



# Newsletter

Spring/Summer 2020

## Philadelphia Dog Training Club

### A message from the President

My how times change. When I wrote my report at the beginning of March, it was all about changing class times, our spring trial, and how well we were doing as a club. And then came COVID-19! As you all know, we are not able to train together for the foreseeable future. However, thanks to several clever people we are having real-time online training for both the public and for our members. I am so impressed that we are able to offer this and encourage those of you who are training members to join in. Our May 2020 show was cancelled and we look forward to May 2021.

The Board met recently via Zoom and discussed with the instructors how class might look when we are allowed to go back. There are a number of options, and we are lucky that St Aloysius is amenable to have us on their grounds. Above all, I hope everyone is safe and healthy and I am reminded every day what a blessing it is to have a dog! I look forward to the day when we can train again.

### Annual meeting and awards

Our Annual Meeting and Awards will be held on Zoom on Tuesday May 19 at 7:30 p.m. We will hear a report from the President, the financials from the Treasurer, and will be voting on a major revision to the bylaws. You will get a notice shortly on this along with a link to the Zoom conference call. If anyone has any questions, please contact [Brenda Perkins](#) or [Sue Anderson](#).

Also, we will applaud those people who earned titles this year, so plan on coming. Since we all are home, we should have a wonderful turnout-look forward to seeing your smiling faces!

### The privilege of therapy work

By A. Laurie Leslie Leevy



On June 6, 2018, my official journey into the world of therapy dog work began. On that evening, I traveled to a TDI testing site with my 3-year-old Kuvasz, Szumerias Taliszman Love in a Mist, BN RE CGC, *Lahdee*, for testing through Therapy Dogs International, one of the larger therapy dog

groups in the US. I had not taken a specific course (some dog training clubs do offer courses for therapy dog training) as I felt our three years of training in obedience at PDTC along with heavy daily socialization from the time *Lahdee* came to me at twelve weeks (with great early socialization by her breeders) had prepared us for the day.

The test requirements from TDI and those of other groups are available online so that one can make an informed decision about readiness. In my case, I can say that *Lahdee* would not have passed the test at a year, as at that age she was still wary of some strangers and probably would have scarfed up any offered food — a no-no for therapy dogs. My way forward with all training and socialization has always been to gradually build exposure without force and with lots of rewards. Given plenty of opportunity with a calm handler, many of our dogs even the guardian breeds will accept a wide variety of people, dogs and experiences as normal but this only comes with maturity, time, and exposure all allowing the dog to become confident in her/his world.

*Lahdee* first visited a nursing home at 13 weeks of age to meet a family member of mine who resided there. The delight of people in this difficult place interacting with my dog was informative. Dogs act as a catalyst for conversation, emotion, and memory as well as offering a break from the mundane. I was influenced by a few other Kuvasz Club of America members and former PDTC instructor Paula McBride, who had shared the pleasure of therapy work. Finally, I had time, along with the inclination, and so the journey unfolded.

The test that night demanded that our dogs be nonreactive; that calm behavior only comes from broad exposure to many people places and things. During the test, *Lahdee* was left with strangers, and upon my return had to greet unfamiliar dogs and people. Several dogs failed that day. Most failed because they jumped on people, an absolute no! Things were dropped, harsh sounds were made, and a screaming group of children with toys played behind us as we sat and read. There were several times that food was presented, including by a volunteer in a wheelchair; the dog must refuse. The thinking behind this is that a dog could be in a nursing home or hospital and someone might offer them food or medicine that would be harmful. *Lahdee* was physically examined, all parts of her body poked and, in the end, we passed every test. But for us, that was just the beginning.

Upon passing the test, most of the official therapy groups offer a wide assortment of institutions to visit. Interestingly, in our area, I could actually visit several nursing homes without any certification (Note: certification offers an insurance policy that protects one from various claims should an incident arise) as I had done from the time *Lahdee* was a puppy. But what interested me most was seeing if we could join the Gerald B. Shreiber Pet Therapy Program at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP), a world-famous pediatric care center. My own personal history as a witness to the struggle of families with seriously ill children drove that choice. We began another certification process. The first step, to have certification from a recognized therapy organization, we had attained. Next a personal interview for me and then *Lahdee* was required. Both a national FBI check and a state government check as well as a health check for me with required inoculations, blood titers on me for all the childhood diseases, two health checks for *Lahdee*, one by my vet and the other by vets at the University of Pennsylvania Ryan Veterinary Hospital. *Lahdee* also was examined by a behaviorist at Penn Vet who pronounced her "lovely!"

The program director at CHOP, Lisa Serad, is a woman with a great deal of dog and people experience whose

Rhodesian Ridgeback is also a therapy dog. In our early discussions, I mentioned that *Lahdee* was not necessarily the dog who comes up wagging madly at everyone but she had a quiet and gentle manner. The director suggested that the quiet dog was actually often the best therapy dog as they do not overwhelm.

Lastly, we had an official tryout as we had no idea how *Lahdee* would actually react to this bustling hospital environment with sights, scents, and sounds never experienced. *Lahdee* was a gem. On that tryout visit, she navigated freight elevators with rumbling carts, children screaming at her (not every child is delighted to see a dog), people from all over the world chatting with her and touching her and enough hands with the scent of disinfectant that I thought she might be reviled — but she handled all of it. My hardest task was to make sure that no one touched *Lahdee* without using hand disinfectant wipes (which I must carry) or Purell available throughout the hospital. I am still developing a good technique for this as sometimes I feel like the fumbler-in-chief as I tackle folks with my sanitary hand wipes!

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*We are there in that moment to bring our dog as a vehicle of love, acceptance, and nonjudgement.*

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*Lahdee* and I are assigned primarily to the neurology pod where there are some seriously ill children as well as some with behavioral issues. It is a great gift to visit children and families in difficult moments and watch the pure delight that a dog can bring. The work at a CHOP is not for the faint of heart. The rules on contact with families and children are very strict. For instance, the families can take photos of *Lahdee*, but I am not allowed to take any photos at all at the hospital nor may I have any connection beyond the hospital. I may not inquire about the happenings of a child or contact a family who has lost a child. We are there in that moment to bring our dog as a vehicle of love, acceptance, and nonjudgement. And yet each time we finish our visit, I walk with satisfaction out into the fresh air, filled with gratitude for being witness to the exquisite animal / human connection.

I shall always remember the day when a child asked to have *Lahdee* in her bed. *Lahdee* got to jump up into the bed, as the dogs are permitted to do if a child so requests. At home, *Lahdee* does not get on any furniture, but with an "Up" command she leaped onto the very tall bed and lay down next to a delighted 11-year-old girl who promptly buried her head in *Lahdee's* ruff and began a conversation. We have had children with brain surgery roll on a mat on the floor with *Lahdee*, a

child announcing she was blind in one eye and might soon lose vision in another all the while snuggling and petting *Lahdee*. We have had one child smack *Lahdee* wherein I promptly redirected him to show me how hard he could hit the floor, reminding him that dogs are never ever for hitting, and I have had the pleasure of the many adults who work on the floor get down and roll around with *Lahdee*, who always leaves her clean white fur on their almost always black pants (*Lahdee* must have a bath before every visit to CHOP — a sure fire way to loosen coat!).

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*Our primary goal as dog caretakers is to make our dogs' lives larger and broader.*

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In late spring, *Lahdee* and I were asked to consider working at Camp Erin, a national bereavement camp for children ages 6-17 run by Penn Medicine Hospice. I met with the director and again underwent a serious screening along with a requirement for attending two all-day workshops. The camp is a long weekend affair open to 120 children with another 160 volunteers serving the children. *Lahdee's* first day was as a greeter dog meeting all 120 children and their family members who brought the children to camp. I often put *Lahdee* in a down-stay in these situations as very large standing dogs can frighten many children. Indeed, when *Lahdee* finally stands, many children will tell me that they had no idea how big she was and that she is the biggest dog they have ever touched! The director of the camp came and told me that *Lahdee* had the calmest aura of any being she had ever met.

She is such a confident girl and has learned to appreciate being a secure quiet friend to people in challenging situations. *Lahdee* amazes me and I think of the long history of Kvasz who are livestock guardian dogs, not herders, being the calm friend to their livestock and human families. *Lahdee* has a big sense of who her family might be. The second day of camp was as you might imagine: children running, chatting, game playing, crafting, and swirling about *Lahdee*. Children — all of whom had lost a parent or sibling or significant family member — in that moment able to play or pet or have a serious conversation with *Lahdee* and me. At the end of that day, another therapy dog handler declared that *Lahdee* was a Peaceful Cloud! I must say the phrase made my heart smile.

My words about our dogs, especially our guard dogs, are always the same: "Socialize, socialize, socialize!" We cannot always know if the outgoing 8-week-old puppy

will become a bit more introverted at a year or two or if the shy pup will become a stable, nonreactive, confident adult. But, no dog will become all it can be without our constant intention to broaden his or her world. *Lahdee's* breeders, Lynn Brady and Connie Townsend of [Szumeria Kvasz Kennels](#) in Minnesota, have often said that it should be our primary goal as our dog caretakers to make our dogs' lives larger and broader. On occasion, I have heard people say they do not want their guard dog to be friendly, and that is certainly a choice. But do know that my gentle therapy girl is a fierce defender of her home, easily able to discern what behavior is appropriate in what place.

Throughout my forty years in Kvasz, I have seen several unapproachable dogs who could not walk in public, could not be petted by a stranger, or even easily visit the vet as they had never been given the opportunity to meet and know the world. In our modern world our dogs need a different model of behavior. Not every dog will be a therapy dog, but with training and socialization, the possibility exists for that and for many other activities.

*Lahdee* recently participated in a reading event at a local library. Some children had signed up for *Lahdee*, the big dog; others for a smaller dog who was a no-show. The librarian asked if we might allow those small-dog children to read to *Lahdee* as well. Of course I agreed. I was told that there was one child who was terrified of large dogs and so upset that the small dog had failed to arrive. I asked the librarian if the little girl was up to entering the room and if so, I would have a conversation with her. I had *Lahdee* in her down-stay and when the child entered the room. I told her to pick any place in the room where she thought she might sit. At first, she sat down very close to the door. She began to tell me about her fear and I listened and simply acknowledged her worry. I told her about *Lahdee* and how she was trained as a therapy dog and that she really enjoyed children in a nice quiet way. In time, the little 8-year-old girl decided to sit down next to *Lahdee* and read her short book to *Lahdee*. *Lahdee* lay quietly next to her for the reading and when the child was finished, the little girl reached over and began to pet *Lahdee*. Eventually she hugged *Lahdee* and said to me "*Lahdee* is a really nice dog!" After the child left the room, the librarian who had been watching us through the door said to me, "That was just unbelievable!" It is the magic of a sound well socialized confident dog! These moments are priceless.

My profound thanks to all of my PDTC instructors and those at other dog clubs whose thoughtful training has helped create the path forward for us.

## News from our members



*Pansy with her CGC ribbon*

**Elizabeth Alakszay:** *Pansy* passed her Canine Good Citizen test at PDTC. In addition, *Lily* and *Pansy* were both featured on the cover of their local paper, the Morgantown/Honey Brook [Community Courier](#). Local children were invited to read to *Lily*, a certified therapy dog, and *Pansy*, a therapy dog in training.

**Chris Allen:** The current issue of the [Australian Shepherd Journal](#) published the 2019 rankings:

- *Bingo*: Beginner Novice B 2nd, Novice B 2nd, Graduate Novice 1st, Open B 4th
- *Frankie*: Open B 1st, Utility B 1st, Blue & Gold (overall) 1st

The 2019 Delaney Ratings published in [Front & Finish](#) included *Frankie* as #1 Aussie.

The USASA's August mid-year rankings (full year not yet published): *Frankie's* #1 Blue & Gold (i.e. overall), #1 Utility B, and #1 Open B. *Bingo's* #1 Beginner Novice B and #3 Novice B.

In addition:

- *Bingo*:
  - 08/04/19 HIT GSDCGW
  - 08/09/19 CD Penn Ridge KC
  - 08/31/19 HIT Morris Hills DTC
  - 10/13/19 GN National Capital KC
  - CDX 11/16/19 Lower Camden County DTC
- *Frankie*:
  - 08/25/19 OM8 Oriole DTC
  - UDX6 11/17/19 Chesapeake GRC
  - 01/12/20 AKC #14 All-time Aussie
  - invited to NOC for 4th year in a row

Good boys, Frankie and Bingo!

**Anne Blythe:** Last year we were successful! *Maddie*, my Golden, earned her first leg of Rally Novice at The West Chester Kennel Club in October.

All three dogs went to Oaks in December with four entries, and we walked away with four qualified legs. *Maddie* earned her Rally Novice title with a score of 97. *Indy*, my English Shepherd, got his first leg of Rally Intermediate Novice despite a problem with a trash can. And *Elly*, my English Cream, came through with her first leg of Beginner Novice. I was very happy and proud of them. Next, to turn those legs into titles!



*Poppy*

**Michelle Dean:** *Poppy* earned her CGC and Rally Novice titles and continues show in the conformation whenever possible.



*Riley received his Preferred Open Title on February 14.*

**Debbie Desantis:** My Sheltie *Gracie* received her Rally Intermediate title at the Valley Forge Kennel Club shows at the end of September 2019. In four shows in two days, she received second place. She also received her Intermediate Trick Dog title.

My Lhasa Apso *Ralphie* received his Rally Novice title in July at the shows at Bloomsburg with scores in the high 90s and even a 100 out of 100, including first and second places. He also received his Rally Intermediate

title at the Valley Forge Kennel Club shows at the end of September 2019. In four shows in two days, he received two first places and two third places. He also received his Intermediate Trick Dog title.

My rescued Golden Retriever *Riley* received his Preferred Open title at the Gloucester County Kennel Club show on February 14, with a second place.



Carol Eisenlohr and Fiona

**Carol Eisenlohr:** Fiona got her BN title at Gloucester County Kennel Club Trial on February 14.

**Barb Doering:** On June 29, *Siri* finished her Excellent Fast title with a first and was first in Master Jumpers. On June 30, she was second in Master Jumpers and Master Fast.

At the Kruisin' Kanines Agility Club trial on August 10, *Siri* won Masters Standard!

On October 13, 2019, at the Burlington County Kennel Club agility trial *Siri* finished her Time 2 Beat title with the last of 9 firsts!

*Siri* got 1st in the following classes:

- De-Bay Herding Club 12/21 – Master Jumpers
- Dauphin DTC 1/5 – Master jumpers
- Keeshond Club of Del Valley
- 1/10 Premier Standard
- 2/9 Premier Jumpers

**Laurie Leevy:** *Szumeria's Talizman Love in a Mist, "Lahdee,"* has earned the following titles:

- CGCU — January 23, 2020
- CD — December 8, 2019
- CGCA — October 6, 2019
- THDN — August 2, 2019



Maureen Hallowell and *Sinatra* in his win photo from the Kennel Club of Philadelphia show.

**Maureen Hallowell:** GCH CH *Stone Run The Best is Yet To Come* aka "*Sinatra*" finished his Championship at 8 months of age and his Grand Championship at just 9 months of age. I am so very proud of what this boy accomplished in such a short period of time. I believe the best is yet to come!



*Haviland* (on the left) and *Corry* earned their AKC ATT titles

**Francine Mallon:** *Comfortme Sharp Dressed Man, "Haviland,"* and *Evanlake Sunshine Superman, "Corry,"* both earned their AKC ATT titles at two trials in February 2020 at the Bayshore Companion Dog Training Club in Edentown, New Jersey.

*Comfortme Sharp Dressed Man, "Haviland,"* passed the test for AKC intermediate trick dog title (TKI), at the Dog Training Club of Chester County in January 2020. He passed the test for therapy dog international (TDI) and AKC Novice Trick title (TKN) in August 2019 at the Cavalier Club of Delaware Valley picnic in Coatesville, Pennsylvania.

## In memoriam



Lady

**Debbie DeSantis:**  
My rescued sheltie *Lady* crossed to the Rainbow Bridge the end of January 2020. The following is the tribute to her life.

*Lady* was a sweet, intelligent, beautiful soul who was in four other placements before I had the privilege of having her

companionship. I had her for six years as of November 2019, and she was about eight years old when rescued. We bonded immediately. Unfortunately, she came to me in horrible shape: curled nails, foot and leg wounds, brown teeth and red gums, bad coat, etc. Despite her suffering, even then her great spirit shone through. After the veterinarians brought her to health, I began to realize that, other than knowing her name (*Ladybug* — which I shortened to *Lady*), she didn't even know the command "sit." No big deal — except for the fact that obviously no one along the way spent time with her, which angered and saddened me.

She *loved* to learn and, five months after I adopted her, she achieved her AKC Canine Good Citizenship title, subsequently being awarded her Advanced CGC and Trick Dog Title. She also served as a therapy dog, as she loved dogs and people and was remarkable with the best temperament. She even was a demo dog in my classes. RIP *Lady*, CGC, CGCA, TKN. You will not be forgotten, my little shadow.



Porter

**Chris Allen:** *Porter, Stonehaven Bayshore Simply Shocking VCD2 UDX OM BN GO TD OA OAJ RN*

June 9, 2009 – July 31, 2019

"The one best place to bury a good dog is in the heart of its master." — Ben Hur Lampman