

Huge success for local vet's dogs in AKC competitions

By **Jodi Schneider**
Correspondent

Dr. Little Liedblad of Broken Top Veterinarian Clinic has been involved with competitive dog training for over 15 years. She's traveled the country with her dogs, Suture, Kanga, and Kiva to American Kennel Club (AKC) shows.

Liedblad got excited about obedience and agility training when Suture, a female Australian cattle dog, came into her life nearly two decades ago. It took time, commitment and TLC to understand what it took to train a dog for AKC competitions.

Liedblad said, "I have always wanted to "do things with my dogs, and I started training at Debrut's K-9 Country with Lori Nickerson in 2003 with Suture, first in obedience and then with agility and rally."

Rally, obedience and agility have their own unique properties in AKC competitions, but they have one similarity in they all have beginning, intermediate and then advanced levels of competition for where and how you receive awards and titles. Rally consists of following signs within a competition ring and completing the written command with accuracy and speed. Obedience initially mimics Rally with the beginning novice class following signs and then graduation to progressively more complex classes where a judge gives you verbal or physical commands for you to follow and be judged on your accuracy in performing those skills.

Agility is a sport where you and your dog complete an obstacle course, of which there are several different variations.

Suture's first agility title was won in the summer of 2005. Their first major AKC award was the RAE or Rally Advanced title in 2011. Following that, Suture and Liedblad were awarded the MACH, or Mastery Agility

Championship. They then earned the UDX title, or Utility Dog Excellent award.

Liedblad said, "During the early years of training, I thought I was good, but I knew so little about dog training. It has taken so many years of training and more training to fully understand how little I really knew."

While training Suture back in 2009, a friend of Liedblad's called to ask her if she had seen the cattle dog on a rescue website in Bend.

"I hadn't seen the dog but, being persistent, Donna sent me a photo link to Kanga, and I could not resist contacting the rescue home and the next week," Liedblad said. "Ten-month-old Kanga came home with me."

Kanga's lessons began upon arrival. Her competitive streak kicked off in 2010, when her friend Debbie put a rally novice title on her over a weekend.

She noted, "With Debbie's love and support, the training and showing in AKC sports continued."

Kanga has over 20 various obedience, agility and rally titles including a UDX, a RAE, and an Advanced Trick title, which allows you to demonstrate 5 expert tricks based upon your mutual strengths.

"The AKC is one of many clubs that put on or support dog sports," Liedblad told *The Nugget*. "As there are so many clubs and so little time,

I chose the AKC as my venue of choice early on and have been true to them ever since."

Kiva is a nine-year-old Belgian malinois, a purebred, that Liedblad received from a friend, and Kiva began competing with her in 2012.

Liedblad said, "Kiva now has a UDX or utility dog title, a RAE, and a Trick Dog title. Kiva also recently received her first PACH, or Preferred Agility Championship title this year!"

Kanga, Kiva and Liedblad are excited to be going to their second agility invitational event in Orlando, Florida this December.

"This is an elite invitation and to have two dogs going is pretty exciting."

Only the top five ranked agility dogs in each of the 173 AKC recognized breeds are invited to attend this prestigious event.

About five years ago the AKC launched a new title called the Agility Grand Champion Award. It is a title designed to celebrate the lifetime achievement of dogs that excel across all AKC agility classes – the Agility Grand Champion (AGCH).

"Kanga and I received her AGCH on August 17, 2019!"

Kiva may be on her way to earning the same title – but Liedblad noted that it will probably take another year of training for her.

She said, "On a daily basis I thank the relationship I have with my dogs. It is a bond



PHOTO BY JIM CORNELIUS

Dr. Little Liedblad (center) and her dog Kanga are well known to dog-lovers in Sisters.

and a sharing that cannot be duplicated. Each dog gives you something special.

"Agility, I am sure, is an addiction. The gratification of a beautiful run. The laughter and the sharing and the failures are often as rewarding as the grand win."

Liedblad added, "For

Kanga, perhaps another grand champion award or maybe we will stay with our feet more on the ground and begin working on more complex Rally titles that the AKC has put into play. Doesn't really matter, as long as we are all playing together!"

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