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The bark behind the bite: Angie Woods teaches misbehaving dogs not how to obey, but 'how to get along'

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DATE: May 28, 2007**PUBLICATION:** Atlanta Journal-Constitution, The (GA)**EDITION:** Main; The Atlanta Journal-Constitution**SECTION:** Gwinnett News**PAGE:** J1**Angie Woods** is convinced she has **dog** in her DNA.

As far back as she can remember, she's been hearing the click-click-click of **canine** toenails on the floor. She can't remember spending a day as a child in her family's home without patting a **dog**. She can't remember not talking to **dogs** and studying their behavior.

Now, as the Atlanta **Dog** Whisperer, she makes **dogs** her business, literally. Aggressive **dogs**, possessive **dogs**, submissive **dogs**, even vicious **dogs**, **Woods** helps correct problems and return each calmed-down **dog** to a family.

"I don't believe in bad **dogs**," **Woods** said. Her left forearm is purpled with a bruise, just the size of a **dog** bite. The particular culprit was angry, she said, and was chastised for losing control. "A **dog** is only as bad as you allow it to be."

Whereas most of us may own one or even two **dogs**, **Woods** currently has a pack of 30, all as different as kids in a school classroom. Among them are Buddy, a submissive golden retriever that likely was abused; Tank, a pit bull found starving, his legs hog-tied and his mouth taped shut; and Jack, a feisty Beagle who snapped at his former family's children.

"Usually, I'm the third or fourth person to get the **dog**," **Woods** said. "Most of them would have been euthanized if we hadn't taken them."

Each **dog** came to **Woods** with a history of problems—behavioral, emotional, psychological. Some have been resolved, others haven't. The difficult **dogs** — like Jill, the Jack Russell terrier that killed a Bichon Frise puppy— will stay with her

permanently. But the more malleable ones will be returned to their owners with the problems corrected. Or if the family isn't comfortable, the **dogs** will go to new owners who can better handle them.

It costs **Woods** about \$4,000 a month in vet bills and food to maintain the pack, but the large group of personalities is essential for her business. The pack helps teach **dogs** "what normal is," **Woods** said. "Obedience training doesn't correct **dog** behavior problems. Learning to get along does."

Carey Sipp knows all about **dog** problems. After she married, she had two small **dogs** and he had two large **dogs**, one very aggressive. Sipp worried that the aggressive **dog** might harm her terriers. Neither she nor her husband were about to get rid of their animals.

Woods "straightened out all four **dogs**," said Sipp, who lives near Mableton. And **Woods** also taught the owners how to handle their pets. "We learned we have to stay on them and correct any aggression," Sipp said. "To keep the peace, my husband thought the expense was worth it."

A **canine** client usually enrolls in a 14-day program at **Woods**' Buford facility. For \$1,200, an adult **dog** will learn what's acceptable with other **dogs** and with humans. **Dog** rescue groups are charged less. The animals play and walk together, work out on treadmills to burn extra energy and learn to wait calmly for meals.

Usually, the **dogs** correct each other. But if a new member becomes too aggressive on the playground, **Woods** rolls the culprit on its back, making eye contact and telling the **dog** to calm down. Her goal is to teach **dogs** how to maintain a zero state – below zero is a worried, nervous animal and above zero is a hyper, aggressive one. Zero is calm.

"With my pack, there's no hierarchy," she said. "People here are in control. **Dogs** know that if you're not in control, they will be."

Helping **Woods** in the day-to-day operation is her son Josh, who's married and who welcomed Tank into his home with his wife, Beth, and baby daughter, Madison. Cobb County resident Rachael Barbee is a long-term intern who usually arrives at dawn to take the **dogs** on a 4-mile walk and helps correct inappropriate behavior.

Ormewood Park resident Rachel Smith has four **dogs**, three German shepherd mixes and one English mastiff. **Woods** helped Smith and her husband to "recognize and anticipate problems with our **dogs**. She helped us to be better **dog** owners and to manage the chaos."

When she's not working with the pack, **Woods**, 41, focuses on her family – son Branden, daughter Kendra and husband Dan. Or she spends time on her hobby, which involves –what else? – **dogs**. She trains personal protection **dogs**, importing German shepherds and Belgian Malinois from Europe.

Large, intelligent and intimidating, they offer "another layer of security" for wealthy clients, she said. The **dogs** respond only to commands in other languages. She charges \$13,000 to \$20,000 to import a **dog**, and then train it and its new family.

"At one time, I thought about being a veterinarian," **Woods** said, "but I figured I could have a bigger impact here.

"Basically, what we do is save **dogs**."

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VINO WONG / Staff

Pete, 4, a bulldog-Lab mix, runs about 10 miles a day. **Angie Woods** says Pete is high-energy and needs lots of exercise.

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Angie Woods teaches Zeus, 1, a German shepherd, to be submissive by lying flat. Zeus had to learn to be passive because he attacked Michael, 1 1/2, a black-and-white French bulldog.

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Oliver, 2, a French bulldog, is at the center for being aggressive toward his parents.

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Angie Woods, who has more than 15 years' experience, gets help from her son Joshua, 23, at their **dog** rehabilitation center.

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Angie Woods prepares to feed her **dogs**, about 30 of them. She says only when the **dogs** remain calm are they allowed to eat.

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Angie Woods

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