

7 January 2005

Dear Sylvia,

I am writing this letter to offer my sincerest thanks for everything that you have done for me and for Scout.

When Robert and I picked up a four-month-old Scout from the Humane Society in March of 2004, it never once occurred to us that we were embarking on what would prove at times to be a very emotional and difficult journey. I say with complete sincerity that your presence in Scout's life, and therefore in ours, made all the difference.

As you know, Scout has had her fair share of "challenging issues". For our part, we were utterly inexperienced dog people who brought only commitment and love to the project. What we lacked was knowledge, skill and the confidence to believe that things could improve when worked on properly. You gave us the tools to become better dog trainers and to have faith that we, and Scout, were up to the challenges with which we were presented.

Every time we had a little setback, you – a virtual stranger to me! – were the first person I thought to contact. It was always reassuring to have your analysis of a given event and to be provided with concrete strategies for moving forward. When you stated in Puppy Class and in Level 2 Obedience that you would be there for the life of our dogs, you actually meant it! The amount of time that you offered to me – be it over email, on the phone or in person – was absolutely remarkable. In addition to being an effective teacher, you were, for me, an exceptionally compassionate, friendly and kind voice of reason.

What I have really come to appreciate about your approach to dog training is that it is very much about teaching us, the humans, how to understand and respect dog culture and dog communication strategies. Knowing something about how dogs understand their worlds and their relationships, I learned, is the basis of dog-training. I feel decidedly well-trained by you!

Over the last many months, my friends and colleagues have listened to their fair share of stories about the trials and tribulations – and the terrific joys! – of living with Scout. They have also heard a great deal about Delightful Dogs and Sylvia Gottschalk; I have sung your praises far and wide.

I would like to add that all of you at the Canine Centre – Norma Jeanne, Christina and Charity included – have all exceeded my wildest expectations in terms of what a dog training facility might offer. My thanks to all of you.

I wish you every success in the future, Sylvia.

With warmest regards,

Dr. Eva Plach