

Dog whisperer expands program to include seminars

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Special Photo: Known as Atlanta's dog whisperer, Angie Woods operates a center for canine behavior modification in Buford and has recently expanded to doing seminars. The next seminar, helping people understand the difference between human and dog psychology is April 22.

Just how you walk into a room means something to a dog.

Most of the ways people greet dogs only perpetuate the dog's perception of who is in charge. And it's not you.

Canine behavior expert Angie Woods, who is based in Buford and known as Atlanta's dog whisperer, has spent decades reversing the problems created because humans and animals don't speak the same language.

Woods uses a pack of dogs at her center in Buford, U.S. Canine, to correct behavior issues with dogs -- and their owners.

She started with her own pack of nine dogs and worked out of her home.

Now Woods has nine employees, upwards of 100 dogs at the center at a time and is expanding further. She's looking at a larger facility to accommodate the demand and has started a series of workshops aimed at helping even more people understand their pets.

"The client base has really grown as people have learned what we offer," Woods said. "It's unique. We have our own pack and it's integrating the dogs into the pack to accelerate learning. Nobody else has that.

"Now we're just trying to grow so we can reach more people through the seminar. (The seminars) are more of the teaching, whereas the center is the action. And there are some dogs that still need the pack."

If You Go

- What: Atlanta dog whisperer Angie Woods' Dog Psychology 101 awakening your instincts seminars
- When: Noon to 5 p.m. April 22
- Where: Blue Mark Studios, 892 Jefferson St, Atlanta
- Cost: \$60
- More information: To register go to www.dogpsychology.com or call 855-364-7792.

Woods created a separate website, www.dogpsychology101.com, as part of the expansion. They've had small weekend workshops, most recently one working with rescue groups and another for shy dogs.

"We just wrapped up a rescue seminar, for rescue groups only, just to give them some pointers on basic psychology," Woods said. "How to match up the right family and how to evaluate dogs in the shelters.

"We're going to be scheduling another one of those here soon. That was very popular."

The next seminar is scheduled for April 22 in Atlanta. The five-hour event starts at noon at the Blue Mark Studios downtown. It includes Woods discussing human vs. dog psychology, canine language and how your energy affects your dog.

"At the larger seminars, we're doing more focusing on how animals don't follow weakness, that's the basic premise," Woods said. "So we really want to work on balancing the human -- and balancing the dog. If you have a nervous, anxious human trying to handle a nervous, anxious dog ... we have to start with the person."

Woods won't be the only speaker at the upcoming event. Others will be there to focus on what dogs need from their owners to be happy, relaxed and satisfied.

"We're doing some cool things," Woods said. "We're bringing in some yoga people in to talk. We're bringing in some martial arts people. It's all to empower. We've got a transcendental meditation guy. And these are all for the people."

Woods isn't ever surprised at how many people have dogs with behavior problems.

"Everybody, as soon as they hear what I do, wants to talk," Woods said.

These seminars, which later this year will include stops in San Francisco and San Diego, were created with that in mind.

"We're trying to go national with it," Woods said. "One step at a time."

One of the first steps Woods teaches her clients is how to treat a dog when you enter a room. Bending down, talking in a high-pitched voice and making kissy noises does not make you the pack leader.

"Don't look, talk or pet," Woods said. "Be aloof. Let the dog come to you."

No eye contact. Head high, chest out. Essentially, ignore the initial burst of enthusiasm and affection most dogs display to greet their owners.

"It's learning the difference between human psychology and dog psychology," Woods said. "For people, it's rude not to say hi."

"When a dog comes into a room, most mature dogs are quiet. They sniff, see who you are and investigate. Especially if you have a more dominant dog. They establish their position before they play."

It's not that you can't love your dogs -- you just have to do it on your terms, not theirs.

"It's our culture," Woods said. "Here in America, we dote. That's the biggest thing -- the unknowingly promoting behaviors that are unhealthy and, really, that we all hate."