

"Miss Behavior" offers help for you and your canine

BY BRENDAN BERUBE
Staff Writer

NEW DURHAM — Hope has arrived for local canines with behavioral problems in the form of New Durham resident Laura Chapman — better known by her professional moniker, "Miss Behavior."

Chapman, a certified dog behavior specialist, recently teamed up with The Barn Doggie Daycare in New Durham to offer training classes for pooches throughout the area and their owners.

During an open house at The Barn on Jan. 9, Chapman said animals (particularly dogs) have held a special place in her heart as long as she can remember.

Recalling that the future goal written down in her eighth grade yearbook was to work with animal shelters, offering rehabilitation services for rescued dogs, she said she decided to pursue an associate's degree in Veterinary Technology while majoring in Psychology at UNH.

While attending college, Chapman interned under the head behaviorist at the New Hampshire SPCA, where she met a four-legged "pupil" named Coral whose story ended tragically, but inspired her to offer those who followed in Coral's footsteps a second chance.

After graduating from college, she partnered with

Club Canine in Portsmouth as a head trainer before branching out on her own as "Miss Behavior."

After re-locating to New Durham recently, Chapman said she dropped by The Barn one afternoon in the hope of networking with the owners, and was asked almost immediately whether she'd be interested in holding training courses at the Main Street facility.

As a specialist in fear-based behaviors such as aggression, Chapman said she is a firm believer in the importance of training owners alongside their dogs, and makes it clear to clients who seek out her services that "they're here to be trained, too."

Chapman also described herself as an advocate of positive reinforcement training, a method designed to reward dogs for exhibiting good behavior, and promote social, rather than physical, consequences for bad behavior.

Given the fact that dogs are social animals by nature, she said, depriving them of interaction with their classmates is often more instructive than any physical punishment.

The change she sees in her human clients as they learn how to bridge the communication gap with their dogs, she said, is often every bit as rewarding as knowing that she has suc-



NEW DURHAM RESIDENT Laura Chapman (a.k.a. "Miss Behavior") touches paws with her four-legged companion, Felix, during a recent open house at The Barn Doggie Daycare.

BRENDAN BERUBE

cessfully rehabilitated the animals themselves.

Describing those success stories as what makes her job worthwhile, Chapman said she is currently working with a Dogue de Bourdeaux mix that was rescued from an abusive situation

and suffers from a number of lingering reactive problems, such as reluctance to get into a vehicle.

Through alternative behavioral therapy and spa treatments for its hip problems, she said, the animal has begun making positive

strides over the past several weeks.

Another recent success, she added, involved a dog that emerged from an abusive situation "afraid of everything," and recently earned a canine good citizenship award as a result of her training.

Her own canine companions, Felix and Fletcher (both of whom came to her as rescues), also serve as constant sources of inspiration for her, often accompanying her during classes.

Chapman currently offers a variety of services through The Barn, including group, private, and semi-private obedience training classes; a behavior modification course; adoption match-

making; and a "Puppy Prep" course for first-time puppy owners.

New adopters are entitled to a discount on training services, and New Durham residents are also encouraged to sign up for classes during the month of January to receive a 10 percent discount on their first session.

Registration forms are available through Chapman's Web site, www.Miss-BehaviorTraining.com. She also welcomes any questions at 509-3877 or by e-mail at info@MissBehaviorTraining.com.

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Rule of three hits home for the New Hampshire Humane Society

LACONIA — The rule of three applies in life, and no more poignantly than on a recent Friday afternoon at New Hampshire Humane Society on Meredith Center Road in Laconia.

First, a cat found frozen and near death in the snow was brought to the shelter by a concerned citizen who knew another night in frigid weather would be the cat's last. Staff called him Rusty. He's an old orange tabby with no tail. A sweet elder gentleman, he was too weak to lift his head up, too far gone to put up any struggle as warming fluids and other meds were administered in a flurry of activity to save his life.

Next, on the same afternoon, the call came from a local police department about animals left alone in a home where the owner had recently passed away. Thirteen cats and two dogs were removed by staff who had to clamber over hordes and hordes of debris and paper, and the detritus of a solitary life lived with only the animals for company. The cats are in rough shape, some of them requiring immediate dental work.

The last of the three was the most pitiful and hardest to look at: A little puppy with possibly the worst case of mange any of the shelter staff have witnessed in a very long time. The pup still whimpers, even through the pain medications given to ease her suffering, her skin is in the most appalling state, over 70 percent of her body is red and raw and oozing; too sensitive to even touch. Her eyes are damaged from the effects of the infection that has attacked and rendered her almost blind; the parasite that runs rampant in her skin has sealed her eyes shut. It is a hideous case of indifference, ignorance and inability to seek care when care is needed, but finally Destiny was eventual-

ly brought to New Hampshire Humane Society, a free puppy on Craig's List, passed around until someone finally thought the dog really was too sick to ignore any longer.

The rule of three to start off the year, three cases all needing the care and comfort the local animal shelter is pledged to provide.

At a time when world events show humans in desperate need, shelter spokesperson Marylee Gordon asks, "if you are rightly upset by this deluge of animals in desperate straits, and wish to help us, supplies of clean bedding, food, and any amount you can spare for our Willow Fund, restricted for extra medical care that will save

lives and cure disease, would be so gratefully appreciated. It's closer to home, but we really need some help."

New Hampshire Humane Society is a private animal welfare agency offering safe harbor for lost, abandoned, unwanted and abused animals. No animal is euthanized for space or time constraints, rather they are as-

sured life and comfort until adoption day, no matter how long the wait might be.

Donations of supplies can be dropped at the shelter at any time. If monetary donations are sent, please forward to NHHS P.O. Box 572, Laconia NH 03247 Attention Willow Fund.


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