

# EDH 'dog lady' has natural instincts about canines

By: Bitsy Kemper  
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Ann King

Ann King has been working with dogs for 20 years, largely in an unofficial capacity. Now a certified dog obedience trainer, she uses positive reinforcement training methods for obedience and problem resolution.

"I feel like I've always had natural instincts about dog behavior. I've always been known as 'the dog lady' among friends," she says. "I ended up helping friends train their dogs and giving advice about dog behavior in general. I recently received my Dog Obedience Certification through the Animal Behavior College. I felt like although I had the dog thing figured out, I needed help in how to translate that to humans."

In addition to spending about 20 hours a week running her own CompliantK9 dog training business, and 25 hours a week as office manager at Mother Lode Pet Emergency Clinic in Shingle Springs, she donates her time working with dogs that are up for adoption at the S.P.C.A. and El Dorado County Animal Control.

About half her training hours are pro bono. Her paying gigs are usually working one-on-one with dogs that have "issues," not just training a puppy in basic obedience, for example, but working with dogs that have gone off track. She's found owners have usually lost sight of who's in charge.

In one of King's cases, a couple chose what thought they thought was a mellow, shy-but-sweet shepherd mix. "They were understandably horrified when, after two weeks of spoiling her senseless, Lexie refused to let either one of them get on their bed while she was laying on it. She growled and actually snapped at them when they tried to move her off. I spent a total of 6 hours with Lexie and her people over the next week. The owners thought they were helping her by giving her all the freedom, space, and ever-present bowls of food she needed to become comfortable in their home. But what Lexie needed was a kind and loving leader to tell her where she fit into the pack, to decide where she slept, when she ate, where she pooped. A leader sleeps in a higher position than the rest of the pack. Without (human) leadership, Lexie felt like she needed to take over - "if not me, then who?" One of the biggest misconceptions, King says, is that people think crates are cruel. "Dogs love having their own little pad." King set her up with a crate and a schedule. She showed the people how to behave like the people they were, so that Lexie could behave like the dog she was.

"Everyone quickly got accustomed to their roles and last I heard, Lexie was sometimes allowed to sleep on the bed with them, but she always politely got off when asked."

Research shows most dogs that end up in shelters (and are ultimately euthanized) are there because of "behavioral problems" resulting from owner ignorance. One of King's favorite things to do is help people identify the right kind of dog for them. She's found often people get a dog based on criteria such as "we just loved that cute dog on the TV show Frasier" and end up overwhelmed when that particular breed doesn't work with their lifestyle. "I look at my job as educating the owner, and then training the dog."

She's looking to work more with local shelters and Animal Control to offer free training to people who adopt dogs. "I feel like if people can get on the right track, they're much more likely to enjoy their life with their dog. And hopefully keep the dogs from returning to the shelter." Despite the hours, King can't complain. "I'm there after school for my kids, and at night for my husband. In between I get to hang out with dogs. And sometimes even get paid for it. It's so great."

## Know your neighbor

Name: Ann King, 41

Family: Husband Tim: 42, kids Cassie: 9, and Connor: 7,  
Sierra the herding dog mix: 4,  
Huge the new English bulldog puppy: 13 weeks

Known As: "The dog lady"

Lives: El Dorado Hills since 2001

Favorite food: Anything ethnic

Favorite music: All kinds, and depending on her mood, Metallica or Shakka Kahn can be heard blasting from her doggy van speakers

Works: Owns and runs CompliantK9 where she dog trains, and is office manager for Mother Lode Pet Emergency Clinic in Shingle Springs