

Citizen Canine Spring Newsletter

March 2004

Citizen Canine has grown ... and has a newly designed website

... see www.citizencanine.org

Since last April when a group of dog owners joined forces over the proposed off-leash ban at Thetis Lake, Citizen Canine has evolved into a driving force on dog-related issues in the Victoria area. From a small group of perhaps 50 dog owners in the city, this group has grown to more than 800 members. Our efforts are raising awareness by the public and by politicians of the legitimate need for increased access for dogs and their owners.

Over the past year, Citizen Canine has been working mainly in the area of advocacy--to protect or improve off-leash access to public parks in the Greater Victoria area. Members of our group have met with public officials, written letters, and developed liaisons with other advocacy groups and with the SPCA. We've been active in the City of Victoria and on the CRD Parks Management Plan Advisory Committee. Now Citizen Canine is moving more into the area of public education and canine community building. We put on our first educational event on February 21—a Canine Good Neighbor Assessment at Mayfair Mall, and we plan to offer more events like this in the future.

City of Victoria Off-leash Access

Last summer, after much pressure from Citizen Canine, the City of Victoria presented a proposal to allow off-leash dogs in a number of city parks. At the public meeting held in September dog owners came out in numbers to support this move. Then in December the city brought forward its revised proposal with the suggestion that Dallas Road as well as the new parks allow off-leash dogs for only a few hours a day. It was through Citizen Canine's efforts to alert its members about this proposal that dog owners were able to block this change. Hundreds of people contacted City Council and at the January 8th council meeting the Mayor announced that Dallas Road would remain a 24-hour off-leash area...for now. This shows that a group of people who take the time to communicate with elected officials can actually have an effect on public policy.

Dogs in Parks Committee

The City of Victoria has now established a "Dogs in Parks Committee" to oversee the development of a trial opening of nine parks for limited off-leash hours in Victoria. The committee's role is to determine ways to proceed with the trial and evaluate its success. Joanna Pettit, a member of Citizen Canine's Steering Committee has been appointed to the Dogs in Parks committee. She will be working to present the needs and views of dog owners in this process. The committee will be meeting for the first time in mid-March. Citizen Canine will keep you informed as this moves forward.

Off-Leash Access at Thetis Lake Park

Last April, the CRD agreed to allow a representative from the dog owning community to sit on the advisory committee that is bringing forward a management plan for Thetis Lake and the two adjoining parks, Francis King and Mill Hill. Mark Hawkes, a Citizen Canine member, has been attending meetings since last August and is continuing to work for improved off-leash access for dogs. Although the advisory committee has backed off from its initial recommendation that dogs must be on leash in all three parks, they are still discussing possible recommendations that will significantly limit off-leash access. This agreement will be up for finalization at the next meeting on Thursday, March 4, 2004, 7:00 CRD Headquarters, 490 Atkins Ave., Langford

See draft at: [http://www.citizencanine.org/crddoc/draft agreement 02-26-04.doc](http://www.citizencanine.org/crddoc/draft%20agreement%2002-26-04.doc)

If you have any concerns about these proposed actions for the three parks, I strongly suggest that you attend the meeting and ask questions of the Chair.

Trail Categories: <http://www.citizencanine.org/crddoc/Trail%20Categories.pdf>

Education and support for responsible dog owners

Citizen Canine's goals are advocacy, public education, and community building. Last year our focus was solely on advocacy, but this year we would like to concentrate more on education and community building initiatives. We held our first Canine Good Neighbour Assessment session at Mayfair Mall on the 21st of **February**. **Four volunteer evaluators assessed forty-two dogs and handlers to determine if they qualified for the CKC Canine Good Neighbour certificate. More than half of the dogs that went through earned the certificate and the others needed work in only one or two areas. You can find more details about this program at:**

<http://www.citizencanine.org/cgn12.htm>

Citizen Canine plans to hold **additional sessions in local parks several times a year. It's all part of our increased emphasis on public education and promotion of responsible dog ownership.**

Opportunities to help Citizen Canine with its work

Citizen Canine is an evolving organization made up of a group of six hardworking volunteers (the Steering Committee) and a larger number of people who help out from time to time by coming out to events and public meetings on dog related issues. We also have an advisory committee of dog trainers, behaviorists and veterinarians that we consult as necessary. Beyond this, there are hundreds of people on our e-mail list either through signing up on the website or through giving us their e-mail address on petitions or other applications. Over the past year this organization has worked quite well but we've come to a point where we can no longer keep up with all the things that need doing.

There is much work to be done to continue our advocacy work as well as our educational and community building initiatives. We would like to create a number of working groups composed of volunteer Citizen Canine members like you. The working groups would take on specific tasks related to a particular issue and give Citizen Canine the capacity to move forward in new areas.

Here are some of the working groups we see a need for:

- § Newsletter
- § Public Education (guest speakers, school programs, etc.)
- § Canine Good Neighbour Program
- § Event organization
- § VACS Watchdog
- § Legal Issues
- § Rental Access
- § Emergency planning for pets
- § Transit lobby group (city buses, BC ferries)
- § Membership
- § City of Victoria

§ CRD Parks

§ Other municipalities (eg. Esquimalt, Central Saanich)

§ Publicity and media relations

§ Fund raising

Citizen Canine can only succeed if everyone who cares about our goals contributes at least a little. If you have an interest in one (or more) of these areas, please get in touch with us. We need new ideas, helpers, leaders, organizers, speakers, writers, advisors...and whatever other talents you might be able to share. This is the time for you to give a little time or expertise and help Citizen Canine move forward. Please consider helping us out in whatever way you can.

How you can help us work for you

The estimates of the number of households that include dogs range from 25 to 40 percent. That represents a lot of dog owners. We can be an effective voice if everyone makes a point of spreading the word about our organization. If every person who received this newsletter could bring in just one more person to join Citizen Canine, we would double our membership. Take a moment to print off a few copies of our pamphlet from the website and hand them out to other people with dogs:

<http://www.citizencanine.org/images/CC%20Brochure%2003.pdf>

And if you care about these issues enough to do a little more, we need to hear from you. Don't just think about doing it at some future time. Drop us a line with your phone number and your area of interest and we'll take it from there.

If you can't spare any time, we can always use monetary donations of any size. Since membership in Citizen Canine is free, we depend on donations and fund-raising strategies to provide the funding it takes to do our work.

Please contact Citizen Canine at citizencaninevic@shaw.ca and let us know how you can help.