

Spring 2013

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# Dog 'n' Cruces

Information for the Las Cruces Dog Lover!

## **NO OBSTACLES!**

Agility training is a blast for dogs and humans alike!

Page 15

## **A CHAMPION AMONG US**

Georgie the Agility Boxer is ranked #1 in the nation!

Page 19

## **VILLAGE PEOPLE**

Animal Village NM in Alamogordo is the largest no-kill shelter in New Mexico.

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## **BATHING YOUR CAT**

Are you kidding?

Page 29

**IT'S HEEERE!**



PLUS... Which local businesses have gone to the dogs?...RVing on a quarter-tank of gas!...Are you bat-crackers nuts?



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# Put a Spring in Your Step!

**A** hhhh, Springtime in Dog'Cruces! Wind in my hair, hair in my mouth...well, that's actually a year-'round phenomenon when you wake up next to three Golden Retrievers!

As the weather warms up and the days get longer, it's a good time to start shaking off the winter rust, heading outside and exploring new activities—for both you *and* your dog. Visit a new park, hiking trail or an irrigation ditch in a different part of town to change up your walking routine. Convince your neighbors to let your dogs swim in their pool (you should probably offer to clean it afterwards). Defy the cliché and teach your old dog a new trick.

Or...you could try something really challenging and fun—like Agility training.

Phyllis Wright and I took another “cover story field trip”—this time to the recent Agility trials in Tularosa. What a great time! I used to do Agility many years ago and was happy to see some familiar faces still involved. But it was a brand new experience for Phyllis, who was a little anxious about what to expect...and what to wear. I was soooo tempted to tell her she had to dress in a formal gown to fit in, but my wife nixed the idea. Apparently, it's not funny.

Guest author Karen Kendall wrote another section of our cover story focusing on younger Agility participants and the benefits of getting kids of all ages involved in this rewarding activity. And our “Working Like a Dog” section profiles *Georgi*, the #1-Ranked Agility Boxer in the country, who lives and trains right here in Las Cruces.

If, after reading these articles, you're interested in learning more about the world of Agility, just drop me an email, and I'll point you in the right direction. Who knows, maybe you or your kids will get the Agility bug!

Spring also marks the return of Yappy Hour and Canines and Cocktails get-togethers—so make sure you check out our “Doggie Dates” on pages 6-7 to find out about these and other upcoming events you'll want to attend.

We're excited to introduce our first not-in-Las Cruces animal group to the pages of *Dog'Cruces*. Animal Village NM in Alamogordo is a relatively new organization, but it's already the largest no-kill shelter in New Mexico. Sunny and Nancy and all the volunteers are doing great work up there, and I can't wait to check out their newly-opened (March 23) on-site store. Sounds like I might find something worthy of taking to *Antiques Road Show*!

When my wife, dogs and I got back from our brief winter vacation, I found out about something I wish I'd know of before we left: the Desert Haven Animal Refuge in T or C has a nice little RV park on the premises! Obviously, we'll be headed there before long to check it out...but what a great idea! A place to camp out—with amenities—close to home while helping the shelter out at the same time. What could be better?

Just one more thing—can I have a drumroll, please?...**The Dog'Cruces iPad app is now live, and can be downloaded for free (of course) at the Apple App Store!**

## WOO-HOO!

Now you can take *Dog'Cruces* anywhere your iPad goes, and it will even notify you when each new issue is available for download.

*App-tastic!* Right now, you'll be able to get this issue and the previous three as electronic magazines with all the cool navigation and zoom functionality you know and love. More features will be added as they become available from our developers.

And for you Android tablet users—don't worry, we're working on your app as well. It just requires a stone tablet and chisel. I'm kidding, of course. I just thought it funny as I sit writing this on my iPad.



## Vic Villalobos

Mayor of Dog'Cruces

Write to us at:

**Dog'Cruces Magazine**  
580 S. Valley Drive, suite 100  
Las Cruces, NM 88005

or email us at:  
**Vic@DogCruces.com**

www. **Dog'Cruces**.com  
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## Dog'Cruces Magazine

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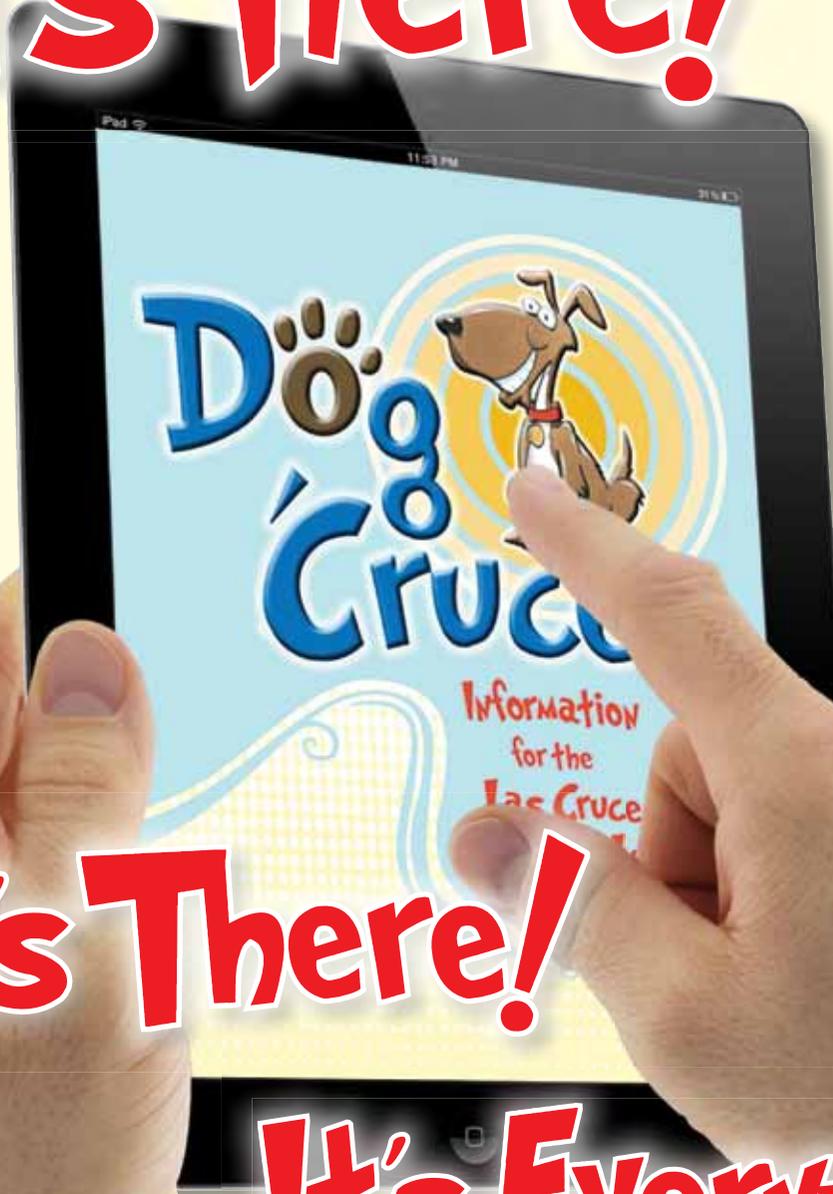
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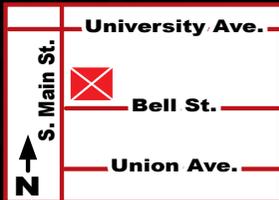


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# Doggie



For a complete calendar of events, visit **DogCruces.com**  
List is updated as events are announced

## MARCH

**Sunday, March 17- Saturday, March 23**  
**National Poison Prevention Week**  
There are definitely things to which our pets should never have access.

### Wednesday, March 20

**Yappy Hour 6-8 p.m.**  
**First one of the New Year!**  
St. Clair Winery & Bistro, 1720 Avenida de Mesilla. \$5 donation at the door. Hosted by the Spay/Neuter Action Program and DACHS.

### Saturday, March 23

**National Puppy Day**  
The Animal Miracle Foundation sponsors this annual event that encourage dog lovers to adopt from a shelter. [www.nationalpuppyday.com](http://www.nationalpuppyday.com)

**Thursday, March 28 - 11am-9pm**  
**Red Brick Pizza Fundraisers for HSSNM**  
2808 #2 N. Telshor on the last Thursday of the month. Just mention HSSNM with your purchase that day and 15% of sales will be donated to the organization! Social time at 6pm with HSSNM members.

**Thursday, March 28**  
**Ruby Tuesday's "Give Back to DACHS"**  
All day long: Pick up a flyer at th DACHS/ SNAP office, 2405 W. Picacho Ave., Ste. 103, or download from [www.donaancountyhumansocietyinc.org](http://www.donaancountyhumansocietyinc.org)

**APRIL**  
**April is Prevention of Animal Cruelty Month!**

**April: Spring Pet Cemetery Cleanup**  
TBA: 8 a.m. until late afternoon  
Alicia Melgaard Memorial Pet Cemetery. Take Weisner Road exit off Hwy. 70 East; turn right at bottom of exit. Cemetery is short distance on the left. Call (575) 640-0634 for more information.

**Friday, April 5**  
**Music Jam to Benefit Animals at Hurricane Alley**  
Doors open at 9pm; must be 21 and over, \$5 minimum donation at the door to benefit APA/DAPA. Call 575-644-0505 or [www.Actionprogramsforanimals.org](http://www.Actionprogramsforanimals.org)

**Saturday, April 13**  
**Cans 4 Critters, a project of HSSNM**  
For information, contact Jean at 575-522-2529.

**Third week in April**  
**National Pet ID Week**  
IDs for pets are crucial!

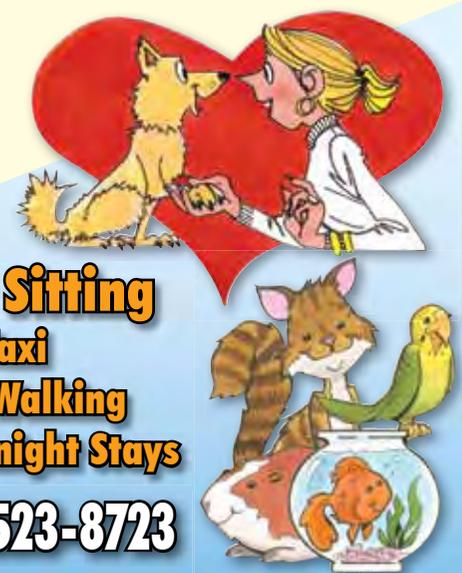
**Wednesday, April 17**  
**Yappy Hour 6-8 p.m.**  
at St. Clair Winery & Bistro  
1720 Avenida de Mesilla. Hosted by SNAP and DACHS. \$5 donation at the door.

**Thursday, April 25 - 11am-9pm**  
**Brick Pizza Fundraisers for HSSNM.**  
6 pm at 2808 #2 N. Telshor on the last Thursday of the month. For information, contact Jean at 575-522-2529.



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# Dates

## Friday, April 26

### National Kids and Pets Day

From the Animal Miracle Network, this day celebrates the special bond between children and pets. [www.kidsandpetsday.com](http://www.kidsandpetsday.com)

## MAY

### Chip Your Pet Month

Ninety percent of animals that get lost without proper identification are never found or returned home.

### Second Saturday in May

#### Animal Disaster Preparedness Day

### Wednesday, May 15

Yappy Hour, from 6-8 p.m. at St. Clair Winery & Bistro

1720 Avenida de Mesilla. \$5 donation at the door. Hosted by the Spay and Neuter Action Program and DACHS; sponsored by American Classifieds, Dog Cruces and the Las Cruces Sun-News.

### Sunday, May 19 - Saturday, May 25

### Dog Bite Prevention Week

Information is one of the best cures for this public health crisis.

### May 30

#### Red Brick Pizza Fundraisers for HSSNM

From 11am-9pm. 2808 #2 N. Telshor. For information, contact Jean at 575-522-2529.

## JUNE

### Adopt-a-Shelter-Cat Month and June 4 is Hug Your Cat Day

### 1st week in June

#### Pet Appreciation Week

### Saturday, June 8

#### First Annual Mulligans Fore Mutts

#### Golf Tournament

To benefit APA/DAPA on Saturday June 8 at Red Hawk Golf Club, shotgun start at 8am. Call APA/DAPA at 575-644-0505 or [www.Actionprogramsforanimals.org](http://www.Actionprogramsforanimals.org)

### Monday, June 10, 2013

#### World Pet Memorial Day

### Mid-June: Animal Rights Awareness Week

### Wednesday, June 19

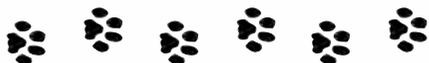
Yappy Hour, 6-8 p.m. at St. Clair Winery & Bistro

1720 Avenida de Mesilla. \$5 donation at the door. Hosted by the Spay and Neuter Action Program and DACHS; sponsored by Las Cruces Sun-News, American Classifieds and Dog Cruces.

### Friday, June 21

Take Your Dog to Work Day and National Dog Party Day

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- Pet First Aid Kits
- Insect Bites & Stings
- Snake Bites
- Heat & Cold Injuries
- Seizures
- Dental Care
- Caring For Your Senior Pet-izen

**Pet First Aid Classes: (4 hours)**  
April 6, 2013 • 8am - 12pm  
April 6, 2013 • 1pm - 5pm

**This Class Includes The Following:**

- Restraining & Muzzling
- Primary Assessment
- Rescue Breathing
- Canine & Feline CPR
- Choking Management
- Bleeding & Shock Management
- Assessing Pets Vitals
- Pet First Aid Kits
- Insect Bites & Stings
- Snake Bites
- Heat & Cold Injuries
- Seizures

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## Valley Fever: A Regional Threat

**F**requently, infectious diseases in humans and animals can have a regional distribution, meaning they are seen with far greater frequency in certain areas of the country than others. A perfect example is Lyme disease, which is transmitted to both dogs and people by certain types of ticks. These ticks are not present in New Mexico; therefore it is rare to see the disease here, while it is very common in certain parts of the Northeast and upper Midwest.

One regional disease that we do see here is a systemic fungal infection frequently referred to as "Valley Fever." The name comes from the San Joaquin Valley of California, a common area for the disease to occur. *Coccidioidomycosis* is the medical term for infection caused by the fungal organism *Coccidioides immitis*. Other terms sometimes used to refer to the infection are California fever or Desert rheumatism. We'll just simply refer to it as Valley Fever or Cocci for the remainder of the article. Although there are a number of possible systemic fungal infections that can be seen in the Las Cruces area, Valley Fever is probably the most common in humans and dogs. The organism has a regional distribution throughout the Lower Sonoran Life Zone, which includes Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California. Southern Arizona and the desert/agricultural valleys of California remain the most common places for infections from this environmental fungus.

So how does a dog acquire this infection? *Coccidioides immitis*, like many fungi, lives in the environment, the soil. Rain or wet weather can activate the organism to form spores which rise to the surface of the soil. Dry, windy conditions then make a perfect

recipe for causing these spores to become airborne. Areas of high risk include dry lakebeds and areas of construction where the soil has been disturbed. This time of year, with our frequent dust-storms and windy weather, is especially dangerous for exposure to the organism.

Once the spores have been inhaled, they can cause an inflammatory response and infection. These infections most commonly stay confined to the lungs; however, other systems can be affected by the organism, as well. Lymph node, skin, liver, splenic, intestinal, neurologic, joint or bone infections are possible, although the lungs and bones

***This time of year, with our frequent dust-storms and windy weather, is especially dangerous for exposure to the organism.***

are the most common sites of infection in dogs. Signs of infection in a dog are varied but include lethargy, fever, cough, difficulty breathing, lameness, swelling of bones, and enlarged lymph nodes. Definitive diagnosis can be difficult

and may require a combination of tests including radiographs, blood counts, antibody tests and biopsies of affected tissue.

Once a diagnosis is made, the potentially long and complicated process of treatment must begin. Valley Fever, like most systemic fungal infections, is difficult to treat. Courses of treatment can span months to a year—and sometimes more. Some stubborn infections may require lifelong treatment to keep the infection quiet and prevent it from spreading to other locations in the body.

So what are some possible symptoms your dog could show that might be caused by infection with this organism? A cough or difficulty breathing are probably the most

# The Vet's View

by  
Dr. Scott Pirtle, DVM

## to Las Cruces and Desert Dogs

common symptoms. Not all dogs infected with the organism have distinct respiratory symptoms though. Sometimes lameness, often with a swelling in one of the bones in the affected leg, can be a red flag. Fever, loss of appetite, and swollen lymph nodes are other possible signs that your dog could have contracted this stubborn and frustrating disease. If your dog is sick with any of these symptoms, your veterinarian will be likely to have Valley Fever on his or her list of possible diagnoses, but it never hurts to mention that you've heard it is common in this area.

Dogs that hike in the desert and are active outdoors are more likely to become infected, so your veterinarian will appreciate any tips you can provide on risk of exposure to the organism. Unfortunately, the symptoms of Valley Fever are very similar to several other serious conditions in dogs. Other diseases that could have overlapping symptoms include bronchitis, pneumonia, heartworms, cancer, bone cancer, and numerous other infections. Your veterinarian may have to consider several other possible diagnoses, and sorting through the tests isn't always easy. Unless a pathologist can find the organism in a tissue sample, other tests may only prove to be suggestive of infection with the Valley Fever organism.

Antibody levels are commonly increased in humans and dogs that live in endemic areas. Many of us have been exposed to low levels of the organism. We may have had a mild to

inapparent infection, but our immune system may have responded so that antibodies remain in our system for long periods of time. The same is true for dogs that have been exposed to the disease.

**Signs of infection in a dog are varied but include lethargy, fever, cough, difficulty breathing, lameness, swelling of bones, and enlarged lymph nodes.**

Luckily, treatment for Valley Fever is somewhat easier than it once was. While any infection with this organism is serious, the antifungal medications used to treat it are much more affordable than they once were. The cost associated with treating larger dogs with these antifungal drugs was once prohibitive for many owners. Generic fluconazole is a much more affordable treatment option available today. Sometimes another similar drug will be used to treat the infection. Although liver problems can be seen with these medications, most dogs tolerate them well and have minimal to no side-effects at all.

Your veterinarian will need to monitor treatment with follow-up tests for many months to decide when treatment may be discontinued. Frequently, infections in the bone will require a minimum of one year of treatment to control, and some infections may require even longer. If your dog becomes infected with this organism, expect a guarded prognosis initially. However, with appropriate treatment, monitoring, and lots of diligence and patience, many of these stubborn infections can eventually be controlled.

If your dog shows any of the symptoms discussed in this article, make an appointment to consult with your veterinarian right away.



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# The CONTINUUM of CARE

**P**repare yourself to be shocked: my Yorkie Toby is spoiled rotten. I carry him around so much that there are some Las Cruces who question whether his legs actually work.

There is a continuum of care for companion animals, and it ranges from abuse and neglect to the bare minimum of responsible pet ownership to the aforementioned over-the-top spoiling.

Toward the center-left, abuse/neglect end of the continuum is the companion animal who has daily shelter, clean water, decent food, regular veterinary care and regular human interaction and socialization. This is the bare minimum.

Toward the other end of the continuum is the animal—like Toby—who gets more attention than some human babies, and has a boxful of toys, and treats in the pantry, and goes pretty much wherever I go, and has regular appointments for grooming, and who sleeps wherever he wants on the bed. Etcetera. (One cannot possibly overstate the work that poor word “etcetera” is being asked to perform in this context.)

I suspect most family pets and companion animals fall pretty much in the middle of this continuum, which means they’re well and continuously socialized, they’re loved like family members, and their families routinely exceed the minimum standards of care.

In fact, there are households—mine is one of them—where multiple critters reside, and only one is spoiled. At Casa Jess, the other four dogs, the cat, the birds and the fish and turtles all get more than the minimum, but they get something less than The Favorite Child Who Can Do No Wrong.

They all sleep in the house at night (well, not the turtles, and only some of the fish). They all get treats and play time (same disclaimer). They all get really good and good-for-them food. They are all treated well, but Toby is treated better. This does not make me a failed pet owner. My animals are all rescues whose circumstances led them to me, with only one

exception—a 26-year-old parrot. I love them all, but somehow, in Toby’s case, a bond has developed to the point that I’m a little bit more than usual carried away about his six pounds of Fabulous.

The reason I tell you all this is because of a question that was posed to me in the course of my writing assignment for this issue of *DogCruces*.

Charissa Paskowski (Senior Editor of *DogCruces*) wrote as follows: “Maybe you could address the fine line between being a good pet owner vs. a bad pet owner. For example: I was thinking about how I am a

**...she poses a good question:  
What is the line between  
adequate guardian and  
irresponsible pet owner?**

pampering animal guardian (and refer to myself as a guardian rather than an owner) verses someone who provides food, water, shelter and veterinary care to a pet. I go to the extreme at times: doggie daycare, a sitter when I am gone more than five hours, quality food, baked treats, toys only made in the US, regular veterinary care at any cost, etc. Sometimes I see another dog that is left outside all day but seems happy and gets food, water, shelter, vaccinations and the occasional attention (never tethered), and it doesn’t make those people bad pet guardians but just of a different caliber. Sometimes we zealous guardians judge those who provide satisfactory care to their animals as ‘bad owners,’ when in fact we may just be a little nuts.”

I can attest that Charissa is bat-crackers nuts. As am I. As are most animal advocates. But she poses a good question: What is the line between adequate guardian and irresponsible pet owner?

I am reminded of Supreme Court Judge Potter Stewart, who famously said, in his opinion in the obscenity case of *Jacobellis v. Ohio* (1964)

that “hard-core pornography” was hard to define, but that “I know it when I see it.”

When I see a cat with its rib bones showing or a dog on a chain, I can make a reasonably quick assessment of that animal’s overall quality of life and the associated responsibility—or lack thereof—demonstrated regularly by its human.

When I see a neighbor who walks her dog every day, and gathers up the poop instead of leaving it to splatter on the blades of the next lawnmower, I can make similar extrapolations about that animal’s quality of life and the commitment to its well-being that happens when the leash comes off back home.

I have a neighbor who really dislikes my macaw, because the macaw is loud, and when she’s in the outdoor section of her cage complex, she sometimes actively attempts to communicate with the planet Saturn. My neighbor once complained, and I told her, “But look how happy she is!” It’s true; she’s a happy bird. She doesn’t pluck her feathers, she eats like a champ, and she loves socializing with people. Her vocal outbursts—along with her dancing and talking—are evidence that she’s enjoying pretty much every moment of her life.

Look around you at the pets and people in your line of vision. You will know the happy ones when you see them. When you see unhappy ones, please realize it’s not the animal’s fault. It’s the fault of a human who has abdicated—to one degree or another—the responsibility that is inherently attached to owning a pet.

Toby’s legs work, but I like holding him close to my heart. Saturn—if it’s listening and speaks macaw—knows all this.

Ask yourself where you fall on the Continuum of Care, and what it would take to move a little to the right every day. We won’t all reach “bat-crackers nuts,” but wouldn’t it be great for our pets if everyone aspired to it?

*Jess Williams is President of the Doña Ana County Humane Society and serves on the board of directors of the Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley.*





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*Carla Gonzales' Border Collie, Ruger, demonstrates the finely-honed coordination needed to sail through a hoop while simultaneously smiling for the camera!*

*Sadie the German Shepherd confidently makes her way across the seesaw. ▶*

# JUMPING through HOOPS

Just as I was pulling on my jeans in anticipation of attending my first Agility event, Jane Lynch's very prim skirt and crisp blouse in the film *Best In Show* popped into my head, and I imagined the Fern City Show handlers expecting the same of me. Although I was thoroughly prepared for the event, itself, with a long list of *DogCruces* questions to ask of handlers, participants, and judges at the Agility trials, I was unprepared to dress myself!

So the first learning experience of the day occurred in my closet on the phone with Vic, (Mayor of *DogCruces*), an otherwise unlikely source for wardrobe advice—sorry Yer Honor!

Agility events, like the one to which Vic and I were headed, are casual, but “advertising is not allowed in the AKC agility ring on the clothing worn by an exhibitor or ring crew staff, such as, “train at Joe’s Dog School,” or “eat at Joe’s Diner.” Club shirts may be worn. Writing on clothing must not be in poor taste or contain profanity” (American Kennel Club). OK, I think I’m safe—plain jeans on, and off we go!

When we arrived at the White Sands Agility Club event in Tularosa, I understood the dress code— we were in a rodeo arena, on natural ground and exposed to the weather of the day, which for us that day was wind.

There isn't enough wind in New Mexico in April, though, to compete with the dynamism of this event! I didn't know where to look first—at the many breeds of beautiful dogs, at the camaraderie among the handlers, at the puppy playpen, or at the actual ring, set up with 20 intriguing obstacles. Even before I could orient myself and make a decision, I was welcomed by Cindy Blanton, President of the White Sands Agility Club, and her Shetland Sheepdog, *MACH Damask—The Incredible*, or *Dash*, if we use his call name. Two

new terms already—“call name” seemed obvious, but MACH required some research.

MACH is an acronym for Master Agility Champion, a title awarded by the American Kennel Club. To earn this title the dog and the handler compete as a team to earn Novice, Open, Excellent, and Master titles. This process entails three classes or games.

The first class is called Standard, and it requires dogs to maneuver on contact equipment like a seesaw, a pause table, an A-frame, a bridge, plus jumps, tunnels and weave poles. Each contact obstacle has a “safety zone” painted on the object, and the dog must place at least one paw in that area to complete the obstacle.

The second class is Jumpers with Weaves, and it consists only of jumps, tunnels and weave poles with no contact objects to interfere with speed.

The third (and relatively new) class is FAST, which stands for Fifteen and Send Time, and it is designed to test a dog team's strategy skill, accuracy, speed, and distance handling.

The Novice, Open and Excellent titles require three qualifying runs with progressively more difficult requirements and courses, beginning with 14 obstacles,

for instance, and progressing to 20. There are numerous different jump heights, from eight inches to twenty-six, as well, so that dogs of all sizes can compete.

***...this was an extraordinarily congenial group of people. Everyone was excited about sharing information, and handlers were as proud to acknowledge another dog's titles as their own dog's success.***

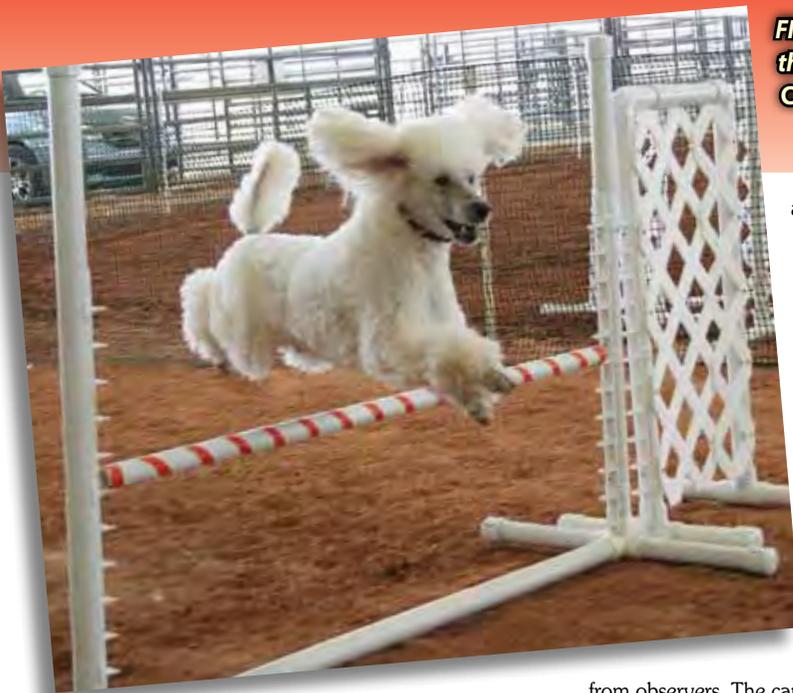
Once the team competes in both runs in one day at the Excellent B level, it is eligible for “Double Q's”. The team earns a Double Q when it qualifies 100% on both runs in one day. To earn the MACH title, the team must have 20 double Q's and 750 point ([machdiva.com](http://machdiva.com)).

Whew. That was a very, very, very general summary. There are actually so many nuances to the classes and the rules and the terms, and the points, I couldn't keep up with my notes at the event, so I finally called the AKC contact number to ask them for a website page count just to make the point. They couldn't give me a count—probably because they have all the info memorized! Everyone at the Agility event explained it all spontaneously.

We were introduced to so many dogs with so many



# WHILE STRIKING a BALANCE!



**FIFI CAN FLY!!** Words can't adequately convey how much fun these canine athletes are having, but you can see the joy in Casey the Poodle's face as he soars over a hurdle.

and most used some combination of commands and hand signals. Some of the dogs turned to check with their handlers between obstacles, and others seemed almost entirely independent. The only constant was the fun all the competitors were having and the enthusiasm coming

from observers. The camaraderie, the universal elation at every dog's success was truly exhilarating.

In fact, this was an extraordinarily congenial group of people.

Everyone was excited about sharing information, and handlers were as proud to acknowledge another dog's titles as their own dog's success. Every time a dog passed by, someone lavished praise, introduced the handler and rattled off the dog's titles, and new dogs and handlers heard kudos for being there and getting started.

*Little Luna*, Karen Blisard's seven-month-old Border Collie, was there to observe and become socialized among accomplished pros like Kim Ramsey's Border Collie, *Echowyn's Rainchaser Burlesque*, and Chris Sanks' Blue Border Terrier, *Sunkist Jazzberry Jam*, and Miss *Lorna*, 13-year-old Jennifer Necker's English Setter,

and Marcie Jensen's Champion *So Quell's Last Souvenir*. I loved all the names, from the familiar call names to the elaborate registered ones, and I learned that AKC only allows thirty-seven dogs of each breed to have the same registered name, though I can't imagine too many duplicates!

I was also impressed by the inclusionary nature of the whole Agility event. An unregistered purebred dog can enroll in AKC's Purebred Alternative Listing/Indefinite Listing Privilege (PAL/ILP), a program that allows unregistered dogs of registrable breeds to compete in performance and companion events. For all of us with mixed-breed canine athletes or rare breeds, the AKC Canine PartnersSM Program opens the opportunity to compete in AKC Rally, Agility and Obedience to ALL dogs. If you're interested, check out the AKC website at [www.akc.org](http://www.akc.org) or contact one of our regional experts (see box). Other organizations, too, such as the United States Dog Agility Association, Inc. (USDAA), Canine Performance Events (CPE), United Kennel Club (UKC), and North American Agility Council (NADAC) offer Agility events.

What a great time! We'd had lots of fun, seen old friends and met new ones, both human and canine—from Albuquerque to Los Alamos to El Paso to Silver City.

And for me, the event would never again be about what I was wearing, but about the remarkable skills it entails, the bonds that are forged, and the joy that Agility teams find in each other and the sport. These dogs literally jump through hoops to please their handlers—and the humans would most likely reciprocate if only it were possible. I really felt, like Roger Caras, long-time host of the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show, that "dogs are not our whole life, but they make our lives whole."

*Phyllis Wright is a contributing editor for DogCruces.*

titles, it was a little like having stumbled into a royal courtyard, but even more impressive than the titles were the skills those dogs demonstrated on the courses! We witnessed amazing feats of speed and agility from big dogs and little dogs, experienced dogs and inexperienced dogs, experienced and inexperienced handlers!

When we arrived, I had seen handlers inside the arena, walking around and around among the obstacles. Once we saw handlers in action, I realized they had been studying the course. The obstacles are not arranged in a linear order, but they are ordered, so the handler has to know where to send his or her dog. In both Standard and Jumpers, the dog must follow a course that has been set by the judge, who keeps track of faults on each dog's run. In FAST, a team can design its own course but must also complete a "bonus," a taped-off grouping of designated obstacles.

Some handlers ran close to every obstacle with their dogs, while others used verbal commands,

**These dogs literally jump through hoops to please their handlers—and the humans would most likely reciprocate if only it were possible.**



**SIZE DOESN'T MATTER!** Small dogs streak through the weave poles in a furry blur, while Great Dane Marley performs a more deliberate dance beside handler Hope Movsesian.

## Upcoming Agility Trials

### AKC

April 15  
Valencia Kennel Club  
of New Mexico  
Belen, NM

April 26-28  
White Sands Agility Club  
Tularosa, NM

July 12  
Chaparral Kennel Club, Inc.  
Cloudcroft, NM

### NADAC

March 22-24  
NADAC FUN-raiser  
Las Cruces, NM

March 29-31  
NADAC FUN-raiser  
Las Cruces, NM

May 3-5  
Southwest Agility Team  
(SWAT)  
Albuquerque, NM

**Brooke and Jordyn have qualified for and competed at the State Fair 4-H dog competition and have experienced success at an early age. They competed not only in Agility, but also Obedience, Rally Obedience and Junior Showmanship.**

**K**ids and dogs go together. Dogs and Agility go together. Put all three together, and you have a win/win situation! For the last four years I've had the pleasure of training two very talented young ladies in Agility, Obedience, and Rally Obedience: 12-year-old Jordyn Gallegos and her partner *Flynn* a Papillon, and 10-year old Brooke Biel and her partner *Judy*, a Blue Heeler/Australian Shepherd mix. Agility training and exhibiting can be a fabulous activity for any child who wants to develop patience, work ethic and leadership skills—all while having a great time with his or her dog!

Running Agility can help a child gain confidence and learn many life lessons along the way. The kids learn how to train and lead their dogs and negotiate a course with many obstacles. They learn how to succeed, and how to handle failure. Working with an animal such as a dog who does not judge a child, but simply wants to make her happy, can be comforting to a preteen who's world can often seem in turmoil.

Agility training has helped Jordyn and Brooke develop the art of practical logic. When running a dog in Agility, the handler has to know her dog's strong points as well as its weak ones. The girls have learned how to analyze a course, and then guide their canine partners around with a successful run. Brooke will often listen to how I think the course should be handled, and then politely tell me how she thinks her dog would best run. She is usually correct. Knowing how their dogs run, and when to give commands to optimize their performance is difficult even for adults to learn, but Jordyn and Brooke have mastered this task.

When an exhibitor goes to a competition, she is given a map

of the course and then time to walk the course. The girls walk the course by themselves and must make their own decisions. I can assist them in their thought processes, but the final decisions about how they run is theirs. After they complete their run we will analyze the problems if there were any, and celebrate the good things. They continually learn from their mistakes.

Both Brooke and Jordyn have learned not to give up—on themselves or their dogs. When training a new sequence of obstacles in Agility, the team rarely gets it right the first time. Sometimes the dog gets it wrong, but more often than not, the handler is to blame. The girls will keep running a sequence until both they and their dogs get it right. Perseverance and patience are paramount in Agility training, and patience is not a strong suit for many kids. If the girls were to lose their patience when training their dogs, the dogs would shut down and stop learning. It is Brooke and Jordyn's goal to keep their dogs happy and interested in the task at hand.

Respect is a social skill the girls have learned that will benefit them into adulthood. When competing, they respond to the judge by saying "Yes sir, no sir" and also thanking the judge when their runs are finished. From respect comes sportsmanship, and supporting one's competitors and cheering them on is an appealing aspect of the sport of Agility. But even in friendly competition, there can be only one winner.



Learning to lose gracefully is one of life's hardest—and most valuable—lessons. I'm proud to say that Jordyn and Brooke have learned to take winning and losing in stride.

As an Agility trainer, one of the conditions I set for my younger students is that their schooling comes first; and if their grades aren't where they should be, the kids lose the privilege of travelling and competing until the situation is corrected. Another thing I insist upon is that nobody take him- or herself too seriously. If either the child or the dog isn't having fun, neither will continue to learn. So good-natured teasing and lots of laughter are a healthy part of the Agility experience for everybody.

If you have a bored child and a bored dog sitting at home, consider Agility training. You, your child and dog will probably have more fun than you ever expected. Kids are never too young to learn how to have fun with their dogs. Oh, and who knows....maybe you all will learn some of those annoying tough-but-valuable life lessons along the way!

Karen Kendall, of Karen's Animal House, has been an Agility trainer since the early '90s.

She loves the pure logic of Agility, and many of her students are successful in this great sport.

**Dancer, Charlene Curry's Rhodesian Ridgeback, emerges from a trip through the tunnel.**



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# Workin' Like a Dog



## Hey There, Georgie Girl—You're #1!

*Hokie Wiley's Boxer, Georgie, is the AKC's #1-ranked Agility Boxer in the United States. But her road to success is even more inspiring when you consider how her life began....*

It was January 12, 2008, and I woke up to a beautiful, warm Saturday. I had no idea that in a few hours a phone call would change my life!

Shortly after I got to work, my cell phone rang. A friend of mine was house sitting, and while she was out feeding the homeowners' dogs, an emaciated and wounded Boxer puppy showed up on the property. My friend took the starving puppy inside to feed her. That's when she thought of me—she knew my boxer *Brutus* had died of old age that past September, so she brought the puppy to me at work, assuming I would know what to do with her.

The pup had something wrong with her bottom jaw (I thought it was dislocated), an open wound on the top of her head, and teeth marks in her left ear. She was so pitiful—6 weeks old and just 6 pounds! I rushed her to the vet just as the office was closing for the weekend, and discovered that the puppy's bottom jaw was broken—not dislocated—and would require emergency surgery!

Dr. Matanis wove wires through the roots of the puppy's teeth to hold the lower jaw in place while it healed. The healing process would take six weeks, and there was a possibility the pup's teeth would be destroyed. Given the seriousness of the procedure, I couldn't believe I would get to take her home the next day!

Sure enough, early Sunday morning I got a call to pick up the wired and active puppy. She required a special diet of canned puppy food and canned puppy milk mixed to-

gether into a gruel she could lap up. And the doctor gave me explicit instructions not to let the puppy chew on anything at all for six weeks. Was she serious? I knew this was going to be an outrageous challenge for a puppy between the ages of 6 to 12 weeks. What had I gotten myself into?

My original plan was not to keep her, but rather to get her healed and give her to Boxer Rescue so they could find a permanent, loving home. But within a few days I had named her *Georgie* (after my neighbor *George*, who named his Boston Terrier *Hokie* after me), and I knew that Boxer puppy had me wrapped around her little dew claw. *Georgie* was my puppy!

I soon enrolled her in puppy obedience classes and was very pleased to see how much *Georgie* enjoyed class and how fast she was learning. I knew she was very special at an early age! The more time and energy I put into her, the more she blossomed! *Georgie* is unlike any other dog I have ever owned or trained: she *did* require more time—and was a constant work in progress—but working with her was amazing. She wanted more than anything to please me, and everything I taught her, she got right away—what a joy to train!

For the first two years of her life, I enrolled her in every obedience class I could find. I couldn't find enough to keep a dog like her busy—*Georgie* is high maintenance and totally exhausting. In the beginning, I was often in tears. I thought I was doing enough, but my little boxer had ideas of her own; she just needed more and more activity. At one point I did try to find another home for *Georgie*, but in the end she came back home with me. I am very thankful to my friends for all of their support or I never would have made it through the first two years. I knew I had to step up and work even harder.

At last *Georgie* was old enough to enroll in Agility class! I had been competing in Agility with my Boston Terriers *Betty*



*Boop* and *Mack* and hoped it would be a good fit for *Georgie* as well. It turned out to be the best thing I could have done for both *Georgie* and me. It has really helped burn off the overload of energy that she has as it builds confidence, challenges her brain, develops coordination—and we have a blast! I learned that keeping *Georgie* totally immersed in Agility was the only way to live with her...she needs a full-time job.

In our first competition, *Georgie* not only qualified but won 3 out of 4 times she ran! One of my friends commented that *Georgie* is Invitational material, and we have been on that path ever since. *Georgie* adores the sport of Agility; we travel and show every opportunity we get.

Although *Georgie* had a rough start to life, she has more than made up for it in the past five years. In September 2012, *Georgie* was ranked the AKC's #1 Agility Boxer in the United States for the December 2013 Invationals in Orlando Florida, so we are traveling and competing to maintain the points required for the #1 position. *Georgie* is qualified to compete in the AKC National Championships in Tulsa, Oklahoma March 15-17, 2013. This will be a fabulous experience!

I am thankful for the strong bond Agility has given us, and it has made us a better all-around team. *Georgie* also works as a therapy dog with the local Therapaws group—we visit nursing homes and special education classes in the public schools. *Georgie* absolutely loves the children, and I love my naughty but wonderful Boxer!





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## Dogs in the Workplace

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Thursday you can find both of them leisurely lying around the office or chasing the occasional ball down the hall. When it gets busy, *Bailey* will nudge one of her coworkers to let them know it's time for a potty walk. Everyone is always eager to take the doggies out for a quick stroll through the back yard. So whether you're looking for solar savings or just want stop by and say "hello" to the four-legged greeters, you're always welcome with open paws at Sunspot Solar!



### Renee's Bridal

**M**eet *Daisy Mae* (appropriately garbed in traditional white), the resident West Highland White Terrier at Renee's Bridal. Usually, she sits in front of the mirror on the fitting box. But when the shop is really bustling with brides, their mothers and even a father getting measured for his tuxedo—like today—*Daisy Mae* takes her place behind the front desk to greet new customers.

visit her at the bridal shop in the Arroyo Plaza (2001 E. Lohman, Ste 126)—but *only* when she is properly-groomed so the NM desert dirt stays far away from all the beautiful gowns.

Camille Stone, owner of Renee's Bridal and *Daisy Mae*'s guardian, said her terrier has a fascination with sports cars, especially Mercedes-Benz, and has on one occasion even hopped into a stranger's car ready to go for a fast fancy ride. *Runaway Bride!*

*Daisy Mae* is almost 4 years old, and you can



# It Takes a Village...

**Animal Village NM in Alamogordo** is a non-profit, no-kill, all-breed facility saving death-row pets from municipal shelters.



They were *cur dogs*—pregnant, starving and homeless 6-year-old sisters—about to be shot as “vicious dogs” by the Conservation Officers on the Mescalero Apache Reservation. They shoot strays there to control the feral population due to lack of spay/neuter interest in the community.

I named the girls *Cinnamon* and *Spice*, and two weeks after their first-ever vet exam and shots, they bore 20 pups, 17 of whom were born alive at my Ruidoso home. Friends built birthing sheds for them, and supporters (including AVNM co-founder Nancy Berg) brought supplies, food and blankets. The puppies were all named for healing herbs and spices, in hopes that they would send the message that spay/neuter is not a *should*, but a *must*.

I had hoped the *Ruidoso Spice Girls’* story would inspire folks on the reservation to take advantage of the low-cost spay/neuter offer from PAW (Partnership for Animal Welfare), our spay/neuter group in Lincoln County. That is still a long-term goal. But the plight of these two sisters *did* inspire a more immediate result: the creation of **Animal Village NM** in Alamogordo. We opened in November 2010 as a no-kill, all-breed shelter for death-row pets rescued from municipal shelters in New Mexico.

In just a little over two years, AVNM has rescued hundreds of dogs and cats, and is already the largest no-kill shelter in New Mexico. Yet it is a struggle each day to keep the doors open.



Because we spay or neuter, fully vaccinate, and micro-chip all our dogs and cats, and even offer K9 training for all our adoptees, our expenses run about \$17,000 per month for our 9-acre facility.

We make a lifetime commitment

**The inspiration for Animal Village NM, *Cinnamon*—once starving, homeless and marked for death—now sleeps with cats instead of eating them to survive.**

to each pet (some have been returned to us as many as *four times*), and as a result, our expenditures continue to skyrocket. We had 73 returns over the summer months, and the cost of caring for this huge number of returned pets almost put us out of business.

However, in this economy—and without any level of government funding—it’s a miracle and a blessing that we *are* still open. We exist as a non-profit 501(c)3 thanks to the generosity of those who donate to us, and from the adoption fees that cover a tiny portion of our costs per pet. Nobody who works at AVNM gets paid for their efforts. Our “paycheck” is the happiness our furry, rescued souls enjoy in their loving, responsible new homes.

Our beautiful *Cinnamon* has a new home in Labrocita Canyon, outside of Alamogordo. Her name is the same, but her life is now full of love from her new family, which includes children, a Maltese and even a cat! Adoptions like this make it worth the last 2+ years of struggle with no days off, and no money to spare. God has been good, and given us what we’ve needed to save hundreds of precious lives, abandoned to die at municipal shelters which are inevitably overcrowded, under-funded and understaffed.

**Animal Village NM** has amazingly adoptable pets! We partner with shelters who do an awesome job making sure they’re healthy. Intense health and safety procedures at our own facility have resulted in the absolute lowest rates of parvo or distemper in NM. Visitors step on bleach pads to enter **Animal Village NM**, sanitize their hands before touching anyone, wear gloves and disposable smocks to meet puppies, and caregivers step on bleach pads to enter/exit each kennel.

Our huge new cat room is being remodeled, allowing us to open an on-site store in the current cat-house. The Grand Opening is slated for March 23, and it will be less a Thrift Store than a Gift Shop—offering more than \$30,000 of donated Royal Doulton and Lladro figurines, thousands of dollars’ worth of jade, ivory, and resin figurines,



**Volunteer Becca LaBelle cuddles with Jessica Rabbit, who occupies the “Mommy & Me” Suite at AVNM with her pups.**

(some hundreds of years old!), and exquisite English china dating back to the 1800s. A Civil War-Era quilt, and hundreds of other rare and antique treasures and paintings by well-known artists have all been donated by appreciative animal lovers. All proceeds will go to fund the rescue of loving dogs and cats who have been left to their fates in municipal shelters.



It takes donations, diligence and compassion, great caregivers, and many, many volunteers to keep **Animal Village NM** “in the business of saving lives.” It also takes adopters who are willing to keep a lifetime commitment to their adopted pets to keep the dream of a comprehensive **Animal Village NM** as a no-kill shelter and animal welfare center alive. We plan veterinary services to be available on a sliding pay scale (indigent guardians can volunteer in exchange for spay/neuter and vaccinations), grooming, training, animal behaviorists, fly-ball and agility fields, the thrift store, and more.

God willing, and support available, we’ll be telling you about our progress again next year—same time, same business... saving lives.

*Sunny Aris* is Volunteer Director of AVNM cell: 575-415-8310 lobby: 575-446-4685 7246 Hwy. 54-70, Alamogordo 88310 Donations can be made by mail, or securely online at [www.AnimalVillageNM.com](http://www.AnimalVillageNM.com). <https://www.facebook.com/AnimalVillageNM>

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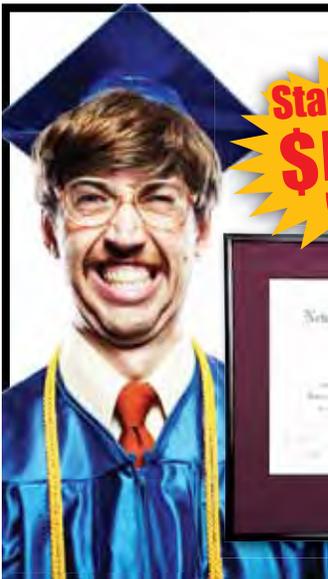
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# Traveling With Your Best Friends

by Vic Villalobos

## Big Plans, Little Trip: Having Fun Close to Home!

**W**e had some grandiose plans this year to take a big RV trip over the Christmas Holiday.

Normally, we stay home and enjoy food with family and friends, siblings coming to town, lots of great presents for us and the dogs—all the usual traditions. This year none of our siblings were coming, and we let friends and family know we were vacating Las Cruces with no real destination in mind. We wanted to head north and let The Girls play in some snow, but other than that we were going to let the road take us on a mighty journey. The type of journey that most people only dream about....

Well, plans change.

Two weeks before Christmas my sister decided to come home after all. Then my brother-in-law decided he wanted to join us, as well. We always love to see them, and it only set our plans back a couple of days. We decided to leave the day *after* Christmas, but still let the road take us where it would. After all, that sounds like fun, right? Just drive till you feel like stopping, stay in remote new areas, live the freedom of the open road....

We packed up the RV on Christmas day and added finishing touches the following day before hitting the road. We packed some extra warm clothes, loaded the food and doggie supplies, and hit the road—the open road that would take us to new and unknown destinations.

First stop on our journey—one hour out of town at **Caballo State Park** (we woke up late and got a really late start). We've had good luck in the past with state parks, so decided to hit *only* state parks on this trip. We thought it would make a good theme for this column.

We pulled into Caballo and noticed we had the place pretty much to ourselves—just a few other intrepid campers in the distance. We set up camp and went for a quick walk down to the lake. Needless to say, The Girls loved it! Caballo offers some great RV camping for both primitive campers and those of us who want all the hookups (that's RV talk for water and electricity). We also found that this state park offered great hiking trails that were clearly marked. We ended up staying two nights and then proceeded up the road.

After another loooong day on the road (18 whole miles!), we decided to try **Elephant Butte Lake State Park**. By now you've probably realized (as

we did) that we were not going to make it very far on our journey. Weather reports showed a big storm coming our way, so we decided it wasn't safe to venture any farther north. Did I mention that plans sometimes change?

Even though we live so close to T or C, we've never spent much time in the town. We found a nice parking spot where we could keep an eye on the dogs and proceeded to do a little shopping in the very quaint and inviting downtown area. We loaded up the RV with some goodies, hit the **Red Box** for some movie rentals, and off we went to **Elephant Butte State Park**. Again, this is the off-season so there weren't many RVs around. We found a nice spot with full hookups, a great view of the lake and plenty of privacy.

We set up our little camp, which includes an enclosed mobile fence area that we carry around with us. The Girls can relax outside, bark at some birds and—most importantly—give us a little extra space in the RV. After almost a year of RV adventures, we find ourselves wishing we had a 75-foot, triple slide-out, self-leveling, self-driving motor coach...but we'll have to keep dreaming for now.

The lake was great, plenty of room for The Girls to run around, play in the water, play in the sand, bring the sand and water into the RV. We now carry a small portable vacuum with us. We ended up staying at Elephant Butte for two nights and really enjoyed ourselves! The camp was clean and well maintained, we felt safe and secure, and we even had access to WiFi.

We finished our trip with a great lunch at one of T or C's best restaurants: **Bella Luca**. It wasn't quite the big trip north we had anticipated, but it turned out to be a great little getaway to explore our neighbors just up the street. We thanked Mother Nature for some foul weather that kept us close to home and allowed us to appreciate what a beautiful, dog-friendly area we live in.

### Vic's Tips for Winter Trips

- 1) There is no such thing as too many blankets or warm clothes
- 2) You can never have enough hot chocolate
- 3) Warm slippers are a must for taking the dogs out to pee at 7am
- 4) You will need a lot more snacks in the winter
- 5) Make sure your propane tank is full (to run the heater)
- 6) Did I mention you need a lot of warm blankets?





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# Llyra's Pack



by Llyra Sarai

## Kitties & Doggies & Cell Phones...Oh My!

**T**his story is, in part, about the death of a cell phone, but more about the crazy things that tend to happen with the pets in my family. The sad thing is, sometimes these situations are created by my own...um...issues. My having multiple pets and Attention Deficit Disorder sometimes creates situations that make my mother question her decision to have two children, three cats, three dogs and a fish. I have to say...for a single mom, she copes pretty well with all our chaos.

One of our cats is a real personality force around the house. We call her *Nami*, which is short for "tsunami," because when we came home the first day after we got her, our living room looked like a tsunami had hit it. *Nami* is half Siamese, with dark points, and massive blue eyes. She was hand-raised and bottle-fed, because her mother had abandoned her. Because she was raised by humans, she loved to suckle on our fingers, and sometimes, if she could find it, she would suck on my brother's lip. Poor Chris...his first kiss was stolen by a kitten! *Nami* also loves to use the treadmill. We've caught her walking with both my brother and our dogs, as cool as a cucumber, at the back of the treadmill.

My ADD issues raise their heads at times in odd ways: one day I had accidentally left the back door open after bringing in the dogs the previous night. My mom came and woke me when she discovered it, and we soon found that our cats had fled into the mysterious beyond. My brother caught one of the cats easily enough, but we couldn't find *Nami*. I let the dogs out of their indoor kennels, hoping they could chase her back inside (a strategy that's proved successful on other occasions), but they couldn't find her either. I took the dogs to their area of the back yard and closed the gate.

Abruptly, my attention was brought back to the dog yard by the sound of hissing. The dogs were chasing *Nami* everywhere around their enclosure. I was able to call two of them off, but the third continued to chase the Siamese mix until she escaped through a hole that led to a three-foot drop under the house.

To say my mom was unhappy would be an understatement.

Mom helped me open the crawl space, and I jumped down into the cob-web filled darkness, trying to find *Nami*. There was no response to my calls from the massive black underbelly of the house, and I couldn't see anything. Our flashlights all had dead batteries. I tried to see if *Miyu* could go under and flush *Nami* out, but she didn't like the scary darkness any more than I did. I ended up borrowing my brother's cell phone at last to try to see, but that didn't help.

I took the dogs back to their kennels to keep them from scaring *Nami*, and continued to try to coax the scared kitty out of hiding. After my mom returned with a new flashlight, I climbed back into the crawl space and turned the light

**...I climbed back into the crawl space and turned the light on. Two yellow saucers reflected back at me out of the darkness.**

on. Two yellow saucers reflected back at me out of the darkness. I began to call for *Nami* again, coaxing her. I was greeted with a sound very much like a mewling kitten, and I wondered if it wasn't *Nami* but a kitten in the dark. I continued to call out to *Nami*, until I noticed the crying was now coming from my right.

There she was, not a yard away, covered in cobwebs with her fur standing on end. I reached out to her and she sniffed my gloved hand, refusing to come any closer. I pulled my gloves off and reached out again. This time, the cat relaxed and began to rub up against my hand. I picked her up and placed her just outside the crawl space so I could climb back up. She immediately began crying in that strange, panicky voice again, until I picked her up. I took her inside and she went straight to our older cat, *Yuki*, for comfort and a much-needed bath.

Sadly, my ADD mind hadn't remembered that I'd left my brother's phone sitting next to the crawl space. That is, not until much later that day, when my mother, looking out the back window, in a very upset voice said, "Llyra... what are the dogs chewing on?" What I retrieved was a very holey, cracked and destroyed red cell phone that had lived a short, six-month life before dying in the ignominy of three drool-filled dog mouths. I have to say Mom really did well; I survived to tell this tale.

So a warning to pet lovers... a cell phone makes a very poor—yet expensive—chew toy. If you're going to leave anything sitting by your crawl space, make sure it's made of rawhide!

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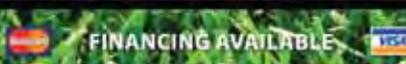
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## Media Picks

### for Dog Lovers



#### Frankweenie

*Starring Martin Short, Catherine O'Hara, Martin Landeau, Winona Ryder*  
Rated PG

*Frankweenie* is Tim Burton's creepy-sweet homage to the Frankenstein movies. It's filmed in black and white, using the stop-motion animation technique we've seen before in Burton's *Nightmare Before Christmas* and Nick Park's *Wallace and Gromit* shorts.

Young Victor Frankenstein is a suburban middle school student with one true friend—his dog *Sparky*, who is hit by a car within the first ten minutes of the movie. Devastated and listless, Victor's interest is piqued by a substitute science teacher who introduces the class to the possibility of using electricity to reanimate dead tissue. The result is a stitched-together *Sparky* who must be kept secret from family and schoolmates if Victor is to enjoy having his old friend back...

At the heart of *Frankweenie* are two very positive things: a sweet story of devotion between a boy and his dog, and a surprisingly-convincing message (given the subject matter) about the impact an education in science can have on a child's life.

The black and white is a nice touch for fans of the old movies, but might not be stimulating enough to hold the attention of younger kids. It's also a little scary in places, hence the PG rating. If you like Tim Burton's sense of humor and macabre—or if you're always up for a new take on *Frankenstein*—this is well-done.



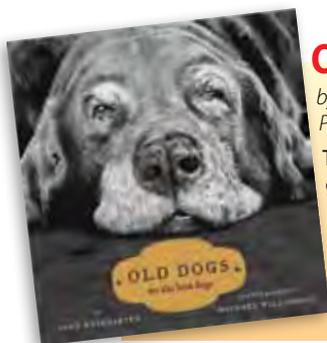
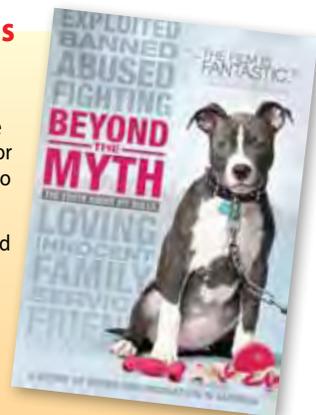
#### Beyond the Myth: The Truth About Pit Bulls

*Directed by Libby Sherrill*  
Not Rated

*Beyond the Myth* is a shocking documentary. In fact, it may not be possible to describe just how disturbing it is—not because of any graphic footage or violence (there's none of that)—but simply because the subject matter is so very wrong.

The film chronicles how three cities in the United States (Denver, Miami and Cincinnati) have enacted bans on certain breeds of dogs deemed to be dangerous simply by virtue of their birth. Without regard to the nature of any individual animal, dogs who merely "look like" they might be at least 51% Pit Bull have been forcibly taken en masse from their loving homes and *killed*. Does this sound at all familiar to students of history out there? How can this possibly be happening in 21st Century America?

*Beyond the Myth* is a story of blatant prejudice and horrific injustice directed against beings who have no voice. It will make you very angry, but it will also make you very aware that this kind of outrageous legislative malpractice is alive and thriving close to home.



#### Old Dogs are the Best Dogs

*by Gene Weingarten*  
*Photographs by Michael S. Williamson*

The title says it all—this is a book devoted to dogs who have reached their golden years. The author is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who reveals each subject's soul through poetic prose; the photographer has a Pulitzer of his own, and captures the grace and wisdom of these faithful old friends in dramatic black and white portraits. You'll certainly recognize some of your own past companions—or perhaps see your puppy's future in one of their faces.





# Kat's by Kat Lacy Konver

## How to Bathe Your Cat—If You Dare!

One might think that a creature that can so beautifully emulate the flow of water would not harbor such hatred and fear of it. Most house cats will leap over a puddle like it is filled with stinky dog pee just to avoid getting even their paws wet. On the other hand, large jungle cats enjoy water. Their coats shed water quickly, whereas domestic cats soak water up like a sponge, becoming “heavy” with water, and making them vulnerable to attack. Attack from what? Maybe loose dogs, faster owls, or possibly dry cats.

So why on earth would you want to bathe your cat? They seem to do a good job on their own, constantly licking themselves with no regard for embarrassing positions. Back toes pointing to the ceiling, legs spread like a harlot, pausing only to gaze at you, seeming to ask, “what are you looking at?” Well, as a cat ages, his rough tongue (key to grooming himself) becomes smoother, which is why older cats tend to need help with their hygiene. Certain breeds have been bred with flatter snouts and incredibly thick long coats—traits that are outside their natural abilities to groom themselves. So, if your cat soils himself on the way to the vet, or is old, or has fancy long-haired genes, he needs your help with grooming.

Preparing for the worst-case scenario is best. Nail trimmers are mandatory. Trim kitty's nails first. Do not trim into the pink area of the nail, as this may cause your cat to bite you. Acquire a muzzle in case your cat does try to bite you. Muzzles are highly ineffective tools because a cat can escape them in seconds, but these are precious seconds you have to escape their sharp teeth. Cats are usually disoriented when the muzzle comes off, giving you a few more precious seconds to call for help.

Never attempt to groom your cat by yourself—a trusted assistant is crucial for completing the task. The two of you need gloves reaching to your elbows. If a water bath is required, fill one side of your sink with warm water and have a gentle cat shampoo (available at Better Life Pet Foods) warmed to the same temperature as the water in the sink. Gently dip your cat in the “wash” side of sink, lather up with shampoo, and brush his coat to spread the

shampoo. Your assistant holds the angry cat while you do this. Do not get kitty's head, ears or eyes wet—use a wet washcloth for those areas.

Use the other side of your sink to rinse kitty. Sometimes it is easier to fill this side with warm clean water to help rinse the shampoo out, but also use your sprayer on a gentle spray to make sure all shampoo is rinsed. If any shampoo residue is left, it can make your cat scratch for days afterward. Have a highly absorbent towel ready, such as the Soggy Doggy drying mitt (only available at Better Life Pet Foods), which absorbs 7x its weight in water. Remove your cat from the sink and wrap in this towel. Wrap another towel around this and hold cat tightly for 5 minutes. This process will soak up most of the water out of the coat. You may then use a blow dryer set on “warm” if kitty will tolerate it. Do this away from water-filled sinks just in case kitty kicks the dryer in, causing an electrical catastrophe.

Never use scissors to cut out matted hair on your cat! This is very dangerous for you and your kitty. Never bathe an already matted cat. This just causes the mats to worsen. If your cat is already matted, it is best to call a professional (like Nancy and Kat at Better Life Pet Foods). If you choose to shave your cat yourself, you will need to purchase grooming clippers and blades, ranging in price from \$70 to \$200. How to shave your cat is another article for another time. Sometimes, only brushing is required and there are wonderful undercoat removing tools (available you-know-where) that can easily remove 50% of your cats' fur.

If you have succeeded in bathing your cat using these procedures without any bites, scratches, or electrical shocks, CONGRATULATIONS! Your cat may or may not be grateful. Some cats understand that you are helping them; others may not forgive you for weeks. If after reading this article you choose NOT to bathe your cat, give Better Life Pet Foods a call—with 15 years of cat grooming experience, a professional may be the best way to avoid hard feelings and bloodshed.

Kat Lacy is the owner of Better Life Pet Foods in Las Cruces.



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#### **Las Cruces Dog Park Coalition**

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#### **PetSmart/HSSNM Cat Adoption Center**

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*If your organization has volunteer opportunities available and would like to be included in our next issue, please email us at [info@dogcruces.com](mailto:info@dogcruces.com)*

### Featured Group

## HSSNM Cat Adoption Center PetSmart Charities

HSSNM Cat Adoption Center— with help from PetSmart Charities— offers cat/kitten adoption. In order to keep up with the standards required to maintain the adoption center in PetSmart, volunteers are needed to help with the care of these cats/kittens twice daily. There are opportunities to help volunteer for a weekly shift for care of these cats where you are able to not only care for their needs but get some cuddle/play time in with them, as well. Volunteers are also needed for monthly adoption events and information booths. Donations are always needed to help with the medical fund for the cats when they require extra medical care for unexpected illnesses, and foster homes are occasionally needed. Get involved by contacting volunteer coordinator Evelyn at (575) 650-6746.



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