

## **On the Positive Side: The Making of a Canine Good Citizen**

**Frank Bryce**

**June 29, 2012**

As is often the case due to recent events involving very unfortunate circumstances, there has been a renewed interest in how each of us can insure the best canine behavior for our canine companions. There are any number of obedience classes available throughout our community or close by. A caller to the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico's Pet Helpline inquired about an American Kennel Club (AKC) program called "Canine Good Citizen". Public awareness and participation in the "Canine Good Citizen Program" (CGC) can help determine our family canines' social limits and provide guidance to protecting the companion, families and the public from unwanted and unsafe encounters. This program sets forth that all dogs deserve training and a responsible owner. This is a fast growing formally recognized program stressing responsible dog ownership and basic training and good manners for dogs.

The AKC CGC brochure states "The AKC CGC Program provides an excellent foundation for training in other fun activities such as Rally, Obedience, and Agility and results in a well-mannered dog who is a joy to live with. Some therapy dog groups require passing the CGC Test as a prerequisite, some insurance companies recommend CGC training, and an increasing number of apartments and condos are requiring CGC training for resident dogs."

Considered a key component of the CGC Program is the "Responsible Dog owner's Pledge" which says a dog owner will be responsible for the dog's health which includes routine veterinary care, vaccinations, nutrition, and grooming along with the dog's safety with fencing where appropriate, not letting the dog run loose, using a leash in public, and providing appropriate identification such as tags and microchip. The pledge affirms that the owner will not let the dog infringe on the rights of others or their safety by running loose, becoming a nuisance and always providing adequate supervision when children are present. Lastly, the owner will address the quality of life for the dog with basic training, attention and playtime and making the commitment in time and caring for a loving family member.

The ten skills need by a well-mannered dog and tested by the CGC program are accepting a friendly stranger, sitting politely for petting, appearance and grooming, walking on a loose lead, walking through a crowd, sitting and staying on command, coming when called, behaving politely around other dogs, reacting appropriately to distraction, and supervised separation. To learn more about these required skills and the CGC Program you can visit the American Kennel Club Canine Good Citizen Program [cgc@akc.org](mailto:cgc@akc.org) on the internet. A CGC Certificate is given after a test by an AKC Approved CGC Evaluator. Before passing the CGC Test your dog and you may need to participate in a dog obedience class. After your dog passes the CGC test, you will contact the American Kennel Club to request the CGC certificate.

The Humane Society of Southern New Mexico (HSSNM) encourages all dog owners to participate in programs designed to protect our canine companions and the public and be aware of the county and city animal control ordinances that apply to our canine companions. If you are interested in having a CGC program made available locally please contact HSSNM at 575-523-8020.

Frank Bryce is President of the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico. Interested guest authors can contact HSSNM at 575-532-8020.