

Understanding DSA Programs

Dog Scouts of America offers many programs and the members assist with even more in their communities. The following is a brief explanation of the programs that DSA provides and supports. If you would like more information about these programs, check the DSA website or contact another troop leader that is working on the project.

What DSA does for its leaders and members:

- ** Develop the troop program so that members can have troops to join
- ** Development of the leadership program and Distance Learning Program so people can learn badge activities and earn badges outside of camp
- ** Train the troop leader at no cost to the leader or the troop through web based manuals, web pages, phone consultations, email support and in-person leadership camp. When possible, in person help is offered by other near-by troop leaders.
- ** After the Scoutmasters and Evaluators are trained, DSA pays them 5 dollars for every certification they do (after a 5 test practicum).
- ** Offer a free website with video and text answers to training problems, information about many dog activities, training help and other wonderful information. The website can be used as a reference, learning tool and training guide by leaders, members and the general public.
- ** Administrators spend their free time trying to figure out how they can reward motivated troops and individuals with recognition
- ** Develop new badges, so that the troops can have fun stuff to work toward together
- ** Publish the DSA newsletter to keep members informed and share educational tidbits. This includes the "troop scoop" to keep people informed about what the troops are doing. Be sure to submit your troop's news!
- ** Offer a discussion list that is open to the public to exchange ideas of interest to other responsible dog parents. http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/DSA_TalkList
- ** Offer a member's only notification list so that DSA administrators can update members by email and to give members a forum to vote.
- ** Administrators give their time for free to develop new programs that make Dog Scouts opportunities more available world wide.
- ** Administrators available - for free (and volunteering their own time)- to offer helpful advice and training as problems arise regarding leadership issues (how to find places to have meetings, what to set up at a booth, how to deal with problem troop members, what to do if XYZ happens during a certification, etc.)

** Troops benefit from all advertising done by DSA national, including newspaper articles, TV spots/shows, interviews, booths at fairs, and much more.

** Free advice and training available on various activities that can be done by a troop like fundraising (and teaching the fundraising behaviors to the dogs), various outings and the badge activities- even if they are just done for fun. Bite prevention presentations, dog care for kids, reading to dogs program, etc.

** Specialty programs developed by people giving of their own time like:

- The Jr. Scout kids program
- The worldwide Dog Scout test/title (& specialty badges)
- The “SIRIUS” reading to dogs program
- Bite Prevention education
- Scholarships for camp
- Development of many of the articles and pages on the website
- Troop Recognition Program

** DSA makes the entire camp facility in Michigan available to any Dog Scout member and to any troop that wants to use it (by reservation please.)

** Covers DSA members with insurance during DSA activities

** Offer multi-level pack dog certificates and titles for members including all the record keeping that goes along with this program.

** Lots of wonderful, helpful, willing people to make everyone’s experience with DSA the best it can be!

** Offers week-long camps, 3-day mini camps and a 3-day leadership retreat. These are a great way to learn more about the DSA philosophy and training while meeting other like-minded “dog people.” Satellite mini-camps are also offered in other locations like Dallas TX. DSA will help large troops set-up their own mini camp to bring the DSA camp to their area if enough interest and the proper location exists.

** Free Spring, Fall and Winter outings at the camp facility in MI. Each year DSA hosts these fun get-togethers that are free to DSA members. Meals are brought and prepared by the attendees and lodging is available on-site or in town for a low price. Watch the DSA discussion list and newsletter for the announcement of the dates for the next outings.

Educational Programs of DSA:

There are many ways that DSA educates the public, its members and its leaders.

1. **The website** (www.DogScouts.org) - the wealth of information that can be found on the DSA website is staggering. New information is being added regularly and making the information as accessible as possible is a high priority. If you have questions about the organization, dog training, dog care or just about anything relating to dogs it can likely be found there. If it is not on there and you think it should be, please let us know.

Various DSA members contributed many of the web pages so if you have knowledge to share, please let us know that too.

2. **The DSA newsletter** – this is a perk of membership. All members that are current with their dues should be receiving notices of this publication. It is full of interesting articles, troop activities and information about the new things that are happening within the organization. It can be found in the “members only” section of the DSA website. The monthly password is delivered to each member through the members only DSA Yahoo List (not the public Yahoo discussion list).
3. **Public DSA Discussion List**- This is an email format for people to share stories, ideas, news, questions, answers and comments about dogs. To subscribe to the DSA Discussion List, you can go to: http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/DSA_TalkList/ and click on “Join this group”. Then follow the instructions to create a free user account.
4. **Membership Program**- Anyone that wants to help support DSA can become a member. There are various levels of membership that people can use to show their support. The Individual and Family Memberships provide basic membership perks. These include the newsletter, potential for troop membership, access to the DSA facility (by reservation), free outings at the DSA camp for members, leadership training, the potential to earn merit badges, insurance at DSA events, and more. The Contributing and Sustaining memberships get the same membership perks as well as knowing that your contributions are helping to fund many of the educational programs that DSA offers. These programs would not be possible without these members and the generous donations of other DSA supporters.

5. **The DSA kids program** The future of our canine friends, dog sports and activities, and the Dog Scouts of America organization truly lies with today’s youth! To encourage our younger generation in becoming responsible dog parents and to participate in a wide variety of activities with their dogs, DSA now offers a Junior Dog Scout badge to youngsters, ages 6 to 16. The Junior Dog Scout program offers kids an opportunity to earn a Jr. Scout badge through local Dog Scout troops, by



video or at summer DSA camps. Children in the age 6-17 group may attempt the Jr. Dog Scout badge rather than the adult Dog Scout badge. It should be noted that children 6 years of age or younger will receive a Certificate of Achievement and will be observed – but not actually be tested – in the Jr. Dog Scout program; this youngest group will not be eligible for merit badges until they reach the age of seven. For more info: http://www.dogscouts.org/Kids_and_dogs_section.html

This is a wonderful program for children to become involved with. It teaches kids responsibility, and some very important life lessons. It helps them build self-esteem, and how to reach success with goal-oriented steps. Because the child is not usually in a position to make decisions, like whether the dog will live inside or out, whether or not to fence the backyard, or if and when the family dog will be spayed or neutered, they are not able to take the Dog Scout test until they are 18. But the child can train the dog, and learn all that he or she can to become a future responsible parent. Some of our Dog Scout Troops actually cater to kids, and consist of adult dog trainers, mentoring kids. There are special membership options for troops that cater to children.

6. **The World Wide Dog Scout Certification-** This program was started in 2005 and makes it possible for people to get the Dog Scout title (and other badges) on their dog without having to come to camp or find a Scoutmaster. Through a series of video taped sessions and a written assessment of the parent's knowledge, the dog can get his or her Dog Scout title regardless of where the dog and parent live on the planet. The



guidelines and steps to be followed to utilize this new program are found in the free, downloadable "Guide to the Dog Scout title" which is on the DSA website. A demo video for the Dog Scout test is also available by sending \$20, your return address and a note requesting the DSA demo DVD to: Chris Puls, Director- DSA Certification Program, P.O. Box 158, Harrison OH 45030. It is a 45 minute DVD that includes training info as well as the strict testing guidelines.

7. **SIRIUS reading program-** S.I.R.I.U.S. stands for "Scouts Improve Reading Interest, Understanding, and Skill." In other words, with the help of this program, using Scout "Tutors," you will see an improvement in the child's reading ability, comprehension, and overall interest in books. It is a program geared toward reading improvement by using dogs to facilitate children's desire to read. Sirius is, of course, also the name of the Dog Star in the constellation, Canis Major. There are already other successful programs in place here and there, which use dogs as reading "tutors" (a non-judgmental listener for the kids to read to.) The results achieved with a dog-assisted reading program are measurable and phenomenal. More information can be found on the Dog Scout website: http://www.dogscouts.org/Community_Fundraising.html
8. **Teachers and Educators Resources (Educational Outreach Program)-** Children are an important resource: They are the leaders, lawmakers, teachers, and parents of tomorrow. The better the crop of kids we bring up today, the better place the world will be tomorrow. Dogs can play an important part in teaching children values, nurturing, respect, and love, which lead to the development of desirable character traits, and high self-esteem in the child. Children growing up with these values and character traits will not be likely to choose a path of self-destruction, or become blights on society. For the preservation of humanity, it is important that those of us who can, help out in any way we can to help children develop to their full potential. DSA members around the country have been becoming more active in our educational outreach program. The fact remains that there are lots of kids to reach, and not enough of us to reach all of the schools. This part of the web site is for sharing information with teachers who see the kids every day, and have a greater possibility of having a profound effect on a daily basis. http://www.dogscouts.org/Community_Fundraising.html
Bite prevention information can be found here:
http://www.dogscouts.org/Kids_and_dogs_section.html
9. **Scholarships for camp** - Each year, Dog Scouts of America gives a scholarship to attend Dog Scout Camp. The scholarship is in honor of all the Scouts who passed away and are now in the Rainbow Bridge troop. The criterion for the scholarship is that a letter be sent to DSA showing the camper has a financial need, that the dog is somehow particularly deserving of getting a trip to camp and that the financial burden of the parent is related to the medical care of the dog. For more info, visit: http://www.dogscouts.org/Memorial_Scholarship.html

10. **Dog Scout camp-** Dog Scout Camp is for dog parents who want to become more involved with their dogs and their community and want to learn fun new things. The Dog Scout Motto is "Let us learn new things that we may become more helpful." DSA sponsors 6-day (5 night) camps each year, where you and your dog can come to learn fun and functional new skills like: Agility, Backpacking, Water Safety, Rally Obedience, The Art of Shaping, Safe Travel, Frisbee, Disaster Preparedness, Basic Canine Manners, Freestyle Dance, Carting, First Aid, Lure Coursing, and other dog sports and activities. There are also a wide range of class topics such as wolf behavior and how it differs from a dog's behavior, canine conditioning, letterboxing, and you will learn how to shape your dog's behavior to teach him to paint! With your help, the dog will create a painting, which can be matted and taken home for framing and you will have learned valuable training skills while having fun! And, you can earn merit badges for completing the requirement for these various activities, once you and your dog have passed the test to become a Dog Scout. For more info: http://www.dogscouts.org/Camp_Info.html

11. **DSA Bell Ringing for Salvation Army-** Bell ringing for the Salvation Army is one of the most rewarding activities that Dog Scout groups participate in. It provides an opportunity for DSA members to serve their community, show off their dogs' skills, and share the message of responsible dog parenting. Teaching your dog to take a donation from someone and drop it into a bucket- or- to hold a basket or bucket while people drop in their donations, can greatly increase the amount collected for the non-profit charity of your choice. For more information:



http://www.dogscouts.org/Community_Fundraising.html

12. **Dog Scout troops** – DSA provides the training and education people need to become troop leaders. To assist leaders, this guide, the many pages of the DSA website and people dedicated to the formation, growth and success of troops are available. For more information: http://www.dogscouts.org/Start_a_troop.html

13. **Community Education** - As a public service, we provide information on a community level where ever and whenever possible in a number of ways: Informational booths at pet fairs, walk-a-thons, and other public events allow us to reach the community on a person-to-person level. Our helpful pamphlets on responsible dog parenting, everyday training, safe travel and positive reinforcement help people relate to their dog in a better way. Bite prevention information and other general information about dog care and selection is also available to optimize the relationship between the family and the dog and make it one that will be a commitment for the lifetime of the dog. Special events, like art shows, demonstrations of various dog activities, in-services and seminars made available to the community allow people to see the value of a great



relationship between the dog and the family it lives with. Local DSA Troops conduct many of these community events and activities.

14. **Fundraisers-** DSA, troops and individual members are involved in many different fundraisers for both national programs and local organizations. Fundraisers have been held to support DSA, to support a troop program or outing, to provide a bullet proof vest to a local police K9, to provide food/toys/supplies to the pets of meals-on-wheels recipients, to get oxygen masks for animals to be used by local fire departments, for Salvation



Army, and to help many local shelters and breed rescues across the U.S. There is some information on the Dog Scout website regarding starting a fundraiser in your area. If you don't find what you need, just ask!

http://www.dogscouts.org/Community_Fundraising.html

There is also a video of some fundraising dogs in action on the training videos page:

http://www.dogscouts.org/Training_Videos.html



Coyote puts a donation into the bucket during a fundraiser for Police K9's

15. **The Leadership Training Retreat- for Troop Leaders, Scoutmasters & Evaluators**

Part of the leadership training can happen at the annual Dog Scout Camps, and it can also go on independently by video. But, another important part of leadership training is the leadership training retreats that are offered as an option at Dog Scout Camp in St. Helen, Michigan each year. This is on Memorial Day weekend (end of May.) While attendance is not mandatory to be a leader, it is recommended if possible. Anyone in your troop that is helping with a leadership role can attend.

The retreats will feature several important things for our instructors. It will provide an avenue to perfect their class teaching skills on a group that will be helpful and constructive (other leaders in various stages of leadership training.) And, it will give the camp staff and instructors a chance to earn some of their badges outside of camp, so that their camp time will be much more productive. The retreats offer new leaders a chance to meet others who have been in the same situations with the same questions. The veteran leaders also learn from the new people! The socializing can be just as educational and helpful as the presentations! The relaxed and friendly atmosphere makes learning fun.



The annual retreats will take place prior to the year's summer camps. The instructors, staff, troop leaders and future leaders desiring leadership training will be the only ones attending the retreat. We will use the three-day Memorial Day weekend, and each attendee will provide 45 minutes of instruction to the other attendees on a dog training or troop growing related topic of their choice. We will work out any difficulties and smooth out any bumps, at the same time we will be allowing attendees, particularly our camp instructing staff, an

opportunity to qualify for the badge they are instructing so that they will not have to spend their time in camp doing this. For people that are new to DSA, it will give you a chance to see some badge testing take place and if there is time, you may be able to earn a few badges with your dog. You will get an introduction to the Dog Scout Way and find support and friendship in your fellow leaders.

The leadership retreats will be provided at no cost to the staff instructors and leaders (other than their lodging and some of their own food.) In 2005, DSA started sponsoring some of the food for the retreat as an extra convenience for the attendees (covered in whole or in part by a silent auction of various items that are brought by and bid on by the attendees.) Each person attending will be presenting some form of training, and in return, receives the training available from the other attendees.

See the camp in a photo tour here: http://www.dogscouts.org/MI_camp_photos.html