

# Lines from Linda

BY LINDA AYERS TURNER KNORR

## TAPPING OUR RESOURCES – YOUTHFUL BLESSINGS



**I**t goes without saying that the future of our sport lies in the hands of the youth we develop and inspire today. The past two weeks brought joy and excitement to me and my Greenville Kennel Club as we took advantage of unexpected opportunities to engage our stars of tomorrow.

As our club planned for our 80th Anniversary Dog Show, special planning was in place to make sure our Pee Wee event would be something the children would “always remember”. President Jeanette Stribling ordered special bags covered with whimsical artwork of dogs including presents inside, Show Chair Chris Harner added lots of goodies gifted to the kids by our sponsor Purina and Barbara Ohmann and Christine Weisse topped off the gifts with treasures from our American Kennel Club. When the gift bags and beautiful rosette ribbons were presented to each of the 22 participants by our beautiful Judge Vicki Seiler-Cushman, each youngster was beaming!

Some of the children were participating in Pee Wees for their second or third time. They can hardly wait to have birthdays that will step them up to Juniors!

Since the Pee Wee class was added to AKC events in early 2016, 2,900 youngsters have participated in 388 events. Most shows average 7.5 entries. (Wouldn't you love to see that half a kid?) The numbers are growing every weekend! Our Greenville event had 22 signed up and unfortunately we had to turn some latecomers away.

The week before our shows I received a call from Ashley McCarter, Clemson University Cooperative Extension Laurens County Youth and Development Agent for 4-H. Ashley had gotten in touch with me at the suggestion of someone at the American Kennel Club. She called to invite me to judge the Dog Show for their upcoming 4-H events at the Laurens County Fairgrounds. She explained that she expected to have about 240 livestock animals exhibited by the 4-H club members and about 18 dogs for the Conformation, Obedience and Rally events. My excited response was “YES, but I would also like to engage my Greenville Kennel Club members. It has long been my dream to find 4-H members to work with in our area!”

Through Ashley McCarter I envision endless opportunities. You can only imagine the joy among our Kennel club members when they learned about the call. The National Cattleman's Association is the sponsor of the fairgrounds competitions. They provide prizes and the ribbons. Now the Greenville Kennel Club members will be able to have a table to display all things about the AKC and our many events. Since I am a Conformation judge, I invited our GKC Obedience Chair Thecla Tyner to judge Obedience and Rally.

Our GKC Program Chairman Debbi Kaplan even re-arranged her planned speakers so that we could invite Ashley McCarter to present a program on 4-H at our next Greenville Kennel Club meeting. It will be the week before the fairgrounds show, so all of our members will be even more excited about our new collaboration.



GKC Show Chair Kris Harner and President Jeanette Stribling welcome Ashley McCarter, Clemson University Cooperative Extension Laurens County 4-H Youth Development Agent and 4-H Members to their first AKC Dog Show  
Photo Courtesy of Bryan McNabb Photography



Courtesy of Cary Manaton Photography  
Pee Wees show off ribbons to proud parents.



Courtesy of Cary Manaton Photography  
Judge Vicki Seiler-Cushman with Pee Wees

The timing of Ashley's call could not have been more perfect. The Carolina Foothill Classic Dog Shows would be the next week, four days of shows, 2,400 entries and 179 breeds would be represented for the Piedmont and Greenville Kennel Clubs' shows. I suggested that she invite her 4-H members to come to our show.

Even on such short notice a group of 11 came. The young people were between the ages of 6 to 14. Here was another fantastic opportunity to engage and inspire youth to participate in AKC events. Again President Jeanette Stribling and Show Chair Kris Harner jumped into to action. After Obedience Chair Thecla Tyner spoke to the group at the Obedience and Rally rings, AKC Delegate Gloria Askins toured the group around our huge show building to see Conformation judging and all of our many vendors. They also got to see and learn all about AKC Reunite as our Trailer was on display at the show. AKC's Barbara Ohmann was a 4-H member herself. She delighted in telling our visitors about AKC's world of activities. Then she adorned them with colorful

AKC bandanas. The visit was a great success! Ashley has already invited our club to be a part of two more 4-H Dog Shows.

The mission of 4-H is to engage youth to reach their fullest potential while advancing the field of youth development. The US based organization was founded in 1902 in Clark County, Ohio. It boasts nearly 6.5 million active participants from ages 5 to 21. There are more than 25 million alumni including, not only previously mentioned AKC's Barbara Ohmann, but my brother Roy Ayers, Jr. and me.

The meaning of the 4-H pledge is the following:

I pledge my  
 Head to clearer thinking  
 Heart to greater loyalty  
 Hands to larger service  
 Health to better living for my club, my community, my country and my world

In the past some thought of 4-H as an agriculturally focused organization. Today's participants also focus on citizenship, healthy living, science, engineering and technology programs. It is easy to see how



GKC Past President Dawn Demeaux invited lifelong family friends to participate in their first dog show event.



youth blessed to be able to participate turn out to be well our rounded leaders of tomorrow.

With the 4-H slogan being "Learn by doing" and a motto "To make the best better", it is great to learn that we have opportunities to partner with these exceptional young people.

Many active participants in our dog world today got their start through participating in 4-H activities when they were growing up. In the coming months I look forward to sharing some of their lives with you. If you have a 4-H story to share, please contact me through my website [LindaAyersTurnerKnorr.com](http://LindaAyersTurnerKnorr.com). ■

