping. You have to tell the guardian carefully and tactfully what to do and how to do it – without being super critical.

You are rewarded for all your patience and understanding when the guardian takes pride in getting their dog to sit for the first time; or when their dog does "touch" or "find it" *all on his own*. You have to give up some control and give the clients more responsibility. But you both revel in the successes.

I *love* virtual training and feel it's making me a better trainer. The clients seem to progress faster and are more confident. Plus, the dogs are learning in an environment that is more comfortable and less distracting. For some people, it's great to learn and teach in the comfort of their home – perhaps while wearing their PJs!

Whether you are an instructor or a student, sign up for a class. I think you'll truly enjoy it. 🐾

Upcoming Event

UPDATE: SUE STERNBERG event now a Live Webinar Series
August 1, 8, 15, 22

Managing Dog-Dog Interactions & Avoiding Dog-Play Dangers!

A Live Online Webinar 4 two-hour Saturday AM Sessions

Contact
917-699-6440
www.puppyworks.com

Register for all 4, or any combination of single sessions; 2 CEUs per session

We are coming back!

Agility classes are back! They will be held on Wednesday and Thursday nights and on Sunday mornings. More classes will be added in the coming weeks! See the current agility class schedule.

Stay tuned and learn more news about Family Dog training classes starting up!

Leslie Llava's dog Rosie enjoys a practice run on the agility field.

Cat Tales and Mews News

Otis: A Very, Very Fine Cat

Otis came to us with an attitude and a letter. The attitude was apparent right away; the letter was an unexpected discovery.

Eight-year-old Otis was a big boy, weighing in at close to 27 pounds. His beloved guardian had passed way and he was surrendered to Marin Humane by his guardian's children. Otis was miserable at the shelter – confused, hostile and shut down. He was not about to let his guard down for anyone; he hissed, growled and struck out at staff and volunteers alike. The shelter staff placed a red caution card on his cage and asked the feline behavior department for help.

After initially observing Otis in his cage, the behavior team sorted through his paperwork for some background information and discovered the letter. It was an introductory letter written by Otis himself (so to speak). The letter began with "Hi, I'm Otis, and by all accounts from everyone who knows me, I am a very, very fine cat." That first sentence caused us to pause a moment. We thought maybe Otis just needed reminding that he was indeed a "very fine cat."

With letter in hand, Paula Skelton sat outside Otis's cage and read him his very own introductory letter—not once but three times! We reminded Otis about how he liked to get up early and sit with his guardian while she drank her coffee and they planned their day. How he liked to lie out in the sun in his catio while she painted.

How he loved gentle scratches behind his ears and how much he liked his furminator brush. Paula reminded Otis how he loved playing hide-and-seek with his guardian as she peeked around the corner for him to find her and how he loved being chased to his scratching pad. Paula reminded him what a wonderful conversationalist he was with his diverse vocabulary of meows, gurgles and omphs, and how much he appreciated a good face-to-face conversation. After the third time reading through Otis's letter, Paula heard a small chirp and a meow (gurgles and omphs came later!). Did Otis really just say, "Yep, that's me."?

Otis's introductory letter (if only every shelter animal came with one!) gave us insight into his life before the shelter. Hour by hour Otis seemed to regain his confidence and friendliness and began making new friends every day. Although still overweight, Otis was now ready for the adoption floor.

He enjoyed his walks around the back room with our pet pal volunteers and had no issues at all with the other cats in the room. He loved his scratching pad, his furminator brush and gentle scratches behind his ears. With his confidence boosted he even tried a few jumps up onto the counter in the room while he was out of his cage. (Was he missing his favorite cat tree?) Unfortunately, he miscalculated a jump and landed on the floor quite hard. His availability for adoption status was put on hold to make sure he hadn't seriously injured himself. Several days of limping ensued, an exam was given, and x-rays were taken. No apparent injuries were discovered but Otis was put on cage rest and pain relief.

Then Covid-19 arrived and Marin Humane began seeking foster homes for all the shelter animals. The behavior team found Otis a foster home in the East Bay. When Beth picked up Otis and weighed him before he left the shelter, she could tell he still was not feeling well; he didn't want to leave his cage.

He had a long drive to his foster home, as there were several stops involved to deliver food to other fosters and another cat to drop off. It was definitely one of those frantic Covid-19 days for both Beth and Otis. He was transferred to his foster home in a large dog crate and it took two people to carry it down a flight of steps. Beth thought about Otis's initial reaction when he first came to the shelter and was worried that this new move might set him back again.

After opening the door to his crate, Beth stepped back to see what would happen. She sighed in relief. Otis immediately came out of his crate, sat

Otis just needed to be reminded that he was a "very, very fine cat!"

in the middle of the floor and purred and purred and purred! He was so happy to be out of the shelter! Transitioning to the foster home still came with some issues, though.

Otis did not eat consistently for two weeks. It was a challenge to make sure that Otis, who could easily get liver acidosis from not eating, ate enough but didn't gain weight. He also still seemed to be stiff and uncomfortable when he walked, which wasn't often. Since the x-rays didn't reveal a problem, Beth reached out to our veterinary staff to ask if Otis could visit a holistic vet close to his foster home. There, they recommended using an Assisi Loop – a non-invasive electromagnetic device for relief of pain and swelling – four times a day and Ligaplex, a tissue and joint supplement.

With all the special care provided by the Marin Humane staff, the holistic vet and the foster, Otis began moving around in his foster home with less and less discomfort. He was able to climb the stairs and even lost weight. A real milestone came for Otis when he could groom *all* areas of himself for a good cleaning!

When Otis was again available for adoption, we knew that this "very, very fine cat" would steal someone's heart. The match came on May 25. Otis's new guardian (a client of our one of our cat volunteers with a cat sitting business) is committed to helping Otis lose more weight and she already has a baby scale to measure his progress.

Three months after arriving at Marin Humane, Otis went home! 🐾

Cat Tales and Mews News

Cats! Whatever are they saying?

Cats have 32 muscles in each ear to help them ignore you. On the other hand, if you learn to read cat signals, the ears will actually help you understand how she is feeling.

A contented and calm cat resting on your lap has ears that will:

· Face forward with the openings exposed.

· Are slightly tilted back or swiveled slightly to the side.

A curious cat will have:

· Erect ears that face forward to the point of interest and that swivel from side to side to hone in on the source and location of her interest.

A perplexed or conflicted cat will have:

· Ears turned sideways, back or one ear tipped to the side.

· Mixed positions of her ears while she assesses her situation.

A nervous or frightened cat will:

· Have ears turned back and flattened against her head.

· The more frightened the cat is, the more flattened back her ears will be.

· This can be a defensive or offensive posturing of the ears.

A very angry cat will have ears that:

• Are completely turned back and completely flattened against her head.

• This is a very offensive posture.

Next month in *Cat Tales and Mews News* we'll decode the rest of that beautiful feline face—eyes, whiskers and more!

Feline Body Language

To learn more about Feline Body Language watch our cat workshops website page for the next "What Is My Cat Saying" zoom workshop led by Beth Weil (featuring excerpts from Carol A. Byrnes, CPDT-KA Diamonds in the Ruff www.diamondsintheruff.com).

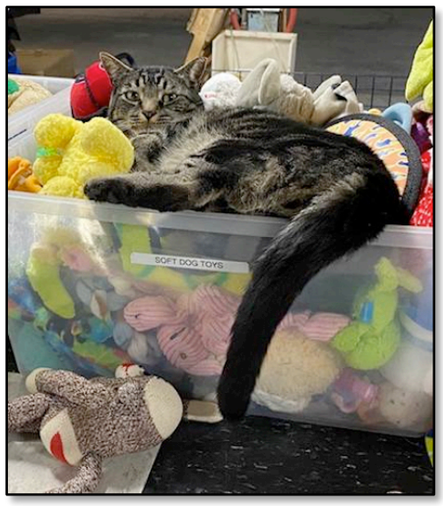
Cat Behavior Workshops now offered online

We are offering online cat behavior classes. A good internet connection and Zoom software (download for free) is necessary for your device (computer or tablet recommended). Not sure about Zoom, we will help you get set up before the workshop starts.

950 - Workshop: How To Train Your Cat (click to register)
Sunday, June 28, 12 pm, $15
Many people believe that cats cannot be trained. They CAN be! They respond well to positive reinforcement (usually their favorite treat or being scratched in their favorite spot). We'll teach you how to communicate with your cat and to provide mental/psychological stimulation for them.

Presented by Beth Weil. 1½ hours

Click to view all cat behavior class offerings.



What do Fred's ears tell us? MH house cat helps sort the freshly dried doggie toys.

Behavior and Training News

News from Virginia…

Sharing kennel enrichment ideas cross-country

Early in May Virginia saw a post to her Facebook Animal Enrichment Group. The FB group poster was newly appointed to oversee the canine enrichment program at the Nashville Metro Animal Care & Control (https://www.nashville.gov/Health-Department/Animal-Care-and-Control.aspx), and she needed some help! She was looking for guidance on setting up and running a kennel enrichment program in a shelter.

Virginia sent her a private message and after some email exchanges was able to set up a Zoom conference to help her get started. Participants were Virginia, Emma Clifford and Stephany from the Nashville Metro ACC. Emma and Virginia told Stephany about Marin Humane's program and gave her guidance on setting up and running her own program. They shared the enrichment material they have gathered and recommended some other sources of material to Stephany.

Virginia and Emma spent nearly two hours meeting with Stephany and very much enjoyed sharing their knowledge and experiences. Virginia was the only person from the Facebook group who reached out to help Stephany and for this she was incredibly grateful. Way to go, Virginia!

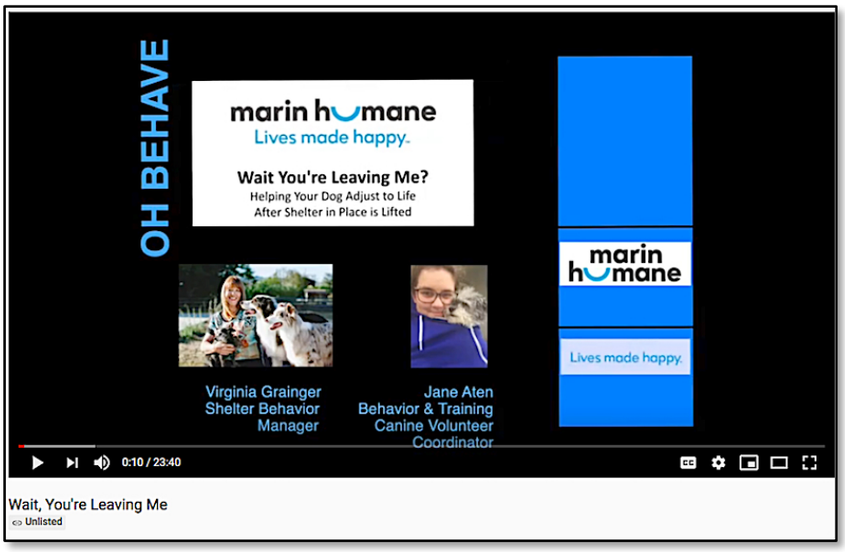
Other news

Virginia Grainger, Shelter Behavior Manager, made two appearances on Julia Sudlow's after-school Zoom programs.

Virtual volunteer orientation In May Volunteer Services agreed to do a virtual volunteer orientation for people interested in joining B&T.

Approximately 16 people attended and we are in the process of setting up virtual orientations for the volunteer jobs in which they have expressed interest.

Cindy Flinn continues to make follow-up phone calls to people who have adopted dogs from the shelter. There were 21 dog adoptions in May and she has called most.



Screen grab of the free youtube video produced by Virginia and Jane to help clients prepare their dogs to be left at home for the first time in months.

Preparing for leaving your dog at home: FREE FREE FREE!

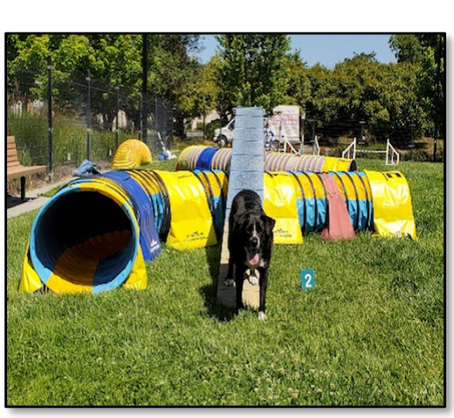
Maybe we haven't loved staying at home all the time, only going out for short errands and walks in the neighborhood. But do you know who has loved this new routine? Our dogs! We're basically living their routine right now: wake up, eat breakfast, go for a walk, and hang out at home until it's time for bed.

But soon some of us humans will be returning to work. If we suddenly leave our dogs for eight hours or more a day, they may freak out and wonder why they're alone.

With this in mind, Jane Aten, B&T Canine Volunteer Coordinator, and Virginia recorded a Zoom webinar to help people prepare their dogs for the end of shelter in place. The session is titled "Wait, You're Leaving Me?" This webinar is free and is available to anyone who signs up on our website. https://youtu.be/GAFeIyZbR5w

The webinar is just over 20 minutes long and is filled with useful information to help people teach their dogs to adjust to being alone for longer and longer periods of time.

Agility Field open to single user rentals



The Marin Humane Agility Field opened to single user field rentals Monday, May 18, after we received approval from Marin County.

The lovely and talented Rosie, with her person Leslie Llava in tow, was first up when the field opened. Rosie has titles to earn and was more than ready to get some practice in! A huge "thank you" to Leslie who was instrumental in helping us get the Agility Field Rental Program up and running. So to speak!

Behavior and Training News

A Team "Way to Go"

By Ann Glascock-Ryan

During the past three months, B&T staff has almost exclusively been working from home. This is challenging for a group of people whose job is very hands on! So, beyond working on a ton of online training, this team has also been working on an amazing amount of projects. As I have been busy trying to coordinate these activities, sometimes getting a bit overwhelmed, I would feel a virtual helpful hand reaching through the phone or Zoom call.

After these calls, I would take a deep breath and reflect on how thankful I was to be working with them. This happened over and over and over again! At Marin Humane there is a ***Way To Go*** award to recognize outstanding individual achievements, but for me this is a **Team Way to Go!** Thank you to all of you for your work, your patience and your dedication to the organization.

Here are just some of the projects everyone has been working on (in no particular order and there are many that are not on here):

- Creation of a Defensive Handling workshop for volunteers & Dog Fight Protocols (Yuching, Ali)
- Refunded approximately $30,000 back to clients (Bunny, Renate)
- Creation of a video log system and populating with our first 30 recordings (Dawn, Emma, Emma's John)
- Educating two of the next generations productive contributors (Amy)
- Creation of video library for Agility (Dawn, Annette, Sally, Dev, Karen Schwartz)
- Nose Work Curriculum (Kathleen)
- Virtual Volunteer Orientation (Candace, Anne, Virginia, Jane)
- Creation of Virtual Orientation Outlines (Helen, Karen Schuerholz)
- Creation of "Wait, You're Leaving Me" free on-demand presentation (Virginia, Jane, Carrie, Dawn)
- Noseletter Contributions (Rosemary, Ali, Dawn, Karen Schuerholz, Virginia, Beth, Janie Cooperman, Kathleen, Cindy Flinn, Jane, and more that I am missing, I am sure)!
- Creation of a Consulting Survey, Puppies in the Park Survey (Kathleen, Carrie, Joan)
- Behavior Videos for Blog Posts (Dawn, Yuching, Karen Schwartz, Emma)
- Instructor Onboarding Guide (Carrie, Helen)
- Completion of 4-ACT training despite struggles (Andrea and others!!!)
- Creation of DTA Workshops (Jane, Virginia)
- Online/Virtual Puppy and Adult Workshops (Ali, Carrie, Chloe, Nancy, Helen, Karen Schuerholz)
- Phone/Virtual Consultations (Ali, Kathleen, Karen Schuerholz, Yuching, Helen)
- Nose Work video library and taping (Dawn, Kathleen, Ali, Yuching, Carrie)
- Rewriting Beginning Puppy Curriculum (Dawn and others with feedback)
- Research on TEAMs for consulting usage (Yuching)
- Management of Virtual Consultations and incoming requests (Bunny)
- Creation of the SOP and processes for Agility Field reopen for renters (Dawn, Joan, Bunny)

So, why do I feel so blessed every day to work with you all? It is all these amazing things listed above, along with your compassion for clients, staff, volunteers and each other. Plus! Your sense of humor and reality checks!

Thank you to all for everything! 🐾

Evaluations

B&T is conducting dog evaluations about once a week. For the most part Virginia is evaluating dogs that have been picked up by field services, surrendered by their owners, or transferred from other local shelters.

Since these dogs are not pre-screened by our rescue partners, they often require a detailed evaluation to determine if they are appropriate for our adoption program. Most of the dogs coming in through our Pet Partnership Program are going straight up for adoption without an evaluation. 🐾

Dashboard Stats:
May, 2020 (Pandemic—Marin Humane closed)

Pen Pals of San Quentin
0 Visits for training
4 Visits for dog pickup/drop off; supplies
3 dog; 3 handlers:
Alex had a bonded pair, Suzy and Lion.
Farrand had Coco.
Mike doesn't currently have a dog.

Cat Consults:
44 cat behavior calls
4 online Cat Behavior workshops; Public 19; Staff 17

Dog Consults:
Phone: 7 Pre-Adoption; 3 Post-Adoption; 5 Foster; 7 Free; Behavior 13
Zoom classes: 6 classes; 25 participants