
LINES FROM LINDA

AKC REGISTERED HANDLERS PROGRAM 2019 HANDLER OF THE YEAR CARISSA SHIMPENNO



BY LINDA AYERS TURNER KNORR

Each year the AKC Registered Handlers Program honors one member who exemplifies their ideals of conduct and professionalism. For the year 2019 members of the group voted to recognize Carissa Shimpenno. Other worthy nominees for the award were Paul Catterson and Gabriel Rangel.

Carissa is a third generation member of our sport with quite an impressive pedigree herself! Over 50 years ago her grandmother, Joanne Satalino, established Alisation Dobermans. Her mother, Gwen DeMilta, is also a professional handler and breeder. Together they have bred over 200 AKC champions.

Good genes run deep in Carissa's family. Even though some claim she was born with a leash in her hand and she most likely teathed on Doberman ears, her Mother was hesitant to approve her wish to begin participating in Junior Showmanship. When Carissa was eleven years old she turned to her Aunt Terry Hundt (you know the beautiful one who made us all so proud as she judged the Sporting Group at this year's Westminster Kennel Club). Hooray for Aunt Terry who convinced Gwen to give in.

Carissa quickly proved her point when through Junior Showmanship she won trips to Crufts Dog Show and the World Show. She was only twelve years old when she represented the United States in both competitions. Carissa credits those experiences with teaching her valuable lessons. Through Juniors she learned to be a good winner and loser. Good sportsmanship helped her build lifelong friendships.





Top: Field Director, Conformation/RHP Field Coordinator Patrica Proctor, AKC President and CEO Dennis Sprung, AKC RHP Handler of the Year Carissa Shimpeno, RHP Director/VP of Dog Show Judges Tim Thomas, RHP Field Coordinator/AKC Field Rep Gina Wieser, RHP Field Coordinator/AKC Field Rep Mary Dukes
Bottom right: Like Mother like Daughter: Gwen DeMilta and Carissa Shimpeno recognized as AKC 2015 Breeders of the Year .

For many years as she traveled with her Mother, Carissa had the opportunity to train and care for the dogs and to develop relationships with each animal. Through those years of experience Gwen DeMilta prepared her daughter to reach her ultimate goal of becoming a professional handler. At age 20, Carissa's dream came true and she began her career as a professional.

When I asked last year's AKC RHP award recipient, Frank Murphy, to comment on competitor Carissa Shimpeno, Frank replied, "Carissa is one of my favorites at the shows. She has a spirit that if she lets you discover, you will want to spend a few moments with her. Plus she is a reader and that means she is a thinker. For those lucky enough to know her, I'm sure Carissa ranks high on everyone's list!"

Not only has Carissa achieved her dream of becoming a top professional handler, she has also been blessed as a breeder. In 2015 she and her Mother were named AKC Breeders of the Year.

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Top (left to right): Eric and Carissa married in 2007. Carissa, Annabella and Tristan. Caleb, Annabella and Tristan Shimpino.
Bottom: Following in her Mother's footsteps enjoying the Pee Wee Class, Judge Bill Shelton. Proud Mom with Pee Wee Annabella and Judge Anthony DiNardo

AKC Registered Handlers

Jason Bailey	Emma Marshall
Barbara Beissel	Lisa Miller
Doug Belter	Kathryn Mines
Kerry Boyd	Roslyn Mintz
Bryan Briley	Leesa Molina
Stephen Cabral	Lori Mowery
Kim Calvacca	Frank Murphy
Sue Cannimore	Patricia Murray
Carlos Carrizo	Dave Musto
R.C. Carusi	Kathy Musto
Paul Catterson	Mary Norton-Augustus
Marianne "Tuni" Conti	Clark Pennypacker
Geoff Dawson	Matt Perchick
Gwen DeMilta	Sarah Perchick
James Dickson	Adam Peterson
CJ Favre	Madeline Peterson
Kaki Fisher	Gabriel Rangel
Robert Fisher	Ivonne Rangel
Lisa Gallizzo	Annmarie Ruggieri
Diego Garcia	Lori Sargent
Rindi Gaudet	Tara Schultz
Andrew Green	Carissa Shimpino
Sara Gregware	Dave Slattum
Dee Hanna	Valerie Stanert
Tara Hartman	Cliff Steele
Shane Hooper	Hiram Stewart
Lydia Hovanski	Greg Strong
Cynthia Huckfeldt	Debbie Struff
Erin Karst	Alison Sunderman
Laura King	Evan Threlfall
Peter Kubacz	Stacy Threlfall
Ernesto Lara	Meagan Ulfers
Angela Lloyd	Alissa Welling
Karen Mammano	Linda Whitney
Sam Mammano	Linda Williams
Kelly Marquis	

Being that Junior Showmanship played such an important part in her life, Carissa is continually giving back. She runs the Juniors program for the Doberman Pinscher Club of America. Her fundraising efforts for Juniors have reached over \$50,000.00 to support scholarships and expenses for the kids. Her group also has a handling seminar for the youth during their DPCA National Specialty taught by the top Doberman handlers in the country. Carissa is investing her time in the future of the sport that has meant so much to her family.

Carissa's greatest achievements; however, come from sharing her life with her best friend, Eric Shimpino, her husband of 12 years, and their three amazing children, Tristan 8, Annabella 6 and Caleb 18 months! Aren't we all looking forward to enjoying the future accomplishments of this fourth generation of AKC Stars of Tomorrow!

In a telephone conversation tonight with my friend, Doberman Breeder and AKC Judge, Robert L. Vandiver, he had this to say, "Carissa learned her handling techniques from the best, her Mother, Gwen DeMilta. Carissa is more than a skilled handler. She is a true dog person who is totally involved in all aspects of the sport from breeding, puppy selection, conditioning, to training her dogs to compete at the highest levels. She has another talent unseen by most. I watched her judge the Futurity Stakes at the Doberman National Specialty last year. She managed the large entry ring as if it was second nature. Her selections were worthy of any of the old Dobe pro specialists. Here's hoping that someday she will join the judging community so that she can share those talents more broadly."

Members of the AKC Registered Handlers Program are held to a higher standard through a Code of Ethics, meeting requirements for years of experience, superior facilities, vehicles and equipment. The professionals on the left are members of this elite group.

To quote Carissa Shimpino, "I consider myself the luckiest girl in the world. I get to do what I love most surrounded by my family and friends and I look forward to all the things this wonderful sport has to teach me."

Congratulations Carissa, we are excited to share in all the exciting things you will accomplish for our sport in the years ahead! ■