

Anger over fake service dogs has people snarling

By Michael D. Bates, AP

Cassie gets plenty of stares as she walks down the aisles of Home Depot, taking an occasional sniff at some of the items on the shelves or standing still while people stroke her long black hair.

Her handler, Lorraine Clark, maintains a firm grasp on Cassie's leash. Sometimes she gently tugs it to keep the Australian Shepherd walking straight and not running into customers or their carts.

Clark, owner of Suncoast Service Dogs in Homosassa, is an expert in training service and therapy dogs. Cassie is the latter, and Clark often takes her out in public to make sure she behaves correctly and follows directions. Clark takes her dog to area elementary schools during reading time, where students are eager to read to Cassie. Sometimes Cassie goes to nursing homes, where she is greeted with smiles by patients and residents who need therapeutic help.

But even though Cassie is properly leashed, she's not always met with smiles, Clark said. Other customers rarely confront Clark, but she says their body language suggests they are not at all pleased with Cassie's presence.

That friction occurs much more often these days – especially since, Clark says, many people are passing off untrained canines as therapy dogs or, worse, as service dogs. That gives trained dogs a black eye, Clark said.

"It is getting out of hand," she said.

Many customers agree.

What is a service dog?

It wasn't always this way. Under federal law, the only kinds of dogs allowed in public places are service dogs – though some stores, such as Home Depot, have “dog-friendly” policies. Service dogs are what most people think of when they think of support animals – properly credentialed, mitigating a physical disability and more well-behaved in stores than many toddlers.

Today, the lines have blurred. Now, you hear about therapy dogs and emotional support dogs. Clark said some people try to pass off their dog as a “companion dog,” even though the label is entirely bogus. The animal need not even be a dog – because of the legal distinction between service animals and therapy animals, people can call their cat, rabbit, hamster, rooster or even snake a therapy animal. While there are therapy animals that have undergone training for their roles, certification is not legally required to call an animal a therapy animal.

Store managers and business owners are largely powerless to act when customers object. While only service dogs and miniature horses are allowed in public places under the Americans with Disabilities Act, there are just two questions people can legally ask when they see one of the animals in a store or restaurant: “Is that a service animal?” and “What task is that animal trained to do?”

Therapy animals are not allowed in stores, but unscrupulous pet owners have begun leveraging the fear of litigation to ensure Fido never has to leave their side.

What is a therapy dog?

For someone subject to panic attacks or post traumatic stress disorder, peace often comes with a hairy face and four legs.

Therapy dogs are more in vogue these days than ever before, thanks in part to an explosion of online stores that sell fake

certificates and vests – and it's not just therapy dogs.

Tim Wayne of Citrus Hills and his bull mastiff, Josie, were standing inside Home Depot on a recent Tuesday morning talking with a friend when a man seated in a wheelchair attempted to pet the dog.

As his hand neared Josie's head, Wayne stopped him: "No, no. She's working right now. You can't touch her."

The man apologized and Wayne thanked him for his consideration.

The same day, Nancy Doak of Inverness was walking her 140-pound Great Dane, Tolkien, through the aisles of the home improvement store when another customer tried to give Tolkien a pat. Doak, who has post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and mobility issues, gently admonished the man, who then walked off.

Wayne and Doak have service dogs. Unlike therapy dogs, service canines are off limits to friendly touches from strangers.

"They don't understand," Doak said. "(The dog) is a piece of medical equipment. (People) shouldn't touch, they shouldn't talk and they shouldn't make eye contact with the dog in any way. I tell people, 'Talk to me and I will tell you all about it.' "

Most people are considerate, Doak said. Some aren't.

Wayne, a disabled Air Force veteran suffering from spinal injuries, puts it this way: "You wouldn't go up to someone and start playing with his oxygen unit."

Wayne was in a grocery store recently when a young girl tried to pet Josie. When he told her not to, the girl's father got huffy and stormed off.

It's the life of a handler and his or her dog, Wayne said.

A couple years ago, before he had Josie, Wayne said was walking with a non-certified dog in the parking lot of a grocery store when a man in a white van drove up to him and asked him if he wanted to get his pet “certified” as a service dog.

He could provide the proper papers for \$79, Wayne said.

After consulting with Clark, he found out the man was a con artist. Such scams represent a threat to legitimate dog owners, Clark said.

Her advice: Be careful.

“Education of the public is needed,” Clark said.

Clark still bristles when she sees animals of any kind riding in a shopping cart. Arizona, she said, recently passed a law outlawing that practice.

“I wish Florida had that law, too,” she said.

Douglas libraries putting on summer programs

The Douglas County Public Library invites all kids and teens to participate in its 2016 Summer Reading Program.

On Your Mark, Get Set, Read is the theme of the children’s program for ages infant to 11, and Get in the Game is for ages 12 to 17. Both run from June 1 to July 30 at the Minden and Zephyr Cove branches.

The goal is to encourage young people to read during summer

vacation with a magic show, a wild animal program, story times, reading prizes, and much more. Register **online** or at either branch.

The kick-off event will be June 14 at the Douglas County Community and Senior Center, 1329 Waterloo Lane in Gardnerville. Tony Borders, the magical ventriloquist, will perform at 6:30pm. From 7:30-8pm the Douglas County Public Library Foundation will host an ice cream social. Both events are free and open to all ages. New books and educational toys will be available for purchase at the Books are Fun fair from 5-8pm. A percentage of proceeds from the sale benefits the library.

To learn more about the library's summer event schedule, call 775.782.9841.

Keeping pets, children safe in warm temps

By Nancy Williams

With warmer weather right around the corner, health officials are reminding residents never to leave children or pets unattended inside vehicles, even for a few minutes.

Each year, children and pets die in hot cars. It is important that everyone take precautions in order to avoid these injuries and deaths.

Temperatures inside vehicles can climb quickly, especially on hot days, and even with the windows partially down.

Heat stress or stroke, irreparable brain damage and death can

follow shortly thereafter. Parking in the shade is also not recommended because the sun can move and directly expose a vehicle.

California law allows law enforcement and animal services officers to take swift action to remove a child or animal in distress inside a vehicle. The individual(s) responsible for leaving a child or pet in danger in a motor vehicle can be cited, and they can face fines and jail time. Felony charges can apply if the child or pet is seriously injured or dies. In addition to heat-related injuries, children and pets left unattended in vehicles can be subject to carbon monoxide poisoning, runaway vehicles, abduction and other dangers.

These safety rules can help prevent heat-related injuries and other vehicle dangers:

- Never leave a child, pet or vulnerable person (such as an elderly or medically frail person) alone in or around a vehicle.
- Check to make sure all children leave the vehicle when you reach your destination, particularly when loading and unloading. Do not overlook sleeping infants.
- Place a reminder of your child or pet's presence where you would be sure to see it before leaving the vehicle.
- Never leave a child in a vehicle with the motor running or the key in the ignition.
- Keep car keys away from children at all times.
- Always lock your car, even at home, and remind your friends and neighbors to do the same. Children die every year when they get into unlocked cars on their own and cannot get out.
- Teach children not to play in, on or around cars.
- Remove your pet from your vehicle when returning home.
- Do not transport an animal in a trunk of a vehicle nor in the bed of a pickup in hot weather. Animal's paws can burn on an extremely hot day.
- Call 911 if you observe a child or vulnerable person in

distress in an unattended vehicle.

Contact El Dorado County Animal Services at 530.621.5795 on the West Slope or 530.573.7925 in South Lake Tahoe if you observe a pet in distress in a vehicle.

Nancy Williams is El Dorado County's health officer.

Latino history film to be shown at LTCC

“Episode 5: Prejudice and Pride” from the multi-part documentary “Latino Americans: 500 Years of History” will be shown at Lake Tahoe Community College on May 24.

The screening will be followed by a talk led by Albert Ponce, who teaches history, political science and ethnic studies at LTCC. This bilingual event is free and open to all.

“Latino Americans: 500 Years of History” was produced by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the American Library Association. It is a nationwide public programming initiative that supports the exploration of the history and experiences of Latinos, who have helped shape the United States over the last five centuries and who have become, with more than 50 million people, America’s largest minority group.

It will be shown at noon in the Aspen Room.

Stevie Wonder to perform in Stateline

Stevie Wonder, who last played on the South Shore nine years ago, is returning in September as part of the Harveys Outdoor Concert Series.

Tickets for the Sept. 2, 7pm show range from \$99.50 to \$249.50.

Other shows include:

- July 2: Slightly Stoopid, Soja, the Grouch, Eligh, Zion I
- July 6: Widespread Panic
- July 13: James Taylor
- July 15: Peter Gabriel and Sting (sold out)
- July 23: Tim McGraw, Brooke Eden
- July 24: Don Henley
- July 27: Keith Urban, Brett Eldredge, Maren Morris
- July 29: Keith Urban, Brett Eldredge, Maren Morris
- Aug. 18: Steve Miller
- Aug. 26: Sammy Hagar and the Circle.

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Bandit

Bandit is a large 12-year-old Maine Coon cat who is very sweet. He likes other cats, dogs and children. He came to the shelter when his owner moved and couldn't take him.

Bandit is neutered, microchipped, tested for FIV, and vaccinated. He is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes.

Go to the Tahoe animal shelter's Facebook page to see photos and descriptions of all pets at the shelter.

Call 530573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet.

For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go **online**

.

– Karen Kuentz

Benefits of meditation at a young age

By Bobby Azarian, New York Times

It's long been known that meditation helps children feel calmer, but new research is helping quantify its benefits for elementary school-age children.

A 2015 study found that fourth- and fifth-grade students who participated in a four-month meditation program showed improvements in executive functions like cognitive control, working memory, cognitive flexibility – and better math grades. A study published recently in the journal *Mindfulness* found similar improvements in mathematics in fifth graders with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. And a study of elementary school children in Korea showed that eight weeks of meditation lowered aggression, social anxiety and stress levels.

These investigations, along with a review published in March that combed the developmental psychology and cognitive neuroscience literature, illustrate how meditative practices have the potential to actually change the structure and function of the brain in ways that foster academic success.

[Read the whole story](#)

Your dog does actually love

you

By Brian Alexander, Outside

Is doggie love real? While it may seem obvious to you that your dog loves you, there's been very little scientific data that dogs feel the equivalent of love for their owners. Some have argued that humans, who crave love and social bonds, see what they want to see when they ascribe "love" to their dogs, while the dogs are simply playing a game to manipulate you for food and care.

Now, from a team of neuroscientists in Japan, comes compelling evidence, released today in the journal *Science*, that dogs really do love their owners.

In two different experiments, the team, led by Takefumi Kikusui of Azabu University, measured levels of a hormone called oxytocin in response to dogs and owners gazing into each others' eyes.

Read the whole story

Vaccinations necessary for Calif. students

The California immunization law that went into effect Jan. 1 will effect children for the 2016-17 school year.

The law eliminates exemptions based on personal beliefs, including religious beliefs, for the vaccines that are currently required for entry into child care or school, kindergarten through grade 12.

Personal belief exemptions on file for a child already attending a California child care or school will remain valid until the child reaches the next immunization checkpoint at kindergarten (including transitional kindergarten) or seventh grade.

Students will no longer be required to have immunizations for school entry if they attend a home-based private school or an independent study program with no classroom-based instruction.

For students to enter or transition into preschool, TK/kindergarten or seventh grade; or students in any grade enrolling in a California school from out of state or out of country, at least one of the following conditions must be met before the student is allowed to attend class:

- Submit documentation of receiving required immunizations to the school.
- Parents/guardians of medically exempt students must submit a medical exemption letter from a licensed physician and provide documentation of immunizations which have been received.

The El Dorado County Immunization Assistance Program has more info by calling 530.621.6100.

Volunteers sought for Brush with Kindness

El Dorado County Habitat for Humanity's A Brush with Kindness will be having a volunteer orientation meeting on May 24 from 6:30-8pm.

Volunteers are being recruited to assist low-income homeowners

who need exterior maintenance work on their homes, such as painting, minor exterior repairs, yard cleanup, and minimal landscaping.

Volunteers with specific skills in carpentry, painting, and general home maintenance are especially needed as well as a flatbed trailer to haul ladders, tools and paint to work sites.

The volunteer orientation will include information about ABWK and the particular needs of each project site. In addition, volunteers will have the opportunity to get all their questions answered and indicate their individual interests/availability for one or more of the summer projects.

The meeting is at tje Carpenters Local 1789 Hall ,2720 Young St., South Lake Tahoe.

For questions or additional information, call 530.541.2844.