



Students Amie Smith and Bailey practice a high-five

PAWS *for* EFFECT

Upminster's J&E Dog Training Club teaches dog-lovers that patience is the key to learning new tricks

Words ELEANOR WILSON Photos MELISSA PAGE

Four years ago, Ashleigh Butler and her dog Pudsey captured our hearts on Britain's Got Talent with their clever dance routines. Their secret: lots of patience, praise and treats. Upminster cousins Ellis O'Grady and Josette O'Shaughnessy, who run J&E Dog Training Club, are right there with them: since 2013 they've been using positive reinforcement to train the pooches of Upminster, from puppy basics to expert tricks.

At a Friday night Trick Training class at Cranham Community Centre, Ellis kicks things off with a dance routine to a Disney tune with Murphy, her award-winning four and a half-year old clumber spaniel. The pair have been together

since Murphy's day one. "I'd never met a clumber spaniel and I just fell in love," says Ellis fondly. "I knew him from the day he was born and I'd basically picked him out three days in." It's clear that they share a deep bond as Murphy weaves, twirls and shuffles, never taking his eyes off his partner. "He loves having an audience...we never intended to compete, but he soaked it up."

Then it's time for the students to try their hands – and paws – at similar tricks. The class is divided into advanced and beginner dogs, most of which are regulars. Josette and Ellis take their time with each one; they know every student's name, personality and even which dogs are right- or left-handed. Today they're



Copper the Hungarian Vizsla loves to learn, despite having had surgery on his legs



teaching a few simple dance moves: side-stepping, shuffling backwards, twirling and weaving through an owner's legs.

Buddy, a ten-month-old Maltese terrier, is in the beginner's class. Lisa Ord and her husband Jason, of Upminster, have been bringing him to J&E puppy training classes since he was just three months old. He looks like an adorable snowball, but Lisa assures me he was once a holy terror.

"I've had a dog before but Buddy hit me like a ton of bricks," she says. "Buddy's very over-confident and it came across as naughty. For the first couple of months I really struggled, but the women in these classes have helped no end. He's like a different dog."

Next, Josette attempts a routine with her two-year-old Bedlington terrier,



Buddy the Maltese terrier has turned over a new leaf

River. However, he's spotted his favourite doggy friends from J&E's boarding program across the room, and as he dashes off to play Josette smoothly turns it into an object lesson. "Don't get frustrated because your dog acts like a dog," she warns her class.

Later, she tells me her most important tips for dog owners are patience and persistence. "A lot of people forget to give the dog a chance. Ask and wait: they need time to work things out," she says.

Cranham local Rachel Merry knows all about being patient. Her striking Hungarian Vizsla, Copper, needed surgery on all four legs when he was just a few weeks old, with a long recovery time. "Now that he's mended, he's a puppy again," says Rachel as Copper, who has made it to the advanced class, greets me enthusiastically. "I took him to Josette and Ellis's dog massage class and all the other dogs were totally relaxed, but he just barked the whole time!"

Ellis's favourite tip follows a similar ethos to her partner. "The biggest mistake I see is people punishing a behaviour they don't want and not rewarding what they do want. When a dog steals your slippers and you chase them, they'll keep doing it because it gets your attention – just like a naughty kid."

She and Josette both agree that bonding is the most important part of training your pet. "A lot of the other big trainers are correctional-based, but rewarding is much kinder and softer. You don't want to break the bond or the dog's spirit," Ellis explains.

Josette's take is simple: "We want people to make friends with their dogs."

J&E Dog Training Club meets every Friday at Cranham Community Centre, Marlborough Gardens. For details on workshops and other services, visit jedogtrainingclub.weebly.com



J&E's Josette O'Shaughnessy and River show off their dance steps