

Sit! Stay! Good Dog!

Lexington dog trainer and author Teoti Anderson knows her stuff when it comes to man's best friend. By **Suzanne Powell Mills**



ABOVE: In her books and classes, Teoti uses positive reinforcement to train dogs and their owners. **ABOVE, RIGHT:** Teoti and her staff work with all breeds ages 4 months and older.



Linus, a shy greyhound, gingerly takes a treat from Teoti Anderson's hand. "He wouldn't do this a few weeks ago," the dog trainer notes. "He's come a long way. Back when he started taking these classes, he was scared of just about everything." The former racer lies calmly beside his owner during Teoti's Family Manners dog-training class, in which she's been improving canine-human relationships for nearly 14 years.

Positive Pooches "I try to be understanding and compassionate," Teoti says of her dog-training philosophy. A reward-based trainer, she believes there should be "no pain to train." Her business, Pawsitive Results, offers classes to dogs of every stripe and spot.

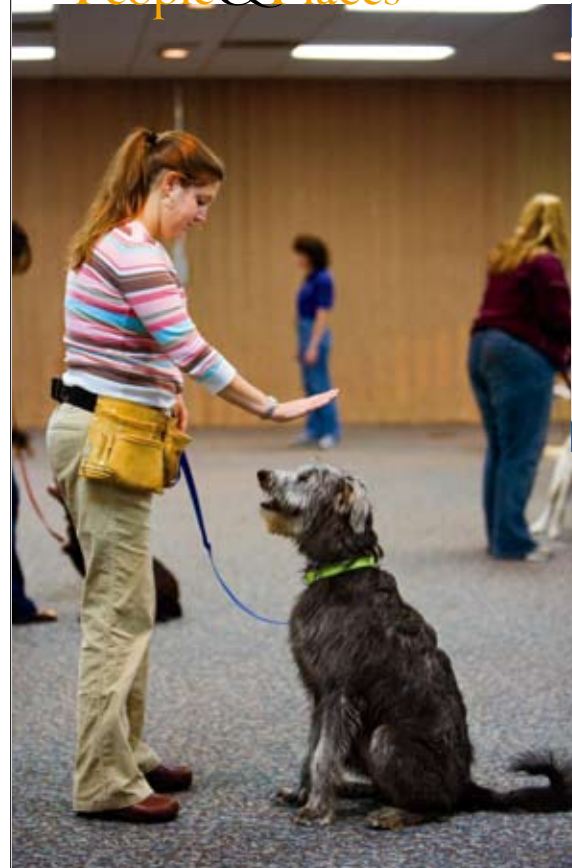
Forget rolled-up newspapers, prong collars, or other old-school methods of training. Teoti relies on positive reinforcement and having fun with your dog. "With the old-fashioned way of training, you watch

your dog like a hawk and punish him when he does something wrong. With today's way of thinking, you still watch your dog like a hawk, but you reward him for doing something right," she explains.

People Training 101 Judging by the progress made by the dogs in her class, Teoti's method works. "Use everyday life as training sessions," she advises her students. "Let your dogs make mistakes. That's how they learn." Dogs, however, aren't the only ones that benefit. Teoti designs her classes to train owners as well.

"People often set up their dogs for failure, because the two species have different ideas about what's going on," she explains. "Sometimes we have to fix *our* habits before we can help our dogs."

Teoti believes this philosophy rolls over into other aspects of life. "When you focus on the negative, that's what you get. I look at the positive. Even things such as traffic don't bother me as much when I do that." ➔ *turn to page 16*



FAR LEFT: Assistants Jenny Prather (pictured) and Phyllis Beasley help spread Teoti's message.

Dogs' Best Friend Teoti is not only a successful trainer, but she is also the author of four dog-training books. A professional whose day job is writing and editing Web sites for BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina, she sees her books as the perfect marriage of her two passions.

For someone who knows so much about dogs, it may seem odd that Teoti didn't own one until she was 12 years old. "I think my parents didn't want all the work that came with it," she says. "We finally got an adult papillon, and I was so excited, I did everything I could to learn about her and take care of her."

Since then Teoti's passion for animals has gone full throttle. Ask about her current pets—Logan, a black Lab; Finian, a papillon; and Sebastian, her 16-year-old cat—and she fills with maternal emotion.

She attributes her skills as a dog trainer, however, to Cody, her late three-legged Lab. Teoti trained him to be an animal-assisted-therapy dog that could visit people in the hospital.

Training Tips

Teoti teaches Family Manners and Rally for Fun at the Leisure Center in Lexington and Tri-City Leisure Center in West Columbia. The six-week courses usually have approximately seven dogs per class.

If you can't make it to a class, check out her books, *Your Outta Control Puppy*, *Super Simple Guide to Housetraining*, *Quick and Easy Crate Training*, and *Puppy Care and Training*. They are available at some pet stores or on her Web site, www.getpawsitiveresults.com.

(She continues this volunteer work with Logan.) Experiencing the positive effect a happy, well-trained dog can have on others gave her the impetus to become a certified trainer.

Try, Try Again Teoti attends and speaks at dog-training seminars across the country. "I love learning. I even use my vacation time to go to seminars," she says with a laugh.

Not surprisingly, Teoti struggles with time management. Between her full-time job, dog-training classes, volunteer work, and furry babies at home, she doesn't have much downtime. Yet she wouldn't have it any other way. Making a difference in the lives of dogs and their owners keeps Teoti motivated. "I love it when the lightbulb goes on and people realize they can work with their dogs," she says. ●