

Jacqueline Pinol:

The Canine Condition. Come. Sit. Stay. Welcome to The Canine Condition Podcast. My name is Jacqueline Pinol. I am an actor, documentary filmmaker and animal rescue advocate.

The Canine Condition Podcast is a platform to bring awareness to dog adoption and to provide all dog lovers and pet owners with information and resources on how to raise a healthy well balanced dog. If you are thinking about getting your first dog or just want to know where and how you can help the dog in need, this is also a place for you.

To train or not to train, that is the question. And here is the answer, to train. If you've had a chance to listen to episodes one and two of this podcast, you know that I am a dog mom to five large breed dogs and one small breed dog and a five-year-old human. I'll tell you, if it wasn't for how well-behaved my dogs are and how easily we can communicate with them and they with us, I could not handle having this many or having fostered those that have come through my home. When you are 5'3" and 105 pounds and your first rescue dog is 67 pounds of lean muscle who's ready to head to the races, you definitely need some help guiding the horse. I'm talking about my beautiful Dublin, who is 11 years old now, and was that 67-pound horse. And it was because of her that I learned about training your dog.

Dublin was in a three-week training program. After she graduated, she showed me that when we have clear lines of communication with our dogs, they will do anything we want and we can take them anywhere. She has had quite the adventurous life with us thus far because she's such a good girl. Here's another cool thing about getting your dog trained, it gives you an added self-confidence that is very empowering. Training my dogs has taught me so much about myself and the skills I've learned have taught me how to read all dogs behaviors and to communicate with all of them. It also translated to how to better read humans. When you go to a good dog trainer, it's like going to a really good therapist.

My guest today is canine behavior specialist, Sheri Venza. She has over 25 years experience training people and their dogs in the dog's environment. Sheri is a published author and also the founder of American Heroes CAC, a nonprofit organization. The organization's mission is to support the men and women of law enforcement, the military, firefighter, the coast guard, and first responders by matching them with equally deserving canines and promoting the healing that can be found in the unbreakable bond formed through proper training. Hi, Sheri. Welcome to the Canine Condition Podcast.

Sheri Venza:

Hi, Jacqui. Thank you so much for having me.

Jacqueline Pinol:

I have so much to ask you. I'm very excited that you could join me today. I want to let our listeners know how I know you. Sheri and I actually have never met in person. But during the COVID shutdown, back in March of 2020, I started helping dog rescue organizations review dog adoption applications. One of those apps was for a family in New Jersey. When I called to check their vet references, the veterinarian got on the phone with me and we had this lovely chat. At the very end, I remember she said, "If you ever need to refer a dog trainer, I have a great one." And she gave me the name and number. Sure enough, among all those adopters, as we moved on through the summer, many of them did call and inquire about dog trainers. So I called Sheri. I wanted to chat with her and get to know her approach and we hit it off. We got to talkin', right, Sheri?

Sheri Venza:

Yes, we did. I have to say, Jacqui, I was very impressed by your rescue form also. I wish more shelters and rescues had the criteria that you do. It was very impressive.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Thank you. That's actually something that I've learned from working with several rescues and this particular rescue was Deep South Canine Rescue, who is a little rescue in Georgia, but they just do things right. I've adopted my dogs from them and I wanted to find a way to give back when I live so far away and sometimes I'm not always able to donate. So that was a way they needed help. It was nice to have that opportunity because I've learned so much about everything, all the steps it takes to run an adoption, even to the point where I had to call you and say, "Hey, some adopters need help." Sheri, let me start by asking you, how did you decide to make this your calling?

Sheri Venza:

Well, it was funny because this was going back probably over 35 years ago, I adopted a black lab. I knew nothing about dogs at that time. All I knew was they paraded this dog out and said, "Tomorrow was D-Day." Of course, that decision of the heart, off I go with this dog, and I said, "Is he full-sized?" He was 50 pounds. They said, "Of course, he is." Well, another 60 on top of the 50, I had a 110 pound beast that my neighbors used to come out and watch the show, the show being me body surfing down the sidewalk with this dog. It's funny now, but at the time it was really a health and safety issue because I had my arm wrenched out of its socket. I mean, he was very strong and I didn't know anything about dogs at the time, like I said. So, we had a love-hate thing. I would come home from work and have to drive around the block before I had the face the dog. It was really upsetting.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Even though I said mine was only 67 pounds, for me, she was a lot. She was a wild child, and you're right. You know when you see people and their dogs are walking them?

Sheri Venza:

Yes.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Yeah, that was me.

Sheri Venza:

Well, that was me. I didn't know at the time there were different training. There was no absolute criteria that made somebody a trainer. Anybody can use that title, which I learned the hard way. So first, of course, for me, and I'm not downplaying any type of training, I'm just saying my own personal experience, I had used the food method and my dog got fat as a house and the vet said, "He's too young. Stop the food." I'm like, "How do I get them to listen?" So for me, at the time, I had to sent him away and I'm thinking I'm going to get this great dog back. It was me who needed the training. Okay. Because the dog was well-trained, but I needed to know how to communicate with him in his language. So, he had come back from the two weeks. The day I got him back, my couch was gone. When I tell you gone, I went to the mailbox, five minutes, come in, it looked like a snow storm in my house, even the frame was gone.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Oh my God.

Sheri Venza:

I cried. I said that day, "He's untrainable." And last-ditch effort, I had called in a trainer that actually came to the house. When I saw the difference in my dog in 45 minutes, I was furious because he and I both went through a very rough time that really was not necessary had I had the right information from the beginning. So that was my first step towards this. I absolutely love what I do. It's been quite some time now, over three decades at this point, and I really, really love what I do. I have to tell you, it's never the dog, ever. It's always the misunderstanding and miscommunication between human and pack animal. There's no such thing as a bad dog. It really doesn't exist.

Jacqueline Pinol:

It's funny because I love that your website says, "You help train people and dogs," and I really took to that because Jonny, my husband and I, we just learned so much when we first got Dublin that it just opened up a whole world of opportunity in so many ways that was unprecedented. We just didn't know everything we were going to gain. It wasn't just about getting this really great dog. It made us better people, better pet owners. It's quite an experience. I can't really say enough good things about it.

Sheri Venza:

Well, Jacqui, I loved what you said in your intro where you said it was like therapeutic, right? It was like therapy, and it really is because it's funny, you have to really focus on the dog, even if it's for those couple minutes. So it's almost like it's an escape because the dog needs your full attention. You spend less time training than you do dealing with the misbehaving of the dog. So, my training is always, I tell my clients, "90% mental, you have to change your mind and think like your dog, because your dog can't think like you."

Jacqueline Pinol

That's true. Is it true because I've heard this that what happens from your hand holding the leash, that they sense whatever energy or whatever we're communicating just with our bodies?

Sheri Venza:

Absolutely. One of the main things I tell my clients, even though the dog may be the one creating the tension in the leash, you teach the dog to respect the loose leash because tension, even if they're the ones causing it, telegraphs as anxiety from the owner to the dog. So it already sends them the miscommunication that this is a person situation or scenario that they need to react to. It puts them right on guard, especially for guard and protective breed. It's funny, I'll see people say, "Oh, look how excited my dog is." I look at this poor dog having a complete meltdown. It's not excitability, it's stress. So, it's just having the understanding of the pet.

Sheri Venza:

People have great intentions. I tell everybody, "Look, if love was enough, I wouldn't have a career." But some people end up loving their dogs to death, and I mean that literally, where they're trying to do the right thing. They're thinking they're doing the right thing, and it would be if it was a child. These are animals. When I use the term animal, I've actually had people cry, but we humanize them and that's where we do them a disservice.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Right. I have heard that because I have one dog that's very fearful and timid and shy and shaky and he's come out of that. But when I first got him, the trainer at the time said, "Do not love the fear out of them because you will never help him."

Sheri Venza:

That's a great saying and it's so true. Human instinct, right? If it was a small child who was scared, what we do from the human instinct is to love them, show them affection, make them feel safe and secure. Well, touch is praise to a dog. So when we're consoling a dog because we love them, we're actually petting them and praising them for acting fearful, which reinforces their response to whatever they're afraid of, making it worse and magnifying it. So you get into that cycle then where the next time this happens... I'll use thunderstorms as an example, right? That's one of the biggest things. People have really good intentions because they love their pets, but they don't realize what they're doing is actually detrimental and praising the dog for their reaction. If I tell people that's the classic thing, the jolly routine and not to equate dogs to children, but just for an example, if a child comes to a parent with a skinned knee and the parent has a meltdown, the child is more likely to have a meltdown versus, "Are you kidding me? Are you really upset over that? That's nothing."

Jacqueline Pinol:

Oh my gosh, that's true. It happens with my five-year-old. If he gets hurt, he looks to me. How I react will determine if he starts crying his eyes out, or if he just looks at me and goes, "I'm okay. I'm a big boy."

Sheri Venza:

Yep.

Jacqueline Pinol:

I've learned that-

Sheri Venza:

Great analogy. Yeah.

Jacqueline Pinol:

... because I used to go, "Oh my gosh, what happened? Let me see." And then I learned, "Uh-oh, pull it back." Just like with the dogs, less is more.

Sheri Venza:

Yes, absolutely. We complicate our dogs. Dogs are not complex thinkers. They're really not. It doesn't mean they're stupid. They're smart, but they're simple. Okay. Even the smartest dog, which is number one rated, the border collie. Okay. I believe they have the ability of the maximum is like a seven-year-old child and that's really extreme, right? So even for a seven-year-old child, they can't think like an adult. So we really do them a disservice by giving them complex thought processes.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Well, let me ask you, I encounter people who feel that they have to buy a dog from a breeder, a purebred or a puppy so that it will be a good dog. Does it make a difference to you when a client comes to you, whether they got their dog from a breeder or they rescued and adopted the dog?

Sheri Venza:

Well, here's the thing, okay, so as far as a rescue goes, fundamentally dogs are the same. It's like people. We're all human, but we all have distinct different personalities. So there is a fundamental foundation that needs to be implemented for all dogs. I don't care if it's from a breeder, a rescue, you found a dog off the street. There are fundamental structural issues that need to be implemented for all dogs. So this way, they don't perceive miscommunication from the owner. Let me give you an example. In homes with little children, a dog needs to remain on the floor at all times, and I will tell you why. When a person allows a dog up on their level, the miscommunication the dog gets is that they are equal or elevated in status. When you have little children, okay, I'm talking like 18 months, two years old, they're running around, they can't understand the warning signs of a dog or how a dog communicates, like with a growl, lift of a lip, which is a bite that did not connect. It's how a dog communicates.

Sheri Venza:

So for safety of children, a dog needs to remain on the ground. You could go on the ground with the dog. It just can't come up to your level. The children are going to have friends over. So this way, you're precluding any potential issues later. Okay. It's also breed-specific. You don't want to have your guard and protective breed up on your level because they're more dominant-natured, or a terrier. Okay. So, there's a lot of variable factors to that and there's always exceptions. Coat does not determine specific behavior. I've had golden retrievers and labs I've responded to who thought they were Rottweilers. And then I've had Rottweilers who thought they were labs. It's like humans. Again, I'm not equating dogs to people, but there's different personalities. So, know your dog.

Jacqueline Pinol:

I have heard that before from other trainers, whether I've trained with them or not, so I'm very careful with that, for the same reasons you just described. We just felt it was safer and now they're very respectful. They just know. They ask permission. If we say no, they walk away and they go lay down in their bed.

Sheri Venza:

Jacqui, again, you had said before you did the training, you set the foundation. So when a dog is up, invited up, it's a perk and not their right.

Jacqueline Pinol:

I see. And it is about making time, which is something I wanted to ask you. In my experience helping other rescues with dog adoption applications and then they adopt these puppies and everyone is like, "Oh, the puppy is so cute." Two weeks in, they get the phone call. "Nipping, it's really hard to housebreak. What do I do? Jumping, pulling." So those are the four, jumping, pulling, nipping, housebreaking. How easy is it to train this? If someone comes to you, how many lessons, how much homework is involved in those four aspects of training?

Sheri Venza:

That is the first lesson I deal with everybody. I will not meet somebody out at the park or work them in the neighborhood until we have gone over the in-home foundation, which everything else is then built off of, what to do, how to do, why to do it, and all of that is addressed in the first appointment. Usually, the dogs having accidents because it's getting too much freedom. The number one missing link with all dogs, I don't care if it's from a breeder, a rescue, people, again, exercise your dog. They need exercise. And that just boggles my mind, "Why did you get a dog then?" That is usually the dominating force with all the dogs, exercise, and get that energy out of them.

Also, too, with dogs that are just introduced into a home, give them time to decompress. I mean, minimum of two weeks. I see people that get these dogs and right away, they're flooding them with unbelievable amounts of stimuli and it's not fair to the dog. The jumping and the mouthing, it's goes hand in hand. It's how a dog tests to see, "Can I get away with this, or can I?" Okay. It's how a dog communicates. So when you touch a dog, touch is praise. So a very simple solution is to have a harness and a leash or a collar and leash, depending on the breed and size and you calmly casually with two fingers, just give it a gentle firm tug to get it to tension, and you're the correction, you say no. That's it.

You don't use the dog's name because you don't want a negative association. Everything's by association with a dog. So it's a firm gentle little tug as you say no. For example, with jumping, and then as soon as the dog's paws hit the ground, "Good boy or good girl." It's that quick. Really, it's that simple. People, again, complicate their dogs. So for mouthing, same idea, the leash and collar or harness and leash and the dog starts mouthing, you calmly casually get the leash, a little gentle firm tug, no, then give the dog one of its toys and say good boy or good girl. It's that simple.

Jacqueline Pinol:

It is. It is that simple. It does take work from us as adopters, as pet owners. So I want to make sure that our listeners understand, you can't just hand your dog to the trainer. The trainer makes the dog a great dog. The dog comes back home and is perfect. It definitely isn't that, and I know that from having four of my six professionally trained. I still had to do homework, follow through, because you can get the dog to be really good with you, but then how does the family get it to be really good with them?

Sheri Venza:

My job, Jacqui, is to get the people to train the dog. I mean, look, doing what I do, I can train any dog. That's not my job. My job is to train the owner to train the dog. Going hand in hand with that, I make it fun. Because if it's not fun, people aren't going to do it, and there's no reason why it shouldn't be fun. I get the people to think like their dog. If you're old enough to walk and talk, you're old enough to be involved. Obviously, not on the level a parent would, but to do things that are productive. We're talking about family pets here. Okay?

Jacqueline Pinol:

Right. Right.

Sheri Venza:

Because there's different types of training for police dogs and whatnot. I'm talking family pets. So there should be no roughhousing, no tug of war. Those types of interactions with a dog promotes unwanted behaviors, such as mouthing. You can't roughhouse with a dog and turn it off and on like a light switch. A dog either can or cannot do something. So when people are "playing," a dog is not. Okay. They do everything for a reason and they can't see it as, "Oh, I can put my mouth on this person, but nobody else." No, either adults can or they can't.

Jacqueline Pinol:

That makes sense.

Sheri Venza:

Right. With tug of war, I don't care if they have a filet mignon or they have a stick. What's theirs is yours if they respect you, but when they're holding it back... And I've had people say, "Oh, but the dog never wins." Oh, but it did challenge. Okay. There is no challenge, because you want to teach the dog to drop or out or give or whatever command you use.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Right. We use drop. It's lovely. It's really cool actually, to have that kind of interaction where they listen.

Sheri Venza:

A dog has an instinctive need to want to please the owner. You have to teach the dog what it is you want from it, but in a way that's consistent with the dog's natural instincts, women, especially. I'm being gender-biased here, but this is reality. Most men are the ones who will roughhouse or tug of war, right? So the dog looks at the owner and dogs are gender biased. As much as I hate saying this, there's exceptions to everything, but for the most part, they're gender-biased. It's usually a male leading the pack, even if you have an alpha female. But women, we have the tendency to talk to a dog like we would a baby, with a high pitched tone, that lovey-dovey talk. Well, we sound like a puppy and therefore submissive to a dog. So I tell my female clients talk firmly, but nicely like, "What a good girl," instead of, "Oh my God, I love you so much."

Jacqueline Pinol:

Right. I had to learn that. I have to say that I was victim to that at the first dog. From then on, it was like, "Okay. I can't be Minnie Mouse here."

Sheri Venza:

Most women, myself, before I was a trainer, we do that because it's instinctive for us, right? Just like men, they're usually like, "Oh, come on, let's roughhouse. Let's do some tug of war." But what they do directly impacts how much the dog will then test other members of the home, especially if there're small children who they're equating as puppies or equal in the pack. So, it's a family effort. So, that's what I do, is I get everybody on board so the consistency is there. Because I'm going to be honest with you, 90% of the homes, if not more, the person who has the bulk of the work is the mom, the wife-

Jacqueline Pinol:

Yes, thank you.

Sheri Venza:

... the girlfriend. Yes. So as long as everybody else is being a help and not a hindrance, it works better. So that's why the first time I see somebody, I need the whole family there, so everybody is on the same page.

Jacqueline Pinol:

And I do love that, because if you're bringing a dog into the home, it's another family member. You did find a way to help people, even with COVID or long distance. Can you tell us how you're able to still train people if you're not able to meet them in person?

Sheri Venza:

Jacqui, what was really interesting to me because I'm a tech dinosaur, because I've always gone to people's homes and then we go out in the neighborhood, but I've done virtual, which is the in-home and it's actually ended up being better because now I'm getting a truer scene of how the dog is without an added distraction of myself, which was very interesting.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Oh, I didn't even think of that.

Sheri Venza:

I have people show me around the house because I teach people the housebreaking formula is controlling the dog's environment, scheduling the food and water, teaching the dog to give you a signal to go out, teaching the dog to go on command and to go in a certain spot. The irony is there's a big misconception, then if you don't catch the dog having an accident, you can't correct that, which is not true because that is the one exception. No, because the dog scent is very distinct unto itself. So you can, if it's done appropriately, teach the dog to do that.

Sheri Venza:

I also teach people how to teach the dog where it should be when they're eating, cooking, or cleaning up so it doesn't develop habits of stealing food, begging food or anything like that, how to teach the dog to act at the front door for people coming or going and setting a foundation for a sit, stay, because every home is different. So I get a truer scene of how the dog acts with the family. I have people doing it. I direct them right online.

Jacqueline Pinol:

I love that because people that can see, "Hey, if this works online and I'm getting something out and they're seeing the result," then once they get to meet you or if they get to have an in-person session, oh my gosh, there's going to be also leaps and bounds of success and furthering the training, right?

Sheri Venza:

Yes, because I give them so much homework because the first appointment is at least an hour and a half. It's a lot of information, one word commands and corrections, never using the dog's name with either, but always ending positive, what to do, how to do, why to do it. And then after two weeks, I meet them out at the park. So we're still able to maintain safety. As long as everything is reinforced inside the house and at the person's neighborhood and environment, it works great.

Jacqueline Pinol:

I want listeners to also know that getting your dog trained doesn't mean that you're killing their personality. There's these myths that people go, "Oh, but I don't want to change who they are." I'll tell you from my experience that all of my dogs have very hilarious, wonderful personalities, even though they're completely well-behaved. They're not unhappy because they have rules and boundaries. Can you talk a little bit about that, Sheri? Have you encountered that kind of thinking?

Sheri Venza:

Oh, always. Absolutely. I have to tell you, the irony is if you have the right type of training, it actually enhances, it opens up the dog's personality. It's almost like watching a flower bloom. It's making the dog want to work. They have an instinctive need to want to please the owner, and that's what I work with. So for example, I mean, I've dealt with some really horribly abused dogs and people feel bad and all, and I said, "Stop doing your dog a disservice. That pity you're giving the dog is not what it needs. It's actually being detrimental. I understand from the human perspective where you're coming from." So first, it's almost like praising the dog to build its confidence, the slightest thing it does, great, and that's done through obedience. You wouldn't train a Rottweiler the same way you would a fearful dog.

First, you build their confidence. Then when their personality blooms, and now they're like, "Yeah, I'm confident. I'm all about me," then you bring it down a notch. So this way, the dog has fun, the full gamut of their personality comes out and it's just so wonderful to see that. That's how you teach the dog not all people are bad, the world is safe. That's where I have to teach the owner how to give the dog what it needs and that's where it's so rewarding for me. Even the puppies, I'm dealing with a clean slate so it doesn't develop bad habits and behaviors. Just to watch that personality bloom, it's really wonderful to see. That's why I love what I do. I mean, even children are like my best clients, to be honest with you. You know what's great is they correct the rest of the family, "Oh, but don't you know you're supposed to do it this way. The trainer said it." The parents laugh, but it makes them really toe the line.

Jacqueline Pinol:

I bet. My son is really good. When we teach him something, they follow, or they want to show you, "Hey, I can do this, so watch." And then they get it. It's really exciting.

Sheri Venza:

It's really fun, but it's just having the right information. But please, I tell people, please research what type of training you're doing. If you're not comfortable with something, stop because your instincts are always right, always.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Yes, thank you for saying that because I really believe that.

Sheri Venza:

Yes. I tell clients, "The biggest missing ingredient for all dog training I found in all my years of training is the exercise." Tired dog, happy owner. Exercise your dog. That doesn't mean take it out and let it run free. Okay. Get yourself a nice long lead. Not the rubber-coated cable because it could hurt the dog, but they have very inexpensive lunge lines or training leads that are cotton, put it on a hundred foot lead, blow bubbles, throw tennis balls, give the dog some exercise, then walk it. Okay. You take the edge off. The misconception of letting every person and dog meet and greet, that is not socialization for a dog. That's very stressful. Okay. I also use this analogy. If you were out there with your son and some stranger came up to you and said, "Oh, what a handsome little child. Let me pick this child up." You don't want some stranger pickup your kid. Most times people say no.

Well, a dog is an animal. They're hardwired to be leery of strangers. It's very scary and intimidating for them to be approached by a strange person who bends over them and then extends their hand over the top of their head, which is dominance. That is not socialization. Let the dog absorb the fact you're talking to somebody. Then after 30 seconds, a minute, then let the person approach. Now you can use real life for actual training. So the dog has absorbed the fact you've had this other person there. Now when the

dog acts inappropriately, such as jumping or mouthing, you give it a little tug and tell it no. Now the dog understands the corrections for its behavior and not the person because it's already absorbed the fact the person is there.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Gotcha. Yeah. I want to talk about your book, Calling All Canines... And Their Owners. First of all, I love that it's an easy read. It's very clear into the point. Exactly what I want. I just go to it, like housebreaking, jumping, bringing your puppy home. It just gets to the point.

Sheri Venza:

Thank you.

Jacqueline Pinol:

I do want to share this little detail, Sheri. When you and I started communicating and you knew that I was helping rescues who need training with their adopted dogs, you so kindly donated 15 or 20 of these books and we mailed one out to each adopting family during that time. I can't tell you how much praise the book got. What made you want to write the book?

Sheri Venza:

I wrote this book to help people because they have good intentions, especially with rescues, as well as puppies. Because I wanted a book that children could read, adults could read because the main questions I had after 20 years of training, I'm like, "There's no book like this, where you're not using food, clickers, any other gadgets or anything." Like I said, it's a real simple read. So, thank you for that. Those were the reasons I wrote this book.

Jacqueline Pinol:

I want to point to something that I have found super curious. In all the years I've done things, you learn so many things and this is one I had not heard from anyone. I love it and it saves a ton of money, so especially when you have more than one dog, but it was the whole thing of the toy bags, the one, two, three. Do you want to tell listeners about that? Because I really love that.

Sheri Venza:

Well, I suggest to people to get 15 hard, durable dog toys. You get three bags, label them one, two and three and put five toys per bag. Day one, they get bag one. Day two, pick up the old, give them the new. When you've rotated back to bag one on day four, the dogs forgot all about those toys. So every day is their birthday. They always have new stuff and their interests will shift from one toy, favorite toy to another through the days and weeks. So your money goes further. Your toys last longer and you're giving the dog a very clear education on what's theirs and what isn't.

A lot of these companies want your dog to chew up stuffed animals, rope toys, which are not only a safety issue to your dog, but those items condition your dog to chew up your house. A dog cannot tell the difference between its stuffed animal and your pillow on your couch, or your expensive carpet with the fringe on it and a rope toy. By the way, the rope toys could be very detrimental to a dog on their intestines. So this way, again, you're giving your dog the clarity of education, but I have clients that say, "Every morning the dog knows they're getting a new bag."

Jacqueline Pinol:

Yeah, those are fantastic tips. So I really recommend the book. It was really easy to read. Now, I want to jump to talking about your nonprofit organization, American Heroes CAC. Congratulations-

Sheri Venza:

Thank you.

Jacqueline Pinol:

... because I know that it is a lot of work to get a nonprofit started.

Sheri Venza:

Yes. We're just getting it off the ground. Thank you for that.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Tell us what motivated you to start it and how it helps our American heroes, in this case, the first responders.

Sheri Venza:

People will do things for their dog they won't do for themselves. Through my decades of training, I ran across some amazing people who were in some really difficult situations. They had just lost somebody, a spouse, a child, or came back from a really hard event where they were working and they were the first ones on the scene, where unfortunately it was a car accident and they have children the same age. I mean, that's really hard for people. That's not something you could just forget.

Jacqueline Pinol:

It's traumatizing.

Sheri Venza:

It is. It falls along the lines of PTSD. So we came up with this idea, why not marry up shelter dogs or people's own dogs? Okay. Every dog has to be... If you have a service, they'll going to have to provide a service. So for an example, somebody with PTSD, nobody knows their dog like the owner, nobody knows their owner like the dog. Okay. So we work with that bond, or we work with somebody to create that bond to help the dog well-behaved, well-mannered, so this way the dog can provide the service. So it forces somebody who would isolate to get out there because they have to do it for the dog. It's a benign conversation piece. Who doesn't want to talk about their dog?

So it keeps that social connection, and what a great bridge to their own family, where we can marry up shelter dogs so they're not incurring a cost, but where they could get professional training, law enforcement, especially. Incidences of suicide are so high. It was very alarming when I was looking at the stats. People forget about the coast guard, EMT, as well as fire, and of course, military. For everybody, we want to make this available. So we just got the 501(c)(3) and we're very excited to launch this. There's a lot of good people that want to be involved in this.

Jacqueline Pinol:

That's really fantastic. How can people get in touch with or read more about American Heroes? Or if they want to help, where do we send them?

Sheri Venza:

There is a website. It's americanheroescac.org. The website gives more about our mission statement, where you could donate and so on and so forth. Because what we ultimately want to do is have facilities with trainers available to everybody.

Jacqueline Pinol:

So it's americanheroescac.org. If people want to find you for their own personal training or get your book, where can they reach out to you?

Sheri Venza:

My book is actually available on Amazon as a digital and a hard copy. Me, it's Calling All Canines and it's spelled out C-A-N-I-N-E-S, callingallcanines.com.

Jacqueline Pinol:

So our listeners should know that I am not getting paid to advocate for any person or organization on this podcast. I choose to interview people from organizations that are doing the good work for dogs and for people across America. American Heroes CAC and Sheri Venza have the Canine Condition seal of approval from me. Thank you, Sheri, for giving us all this knowledge and getting so many people and their dogs set up for success. I love, I really truly am moved by how you want to use your expertise to give back to the community and to extend your network for the greater good of people and dogs. Thank you so much.

Sheri Venza:

Jacqui, thank you for the opportunity to get some of this information out there and for having me today. Really appreciate it. Thank you.

Jacqueline Pinol:

All right. Well, come back anytime. You're always welcome on the Canine Condition Podcast.

Sheri Venza:

Thank you, Jacqui.

Jacqueline Pinol:

I am going to leave you with this thought from Calling All Canines, "A well-behaved, well-mannered dog in all situations enables both owner and dog to have a happier, more enriched life." Until next time, hang on to those leashes.

The Canine Condition. Come. Sit. Stay.