

AKC DETECTION DOG TASK FORCE AND PUPPY PROTECTION PROGRAM EXCITING NEWS

INTRODUCING PHASE II PROGRAM MANAGER STACEY WEST

BY LINDA AYERS TURNER KNORR



The purpose of our Detection Dog Task Force is “to study specific areas in which the AKC can help address the crisis (of a shortage of high-quality explosives detection dogs for US national and public security), work toward improving incentives for US breeders, while also advancing recognition of purpose-bred dogs as crucial to our nation, and AKC as preeminent authority on canines.”

The primary role of the DDTF is as “facilitator.” The AKC is uniquely positioned to bring together the leading expert breeders, trainers, researchers/scientists, purchasers, government officials, private buyers, and others to collaboratively address the obstacles that prevent the US from being able to produce the dogs this country needs. Three key areas of the DDTF focus include: Public Policy/Government Relations, Breeder Education and Outreach, and Educational Conferences/Seminars.

DDTF Chair, Dr. Carmen Battaglia, commenting of the program’s origin said, “The AKC Board authorized the establishment of the AKC Dog Detection Task. The task was to develop a pilot program and demonstrate



AKC Detection Dog Task Force team
Stacey West,
Dr. Carmen Battaglia,
Sheila Goffe,
Melissa Ferrell,
and Chris Sweetwood
meeting in front of the
AKC Headquarters in
Raleigh, North Carolina.

LINES FROM LINDA: AKC DETECTION DOG TASK FORCE

**TODAY, THE DDTF IS
COMPRISED OF THE
FOLLOWING MEMBERS:**

Dr. Carmen Battaglia

*Task Force Co-Chairman
AKC Board of Directors*

Chris Sweetwood

*Task Force Co-Chairman
AKC Board of Directors*

Rita Biddle

AKC Board of Directors

Dominic Carota

*AKC Board of Directors
Vice Chairman*

Ann Wallin

AKC Board of Directors

Sheila Goffe

*AKC Vice President
Government Relations
and Staff Lead for DDTF*

Doug Ljungren

*AKC Executive Vice President
Sports & Events*

Mark Dunn

*AKC Executive Vice President
Registration Management*

Stacey West

*Program Manager
AKC Patriotic Puppy Program*

Melissa Ferrell

*Program Manager
Government Relations
and DDTF*



Dr. Carmen Battaglia, Task Force Co-Chairman, AKC Board of Directors



Chris Sweetwood, Task Force Co-Chairman, AKC Board of Directors



Rita Biddle, AKC Board of Directors



Dominic Carota, AKC Board of Directors, Vice Chairman



Ann Wallin, AKC Board of Directors



Sheila Goffe, AKC Vice President, Government Relations, Staff Lead Detection Dog Task Force



Doug Ljungren, AKC Executive Vice President, Sports and Events



Mark Dunn, AKC Executive Vice President, Registration Management



Stacey West and "Yadi." Stacey will lead Phase II of the AKC Patriotic Puppy Pilot Program.

PHASE II

As of this month, DDTF breeder education and outreach is entering a new phase. A new AKC Canine College program on raising confident puppies is nearing completion, and a new subject matter expert, Stacey West, has been hired to lead Phase II of the Patriotic Puppy Pilot Program. The Patriotic Puppy Program is a program designed to study whether AKC breeders can provide a suitable and reliable source of future "green" dogs that could then be purchased by law enforcement or government agencies advanced training and successful deployment as explosives detection dogs (EDDs).

In its first year, the Patriotic Puppy Program established a wealth of educational and technical resources that are available online at <https://www.akc.org/akc-detection-dog-task-force/akc-pilot-detection-puppy-rearing-program/>. The task force also worked with a specialist who focused on federal, and specifically TSA, requirements for explosives detection dogs. DDTF also conducted extensive outreach to the federal government, assisting with the development of mandated reports to improve federal transparency in purchasing procedures and reporting requirements. It worked with members of Congress to create and pass legislation establishing a working group to develop federal guidelines for explosive detection dogs. Dr. Carmen Battaglia served on this working group.

Throughout this period, the Task Force continued to receive increasing interest of the program from canine handlers in other agencies, as well as local and state law enforcement, resulting in the decision late this summer to create Phase II of the Patriotic Puppy Pilot Program that would also broaden training and outreach to include the development of detector dogs that might be deployable more locally and even in other detection areas.

"We are really excited about this new phase in the Patriotic Puppy Program," said Sheila Goffe, Vice President, Government Relations and AKC Staff Lead for the DDTF program. "The new phase of this pilot program represents a new, broader opportunity for AKC dogs and their breeder/trainers. It also incorporates elements of more traditional dog training that AKC breeders and trainers are already familiar with. Additionally, we expect that our participants will be able to spend less time on reporting and more time focusing on valuable new skills and problem solving that are appropriate for a variety of working futures."

Stacey West, AKC's new program manager is ideally suited to the new role. Stacey has extensive experience in breeding, training, and handling Sporting and detection dogs, and in working with federal, state and local government agencies to help them address their working canine needs. His experience in this area includes the development of proposals for contracts, the sourcing of detection dogs, and the preparation and presentation of detection dogs for contract or purchase. As president of Anchored Canine Inc., he has been responsible for all aspects of the development and operation of a canine breeding and training program to produce detection and Sporting dogs. Stacey also worked with K2 solutions, where he first interacted with the AKC DDTF. Stacey attended several of the AKC DDTF conferences, including one in which he demonstrated explosives detection with K2 dogs. While at K2 Solutions, he was also deployed to Camp Leatherneck, Helmond Province, Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Stacey is also an AKC Licensed Retriever Field Trial Judge and a Key Opinion Leader with Eukanuba Dog Food. Stacey has a Bachelor of Science in Fisheries and Wildlife Science from North Carolina State University and a Master of Science in Zoology from Clemson University. Stacey currently resides in Pinehurst, North Carolina, with his family.

that a domestic breeding program could be developed with AKC breeders who are willing to help produce explosive detection dogs. If successful, the country would no longer be dependent on foreign sources for dogs needed to protect the country. I was asked to chair the effort. The Board also approved a large working committee and hired an outside consultant. We knew from the beginning that Phase I would have many startup problems. We also learned that public awareness was low and that only a few US vendors were active. We learned that breeders had many questions and would need a support system, which included information about breeding, training, and deployment. We responded by developing videos, and a group of "go to" contacts who could help with questions and some of the unforeseen problems in their breeding and training program.

We have taken all of the valuable input, information collected from our surveys and three national conferences, and developed the plan for Phase II which is being implemented as this article goes to press. We have hired a new consultant who is well-known and respected by federal and state agencies, vendors, and the academic community. He has an excellent history of breeding, training, and placement of dogs bred and trained for single and dual purpose deployments. Phase II will include the launch of meetings with breeders, webinars about breeder questions, and a series of meetings aimed at those who have an interest in participating. With an enhanced AKC website and database, the Task Force will be moving closer to demonstrating that a domestic breeding program for dogs needed to protect this country can be achieved with the efforts of AKC breeders and purpose-bred dogs."



Patriotic Puppy Program participant "Mini" sits with owner Sharon Smith of Greenville, South Carolina. Photo courtesy of Gabrielle Miller, @gabriellegracePHOTOGRAPHY

“The year 2020 was designated as the year of the breeder by the AKC Board. Our breeders are the heart and soul of the AKC, and with their 20/20 vision they have continued to produce the best American purpose-bred dogs in the world.

—Chris Sweetwood”

A second part of the new educational programming includes development of Confident Puppy, a new AKC Canine College course that provides a new, broader focus, and provides a more structured approach to understanding the fundamentals of raising a confident puppy that could go on for advanced training as a detection dog, service dog, or a well-trained competitor or pet.

WHY ARE SO FEW US BRED DOGS BEING TRAINED AND USED AS DETECTION DOGS?

There are a number of reasons this is happening. These include:

- The Department of Defense, which purchases many of the military and TSA dogs, typically wants to purchase 50 or 100 dogs at a time. Typical individual Sporting breeders can't provide those kinds of numbers.
- Years of anti-breeder laws and the animal rights agenda have resulted in discouraging potential breeders from producing the kind of dogs needed.
- The extra effort associated with government contracts is a hurdle many of our breeders currently aren't interested in dealing with.
- Most dogs aren't bought until about 8-10 months of age, well beyond the age that most breeders can keep large numbers of dogs.
- There's also lack of transparency about the real cost of what it takes to breed, raise and deploy a successful explosives detection dog. This is a problem the AKC Government Relations team is working on now.

“Typically, the outright purchase cost for a dog in Europe may be cheaper, however when you consider the number of dogs purchased overseas that never make it through the full training cycle, we believe it can be more efficient to purposefully breed and train the dogs here in the US where we can also study the pedigrees, genetics, health tests, and other traits of the dogs so that we really understand how dogs succeed in these programs; we can select for those traits, and we also can monitor the care and conditions with which they are raised. This is a concern about some of the overseas kennels from which our governments are obtaining these dogs. We haven't heard a lot about this yet, but in the future, I think we will,” explained Sheila Goffe.

Thoughts by AKC Board Member and Co-Chair of the Detection Dog Task Force Chris Sweetwood are right on target as we welcome Stacey West. As Chris notes, “The year 2020 was designated as the year of the breeder by the AKC Board. Our breeders are the heart and soul of the AKC, and with their 20/20 vision they have continued to produce the best American purpose-bred dogs in the world. The Patriotic Puppy Program is a tribute to their efforts and as we step into the future we know they will produce the best American purpose-bred dogs for our first responders. We value their continued support and patriotism, and look forward to the future as our program enters its final phase. With Stacey working with breeders, I have no doubt this three-tiered approach will take our program to exciting new levels of success!”

For more information, go to <https://www.akc.org/akc-detection-dog-task-force/> or contact Melissa Ferrell, Program Manager, at Melissa.ferrell@akc.org and 919-816-3577. ■