

STAR Pilot Program: Harkins House Summer Class

This document is not intended to be a detailed description of final class content. It is a quick overview for those of you who are unfamiliar with STAR, and a high-level description of what we will cover in the July pilot at the pre-adjudication juvenile detention facility in downtown Hillsboro.

With your contributions we will have a more detailed plan in place before the end of this week. Each of you has valuable experience that can help us to not only do a great job for Harkins House, but also take full advantage of this pilot opportunity to explore content and presentation methods for the final STAR program.

Review Section

What is STAR?

At the request of the Washington County Multidisciplinary Task Force dealing with the strong link between domestic violence and animal abuse, task force member Linda Keast has pursued the development of the See, Tag And Reward (STAR) program as a component of its ground-breaking Children and Animals Protection Program (CAPP).

STAR focuses on “deprogramming” children affected by domestic violence. While there are excellent examples on which STAR can draw (read the description of SHIP in San Francisco at (<http://www.clickertraining.com/node/315>)) there are significant differences – primary among which is that STAR uses carefully screened dogs (therapy dogs and Canine Good Citizen graduates) rather than shelter dogs. There is also a heightened focus on building in support for the therapists’ efforts to nurture empathy and problem solving skills – but it is done under the guise of “training a dog to do tricks” in a positive and satisfying way.

Target Participants

- Children who have witnessed or been a victim of domestic violence and their families.
- NOT to include abusers (children or adults), who will be referred to Ani-Care-trained counselors.
- Children in Washington County schools who have been identified by counselors as “at risk”.

Core Focus

- Mastery of STAR training – half of the time will be playing clicker games (training each other), half of the time working with dogs
 - Operant conditioning – critical timing of “tag”, frequency and desirability of reward, consistency of task criteria
 - Breaking complex tasks into manageable steps which, once learned, can be chained to create the full sequence
- Empathy (recognizing the feelings of others, learning to care, self-control, building ties)
 - How to “speak dog” and why this matters
 - By inference, reading humans – topic to be picked up later by therapist/teacher
 - Importance of maintaining a calm and positive state while training
- Promotion of a positive Future Orientation – “things can improve and I can make it happen”
- Literacy – provide content that encourages tie-in activities that the Teacher/Counselor can use to reinforce concepts. Example: write/design a dog-safety video for kids
- Balance and restorative justice – foster opportunities for participants to use new skills/knowledge to “do good things”. Example: Train the dog to act in a dog-safety video for kids; train goats in behaviors that make them easier to care fo.

Who is sponsoring STAR?

Bonnie Hays Small Animal Shelter and the multi-disciplinary task force described above. Delta Society is explicitly NOT a sponsor, except in that STAR honors their screening of therapy teams. After much discussion, it was determined that their insurance coverage did not cover activities that involved teaching. However thanks to kind supporters, STAR and its volunteers ARE covered by liability insurance. Policy details are available on request. We will also have the usual liability waivers for all participants to sign.

Where are we in the developing the program?

It is understood that we are in the learning stages of developing the curriculum, and STAR volunteers are spending several months learning the most effective content, pacing, etc. for the various age levels.

- At the end of May, STAR ran a 4-class pilot with twelve “empathy impaired” 2nd and 3rd grade students at McKay Elementary school. The counselor very much wants to add this class as an ongoing part of her toolkit next year. Linda Keast and Eli were the STAR team, Gillian Dyllal was the McKay counselor, and we were assisted by four LEP High School students as part of their senior project. The class taught Eli how to ride a skateboard, find earthworms, and jump through a hoop.
- STAR has been signed up by the Washington County Juvenile Department to run two concurrent series of classes, 7-8 classes each series, at Harkins House Juvenile Detention Center at 244 W. Main Street Hillsboro, Oregon 97123 (<http://www.co.washington.or.us/Juvenile/HarkinsHouse/>), during the month of July. These two series will be our pilot for kids 12-17.

Harkins House Pilot

There will be two separate sets of students, an A set and a B set, split by ages. The A set will meet Monday and Wednesday, and the B set will be Tuesday and Thursday. Each class will last 40 minutes (10:45 am to 11:20 am). The population of Harkins House varies constantly, but there are never more than 18 kids total (nine per set), all between the ages of 12 and 17. We have asked that the kids be grouped by age if possible.

Dates:

Week	Set A (Mon, Wed)	Set B (Tues, Thurs)
One	July 6	July 5, 7
Two	July 11, 13	July 12, 14
Three	July 18, 20	July 19, 21
Four	July 25, 27	July 26, 28
Field trip	Friday, July 29	

Their final project will be a field trip to the Silver Creek Animal Sanctuary to help the caretakers train goats in behaviors that will make their care easier.

Volunteers

The core STAR team will be class organizer Linda Keast and her over-sized Papillon Eli (Delta-certified and clicker-savvy). In addition, the following volunteers have indicated an interest and will be (at a minimum) “featured guests” on pre-determined days:

- Barbara Stone (a social worker) and her bearded collie Brin (recently TDI-registered and clicker-savvy)
- Suzi Waki, a dog training professional and skilled clicker-trainer who works with Project POOCH and her clicker-savvy golden retriever, perhaps introducing Nosework;
- Susan Fletcher, a dog training professional and skilled clicker trainer, and her spiffy rescued, clicker-savvy Chihuahua mix Speedy; perhaps introducing Flyball; also well-mannered Chinooks!
- Cheryl Vanlac (a Juvenile Services administrator), and her Bernese Mtn. Dog Baron (CGI-certified); NOT clicker-trained, perhaps introducing Drafting (Baron just got his novice title)
- Barbara Aleskus and her beautiful standard poodle (Delta-registered and active in competitive obedience) – NOT clicker-trained, but a good example of other positive training methods
- Christina Arth, President of the Animal Aid Board of Directors (willing assistant).

STAR volunteers WILL NOT need a criminal background check, but I will need to let the staff know who to expect each day.

What do we have to work with

Classes will be held outside in a covered sports area immediately behind the building and next to the parking area. An interior room will be made available if needed (e.g., weather or to watch videos). We will be working with counselor **Carol Anderson, MSW**, who will be present at each class and will see that we have as needed:

- A white board
- Places to hang posters
- Ability to play videos from DVDs
- Possibly storage area for frequently-used props

Additional props provided by Linda Keast, but for use by all:

- Pepe, a stuffed black standard poodle, complete with collar and leash
- Plenty of clickers
- Five treat-bags of various types
- Beans to practice treating with
- Light-weight ball (bounce for clicker-timing practice; play “soccer”, etc.)
- “people treats” pre-cleared with the staff (jelly bellies, m&ms, skittles), and clean cups to carry them in
- Skateboard
- stopwatch

Harkins House Guidelines for Volunteers

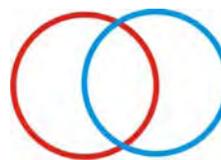
Suggested arrival time for volunteers: 10:15, to allow adequate set-up time. There is a sign-in/out paper at the front desk. We are asked to sign in when we come and sign out when we leave!.

Dress code: “Just be a bit conservative. Shorts are ok, but with a longer inseam..A thick strapped tank/sleeveless tee would be alright, but nothing that reveals cleavage or bra straps. Midriff must always be covered. No logos glamorizing drugs or alcohol, etc.”

Homework: No, except in what the counselor can roll incorporate into other classes.

Proposed Pattern for Introduction of Concepts

- Dogs are not toys, and they’re not little people – but we DO have a lot in common....
- (name a shared trait or reaction) (center of Venn diagram)
 - But here’s how dogs show it / see it
 - And here’s how people show it / see it (matter-of-factly mention but DON’T DWELL. Leave the door open for the therapist / teacher to pick this up later)
- **Why this matters** (particularly during training and dog safety portions)



Example: We both communicate what we think and feel ALL THE TIME. BUT humans use words and body movements, and dogs use mostly body movements and smell. **Lots** of discussion points on this one – spend time because it is key to “reading” a dog’s reaction.

Example: We both learn “manners” when we are young that help us avoid problems as we get older. BUT what are good manners for a human (e.g., greeting behavior of direct approach, strong eye contact, extended hand) is VERY RUDE to a dog (describe a polite dog greeting). Discuss what might happen because of this and possible solutions.

- Use bulletin board / blackboard that stays in place during full set of visits so that concepts can build on each other.

Proposed Class Sequence

Weekly pattern:

- First class of the week – introduce a topic (divide time between listening and active activities)
- Second class of the week – Review and expand on topic; guest dog highlighting topic and cool things that people can do with dogs (divide time between listening and active activities)

Order of concept presentation:

Each week will build on prior weeks; **training concepts should use examples from some aspect of a dog's life/needs** (e.g., health/safety, need to be with the “pack”, prey/play drive, etc.) with a mild allusion to how this is the same/different from humans so counselor can follow up outside class. **With guest dog, review “reading emotions” criteria, suitable motivators, and safe manners with new breed. Learn that dog's story, how it affects its training, and how the trainer is working with it now based on that dog's Personality / past / physical capabilities. Does NOT need to be clicker-based, just positive.** In my case, for instance, I hope to build on Eli's trick-set based on scent – he can spell and do math, and I'm going to suggest other variants for the group to train.

- Week 1: Introductions; give goal of creating a video (show sample); introduce clicker training AFTER explaining why it's needed (A clicker is NOT a remote control, but rather a “universal communicator”.)
FIRST CLASS (see class 1 script)
 - “Dogs are not toys, and they aren't little people”. Differences in how they perceive the world, how they communicate, acceptable “manners”, things that make them unhappy, and how this affects the role of a trainer.
 - Reading Eli's body language
 - Introduce clicker training and give simple demo of to teach Eli a new behavior without saying a word.
 - End with everyone practicing meeting Eli with proper manners, and (“Eli, eyes” and “high-five”)

SECOND CLASS (see class script 2)

- Review things that make a dog unhappy
- Review Eli's body language; what do we do if we see he's getting uncomfortable? BACK OFF.
- Clicker training in more depth – importance of timing, consistency of reward,
- Clicker games (Eli in crate)
- Week 2: Review clicker concepts; review reading dogs' emotional state, introduce different ways of eliciting clickable behavior (capturing, shaping, luring, targeting) and why you might choose one over another. Specific focus on how dogs “see” the world vs. how people do (emphasis on scent in preparation for Eli's scent-based tricks). Students to work in groups of 2-3 (one to be tag, one to reward, one to either be “trainee” or to evaluate/log/time training of dog; rotate roles). Each team will select a behavior/trick to teach Eli for use in the video. Eli's training sessions will be no more than 5 min/trick, with a break in between.
- Week 3: Adding cues, fading targets, intermittent reinforcement. Introduce chaining to get complex behaviors; how to break down a task into trainable steps; continue working with Eli, adding to behaviors indicated. Guest dogs add to the picture by showing how that trainer broke down their dog's task in a manner appropriate for that particular dog.
- Week 4: Final training of Eli, possibly doing a show for family or staff; possibly filming the video. Plan for Sanctuary trip to train goats – why this will be a valuable contribution, target behaviors and breaking them down into steps, choosing appropriate reinforcers, duration of training sessions (answer: short), frequency of sessions, how to track how each assigned goat is doing.