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The Newsletter of San Francisco Dog Owners Group

SPRING, 2005

The Year in DOG

Have you ever wondered what SFDOG does with your membership dues and donations? Over the past year, we have offered behavioral workshops, monitored City commissions, educated officials, and just plain had some fun. Here is a closer look at what we did last year.

For Dog People

SFDOG works hard to ensure that dog people have the information they need to be responsible dog owners/guardians. We developed a workshop with trainer Beverly Ulbrich addressing common behavioral problems seen in parks (e.g., poor recall). The workshop includes one-on-one sessions with Ulbrich for problem dogs. We conducted a pilot workshop in Dolores Park last fall. We've scheduled an improved version in Duboce Park this coming July.



Borrowing an idea from the Oakland Dog Owners Group (ODOG), we presented two workshops to socialize dogs to the presence of horses. In June 2004, behaviorist Dr. Ian Dunbar showed a crowd of nearly 100 people how to use positive behavior modification techniques to stop their dogs from barking or lunging at horses. The SFPD Mounted Police unit provided horses and riders for Dunbar's lecture/demonstration and for a subsequent hands-on workshop held in September. In the follow-up event, ODOG's Nancy Rieser worked one-on-one with owners/guardians, their dogs, and the horses. We plan to continue these free workshops this summer. Details will be posted on our website when available.



At our most recent membership meeting, San Francisco Chronicle columnist and veterinarian Dr. Sophia Yin discussed why dogs bark and gave tips on controlling excessive barking. At other meetings veterinarians have described what to do in common emergency situations, and members heard about working with search-and-rescue dogs. In September, the people behind The Bark magazine and illustrator Mark

Ulriksen discussed dogs in the publishing world. At our upcoming meeting (June 21), representatives from the SF SPCA and Animal Care and Control (ACC) will address disaster preparedness for dogs.

The SFDOG website (www.sfdog.org) provides links to interesting articles, and to local dog groups, rescue groups, and canine health websites. Anyone can download our "Park Petiquette" flyer from the website. The flyer outlines what responsible dog ownership/guardianship is all about. We hope our website helps people find the answer to any dog-related question they may have.

We have plans to offer training and testing for the AKC Canine Good Citizen program. This program combines traditional obedience skills (e.g., "come") with real-world situations (e.g., allowing a stranger to approach and pet a dog). Let us know if you'd like to arrange this for your neighborhood park. We also hope to work with ACC to increase the numbers of licensed dogs.

For Non-Dog People

SFDOG has begun to reach out to non-dog people to help them understand dog behavior and alleviate their fears and misconceptions. We arranged for Trish King, from the Marin Humane Society, to lecture at the SF Recreation and Park Department (RPD) on dog body language and behavior. Nearly 75 staff gardeners attended her lecture. King will repeat her lecture for RPD rec center staff this fall.

SFDOG would also like to develop programs for kids and seniors. If you would like to help, please let us know.

Official San Francisco

We continue to work to educate elected and appointed officials in San Francisco about the benefits of dogs and the need for increased off-leash recreation opportunities. Although we feel RPD's dog policy is inherently unfair and hopelessly flawed, SFDOG continues to sit on RPD's Dog Advisory Committee (DAC) to ensure people who want official off-leash areas in their parks can get them.

SFDOG is one of the stakeholder groups that will take part in upcoming negotiations over off-leash recreation in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA). A mediator will help the stakeholders decide where dogs can be off-leash in the GGNRA.

We have prepared fact sheets on dogs and off-leash recreation for elected officials in San Francisco. Many were distributed to candidates for the Board of Supervisors last November. Because we are a non-profit, SFDOG does not and did not endorse any candidate. But we did provide them with information about dog issues.

SFDOG representatives attend meetings of the SF Police Commission (weekly), Recreation and Parks Commission (monthly), and Operation Park meetings (bimonthly) at which police officers responsible for parks and RPD staff discuss park problems. We monitor what is said, and often speak ourselves, to ensure that the interests and rights of dog people are respected.

Fun

SFDOG is not just serious meetings and programs. We hold an annual picnic in the fall, an opportunity for dog people to share food and drink and compete in fun contests. Last December, author Maria Goodavage talked about places to go with your dog in the Bay Area and California at our annual holiday meeting, then helped select the winners of holiday raffle prizes.

SFDOG obtained a block of tickets for the San Francisco Giants' "Dog Days of Summer" game in August last year. Dogs – and their human companions – walked in a parade on the field before the game, then watched the game from the bleachers. If you'd like to attend this year's game (August 6), let us know.

We set up booths at street fairs during the summer and fall (e.g., Fillmore and Castro Street Fairs), and at ACC's Pet Pride Day, and the PAWS Doggone Fun Run in Golden Gate Park. The Sports Basement in the Presidio has begun monthly doggy socials, and SFDOG is there for each one. At the May doggy social, we set up some agility equipment and let people "play" with their dogs on it.

SFDOG will continue our efforts to educate the people of San Francisco about dog behavior and the benefits that dogs provide to people and society. We will continue to work to ensure that the rights and interests of dog people are respected.

We do all of this without the benefit of a paid staff or a large budget. We're all volunteers, and we rely on your dues and donations to do what we do. Thank you for your support.

Rec & Park Dept. Update

Limited Accomplishments, Major Shakeup at DAC

By Keith McAllister, SFDOG Representative to the Dog Advisory Committee

In all of 2004, the Recreation and Park Department's (RPD) Dog Advisory Committee (DAC) approved the expansion of one existing DPA. So far this year, they have approved a single off-leash trail. Over the past 18 months, that's all they've done. Indeed, DAC has not met since March 2005. Here are some details on what's up with DAC.

2004 "Accomplishments"

DAC began 2004 by rejecting off-leash Dog Play Areas (DPA) for Holly and Sunnyside Parks in March and April, respectively. The sole DPA approval in 2004 was an expansion of the Dolores Park DPA. This followed a long negotiation within the Dolores Park neighborhood. The newly configured Dolores DPA was a true compromise, leaving everyone with something to grumble about.

2005 Actions to Date

In January 2005, DAC approved an off-leash trail in Stern Grove, connecting a DPA off Wawona St. with one in Pine Lake Meadow. RPD's Dog Policy states (sec. 4.3), that the DAC will: "Identify three DPA trail/meadow experiences (in regional parks) in the first year of forming." It took DAC three years to come up with just one.

Dog people proposed a DPA in Duboce Park late in 2004. RPD conducted a community meeting at Duboce Park in February 2005. Although a majority at the meeting wanted some kind of DPA, there was no consensus on what it should be. Supervisor Bevan Duffy's office has moderated a series of neighborhood meetings that may produce a specific DPA recommendation for DAC. Another community meeting to discuss the results of the negotiations is planned, but details have yet to be announced.

RPD conducted a community meeting in March 2005 in response to a petition for a DPA at "Big Rec," located just north of the baseball diamonds near Middle Drive East and 9th Ave. in Golden Gate Park. The DPA will not include any part of the playing fields. A clear majority of the neighbors at the meeting favored creation of a DPA at Big Rec. High school baseball players, brought by their coaches, opposed it. A modified recommendation was expected at the May DAC meeting, but that meeting was cancelled.

Dan McKenna Fired

RPD Superintendent of Citywide Services Dan McKenna has had responsibility for administering the Dog Policy since it was adopted in 2002. In March 2005, RPD Acting General Manager Yomi Agunbiade, for reasons that are unclear, fired McKenna. Amber Evans, from the RPD Planning Department, has assumed

administrative responsibility for DAC. Because she needed time to get "up to speed", the scheduled May DAC meeting was postponed to July.

"Enforcement"

The March 2005 DAC meeting was devoted entirely to a discussion of enforcement of the leash law in parks. DAC created an "Enforcement Task Force" to make recommendations on enforcement policy. Since McKenna's firing, the Task Force has not met. In the meantime, several DAC members and their allies have appeared repeatedly before the SF Police Commission to demand increased ticketing for off-leash dogs.

But, enforcement of the "leash law" (actually Section 41.12 of the Health Code) is not the responsibility of the DAC. That responsibility lies with the SF Police Department, Animal Care and Control, and RPD's Park Police. DAC has no authority over these agencies. In fact, the Dog Policy contains a long list of responsibilities for the DAC, but enforcement is not mentioned.

SFDOG has argued that, with the many serious law enforcement problems in San Francisco, it makes no sense to use scarce police resources to harass people with well-behaved, off-leash dogs. Any enforcement that takes place should target egregious misbehavior: failure to pick up after your dog; allowing your dog to dig in public lawns and flower beds; and allowing your dog to be aggressive toward people and other dogs. Police officers should be allowed to use reasonable discretion, ticketing people with aggressive or out-of-control dogs, but not those with well-behaved dogs.

SFDOG is particularly distressed that "enforcement" has leap-frogged over "timed use" for consideration by DAC. While the Dog Policy contains no mandate for DAC to consider enforcement, there is a clear mandate for it to discuss timed use. The Dog Policy (sec 4.3) states that the DAC will: "Report to RPD with a recommendation on timed use for parks. The Department, with input from the Advisory Committee will prepare and deliver a report to the Recreation and Park Commission no later than October 2002 on timed use." In May 2004 (two years late), DAC formed a "working group" on timed use. Twice the working group scheduled meetings, but both were canceled. DAC was told that RPD staff needed more time to "research the issue." To date, the timed-use working group has never met. The report on timed use is now three years late, and counting.

As we go into summer 2005, the future of timed use and the proposed DPAs for Duboce Park and Big Rec are unresolved. Whether the Dog Advisory Committee will be a venue to solve these and other off-leash related problems in San Francisco remains to be seen. Stay tuned.



SF DOG Calendar of Events

THURSDAY, JUNE 9

CLAW 4th Annual Hats Off Fashion Show & Luncheon, benefiting the SF SPCA's Cinderella Fund

11:30 am reception, 12 noon luncheon, 12:45 to 2:15 pm fashion show & live auction. The Grand Cafe, Hotel Monaco, 501 Geary Street at Taylor. General tickets are \$55.00 per person including 3 course prix fixe lunch, wine, tax & gratuity. Free valet parking. Contact CLAW at 415.522.3535 for more information and reservations.

TUESDAY, JUNE 21

SFDOG General Membership Meeting

7:30 pm. Fort Mason, Building A, Marina Room. Tracy Pore, from the SF SPCA, and Deb Campbell, from Animal Care and Control, will discuss disaster preparedness and dogs. Pore tells what every dog person should have in a disaster-readiness kit, and Campbell discusses the city's plans for pet shelters in the event of a natural or man-made disaster.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 22

Public Meeting: RPD Natural Areas Program plans for Buena Vista Park, Corona Heights, Golden Gate Park (all have off-leash areas at risk), Glen Canyon, and Mt. Davidson.

6 pm to 9 pm. Glen Park Recreation Center, Bosworth and O'Shaughnessy (see article elsewhere in this newsletter for more information).

TUESDAY, JUNE 28

Public Meeting: RPD Natural Areas Program plans for Lake Merced, Pine Lake (both have off-leash areas at risk), and Golden Gate Heights Park.

6 pm to 9 pm. Trocadero Clubhouse, Stern Grove.

THURSDAY, JUNE 30

Public Meeting: RPD Natural Areas Program plans for Bernal Heights, McLaren Park (both have off-leash areas at risk), and Sharp Park.

6 pm to 9 pm. South East Community Center, 1800 Oakdale.

TUESDAY, JULY 12

Dog Advisory Committee Meeting

6:30 pm. Hall of Flowers (next to Strybing Arboretum) in Golden Gate Park, near the corner of 9th and Lincoln Avenues.

SATURDAY, JULY 23

Dog Park Etiquette workshop in Duboce Park.

Lecture and one-on-one sessions with trainer Beverly Ulbrich, "The Pooch Coach." Lecture from 10 am to noon at Café International (508 Haight St, near Fillmore). Training sessions in Duboce Park. Reservations required. Lecture \$10 in advance, \$15 at the door. Training Sessions \$15 in advance, \$20 at the park (if space available). RSVP to info@sfdog.org or 415.339.7461.

A Message from the Chair

Why We Love Dogs

Dogs and people just plain go together. Simply petting a dog can lower both your heart rate and blood pressure. A recent study found that people who walked with a dog lost more weight than people who walked alone or with another person. Children raised in homes with two or more dogs during the first year of their life have significantly fewer allergies than children raised without pets. In a national program, kids who read aloud to dogs significantly increase their reading abilities.

Dogs guide and help blind, deaf, and disabled people live independent lives. Patients frequently require less pain medication after visits from therapy dogs. Search-and-rescue dogs find lost and injured people, and detect bodies when help is too late. Crisis-response dogs comforted people grieving for missing loved ones at assistance centers in New York City in the weeks immediately following September 11th. Dogs help us herd and hunt. Military dogs saved an estimated 10,000 soldiers' lives during the Vietnam War.

Dogs help customs agents find illegal drugs and search for the chemical precursors to weapons of mass destruction in trucks and shipping containers entering the US. Bomb-sniffing dogs regularly assist police. Dogs have even shown the ability to "smell" cancer in human tissues, sometimes detecting early stages of cancer that more traditional screening tests had missed.

None of this surprises those of us who share our lives with dogs. The bonds we share make us want to give our canine friends the best that we can. And that includes plenty of good exercise and play.

We all would be a lot worse off if dogs were not part of our cities and our lives. If you know people who are afraid of or angry about dogs, let them know all the things that dogs do for people. Share your love of "dog." It's the least we can do.

Sally Stephens
Chair, SFDOG



Extra Extra, Read All About It!

De Rigueurrrr...In the Parks

Every properly dressed pup in the park is wearing a dog license these days. The wandering pup is more easily found when wearing identification and other park visitors are assured that this is a dog that is properly vaccinated. This means safety for park visitors as well as our dogs and good public relations for our community. Furthermore, since licensure is legally required, why run the risk of an expensive ticket, when licensure is easy and cheaper?

San Francisco's Animal Care and Control says there are about 120,000 dogs in the City but only about 20,000 are currently licensed. Every time we have to defend our right to use our parks in the company of our companions, we hear about this discrepancy. Unlike the inadequate legal spaces to walk our dogs in the parks, this is something we can fix, so let's do it!

Licensing your dog is now easier than ever. You can take care of it on line at http://www.sfgov.org/site/acc_index.asp?id=6619. Once you've gotten a rabies vaccination, just put the number of the vaccination certificate into the on-line form and presto you've got a one-year license for only \$12!

There are also several vets who will take care of both the vaccination and the license at the same time. Call Animal Care and Control at 415.554.6364 for the names of vets who offer this one-stop-shopping.

Please help defend our right to walk our dogs in our parks by licensing your pup and promoting licensing in your local park. Notice if other dogs are licensed and tell their companions how easy it is to take care of this important prerequisite to a visit to the park. Thanks for your help to promote responsible dog ownership/guardianship in our parks.

Consideration

SFDOG would like to remind everyone that being a responsible dog owner/guardian means not letting your dog approach strangers without permission. Even if your dog is very friendly, don't assume other people want your dog to say "hi" to them. Call your dog when you see a stranger approaching. Also, don't let your dog approach people walking with leashed dogs. There may be a good reason why the dog is on-leash (perhaps it's dog aggressive) and your dog could be hurt. If you see a dog walker with several dogs on-leash, call your dog so it doesn't interfere.

Results of Survey of SFDOG Membership

By Mary McAllister

Thanks to the folks who completed the survey about dog play areas (official off-leash areas, DPAs) in our April 2004 newsletter. Here is a brief report of what we learned.

The most popular dog play area is the Pine Lake Meadow in Stern Grove, both in the number of people who use it and how they grade their experience. It earned a solid grade of B. In descending order of popularity, our members also use Alta Plaza (B-), Mountain Lake (B), Alamo Square (C+), and Bernal Hill (C+).

However, many members who responded to our survey use parks without legal off-leash areas. Glen Canyon was the park without a legal off-leash area mentioned most frequently by members.

Most members (72%) say they visit their parks daily. Two-thirds of respondents reported no increased hostility at the time of the survey. In answer to the question, "what would you do if you were forced out of your park," 85% said they would continue to walk their dog there.

Only about one-third of respondents said they had been "involved in creating a new DPA" yet 75% percent said they

did not feel "fairly treated" by the Dog Advisory Committee (DAC). Our experiences with DAC have been much more negative since the survey was completed. What would our members say now?

Thanks again for telling us what you think. Please email me if you would like to express or update your opinion. Send any comments to info@sfdog.org.

Pine Lake DPA and Glen Canyon Park Users

Just a reminder that Rec and Park Department summer day camps will begin in June near the Pine Lake DPA and in Glen Canyon Park. Day camps will be in session for nine weeks, from June 20 until August 19. Camp supervisors will begin setting up the week of June 13. If you use these parks with your dog, please be considerate. Keep your dog away from camp areas, if possible, and always call your dog when you see children outside. Thank you.