



GOING TO THE DOGS

Kathy Weichert & Uno on a Good Will Mission

Kathy poses with Uno's sister, Secret.

“Uno is doing countless appearances during his reign, and all goodwill appearances.”

Kim Snider

Even before the whirlwind media storm surrounding Uno, Kathy Weichert and her beagles weren't nobody's. She has been breeding beagles since the 1990's, with many champions under her belt, of course none winning the coveted Best in Show, like Uno did, but champions nonetheless.

With Uno on tour and Kathy finding her email inbox filled every day with people wanting a beagle puppy, Kathy, Uno, and the many folks associated with Uno (Uno's breeders, handlers, and owners have a combined 125 years of experience with beagles.) who make Best in Show happen are now on a goodwill mission. The goal is to get the word out about choosing the right pet for the family and defining what it is breeders do.

First, when choosing a pet, make sure the family is in agreement on what breed of dog to get. When choosing a breed, consider your family's lifestyle, and avoid pet shops, puppy mills and backyard breeders. Talk to breeders and know the dog's history if it's not a puppy. The same is true when choosing a dog from the Humane Society. Often times folks can't afford a purebred dog and there are a lot of good dogs in shelters looking for good homes, but again, know the dog's history, if it's been abused or abandoned.

And Kathy warns, "Don't fall for cute. Consider the dog's size, hair (Will it shed a lot?), and temperament." For instance, when 101 Dalmatians was on the big screen everybody

wanted one, but Dalmatians require a lot of exercise, and bundled up energy results in destruction of the household. Remember too, a dog is at least a 10 to 15 year commitment.

Another option Kathy recommends is purebred rescue such as Greyhound Rescue, but there is a rescue for almost any breed.

"And always spay and neuter." This is where Kathy defines exactly what the ultimate goal is for breeders and that is the breeders motto: "Betterment of the Breed." That is, as Kathy puts it, "the next generation should be better than the one that produced it."

One last recommendation from Kathy is to avoid designer breeds such as Labradoodles and Schnoodles. "People are paying \$1,500 for a mutt." The problem is, as an example Kathy used, Poodles as well as Labradors have huge hip and skin allergy issues. Breeding the two together

causes these dog owners large amounts of money to keep their pets healthy. "If it's not purebred, beagle to beagle, German Shepherd to German Shepherd, you're breeding a mutt."

With his newfound fame all proceeds from Uno's paid appearances go to the Canine Health Foundation, the Morris Foundation, and local shelters and California Dog Owners Organization. Currently, the state of California is a great concern to breeders everywhere because of a spay/neuter legislation that, if passed would require all animals to be spayed and neutered at sixteen weeks old. "This law would not separate a legitimate breeder [like Kathy], who breeds once a year, from the puppy mill who has a hundred litters a year."

While Team Uno con-

tinues to educate, Kathy will continue to work in the accounting department at the Metropolitan Sewer District which enables her to breed and show dogs on a hobby basis.

Even before his big win, Uno was having a great year. Uno and his entourage are scheduled to visit the White House and Planet Snoopy in Sandusky, Ohio. On August 24 Uno will be in town for a Cardinals game where he will carry out the first pitch. Then there is the Macy's Day parade, and Simon and Schuster contacted them about a book.

"There will never be a 'life after Uno.' Most Westminster winners do about a half dozen appearances, Uno is doing countless appearances during his reign, and all goodwill appearances."

On a side note, I mentioned to Kathy that I wondered what Charles Schulz would say or what kind of cartoon he would put in the paper if he was alive today to see a beagle win Best in Show. Kathy informed me that Uno's win came on the day of the anniversary of Charles Schulz's death. "We said when Uno won, [Charles Schulz] was looking down on us and I bet he was grinnin' from ear to ear."



Uno, top dog.