



# Jan / Feb Newsletter

www.CanicrossUSA.org



Issue #2 | Jan / Feb 2019 | Sure they like to walk, but they LOVE to RUN!

## Issue #2

Welcome to the 2<sup>nd</sup> issue of the CANICROSS USA newsletter! Progress has been made and we strive to continue to introduce and develop the organization and its efforts of drawing attention to the sport of canicross across the country.

Some of the exciting deployments that we'll cover in this issue are: the very first national virtual canicross event, CANICROSSUSA.ORG website, training tips, and personal stories. Feedback so far has been great!

As we continue our efforts, we still look for your contributions to help this grow! Ask questions, share experiences, contribute where you can. Let's keep the momentum going!

## Inside This Issue

- PG. 2 Letter from the Founder
- PG. 3 Canicross USA Vision & Mission
- PG. 4 Event Follow Up
- PG. 5 Warm-up Essentials for Canicross
- PG. 8 Virtual Run / Grow Your Chapter
- PG. 9 Events
- PG. 11 Blog Post
- PG. 12 The Adventures of a Canicross Newbie

## Canicross USA 2019....

A year ago, I was invited to take over a FB Group Page called 'Canicross USA' and reluctantly accepted, thinking I would do some generic post on Canicross and upcoming events I personally sponsor in SE Wisconsin. I was thinking 15-20 minutes a week and it would be fun and engage those that love running and being active with their dog(s). Little did I know what would happen next!!! You responded in way I did not imagine, and your passion influenced me to do more than I imagined or honestly thought possible.

Here it is a year later. We have a website that is up and still under development, our second newsletter is here, a small team to assist in moving the ball forward, will have Canicross event insurance available shortly after the first of the year, and we are hosting our first of three Virtual Canicross Events in January.

Who is our team?

Mark Franco - Newsletter/Website

Macy Hunsicker - Communications and Administrative

Bethany Lavins - Race Directory

Macy & Bethany also assist with the newsletter and website.

I am very thankful for their time and willingness to assist in building this organization into something that will help grow the sport of Canicross.

Cani "Cross" America, our first virtual event is a result of so many of you asking when I was going to host an event in your area or where is a Canicross event in my area. My hope is the Canicross USA Chapters and other groups will plan a group run on either January 12th or 13th and enjoy the bike path or trail together. It is important to start building the chapters and groups in your local area. Mark and the Georgia chapter have been organizing and with their persistence, they now have a trail race coming up that will now include a Canicross event. I believe one of the quickest ways to start having Canicross events in your area is to organize your group, approach a RD for local trail event and include me in the conversation as I will lend my support and experience hosting these events. Please know that I will do all I can to support your efforts to have Canicross events in your area.

Now that I have eight months of Canicross USA behind me and 2019 beating on my door, here are some of the objectives for 2019. Re-establish communication with chapters on a regular basis, further develop the website, enhance the content of the newsletter to include regional updates from the chapters, create membership-based organization that will lend itself to being functional, maintainable and sustainable today and long into the future, and continue to be open to new ideas and partners to assist in growing and supporting Canicross. Please reach out to me with ideas and if you would like to become more involved on a local or regional or national level. [briant@kenossharunningcompany.com](mailto:briant@kenossharunningcompany.com) office 262-652-8660

Thank you for unknowingly planting seeds within me with your passion and interest. The development of Canicross USA is really happening because of you.

Have a Christmas that is full of blessings and love.

Brian Thomas



# CANICROSS USA

## *Canicross USA Vision:*

Canicross USA will actively find ways to introduce and support those that enjoy and perhaps even love to run and/or walk with their dog. We will evolve and grow to best realize this vision.

## *Canicross USA Mission Statement:*

Canicross USA and our local chapters will embrace our grassroots effort to create a welcoming and encouraging atmosphere. We will be all inclusive to all abilities and breeds of dogs. With a distinct focus on living and loving a healthy lifestyle in a community that is exploring and expanding the relationship with our canine running partners.

Canicross USA will build bridges with each chapter that will further allow each chapter to create its own identity locally and grow in their unique part of the country. We will provide resources and guidance that will best assist in developing: group runs, Canicross events, community awareness, product support and continual education on our sport.

Canicross USA will rely on its local chapters to provide creative, fun and healthy ideas with each other to ensure a nurturing environment.

Canicross USA believes in you and the care, passion and love that is required to keep our canine running partners healthy and active.

## *Fallow up for the 5th Annual Hateya Trail Run & Canicross*

The 5th Annual Hateya Trail Run & Canicross found a new home in Lake Geneva! After 4 great years at Petrifying Springs County Park, we simply needed a better indoor facility to accommodate the expected cold December weather. Thank you to Lake Geneva Canopy Tours for allowing us to explore the trails, enjoy the two fires and have the comfort of a great indoor facility. A couple brave ones even did some zip lining once done running!

I think many can attest that the start on the highest point on the property looking down over the valley and Lake Como made feel like we were in the mountains. No, I was drinking at that point!!!

Let me start by thanking those who made the day possible... Carlie who helped me mark the course, set up and assisted with timing, Ryan who brought some great homemade soup, tear down and assisted with timing, Stephanie check in - same day sign up - fitting dogs and humans with products and tear down, Jim & Maggie with the food & tear down... my wife Tammy who puts up with all my SH\*\* , set up, tear down and makes you post run happen with the food.....

Now to each of you, I like to say I plan, organize and invite... the rest is up to you! You made it a great event for each other, thank you :) Those that brought treats to share, thank you so much... Whoever brought he Vodka Peppermint flavor, shame on you!!! You better come every time now as everyone is counting on you for a shot either straight up or in their hot chocolate!!!

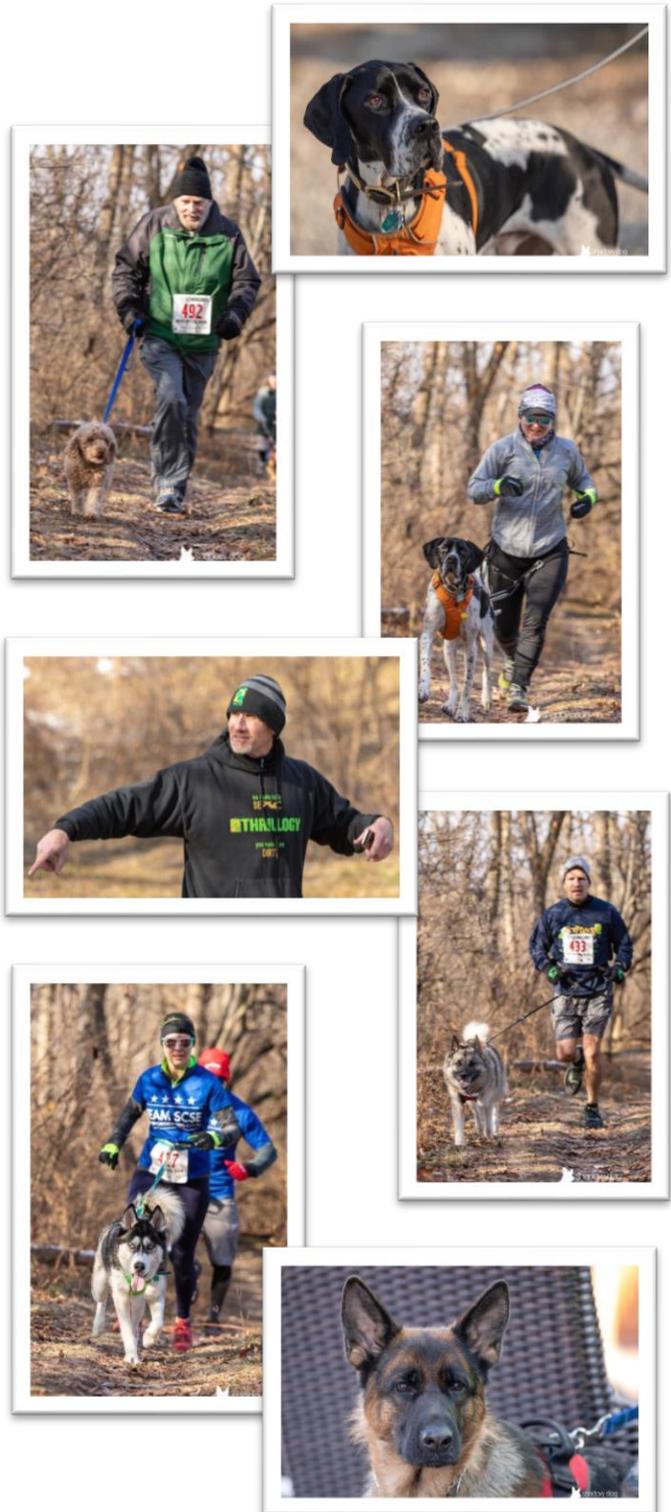
The trails????? What do you think? I am hoping you loved them as we will be out there in March, November, and December in 2019. I promise you they will be a different combination of trails every time! For more information on our upcoming events [www.XCThrilllogy.com](http://www.XCThrilllogy.com)

These great pictures are from Jan Bezzo owner of Shadow Dog Photography. Thank you, Jan, everyone loves these pictures. We will be posting the pictures from the trail cameras on Tuesday.

[https://www.facebook.com/pg/KenoshaRunningCompany/photos/?tab=album&album\\_id=1283916521788357](https://www.facebook.com/pg/KenoshaRunningCompany/photos/?tab=album&album_id=1283916521788357)

Most of you I will not see until after Christmas, have an amazing and Holiday season. Thank you all for an amazing day.

Brian



# Warm-Up Essentials for Canicross

Erica C. Boling, PhD

Warming up our dogs prior to canicross is a simple process that brings tremendous benefits to our canine athletes. Not only does it enhance performance, it also minimizes the risk of injury. Even though we have solid evidence to support the many benefits of warming up our dogs, many people are not building it into their training routine.

Below I describe why a warm-up should be an essential component of your canicross training. I also give examples of quick and easy exercises that you can do to warm up your dog.

## Warm-Up Goals

A dog's physiological response to warm-up exercises can result in enhanced performance and fewer injuries. Your dog's body responds to these exercises in a number of beneficial ways. For example, warming up your dog leads to an increase in blood flow, oxygen intake, muscle elasticity and body temperature. Warm-up activities also reduce muscle tension. Your main goal during your warm-up is to gradually raise your dog's heart rate and warm the muscles through activity.

The amount and intensity of your warm-up will depend on such things as climate and your environment. Temperature, humidity and altitude can all impact the length of your warm-up. For example, on a hot and humid day, your warm-up might only be a few minutes. On a really cold day, you might spend twice as much time, or even more, warming up your dog. I always observe my dog closely during a warm-up and use that as a guide to determine how long it should last. Some of the signs that I want to see include an increase in heart rate and panting. Sometimes the insides of the ears turn brighter pink. Avoid warming up to the point that your dog shows signs of fatigue and overheating.

No matter what activity you're doing, always start easy and slowly then gradually increase intensity. Below are examples of some simple warm-up exercises that I frequently use.

## Warm-Up Exercises

- **Walking and Jogging:** One of my favorite ways to warm-up my dog is to do the warm-up with him. I do this by starting my canicross run with a few minutes of walking. I start with a casual walk that is relatively slow and do this with my leash attached to my dog's collar. If I let him pull right away, he'll be straining hard to get started without having a proper warm-up. I always try to minimize his pulling at the very beginning of our warm-up.

While walking, I gradually increase my speed until my own breathing becomes harder and I feel my muscles loosening up. After walking fast for a short distance, I then stop and attach the line to my dog's harness. Once attached, I don't immediately start running. Instead, I walk a little longer and allow my dog to pull. After a short walk with pulling, I then begin jogging and gradually increase our speed.

- **Lunging in Circles:** Another favorite warm-up activity is to lunge my dog in circles like a horse. After doing a short walk with my dog, I hold the leash and have him trot in circles around me in both directions. If my leash is only 6 feet long, I'll walk along with him in small circles to increase the size of the circle that he's trotting. This is a great way to warm-up your dog, but unfortunately, it's not helping prepare your own body for your run. If I lunge my dog in circles, I still have to take time to do my own warm-up. This is why my favorite canicross warm-up is to walk and jog with my dog. If I'm racing, I'll find an area to lunge my dog in circles before the race begins. We'll then do some jogging together before we head to the start line.
- **Tugging and Short Retrieves:** If I need extra warm-up activities, I'll also have my dog do some obedience and heeling then reward him with a game of tug. I can even throw the tug a short distance and have him retrieve it while pulling me. This mimics the kind of pulling he'll be doing once we are in a canicross run. However, your dog will be working at a lower level of intensity so that the body has time to adjust.

Get creative with your warm-ups! The types of activities that you can do are endless. Just make sure to gradually increase intensity so that your dog's body has time to adjust to a harder workload. Also, don't forget that temperature, humidity,

altitude and even the overall general fitness of your dog will all impact how much time your warm-ups take. Want more ideas for warming up your dog? Be sure to check out my [Facebook Live videos](#).

### Final Thoughts

Warm-up exercises are designed to prepare your dog for more strenuous activity. Before engaging in any exercise, however, be sure your dog is healthy or has veterinary clearance. Be sure to keep your dog at a good working weight to decrease the chance of injury. Also, avoid exercising your dog if it's the slightest bit dehydrated. Being dehydrated increases the likelihood of heat stroke, and it doesn't have to be warm outside for your dog to suffer from the effects of overheating!

Finally, no matter what you do, don't skip the warm-up! It doesn't matter if it's a casual Sunday run or the biggest race of the year, be sure to make warm-up exercises an essential part of your daily canicross routine.

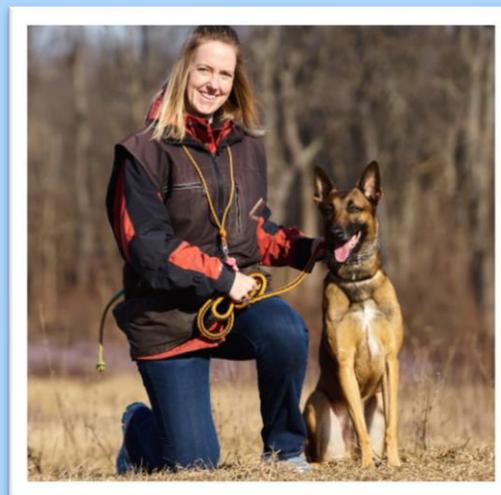
**Erica C. Boling, PhD**, is an Associate Professor of Education at Rutgers University and the owner and founder of Northeast K9 Conditioning, LLC and [Northeast K9 Conditioning Academy](#). Erica helps sport and working dog handlers create peak performance, canine athletes by teaching them how to integrate canine fitness into their training programs. Erica is a Certified Canine Fitness Trainer (CCFT), Certified Canine Massage Provider and member of the United States Federation of Sleddog Sports (USFSS).

Email: [info@northeastk9conditioning.com](mailto:info@northeastk9conditioning.com)

Website: <https://www.northeastk9conditioning.com/>

What's your K9 Fitness IQ? [Take the quiz](#) to find out!

Join: [Get Fit and Active with Your Dog!](#)



Erica and Knoxx

[www.CanicrossUSA.org](http://www.CanicrossUSA.org)

The website is live! While a continuous work in progress, it will be your one stop shop to all things CanicrossUSA. We currently have national canicross event listings, links to the newsletter, links to the active CanicrossUSA chapter pages, and some general information. Soon to come are videos and stories that will provide related information and instruction, and some purely for entertainment. Please feel free to contribute your experiences and content. We want nothing more than to share this exciting sport and activity with the rest of the country and the world.



Contact: Mark Franco ([mark.franco.jr@gmail.com](mailto:mark.franco.jr@gmail.com))



**CANICROSS USA**

is pleased to announce the first-ever

## **Virtual CaniCross Event**

January 12th or 13th • Location of your choice

**[www.TrailDogRunners.com](http://www.TrailDogRunners.com) • (262) 925-0300**

<https://www.raceentry.com/race-reviews/cani-cross-america>

# Canis "Cross" America

## Virtual CaniCross Event – January 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> You choose!

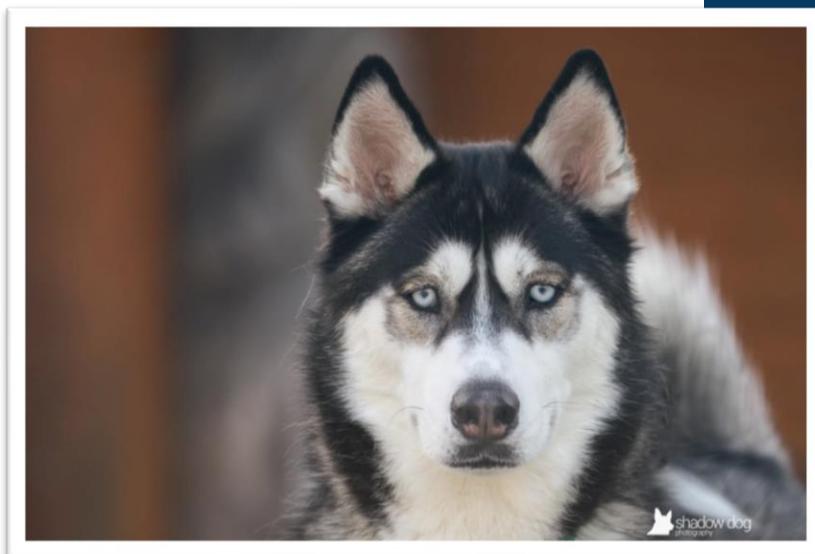
Canicross USA is pleased to announce the first ever Virtual Canicross Event in the US (to the best of our knowledge) hosted by the [Kenosha Running Company](#). This will be the first of at least three similar events for 2019.

Register early to ensure you get your SWAG – a patch and bandana with the logo seen on the full page add on the previous page – which will be mailed on January 3rd and guaranteed to the first 200 registrants.

Distance will be completely up to you! We prefer you run on trails, but any location is fine. You will be able to post pictures of your run, including distance, selfies, or any other fun things you wish to highlight from your run on the [Canicross USA Facebook page](#). We will also be posting information and results on our website and in our newsletter.

### How to Use the Virtual Run to Grow Your Chapter

1. Get a group together to run the Virtual Canicross race.
2. Pick a trail easily accessible and widely used by other dog walkers/runners. Make sure it is accessible the day and time of your planned event.
3. Plan out the logistics like accessible restrooms or other facilities along or near the course.
4. Plan a group social activity for after the race.
5. Plan the route, measure, test the course and make a map.
6. Make a flyer with both event and group details.
7. Have everyone share the flyer on social media, *display on bulletin boards at work, the local veterinarian's office, pet stores, running stores, post at trail heads (if allowed), coffee shops, sporting goods stores, livestock feed stores, horse tack shops, dog training facilities, gyms and everywhere else you can think of.*
8. Find local dog obedience classes and ask the instructors to bring students looking for group outings.
9. Look for free advertising possibilities in local classifieds (radio, electronic and print).
10. Recruit volunteers to man water stations and a pre/post-race hot beverage station.
11. Make sure to capture contact information for attendees and make sure to gather feedback and invite them to join in on future events and scheduled meet-ups.
12. Have fun, take lots of photos and update your [Canicross USA Chapter Facebook page!](#)



**Hateya Trail Run  
& Canicross,  
Lake Geneva, WI**

**Shadow Dog  
Photography**

## January / February / March Events

The following is a list of dog friendly events for the months of January and February. The list consists of canicross events and dog friendly trail runs and races. Most of the list came from [RunRepeat – The Dog Race Database](#) and only includes events in states where we have existing Canicross USA chapters.

A very special THANKS goes out to Bethany D. Lavins-Merillat who has spent over half a year researching dog friendly events around the country and manages the [Dog Race Database](#) which consists of 1511 dog friendly events. She has been very helpful in working directly with us on the listing below.

Event Name	Location	Date
Virtual Cani "Cross" America	Everywhere	1/12 - 1/13
im Schnee festsitzen Trail Run	Bristol, WI	1/19/2019
Boreas Trail Adventure	Bristol, WI	2/17/2019
Hills Are Alive Trail Run/Walk	Burlington, WI	3/16/2019
South Fork Dryland Race	Taylorville, IL	3/23 - 3/24

Always consider the race course and conditions when choosing an event, and how it will impact your team mate. Running your dog on unnatural surfaces can be more harsh than natural surfaces and should be limited by your dog's conditioning and ability. Always consult with your veterinarian when participating in sporting events.



If you would like to add a dog-friendly walk/run to [The Dog Race Database](#) or would like any changes/updates made to your event, email Bethany at [lavins.l@buckeyemail.osu.edu](mailto:lavins.l@buckeyemail.osu.edu).

### Canicross USA

#### Core Beliefs & Values:

1. We will be welcoming and committed to establishing and maintaining this atmosphere that feels in every aspect completely like family.
2. We are making a difference in the lives of others in ways that are at first to understand. Accept this responsibility and the influence you have going forward.
3. Have fun, tap into the crazy wonderful energy that surrounds this sport and our shared love of our canine partners.

## Get Fit for Canicross!

One of the best things about canicross is the resistance training it provides for both the canine and the runner/walker. Depending on how much resistance your dog provides, your glutes, hamstrings, hip flexors and core muscles (to just name a few) will get a great workout. Want to build your own strength for Canicross? Here is a home strength workout that requires no fitness equipment. Just a wall, a coffee table, bench or chair and you!

3 Rounds as fast as you can:

- 5 Wall Walks
- 25 Jumping Squats
- 15 Push-ups
- 5 Inchworms
- 25 Mountain Climbers
- 15 Bench/table/chair Dips
- 5 Wall-facing air squats
- 25 Hip Bridge
- 15 Flutter Kicks (each leg or 30 total)
- Rest 1 min

### Videos for each movement:

Wall-walk

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VpuoE246W1Y>

Jumping Squat

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gijGpRSA9FI>

Push-up <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3ySVKYVJ8>

Inchworm

<https://www.muscleanfitness.com/workouts/abs-and-core-exercises/videos/inchworm>

Mountain Climbers

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nmwgirgXLYM>

Bench/Table/Chair Dips

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0326dy\\_-CzM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0326dy_-CzM)

Wall-facing Squat

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hV\\_rDOloxCI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hV_rDOloxCI)

Hip Bridge (wall)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gv0JhsK02Oc>

Flutter Kicks

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VoHnFoltdg>



Team Michelle Gordon Coleman and Stella  
Canicross USA - Kansas

“Without my dog  
my wallet would  
be full, my house  
would be clean,  
but my heart  
would be empty.”

## *We're Gonna Need A Montage*

*A snidbit from the Blog of Jessica Cady-Bartholomew @[LOCAL DOG TRAINING & ADVENTURE](#)*

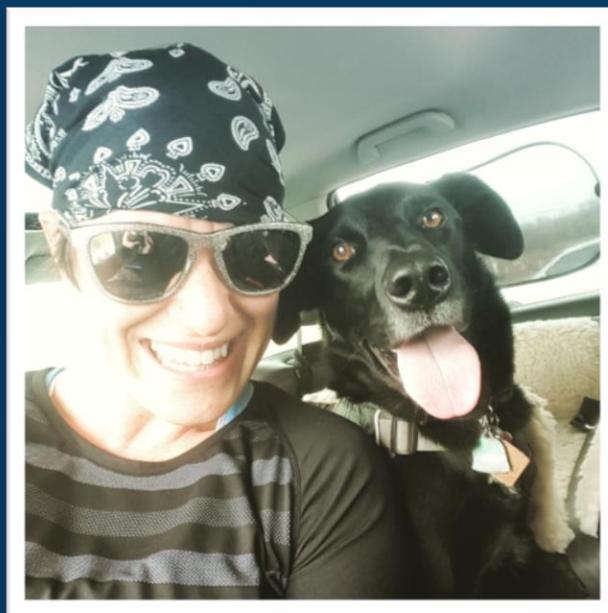
In the movie remake of *my life*, this is where a montage of our training trials and tribulations syncs to a driving anthem and motivates you to be bold and great. Ready? Frank Turner, on *Positive Songs for Negative People*, sings “I’m trying to get better because I haven’t been my best.” *Get Better* became our fight song. What makes my boy better? Running. What makes me better? Running. Us? We may be up on bricks, but we're machines and we were built to last.

Ojai and I spent a lot of time training in the dark. Like, a lot. We built trust and developed focus. We slowed down his speed of life. I remember the day when we saw a bike three blocks away. Ojai’s head and tail high, I asked him for a “touch” and he quickly booped my hand. Just as quickly, he returned gaze, silent but hyper alert, to the bike. I knew that if I won a split second of his attention, I could get a full second. Then, two seconds. Then, the world.

At the same time, I was finding my legs. Mixing short bouts of running with walking, then longer bouts of running, then fast running. Navigating pain management and the less-than-optimistic thoughts in my head, I found great excitement writing a training plan around Ojai because it had nothing to do with me. Any notions of “how I used to run” or “what that workout used to feel like” were irrelevant. In this moment, I was simply lucky enough to be tethered to him for the ride.

Given both of our conditions, we had limited distance to play with. But speed, that was ours. He really shines on trails - his downhilling is pro. He takes all the lines I would take (or better ones) and he pulls like a champ; he is canicross perfection...aside from that 3-legged b.s.

We worked steadily. Little goals multiplied until we were regularly kicking ass. As we progressed, in our own ways, and together, we developed our own language on the run. I learned to read his body language, just as he read mine. Ojai’s desire to chase tamed. He started to see bikes, even get passed by bikes, and never break stride. One day, we got swallowed up by a pack of faster runners. I held my breath - he was in his glory. His calmness increased. His freakouts, far fewer and less freaky. He regularly received compliments on his trail etiquette and manners. “See? That’s what a good dog looks like, Eddy,” one woman said to her frisky, four-legged companion. My pain was managed. My happiness increased. It was all so reinforcing. Our bond strengthened.



Jess and her 3-legged teammate Ojai.

## The Adventures of a Canicross Newbie: How Do You Even Start?

By M. Hunsicker

Six months ago, I had no idea what Canicross was, let alone know how to get started. Thankfully, Michael Burkey at [Michigan Dog Training \(MDT\)](#) in Plymouth MI, studies with Dr. Erica Boling of [Northeast K9 Conditioning](#) and was able to set me on the path to this amazing sport and provide me and my dog Murphy with the skills and tools we need to be safe and have fun on the trails.

When I was choosing a breed for my potential service dog, one of the criteria I knew I had to have was the ability and the desire to run and hike long distances. An avid runner, I need to run at least 5-6 days a week to help prevent my illness from flaring up as well as my long-term mental and physical health. Due to my schedule, I have to run very early in the morning so most of my runs are in the dark and I usually stick to trails to avoid the pounding of pavement and the risk of aggravating the ankle I injured in the military.

When my doctor and therapist recommended a Belgian Malinois, I was extremely hesitant. My exposure to the breed was primarily in explosive and narcotics detection roles and I knew they were smart but also very high energy. My dog would need to love to run but also have to quietly focus on my vital signs, blood pressure and other signals while I go to meetings and sit at a desk for 8-10 hours a day. When a local K9 handler I met through work mentioned knowing of a litter of puppies I went to check them out and you can guess the rest. There is nothing like a Malinois (or any puppy really) to steal your heart.

My dog Murphy or “Murph” is named after Lt. Michael Murphy, a U.S. Navy Seal killed in Afghanistan June 28, 2005.<sup>1</sup> I figured the way Lt. Murphy remained focused on his men and his mission through such a harrowing attack, eventually giving his life so his teammates could be rescued was a name worth living up to.

About halfway through Murphy’s training, he became such an adrenaline junky demanding more and more exercise, and on rest days he was not much fun to live with. I was running with him, playing ball and tug, practicing his obedience and tracking skills and spending my lunch break taking him out for a power walk but I was not sure how else to keep him exercised and entertained without training for an ultra-marathon. When I mentioned my concerns to Michael, he mentioned Canicross and sent me a link with some additional information. He explained how the resistance component of Canicross would not only strengthen Murphy’s muscles to help prevent injury but would also allow me to burn more of his energy with less mileage. The other “pro” for me would be to have my hands free so I could focus on running and help counteract my ankle instability and natural clumsiness.

As a CrossFit Level 1 Coach and volunteer for a local law enforcement CrossFit affiliate the idea of strength training for my dog and adding a resistance component to my runs was the icing on the cake. I quickly read everything I could find about Canicross and watched a zillion YouTube videos. I started looking into harnesses that would fit my super long and yet narrow chested partner and googling dog-friendly running events. One of my first hesitations came when I realized I had spent months training my dog to walk and run on a loose leash in heel position. What would happen to all



Macy and Murphy

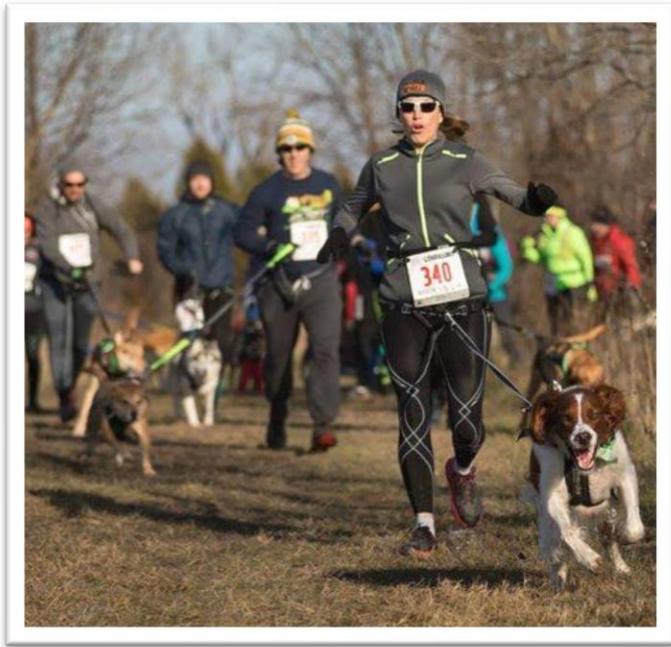
of that if I let him run ahead of me? Also, he was really good about behaving and ignoring distractions when in heel and when working in his vest, but what would he do when he saw a squirrel or a deer run across the trail when he was running in harness? How could I prepare and practice for encountering other runners, walkers and dogs?

Thankfully part of MDT's program includes training and testing for the American Kennel Club (AKC) Canine Good Citizen (CGC), Community Canine (CGCA) and the Urban Canine Good Citizen (UCGC) certifications. The skills learned while preparing for these certifications allow the dog handler to feel confident and have trust in their dog's knowledge and obedience in stressful and unusual situations.

Michael also had us practice walking towards, approaching from behind and passing other dogs while using the Canicross harness and belt. We worked new voice commands and having Murphy halt and heel or halt and down when encountering others on the trail. If we run with another dog, we do not know very well we usually run single-file. I talked my dad into running side-by-side us with his pointing Labrador and Murphy's best friend. The more Murphy runs in his harness the more he just focuses on heading down the trail and the less he cares about what is going on around him. With the hyper-vigilance he has to practice while working for me, I think he loves the time spent just racing down the trail, not thinking about anything but the wind in his face and the feeling of flying.

*Check out next issue's installment of "The Adventures of a Canicross Newbie" to hear how we find the right style of harness, how Murphy handles his first Canicross race, and a review of some new trail shoes that work in both snow and mud. For questions and ideas "M" can be reached at mhunsicker@gmail.com.*

<sup>1</sup>[https://www.navy.mil/ah\\_online/moh/murphy.html](https://www.navy.mil/ah_online/moh/murphy.html)



## ***Links/Resources***

[CanicrossUSA.org](http://CanicrossUSA.org)

[XC Thrillology Trail Events](#)

[Kenosha Running Company](#)

ICF - [International Canicross Federation](#)

[RunRepeat – The Dog Race Database](#)

[Northeast K9 Conditioning](#)

[Get Fit and Active with Your Dog](#)

[Shadow Dog Photography](#)

[Local Dog Training & Adventure](#)

[K9 Trail Sport](#)