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Better Living

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Some hope for dog owners barking up the wrong tree

By MIKE KERWICK
STAFF WRITER

Janice Wolfe rushes outside, where a guest is about to summit the steps that lead to her Wyckoff home. Six Rhodesian ridgebacks are waiting in her family room. They are barking.

Wolfe settles on a spot outside her front door to deliver this warning:

"Just ignore them, even though there's a bunch," she says. "The only thing that may happen is Angel may jump on you because [publicist] Heidi [Raker Goldstein] has her excited. There's a bunch of them. They're not going to hurt you. And if you just ignore them and look

up, you're going to see how good they are."

Her guest walks inside. The dogs bark. They take turns licking her guest's ears and nosing around his chinos. After a few anxious moments, they calm down. One dog falls asleep on the couch. Another finds a quiet spot on the floor.

Wolfe is an expert at changing the tenor and temperature of a room. A devoted student of canine behavior, she has co-written a book with Mark German, a man better known as "America's Dog Whisperer."

Their 2007 book "There's Hope: The Four Essentials to a Stable Dog" has been out for 14 months. Wolfe and German want pet owners to

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KEVIN R. WEXLER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

People must be the leaders, says Janice Wolfe. Her dogs, like Fallon, know they need permission to be on furniture.

DOWN, BOY!

Want your dog to behave better? Here are a few of Wyckoff resident Janice Wolfe's tips:

1. "The most obvious way to determine whether your dog is the leader is by observing his behavior during the walk. A dog walking ahead of its owners, perhaps with a retractable leash, is an obvious sign of a reversal in the leader-follower roles."
2. "Nothing replaces the walk for providing leadership and rehabilitation of the dog."
3. "We need to know what our rules are going to be before we teach the dog our rules."
4. "The first thing we, as dog whisperers, recommend that any owner do is to supplement his or her dog's food intake with a top-quality daily vitamin."

Source: "There's Hope! The Four Essentials to a Stable Dog" by Mark German with Janice Wolfe

Dogs: Book offers hope for owners who have lost control



KEVIN R. WEXLER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Janice Wolfe works at trying to curtail dogs' bad behavior. "She saves lives every day," says co-author Mark German.

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live unburdened, free from the fear that their pets may rip apart the sofa or, worse, the mailman.

"Have a seat wherever you'd like, wherever there's no dog," Wolfe tells her guest. "And if there is a dog, it will move before you get there, 'cause we have rules in the house."

A few years ago, Wolfe was still learning how to establish those rules. She had an autistic puppy that was draining both her patience and bank account.

"I spent about \$14,000 just in tests on him," Wolfe says. "He went up and down the East Coast. Two animal behaviorists, three neurologists, two orthopedists, a dentist, a periodontist. Everyone. And all these people kept saying, 'He's crazy, put him to sleep.' He bit me 300 or 400 times as a pup. And I don't mean little bites, I mean bites that I still have welts on my legs from."

Wolfe eventually turned to cyberspace for a solution. She went online looking for pet psychics.

"I found this nutty guy in Arizona who e-mailed me back and said he could help me," Wolfe says.

The nutty guy in Arizona told her that all her petting and coddling was only stoking her puppy's aggression. The nutty guy in Arizona found a way to do what all those neurologists and orthopedists could not.

The nutty guy from Arizona — Mark German, America's Dog

Whisperer — saved her dog's life.

"The toughest thing is people need to realize a dog is a dog," German said during a recent phone interview. "You've got to have the ability to change people."

German tutored Wolfe in the art of whispering. Together they put together this book, outlining four issues that can save pet owners from conducting a panicky 2:30 a.m. search on the Internet. Dog owners who want a more stable canine should focus on establishing leadership, perfecting the walk, setting rules and improving nutrition. With eight chapters, and 10 sample cases, Wolfe and German try to make lives easier on those people who love their dogs but don't know how to deal with them.

"What most people fail to do is set themselves up as the leader," Wolfe said.

They discuss this in Chapter 3. German writes that he sees too many dog walkers allowing the dogs to walk out in front. It gives dogs the impression that they are the leaders, that the humans are their pack. A simple mistake, but it's a mistake that can lead to troublesome behavior over time.

Wolfe spends her days trying to curtail that behavior. Dogs still bite her. They still bark at her. But there are very few dogs she meets whose lives she cannot improve.

"She changes lives every day," German said. "She saves lives every day."

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