

AKC Takes Patriotic Puppy Program to The West Coast

The American Kennel Club's Patriotic Puppy Program (PPP) held a hands-on training seminar in Oroville, California, hosted by Jim and Teal Knapp of [Highest Kennels](#), November 10-11, 2023. Featured trainers for this event included Tim Baird with Arete K9, Jamie Popper with Blue-9, and Stacey West with AKC's PPP. This is the 2nd hands-on event for PPP participants during 2023. Participants traveled from multiple states including Washington, Oregon, California and Utah to join AKC's staff and industry experts in two days of fun-filled, educational opportunities surrounding the development of future detection dogs for local, state and federal law enforcement programs in the USA. Topics included building toy drive in puppies and young dogs, introduction to interior room searches, environmental training for all ages of pups, open area searches in short and tall grass, introductory vehicle searches and a demonstration by a PPP graduate, bred and trained at Highest kennels, who is now a certified working dog. Multiple breeds were represented including Labradors, English Springer Spaniels, a German Shorthaired Pointer, and a Doberman Pinscher.



Day 1 started with the basics of building toy drive. Tim, Jamie and Stacey traded off working with the dogs to provide slightly different approaches to building drive. From there, focus moved to an area where the older dogs could experience some environmental evaluations. Noisy trash can lids, moving objects and even a mannequin nicknamed "Cross-eyed Pete" tested the dogs' ability to recover when startled. After lunch, the training day continued with Jamie leading the younger pups through environmental training using products provided Blue-9. The treats were flowing, and the pups and their handlers did very well. Later in the day, focus shifted



back to the shelter where Tim provided direction on how to start room searches. Day 1 concluded with dinner and an opportunity for attendees to socialize and network.

Day 2 built on foundations established the day before. Open area searches in short and tall grass, with various ways to introduce these types of searches, were demonstrated. Trainers demonstrated the difference between “training” and “testing” in open area scenarios. Everything from low level excitement evaluation type searches to high levels of excitement with a helper in the field verbally enticing and throwing toys for the pups to find was covered. Next, puppies were taken on simple environmental walks with incidental toy “finds” to show how to incorporate early planted toys without the pressure of an actual search. Tim demonstrated his approach to introducing vehicle searches. Jamie



introduced a technique for shaping behaviors for dogs with lower levels of possession using a variation on a conditioned retrieve. Despite more than 25 years of training, Tim and Stacey joined the others in learning a new approach to an old problem.



A demonstration of a certified working dog allowed everyone to see what the finished dog skillset should look like, followed by a Question-and-Answer period with the trainers. Finally, AKC’s Vice President of Government Relations, Sheila Goffe, along with

Detection Dog Task Force Program Manager, Melissa Ferrell; and Patriotic Puppy Program Manager, Stacey West, presented Tim Baird with a “Best in Show” rosette acknowledging Tim as the first official American Kennel Club Patriotic Puppy Program Mentor. Tim has volunteered his time on countless occasions to help mentor PPP participants, participate in numerous AKC Detection Dog Webinars, present at AKC Detection Dog Conferences and conduct himself as an industry expert while sharing his experience to make those around him better.



Additional PPP hands-on training seminars are being planned for 2024. Come out and join the fun while learning some new techniques for training your detection dogs!