

Dispatch from Real World Canine

ISSUE #4

THE RWC TEAM
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WHAT MAKES RWC DIFFERENT FROM OTHER CANINE CARE FACILITIES?

At RWC, our mission is simple: improve the life of every dog we meet. We're driven by a deep love for dogs and a commitment to return the unconditional love they give us. This philosophy underpins everything we do.

We are guided by, and advocate for, the Five Freedoms of animal welfare—freedom from hunger, discomfort, pain, fear, and the freedom to express natural behaviors. While almost all pets enjoy these freedoms, some, especially rescue dogs, struggle with fear and stress. Our Yellow Dog Program supports these dogs with operant conditioning, confidence-building, and behavior modeling. We're proud to have helped over 200 dogs graduate from “yellow” (dogs with anxiety/fear issues that affect their behavior) to “green” (well-adjusted, not highly impacted by anxiety/fear) — happier and more relaxed.

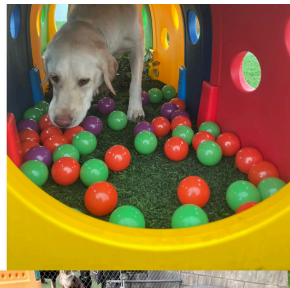


Some of our “yellow-to-green” graduates

To combat pain and discomfort, we offer laser therapy, (with hydrotherapy coming soon), to help older dogs and those with other joint/muscular issues, stay active and pain-free. Our low dog-to-staff ratio, structured day camp, and variety of supervised activities help reduce injuries during play.



We also honor dogs' natural instincts - digging, foraging, barking, guarding. Our enrichment programs let all types of dogs express these behaviors in a fun and healthy way. This approach allows dogs to channel their inner wild dog, and avoid outbursts from pent-up energy and frustration. The result? Calmer, more content dogs who make great companions at home.



All this is made possible by our dedicated staff. We hire passionate animal lovers, train them vigorously, pay them fairly, offer benefits, profit-sharing, and promote from within. Not only do our employees train in-house using our proprietary processes and procedures, they also have the opportunity to train under industry standard-bearers including Dog Handler Academy, and Pack Pro Training. At RWC, we provide all team members with the tools they need to become highly skilled dog handlers.

We know how important it is to have faith in the place and people that you entrust your dog to, and we take that trust and responsibility very seriously.

We are committed to treating you, our customers, with fairness, respect, and appreciation. We value honesty, take responsibility if something goes wrong, and will not prevaricate, make excuses, or blame others. We want to help you build a stronger bond with your dog through our work with your pups, as well as through education—via newsletters, social media, and future offerings.



Thank you for trusting us with your dogs. There is a very special bond between humans and dogs - a dog's love often exceeds human love, and we honor that every day.

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO AT HOME WITH YOUR DOG

Many of our customers love the enrichment activities that RWC does with their dogs, and certainly, the facility allows us to do more involved, complicated, and time-consuming activities. However, there are many activities that you can do at home with your dogs too, to give them more stimulation and challenges! Here are a few suggestions:

1. Scatter Feeding: Feeding your dog in a bowl is probably the most boring and unchallenging way to feed your dog. If your dog hasn't had much to do most of the day except sit by your side, try making feeding time fun by scatter feeding. You can scatter feed in many ways: you can literally scatter your dog's kibble all over the back yard, and let your dog run around foraging for their food. You could also hide his kibble in the house. Up the difficulty level by hiding the food in toilet paper rolls, kitchen paper towel rolls (put kibble in the empty cardboard rolls and fold up the ends or scrunch them into a bunch), hide them around the house, and have your dog find them. To make it even more challenging, hide those cardboard rolls in a box, and let your dog hunt for them in there! Do monitor your dog in case they decide to eat the cardboard too.
2. Put your dog's food in a Topl, or one of the many feeding puzzles that are out there. I (Jodie) typically feed my dogs in TOPLs: I mix their food up and fill the TOPLs with the food. Instead of wolfing down their dinner in 1-2 minutes, my dogs now spend 10-15 minutes focusing on the task of extracting their food from the TOPLs. Another upside to this is that it also helps their digestion as they are no longer swallowing their food whole!
3. Training your dog is one of the best enrichment activities you can do with your dog. Just bear in mind that you have to be patient and kind to your dog, and not train for longer than 10 minutes at a time. If you feel yourself getting impatient or angry, stop the training and try again later. There is nothing that will ruin your relationship with your dog faster than to turn an activity that should bond you, into one that makes your dog anxious. I do a fun training activity with my dogs called "Make Better Choices." It's actually taught by a trainer called Susan Garrett, who calls it "It's Your Choice." One of my favorite exercises is this: I hold a treat in my open hand sitting on the floor at my dog's level. If my dog tries to grab it from me, I close my hand. When they stop, I open my hand. If they go for it again, I close my hand again. When they make the choice not to try to grab or steal it, I offer the treat to them. You can do many variations of this exercise (try stacking a pile of treats in front of them as they wait patiently, or put a treat on their paw or head without them grabbing it), and the objective is to teach them self-control and restraint. It also teaches them that good things will come to those who wait patiently.
4. There are of course, a multitude of lick mats, snuffle mats, and puzzles you can buy for your dogs -- some of which are available at RWC! These activities are great for when you have to leave your pup alone without supervision. If you have more than one dog, you may want to consider letting them do their puzzles and mats in separate crates or rooms, to prevent competition and fighting. That is what we do at RWC, when we give our pack members food enrichment activities.
5. Finally, playing with your dog is also one of the best enrichment activities, with the added bonus of building a closer bond between the two of you (just as with training). You can play tug, fetch, you can have your dog chase you (don't chase your dog - you probably won't catch him, and you may end up teaching him to run away from you), or play hide and seek with your dog (you hide, they seek). Of course, if you play tug, let your dog win every so often or it is no fun! Spending time with your dog is one of those things that you will never regret doing!

I hope that these ideas will give you some starter options to have fun and provide enrichment for your dog at home! Of course, you can always bring your pup to RWC if you're too busy or swamped. As you know, we always have a ton of ideas and themes for activities to do with your pups!

MEET RWC'S OWNERS



RWC's owners are Angela (right) and Jodie(left). They started off as angel investors in Real World Canine (2018), providing a 0% interest funding to the company. After 3 years (2021), the company's founders were operating the company at a significant loss, and were not able to make the first loan repayment. For months, Angela and Jodie provided them insight and additional funds to implement measures that would turn the company around, but they were not willing or able to do what was required to ensure the long-term viability of the company.

By April 2022, Angela and Jodie had to make a decision on RWC: close it down or take over management. Prior to RWC, Angela and Jodie had founded and grown multiple

companies, including an engineering firm that supported the US Navy, a software development company, and a real estate company. At the time, Angela and Jodie were in the process of retiring, to enjoy more adventures and travel. Taking over a company that had so many operational and financial problems was a big step away from retirement. While contemplating the decision, they spoke to many RWC customers, who made it clear that RWC was vital for their dogs' well-being. RWC was the perfect (and sometimes only) place that a large number of them could go to socialize, and feel comfortable playing with other dogs. Jodie and Angela realized that RWC had to continue to exist, and decided to dedicate themselves to making RWC viable.

What they brought to RWC was decades of experience running successful businesses that operated with integrity and quality, a keen sense for developing operating procedures that enabled many people to support the same goals, an engineering background with experience designing and building to support operational efficiency, and a keen understanding of business principles to ensure financial viability. In the end, the decision was one made from the heart: to delay retirement, and to structure RWC to be a company that improves the life of every dog that comes here - the founding principle on which RWC is run today.

From day one, Jodie and Angela devised a division of duties that allowed them to quickly implement improvements. Jodie is the CEO, responsible for devising and planning services, including introduction of new features like laser therapy and enrichment activities. She also manages all financial and customer relation efforts. Angela is the COO, responsible for operational efficiency, manpower task distribution, scheduling, as well as facilities and building design and management. The plan started with ensuring RWC had the best dog handlers and boarding personnel. Then, educating them on how to determine costs for specific events, and working together to identify the best series of events that dogs should get to experience during the day and night. With structured daycare and boarding schedules, individual team members were able to focus on their assigned tasking and know what they need to be doing throughout the day. They were part of the solution, and understood how everyone's efforts fit together to provide optimal dog activity and care. Efficiencies were achieved, and issues were addressed by the team. Within a year, the company was able to overcome prior year losses, achieve a credit rating that allowed the purchase of the new building in 2023, and to finance expansions that increase the services that RWC can provide (such as the large covered outdoor play area and the soon-to-be indoor swimming pool).

With the company on a solid footing, and providing the best canine care, Angela and Jodie are focused on the future for RWC. They want the team at RWC to have the opportunity to make a career of dog care, which requires compensation that supports the American dream (buy a home, have kids, etc.). In the last 2 years, RWC has been able to increase salaries in line with inflation, and also offer health, dental and vision insurance. We believe the future holds much promise for both the dogs that come to RWC, and the employees who take care of them.
