



Training Tip

(Reprinted from our *Golden Opportunities* magazine)

Positive Reinforcement: Reward & Repeat

By Dennis Stauffer, *Kennel Manager*

Living and working with dogs is an opportunity to combine fun and play with training and goal setting if you remember a few key points.

Behavior that gets rewarded, gets repeated. If you are working to increase the odds of a specific behavior being repeated by your dog, you need to provide positive reinforcement for the desired behavior. Depending on your dog's preferences, this could be a food treat, quick game of fetch, tug or simply kind words and an ear scratch. Just remember, even negative attention can be rewarding to your four-legged friend. A dog barking incessantly at the passersby on your street may find your shouting "NO!" to be rewarding. Even if it is only negative attention, it is still attention.

Keep it short and simple. It is easier for you to incorporate training into your busy day and for your dog to think of learning as fun if you make the sessions short and sweet rather than long (and sometimes boring to your dog). Asking your dog to sit a few times as you make your coffee is quick and easy. Working on the "leave it" command a few times during your daily walks provides more convenient training opportunities.

When trying to extinguish a "bad" behavior, help your dog to succeed by teaching him/her to offer an alternate behavior that is incompatible with the undesirable behavior. For example, a dog cannot jump up on people if he is sitting. Teach the dog that offering a sit upon greeting someone is what earns a reward and attention. Ignore the undesirable behavior and reward the desirable one. A dog cannot bark if he has a toy in his mouth. Show him that excitement over the doorbell is fine, as long as he chooses to run and grab a dog toy, rather than bark excitedly.

Training your dog doesn't have to involve long, intense sessions. It can easily be incorporated into your daily activities and made fun for both of you.