Paws to Dance

The Newsletter of the Canine Freestyle Federation, Inc.
February 2016

Sunday with Joan

Six eager DogWork fanciers gathered one Sunday in January for the first of five workshops in a mini-series titled Improvisations, Training in an Artistic and Creative Manner. Our first session was about building a movement vocabulary, which is one main purpose for improvisation.

First and foremost, Dictionary.com defines improvisation as "the art or act of improvising, or of composing, uttering, executing, or arranging anything without previous preparation." We've all experienced a time when something "unplanned, just happened, out of the blue", and seemed just right. Call it luck, serendipity, or great good fortune; just don't forget how it came about, or how you might be able to use it. This is especially true of movement with your DogWork teammate.

In order to be successful, you will first need an intent; a motivation related to an aspect of the dog you want spectators to see (and enjoy!) This is often chosen from elements listed in the Definition of Freestyle, or one of your dog's singular attributes. One of the choreographic concepts will help you to clarify this intent. From there Joan's advice is "Don't think! Do!" You are looking for hidden gems, not trained movement phrases. This is the dog's time to show *you* a thing or two!

For some, music enhances the ability to improvise. Often, though, it ends up leading to moving **to** the music, and draws the intent toward the music and away from the movement and communication between dog and handler. It may be better to work in silence so that your full attention is on your partner. (After all, isn't that what we're asking of our dogs?)

Joan teaching in Beaverdam, VA
Photo/ Trish Koontz

The third element in a successful improv is an observer (or, if you are as fortunate as we were that Sunday, *six* observers.) Being, as we are, in the middle of the shape and the movement, we can't see the results of our own exploration. A kind but totally honest critique from outside the movement will guide

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you toward those movements that look wonderful, and those that you might want to enjoy only behind closed doors. (If you train in a vacuum, video is a poor second choice.)

In my own improvs with Lyra, there were things that I knew were keepers to be trained and put on cue. However, I would never have seen and appreciated a tiny change in the flow of her movement that begged to become a transition from backing to lateral movement. But my friends did, and I believe it will become a strong point in our movement vocabulary.

Another gem that came out of the improv exercise was so simple, yet none of us really appreciated its importance until we saw it in action. One team was moving stiffly (this may have applied to me too!) until on one effort suddenly everything changed and there was harmony and oneness. What changed, we were asked. Handler and observers responded in unison "she went with her dog!" This is the real value of improv to build vocabulary. Trust your friends. Then be quiet, and listen to the dog.

There's Still Time!

There are still a few spaces left for the remaining three workshops in Joan's Mini-Series on Improvisation, held in Beaverdam, VA.

March 6 Creating the Map: Inviting and maintaining spectator involvement

April 3 The Go-Power of DogWork: Keep it simple

May 15 The Magic of Choice: Completing the puzzle or opening the box

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Animal Communication

Julia Gregory

I'll never forget the first time that Joan Tennille suggested that the dogs were communicating to her. It was our very first meeting during a seminar held near Chattanooga. I had carefully chosen music that suited the rhythm of my then-partner, Cardigan Welsh Corgi, Bombur. We went out on the floor to show our choice. Joan said, "It's the right tempo, but he doesn't like it." I rolled my eyes (inwardly – even then I sensed that disrespect was unwise) and retired from the performance space. A little while later, while Bombur and I were in the restroom (he barked if I left him where the other dogs were working) a piece came on that sounded sweet, but spirited and I said to him, "Let's try that one." We trotted out onto the mats and began to circle. Joan began to shout, "Look at the corgi! Look at the corgi! THAT'S his music!" And of course she was right. I credited her ability to judge physical demeanor, but now, I'm not at all sure that's all it was.

After years had passed and Joan and I were better friends, she related some instances in which students' dogs had communicated their needs or opinions to her and when she acted on them, not only did performances go better, but in some cases, home life too. So perhaps those conversations left me more open to accept the two times that dogs clearly (and unexpectedly) spoke to me. The most memorable was Hal. I had worked all day on a Friday and was an hour away from leading an overnight program when I encountered a stray dog in the park that surrounds the Tennessee Aquarium. He was a full-grown Plott hound; pleasant, healthy, a little on the thin side, but easy to lead with my belt around his neck. I took him upstairs to my office and sat down to pet him and figure out what to do next. I was thinking out loud. "I can't leave you in the office overnight, and you can't go to any other building in our complex. That's a violation of quarantine. I don't have time to drive you home, and in any case I'm not keen on the idea of dumping you at home with only my not-very-dog-savvy husband to cope with you and my pack. What am I going to do with you?!" I demanded. He looked at me and again the words formed in my head. "If you'll keep me safe I'll do whatever you say." This time I was floored. I had no choice but to call animal control; I felt like a Judas when I patted the floor of the cage in the truck and the big, brindle dog hopped right in. "I'll come and get you." I promised. But I had to wait the five days for an owner to claim him. I visited him every day and told him I'd take him home as soon as I could. He hated the shelter. His roommate was wild and the poop on the floor embarrassed him. But in the end, I was able to bring him safe home. To this day, he has scrupulously kept his part of our bargain. He was easy to train and integrated into my pack with a minimum of trouble. I named him Wildhaven's Halcyon Heart, "Hal" and he remains "Hal" in his forever home. In his new family he has accepted the cats, helped to stabilize and protect a member

of the family who is recovering from a stroke and shown the ropes to a new greyhound family member who lacks confidence. In his spare time, he has earned several obedience and rally titles. What a gentleman!

Even though I don't think I can live without them, dogs are not my whole life. This year, starting last September, I'm spending a weekend each month camping in a forest near Athens, Georgia and exploring a deeper connection with nature. We learn to observe wildlife and track. We learn a few primitive skills and to make useful items with wild materials. We have also broached the topic of interspecies communication. Now, in spite of the experiences I've related here, I was a bit skeptical. But I've come to trust these nature-geek friends of mine so I've listened. I've listened to the idea that we all have intuition. You've had it happen to you. The phone rings and you know who it is. You've been thinking of an old friend and she calls you. "OK", I thought, "so there are untapped depths to the human mind". I've done the meditation exercises and had some surprising revelations. Did they come from another creature or from inside my own head and experience? My turning point was watching this documentary of Anna Breytenbach.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2vhV63lx2k
(If I haven't cut and pasted this properly, it's on YouTube under The Animal Communicator-Anna Breytenbach (Full Documentary). website the address is http://www.animalspirit.org/
I cried as I watched; not because I felt sorry for the animals, but because this skill is something I desperately want for myself, but it seems so unattainable. I WILL keep trying though. I've read a book by Marta Williams called Learning Their Language. I tried to read this years ago and I wasn't ready. I thought, "She makes it sound TOO simple", but with the other exercises and discussions behind me I'm ready to use it as a workbook.

Has all this made a difference in my dog life? I think so. Nothing earth-shaking. I'm more sensitive to Milo's looks and movements. I'm more patient on walks when he's really wrapped up on some smell. Unfortunately it's harder to leave him to travel or even for long days at work. He's running agility more smoothly than ever with no practice and the retraining for right-side entry on the weaves has gone easily. Freestyle? I think we're pickier about music now. He hasn't indicated a clear preference yet and that keeps me from choreographing enthusiastically. I don't want to waste our time on something he doesn't like. It seems disrespectful. But we experiment and build movement vocabulary and hope to see you in Ohio in May. I managed to get the weekend off!

Retreat Update

Our plans for the Train, Create, Celebrate Retreat are being rescheduled from July 2016 to **15-18 June, 2017** at Purina Farms. Anyone who is interested in helping with PR, please contact Kristen Sicotte, **kdammen@yahoo.com** so that we can produce the **Best Retreat Ever!**

Something New! Improv Class!

(Experimental at this time)

The Improv Class is a Pass/Fail, non-titling event.

The class will be judged by one judge, one certified instructor or provisional judge, and one member–at-large, on a Pass/Fail basis, and will not receive a numerical score.

No music will be played. The improv will have a concept and an intent, these being randomly drawn or assigned at the beginning of each entry's turn. Within one minute of receiving these, the team will move briskly into the performance space, honor, and proceed directly to an opening shape.

The maximum time is one (1) minute, with no minimum. Handler's recognition of having solved the problem, and drawing to a closing shape, is of much greater value than extending the duration of the improv.

The Improv Class will be presented following presentation of the Awards at the end of the Titling Event.

The first Improv Class will be held in Chesterland, OH on April 30, at the North Coast event., as we explore the "what if" of producing a totally new class.

Entries will be $10, and you may simply write it in on the event premium.

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Guild News

First Florida Freestylers Guild

Amy Reinhart, Secretary

As we look forward to our next Canine Freestyle Federation Titling event in March, we continue to train on various days and at various levels, but, YAY, everyone selected music several months ago. Routines are being worked out which is why the Guild meeting on Saturday, January 16 was so important and positive.

As our instructor (Ann) always reminds us, it's very important to have other eyes for your routine. You and your dog are a team in your routine, you can't see or notice what others may notice because you are focused on the two of you working together. We each ran through our routines (or through moves /phrases), providing feedback and support to our class mates, and began the planning for our upcoming CFF Titling event. We're excited, (some of us are nervous), but we are all proud of our canine companions and each other. Wow, how uplifting it is!!!

First Florida Freestylers Guild Titling Event

19-20 March, 2016
Cocoa, Florida

Premium available for download at
www.canine-freestyle.org
Events Calendar

Entries close at 6PM, Wednesday 24 February

North Coast Canine Freestylers Guild

Bridget Telencio and Janet Dayton

Winter has finally arrived on the North Coast. We have watches and warnings for lake effect snow and wind chills over the next couple of days. Two NCCF members welcomed new additions. London joins Bridget and Taxi joins Sue Ann. What fun!

We had an Evening of Sharing on January 15th. This night gives students whom have just completed the introductory classes an opportunity to present a phrase to guild members, family, and friends. Guild members have the chance to present new routines or works in progress. It was a nice night topped off with yummy treats.

Good news: Cindy with Ike, the English bulldog has made awesome strides with her rehabilitation. She is home and came to visit the guild. She looks and sounds great.

NCCF has been approved for a titling event for April 30/May 1, 2016. We are busy getting routines polished. We hope you will join us here on the North Coast.

North Coast Canine Freestylers Titling Event

30 April- 1 May, 2016
Chesterland, Ohio

Premium available for download at
www.canine-freestyle.org
Events Calendar

Entries close at 6PM Saturday 9 April

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Sirius Guild

Betty Swenson

The Sirius Guild has had a busy few months, highlighted by our Titling Event in early November. Despite a rocky start on Saturday (dead car battery in Richmond made getting the Music Man to Stafford on time a bit of a challenge), the weekend was a huge success. Teamwork was the key to this success, with guild members working together under the direction of co-chairs Wendy Ely and Pat Matthews and secretary Cinda Verbin for all the show preparation and execution. Teamwork also was in evidence in all the lovely performances and titles earned. We would like to thank members of the North Carolina and Florida Guilds for supporting our event as well.

In addition, two Sirius Guild canines were inducted into the DogWork Hall of Fame that weekend: Marian Hardy's Ping and Janet McBrien's Nicholas.

In other news, both the Beginning and Advanced classes at Capitol Dog Training Club are well-attended and going strong. The DC area folks realize how fortunate they are to have a warm (or cool) place for their weekly work sessions. Joan is holding a mini-series of classes on Training in an Artistic and Creative Manner. The first session, held Jan. 10, was on Building a Movement Vocabulary. Future sessions are: Feb. 7, Making Movement Talk; Mar. 6, Creating the Map; Apr. 3, The Go-power of DogWork; May 15, The Magic of Choice.

Ping with Marian, photo by Jim Poor

Nicholas with Janet, photo by Jim Poor

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North Star Notes Guild

Kate An Hunter

Happy 2016! Our guild is keeping busy this winter. During this frigid time, we are so glad to have indoor activities to keep our dogs busy physically and mentally. Whether meeting as a guild, getting together for puppy play or just spending a few minutes at home working with our dogs, the weather doesn't slow down the work we do with our dogs and our CFF friends. And when we do go outside, we are all bundled up with coats and boots, dogs included!

Jeanine Brown and Kate An Hunter are studying with Kristin Sicotte to become certified Dogwork instructers. We are looking forward to being able to share what we do with more people in our area. We are planning a seminar for this year to show more Minnesotans what fun we have in CFF.

The dogs in our group are multi-talented and have been working to earn titles in obedience, rally, K9 Nosework and Barn Hunt.

We hope you are staying warm and enjoying every day with your dogs!

Cooper at Barn Hunt, photo by Kate An Hunter

Otis bundled up for a walk, photo by Kate An

Carolina Canine Freestyle Guild

Trish Koontz

The Carolina Guild has started off the New Year with some great resolutions. We have 2 weekly introductory class sessions beginning in Sanford, NC and Winston Salem, NC this spring, hoping to reach some new folks with this joyful sport! We are also lucky to be able to participate in the ongoing monthly classes sponsored by Durham Kennel Club for 2016.

We had great attendance at our year-end gathering in December, which was a gracious pot-luck "munch and meet" followed by training at DogTown in Burlington, NC. We not only reviewed and evaluated our goals for 2015, we set our course for the upcoming year. Our goals for 2016

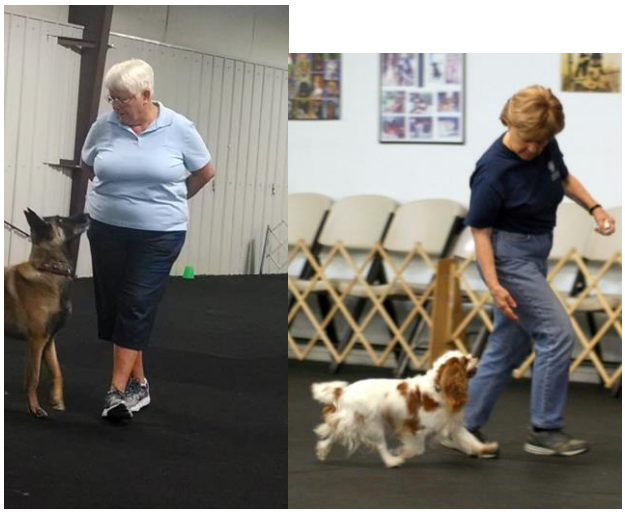
include investigating demo opportunities to expose more folks to our sport, producing a Titling Event in November, adding classes in the state (Yay! That goal is well on its way!), lending support to other guilds with their activities, and fund-raising. We also set as a priority specific guild encouragement and support so that every member with a healthy dog can set personal goals to train and present at a titling event this year. That December event was the last one we would share with Rickie's KaJen, a dog who inspired all of us in so many ways. His ebullient spirit lives on in our memories.

In our biennial elections concluded in December, 2016, the following board was elected to serve for the next two years. We thank Dee and Adele for serving as our Nominating Committee and Inspectors of Elections and we are always grateful to all of our guild members; they each contribute so much to our many activities and functions. We have the most outstanding cooperation and sharing of work (and FUN) in this group!!

Trish Koontz, President
Co-Secretaries, Rickie Morrison (Winston Salem) and Beth Fletcher (Durham)
Shari Bryant, Treasurer
Barbara Long, Training Director

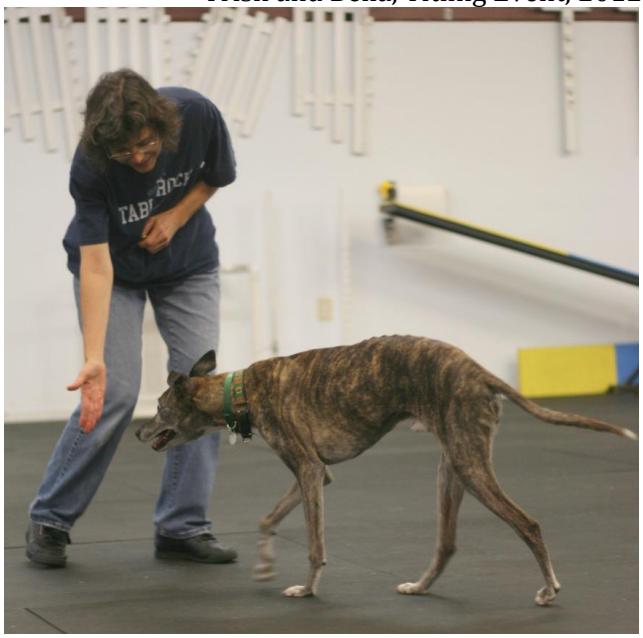
Well, we are off and flying for this exciting year. As always, our past inspires our future! Hope you enjoy these inspiring DogWork "blasts from the past" with Carolina Canine Freestyle Guild members. Photos by Trish Koontz.

Joan teaching at Durham Kennel Club, 2013



Diane and Buck, Retreat 2014
Dee and Onesie, Durham Kennel Club Class, 2015

Rickie and KaJen, 2014
Trish and Bella, Titling Event, 2012



Shari and Skye, Durham Kennel Club, 2015

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FIRST CLASS MAIL

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Coming Events

Titling Event Cocoa, FL, March 19-20, 2016
Titling Event Chesterland, OH, April 30- May 1, 2016
Train, Create, Celebrate!! Purina Farms, Gray Summit, Mo June 15-18, 2017

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