

Newsletter

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SUMMER
2009-2010



The Quarterly Newsletter of Australian Support Dogs, Inc.

President's Report 2009

Here, on the eve of 2010, we can look back on a sometimes difficult year and know that we now have a stronger, more focussed, resolute and highly talented Management Committee, with a sense of purpose, a better understanding of what ASDOG means to the people it serves, and the knowledge and determination to continue to improve the services we offer.

It was fitting that our Spring Newsletter showcased three of our dogs – Barnaby, the puppy, who is showing so much promise, Sara, the Assistance Dog in Training with our wonderful new trainer, Pauline, and Jade, the supreme Assistance Dog, who has done so much for Sheree - and will no doubt continue to do so just as long as she gets plenty of treats!

We cannot thank our new Committee Member, Robyn Colleran, enough for the energy and clear minded approach she has brought to our deliberations. And our two most recent Committee Members, Joan Minns and Danielle Press, who bring us unique skills and experience, and a fresh look at our methods and purpose. Having Ann Barnacoat back on the Committee has been wonderful. Her experience with puppy raising (currently with the wonderful Barnaby) and her knowledge of ASDOG makes her invaluable – and she has also brought her son Daniel into the fold to help us with the website!

Marilyn Roberts has been an amazing Treasurer for ASDOG for the last two years. She not only brought bookkeeping expertise to the table, but her background in dog training has proved useful time after time. Likewise Sheree



has been an absolutely brilliant Secretary, and her relationship with Jade, her knowledge of what it means to be the partner of one of our dogs, and her enthusiasm for the charity have underlined our sense of purpose.

When we lost our Director of Training of many years standing at the beginning of 2009, we knew it would be difficult to replace her. But we did! We found Pauline Dickerson, a wonderful trainer, as you will have seen from her training reports on Sara. She has already learned so much from reading and research in such a short space of time, and has translated this into training Sara so very well. She has undertaken a revision of our training procedures and manuals, and we are thrilled with her work and commitment to ASDOG.

To sum up the year, it has just got better and better! We have commenced a major review and revision of our processes and procedures, manuals and guidelines. We now have a Business Plan, and we are working towards ADI Accreditation in 2010. We look forward to 2010 with enthusiasm and hope. We will be placing Sara with her new partner. We hope to get another puppy soon, and hope that Barnaby continues to fulfil his promise. We are continually seeking to improve the way we do things.

Above all, we are so very grateful to everyone who contributes to ASDOG by way of donations of time, expertise or money. Clearly, without you, we wouldn't be able to do the work we do. The difference our dogs make to the lives of people with disabilities is truly wonderful. We need your help to do so, and we have never been disappointed. So the biggest thank you goes to you, our Members, who support us in every way. Thank you everyone.

Sue Elstub, November 2009

Thank You...



We have received assistance and donations from the following people and organisations. Thank you all for your generosity.

- John and Yvonne Almgren • Back To Eden Pty Ltd
- Gary and Judi Blackler • Eurobadalla Canine Club
- A & H Jamieson • Ku-Ring-Gai Veterinary Hospital
- Jane Milliken • Tricia Reid • Regeneus
- Romy the Roaming Vet • Nancy Sommerville • Vet HQ, Double Bay

And once more our special thanks to Moyna Smeaton, moynzart@optusnet.com.au, who designs and produces our newsletters.

And thanks, too, to The Belrose Bowling Club and its staff, who generously allow us to use one of their rooms for our monthly meetings.

A note from ASDOG's new President for 2010, Danielle Press

It is with a sense of pride and great excitement that I take on the role of President of ASDOG. On behalf of the Management Committee I would like to thank Sue Elstub, Marilyn Roberts and Sheree Hurley for their tireless efforts over the past 12 months and I look forward to working with them and the rest of the Management Committee to ensure we move ASDOG forward in 2010.

I would also like to thank all our members, donors and volunteers for their continued support. Without you, we would not be able to operate and to continue to help make people's lives better.

As we embark on the next 12 months, I urge you all to help us make a difference by sending in suggestions and information to us through the website and to keep spreading the word about our organization and the good work being done by our volunteers. If you would like to volunteer and have a specific area of skill which you think may be useful, please contact us. We are always delighted to have more help!

For those who celebrate Christmas, Merry Christmas. For all I wish you a happy and prosperous 2010.

Danielle Press, December 2009



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Unlucky for some...

This is the story of Jedda

This wonderful girl is a beautiful black Labrador retriever who was raised and trained by ASDOG in the hope that she would prove to be suitable as an Assistance Dog.

However, although she was a truly willing and obedient dog, she was also a joyous and very exuberant dog who loved playtime and energetic games. It was evident over time that her future would be better suited to a different working role.

So it was that Ann Barnacoat, who had raised Jedda as a puppy, was given the task of finding a role where Jedda could really fulfil her



Jedda meeting Ann, her Asdog puppy-raiser - a happy reunion!

true potential. Ann was very fortunate to be put in touch with Corrective Services through Marilyn, a fellow committee member.

Sharon from Corrective Services visited Ann and Jedda, and took Jedda on first sight to be re-trained as a search dog for Corrective Services. We didn't realise at the time that this was a truly momentous event: Jedda was to be one of the first dogs in Australia to be trained in detecting mobile phones within the prison environment.

Jedda took to her training like a duck to water, and learned to perform the tasks with her usual enthusiasm and ease.

And so it was that Ann received an email from Assistant Superintendent Troy Seychelles inviting the ASDOG committee to Jedda's graduation at the Department of Corrective Services Course Pass Out Parade on 9th October 2009.

At this parade there were new recruits graduating from the academy, three drug detector dogs passing out from their 13 week handlers course, and the two new Mobile Phone Detection Dogs, Boe and Jedda, passing out also. Before the parade the K9 unit put on a 20min display which included a demonstration from Jedda. Five of us from ASDOG attended the event and watched proudly as Jedda and Correctional Officer Scott Wilton, her handler, displayed their



Scott, Jedda and Ann meeting after the ceremony

skills with enthusiasm and qualified as a fully fledged Mobile Phone Detecting team. We continue to be very proud of Jedda's achievements and, indeed, felt very honoured to have been invited to attend her graduation.

Jedda is now one of the first K9s in the country that can sniff out mobile phones. If we may quote from the November 2009 issue of the Corrective Services NSW Bulletin,

"Corrective Services Minister, John Robertson, attended the graduation ceremony with Commissioner Ron Woodham, and said the day marked an important milestone for the K9 Unit.

"We now have dogs that can detect mobile phones in correctional centres", he said. "Troy and his dog, Boe, and Scott Wilton and his dog, Jedda, are honoured as the first

Last minute gifts? Time to visit the Self-Fundraising online shopping website and help ASDOG at the same time...

If you've bought something already, thank you - we are most grateful for your support. If you haven't yet tried it, why not give it a go now? At Self-Fundraising, you can shop online AND give financial support to ASDOG at the same time - and it costs you no extra! At Self-Fundraising, up to 10% of every purchase you make from their website goes to a worthy cause. Visit: www.self-fundraising.com.au/cause/ASDOG and see for yourself the wide range of products available through Self-Fundraising. Remember - your purchases are only connected to ASDOG if you purchase online by following this link... www.self-fundraising.com.au/cause/ASDOG Thank you, and happy shopping!





Left: Jedda demonstrating a successful mobile phone search under the guidance of her handler, Scott Wilton.

Below: Jedda and Scott officially graduate as one of the first two Mobile Phone Search Teams in NSW.

graduates of the initial Phone Detector Dog Course.”

Jedda simply adores her job and is very well rewarded with lamb shanks following her successes! She has already successfully detected a number of mobile phones and chargers that were not meant to be in the prison environment.

So what was ASDOG's loss has become the Department of Corrective Services' good fortune - but unlucky for some prisoners of course, who will lose those illegally held mobile phones!

It is always a gamble when choosing a tiny puppy for a future role, as some dogs, whilst very worthy in themselves, do not measure up to the requirements of an assistance dog. And this potential loss factor has to be incorporated as part of the financial cost to ASDOG of delivering a trained assistance dog to a recipient.



Nevertheless we'd like to consider Jedda's story a success story with a twist... especially since Jedda herself chose an alternate career!

Joan Minns, with quotes from Corrective Services NSW Bulletin Issue 632



Congratulations to...

John and Ruby, Allan and Rayner and Sheree and Jade, who have all passed their annual Public Access Test with flying colours in the last two months.



Dogs Day Out at St Ives Showground



On 29th November, a very warm sunny day, the Committee attended the Ku-ring-gai Canine Biathlon at St Ives Showground. The focus of the day was the dogs' obstacle course which, thankfully for the dogs competing, included a trot through a makeshift pond and a ride in a wheelbarrow!

ASDOG was armed with lollies and Christmas cards to sell, and lots of information to give away. Pauline Dickerson and Sara gave a wonderful demonstration of some of the tasks our dogs can do for their partners, with Danielle Press giving a commentary. This was Sara's first public demonstration and although there was one patch of ground with a particularly interesting scent, she performed beautifully and wowed the crowd.

During the day we spoke with many interesting people, two of whom expressed interest in learning more about puppy-raising. We are always on the lookout for puppy-raisers! We also met Judy Perrin of the Hornsby/Ku Ring Gai Emergency Management Committee who look after animals in emergency situations such as bushfires and floods. We have enclosed a brochure about this terrific service, manned by volunteers, for those of you living in the Hornsby/Ku Ring Gai area.

At the end of the day, we were thrilled to learn that Regeneus, the Australian biotech company known for its treatment of osteoarthritis in dogs, whose managers John Lee and Colin Bentley were manning the sausage sizzle, had generously donated the day's bbq takings to ASDOG. Thank you very much Regeneus!!!



Trainer's Reports on Assistance-Dog-in-Training, Sara

Our Trainer, Pauline Dickerson, has continued to work with Sara, who is nearly ready to start her new role as an Assistance Dog.

October: This period has seen gradual improvement in Sara's behaviour and coping ability in public places. She appears to have crossed a boundary, where she no-longer requires the handler to have a high level of vigilance in familiar environments, such as shopping centres and malls. Sara shows only minimal interest in what is going on around her and appears to be more relaxed and comfortable than previously.

An episode in the local supermarket this week demonstrated clearly an increased level of confidence around children under the age of 5 years. A toddler approached and petted Sara for several seconds before letting out a high pitched squeal and running back to his parents. Sara's behaviour throughout the brief encounter was calm and controlled.

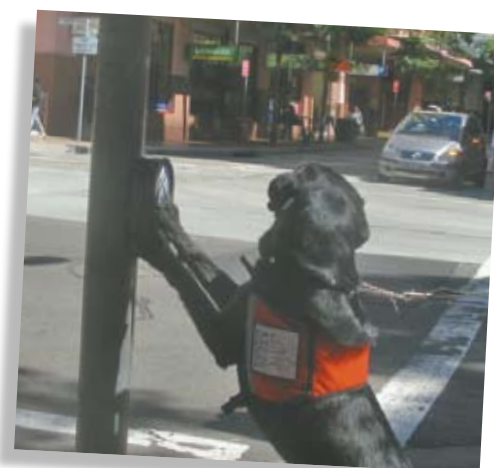
There has been marked improvement in other areas also. Sara is showing a considerably more relaxed demeanour while travelling on public transport, in particular trains. Her distractibility around birds has decreased, and her confidence in the water and swimming ability are gradually improving.

I still have some reservations regarding Sara's wariness with people. As previously noted, there are two main contexts in which this issue becomes apparent, the main one being a single individual in a relatively quiet or isolated environment. There have been two occasions during the past 5 weeks in which Sara has barked at an individual in this context.

The second context that can create hyper-vigilance in Sara is tall adolescent or adult males staring at her, however in most instances it is easy to divert Sara's attention and avoid any problems. I have been taking Sara to my adolescent children's basket ball games as frequently as possible in an attempt to desensitise Sara to this stimulus.

November-December:

Although Sara now seems more relaxed in familiar contexts, it is apparent that some vigilance is still required in less familiar environments. By way of example, Sara has attended multiple basketball games at the Brick-pit Stadium in Normanhurst and in this environment seems very relaxed. She is happy to lie flat on her side and rest during the game and happily greets people that approach her. However, this week we attended a game at the Loreto High School basketball courts, where Sara seemed a little less relaxed. She barked twice at a member of the team who was seated at eye level and intently staring at her. When asked to say hello to the lady Sara happily did so, greeting her with friendly gestures. I feel this is Sara's way of communicating concern to people. Her body language is alert, but there appears to be no aggression in her manner.



An increase in the intensity of public access training and a change in the management plan for Sara have had some apparent success. I have found that by allowing Sara to greet strangers, it demystifies them for her and I have noticed improvement in Sara's ability to cope with behaviours on the part of the public which could be perceived as threatening by a dog.



It is my opinion as a trainer that Sara is suitable for work as an Assistance Dog, providing that the recipient is made aware of the existing issue of occasional vocalisation in response to some human behaviour, agreeing to accept Sara in the light of that knowledge and appropriately manage the behaviour on an ongoing basis.

It is to be hoped that we find a suitable recipient for Sara early in the new year, as she is ready and willing to get started on her work as an Assistance Dog.

Pauline Dickerson