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Local personality

The Atlanta Dog Whisperer

by Taylor Arnold

She has been called the "Dr. Phil" of the dog world, and her bond with animals is nothing short of amazing. Angie Woods is a dog behavior expert who has earned the title of the Atlanta Dog Whisperer, and she is delivering real solutions for everyone who wants to uncover the psychological and physical needs of their pet. "I teach people how to be good pack leaders, and I teach dogs how to be followers," Woods says. "Most people attempt dog training before establishing pack leadership, and this is backwards. I bring dogs into balance."

Woods treats such problems as aggression, hyperactivity and excessive barking with her "Pack Behavior" approach. "We apply human psychology to dogs, and this is completely wrong," she says. "I teach people how dogs communicate by using three basic tools: eye contact, body language and physical touch." She is also quick to point out the drawbacks of obedience training. "If you are having behavior problems with your dog, this is not what you need," she says. "Obedience training should be the follow-up after all behavior problems have been addressed."

Clients first come to Woods for a consultation that generally lasts for one to one and a half hours. "I totally ignore dogs on my first visit with new clients," she says. "This makes me the boss." Woods believes that most dogs are too hyper because people teach them how to behave inappropriately in their homes. "I call it the American dog culture," she says. "We are teaching our dogs to be hyper-excited. In Europe, dogs are so well-behaved because they are raised without the hyper-influence of people."

For clients who are experiencing behavior problems, Woods offers Boarding Training, an intense two-week training camp for dogs. "We teach them social skills and what it means to be a member of a dog pack," she says. Dogs that are aggressive learn to get along with each other, and dogs that are hyper or exhibiting phobias can learn to become calm, submissive pack members. The program lasts a minimum of 14 days, depending on the needs of the dog, and costs \$600 a week. Owners can also attend weekly private sessions with their dog during which they learn to behave as their leader.

A typical day for Woods generally begins very early. "I am usually at the dog center before 6 a.m.," she says. "We take a morning hike that is five to six miles. This takes about three hours.



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This business of training dogs is very much a family affair. Woods' husband of 23 years is a fixture of the Buford dog center, as are their three children, 22-year-old Josh, 17-year-old Brandon and 14-year-old Kendra.

It is Woods' personalized consultations, however, that have won the loyalty of her client base. "Angie Woods is nothing short of a marriage-saving miracle worker," says Carey Sipp Kameika. "After my husband and I were married, the kids merged great, but the dogs ... Let me just say that there was angst, bloodshed, a couple of vet bills and one human trip to the emergency room. It was not pretty or safe." Once they met the Atlanta Dog Whisperer, however, everything changed for this family. "Angie trained us, trained the dogs, helped us establish the right environment and then stuck with us through the homecoming. I cannot imag-

with her," she says. "Angie assessed our family structure, and taught me how my dogs interact with my husband and myself and how they act or react to one another. If my Doberman is aggressive, my bulldog is aggressive. If I calmly correct my Doberman before he gets out of control, my bulldog won't raise a fuss. I can now take my Doberman on walks without having to worry about him lunging at people or animals as they pass us."

Ultimately, Woods sees her work as a quality of life issue. "If you have a horrible dog, your life is upside down," she says. "A puppy may need to learn manners, or an aggressive dog may need to do the boarding program." Either way, it seems this dog whisperer is acutely aware of the needs of these creatures. "I always had a bond with animals," she says. "I was told I would outgrow this at a young age, but I never did. This will always be a passion."

After that it is feeding time, then rest." Her afternoons are packed with private consults, and then she unwinds by playing with the dogs some more. "We'll throw balls for them and hang out as a pack," she says.

me having these four dogs under the same roof without having had Angie's training."

Client Vivian Foster echoes these sentiments. "I got a warm vibe from her and liked the way she interacted with the dogs she had staying

The Atlanta Dog Whisperer's Dog Center is located at 4191 Sudderth Road in Buford. For more information, visit www.atlantadogwhisperer.com.

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