

April's K911 Academy

Our Mission

April's K911 Academy is a behavioral training program dedicated to educating "pet parents," and the general public, on communicating effectively with dogs with emphasis on understanding the significance of body language and the energetic responses between humans and canines. April's K911 Academy works to transform our community's pets into happy, well-mannered members of families and society.

THE NEED:

April's K911 Academy is so-named for a reason; on countless occasions, since 2009, I have been contacted as the "last-resort" for problem dogs. The need is great in our area, as any dog can be a bully as aggression and fear affect every breed and the instinct ends up being fight or flight. *Bully breeds* (dogs selectively bred over time for their tendency toward aggression) such as pit bulls are popular and high in number. April's K911 is the only training program in Las Cruces that specializes in work with aggressive dogs. We are the primary local referral for pet-keepers who want to *correct* their potentially dangerous dogs' problems rather than simply giving up on them, before they become dangerous to our society. I have found over the years that when working with clients willing to follow the necessary protocols in effectively communicating with their dogs, almost *any* dog can be transformed into a confident, calm, well-socialized family pet and community member. These happy endings are win/win for both the families who are able to keep and enjoy their pets and our community, vets, daycares, animal control officers, rescues, mail carriers, our police officers, and innocent souls. This also benefits our shelters, by relieving their additional burden.

EDUCATION IS THE KEY:

I have learned over the course of my 17+ years of dog training that, in fact, dogs are easy to train- their people, however, aren't necessarily so. April's K911 training program centers on educating pet parents on how the parent's own energy and body language affects their dog's behavior. A calm, confident pet parent (pack leader) can manage a dog through any stressful situation. A nervous parent will make the situation worse, leaving the dog feeling it is his/her responsibility to handle stressful situations and protect both himself and his leader.

OUR SCOPE:

April's K911 Academy offers help to pet keepers in a variety of settings, including:

On-site classes. The class setting provides a controlled environment where pets parents are educated on a broad range of socialization skills. *See syllabus overview for details.

On-site, professional support-therapy play care. In a supervised, open-play setting, dogs develop their social skills with other dogs, building the dogs' confidence. Pet parents are encouraged to spend time observing the supervised play care, where they will learn to understand healthy boundaries for their pets' interactions with other dogs.

In-home "pack" therapy. This intensive therapy is for pet parents who are fearful of their own dogs. Dogs and parents receive focused grounding techniques, building confidence in their own pair-bond prior to working with other members of the family ("pack"). This therapy builds a healthy hierarchy of leadership from which to build upon.

Free Support therapy sessions in the community setting. Dogs and owners learn how to interact with the (uneducated) public, where they gain confidence in new, stimulating settings. These sessions are offered as a monthly community service free of charge and open to the public.

Additional services to pet owners. April's K911 offers off-site social events to assist pet parents to experience how to positively interact with people.

Training/Work Exchange Program. April's K911 strives to reach all community members seeking help. Pet parents with a demonstrated, dedicated desire to learn, who are unable to afford training or play care can arrange to trade work/help with April's K911 facility in exchange for training services. April's K911 seeks to expand on these opportunities in the future, as they are currently limited due to our capacity and scope of operations.

THE CHALLENGES:

April's K911 Academy has had to downgrade her program due to county codes requirements. April's is revising her scope and pursuing the needed Special Use Permit under Dona County regulations in order to continue to address the serious challenges facing pets and their owners in New Mexico. As the only entity in Las Cruces who has the program, experience and willingness to take on the liability of helping grumpy, misunderstood dogs (and their owners), April's K911 strives to assist in meeting this need. The stakes are high. Under state law and current shelter protocols, pet owners face multiple high-risk factors in being pet owners. These include:

- (1) New Mexico is a "one strike" state. After a dog's first bite incident, a further bite incident is legal grounds for confiscation and euthanasia of the dog under state law, regardless of circumstances. Extenuating circumstances may include a dog biting in fear while in pain due to an injury, a dog owner being bitten while trying to break up a spat between dogs, or an accidental injury such as by an excited dog taking a treat from someone's hand too harshly. Doctors are required by state law to report all bites regardless of whether or not the bite was a result of genuine aggression. Further, as of 2005 it is considered a felony if an owner's dog bites someone, even if it is an accident or a justifiable reaction to a situation.
- (2) NM 2020 Statute Chapter 77-1A-5(8)D states that following a bite incident, Animal Control is required to ensure that the dog owner has entered the dog in an approved socialization and behavioral training program. The Animal Service Center of Mesilla Valley is not currently practicing this protocol because there are not options available besides April's K911 Academy.
- (3) Under the new statute, law enforcement may use lethal force on a dog during a home visit or search. During what is likely a stressful encounter for the entire household, such a measure could easily be carried out as a result of an officer's own lack of education or a personal situation of PTSD. As a matter of

routine, law enforcement receives no formal training on safe interaction with dogs as a part of their basic skill set, putting officers pet owners, and pets at risk of a traumatic or fatal interaction.

- (4) The Animal Services Center is knowingly adopting out “red flag” dogs-- dogs that have been returned to the shelter with owners reporting that the dogs were behaving aggressively. This dangerous and irresponsible practice leads to unnecessary problems, danger, and heartache for all involved. As seen in the reports of the Animal Service Center, their protocols have resulted in loss of life and we need to educate all involved.

THE GOAL:

April's K911 is dedicated to improving all of the above circumstances by providing on hands education, guidance and training for both the public and local officials who encounter dogs in their work. To reach our goal, we are currently working to make important upgrades to our facility. Everybody who has contact with a dog is a dog trainer.

We need your help....