

What are Non-Traditional 4-H'ers Really Like?

By L.M. Shannon-Chaillet? © February 23, 2014



The biggest cruelty of all for anyone with a disability is that the person gets lost and the name or adjective associated with the disability takes the place of the person."

By Rev. Paul Pararetos, Jr.

What are non-traditional 4-H'ers really like? Good question, eh? Just what are “*non-traditional,*” “*with disability,*” “*disabled,*” “*different abilities,*” “*handicap,*” “*life challenged,*” or “*special needs*” 4-H'er really like?

Call it what you like, the definition remains the same. Non-traditional 4-H'ers are human beings living in the real world. It is a real world where it is customary for him or her to have a mental, or physical ability, or maybe both, that may or may not be understood by the community.

But whether these disabilities were caused by genetic or by accident, in the canine world the results remain the same. These are the young people who are being omitted from canine training and dog show exhibition because he or she cannot perform to the standards of dog handling by him or herself.

Yet you put these same youths into a canine therapy obedience, rally and agility dog training class using the American Kennel Club's Canine Good Citizen and Community Good Citizen Program¹ as goals, add low impact agility obstacles and a few Rally directional signs, throw in a Team Instructor to assist with the adapting of the dog training techniques² to fit the 4-H'er's physical and mental needs for good measure, and in eight short weeks you will see a 4-H'er having confidence in his or her canine's abilities, while making great strides in communication skills, motor skills, and canine knowledge.



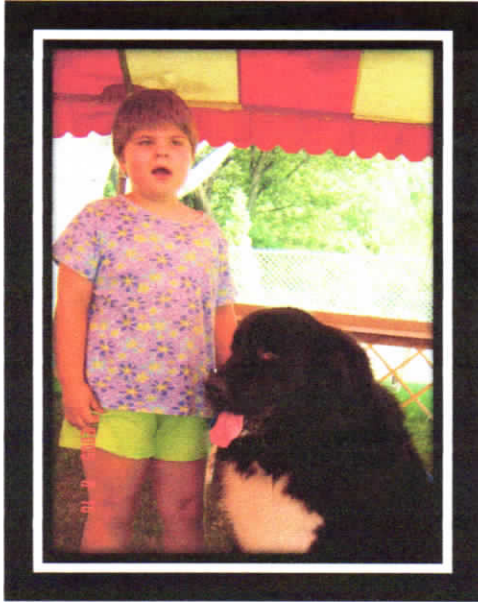
¹ www.akc.org

² Teaching Dog Obedience Classes: The Manual for Instructors by Joachim Volhard and Gail Tamases Fisher
Photographs were taken by Flying Spot Photography.

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What is the reason for our years of success? **Our 4-H leaders accept the fact that the non-traditional 4-H'er is normal.**



It's that simple. The 4-H'er is living in the real world where it is normal for him or her to perceive, comprehend and adapt to his or her environment in a fashion that we, as adults and bystanders, may not fully grasp.

So it may surprise you to find that a 4-H'er with a disability is a “*bright, creative, talented, loving sensitive, withdrawn, aggressive, insecure, poor self-esteem, anxious, impulsive, resistant to change in the environment or behavior, shy to extremely outgoing, have problems with relationships, impaired personality development (immaturity), fearful, sees the world as unpredictable, manipulative*” child.³

A normal growing and maturing child, right? Right.

A non-traditional 4-H'er is a normal child trying to learn the facts of life and the skill of survival. It just might take him or her a bit longer to achieve and comprehend a single goal in the canine knowledge, as well as being able to physically execute the canine exercise, let alone communicate with it. But that's okay. The 4-H'er has a life time to learn his or her “life” lessons.



³ Teaching Exceptional Children in All America's Schools by Maynard C. Reynolds and Jack W. Birch, 1977