

Carol Manley The Wizard of Dogs



WRITTEN BY CARA LANZ
PHOTOGRAPHED BY JEFF COLLINS

CAROL MANLEY IS THE STUDENT THAT BECAME THE MASTER. Known as the Canine Tutor, Carol is an expert dog trainer. But she started out like the rest of us. "I've probably had every problem everybody's had. I had a big rammy Lab and I needed help. So, I went and got help," she explained.

At class, she was fascinated by how well-trained the other dogs were. She wondered how their owners got them that way—and if she could do it, too. "That's what started me down the road," she said.

That same sense of wonder, but a different dog, introduced Carol to

canine massage. When her Bernese Mountain dog was recovering from two torn ACLs, she realized it was compensating for its injuries, causing tight joints and painful tendonitis. Carol explained, “The surgeon gave me great rehabilitation instructions to get her back end up and running. Nobody said to keep the rest of the dog running.”

After learning basic pet massage techniques, Carol enjoyed helping her dog and realized the service would be a good complement to her dog training business.

From 2006 to 2008, Carol completed intense training and apprentice work to achieve her certification for canine sports massage. Today, she offers her services to competition dogs and pets alike, ranging from four-pound papillons to 180-pound Great Danes.

“I work with a lot of people who are preparing to compete,” Carol said. “I also do agility trial massages in St. Cloud, Little Falls, and Duluth. Sometimes I have to advise people to pull their dog from competition if I see the potential for permanent injury if they continue to run their dogs.”

She’ll even pick up on injuries pet owners aren’t aware of. “When I’m watching dogs in my obedience classes, I’ll pull someone aside and say, ‘Do you know your dog is dragging its rear foot?’ and give them a cursory check and tell them they should see their vet,” she noted.

When Carol knows massage isn’t the answer, she has an arsenal of professionals she recommends including veterinarians, chiropractors, and acupuncturists. “I know when to say this is beyond my pay grade.” She added, “I’m not going to take a chance and risk a dog having an injury because I didn’t do my part when I saw something beyond my abilities.”

But make no mistake, she has an abundance of abilities that make a difference in dogs’ lives. Like the ability to help unlock a dog’s jaw that was so tight it couldn’t fit a ball in its mouth. Or assist a dog, who couldn’t walk due to a “spinal stroke” eventually regain the ability to walk, swim, and even steal chocolate cake off the counter again.

“Knowing the dog has a better quality of life makes my heart soar.

We tend to let older dogs lay there, but they really don’t want to, they want to be active, they want to go on walks—it’s whether or not they can,” Carol explained.

And in return, the dogs seem to appreciate her assistance. Cats? Not so much. “I tried massage on my most mellow cat and he was into it for about five minutes,” she chuckled. “I’ve seen people do cat massage where they can turn them into Gumby. My hat’s off to them because I can’t get my cats to do that.”

So, she’s sticking to helping dogs—through training and massage—and the people who love them, even if they expect a bit too much from them sometimes. She explained, “People come to me and say, ‘I’m going to make this dog perfect.’ You can always shoot to do better, but it’s a dog. If you expect it to be perfect, that’s just not going to happen. Some days they’re rock stars and some days they’re pistols.”

“I embrace the crazy side of it,” she said with a laugh. “It keeps us humble.” 🐾

Carol’s training tips

Every dog should know sit, down, come, and settle. “Settle means I need you to turn off so I can handle your feet or tail, check your mouth, pull off a tick, or let a vet or groomer do their job,” Carol said.

A new dog, young or old, should exhibit trustworthiness before getting freedom in the house while you’re gone. Essentials include potty training, crate training, having a schedule, and following the rules of the house.

Don’t let your puppy develop bad habits—they’ll carry them on to adulthood. Puppies can enroll in Carol’s puppy training class as young as 12 weeks.

Dogs in public aren’t for everyone to pet. Some dogs don’t want to be approached. Ask for permission first.

Taking home two litter mates can lead to co-dependent dogs that can never be separated if they aren’t trained individually. Carol suggests getting one dog at a time.

To enroll in classes or schedule a massage, contact Carol Manley at 218.828.8656. Carol’s pet classes include puppy, beginner obedience, and advanced pet class.

