

## Of Music and Character

*by Ralph Falciani (As published in the Pinscher Patter, Sept 2005)*

My name is Ralph Falciani. I live and teach music in a growing community in South Jersey. I have made my home in Willimstown my entire life. As a teacher, I have tried to give back to the students a positive educational experience like the one I received from Monroe Township Public Schools.

Several years ago I purchased my first Miniature Pinscher from a pet store. Little did I know what I got myself into. We named this little girl Ginger Snap. One reason was for her color (black and tan) and the other was for her personality. Let's put it this way, she was not a people person. In desperation, I took her to weeks of obedience training. She did so well, I entered her in obedience competitions. Ginger has even learned to say Hello on command.

Getting bit by the show bug, I have since gone on and purchased Kimro's Pipin who we call Cricket. We were not able to finish her in conformation but this little gem is just now starting her obedience training. My love of the breed and dogs in general has entered into my music classes. Many of the students have seen me walking my girls. Several of them have seen me at local dog shows. I discuss responsibility with them and correlate it into the responsibility it takes to play their musical instruments.

This year our elementary schools have been developing a Character Education Program. There are five areas emphasized in character education. They are: Respect, Responsibility, Caring, Trust and Family. In my classrooms, I have recycled old Min Pin calendar pictures with character education captions. For example, there is a picture of three puppies in a wheelbarrow, a chocolate, a red and a black and tan. The caption I placed under the picture is Respect the Differences Of Others. The students have really gotten into the pictures and captions. They seem to enjoy discussing the various concepts of character education.

The administration of the schools I teach have invited my trainer Bonnie Fletcher from This Obedient Canine and I to demonstrate dog obedience training at various student assemblies. At the assemblies emphasis is placed on the five elements of character education. The students love walking the dogs and doing several commands with us. They are eager to tell us about their pets.

Owning Miniature Pinschers has given me great joy. The love they can give

back to their owners is amazing. I want to acknowledge both Bonnie Fletcher and Kim Pastella for helping with showing my ladies, and opening a wonderful world of showing dogs whether it be conformation or obedience.

### ***Character Education***

- You have to know what type of pet you want, and care enough to want to take care of it.
- You must investigate who you get the pet from.
- You have to ask the question - Do I have the time to take care of a pet?
- It is not enough to just love your pet.

### ***Responsibility***

- It is a responsibility to feed your dog.
- It is a responsibility to groom your dog.
- It is a responsibility to house train.
- It is a responsibility to maintain your dog's health.
- It is a responsibility to teach your dog good manners and teaching it to be a good citizen.

### ***Respect***

- You must respect other life.
- Your dog must respect you and follow your commands.
- Your dog must respect the property of others.

### ***Family***

- What does it take to make your dog a member of the family?
- Does your dog travel well with you? What do you take with you when you travel?
- Family meals and feeding the dog.

### ***Trust***

- Many dogs work at jobs. What kind of jobs can they do?
- Do they need special training?
- Your dog needs to trust you just like you need to trust your dog.

### ***Name That Puppy Contest***

- Each class has two weeks to come up with a name for the shy puppy.
- The puppy's name must relate to character education.
- The prize is a free snack donated by Mr. Falciani during a designated

lunch period.

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