

Different Roads Can Lead to Success: How One Litter Is Taking Many Different Paths to Certification

A quality breeding of canines with good genetics, with puppies whelped and raised to be working dogs from day one can often take different roads to get to the finish line. For detection dog breeders the finish line means certification and actively working with new handlers to keep our world safe from harm. Here's the story of one Patriotic Puppy Program (PPP) Breeder, a litter of German Shorthaired Pointer puppies and the divergent paths they are taking to become certified detection dogs.

Marie Appel of Mechanicsville, Iowa has been an active participant of AKC's Patriotic Puppy Program (PPP) since early in Phase 1. In 2022, Marie whelped a litter of German Shorthaired Pointer puppies. As is normal, some pups stayed with Marie while others left for different jobs. One went to a hunting home; one (Mollee) was donated to PennVet's working dog program; one was placed with a trainer of working dogs; and Marie had plans to keep one for her family, while two others (Betty and Bilbo) were to be enrolled in the Patriotic Puppy Program.

Meanwhile, Jeff Hanson of Adairsville, Georgia, had registered to join the PPP and was looking for a pup or two to get started. After some discussion with PPP Program Manager, Jeff reached out to Marie to see if she had any pups available from her new litter. Jeff was a breeder of German Shepard Dogs but did not have a litter planned that would allow him to get started in a timely manner. Before long, two of Marie's female pups (Gert and Grace) were headed to Georgia to begin training with Jeff.

[In July 2023, K2 Solutions Inc. hosted a two-day training seminar](#) in Jackson Springs, NC for AKC PPP participants and would evaluate participant dogs as part of the seminar. Jeff brought 9-month-old Gert and Grace, hoping they might be ready. Day 1 started out rough for both dogs as they adjusted to the large, intimidating facility at K2. By dinner that night, Jeff was shaking his head, confused by his dogs' performance there, despite seeing gradual improvement throughout the day. On day 2, the dogs continued to improve and adjust to their new surroundings. They came out and performed the way Jeff had expected. By the end of the second day, K2 had selected Gert to immediately go into their training program. Grace would stay with them for additional evaluation, before moving into K2's training program 30 days later.



Grace

After hearing the news about Gert and Grace, Marie decided to travel to North Carolina to have her two pups, Bilbo, and Betty, evaluated by K2 a month later. Betty was selected to be a part of a showing for an upcoming TSA contract. Three out of four from the same litter were moving on to advanced training!

Today, after months of training, the updates on this litter are showing results that every breeder would be excited to hear. Betty, Marie's male

pup, was selected by TSA on a procurement contract held by K2. Marie and Betty have accomplished PPP's original goal of an AKC bred sporting dog being selected for TSA's training program, a feat few have successfully achieved!



Gert

Gert has finished her Person-Borne Explosives Detection Dog (PBEDD) training and will be on a handler course soon to begin working on K2's Person-Borne Explosives Detection Dog services contracts for large venues and sporting events.

Grace has finished her Single Purpose Explosives Detection Dog (SPEDD) training and will begin PBEDD training soon.

Jeff's experience shows that a difficult day during an evaluation does not mean that you have failed; tomorrow is another day!

Marie continues to develop Bilbo as a potential "green" detection dog and Mollee continues progressing through the training program at PennVet.

The individual journeys of each of the pups in this litter have taken them to different places, but the end result – successful selection as working detection dogs—has been remarkably consistent.

Success as a breeder is often measured by the homes pups end up in, and the dedication of the trainers who bring out their potential. But when success is achieved with multiple littermates that travel different paths to a detection career, that breeder can truly be proud of the quality of their program and the contribution they are making to keep communities safe. We look forward to the future updates and success stories this litter is sure to receive.