



Austin and Jordan play a training game with Bella.

Games for **kids and canines** help make training fun

by Joan Orr

Upstairs, downstairs, under the table, behind the couch... Bella is a six-month-old bouncing bundle of fluff playing her favorite game of hide-and-seek with her best friends, Austin

and Jordan McIntyre of Campbellville. The McIntyre family has always had dogs, but now the boys are the perfect age to take a part in Bella's care and training. "We love having Bella

around,” says eleven-year-old Jordan. “She’s always ready to play.” Ten-year-old Austin agrees: “She will play as long as we want, and when we just want to hang out and read or watch a movie she lies quietly with us.”

Showing your children how to interact safely, playfully and positively with your puppy or dog not only strengthens the bond between them, but also enhances the training process by teaching the dog to respond to commands. Here are some fun and simple training games your children and dog can enjoy together.

Hide and seek

This activity is a hit with both two- and four-footed family members. Have one child distract the dog, while the other hides and calls for her. At first, instruct your kids to hide in easy places so the dog can’t go wrong. When the hider is found, he gives the dog a treat. Once the dog gets the hang of the game, the hider can make it more challenging by going out of sight or into another room while the other child encourages the dog

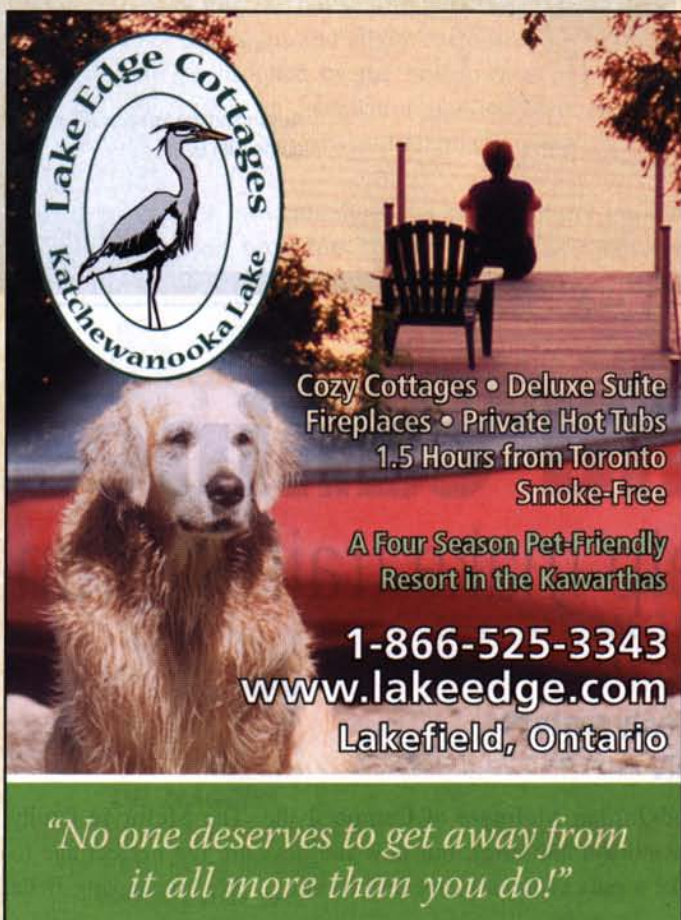
to “go find Jordan!” This game exercises the dog and is also mentally stimulating.

Fetch

This is another good game that gives the dog exercise and is fun for kids. It is important, however, that the dog is taught to give back the fetched object and to step back and wait for the next throw. If the dog tries to engage in a game of tug of war, or refuses to give up the object, the kids should end the game and ignore the dog for awhile. “Any game that pits the strength or speed of the dog against those of the child could lead to over-excitement and even a biting accident,” says canine behavior consultant Teresa Lewin of Milton K9 Obedience in Milton. “Adult supervision and proper training are essential.”

Stay inside the rope

Clicker training is the best way for kids to get involved with training, and this game gives them a good opportunity to try it. Place a circle of rope on the floor and give each child a clicker



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and some small dog treats (the kids can make a clicking sound with their tongues if no clickers are available). Toss a treat into the center of the circle to get started. When the dog has eaten the treat, click before she steps outside the rope and toss another treat into the circle. The goal is to click and reward as often as possible while the dog has all four paws inside the rope circle. Once the dog has the idea that the place to be is inside the rope, the children can start moving around the room, still clicking and tossing treats into the circle. Play this in various locations and eventually the dog will learn to go and lie within the rope. You can then take the rope into any situation where you need to establish a boundary for the dog. It's easier and safer than using the rope to tie the dog up!

Keep it positive

Variations on this method can be used to teach the dog to prefer a certain room in the house, lie on a mat or in a crate, shake a paw, jump over a stick or just about anything else you and your kids can think up. Just remember to teach your kids never to scold or use physical force. The word “no” is never used, and there is no need to try to “dominate” the dog. If the dog does the wrong thing, the kids ignore her; if she responds correctly, she receives a treat reward.

Who says training isn't fun?

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