Trainer works with dog and owner

Millwood resident Cathy Fox runs Paw and Order, Canine Behavior Services

BUSINESS FOCUS

BY MIKE LYNCH
Correspondent

Cathy Fox has been training dogs for about 10 years, she says. What goes unsaid is that training the dogs' owners is an equally important part of her occupation.

Fox, who lives in Millwood, calls her business Paw and Order with the subtitle, Canine Behavior Services. She started out by training her own dog.

She works primarily with family dogs, and any consultation is almost always in the owners' homes. The environment there is more comfortable for the dogs and it is good to have family members present, she said.

Fox specializes in aggression issues and common behavior problems and uses positive reinforcement methods in her training. She has worked with dogs with serious behavior problems for about the last seven years, she said.

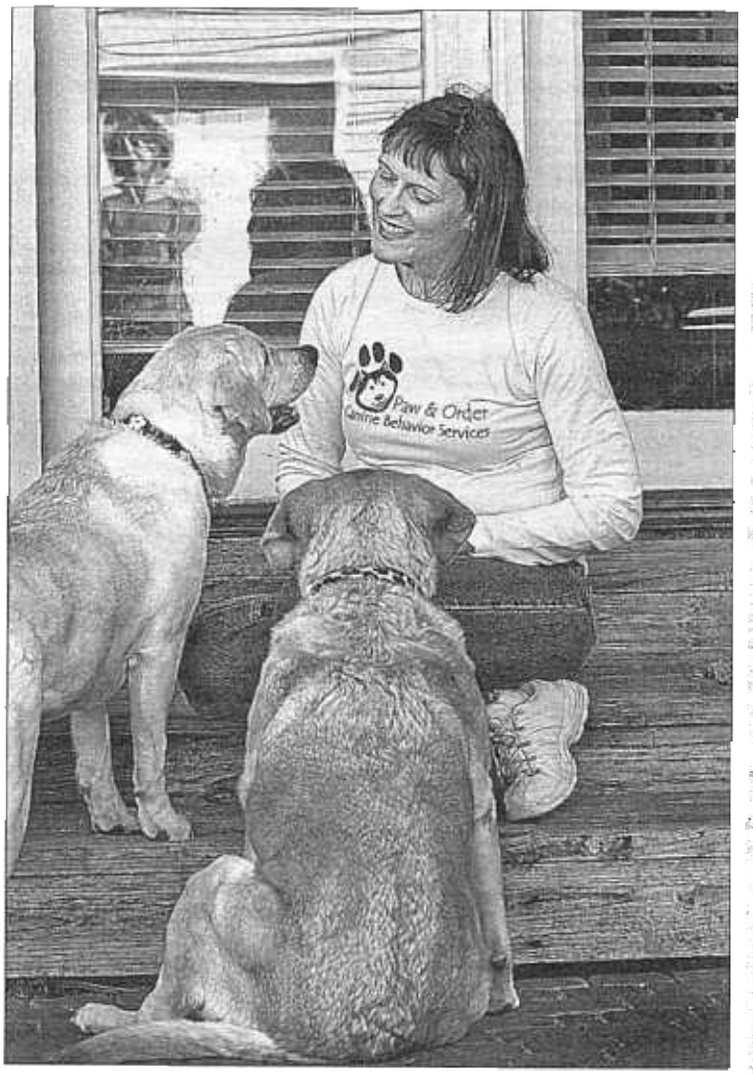
Fox is a certified professional dog trainer. That credential is earned through a four-hour examination prepared by the Certification Council of the Association of Professional Dog Trainers.

Part of the requirement for taking that lengthy test is 300 hours of teaching. The test focuses on technique, learning theory and husbandry, among other subjects, Fox said.

The problems that many dogs have can be linked to lack of guidance and lack of leadership, Fox said, noting that dogs are smart and can recognize lack of leadership.

Most aggressive behavior is fear-based, she said. Often a dog acting aggressively already has sent "back-off" signals, she said.

Of course, every situation is different, Fox said, and a lot of the training she does is aimed at the owner as well.



CHRISTOPHER ANDERSON The Spokesman-Review

Cathy Fox, owner of Paw and Order, meets with two of her clients Lili, left, and Izzy on Tuesday. Fox works mostly with family dogs like these Labradors of Colleen Curtis (reflected in window).

A common problem is the dog that jumps on everybody and is most annoying when visitors come to the door. Then the dog is shoved into the backyard, Fox said, and is punished rather than taught.

"A dog must learn that attention is gained by proper behavior, with all four feet on the ground," Fox said.

Fox conducts regular classes for dogs and their trainers, working with Carol and Dana Byrnes at their Diamonds in the Ruff training site.

Most classes have up to eight dogs and run about an hour to an hour and a half each week for four weeks, she said.

However, her favorite classes focus on "social skills" for dogs with what she calls "bite issues" or aggression. Those classes are limited to six dogs and run about 90 minutes for weekly classes over seven weeks.

One adage she keeps in mind, Fox said, was coined by noted veterinarian Ian Dunbar: "The more you discipline, the less you punish."

Contact correspondent Mike Lynch by e-mail at landmlynch@netzero.net.

More information

Paw and Order, Canine Behavior Services; Cathy Fox, CPDT; telephone: 993-3622.

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