



The USDAA®

# OVERview™

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## Two ADCH Titles on the Same Day



From left, Barrie McBride, Boris, Nikki, and judge Lois Mark.

Photo by Amy Johnson of Great Dane Photos

On February 24, 2007 at the Minnesota Agility Club's trial, **Barrie McBride** earned an ADCH on each of her Siberian Huskies. Going into the competition, eleven-year-old **Nikki** needed one Standard leg, and **Boris**, who is nine, was lacking only a Q in Gamblers.

Nikki was up first and due to a miscommunication with a friend, McBride believed that she had faulted on her run. She said, "I was thinking that my mind was playing tricks on me, so I actually asked, 'Did I qualify?' When the positive reply came back, it hit me. We had done it, we had really done it. The old girl had finally finished!"

Four hours later, McBride stepped up to the line with Boris in the Gamblers ring. Although he did a beautiful gamble, a problem with the chute left McBride believing once again that she may not have qualified. But the score sheet confirmed that, with two points to spare, Boris had also completed the ADCH. McBride said, "After Boris finished, I was still experiencing some mixed emotions. It really was surreal. Had I really done this, had I really finished both dogs? Every time I passed by the accumulator sheets I stopped to look, worried that it was just a dream

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# Off the Leash

Here in the United States we have come to expect large events with a high level of competitiveness week in and week out. For the past few years, competitors from the United States have found their way to USDAA events in Puerto Rico and Bermuda, seeking a different experience. These groups present the same high quality events as found here in the United States. Some American competitors have found their way to these events on a recurring basis because they have found great pleasure in the warmth of foreign hospitality and in making new friends. With expansion of USDAA programs into other countries in the past year, new opportunities for American competitors are opening up.

In 2006, groups in Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Spain each decided it was time to join the USDAA community and began holding USDAA-licensed events with both titling and tournament classes. Just this past month, groups in Hong Kong and the Philippines signed on as affiliates after having weighed their options for two years or more. The leadership in each of these countries has undertaken the challenge of building a sport from the ground up, regardless of what it takes.

One of our challenges in working with overseas affiliates is to assure that our programs are properly understood and events are run in a suitable manner. As part of our agreement with these affiliates, through the early part of this year they have each held judging seminars in their own regions. These seminars were well-attended and their enthusiasm for the USDAA brand was apparent. Each seminar resulted in naming approved judges in each region. Throughout 2007, several judges from the United States will have the opportunity to serve as supervisors for the new local judges in those regions. There is no doubt that group organizers in these areas will continue to raise the bar for dog agility.

Our new international affiliates have made a full commitment to the USDAA program and we want to encourage competitors who might enjoy traveling abroad to consider visiting one or more of these events. Organizers are ready to welcome competitors from the United States with open arms and are sure to offer great local hospitality as well as assistance with transportation needs and tourist information. For more information about our international affiliates and upcoming events, please contact the USDAA office at [info@usdaa.com](mailto:info@usdaa.com).

Ken Tatsch, *President, USDAA*

## From the Editor

Now that we are well into spring, the USDAA agility season has kicked into high gear in many parts of the country. I hope to be reading reports from these events and adding them to the Subscriber Services news page on the USDAA Web site. You don't have to be part of the trial in an official capacity to share your observations with the USDAA community. If you can relay your experiences and those of others on a particular course or describe some unusual aspect of a certain event, I would love to hear from you. Please contact me at **[brennafender@gmail.com](mailto:brennafender@gmail.com)**.

Over the next few months I'll be working to continue offering subscribers a variety of articles to enjoy – from exercises to interviews to training tips and more. Suggestions are welcome!

Thanks for reading!

Sincerely,

Brenna Fender



# Talking With Katherine Elliott

**Katherine Elliott** and her two-and-a-half-year-old Jack Russell Terrier, **Whim**, won the 12” class of the 2006 Dog Agility Steeplechase Finals. Her three-and-a-half-year-old JRT, **Petey**, won the 16” class in the 2006 Grand Prix Semifinals round. She also owns two young Border Collies, **Maze AD**, and **Xtreme**, who doesn’t yet compete. Elliott and her pack live in Windsor, Colorado, and train both alone and with **Stacy Peardot-Goudy**.

—*B. Fender*

*BF: How did you prepare for the nationals in the weeks, days, and hours before your runs?*

KE: I did nothing different in the weeks before Nationals. In the days before, I took my time traveling out to Arizona from Colorado, had an awesome private lesson with Ronda Carter for Petey and Whim, and relaxed. In the hours before my runs, I watched some amazing runs and enjoyed the energy that is the USDAA Cynosport World Games. In the minutes before my runs, I tried not to touch my dogs so they wouldn’t feel how nervous I was!

*BF: Did you do anything different before your run in the finals?*

KE: I made sure to breathe, be calm, and tell myself that it was just another run to enjoy with my dogs. Also, I tried to soak up the great positive energy and vibes from crowd around me.

*BF: What agility skill do you find most difficult and how do you train that skill?*

KE: I think the agility skill that is most difficult to train is tight turns at speed. I start working on this skill as soon as my puppies have good toy drive and can pay attention for two to five minutes. I use a big cone to start and have my hand against their chest with their toy slightly in front of them around the cone. When they’re really pushing against my hand and driving for the toy, I let them go and



**Katherine and Whim**

*Photo courtesy of Saby Rochon, info@sportphotography.ca.*

drag the toy quickly around the cone with them following. Soon they understand the game and can be sent around the cone in either direction in a tight turn. Eventually, this translates to a jump standard, then to an actual jump, and then to a jump at speed, usually over a 12 to 18 month period, only rewarding when the dog gives me the tight turn I want. To me, this skill is made more difficult because it must be worked on constantly throughout the career of the dog in order to maintain criteria.

*BF: How did you train the weave poles?*

KE: The best way I’ve found to train the weave poles is by using channel weaves without guides. This way I don’t have to wean the dog off of the guides later on. I start with the poles about 18” apart and get the dog running through independently with speed. Then I slowly start moving the poles together, sometimes only 1/4” to 1/2” at a time, and

*Continued on page 4...*



# Help for Hearing Challenged Dogs in Agility

By Angelica Steinker M.Ed, CCBC

Those of us that train dogs with hearing problems know that we face unusual challenges. Some dogs seem to compensate better for lack of hearing than others.

Training a dog to turn *left* and *right* on a verbal cue when she is unilaterally deaf (deaf in just one ear) can take more time and require more proofing than with a hearing dog. Some handlers of unilaterally deaf agility dogs report that their dog prefers to turn in one direction

and that when rear crossing the dog would turn smoothly in one direction and spin in the other direction. In my own experience, I was able to work my uni, **Zoomie**, through this in both training and competition by using verbal cues left and right to assist him in turning the way my body was signaling.

Bilaterally deaf dogs (those who cannot hear at all) are trained using hand signals and can be very successful in agility. Stop, go, left, and right cues are all trained with hand signals. Handlers of deaf dogs state that only rarely do they face problems caused by their dogs' lack of hearing. Picking the dog up directly at tunnel and chute exits is

critical to prevent off courses.

If your dog is presenting you with some unusual training challenges, consider that she may be unilaterally deaf. One clue can be if your dog is able to find you if you are hiding from the dog. While out of view call the dog's name. If the dog is frantically searching but unable to find you based only on the sounds you are making, your dog may be unilaterally deaf. A visit with a veterinary neurologist who performs a BAER test can confirm the status of your dogs hearing.

**CLICK ON THE LNK BELOW to read the complete article.**

***Help for Hearing Challenged Dogs in Agility***

## Talking with...

*...continued from page 1.*

keep them at this width until the dog is moving through them again with the same accuracy and speed as before. This entire time, starting with the poles 18" apart or so, I start teaching entrances so that, by the time the poles are together, the dog is able to do round-the-clock entrances with 75-80% accuracy. The rest is just practice, practice, practice.

Also, since I reward with play after every single execution of the poles while I'm training, my dogs absolutely love the weave poles, and they are one of their favorite obstacles.

*BF: What area in performance do you feel you still have some work to do in order to further refine your performance of the obstacles?*

KE: I still battle mostly with jumps. Giving my dogs the correct path, cueing them properly to make sure they know where they're going, teaching them how to jump correctly in the first place, and so on. I think this is why I enjoy Jumpers courses so much. They're a huge challenge at very fast speeds. They're a great ride!

*BF: What is your proudest accomplishment in training?*

KE: My dogs' weave poles! They are all fast and accurate and obsessed with them. They love the weave poles and I sometimes call them "weave pole suckers" rather than "tunnel suckers." Both my Jack Russells whine and scream when they are going through their weave poles.

**CLICK ON THE LINK BELOW to read the complete interview.**

***Talking With Karen Elliott***



# Supporting Youth Agility

## A Special Youth Outreach Program at Canine Agility of Central Minnesota

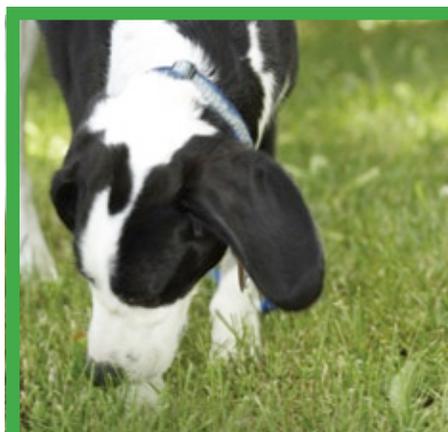
By Leona Hellesvig

A Minnesota agility club is making a difference for troubled youth in their community through participation in the USDAA Junior Handler Program. This is not a case of a club hosting a fund-raising trial where the profits are donated to charity. Instead, the club is reaching out to kids and allowing the experience of participation in agility to be “medicine” for them.

The medicine comes in many forms: pet-assisted therapy through taking agility classes; forming meaningful relationships with dogs loaned to the kids by club members, with each other, and with adult trainers in the program; and showing in a USDAA trial in the Beginner/Elementary class levels.

The achievements of these kids are remarkable. The beginner agility title that many of them earn is actually the smallest part of their achievement—the kids gain very much more than that. Through the program, some have learned to manage their anger. Some have learned to lead. All have learned to communicate more clearly with both their dog and the adult trainers in the program. They also gain acceptance and love that is often lacking at home (for many, that is the main reason they were referred to the program). They gain self-esteem and experiences that will last a lifetime.

Read an interview with Canine Agility of Central Minnesota member and program participant Betty Johnson by visiting [http://usdaa.com/sub\\_article.cfm?newsID=460](http://usdaa.com/sub_article.cfm?newsID=460)



### Looking for more?...

Sign up for Subscriber Services at [www.usdaa.com](http://www.usdaa.com) and enjoy expanded versions of many *OVERview* stories and much more! These articles have appeared in recent months.

#### **APD Judy, the FHO Wonder Dog**

By Adrienne McLean

Some agility competitors climb enormous obstacles to reach their agility goals.

#### **Obstacle and Discrimination Practice**

By Leona Hellesvig

Several practice options based on the same course layout. Focused on discrimination and obstacle performance.

#### **Clumbers in USDAA Agility**

By Judy Hiller

These unlikely agility candidates have a great time on course.

#### **Make Your Own Dog Treats**

With the recent pet food recalls, you might be looking for training treats you can make yourself. Here are some to try!

## Two ADCHs

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and the next time I looked the Qs next to their names would be gone.”

McBride is obviously a talented trainer, having completed such a challenging title on two Huskies. She offered a few training tips to other competitors: “Never be afraid to ask for help—there is always someone out there with more knowledge than you. Don’t make excuses for your dog based on his breed; every dog can be trained, some will just require more creativity and energy than others. And when you are shopping for a trainer, if you find one that discourages you based on your breed, don’t bother wasting your time or money on that trainer. Keep looking.”

—B. Fender

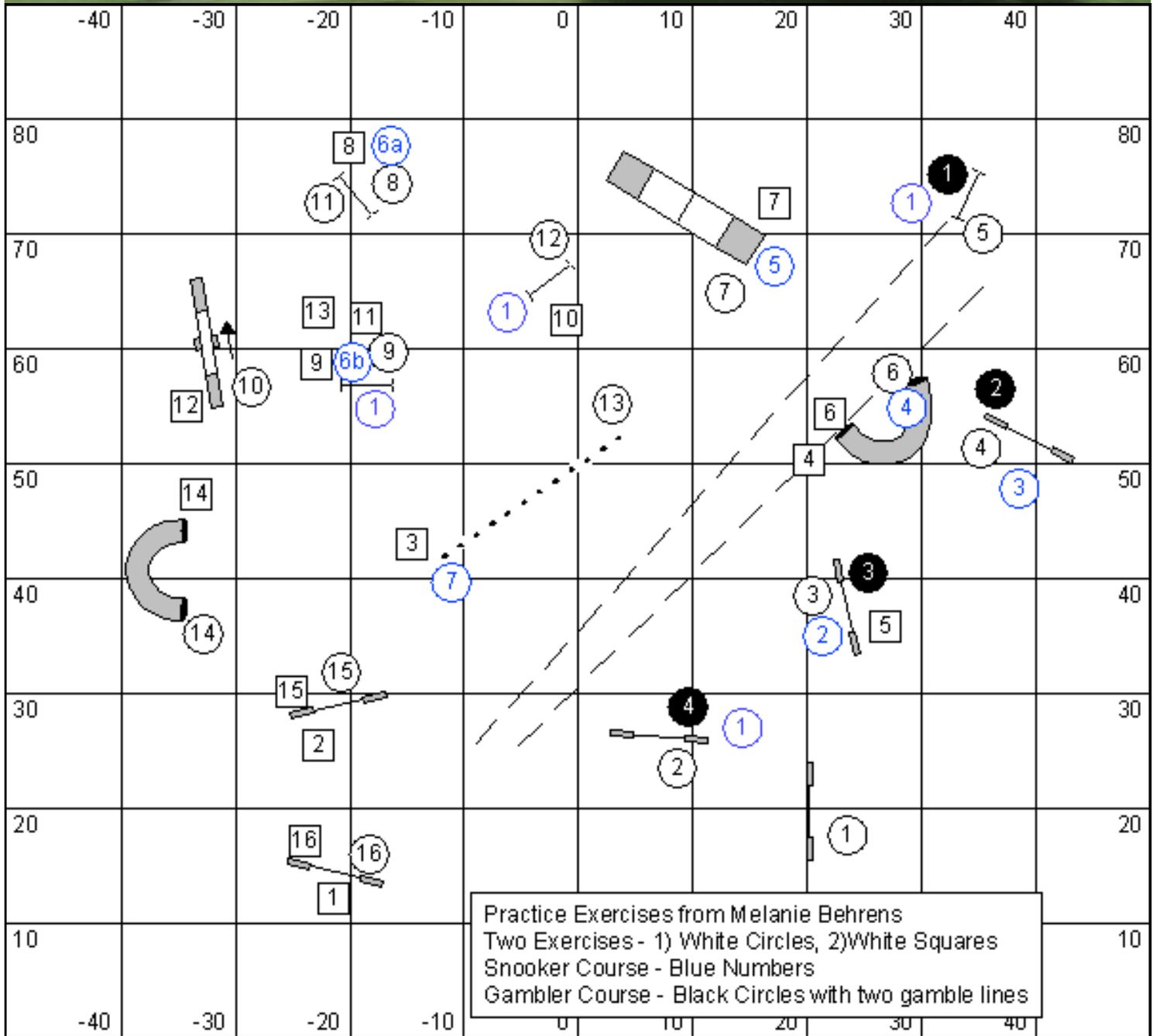
CLICK ON THE LINKS BELOW for the complete two-part interview. McBride, Part I McBride, Part 2

## TRAINING CORNER

# All-Four-One Training Course

Two standard practice courses, a gamblers course, and a snooker course, all without moving the obstacles!

— M. Behrens



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