

Waltham woman to head dog obedience competition

By Nicole Haley/Daily News staff, GHS, Sun Dec 02, 2007



Contributed Photo: Anne Marie Fullerton, right of Waltham, wins a ribbon for her Shetland sheepdog, Shelly, at the Bay Colony Cluster Dog Show

WALTHAM - Maybe you can teach an old dog new tricks. Ann Marie Fullerton says all dog owners can train their pets and she is not just talking about basic commands like "sit" and "stay."

This weekend the Waltham woman will oversee 200 dogs and their owners in obedience competitions at the annual Bay Colony Cluster Dog Show at the Bayside Exposition Center in Boston.

"We think it's a good thing for the general public to come in and see what they can do with their dogs," said Fullerton, who has been involved with the dog shows since 1994. Fullerton is

this year's obedience coordinator and has been organizing purebred dog owners and their pets to compete in the show.

Running from Thursday to Sunday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., the Bay Colony Cluster Dog Show showcases about 2,500 pedigree pooches competing in a range of events. Fullerton will be there Saturday for the obedience competitions in rings 22 and 24. The contests include dogs jumping over obstacles on command and sniffing out their owners scent on an object.

"The handler puts their scent on an object (while the dog's back is turned) and places several other objects all along the ground and the dog has to sniff out the one that the owner touched," Fullerton explained. There will also be team obedience competitions where two dogs of the same breed go through obstacles together as well as a contest for "veteran" dogs over 7-years-old.

The four-day event will have daily "best in show" competitions as well as agility trials, which are timed competitive events where dogs race their way through obstacles alongside their owners. But to bring home prizes in those competitions, Fullerton says, obedience is a must. "The basis of everything is a well-trained, obedient dog," she said.

Fullerton got hooked on obedience training when she got her Shetland sheepdog, Shelley. "Because of her I became president of a dog training club," Fullerton recalls. "She was just the smartest thing I ever came across ... If it weren't for her I wouldn't have had my career."

In addition to watching dogs compete, Fullerton said members of the public often come to the show just to see the different dog breeds, especially when they are thinking about getting a certain breed as a pet. "You need to find the right breed and you need to sort of match it with your personality," Fullerton says. "(At the show) all the breeders are there and you can ask them questions."

With booths selling everything from antique dog paintings to collars, beds, and chew toys, Fullerton said spectators can get some holiday shopping done in between competitions. "I'd really like to get the word out about the world of purebred dogs," Fullerton said. "Dog people are nice people, they're compassionate people ... I love seeing people come in (to the show) and getting all excited around the rings."

Admission to the Bay Colony Cluster Dog Show is \$12 for adults and \$7 for children. Parking is \$12. To find out more about the event visit www.baycolonydogshow.com.

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