

Thurs, Jan. 18, 2007

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

[ajc.com](#) > [Metro](#) > [Atlanta](#)

The 'dog whisperer' coming to Buckhead

Expert helps humans rein in their canines

By H.M. CAULEY
For the Journal-Constitution
Published on: 01/18/07

Ask animal behavior expert Angie Woods over for coffee and it will take her only a few minutes to figure out who's in charge — you or your dog.

"In 99 percent of the homes I visit, the dogs are totally in charge," said Woods. "They take over the house. They do anything they want — they're up on the furniture, all over the people, they have no structure. What happens when you have a teen with no structure? They make bad decisions."



Vino Wong/Staff

[\(ENLARGE\)](#)

animal behavior expert Angie Woods works with dogs in packs at her canine training facility. "Dogs bring other dogs into balance," she says.

For more than 20 years, Woods has worked with dogs in one form or another. She's been around them — and other animals — her entire life and has always been in tune with them, developing a reputation as a local "dog whisperer."

"They told me I'd outgrow it, but if it has fur or fins, I'm there," said Woods. "It's always been my passion."

Two years ago, Woods opened U.S. Canine, a facility in Buford in Gwinnett County where she trains, boards and readjusts the attitudes of dogs of all ages and breeds. And she's started giving classes on "Dog Psych 101," a human-only session that covers topics such as how to walk, reward and discipline your dog.

This Saturday, Woods will share her secrets to having a well-behaved pooch in a three-hour session at the InterContinental Hotel, 3315 Peachtree Road in Buckhead. The 8 a.m. start includes a continental breakfast, followed by a range of rules and tips for a better-behaved pet and a question-and-answer period.

The session has become so popular since Woods began offering it last year that she's gearing up to go on the road and share her insights in other cities. Meanwhile, she works in metro Atlanta solving all sorts of four-footed problems.

But don't blame the bad behavior on Fido. There's usually a human at fault, said Woods.

"Having a dog is kind of like having kids," she said. "If you're not the boss, they won't listen to anything you have to say. Humans really do introduce all the problems to the dogs — they don't find them themselves. Much of what I do is teaching people how to live with their dogs properly, from starting off on the right foot with a new puppy through handling an older dog."

At Woods' Gwinnett facility, about 40 dogs that have issues with aggression, fears and phobias usually are in residence. Woods uses dog psychology and other dogs to cure their ills. Her hardest cases involve dogs that are nervous, anxious or very shy.

"It takes longer for them than an aggressive dog to get over their problems," she said. "They can be very afraid to meet new people and bark incessantly, or shake in new situations."

Woods' pack starts the day with a four-mile hike and spends the afternoon going after sticks, balls and Frisbees. "As soon as dogs wake up, they start to move," she said. "If they're in the house, they look for other ways to expel that energy. I've also found that dogs help bring other dogs into balance; that's why we work in a pack."

Woods honed her canine skills by studying a pack of eight dogs. "I saw how they interact, learn and live with each other," she said. "That's when I got away from 'obedience' training. You need to know the language of dogs. It's not something you can pull from a book or the Internet. It comes from the animal. If you don't understand their language, they become territorial, possessive and even biters. But people can learn the language and the skills to assert themselves."

How do you know if the dog is in charge? Just go for a walk, said Woods.

"Ninety-five percent of Americans let their dogs walk in front, leading them through the world," she said. "We don't care, but the dogs do — it puts them in charge."

•?Information about Woods' programs and registration for the Saturday seminar are online at www.atlantadogwhisperer.com. Seats are \$85 per person or \$150 per couple. A portion of the proceeds from the event benefits Golden Retriever Rescue of Atlanta. For details, call 770-682-5434.

[Nation/World](#) | [Metro](#) | [Sports](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Living](#) | [Travel](#) | [Business](#) | [Obituaries](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Health](#) | [Site map](#)