

# Paws to Dance



The Newsletter of the Canine Freestyle Federation, Inc.

February 2022

## Choice

By Shari Bryant

During my journey with Jace, I allowed him to have a lot of choice in our “work”. Jace is very independent. When he was a puppy, I hid behind my van, expecting he would come find me. Nope. He looked up, and his expression said, “Oh good, she’s gone,” and he went back to exploring. Ten minutes later, he still had not come to find me so I walked out from behind the van. Again, he looked up and his expression said, “Oh, there you are,” and he went back to exploring. Jace is happy to work with me as long as he thinks it is his idea. If I start trying to tell him what to do, off he goes. So, I have to let him think he’s in control (well, often he is) and all is well.

When working with Jace, I wanted to shape or capture any behaviors I taught him. So, when he was a puppy, we played “dinner games”. As I prepared his dinner, I marked and rewarded any novel behavior he offered. He learned sit, down, back, left and right lateral, bounce up in a sit, etc. Then, I started to develop phrases this way. I would set him up in an opening shape and ask “Whacha got?” He would offer some movement out of the opening shape—click, then treat. I would ask “What else?” He would offer another movement; click, then treat. In our Level III FEO, there were three phrases we developed this way. I never put any of the individual behaviors within these phrases on a cue.

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After I set him up, I just said “Whacha got?” then, “What else?” Nine times out of ten he did the same combination of movement. It was fascinating to me how he changed the combination of movement depending on my position. One of the phrases he was standing in right Thunder about six feet away. He did a diagonal left lateral to front position, a play bow, then a spin to his left. When he was standing in left Thunder about six feet away, he moved forward on a diagonal and did a spin to his left to end up in front position, a play bow, then a lateral to his right. It was basically the same three movements—spin, lateral, and play bow—just in a different combination and with slight variations. Yes, he could choreograph.

Then, I started working with choice before entering the space at a trial. Rather than doing our usual warm up—cue a behavior, reward with a cookie—I waited until Jace chose to work with me. The first

time I tried it was for his Level III FEO. We had five or six minutes before our turn. I placed his cookies near the door. Jace started sniffing and looking around. Two minutes passed, three minutes passed, and he's not paying any attention to me. I am starting to get a bit concerned. I had decided if he didn't choose to work with me then I would withdraw. Then it hit me...silly human, just reward a small acknowledgement. At one point, Jace looked at me briefly as he was scanning the environment. I said "Yes, okay, let's go get cookies." His ears about flew off his head. We ran over to the cookie container and I gave him several. We went back to where we were waiting. More scanning and sniffing, then he looked at me again. "Yes!" and we ran to the cookies. Each time I got more attention, more engagement, then he started offering me behaviors.

We had about 20 seconds to spare. I used this warm-up for his Level IV, too, and was really pleased how quickly he chose to work with me. It's hard to say since we've only done it a few times now, but he seemed more focused and engaged during the performance.

Jace has taught me a lot about choice in training—mostly out of necessity. It has been basic and rudimentary, and there is room for lots of improvement. But, hey, neither of us knew what we were doing. There is a lot of information coming out now on start button behaviors and consent-based training. All I know is allowing my dog choice in working with me has been amazing, and with my next freestyle dog, we'll know a little more from the beginning and will move on to Choice 2.0.

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## Mark Your Calendars – Upcoming Events

Late May – Early June,  
2022

### **North Coast Canine Freestylers Titling Events**

The North Coast Canine Freestylers Guild is tentatively planning to host a two-day trial at the Canine Affair Center in Chesterland, Ohio. If the Guild moves forward with the trials, more information will be available soon.

October 28, 2022

### **Carolina Canine Freestyle Guild and Sirius Guild Titling Event**

The two guilds are planning host a one-day trial at the Winston-Salem Dog Training Club in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Regular classes, PhraseWork, and In The Moment will be offered. More information will be available soon.

October 28-30, 2022

### **Canine Freestyle Federation DogWork® Jamboree**

The Jamboree will be held at the Winston-Salem Dog Training Club in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. More information will be available soon.

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## Sirius Guild

By Mary Sullivan

I am so sad to report about a seriously ill member of our freestyle family. Marge Hetrick, long-time member, competitor (with Standard poodles), judge, and two-time co-creator of the first two CFF Retreats, is in hospice in Columbia, MD. She has been ill for months after a fall which broke one of her legs. One illness has led to another while in recovery for the broken leg. Her daughter, Mindy, has been steadfastly by her side (and has taken on care and freestyle training of their current poodle, Eva). Marge is unable to communicate but Mindy says Marge can comprehend at times. Because (fully vaccinated and boosted) Marge has contracted Covid for the second time while in the hospital, she is allowed no visitors at the moment.



I've known Marge for many years and consider her one of my very best friends. We traveled together to most freestyle shows and retreats, learned under Joan at the same time, and trained in the same Silver Spring, MD classes. I've spent many Thanksgivings at her home in Columbia, and my Journey and her Eva grew up together and are great friends-even swapping human bed partners when Marge and I roomed together at motels. Marge is a tea drinker and I coffee, but we both love and shared fast food French fries and hot apple pies on road trips. She was my go-to friend and sounding board through my divorce and the births of my two grandchildren. She was nearly as excited as I when we went together to view and pick up Journey as a little puppy ten years ago. I consider her Journey's Mama #2, and he does, too. She is always the first one he looks for when entering class and tries to climb on her lap. One day when she wasn't in class, he pulled me through the door and quickly inspected the line of white-haired ladies as he looked for Marge. Marge and I often had lunch at my house after class. While waiting for her, I'd tell Journey, "Marge is coming! Is she here yet?" and, tail madly wagging, he'd rush to the glass front door and peer up and down the street, whining and barking when Marge appeared. We both miss her so very much. One of the last things she said to me on the phone when she was still able to talk was "Please don't forget me". Like I could. Please keep her in YOUR thoughts and prayers.

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On a completely unrelated and happier note, please welcome my new Belgian sheepdog puppy, Theo. He's almost 4 months old as I write this and keeping Journey on his toes. I had hoped to enter Journey in the trial in March and to attend the workshops, too, but decided it might be too much for such a young pup. I don't want to board him so young so have decided to stay home and monitor the destruction as Theo starts teething. My very best wishes for success and learning and much comradery at the events!

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## North Coast Canine Freestylers Guild

By Janet Dayton

Winter is still here. Today, we had a windchill of 3 degrees. The girls and I made it out for a short but enjoyable walk.



We started a new beginner class in January. We don't usually start a new class in the middle of winter, but we had four ladies asking for one. So far, we have only had to cancel one class because of weather. Introducing newbies to our sport is always a rewarding experience. It is fun to see new participants and their canine partners develop and grow into a team.

These ladies and their dogs are moving along quite nicely. They are excited about what they are learning and their excitement is contagious. They are asking if a titling event is possible. That got us to thinking. Last fall the guild decided not to have a titling event because we did not think we would have enough entries to support it. With their request, we are looking into having a titling event in late May or early June. It is still early, but it looks very possible. Since the titling event at the Jamboree has been canceled, we thought some of you might like to join us in Ohio. Think about it. It would be really nice to see you.



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From Karen and Wink

I have trained, shown, and titled Wire Fox Terriers in obedience, rally, agility, tracking, barn hunt, and scent work since 1990. Of all the performance I've done with my dogs, I have been most inspired by freestyle. It is hard to put into words but when Wink and I are moving in that performance space, it is truly special, like we are one entity. Maybe it's the "free" part. We can go wherever, whenever, and however in that 40' x 50' space. This is not to say freestyle is easy. It may be the hardest thing I have ever done with my dogs. The difficulty lies in its uniqueness. Freestyle challenges me to show the judges and audience how very special my Wink is.

I have always loved dog class; could go every day of the week. Over the years, I've had many, many instructors. While the vast majority have generously shared their wisdom and kindness, none have come close to Leila Widgren and Janet Dayton. Leila and Janet's hearts and souls are truly with me in my freestyle journey. I am extremely grateful to these two, kind, generous ladies for sharing their passion for this wonderful sport.

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## Carolina Canine Freestyle Guild

By Shari Bryant

We were planning to host a one-day trial with Sirius Guild on March 18, 2022, but unfortunately it had to be canceled due to construction delays in some ongoing repair work at the Winston-Salem Dog Training Club building. The guilds have rescheduled the trial for October 28, 2022. Also, the Jamboree was rescheduled to follow the trial. More information will be available for the next newsletter.



We had a guild meeting via Zoom in February. The Guild's president position has been vacant for about a year. Adele Monroe volunteered to serve as our president. Adele was our secretary so Michele Meloy has volunteered to serve as secretary. Also, Ruth Hoffman volunteered to be our show chair. Thank you, Adele, Michele, and Ruth! During the meeting, we came up with several ideas to support existing guild members and to help recruit new members.

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## Volunteer Opportunities

Below are a couple of volunteer opportunities. It's a great way to support CFF.

### **Videography/Video Editing**

Over the years, Cameron Foster has done a wonderful job as CFF's videographer and in producing the trial DVDs. However, Cameron is no longer able to do this for CFF. Professional videographers and video editors are very expensive. CFF has a professional video camera. So, we thought we would see if any CFF members have experience in videography or would be interested in learning how to use the camera to video the trials. It is hoped there would be at least a two people (in case someone is wanting to show their dog) available at each trial to serve as videographer. Also, we are looking for someone that has experience in editing video or is interested in learning how to edit video to produce the trial DVDs. We will never be able to replace Cameron, but we hope to find a way to continue to video the trials and provide DVDs at a reasonable price. If you are interested, please contact the board at [Directors2020@canine-freestyle.org](mailto:Directors2020@canine-freestyle.org).

### **Archivist**

CFF is looking for an archivist. The archivist would collect, organize, maintain, and preserve materials that document the history of the organization. If you are interested, please contact the board at [Directors2020@canine-freestyle.org](mailto:Directors2020@canine-freestyle.org).

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## 2022 CFF Annual Dues Notice

The CFF membership year has been changed from:

January 1-December 31 with members joining between September and December having their membership carry through to the following year.

-to-

April 1-March 31 with members joining between January and March having their membership carry through to the following year.

However, for this year only, members joining between September and December 2021 will have their membership will carry through until March 31, 2023.

Dues are \$25.00. Please renew today! (Your membership expires on March 31, 2022 unless you joined since October 1, 2021 or have a life membership.)

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to CFF, Inc. and mail to Carl Tennille, Treasurer CFF 14430 Overlook Ridge Lane Beaverdam, VA 23015 or go to CFF website, login to your account and pay via paypal (This is the fastest method.). Instructions to pay through your member account at <https://bit.ly/2GBB0yB> or you can pay via the store.

Remember, if you joined in the last quarter of 2021, your dues are not due until March 31, 2023.

In May 1998, CFF filed an Application for Recognition of Exemption under 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code with the IRS. The IRS granted CFF's request in 1999 as exempt from federal income taxes. CFF dues are not deductible for federal income tax purposes as a charitable contribution.



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## FIRST CLASS MAIL

### Upcoming Events

North Coast Canine Freestylers Guild Titling Event, Late May-Early June, 2022  
Carolina Canine Freestyle Guild & Sirius Guild Titling Event, Winston-Salem, NC, October 28, 2022  
Canine Freestyle Federation DogWork® Jamboree, Winston-Salem, NC, October 28-30, 2022

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