

The Maine Highlands Sled Dog Club

Mild Winter Mushing

Born to Pull

Spring, 2016

2-Legged Mushing at Canaan School

The Howl

- Spring Meeting is Sunday, April 17th in Newport
- It's time to sign up for Basics & Beyond! Limited spots available, hurry!
- Upcoming club advertising opportunities, help out!
- Award nominations are due
- LIKE us on Facebook and stay up to date with all the club news on our website: mainesleddogclub.com

Valerie Parent was recently invited to Canaan Elementary School's 3rd grade classroom to help them learn about the Iditarod. With the help of Merry Burton and Brittney Robinson they thrilled the student's with Frankie, a 3 year old Siberian and lead dog Jesse, a 4 year old Siberian as well as puppies, Pearl, Rocky, and Peter Pan.

tastic time putting their classroom knowledge to the test with some practical application of skills and a bit of imagination. Jesse was a big hit, when the kids were all in their places along the gangline, Valerie put his harness on and let him

training and socialization opportunity for their experienced

dogs as well as the puppies. For the student's it brought what they were learning in the classroom and following online to life. The opportunity for kids to get to be



"We so enjoyed having you and your friends both human and canine!! It was a great experience for all involved and your dogs are spectacular! The kids also sent me thank you cards for bringing the dogs for a visit.."

-Lauren Taylor, teacher

free run... he ran right in front of all of the kids in team

hands-on with sled dogs and real equipment is for some, once in a lifetime... and hopefully for a few, just the first step to following their dreams of racing in the Iditarod.

Valerie's visit to the 3rd graders did not go unnoticed; it was featured on the local news. A great job well done goes out to Valerie, Merry and Brittney... and Jesse, Frankie, Pearl, Rocky, and Peter Pan for shining a positive light and being such great ambassadors to our, and hopefully inspiring some future mushers!

The news footage can be seen on the WABI website: <http://wabi.tv/2016/03/08/sled-dogs-visit-students-in-canaan/>

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The kids were super excited, and went through 20 minutes of Q&A in the classroom and then it was time to go outside and meet the team, they even had the opportunity to become their own team! Valerie and crew had set up a 16 dog gangline to a double-driver sled. The kids took their places in lead, team and wheel, and they were off! By the end of their visit the kids had pulled the sled all over the playground and had a fan-

and positioned himself, ready to run, but a little confused by the appearance of the 2-legged team that had stolen his spot!



This was a great learning experience all around, for Valerie, Merry and Brittney, it was a great

A Message from the Kennel of the President

Greetings Highlanders,

I've been thinking about this winter compared to last, what a difference mother nature can make! We were lucky to hold two of the three scheduled snow events this past season, as many groups were forced to cancel races due to lack of snow. Such is the reality of dog mushing; it's not an indoor sport! We had a great turnout for Brownville- KI and Beyond, a big thanks to everyone who came out to help, and of course, the town of Brownville for their ongoing support. I want to thank some folks who have stepped up this past year, and taken on some club responsibilities. Darlene Farr and Julie Bjelko have taken over the twice a year newsletter, and have been doing an excellent job. Thanks to everyone

who contributed to the spring newsletter. Darlene and Julie will be looking for submissions from members for the fall. Sandy and Savannah have been managing the club store, this involves packing, unpacking, and hauling everything from one site to another, maintaining the inventory and keeping up on orders. Jan has taken control of the bibs and kids helmets, thanks Jan! So many others continue to work quietly behind the scenes to get things done, and several of you show up at the races just to help out, no job is too small when it comes to an all-volunteer sled dog club! We continue to be blessed with great club members. We'll be having our spring meeting in Newport at the American Legion Post again in April, check our website and Face-

book for date, time and agenda when available. We plan to have our annual summer auction and cookout in Brownville sometime in July. If you've never attended this event, please make an effort, you won't be disappointed, and you're guaranteed to take home something you didn't know you needed! Lastly, as most of you know, our club member and friend to many of you, Jeff McRobbie, was injured just minutes into his Can Am 30 mile race after he was hit by a snowmobiler on the trail. Please join me in wishing Jeff a speedy recovery. I'm sure we will see him at our spring meeting, and if you have a chance, ask him about how glad he was that he was wearing a helmet!

Respectfully, Jill Carter

Fundraising for a Friend



As we all have heard by now, our friend and fellow club member, Jeff

McRobbie was seriously injured when he was hit by a snowmobile during his Can-Am 30 race. Jeff has had to undergo emergency surgery to repair severe breaks in his arm, among other injuries.

Jeff has none the less forged ahead with a positive attitude and determination to get back on the trails.

A Go Fund Me online fundraiser has been set up to help Jeff in his

recovery. Any and every donation is greatly appreciated! Thank you!

The Sled Dogger Magazine has also graciously offered to provide ad space in an upcoming issue to promote a fundraiser for Jeff, so look forward to hopefully getting together for an event sometime soon!

The Go Fund Me link can be found on our website!
www.gofundme.com/hytafj2c

Skijorring in Fort Kent, by Jill Carter

Maine Highlands was represented by three skijorers at the Can Am Sled Dog Race this March, Jill Carter, Michele Chase, and Neil Fisher. I'll let the other two tell their own stories, here's my take on the experience. This was the second annual skijor event cosponsored by the Can Am race organization the Fort Kent Outdoor Center, a world class biathlon facility about two miles from the start of the famous sled dog races. I attend-

ed the skijor event last year also so I guess I was a returning veteran. Last year's race had the excitement only an inaugural event can have. Participants included families, skiers of all abilities, and a variety of dog types, including one of those large brown, fluffy Bouvier des Flandres. I think that was the only team I managed to pass last year. I had my "alligator" dog with me that year, but I think

even he knew this was special, and was on his best behavior. I was so proud of him! Anyway, as I looked around during that first awards ceremony/lunch break, I knew this race would never be like that again. And I was right. This year the competition was kicked up a notch or two. The hounds had arrived, and they brought the most excellent skiers with them.

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Skijorring in Fort Kent, cont'd.

In case you don't know much about skijor racing, I'll let you know that the pointer and pointer crosses rule the world of competitive skijoring, they're unbeatable....period. This will be good for the Can Am skijor races, and I have little doubt that this will become a world class competition.

There were two days of races this year. Saturday was at night as they have a 2.5K trail with lights, mostly. Note to self, run the dogs at night once on awhile



so they're not quite so freaked out by the darkness next time. Sunday went much better for me and my ski dog

Piper, still, 5K kicked us a bit. The first part of the trail was a blast, a gentle downhill, I felt like we were flying, and the turns were awesome! The last kilometer was a long one.

Just as I started scanning the side trails wondering if any were shortcuts back to the park-

ing lot, we hit the downhill again, cruising to the finish line. I've said it many times; skijoring is the most fun you can have with one dog! I think next year, unless they have a geriatric recreation class, I might be content to watch these magnificent two and four-legged athletes from the sidelines.



Basics & Beyond October 8-10, 2016 in Brownville

Basics & Beyond will once again be held in Brownville over Columbus Day Weekend. The dates have been confirmed and updated on the website. You can download the registration form to reserve a spot for your team... and don't delay, there are limited slots available!

This year's Basics will not disappoint! The organizers were very open to feedback after last year

(which was a stellar success!) and this year they hope to make it even better!

Never been to Basics & Beyond before, don't worry, newcomers of all experience levels are welcome. We learn from each other.

Been to Basics before? Come again! There is always something new to learn as mushers develop new tricks of the trade! You won't be

disappointed!

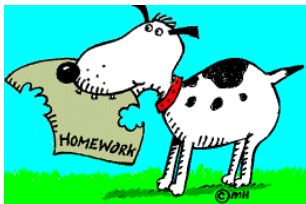
Most importantly, don't forget the non-negotiables! Here are the BIG 3 to not forget: 1. All dogs coming to Basics MUST be vaccinated prior to the event. 2. Each team MUST have a handler. 3. All teams MUST arrive and be set up and ready to go by the start time!

Don't miss out, register your team now! See you in October!!

Speak!

At the Fall meeting, the club voted to get some business card advertising started in order to spread the word and attract new members.

The order has been placed, and we should have a supply of business cards ready for distribution by the Spring



meeting. They will be bundled into small quantities, probably 25 per bundle. We invite you to take as many as you need to distribute in your area.

Places to think about are to leave a stack at your vet's office. Post them on community bulletin boards in local stores or

at your favorite Outfitter. It's never a bad idea to keep a few in your car or wallet to give out when you meet someone new. The cards have our website, and Facebook information on them including a QR code for smartphone users to get faster access to our website. The idea is to invite anyone and everyone to participate in our club and events.

A Session with Aquarius Animals

By Lindy Howe

Have you ever wondered what your team dog is thinking? Did you ever wonder if your wheel dog could talk what he might say? Have you ever thought that your lead dogs might be reading your mind before you even give a command? Paula Rowe, an animal communicator and owner of Aquarius Animals says all of this is possible. She knows, she does it for a business. A social worker by day and animal communicator by night. Paula is very busy fielding calls and emails from customers that need help with their pets.

Paula says that we all have the ability to “talk” with our animals. But it is not like you read in Dr. Doolittle. She likens it to playing the piano. Some people are born naturals while others who have the interest need to work hard and develop the skill over time. With this being said, I call Paula “the Beethoven of animal communicators”. The list of cases she has taken on grows each day. She has testimonies from many clients who have come to her in desperation with an issue they didn’t know how to solve.

Often times, concerned pet owners will call Paula because they have nowhere else to turn. Frequent requests include issues with food, soiling in the house, chewing, nervousness, shyness, aggression, jumping, attachment issues, and separation anxiety. With many animals being rescued from within the state and from out of state she has seen an increase with PTSD associated with travel and stress caused by fear of non-permanent placements.

Paula has now had the opportunity to work with sled dogs. She finds this work exciting because sled dogs are different in the way they want to run and pull and work together as a team. She noted that the energy flowing between them while they were pulling a sled was very powerful both physically and spiritually. She finds that some lines of dogs seem to be more spiritual. Generational messages passed down from many ancestors before can play a part in a huskies

belief system. For example she was called to Heywood Kennel Sled Dog Adventures to work with a very timid yearling named Salmon.

Paula is able to work with Salmon and other animals by connecting to their energy. This can happen in a few different ways. She is able to do it telepathically from a photograph which often allows her the quietness and relaxed atmosphere to get the most from her time with the animal. Sometimes pets are not used to people trying to connect with them at this level and it can make it more challenging to be in person. In the case of Salmon, Paula first connected to his energy through the use of a photo-



graph. She was able to share many things with us about him. This helped us make decisions on how to best handle his extreme shyness. Here is Salmon’s story.

Salmon comes from a long line of serious working dogs. The genetic messages passed down through the years has been that he would prefer not to be treated as a pet. In his mind, pets are lazy and he does not feel respected when he is coddled. This confuses him. It is in their bloodlines to be strong and powerful sled dogs. He also wanted to be respected as a spiritual soul. This particular line of dogs as well as many others that mushers own, have a strong sense of spirituality. He wanted to have less dogs around him in the kennel though he enjoyed playing with his bossy sister. He also showed Paula that he wanted to be a leader. Paula was able to relay

these messages to us so that we could make some changes to see if it would help.

Before hearing this feedback from Paula, we were quite unsure what we would do with Salmon. We tried to give him unwanted attention and talked in high voices to him to try and show him that we cared. We tried to “cure” him but in all the wrong ways. We didn’t run him a lot because he was so uncomfortable being handled. We were ready to give up. We were even worried that he might bite in a reaction of fear.

After receiving the first report on Paula’s findings we stopped the baby talk, ignored his behavior, moved his sister near him and started hooking him up in point as much as we were able to run. We normally would not put this shy a dog right up in point. Through Paula we learned that he wanted to prove himself as a leader. He responded so well in the front of the team that he was finally acting like a more “normal” dog. It was thanks to Paula’s initial communication with Salmon that showed us how to handle his shyness and give him the best chance for him to show us what he was all about. Because we were open to changing our ways, we were able to make him more comfortable and now we are able to handle him with greater ease. Salmon is still shy and we are working with him but he and Paula have a great relationship of mutual respect and he is willing to share more and more as we progress.

Salmon is just one of many examples of how Paula has been able to help other pet owners work with their animals. Paula has worked with many cats, dogs, horses and even goats. To learn more about Paula and her work you can read a full feature to be published this summer in the ‘Sled Dogger,’ on her Facebook page and she will be invited to the Heywood Kennel annual Mid-Sommar celebration in Augusta this June. If you or anyone you know are having an issue with a pet or are curious about how this works, she is taking on new clients.

Tragedy Inspires Courage at Iditarod

Our most followed races, the Can-Am Crown and the Iditarod are two races that are fraught with dangers... the elements, wild animals, injury to dogs or mushers along the trail. This year however, presented a not unknown but far more rare threat... people. Specifically reckless snowmobilers who posed a threat to the safety of mushers and dog teams on the trails.

Our own Jeff McRobbie suffered severe bodily injury when he was hit by a snowmobiler traveling on the Can Am trail at high speeds. Thankfully we are glad to report that Jeff was wearing a helmet, which likely prevented his injuries from being worse. We are also grateful that his dog team went unharmed.

What happened to Jeff was what we all thought an anomaly. Mushers have always shared trails with snowmobilers, and there are always risks when passing other teams or machines on the trails. We are cautious to a point and try to respect and appreciate that we are all winter sport enthusiasts.

Then came the Iditarod. The reports started coming through social media and news outlets that two teams that were hopefuls for the win had been "attacked" by a snowmobiler repeatedly while traveling the trail along the Yukon River. Shock coursed

through the mushing community. As the story unfolded we learned the snowmobiler had been driving drunk at very high speeds. Aliy Zirkle and Jeff King reported having been hostages to the snowmobiler on the trail. We are thankful that the offender was apprehended and jailed the next day.



The result of the traumatizing attack was the tragic loss of Nash, one of Jeff King's dogs, and multiple dogs with serious injuries that needed surgery and veterinary care.

Both Jeff King and Aliy Zirkle chose to stoically continue on their races. This shows guts and determination that we can all respect. Zirkle placed 3rd, King 9th, despite all odds turning against them that night, they brought their teams home, heads held high.

In a March 19 statement, Aliy Zirkle reminds us rather profoundly, that "I am angry with only one man. One of the most important aspects of racing the Iditarod to me, is the interaction with wonderful Alaskans across our state. I enjoy visiting all the villages along the trail and feel loved and supported during the Iditarod race and beyond."

With what happened to Jeff McRobbie hitting us so close to home and then to see the Iditarod athletes attacked it would be very easy for us as a community to blame snowmobilers, but it is so important for us to remember that these offenders are individuals and not the community of snowmobilers at large. We need to remind our community that the trails are there for us all to share and enjoy safely. So let us all be reminded to follow in Jeff

McRobbie's positive attitude and good example and wear helmets and to practice safety and caution when sharing the trails. If we do our part, hopefully those we share the trails with will as well, because the majority do.

We thank these mushers for being leaders in our community and examples of courage and good sportsmanship.

Plan Ahead for Spring Meeting

We hope to see everyone at Spring Meeting in Newport, it's a potluck, so bring a dish and come hungry!

Now is your opportunity to submit your nominations for our club awards to Valerie Parent. Nominations must be in writing submitted by email or at Spring Meeting April 17th.

The Leonhard Seppala Award is presented each year to a club member in

good standing who is a "leader in sportsmanship, outstanding in club participation, and presents a positive public image in the sport of dog sledging."

The Allan Thomas Good Sportsmanship Award. This award is presented annually to one club member in good standing who fulfills the following:

a. Performs an act of good sportsman-

ship at a TMHSDC race event.

b. A nomination in written form is presented to the club Vice President at the spring meeting.

2. The board of directors will meet prior to the fall meeting to select the recipient of the award from nominations.

3. If there are no nominations the award will not be presented.

Email: vrblackwidow@aol.com

HELP WANTED

TMHSDC is always looking for new ideas. If you have a special skill-set, from a background in design, interest in leading a master class, a desire to cook for crowds of hungry mushers, let us know! We would love your input and skill to be put to use at making our club better! Reach out and let us know what you want to bring to the club! Message us on Facebook, speak up during a club meeting, let us know... we may have never realized just how much we need you!



The Maine Highlands Sled Dog Club (TMHSDC) was formed in 2002 for all mushers, especially recreational mushers. We are a family-oriented club. Our “races” are fun get-togethers. We encourage all levels of mushers to join us. TMHSDC’s main focus is to provide a place to learn and to run with other teams. Kids are always welcome. We hold yearly educational events for dog care, kennel management, and hands-on training for dogs and mushers.

Wagging Tales

Many of us started the season with some great goals... some reached for the stars, others just hoped to stay on the trails while they worked with new leaders... so have we earned our treats for being good mushers?

Our hearty congratulations to all of our members who competed in the Can-Am Crown dog sled and skijor races, well done! And a high-five to our friend Rico Portalatin who back-flipped his way in to 3rd place in the 100!

We accomplished building an adapted standard dogsled for disabled mushers to get out on the trail with the doggies, we didn’t get to test run it since we lost the snow the weekend it was completed.—Joe Albee

The upcoming Recreational Mushing issue of the Sled Dogger Magazine is worth a look see! Our friend’s at Coppertop Kennel are featured and our own Brittney Robinson is highlighted as an up-incoming junior musher!

After 22 years of mushing we decided to change our interests and ended up placing all the puppies in awesome mushing homes —Lindy Howe

He did it! He really did it! Bingley, my 9 yo Brittany pulled a sled for the very first time with thanks to Savanna Rodrigue’s leader, Burgess and Heywood Kennel’s Colby College team building exercises. I am one proud Momma! —Julie Bjelko

