

My 4-H Dog Care & Training Story & Photo Portfolio

An author by the name C. JoyBell once said “This is not the beginning of a new chapter in my life; this is the beginning of a new book! That first book is already closed, ended... this new book is newly opened, has just begun! Look, it is the first page! And it is a beautiful one!” which definitely describes my



4-H year this past year. This year was filled with new experiences and new learning outcomes. I was stretched and pushed out of my comfort zone in order to have fun new experiences. As this my final year in 4-H, this year was primarily about making memories and sharing of wisdom to others. 4-H has given me many opportunities to give and grow through my projects of Dog Care and Training , Public Speaking, Mentor Up, Clothing and Textiles, Food and Nutrition, Ambassador, Leadership, Photography, Texas 4-H Technology Team, Lambs, Goats and Community Service.

My primary project this year was raising a Guide Dog for the Blind in the Dog Care and Training project.

This year was my fifth year in the project. My first goal was to finish training my fourth dog, Pirate. Raising a single Guide Dog is a two-year process. Miami, Oak, Volvo and Pirate were bred in San Rafael, California at the main campus for the Guide Dogs for the Blind. Miami, Volvo



and Pirate are Labrador and Oak is a Golden Retriever. Labradors are known for intelligence, obedience, stamina, and friendliness. Retrievers are known for their loyalty, obedience, and energy. We started training together immediately when I get each one of the dogs. The training is intense, the emotional level is high, and everybody works very hard. Our local chapter, Lone Star Guide Dogs for the Blind, worked with me one-on-one, provided a manual, as I attended monthly group meetings for accountability and questions. My job was to teach these dogs obedience skills, expose them to new



people and environments, and train them through the difficult puppy season. In addition, I am responsible to provide them with an environment of love, attention, discipline, and consistency so they can grow into a happy, confident dog ready for guide training. Basically, I am required to lay the groundwork for the more extensive guide training to come. When the dogs are 16 months old, I fly back to the California training center. These dogs

then go through an 8-week one-on-one training and testing program to insure they can easily perform the guiding tasks.

At any point during this process, any dog can be “re-careered.” This means they may not have the temperament or focus needed to guide a blind person. However, because of their early companion training, they are capable of being another type of

service dog. Some examples of what a well-trained guide dogs may be re-careered into are early detection of seizures or early detection of low blood sugar levels in people with diabetes. According the Chris Benninger, the CEO and president of Guide Dogs for the Blind, currently only 47% of dogs that enter the training actually graduate into a pairing with a blind person. This is the difficult reality of being a puppy raiser.

The final stage of a guide dog's training is receiving and learning to work with their new blind handler. Miami was paired with her handler Martin. They are a great pair and Miami helps him get to work each day and live a productive, full life. I then was challenged by receiving the Golden Retriever puppy, Oak, who was 12 months old and diagnosed with confidence issues. I felt honored to be chosen to work with a struggling puppy and took on the challenge of helping her succeed. She was accepted into training center and greatly improved by the time she was

16 months old. However, Oak was ultimately re-careered to a family in Oregon. I was sad that she did not make it to working with a blind person, but I know she is in the best place for her. For my 3rd dog, Volvo, I was able to raise him starting at 6 months all they way until he graduated this past September. My 4th guide dog is was also successfully paired as a K9 buddy. His job is to help a young boy who is visually impaired to learn



responsibility and what it means to have a guide dog at a young age. I am now training my 5th Guide dog named Hermosa. He is on his last weeks of training before he goes back to California. I was honored to be a part of this 4-H program that taught me selfless giving even through success and near-success. This program also allowed me to open my mind to new possibilities and a heart to serve other. However this not only allowed me to grow deeper in my work in my community, but it also allowed me to expand my comfort levels into my Public Speaking project.

My passion for guide dogs extended into my Public Speaking project. This was my fifth year in the public speaking project, since being in the project my goal was never to win a competition, but instead to help educate people about guide dogs and just how much they can make a difference. It was a difficult process because although Guide



Dogs have been a 4-H project since 1942, I had to relate Guide Dogs to the 4-H program and agriculture. This required me to re-write my entire speech from the year before, so that I had the ability to have personal connection to my audience. I researched and discovered a blind poultry farmer who not only succeeds in farming, but also hires 1 full time and 5 part-time employees. By the end of

my Public speaking year, my speech helped to educate the judges, FFA, and 4-H members about the benefits of guide dogs and the long waiting list for blind people to get

a dog. The more awareness I can bring, the more raisers to train dogs, more funds for trainers, and more guide dogs available for people all over the nation. I competed in several major shows including Houston livestock show, Dallas Livestock and Rodeo, and the San Antonio Livestock show.

While making a difference with guide dogs not only in training, but also in awareness, I continued to look for ways to use my love of computers and other technologies in a 4-H project. For the past five years I have helped to pioneer the Mentor Up program in our Georgetown 4-H. Our mentors go each



month to local nursing homes to bring technology and troubleshoot technology. In addition, we provide trainings at the local library every Wednesday to offer our technology knowledge to the elderly in our community. I love to see our clients try new apps, Skype their great-grandchildren, check out audiobooks online, or just troubleshoot their computer issues. The project is under the project of citizenship and civil education.

To keep my left-brain computer mind in check, I chose a right-brained activity of Clothing and Textiles where I mentor and planned on competing in the buying category. This is my 8th year in clothing and textiles, so I am spending much of my group time helping new 4-H club members to learn the basics. I have helped taught classes on how

to do straight stitching, how to make a pillowcase, how to pivot and turn to make an ice pack bags, how to read a pattern, and how to cut material properly. Our projects help to teach the younger students but were also designed to be community service projects. An example of this is the pillowcases. We used them to teach straight stitches, but we were able to donate them to Dell Children's Medical Center. We gave the rice bags for youth programs, and smile train bags for kids recovering from cleft palate surgery. I also



orchestrated a community service project where we made tie blankets for a local animal shelter. In addition each year the older members make a quilt to help raise funds for college scholarships for our local community. This year I competed in the Buying Competition for Fantastic Fashions under 25, I came in 1st place in my Club, County, and District Competition. I will be competing at State Round Up and hope to be moving on to nationals to share my passion with others.

Another project I competed and served in was Food and Nutrition. Our team, Chefs' Palate took first place in the county competition and 3rd in district. I also



competed in the Heart of Texas Competition where our team placed 1st overall. Not only was this project a way to earn blue ribbons, it is a way for me to give back. This year I applied for and

completed the Master Nutrition Course where I became certified as a master chef. I can now officially (and with proper credentials) help my local club with food service to raise money for youth projects, help with potluck and concession stands for charities, and volunteer my time hosting luncheons for 4-H adult leader training sessions. I also helped run a Healthy Eating Class where I taught about 30 women about healthy cooking and eating. The classes and exams were difficult, but I learned a lot and feel like I am equipped to use this project knowledge to help others in many different ways.

Another way I have found to serve my club and fellow 4-H program is through Leadership. This is the area I have grown the most in this year and see the most potential for my community service in the future. I know that leadership is a learned skill that



requires commitment, dependability, and thoughtful attention to the needs of others. I started out by being elected as the President for our local club. I have served this area well and earned 100% attendance at club meetings. I am also a county ambassador and volunteer at all

local shows. Our primary job is to help at all the local shows and to promote 4-H in our everyday life. I am also on the County council as our President in order to share my knowledge in leadership and activities that are happening in our county. . In final, I am apart of the Texas 4-H technology team. As a State student lead organization I have the

ability to share my knowledge of technology and my experience with other peers. In addition to that I am constantly learning new skills in order to help me expand my own knowledge. I have also have the opportunity to go to California to represent our tech team as the California state leadership conference. I was able to expand my 4-H knowledge and meet great people along the way. I am now also acting a mentor to the newer members since this in my 3rd year in the club. In addition, I will attend Surge Leadership Camp this summer and be a counselor at our District 8 camp. I believe in using my 4-H experiences to help younger 4-H members navigate and excel in 4-H. Leadership



Service allows me to pave a way for the next generation of 4-H members. In addition this year I had the amazing opportunity serve as a District vice chairman. I help to plan events for the districts and will be leading programs at the Surge leadership camp this coming summer. Additionally, I also served as part of the inaugural district 8 media crew, our task was to take images and promotional pieces for all district 8 events.

But service for me extends beyond my club and into the community. I believe community service is the key to showing our neighbors that 4-H kids care, so I am involved in many club. County, district and state level opportunities to give back. I have spent several Saturdays working the local Farmer's Market to sell food items to raise

money for our teams who show animals. I have helped to collect books for the state wide book drive, and collected clothes for a clothing drive done by our county. I have also taught kids the value of nutrition, made cards for veterans, supplied backpacks for military kids, and prepared Easter Eggs for a local community event. In addition helped to clean around one of lakes here in Georgetown along with putting up Christmas lights for our elderly community. Each month I dedicated my time and energy to a community service project because I believe together, we can make a difference in our own local area.

Outside of 4-H I am a conscientious student, National Honor Society Secretary, leader in our student lead robotics team, and a leader in my High School Model United



Nations program. This past year I also helped run and organize our very 1st Model United Nations Conference. In addition to this school ran conference; I have also been working with some of my peers to host our very own statewide conference for both middle and high school students. In addition I also am part of my Student council as my Student government treasurer. I was awarded Cum laude for a GPA exceeding 90%. I am also active in my

church youth group helping to lead our missions' teams in Mexico. In addition I help organizes and plan both of the Mexico mission trips, one in August and one in December.

I am excited for the future of my 4 H career and the opportunities I will have to grow as a well-rounded person. With a focus on challenging myself in new areas, I know I will grow, learn, succeed, fail, and create lifelong memories. Purposeful memories will be a measure of my success. By listening to the wise words of C.S. Lewis, “The smallest good act today is the strategic point from which, months later, you may be able to go on to victories you never dreamed of.”



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believe my focus on acts of service will lead me to a future of fulfilled dreams that 4-H has inspired.