

# Graduation Day!

MNAWF marks their first Obedience and Agility Training Graduation. Text by Jayne Kennedy. Photos by KL Pua.

**JANUARY 24TH, 2010**, marked the official Graduation Day for participants undergoing the Malaysian National Animal Welfare Foundation's (MNAWF) Obedience and Agility Training. This training is popular for its positive reinforcement approach which is coupled with personal training conducted by the owners, allowing them to build and strengthen personal relationship with their pets.

It was an early Sunday morning and Bandar Utama's Central Park was already bustling with activities. Joggers scattered the canvas of land, moving along their established routes with precise determination. Others stretched out on the grass, enjoying the effulgence of the morning sun. The only sight that was slightly out of the ordinary for a park in Malaysia was the gathering crowd of dogs. Large Alsatians sniffed at tiny French Bulldogs as dogs of all colours and sizes stood together for one special day; Graduation.

The atmosphere was jovial, with owners laughing and pets socialising. It was no surprise that all of the dogs present were playful, approachable and seemingly well-behaved. Laughter dispersed as the graduates were called forward and the air was filled with respectful silence. Graduates received their official certificates and were rewarded with complimentary gifts for their sacrifice of early Sunday mornings, hours of training and countless frustrating incidents, and the best gift of all, a successfully trained dog.

The training was launched at the end of 2009, and has already acquired an impressive amount of participants and an encouraging collection of positive comments. The following testimonials shed light on some of the graduate's personal opinions on the success of MNAWF's Obedience and Agility training.

**Andrew Chu with Lilo**

"I joined this training program because I believe that a dog needs to be obedient everyday. Especially big dogs like mine. Through the training I've seen a great change in Lilo, she's become much easier to handle. I've found that her behavior has improved and she's learnt a lot since we started. I can bring her out and she can socialize now, she's much friendlier. But I've learnt quite a bit, too! Sometimes I feel like the training is for me, rather than the dog! For example, I've learnt how to effectively correct Lilo.

I think the positive reinforcement method used is harder than the usual method of punishing. I guess punishing can be considered more effective and easier in certain ways but it is cruel. I feel that dogs now are not the same as the dogs before, they've changed. It just doesn't feel right to wallop them.

Will I continue with the training? Well, I just completed the Basic training and have already signed up for Pre-Novice. I'm definitely continuing."



*Andrew Chu with Lilo*

**Fong Mei Leng with Max**

“When I was living in Hong Kong, I’ve always had Golden Retrievers and when I came back here, I got Max. I want to make sure that my dogs are sociable and interactive with other owners and dogs. I feel it’s a waste if you don’t train your pet. What’s the point of having a dog that is beautiful but not obedient? I signed up for training because of this, plus I find the trainers here wonderful. I trust them completely.

Max started training when he was about 5 to 6 months old, and he has shown many signs of improvement. He’s getting much easier to handle, thank God, I thought it was never going to happen!

We just graduated from Pre-Novice, and it’s been absolutely effective. I have to say much of it goes to the dedicated trainers, I approve of all their methods! They handle the dogs really well. We’ve both benefited from this very much; Max being more obedient and I having more friends since my coming back to Malaysia. I feel so comfortable with the trainers and the other members here. I’m going to continue with the next stage; Novice.”



*Fong Mei Leng with Max*



*Wong Chye Soo with Roxy*

**Wong Chye Soo with Roxy**

“I joined the program to teach Roxy how to be obedient. I go for walks with her at Central Park very often, so it was important. That’s actually how I found out about this training, I was walking past it one day and checked it out of curiosity. I was pretty interested in it once I saw the actual training happen. So far I’d say the training is good, it has a great quality training method that involves both the owner and dog which I like. I think it’s a great way to bond with your pet. This is Roxy’s first training and I have to say we both enjoyed it as she likes to socialize. She’s definitely better now, she used to be incredibly stubborn.

I take the training lessons back home and I practise with her everyday for a maximum of 10 minutes - anything longer than that and she loses interest. I’d definitely recommend this training to others though. It’s worth it.”

**Tan Tze Yuen with Jasper**

“I have two dogs, my first one had training and I needed Jasper to be equally as easy to handle. He hadn’t any training before this and when I compared his behavior before and after the classes, I can say he definitely listens to me more and now follows my instructions.

You have a lot to learn from your pet, to be honest, and there is a lot that we need to teach them too. I can say that I have learnt a lot, with Jasper being my second dog. I’m actually in the midst of training both dogs now, and we’re moving on to the next stage. I would definitely recommend this to all my friends.

Actually, I have already asked most of them to join!”



*Tan Tze Yuen with Jasper*



*Ooi Na Teh with Joy Joy*

**Ooi Na Teh with Joy Joy**

“I joined this training for the sole purpose of obedience. Joy Joy needed to learn how to behave! She didn’t have any previous training, none at all, and she just did not know how to behave, what was wrong or what was acceptable. She graduated from the Basic training stage, and at the moment I’m already involved with the Pre-Novice classes. I’m very impressed with Joy Joy and am signing up for the next class! I think that anyone who wants to train their dog should join this program. Like I said, I’m impressed.”

*Congratulations*