

# Life in LAMORINDA

## Surviving Boot Camp

By Cathy Tyson

I had imagined camouflage pants and a bullhorn. In reality the instructor for my first day of class was wearing the latest in stretchy athletic gear and looking very fit. It wasn't long before I was panting and dripping with sweat, one recent morning at the Moraga Commons. It seemed like a good idea, sign up for Boot Camp, see what its really like, and write an article about the experience. For yours truly and every other "camper" I met, the unanimous feeling is that its definitely challenging, but in the end, very rewarding. Which is the whole point.

Instructors, Tim Hill, Liesbet Bickett and Martin Sadalski are great about encouraging one's best efforts and offering alternative moves, on the off chance it gets too difficult, say for a middle-aged reporter. They really know their physiology, so can offer informed advice and pre-workout stretching for injured or post-surgery classmates. Kelly Price, one of my

partners in sweat says it best. "I wanted something that gave me a good jumpstart to lose the weight, feel stronger and have more energy. What I've realized is that when you begin to truly concentrate on yourself, take the hour to work hard and understand your goals, life becomes so much more authentic. Tim and Liesbet are so inspiring because they live each day exactly how they train and teach. Their energy, attitude, and work ethic are contagious!"

"When I spoke to Liesbet about my goals, she genuinely took the time to take me grocery shopping and show me healthier food alternatives. Those experiences have been priceless."

"You leave each workout feeling like you just conquered a mini-marathon. I have definitely lost weight and gained strength, but the best feeling is the pride you get deep down inside from staying committed to something that felt so hard to begin with."

Deb Witmer, a 55 year old

participant had signed up for five months worth of classes and recently bought a pass that allows her to take additional classes for the balance of the year. "I just feel terrific, I have so much energy all day." Although there were moments when it wasn't always so pleasant. "Golly, I'm sore - but only occasionally, usually after the interval training." She's lost 26 pounds.

"For me," says Julie Luckenbach, "boot camp is something healthy that I can do for myself in those precious moments we Mom's have between dropping the kids at school, unending chores and picking up the kids again."

Independently owned and operated by Tim Hill and Liesbet Bickett, Contra Costa Adventure Boot Camps had their first class in June of 2006. Prior to starting the business, the couple, who met on Match.com, had extensive backgrounds in exercise and athletic competition. The camp itself is a four-week outdoor program of fitness instruction, nutritional coaching and motivational

training. Participants can chose from three to five days per week, starting at \$199. The next sessions are starting soon in Lafayette, Moraga, Walnut Creek and beyond.

"My idea was not to train people in the gym but to train them outside and show them that the natural gym is so much more fun, and that exercise was about loving and discovering the power of yourself, not putting in your hour at the gym because you have to," reflects Liesbet about her philosophy. Included in the program is a free nutritional seminar, also available for an additional fee are: the Clean Cupboard Makeover in your home, and The Clean Food Makeover by Cindy Gershen owner of Sunrise Café, and prepared healthy meals by OrtoGo.

At the moment, I don't have abs of steel, but I'm working on it.

For more information call (925) 457-4587, or www.contracostabootcamp.com



Instructors Tim Hill in white T-shirt and Martin Sadalski in black T-shirt facing camera. Photos by Andy Scheck

Pain is weakness leaving the body  
No bad weather, only bad clothing  
Mind over matter - if you don't mind, it doesn't matter  
Make life a mission, not an intermission  
I don't carry my weight, my weight carries me



Enjoying the obstacle course with fellow campers at the Moraga Commons.

## Lamorinda Puppy Raisers Give of Selves for Great Cause

By Jennifer Wake



Cindy Sevilla, walks throughout La Fiesta Square with Guide Dog trainee, Margie. courtesy of Cinda MacKinnon

When Orinda resident Cinda MacKinnon first signed up to raise puppies for Guide Dogs for the Blind three years ago, she envisioned training part-time, while working from home.

She soon learned that turning a little puppy into a working dog - one that a blind person eventually will entrust with their lives - is not an easy task.

MacKinnon, and her husband Tom, dedicated 18 months to socialize Rhapsody, a golden retriever who recently graduated and was partnered with Matthew Friend, who is not only blind, but deaf as well. Because of his disabilities, Friend did not take many walks

before he had Rhapsody, but now he walks everywhere.

Following Rhapsody's graduation, the MacKinnons continued to be part of the puppy raising team by babysitting for other guide dog puppies.

"It's a lot like having a baby," MacKinnon explained. "You can't leave the dog in the house to simply go to the cleaners; they need to be watched all the time." Puppies are trained to behave as they would with a blind person. They are taught to relieve themselves on a leash, for example, since a blind person will have to relieve the dog this way.

Guide Dogs for the Blind CEO, Bob Phillips, explained that you teach the puppy to be-

have under certain circumstances.

When Rhapsody was only 8-weeks-old, the MacKinnons began training her to sit, to stop chewing on furniture, to not eat food off tables - basically learn un-puppy-like behaviors while she was "working."

"Our work is to socialize in every instance: at work, at home, at the grocery, on trains or BART, at restaurants," MacKinnon said.

Since a lot of the socialization training happens outside the home, MacKinnon and her puppy raising leader, Lafayette resident Cindy Sevilla, rely on Lamorinda businesses to help. Fortunately, business owners in the area have been very open to them.

"Amarin Thai Cuisine in Lafayette has let me train every

puppy I've had, and Clocks, Etc. has been fabulous letting us in," said Sevilla, who has trained 13 puppies over the past eight years. She is constantly on the lookout for socializing opportunities for her 8-month-old trainee, Margie.

"It's important that dogs don't rush up stairs or run down stairs," Sevilla explained, as she walked Margie steadily up and down stairs throughout La Fiesta Square in Lafayette. "Initially, Margie would charge upstairs, so I've done a lot of body blocking (blocking Margie's rush upstairs by squeezing her between the wall and Sevilla's legs)."

She also takes Margie on elevators, and is teaching her to sleep under the table at restaurants or under desks at work. Her entire family gets involved. Sevilla's husband, Al, has

taken puppies to work with him. Her three children, Ginger, Sean, and Hayley, take puppies to work, to school, or to the gym.

After socialization training, the puppies return to Guide Dogs for the Blind for 10 weeks of intensive training, which includes things like teaching dogs to look for overhead obstacles that might injure their partner - an incredibly difficult task, considering the anatomy of the animal. Those wanting dogs also go through a rigorous application and training process before being partnered with a guide dog.

Guide Dogs for the Blind is fully supported by private donations. It offers everything from transportation to room and board, including training and all its support services free of charge to the blind or to the visually impaired student.

The organization recently

began the K9 Buddy program for blind children who are too young for guide dogs.

"The child learns about the human-animal bond," said Phillips, whose daughter is blind. "They are partnered with a dog that might be perfect in every way, but are not yet ready to guide. Parents might view a dog as another distraction, but they have never seen a well-behaved dog.

Some children partnered with a K9 Buddy, Phillips noted, can take the dogs to school, making it easier to meet people and make friends.

"We have shifted our focus to a broader way of thinking of the impact when we partner a guide dog with a blind person; the natural interdependency we place between guide dogs and their partners," Phillips said.

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