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Petting a Rottweiler is no sweat after this kids' camp

By Toni Lepaska

Contact

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Two cupfuls of water poured down on her back and Memmie could take no more.

The gray and white sheltie took advantage of a moment's inattention from four giggling girls and made a run for it.

Alas, the 11-year-old pooch was unable to elude her captors for long. They wrapped their arms around her and pulled her back into the pool with them.

Children who attended All About Dogs Day Camp on Saturday took a hands-on approach to learning about man's best friend. The lesson on bathing was saved for last.

The camp was designed to foster responsible pet ownership by teaching children about feeding, grooming and basic disease prevention in dogs.

Animal placement organizations Save1Pet and Mostly Beagles sponsored the second-annual event. Olive Branch Animal Clinic hosted the camp.

Seventeen children attended, including Makala Ungren, 9, of Olive Branch, who stuck Memmie's bushy tail into a plastic cup to wash it, and Brian Devzin, 12, of Memphis, who commanded Labrador Nala to sit for a brushing.

Brian said getting his mixed Labrador at home to cooperate with brushing isn't a problem. It's the bath that is a battle.

"It's a war with her," he said. "I mean a war. I don't wash her much."

The children learned, however, that bathing a dog is important. So is brushing teeth, especially if the dog doesn't like to chew objects designed to help retard tooth decay.

Elizabeth Pitts, 12, an Arkansas resident in Olive Branch to visit her grandparents, said she's going to practice tips on how to walk a dog on a leash on her two German Shepherds.

"My dogs don't like to walk," she said. "They go crazy."

To learn about approaching an unfamiliar dog, Edee Fuller, a Save1Pet volunteer, had the children role play with a huge, 100-plus pound Rottweiler, Hercules.

With 8-year-old Mary Lee of Olive Branch and 12-year-old Russell Townsend of Senatobia on either side of her, Fuller asked the dog's owner if they could pet him. They extended their hands, Hercules sniffed, then they rubbed his back and head.

Fuller cautioned the children that if confronted with a strange, unattended dog, they shouldn't run -- but 8-year-old Dylan Dudas of Olive Branch had his own take on the possible scenario.

"If it's a pit bull, you can scream and run," he announced to the class. "Don't turn around and kick it, then it will follow you."

Fuller, of course, corrected him.

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