

Animal Attraction: Good training leads to better dogs

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By Lisa Foronda / 11 News



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Lisa Foronda

Most children I know love pets. Your child might even be bugging you to get one. But you think, "I'll end up walking the dog. I'll have to feed it and care for it. No way." However, you might be pleasantly surprised -- especially if your child is in the Trails End 4-H Club of Montgomery County. Once a week, 10 children between 11 and 13 years old, meet at the Oak Ridge North Pavilion in The Woodlands to train their dogs. It is part of their annual 4-H project and these kids and their pets are participating in a round-the-clock life-changing experience.

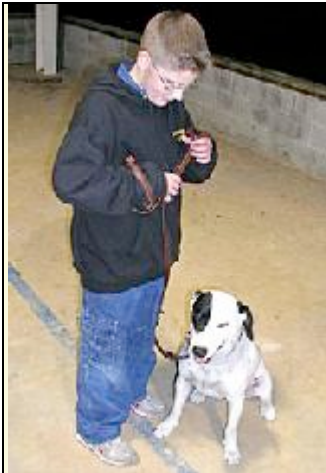


I found out about the project through one of my dog trainers, Jessica Logan (who just happens to run Loving Spots Dalmatian Rescue - but that's another column). Jessica and Dean Miller of Dogs California helped tame my "savage beasts" and I was thrilled to hear Jessica was helping these young pet owners learn how to become responsible pet owners. She invited me to The Woodlands to watch them at work.

It was rather chilly that night, but I was immediately taken by how well the dogs were behaving! The kids had been working for weeks on the foundations of obedience training: ensuring their dogs looked to them for guidance and instilling confidence in their pups. All around

me, I watched as the young 4-Hers moved their dogs through the motions of how to heel, sit, sit, stay, lie down, and come when called.

The kids told me they're pretty amazed that all this is working. Their dogs are behaving better. They're not jumping up on people or furniture. They're more fun to be around. The parents have been proud to watch their children learn how to be more responsible, committing to daily training routines, and seeing the relationship between their pets and their children grow.



Dustin Lorance and his dog Ringo

On a personal note, I wish all children could go through the training. Heck, I wish *everyone* would go through the training. It's easy to adopt a dog through a shelter or responsible breeder, but learning how to properly care for the dog takes more time and effort. Many dogs are returned for behavioral issues. Their owners say they're "untrainable." But a little investigation and investment into understanding your dog and working with him will bring countless benefits, not to mention a happier home.

The 4-H kids already know this. They're setting a great example for the rest of us dog owners. I'm proud to have met them, and I'm proud of what they're doing. For more information on the 4-H Club, you can find their Web site at [Trails End 4-H Club](#).

Jessica's Dalmatian Rescue Web site is: [Lovingspots.org](#). And you can find out more about my dog trainer, Dean Miller, at [Dogscalifornia.com](#).