

January 21, 2007

Pembroke Pines - It was test day for Loki, a 3 1/2-year-old golden retriever, but he looked calm, cool and collected lounging in the grass.

His owner, Samantha Bauer of Hollywood, did the worrying for him.

"It could be a big step for him in learning basic obedience," she said.

Loki and two other canine companions were put on the spot recently to show what manners they've learned so far during the Canine Good Citizen Test at C.B. Smith Park.

"It's a certification that the dog basically has good manners to be in public," said evaluator Marni Bellavia, of Sunrise, owner of HumaneK9.

Canine Good Citizen certification is a program of the American Kennel Club. It's designed to reward dogs that have good manners at home and in the community, as well as stress responsible pet ownership.

"Florida's becoming more and more open to allowing dogs in public places," said Bellavia, who also manages the Humane Society of Broward County's pet therapy program. "So it is a way to show store owners your dog has good manners."

Bellavia makes a point not to meet with the dogs before the evaluation so they do not become familiar with her. She puts them through 10 different steps to gauge their friendliness. Steps include accepting a friendly stranger, sitting politely for petting, appearance and grooming, walking through a crowd, coming when called, reaction to another dog and supervised separation.

Emily Wines traveled from Boca Raton with Clifford. Her pooch is a Vizsla, a type of Hungarian pointer known for its high energy.

"Manners are very important when you have a Vizsla," she said.

Bellavia recommends all dogs be enrolled a basic obedience class to prepare for the good citizen test.

"A lot of components in the test do run through basic commands like sit, stay, down and walking on a leash," she said.

Melinda Steinbacher, of Fort Lauderdale, spent several months taking Duncan, her flat-coated retriever, to obedience classes before the test.

"It's just a nice thing to work with him," she said.

Bellavia offers preparation classes for the test, as well as basic obedience and puppy classes, at C.B. Smith Park.

Call [954-288-1021](tel:954-288-1021) or visit [www.humanek9.com](http://www.humanek9.com).

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