

Scottish Terriers 05/16

Our future

In our sport we are always looking to the future. We plan a breeding and look beyond to subsequent generations. We get our dogs ready for the ring, we look ahead to plan shows and make sure coats will be ready. We look at pups and look ahead to their futures, will they become champions or simply have a wonderful life in a loving home. This forward looking needs to include our youth. They are the future and they will be the caretakers of our legacies.

I am proud that our club has taken steps in aiding our youth. This venture is called "Paws for Juniors." Ok, let's "pause" a moment and find out what it's all about. This program helps encourage young people to participate in our sport and the STCA. The club offers financial aid and help to those who would like to be active but might not have the means to do so.

It is a wonderful effort by the club and a host of volunteers. There are sponsors and mentors who can help juniors become active in our sport but most importantly in our breed. This will help encourage future generations, the ones to preserve our precious breed.

The club has set up a program where juniors apply for financial aid to help incentivize their involvement in showing in Junior Showmanship and STCA events. Juniors can apply for this aide by filling out applications on our club's website.

In addition, there are sponsors and mentors. Sponsors are members and breeders who have volunteered to *"help juniors join STCA, pay their initiation fees, and communicate with our new juniors in order to help them remain active in the sport. Sponsors may also purchase and sponsor junior trophies for STCA or regional JS competition."* Mentors are members who *"assist juniors by lending/co-owning a dog they can exhibit, assist with grooming and handling instruction. Possibly help finance individual juniors (on occasion) so that they can attend events they aspire to attend or qualify to attend."* This type of help can make all the difference in the world to a young person interested in Scotties. Their families may not be interested so it gives them a support network to learn about showing and our breed. Also they might not be able to financially participate but their interest is so keen and this allows it to flourish.

With many conversations on the lack of new people, it is refreshing to see a club actively working to encourage a new generation. Anything we can do to help bring in new people is positive. I know for myself that participating in juniors helped shape me into the person I am. I found I had more confidence and tolerance when I went on to college and my first jobs. I was exposed to people and situations that I might not have been, if not for this sport. I learned to loose, win and work for goals I wanted to attain. Sometimes that meant spending hours at home grooming or practicing when I could have been out with friends. It taught me commitment. Admirable traits for anyone to learn and I credit this wonderful sport in helping me develop them at an early age.

What better than to pay this forward by having the STCA encourage the same. The club even offers an *"Annual \$1,000 college scholarship(s) will be applied to undergraduate studies for junior members of STCA in good standing. The number of scholarships will be determined by the number and quality of applications received and the funds available through the STCA Junior Incentive Fund."*

Any high school junior or senior (ages 16-18) that are involved with Scottish Terrier showmanship in AKC/STCA activities. To be eligible, the applicant and parent must be a member of STCA in good standing. Applicants need to be a junior or senior in high school in good academic standing (according to AKC criteria 3.0 or above) or have documentation substantiating the meeting of quality home school standards or special needs requirements". This is the type of forward thinking I personally believe in and wish more clubs offered. Not only are we getting young people involved but we thank them by offering the opportunity to help them with their continuing education. Certainly a worthwhile investment.

I am proud the Scottish Terrier Club of America has this program. I support it with a donations. With all the talk of declining numbers and smaller participation, I think this is something that is a step in a positive direction. Not only to help keep young people in our sport but to encourage them to be the next caretakers of our precious breed.

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