

Texas Academy Trains Dogs, Trainers

The Triple Crown Dog Academy canine center hosts dog shows, trains and boards dogs, and trains future dog trainers. Courses at the Texas-based center run from 4 weeks to 9 months and can cost up to \$12,000 for the full program.

"We get students from all over the world, ranging in experience from those who've been trainers for 20 years to those who've never even owned a dog," says Jesse Gabriel, head of the academy. "You have to have a love for dogs, an open mind and a good work ethic. It's often easiest for those with no experience. They start with a clean slate and no bad habits."

Classes can be taken in 4-week segments or continuously. Students vary in number from 15 to 20 at any one time. Graduates have the option of applying for internships for more experience working with Academy trainers. Students and interns also get experience working at major dog shows and trials held on the 350-acre facility with its 32,000-sq. ft. training center and 200 indoor/outdoor kennels. The property includes ponds, fields, tracking and herding areas for training and

events as well as a 180 by 360-ft. dog sports field.

Furnished, on-site housing is available for students who may bring their own dogs. They will also work with untrained dogs from local shelters.

"We bring in dogs from shelters and rescue groups who have been given up on by owners because they have problems," says Gabriel. "The students get to work with them and help them be better mannered dogs so they can be adopted. When students have their own businesses, these are the kind of dogs their clients will bring them."

She says the Academy has a 98 percent adoption rate for the former problem dogs after students work with them. Ironically, the student graduation rate is 75 to 80 percent. Training isn't easy, in or out of the classroom.

"If students have problems, we work with them, but if they aren't willing to work, this isn't a vacation," says Gabriel. "The training is hard, but usually, if you have a good work ethic, you won't have a problem."

Students spend the first four weeks learning theory and the basics of dog training. As they advance, they move into behavior modi-



At the Triple Crown Dog Academy canine center, students spend the first four weeks learning theory and the basics of dog training.

fication, agility, kennel and breeding management, personal protection, police, schutzhund (developing and testing traits), tracking and more.

"Students are responsible for personal and assigned dogs, feeding, watering and cleaning kennels," says Gabriel. "The day runs from 7 a.m. until 10-11 p.m., Monday through Friday. Students work more with the dogs on weekends."

Tuition covers basic equipment, books and

supplies needed for the course and runs from \$6,545 for the first four weeks to \$12,000 for the entire 16-week program. On-site housing is extra and ranges from \$100 to \$150, depending on type of room.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Triple Crown Academy for Professional Dog Trainers, 200 County Rd. 197, Hutto, Texas 78634 (ph 512 759-2275; www.schoolfordogtrainers.com; www.triplecrown dogs.com).

Hand-Made Broom Business Keeps History Alive

Hand-stitched corn brooms made on foot-powered machines are a specialty of the David Schroeder family of Bradford, Tenn.

"We use original machinery from the turn of the century to make our brooms," David says. "For example, the stitching vice we have says it was patented in 1878. It was probably made in the 1920's. The man who owned our equipment was legally blind - and broom making was a traditional craft taught to blind people because so much of the craft is done by feel."

The Schroeders call their business "Plain and Simple Broom Shoppe," and produce six to eight styles of brooms, all of which are traditionally-styled, functional products. They're more expensive than conventional brooms of today, but Schroeder says this is made up for by their higher quality.

The brooms' bristles come from processed broom corn, which was once grown throughout the Midwest. It's now grown mostly in Mexico, Africa and Hungary, which is where the Schroeders get their supplies. It's a very hand-labor intensive crop, according to David, so he usually grows just a small amount for demonstration purposes.

The family started making brooms in 1989 after a good friend who was a broom maker taught David the trade.

"The machinery is the key, and it's also the hardest thing to come up with. I spent about three years searching for broom-making equipment, which I was eventually able to purchase from a family's estate," he explains.

The first device is called the "kicker" or "winder." You run it with your foot, turning a treadle to rotate the handle, while you layer on the bristles under a tight wire. The wire holds the handle and the broom corn bristles together. He uses a commercially produced hardwood handle that's made specifically for brooms.

Next is the vice, where the broom corn is squeezed flat and held while it's hand stitched with waxed jute or, on small



"We use original equipment from the turn of the century, including foot-powered machines, to make our hand-stitched corn brooms," says David Schroeder.

brooms, polished cotton.

The last process is trimming the bristles to length with a "chopper."

Depending on the size and style of the broom being made, it can take anywhere from 15 to 30 minutes to complete one.

"We spent many years doing craft shows with our brooms and then we quit when we started our family," he says. "Now we market our brooms through Mennonite bulk food and craft stores in Tennessee and Ohio."

Broom prices range from \$5 to \$15 each (plus shipping), and the family accepts mail orders.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Plain and Simple Broom Shoppe, David Schroeder, 16 Peavine Rd., Bradford, Tenn. 38316 (ph 731 742-4373).

Dove Release Business Thrives

Ken and Joanne Dodman go to a lot of weddings, funerals and other special family occasions. That's because their company, "The Sky's The Limit," provides white doves for release.

White doves represent faith, fidelity, purity, hope, new beginnings, and eternal love, not to mention they're the international symbol of peace. "Doves mate for life and are very romantic and affectionate - a true reflection of the term 'love me dovey.'"

Beautiful white birds are in high demand, according to the Erickson, Manitoba couple, who breed and raise their own birds, which are actually white racing homer pigeons that are recognized as a larger type of dove.

Their instinctual ability to return home, no matter where they're released from, makes white homers ideal for this type of business. Dove releases with non-homing varieties are considered inhumane, and the Humane Society would try to stop the practice.

Since the birds don't need fancy facilities to thrive, raising them isn't expensive, and Ken has enjoyed them as a hobby since boyhood. When Joanne suggested started a business, they purchased a small flock of white birds.

They charge a minimum of \$150 for bookings of one to 10 birds. If more than 10 birds are booked, the fee rises accordingly.

Dove releases are available during the spring to late fall. You can choose to do a hand release (holding and then releasing them) or release them all at once from a basket.

The Dodmans won't do releases in bad weather (strong winds, low clouds, rain), because this puts the birds under more stress and higher risk of trouble enroute.

Once they've taken flight, the birds will gather in the sky, briefly circle and then begin their journey home.

The Dodmans prepare the flock for their work by first releasing them short distances from home, gradually going further and further out.

"Eventually, you can release them as far away as you want, and they'll always find their way back," Ken says. "The only time



Ken and Joanne Dodman's company, "The Sky's The Limit," provides white doves for release. They breed and raise their own birds, which are actually white racing homer pigeons that are recognized as a larger type of dove.



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we ever lose one is in the rare instance of a hawk or power line taking one down, or if they encounter sudden bad weather."

The Dodmans are members of the International White Dove Society, an umbrella group for White Dove Release businesses across the U.S., New Zealand, Europe, Australia, and Canada.

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