

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Work+Play+The Pet Set= The Best For Atlanta Pets!

Work+Play Positive Dog Training LLC and The Pet Set are teaming up to offer animal training and behavior classes at The Pet Set's convenient location. The Pet Set has been Atlanta's most unique dog and cat wonder store since 1982, catering to people who want the best for their pets. Their retail boutique carries the best in pet foods, pet accessories, and pet toys. Their pet spa offers the best in pet pampering, from grooming, to massage. Their doggie daycare offers the best in supervised pet playtime. Now, through Work+Play Positive Dog Training, they are offering the best in animal training services.

"How do you want your pet to behave?" It's the first question Samantha asks new clients. She knows that different people want different things from their pets. Some people are happy if their dog comes when called, and doesn't drag them around when they go for walks. Some people want their dog to sit before going out the door, and others don't care what the dog does so long as the dog waits for the door to be open before racing through it. Still other people want their dog to pull their wheelchair, or to retrieve their TV remote. In order to be the best trainer you have to listen to what people want, to how they want their dog to be a part of their lives. This ability to customize training plans is evident even in Samantha's group classes. When you look at her handouts next to the description of "default behavior" is a fill in the blank.

"A dog's default behavior is the 'I don't know what to do so I'll try this first' behavior. Most people want this to be a sit or a down, but not everyone. I had one client who wanted his dog to touch his leg with her paw because he found that he had trouble noticing a sit or a down. Of course, I asked him whether anyone in his family wore pantyhose because a paw to the leg is bound to cause runs, but his wife didn't wear them, and this behavior ended up being a perfect default behavior for that dog and that family. I want the first behavior that my students consciously teach their dogs to be the default behavior. Yes, this makes a bit more work for me, but my students come to me because they want their animals integrated into their lives and having the right default behavior makes a big difference when it comes to how well the animal fits into their lives."

Samantha says that it is important that people have realistic expectations. In dog training, we're dealing

with a lot of variables. The amount of time and effort an owner is willing to dedicate, the dog's innate temperament, the dog's physical ability, and the dog's history. When you're working with an adult dog every experience that that dog has had in his life is going to have an influence over how easy or hard it will be to teach that dog something new. Puppies, of course, can't be expected to act like adults – they have shorter attention spans, smaller bladders, and their bodies are constantly changing as they grow. "Dogs aren't robots. Each one is an individual and you need to have some flexibility in your approach. You need to see where a dog is, and work from that place, not expecting them to be a certain way because it would make your job easier. Animals do what works for them, and as a trainer I need to teach the animal that doing the behaviors that I like works for the dog."

Samantha uses a method called Clicker Training. She is quick to point out that a lot of people use clickers in training, but true Clicker Trainers are using operant conditioning with an emphasis on positive reinforcement. "Traditional training was all about teaching the dog what not to do. It could be very frustrating for dog and owner, and it made training a more onerous task. It is a lot more efficient, and a lot more fun, to focus on what is being done right, and to tell the dog what TO do, rather than what NOT to do. Plus with Clicker, I can teach animals to perform a wider array of behaviors," says Samantha. Samantha explicitly uses operant conditioning, classical conditioning, and ethology in her classes. She encourages her students to ask her why she is doing things. "If they understand why, if they understand the theory, they can more easily customize training plans and problem solve. Understanding why improves their relationship with their pets, and that is what this is all about."

Many trainers have a competition background. Samantha's background in training is more practical. Samantha got her start in an animal shelter, working with animals who needed to learn basic manners in order to find, and to stay in, new homes. From there she moved to studying the training of Service Dogs – dogs who are individually trained to mitigate their human partner's disability – and has trained not only Service Dogs, but also trainers of Service Dogs. Samantha maintains an interest in animal rescue, and is the President Emeritus of Leonberger Rescue Inc. (a 501c3 non-profit that rescues and rehomes Leonberger Dogs across the country). Samantha has also trained animal actors and models for print, video, and

film (including training a dog for Tim Burton's movie *Big Fish*.)

Work+Play Positive Dog Training is offering group classes and private lessons for people and their pets (yes, pets, Work+Play Positive Dog Training also trains cats; though group classes are for dogs only) at The Pet Set. Or, if you'd prefer, The Pet Set and Work+Play Positive Dog Training are teaming up to offer Boarding School animals who need a jump-start on training, for people who would like to come home from vacation to pets with improved behavior, or for people who would like their animal to learn a specific behavior. Behavior Basics+Puppy Playtime class (for puppies, beginner dogs, and dogs who could use a review of the fundamentals) start in April. Call The Pet Set today at 404-633-8755, or go to <http://workplaydogs.com> to reserve your spot.

For More Information:

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