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Learn How to Train Your Dog to be a Service Dog

By Christine Butler

Tynia Johnson Dickson was an animal lover from the start. While living in New Orleans, she started her dog training career at an early age. When ten years old, she began training her two dogs to pull a wagon while secretly planning to run away from home. Jellystone Park was her target destination. She loved Yogi Bear and Jellystone and was set on getting there. She successfully got the dogs to pull the wagon around the neighborhood, and that's when she discovered animals would listen and understand.

Allergies Changed Her Life Dream

Her initial dream was to train horses; however, she was allergic to them. At first, she thought her life was ruined but soon looked for alternative students. She had a cat at the time and decided to train it instead. She taught the cat to use the toilet instead of a cat box, and her animal training career was secured.

Over the next few years, her allergies became less of a problem, and she continued to pursue her dream of training animals. She studied grooming as well as training. After college, where she

Tynia Dickson with her show dog Gordon

studied economics, and her three years serving in the Army, she expanded her business to include boarding. At one point, she had 20 cats and 100 dogs.

She joined the Army to see the Carolinas where she was based. Had she known at the time that she could have trained animals for military service, her career may have taken a different path. Instead, she served her three years, after which she moved to Colorado. Because she already had a successful business, she didn't pursue economics. However, the knowledge she gained while getting her degree has been priceless in setting up her own businesses.



Hurricane Gus as a puppy being trained with Gordon and Precious, Tynia's two dogs

After the Service, Tynia moves to Las Vegas

After about seven years, she shut down her Colorado business and moved to Las Vegas. She thought she had retired, but after the recession, her plans changed, and she decided to keep working. Soon she recreated her training, grooming, and animal transport business in Las Vegas. She called it The Sassy Trainer.

In 2002, at the recommendation of a friend, she visited Front Site and took one of the classes where she met her husband, Daniel Dickson. Daniel is the creator of and teaches the Marital Arts Empty Hand and Edged Weapons Discipline. After four months, they were married.

Daniel had two minor children and worked at Front Site, so when trying

"Tynia offers classes twice a week... There are no restrictions as to who can participate."

to decide where to live...Las Vegas or Pahrump, Pahrump won. They felt it was a better environment to raise children, and Daniel wouldn't have to commute from Las Vegas every day. Tynia decided to move her training and animal transport business to Pahrump. She also chose not to continue grooming.

Tynia Creates the "Personally Trained Service Dogs" (PTSD) Program

Her business continued to grow. A believer in continued education, she returned to school and studied at Bergin University of Canine Studies in California. She graduated in 2017 and established a program she calls Personally Trained Service Dogs (PTSD). She planned to offer it to Veterans with service dogs only and then decided not to restrict it to just them but open it to anyone interested.

Pahrump resident and veterans activist Dr. Tom Waters introduced Tynia and the PTSD program to the Nye



Chris with student Buddy

County Commissioners to see if there was a possible funding opportunity. Tynia considered this a bonus. She received funding for one year, and then COVID hit, which delayed the program funding. Tynia will reapply when the time is appropriate. In the meantime, she is paying it forward by funding the program herself.



Tynia teaching the group class



Tynia presenting certificate and service dog vest to student Moose and his mom Chris

Class Structure

Tynia offers classes twice a week, Mondays and Wednesdays. There are no restrictions as to who can participate. Her teaching style is low key as she encourages socialization between the dogs in her class. It's important for service dogs to be comfortable around other dogs and people. Service dogs cannot be protective of their handlers. They cannot be protectors or guard dogs at the same time as being a service dog.

Because she's studied different train-

ing methods, she can take the best of each discipline and teach her own style. She teaches life lessons because every relationship between two beings, whether animal or person, is different. Her specialty is to teach how to have the relationship you want with your pet. You don't want your relationship to be a dictatorship but a partnership. Tynia has been working with animals, specifically dogs and cats, for about 30 years. She offers multiple dog classes (\$10 per hour) and individual working sessions (\$50 per hour).

"If the dog has the propensity to do it, then they should... but they should not be forced."

Working with both the owner and the dog is essential. They need to learn how to communicate with one another as well as with others. The group classes are a great way to accomplish that. Communication is essential to the process of learning. Tynia's specialties are teaching the art of communication between the person and the animal and building a relationship between the two. The stronger this relationship is, the better the pet behaves and the happier their owner is.

What Kind of Animals Make a Good Service Animal?

Becoming a good service animal is not dependent on the breed of the dog but rather on his or her desire to be a service dog. "If the dog has the propensity to do it, then they should...but they should not be forced," says Tynia. It's a partnership and should be treated as such. She trains both the people and their dogs.

Tynia keeps very busy teaching the dogs and their owners and continues to transport dogs and puppies across the country. Since COVID started, her transport business has grown.

Tynia's Training Techniques Gain Worldwide Recognition

In August 2017, Tynia was asked to go to Malawi, South Africa, to start a service dog training program. She spent five weeks training trainers and their dogs using her techniques. She also trained the head of this organiza-



Betsie and graduate Charlie



Charlie with his training vest before he gets his new one

tion on how to run the program. It was a very fulfilling experience for her.

For someone who started at ten years old training dogs to pull her wagon, she's become a very accomplished animal trainer. Even though her initial desire of training horses didn't work out, she's delighted with her life as it is.

Interested in dog training? Give her a call at (513) 417-1334 or email her on tynia@mac.com You can also follow her on FaceBook at: <https://www.facebook.com/TheSassyTrainer/>



Student Buddy and his parents, Doug and Marilyn

Johnny Boys

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