



Winter Park Training and Behavior Center at Winter Park Veterinary Hospital

Maximus' Family on Maximus

Ina, Theresa, Tracy, Ellen, and the rest of the WPVH Training and Behavior Center have been training my rescue dog Maximus for over a year. The WPVH have been the Veterinarians to our family's dogs for over 10 years, so naturally when we adopted Max the first place we brought him was WPVH. Upon his first visit we met Ina Herbert, the head trainer of the WPVH Training and Behavior Center (WPVHTBC). We spoke with Ina about Max and about the reasons the old owners turned him into the SPCA for adoption. Ina briefly discussed with me how she would approach training Max and how she would address those problems (i.e. chewing, barking, not sitting still, etc.).

We did not put Max into classes at first as we thought we could train him ourselves. All of our other dogs were taken to Fly By Night Dog Training companies that are not in business anymore. Nonetheless, we thought we could use that past experience to train Max. Our past experiences with dog training had been classes that taught simple routines of sit, stay, and down. To be honest when looking back at the training techniques we were learning we were wasting our money because most dogs can easily learn the commands of sit, down, and stay. These training companies we attended did not provide you the learning tools to get your dog to do it on command and/or to do the commands we learned for long periods of time.

After a few weeks of trying these old training methods on Max we started noticing that he was an extremely hyperactive dog who was used to having his way. When we first adopted him he was a little shy, but once he became comfortable in our home he started to show his true personality. We tried everything we could think of to get him to listen to us and it was not working. So we picked-up the phone and called Ina. We told her we tried our methods of training and were not achieving the results we wanted. She advised us to bring him in for a private training session so that she could evaluate him. During the private training session we went into further detail of our original conversation from our first meeting. We discussed techniques for handling behavioral issues and developed a customized plan to help our family achieve the goals we wanted for a dog in our household.

Ina's approach to all dogs is customized to their individual problems. She incorporates different training methods for individual dog's needs, which she draws from the experiences of her long career. Her methods and knowledge far surpass any trainers we have met. We have learned so many techniques on how to properly train your dog, but the most important thing we learned is we have to be fair to our dogs. We need to understand their behaviors before we can expect them to listen to us. For example, Ina always stresses the fact that once a dog learns a command it does not mean they will do it for you. We have to practice with them and we have to get our dogs to respect us as the owner ("alpha dog") of the household. It takes time, repetitions, practice, and respect to have a dog to perform a learned skill on command.

Our initial fear after adopting Max and seeing his behavior was he would not be able to be calm enough for when family and friends came to visit. The last thing we wanted was a dog that we had to keep locked away all the time. We also feared that if he didn't get trained appropriately that he would destroy the house. We wanted a dog we could take in public, go to the beach, and would be calm when family and friends came over to visit.

Ina and her team have spent hours taking Max from a dog that potentially couldn't be around people and dogs and turned him into a dog that has the skills and abilities to be more than just a household pet. Ina has shown me that Max has the capabilities of becoming a service or search and rescue dog. This is amazing progress in a year's time to become a dog of that caliber from what he was when we originally adopted him. He was a dog that would chew anything he could find, he would not sit still, and he would bark at random people and things. That has all changed over the course of the past year.

Ina saw a dog and a family that just did not have direction in training. She was able to harness Max's energy and turn him into an amazing dog. Max has a lot of energy and love for friends, family, and canines and now knows how to express it appropriately. Ina and her team were able to give Max and his family direction and the tools to properly train him at home. We now know this is a life journey for Max and us and not just a couple of months of practice.

Our family is so pleased with Max's progress and with the dog Max has become. We are truly thankful for Ina and the WPVH Training and Behavior Center.

Maximus' Family

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