

MUSH!

No snow? No problem for Ocean Park woman

By LYNDA LAYNE
For EO Media Group

OCEAN PARK, Wash. — Tamra Kellogg loves the sport of dryland mushing and so do her four Siberian huskies.

Recognized worldwide, this activity is applauded for being an effective way to keep high-energy dogs mentally and physically fit.

While Kellogg might eventually compete in dryland mushing events in the Northwest, for now, it is strictly a recreational endeavor for her team. Not only does it benefit her “Sibs” or “pups,” as she calls them, it also gives her much-needed breaks from her work-at-home business of medical transcription.

The dogs get so excited when they know they’re going mushing, Kellogg has had to develop a quick system of harnessing, hooking up and taking off. Otherwise, “They just go nuts,” she said.

Whether she leaves directly from their Ocean Park home or loads the dogs in her van for a short trip to another starting spot (Leadbetter State Park is a favorite), Kellogg is sure to have the cart and ganglines ready. It only takes her about 45 seconds to “hook them up and get going.”

Started with one husky

Eight years ago, Kellogg made the decision to get a Siberian husky. At that time, she wasn’t aware of rescue groups. Searching Petfinder.com, she found a breeder in Wisconsin who had one pup left from a litter.

“I saw pictures of her and just knew she was mine,” Kellogg recalled. The breeder, in turn, said she didn’t understand why this pup was the last of the litter, because she was one of that breeder’s favorites. Kellogg responded, “She was waiting for me.”

Kellogg named the pup “Sassy,” Sass for short, and knew it would be quite a task to get her from Wisconsin to Ocean Park. The first step was booking a spot on a flight, with the rules being that this 13-week-old puppy wouldn’t be allowed to travel unless the cargo area was above a certain temperature. Luckily, they made it at 1 degree over. “Otherwise,” Kellogg recalled with a sigh of relief, “I wouldn’t have been able to get her here.”

Sass begins bikejoring

As Sass grew, Kellogg began harnessing her and using a towline to have her pull a mountain bike. The sport, called bikejoring, is a nonsnow mushing activity done as recreation or in some cases used off-season to train sled dogs for racing. Although Sibs are commonly used for this activity, many other breeds also adapt well to it.

Bikejoring characteristically takes place on cross country jaunts, on soft trails, but Kellogg took advantage of the Long Beach Peninsula’s beaches. And about the time Sass was 18-months old, Kellogg thought, “It would be so cool to have two dogs, on a long, flat beach.”

Enter a rescue named Karma

By this time, Kellogg had become familiar with dog rescue groups. She contacted a woman named Deb Blake at Harbor Rescue in Aberdeen. Blake had a Siberian husky named Karma who might be a perfect fit for Kellogg’s pet family. Blake brought the dog for a meet-and-greet to the Humane Society in Long Beach and Kellogg smiled when she recalled, “Of course, Karma came home with me the same day.”

Karma settled in to her new home in Ocean Park and it wasn’t long before she proved her strength.

“She could pull a semi-truck,” Kellogg said, smiling, adding that was, of course, an exaggeration. “But she has power like you would not believe. I call her my bull in a China closet, because of her forceful personality.”

And then came Clutch

From the same rescue group as Karma, along came Clutch, who quickly showed his new owner his unique personality. While most Sibs use a howling-type voice, somewhat like the call of a wolf, Clutch prefers barking. And he is the only one of the pack that is a true foodie. He gets excited about each meal. He is currently on a weight-loss program, because his X-back harness has become a bit snug.

And last, but not least, Mars.

Another Sib also found himself in a transitional state. Mars was in a shelter in Wenatchee. Through a woman named Tanya Quaranta, who coordinates a lot of rescues, this dog also came to Kellogg’s Ocean Park home. He was just over a year old when he arrived.

Basic training

“Each time I got a new dog, I would take them out on walks and teach them the commands,”



Tamra Kellogg often passes curious onlookers, both human and canine, during her dryland mushing runs around Ocean Park. She’s working on getting her dogs to ignore distractions. She says, “They’re getting better.” Three of these four dogs came from rescue organizations. Front, from left to right, are Karma and Mars. Back, left to right, Clutch and Sassy. The only one Kellogg purchased as a puppy from a breeder is Sassy.



Lynda Layne/For EO Media Group
Clutch models his padded X-back harness. This style, Kellogg says, is comfortable for the dogs and allows more pulling power. Clutch is a foodie and Kellogg says they’re working on a weight loss program, so his harness will soon fit better.

explained Kellogg. Wearing a harness and leash, the dogs would learn that, “Hike (in place of mush) means to go. Gee is right. Haw is left.” Stay straight, she said, means just that.

And in the basic training mode and even now, when they all pull a cart, distractions get their attention and Kellogg has to stress to them that they have to, “Go by!” or “Leave it!”

They’re certainly not aggressive dogs. “They’re just so friendly, they want to be in the middle of everything, like when we go out and there are people walking or riding bikes, or dogs being walked,” she said.

Now that they’re so fit, if they’re fresh, they’re a handful, Kellogg said. If she harnesses them and attempts to just walk with them right from her house, “They forget they’re not on the cart and just want to go. They’re too strong now.”

She has to get them tired first, before walking can be successful. “Unless they’re worn out, they’re too strong to just walk with. But if I’m out on the beach mushing with them and we’ve gone for, say, a mile, I can unhook them from the ganglines and we can walk for a while.”

Dogs before the cart

Kellogg’s first cart didn’t have brakes, like the two newer carts she has now. It was, in fact, inadequate in many ways and she wishes she would have known more about what to look for when she purchased it. And, because dryland mushing dogs are driven without the aid of leashes or reins, four powerful dogs in front of a cart can be a bit daunting. For example, Clutch is a big boy, 95 pounds. But Kellogg said, “It’s not the weight that gets me. It’s their pull power. They’re just extremely powerful.”

With that first cart, Kellogg never sat or stood



Lynda Layne/For EO Media Group
Even though it weighs in at 118 pounds, this cart is balanced enough to roll to the hitch and rack on the back of Kellogg’s van. It is raised up and secured for transport.

on it. “I walked behind it and held on, while the dogs worked.” They had some weight behind them, so weren’t apt to pull her off her feet. “We just walked for up to 4 miles. They learned that way and got good exercise.”

Eventually, Kellogg had brakes put on that first cart, but said they weren’t strong enough.

Not like the two carts she has now. The one she has been using for about three years weighs 118 pounds and has strong brakes. Manufactured by a company called Artcis, Kellogg purchased it, lightly used, from a man in Kentucky. The brakes, she said, “are great.” She could put six dogs on that cart, “and still be able to stop them. It’s got dual brakes and a bigger brake in the back with a lever that goes down. I usually use that when I stop, so the dogs can’t take off.”

Cart No. 3

Because Kellogg does see a distant future of competing with her dogs, she recently had a wide-tired cart made by local welder, Bob Girouard of Bay Machine Works on Sandridge in Nacotta. “It’s more of a race cart,” she explained. “It’s super good for racing and beach runs in the sand or snow.” Kellogg printed out a photo of a commercial “fat tire race cart” to show Girouard. “He’s a super nice man and he knows his stuff! He said, ‘Yup, we can make something like that.’”

Following mushing groups on Facebook and doing a lot of research is helping her learn about the competition part of the sport, but she said she still has a lot to learn and for now, her business workload is too heavy to even consider getting away on weekends, when most events are held.

Soon, there might be six

Kellogg has a friend in Surfside, Kathy Pres-

ton, who has three Sibs. Preston has purchased harnesses for two of her dogs. Kellogg has extra ganglines. She hopes to soon start working Preston’s dogs with her own. “We just have to get together,” Kellogg said.

Preston and Kellogg have mulled over someday starting a Siberian husky rescue organization. Until she started searching listings, “I really had no idea how many Sibs need to be rescued. It almost breaks my heart,” Kellogg confessed.

S’no joke, they’re snow dogs

Because Kellogg was born and raised in Idaho and has been on the peninsula for 11 years, she understands how her Sibs feel about rain, versus snow.

“They’re snow dogs and they think they’re allergic to rain,” Kellogg joked. When they’re out mushing, the dogs are busy and focused and don’t seem to be as worried about the wet stuff. But when they’re in their backyard, “they don’t utilize their dog houses. They just want to be inside the house with me. I’m really glad that I work at home, because they can be.”

After a mushing run, Kellogg will sometimes bring the dogs inside. She said they’ll assume positions on the floor, sometimes roll over, bellies exposed, and just stare at her adoringly as if to say, “We love you, Mom.”

When they’re out working

Regardless of where Kellogg takes the dogs on mushing runs, she said people take photos, shoot videos and many give her a thumbs up.

On one of her beach runs, a local photographer named Rob Matthews shot a picture as Kellogg drove the Sibs near the water. She didn’t know about it at the time, but Matthews put the photo on canvas, titled it, “Ocean Park Dog Sledder,” and left it at Full Circle Cafe for its owner Colleen Smith to give to Kellogg. Smith did just that and Kellogg treasures that picture.

One day, Kellogg said she was, “out mushing with the pups. We went by Colleen’s restaurant. Everybody inside waved and had big smiles on their faces. It’s so cool to see people so happy and amazed with the pups, while they’re doing what they love.”

‘She could pull a semi-truck. But she has power like you would not believe. I call her my bull in a China closet, because of her forceful personality.’

Tamra Kellogg
dryland musher

Coast River BUSINESS JOURNAL
Chronicling the Joy of Business in the Columbia-Pacific Region
Volume 10 - Issue 1
January 2015

FREE SUBSCRIBED THE FIRST TREAT TO THE BUSINESS WORLD

Inside: Industry spotlight: Shellfish farm copes with challenges
Taylor remains optimistic despite changing ocean conditions

NEWS Pacific County makes a splash with its new page 18

NEWS Treasurer Muller and OR Board work with the legislature page 21

BOAT OF THE MONTH The new boat of the month, Work page 24

Now inserted into
The Daily Astorian and
Chinook Observer

For more information call 503-325-3211

Coast River BUSINESS JOURNAL
crobizjournal.com