

# ***ECHO Club, Inc. - U.K.C.'s First Obedience Club***

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In July 1966, dog-lover Elizabeth Halsell was the catalyst for what would become one of the U.K.C.'s oldest and most diversified dog obedience clubs - ECHO the Elkhart County Humane Obedience Club, located in north central Indiana. She acted on the idea of forming such a group by writing to about 120 graduates of the Elkhart County Humane Society's dog obedience classes to determine the interest level in starting a small training club for mixed breed as well as purebred dogs.

News traveled fast on the canine grapevine and interest grew from obedience class graduates in Elkhart and nearby St. Joseph counties. Finally, on October 7, 1966, a small, eager group of people, including some Humane Society Personnel, met in the basement of an Elkhart, Indiana, bank for the first of ten planned weeks of training. Each person made a \$5 donation to the Elkhart County Humane Society and later dropped quarters in a coffee can for each training session. A list of about 20 charter members and a con-

ECHO Club's U.K.C. titled dogs (March, 1997). Top row (left to right): U-AGI Prima's Kaledioscope O'Zielor; and U-AGI Ziel-Lor's Y-Knot Snokist Lace. Middle row (left to right): U-CD U-AGI Prairetops Keepin' Time; U-CD Collie Acres Cara Mia; U-CD Wired Crusin Ernie; U-UD U-AGI Frederick von Krueger; U-UD U-AGII Sun Dance's Pyrite; and U-CD Sun Dance's Blame It On Rio. Bottom row (left to right): CH U-CDX Seabrook's Belladonna Delmar; U-CD Anchorage's Northern Light; U-CDX Stonington's Salty Benjamin; and CH Mchuno's Sand Stormin Morgan.



stitution were established. The idea for the club's name was unanimously accepted and quickly shortened to ECHO Club. Through the ensuing years, ECHO met at banks, roller rinks, meeting rooms, fire stations, park buildings, schools and malls. The group currently meets at an armory.

The first fun match for all types of dogs was held in May of 1968 at the Elkhart County Fairgrounds. It was a great success and was followed by a total of seven such matches during the club's first ten years of operation. At trainings and competitions, most of ECHO's sizeable collection of equipment was designed, built, painted, hauled, lifted, set up and torn down by members.

From the beginning, ECHO members have been active participants in a wide variety of community events. These include obedience demonstrations, pet therapy, story hours, Be Kind to Animals Week programs, appearances on radio and TV, and visits to nursing homes, senior centers, schools, scout groups, civic groups and shut-ins. For many years, a drill team worked along with the above programs.

Throughout the club's history, two- and four-legged members have enjoyed picnics and other gatherings at members' homes. Even in the midst of these social gatherings and community service, members found plenty of time to experience the joy of training and showing their dogs for obedience degrees and titles. An annual awards banquet marks members accomplishments.

As early as the late '60's, ECHO members were interested in tracking. The first group included a variety of dogs ranging from Papillons to Newfies along with handlers dressed in delightfully old "odorous" shoes and clothing wandering through all types of fields for tracking lessons and fun. Members have earned various tracking titles.

In 1970, a commercial artist who joined the club, donated his time and talent to design the official club logo, as well as many professional-looking signs. The first ECHO Club newsletter appeared in January of 1980.

In December of 1987, ECHO applied to U.K.C. for permission to hold U.K.C. licensed events. This meant the group could hold sanctioned trials instead of just 'fun matches'. In 1988, ECHO fulfilled its long-standing dream when the club held an official U.K.C. Obedience Trial. ECHO also held the first 'double'

(2 days/2 trials), and the first 'quad' (2 days/4 trials) in U.K.C. history and was the first to offer a combination Obedience and Agility Trial. One of the many interesting aspects of ECHO had always been that the club included mixed breeds as well as purebred dogs in the fun of earning awards and competing. Club members were delighted when U.K.C. and AMBOR joined forces to accept mixed breeds into participation at U.K.C. events.

In the early 1990's, two ECHO members developed an interest in agility training. Their enthusiasm was so contagious that in living rooms, basements and unheated garages (in January!), a merry band of bravehearted members could be found building and painting equipment. Agility took off like wildfire. A very open-minded Board of Directors decided to take the chance on an agility Trial was a way of keeping part of the local fairgrounds building from sitting idle during fall obedience trials. Even though several members had no idea what agility was, they demonstrated the unfailing spirit of ECHO by serving as timers, equipment haulers and course builders to pull off the club's first successful Agility Trial.

Search and Rescue was another point of interest in the early '90's. Several ECHO members worked and trained with Northern Indiana Search and Rescue to help their dogs learn to find - and possibly save the lives of - lost people. In 1995, a member's Rottweiler was certified as a Wilderness Search and Rescue dog. In 1996, the handler/dog team went to Atlanta as standbys for the Olympics. This dog is now a certified Disaster Search and Rescue Dog at Level 2 of FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency). He is one of only 34 dogs in the United States to carry this designation and the first in Indiana. Additional ECHO members are expected to follow suit in the near future.

Another interesting activity ECHO handlers and dogs are participating in is carting and water trials - particularly among the Newfoundlands of the club. Several owners of Herding Group dogs have attended herding trials and tried out their dogs for herding instinct.

ECHO members are also active in Assistance Dog work. One handler - a special education teacher - has a Jack Russell Terrier who attends elementary school each day in a classroom of children with autism. Another member serves as Training Director of Midwest Assistance Dogs, Inc., a group that trains

hearing dogs for the hearing-impaired. The group also places retired senior dogs as companions. Most of these dogs come from Humane Societies in the area.

ECHO has a number of dog groomers and obedience and agility instructors who gladly share their knowledge. Many members have donated countless hours teaching 4-H dog obedience classes. The 4-H'ers work elbow-to-elbow, and paw-to-paw, at ECHO obedience and agility trials with their 4-H leaders. When they grow up, 4-H'ers often join the club. Members realize the value of sharing their interests in dogs with young people and go the extra mile to make ECHO a family-oriented group. As a result, the organization has one of the strongest junior programs in Northern Indiana.

During the past three decades, ECHO members have enjoyed virtually every activity related to dog training, including seminars, Dog Camps, Flyball and

Lure Coursing. Hard-working canines and handlers have earned accolades in hunting/retrieving field work, breed showing, U.K.C., AKC, USDAA, and NADAC Agility; go-to-ground Terrier trials; and many other activities that are both fun-filled and fulfilling for the dogs and their human companions. ECHO members and their dogs have also graced the pages of such publications as *BLOODLINES*, *Dog Fancy*, *Front and Finish*, and many breed-related newsletters, books and calendars. Several times a year, members or their dogs smile from the pages of daily and weekly newspapers in northern Indiana. ECHO membership includes a wealth of highly-experienced stewards, show personnel, and Judges. Through the numerous generations of puppies, puddles and paper towels, ECHO has a proud, thirty-year history of obedience, agility and conformation, showing and winning.



ECHO Club's U.K.C. titled dogs (March, 1997). Top row (left to right): U-CDX U-AGII Mel-O-Dee's Havin Hy Tyme; U-AGII Hy Tyme's Take A Chance; U-AGI Hy Tyme's Casseopia; U-CDX U-ACH Czar Zelda; U-CDX U-ACH Jam's Uptown Jonah; and U-CDX Taffy's Candies Delight. Middle row (left to right): U-CD U-AGI Lyndell's Foxfire; CH U-AGI Cinnrhee's Starry Sky; U-AGII Jackpot's Gunner Magee; U-CDX U-AGI Sailour's Jeannie of the Lamp; U-ACH U-CD Meadow's Fantasia; U-CDX U-AGI Treasure Tyme Got That Magic. Bottom row (left to right): U-CD Pinecrest's Golden Tyler; U-CD Honeycreek's Amber Dawn; U-AGI Deihl's Duchess Delight; U-CD U-AGII Deihl's Ebony Lady; and U-AGI Germantown's Harlot von Udo.

