Message From The President

With so many people to thank for their assistance in continuing to make TOP DOG a successful organization, one might say this is an inventory of individuals to which I and the Board are very grateful.

So let’s begin with a huge thank you to Anita Alsup-Page-Hurlburt and her husband Scott for finding us a new, and more appropriate, training center at Direct Center for Independence. Our new address is 1001 N. Alvernon Way here in Tucson, of course. The new building has more handicap accessible areas for students to work on service exercises. Handicap buttons, a kitchen for practicing opening and closing drawers and it even has a bed that can be used for teaching purposes if needed, best of all for our wheelchair students the parking lot is paved.

Of course, it goes without saying, TOP DOG, Inc. extends a giant thank you to Direct Center for Independence for allowing us to conduct our group training classes at their wonderful new facility. We hope to expand our symbiotic relation with Direct in the coming months.

Last, but not least, I would like to personally recognize the following people and acknowledge their contributions to TOP DOG.

Many thanks to:

Deb Bettis, and also congratulate her on becoming the director of mobility. Deb brings many years of training, and a wealth of knowledge to our program. Additionally, I’d like to thank Deb for stepping up, and bringing us her talents to teach the beginner’s class.

A really big thank you to Bette Immel for entirely taking over the creative process and compilation of the TOP DOG, Inc. newsletter. A task that I don’t have time for and was never my favorite thing to do. Bette brings more than 25 years of knowledge as a former journalist and editor.

Thank you so much to both Beth Madden and her daughter, Maria, who’ve been working diligently to rearrange, and fix our website that definitely improves our public face. This is an ongoing project, but we have already seen much improvement.

Now for some important announcements. The Jim Click car raffle is again underway. This year’s car is a 2016 Ford Shelby GT350. If anyone is interested in either purchasing, or helping to sell tickets, please give me a call at (520) 323-6677 or TDs cell (520) 484-4034. TD also has a toll free number 888-257-6790. You do not need to be present to win.

Please see Page 4 continued President & for more announcements!!
I am sorry to hear of Mikes passing. He was the greatest benefit the beginning students could have asked for.

He understood the students, and the dogs. Was gentle in his teaching and manners. Rain or shine, hot or cold he was always there. The bus trip was just a means to an end. He enjoyed nothing more than seeing his students, and imparting his years of knowledge. Always smiling, easy going and willing to do whatever it took for successful outcomes. Mike you will be missed by all who knew you.

Helen & Hope *105

I am so sorry to hear about the passing of Mike, I enjoyed having him as an instructor for Top Dog so much; he taught me a lot about having patience and understanding of dog behavior. He had me laughing in class on a number of occasions, I will miss him and his stories. This will be a sad time for Top Dog. Mike keep an eye on Top Dog and Thanks for everything.

Morris & Cheyenne *102

Mike always had a warm smile when he saw you. I always enjoyed his way of teaching with knowledge and humor. Rest in peace Mike.

Diane and Tucker *93

I'm so sorry to hear about Mike. He was an amazing person and an amazing instructor. He will truly be missed.

Sami & Ravi Team *78
Sami & Ashka Team *113

I first met Mike when we interviewed him to come and join our third TOP DOG class. He and his wonderful little white shepherd, Ruby, were perfect candidates, and I was proud to work with them through certification as TOP DOG team #009. Then he didn’t go away. He agreed to teach our beginners class, offering wisdom and experience for the students coming into the program. He and Ruby taught classes for many years.

Mike will always be remembered as the “voice” of TOP DOG. He is the narrator of the Teamwork videos—his rich tones adding such depth and strength to the videos. And he read all of the two Teamwork books onto tape so we can have them in digital format. Some of my favorite memories of Mike are of those times, filming, recording, re-recording, and working on those projects until we got them right. He was often tired, ill, in pain, but he never quit.

Mike was also a friend. I enjoyed visiting him, with Ruby jumping on me (she never jumped on anyone else—some training director!) and Buddy accepting me with wagging tail when he was suspicious of most people. Mike will be sorely missed, but his legacy lives on for everyone who will ever hear him tell them at the end of the Team-work II video: “You have Teamwork!” God bless you, Mike, and thanks for all the memories.

Lydia

Mike Landweir
Rest In Peace
I had the honor and privilege of meeting and becoming a #1 fan of Mike in 2007 when Zapata, (my Great Dane), and I showed up for our first Beginners Class at TOP DOG.

Mike was inspiring, with all of his own challenges, to be so devoted to working with others. Helping them to get their future Service Dogs off on the right foot with a great foundation.

There wasn't a dog that didn't like Mike, especially Zapata, who would leave me standing and go to Mike every time he saw him. They bonded quickly and always had to have their private greeting time before class.

Though Mike had done many, many Recalls with students, he got a big surprise on the first one he did with Zapata.

Mike said, “Deb let's do a Recall with Zapata,” my reply was, “Are you sure?” Mike said, “Oh yes”, with that big smile on his face. I walked over handed him the lead and ask again, “Are you sure?” Mike said his chair was powered off and the brakes were set. I told him, “if he starts pulling let go,” Mike said he was set and wasn't going anywhere, (little did Mike know). I started walking to the other end of the room. Got about 4 feet, maybe a bit more, and from behind me I could hear..... “Whoa, Whoa, Whoa...” I turned around and Zapata was pulling Mike, wheelchair and all to follow me. Mike was in shock, he never imagined that Zapata would just walk off with him with no effort. After recovering our composure, Mike insisted we try again, I reminded Zapata to stay with Mike, and we had a successful Recall. I will never forget the look on Mike's face, or that day.

We became good friends; Zapata always looked for Mike at ever event we attended, from Fun Matches to End of Sessions. He would pout if Mike was not present.

Zapata will no longer miss his dear friend, they are together now and I am sure are having a great time!

To a great Trainer and Friend....so many will miss you, you were a great inspiration to all you encountered.

Deb & Zapata #91

Mike was a good friend, talented guy and great spokesperson. I'll never forget when he first came to TOP DOG with this beautiful, skinny German Shepherd puppy named Ruby. Mike had a natural talent for bringing out the best in Ruby and together they sailed through the basic obedience exercises. However, they hit a stumbling block when it came to doing the take-its. The Training Director and his TA at the time, Lydia, invited me to their midweek to see if any progress could be made. I took along the dowel that I had used to trained Lucky and Sage with and low and behold it worked. Once Ruby learned to take and give the dowel, it wasn't long before she started picking up everything and they became TOP DOG Team # 09.

Mike had a great voice and in addition to working on the radio, he was perfect choice to read our Team Work books on tape. I had the privilege of introducing Mike to our nephew, Matt George, owner of Commotion Studios where the CD's were produced. I am including a photo of Mike reading from one of the Team Work books with Matt on headphones and a photo of Mike with Lydia, Lynn & Matt in July 2008.

Last but not least, Mike had great insight and loved teaching the Beginning Class. When it came time to update the Team Work books, Lydia called on Mike and me to help. Together the three of us met at the Blue Willow Restaurant for several delicious working lunches and the result was the Revised & Expanded Team Work books.

Mike will be missed, but make no mistake, the lives he touched and the difference he made will live on at TOP DOG!

Love, Mary
TOP DOG, Inc. is holding an OPEN HOUSE at our wonderful new location, 1001 S. Alvernon in Tucson on March 19, 2016 from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. Please drop by and visit with us. There will be coffee, water, and baked goodies. All are invited to “float in and out” at your convenience. Thank you.

New Email address is: topdogusa1987@gmail.com Website: topdogusa.org

**President’s Message cont.**

I’m sad to report that due to declining attendance, TOP DOG will no longer hold the usual end of session events, but will be switching to an annual End of Year event that will usually be held in either March or April. *This starts with the April 2nd event*, which will once again be held at Habitat for Humanity. We currently have 4 teams who are ready to celebrate their certifications. We’re anticipating a total of 6 by April 2nd as TD has had a recent influx of Out-of-State who have come in for certification. This event will be a POTLUCK. Please come join us for this event. TD will have T-shirts, polo shirts, and Jim Click Raffle tickets available for purchase at the end of session party and also through the office. All ticket sales monies stay with our program. Tickets are $25 each or 5 for $100.

And please don’t forget the Match that is being held by the German Shepard Dog Club of So. Arizona (GSDCSA) on *April 15* at 6pm. The dog show runs April 16-17. Both events are at the Hotel Tucson again (311 East Congress, Tucson AZ 85701). Once again a note of thanks to Kevilee and the GSDCSA for their generosity in holding fund raising matches to benefit TD in the past. All of the monies they raised went directly to TD. These fund have helped us continue to offer classes and assist low income students. We are thrilled to know that they will be hosting an upcoming match at the Hotel Tucson on April 15th @ 6pm. There will be a silent auction benefiting both organizations — TD and GSDCSA — with all prizes being awarded on Sunday, April 17th.

**Announcements**

TOP DOG, Inc. is holding an **OPEN HOUSE** at our wonderful new location, 1001 S. Alvernon in Tucson on **March 19, 2016** from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. Please drop by and visit with us. There will be coffee, water, and baked goodies. All are invited to “float in and out” at your convenience. Thank you.

New Email address is: topdogusa1987@gmail.com Website: topdogusa.org

**Direct Center for Independence**

You might be asking yourself what is Direct? Well … DIRECT Center for Independence, Inc. is a consumer-directed, community-based advocacy organization that promotes independent living, and offers a variety of programs for all people with disabilities, which encourages them to achieve their full potential and to participate in the community.

They are located at 1001 N. Alvernon Way Tucson, AZ 85711. And can be reached at 1-800-342-1853 or direct@directilc.org. You can find more information on their website www.directilc.org

**Once Again ....**

Saturday, April 2, 2016 at 10:30 a.m. is the Annual End of Year event. It is being held at Habitat for Humanity, 3501 N. Mountain Ave., Tucson AZ. Please bring a yummy contribution to share for the Potluck. See you there!

German Shepard Dog Club of So. Arizona is hosting a Match on April 15, 2016 at 6 p.m. at the Hotel Tucson — 311 East Congress St., Tucson, AZ. The Dog Show runs April 16th and 17th. A silent auction is being held to benefit both TOP DOG and GSDCSA.
The GSDCSA is conducting a Match that is being held by their organization, German Shepard Dog Club of So. Arizona, on April 15th at 6pm. An accompanying Dog Show runs from April 16 through the 17. Both events are at the Hotel Tucson again (311 East Congress in Tucson).

Roving Reporter by Charlie Mendelsohn

Soooo, here we are Mom and I all snuggled up on her bed watching television. Suddenly there are pictures of lots of snow in a place called “back east.” Mom looks at me and says she is glad we live where there is no snow, but I wiggle some to tell her it looks like fun to play in all the white fluffy stuff. Just then Mom says we’re are going to have a little talk. I know what that means Mom talks and I listen, just once I would like to surprise her and do the talking. That’s not going to happen!!

Mom tells me, that dogs that live “back east” are lucky if they live in the country. Snow is clean and fresh and is fun to play and roll in. Dogs that live in “the city” are not that lucky. Streets must be kept clean and snow removed quickly, so as not to have accidents on the road. I do not know why anyone would want to ride in a car, when they can roll in the snow. Mom tells me that in order to keep the streets clear and clean, they salt them. This is good for cars, but bad for dogs! Salt hurts dogs feet and pads. “Back east” city dogs need to wear boots in the snow to protect their feet.

She then tells me, it will be a very good idea, if I get a new spring wardrobe. Oh good I am getting a new collar and lead………but no, Mom says, if boots can protect my feet from salt in the winter, then they can protect my feet from the hot pavement and blacktop during the summer in Tucson. I wonder what boots are like, do I wear them only outside, will I walk funny in them will my dog friends look at me strangely because I am wearing them? Will they really keep my feet cool? Do they go on and off quickly? However, most of all I really hope they are not pink!!!

All the time Mom is telling me about boots, and how they will protect me during the hot weather, she is rubbing my feet to remind me this is where the boots go. I really and truly wish they made boots for my belly, because I would be much happier if Mom were rubbing it instead of just rubbing my feet.

I hope to see many of my “Service Dog” pals wearing boots this summer, so that they too will have their feet protected from the hot roads and pavement.

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A perfectly painless way to donate to TOP DOG. If you purchase your Amazon favorites through this site, and designate ‘TOP DOG’ as to the organization you want your charitable donation to go, TOP DOG will receive a donation from Amazon every quarter.

Please Note: This does not cost the shopper any additional funds. So please be sure to Bookmark this webpage.

Thank You.
**Kudo’s To Our Recently Certified Teams!**

**Linda and Rango — Team #146**

My husband William and I are snowbirds. We’ve been coming to Tucson for 11 years. We had an old service dog who we knew would need to retire soon. A few winters ago I met a man also with a service dog while walking. He told me about a local organization named “TOP DOG” that helps you train your own dog. After retiring Keto, we spent a lot of time and money trying to replace him.

January 2015 William and I decided to start checking out some local shelters. We found ourselves spending one whole day going thru Pima County Animal Care Center seeing numerous dogs. At the very end of that long day we met Rango. He was sitting quietly on his bed while chaos ensued around him. He came over to me and gently took a small treat from my hand. I knew then he had possibilities. We spent a few days visiting him, and also had Top Dog help us evaluate him. All went well.

The Shelter told us he was 3 years old and had spent most of that time there. We saw Rango had lots of energy. He definitely needed a job! And I had one for him. He walked properly beside me from the start. We did have to work on distractions, leave its, and obedience. After a period of adjustment, our trainer Helen visited, and evaluated him. We did well, but still had lots of work ahead of us.

In March we returned home to Rochester, New York because I had some health issues. All spring and summer we worked on obedience with a local trainer. I read thru training books and the on-line program, too. I recovered in time, while Rango learned my needs and commands. Once, I stumbled while walking with Rango. He immediately stopped and braced!! I was able to hold the harness; Rango prevented me from landing face down in the concrete. You cannot train that!!

October 2015 we arrived back in Tucson. Yea! Then the real work started, Helen worked with us weekly. She guided us, recognizing weaknesses in myself and Rango to correct. Helen definitely knows dogs, and has wonderful people skills. She knew when and how much to push us. She also spotted when I needed encouragement and support.

My Rottweiler mix and I were finally ready for certification in late January. I’d never met the evaluators, but we were well prepared. Helen was there as we finished our test. Handing Helen our passing test paper, I heard the evaluator say to Helen, “you’ve been sending us some good teams lately.” That’s a great compliment to Helen, and to the Top Dog organization’s work that they do.

Thank you Helen! Thank you TOP DOG!

**Josh and Vettel – Team 145**

Josh’s Diary

Josh picked me because I was the cutest eight–week old Rottie. I am named after a Formula1 driver. I loved snuggling and taking naps with my Josh. Soon I learned sit, stay and down. Then the real work started when we attended classes. My favorite part was the car ride. I worked so hard that when I got home I slept a lot. Since I am still a puppy, I get distracted easily, so Josh reminds me what I suppose to be doing.

**My other favorite part are the yummy treats. Mmmm. I quickly learned that I only got a treat when I obeyed. I like doing things for Josh. Even though I am big now I still love to snuggle in Josh’s lap. I worked really hard and finally passed my certification test. Yea! I really hope I still get lots of treats. My owner is awesome. Top Dog made us a successful team.**

**Anita & Lara Lou — Team #143**

Lara Lou was always meant to be a service dog. She was bred by Guide Dog for the Blind to be a guide dog. As a puppy she was team raised by two families that I worked with at SAAVI (Southern Arizona Association for the Visually Impaired). After 15 months Lara was called back for guide dog training. Unfortunately, she did not make the grade in the initial assessments, and entered into the status of “Proud Career Change Guide Dog.” The puppy raisers opted to get her back and they would find her, her forever home. Both of the puppy raisers asked my husband and myself to take her. We agreed, and she has been a wonderful addition to our family ever since.

Unfortunately, my disease started to take a turn for the worse, and a friend suggested that I take Lara to service dog school. That friend was Diana and Simba (Team #132). Thank you Diana. Lara became my Mobility Dog despite a couple of delays because I needed additional surgeries. I can’t say enough how much I appreciate the help she provides to me. She is a instant hit wherever she goes. And she is always working to help spread the word about TOP DOG and how dogs can help make people’s lives more fulfilling.

Thank you TOP DOG for helping Lara continue her life’s purpose as a working service dog.

**Jodi & Sedona — Team #144**

My Collie mix, Sedona, and I found each other, believe it or not, at a home show. Pima Animal Control had brought ‘very sick’ and abandoned dogs looking for someone to save them. I didn't know that day that years later it would be Sedona saving me! Now I am the one that needs her to help me with my Rheumatoid Arthritis challenges. We have learned so much in training this last year, including patience, how to listen and read one another, and of course how to have fun learning. Sedona and I make a great team. She is always watching, enthusiastically picking up all the things I drop (which I seem to do a lot lately). Sedona has a sweet sensitive disposition...and is more than willing to learn any task I ask of her.

I see this as just the beginning for us. Together we can do just about anything!
Wake Up!
If you have an interesting canine related anecdote, we’d love to hear it. We can’t promise which issue your story will appear in (or maybe edited for space), but we will get it in eventually.