

On the Positive Side: Have a new dog? Get off to a good start

By Dr. Judy Long / For the Sun-News

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Have you heard some sad stories about adopted pets? Here's your chance to get started on the right foot and make sure yours is a pet success story.

This month the local PetSmart (575-523-1154) is conducting free new dog orientations to help new pets and owners.

Pets - like children - do not come with instruction manuals. That's why PetSmart is offering free new dog orientations during the month of September. Remaining dates are from noon to 1 p.m. Sept. 18 and from 3 to 4 p.m. Sept. 26 These one-hour orientations will be available at all PetSmart locations and will be free to any new dog "pet parent" who wants to attend them.

A pet parent who is interested in attending should ask a PetSmart employee to show them the schedule and sign them up. Orientations will be led by accredited pet trainers and will cover the topics that new dog Pet Parents most commonly need help with, such as:

- Potty training/crate training
- How to provide a happy homecoming
- How to introduce your pet to new family members (especially children) and other pets in the household
- Introduction to basic training, beginning by learning the cue "sit."

In addition, all pet parents who have adopted a dog at PetSmart will receive a coupon in their adoption kit for \$20 off a six- or eight-week PetSmart Pet Training course.

A question-and-answer session with the pet trainer is available, as well as a PetSmart store tour.

Many people begin the journey by adopting rescue animals. They start out with faithful, loving and wonderful companions. Where do you go from there? Bringing a pet into the family means making a positive personal, physical and financial preparation and commitment. This will include the right food in the right amount, needed vaccinations and health care, exercise, grooming, training, socializing and, last but not least, love.

As a pet owner you will also need to understand and comply with local animal or public health ordinances.

Even before adopting, do some research. If you are not sure which type of animal best fits your family and life style, ask people who know the traits and needs of the different breeds (often your vet or staff members). Will it be a cat or dog, a big or small one, a quiet or lively one, long hair or short, one that needs lots of room or just a little, a male or female? The new companion needs to be good match for its new home, so take the time to find a good match.

There is more help than ever locally to help you make an adoption a success and continue this great relation for years to come. There are lots of folks out there positively prepared to help you. Give them a call, find that companion that needs you as a family, and enjoy the benefits of the kind of loving and rewarding relationship so many of us treasure.

Information and guidance can be obtained locally from the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico Pet Helpline (575-523-8020), Action Program for Animals Resource Guide (575-644-0505), Spay Neuter Action Program (575-524-9265), Safe Haven Animal Sanctuary (575-805-5338), Animal Services Center of Mesilla Valley (575-382-0018) and numerous local breed rescues and veterinary clinics. National organizations and corporations have online assistance, too.

Judy long is a retired sociologist and board member of the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico.

Considering adoption?

Here is a sampling of resources to obtain information and guidance about adopting a pet:

- Humane Society of Southern New Mexico Pet Helpline, (575) 523-8020
- Action Program for Animals Resource Guide, (575) 644-0505
- Spay Neuter Action Program, (575) 524-9265
- Safe Haven Animal Sanctuary, (575) 805-5338
- Animal Services Center of Mesilla Valley, (575) 382-0018