



A Weekend With Ken Ramirez

Presented by **HEART**land Positive Dog Training Alliance

Kansas City, MO – June 22, 2015

HEARTland Positive Dog Training Alliance (**HEART**) hosted renowned biologist and animal behaviorist, Ken Ramirez for a weekend of education about animal behavior and training, conceptual learning in dogs and other animals, social integration of dangerous and aggressive animals, and behavior training as a tool to aid in animal conservation. Through 2 days of lecture and video, Ramirez demonstrated repeatedly that “the laws of learning apply to all animals– whether lowly earthworm or Harvard Graduate”. A cornerstone of Ramirez’s training philosophy is that training is not a luxury done for our convenience or amusement but “is a key component to good animal care”. Ramirez emphasized repeatedly that animal training “should directly benefit the individual animal – helping it learn rules for living in our human world and enabling its cooperative participation in its own care. Training... teaching is a cooperative process. The animal is free to choose to participate or not.” A passionate practitioner of positive, force-free training methods, Ramirez challenges trainers and pet professionals all over the world to examine their training methods and beliefs. “If we can successfully use positive reinforcement training techniques with dangerous animals like lions, tigers, and seals, how can these techniques not work with our family pets?” said Ramirez.

HEART members were mesmerized by Ramirez’s discussion of conceptual thinking including his latest work in proving that dogs can master conceptual thinking like counting. “Standard training teaches very specific behavior. Concept training teaches an idea,” said Ramirez. Through his own experience with Guide Dog training, Ramirez recognized that dogs are more capable of generalizing than commonly believed. Guide dogs are able to assess the height or width of their handler to help the handler navigate around obstacles, even to the extent of “intelligently disobeying” a command from the handler if the command would put the handler at risk. Ramirez’s work on teaching dogs to count began as a project to show how to train the behavior of training – not as research to prove dogs could count. “It didn’t occur to me that this was something the dog was not supposed to be able to do.” From there Ramirez challenged seminar attendees to not limit themselves to preconceived notions of what a dog – or any animal – can or can’t learn. Ramirez will present the results of the latest 3rd phase of this work at the 2015 Clicker Expo event.

About Ken Ramirez Ken Ramirez is Executive Vice-President & Chief Training Officer at Karen Pryor Clicker Training. He was most recently Executive Vice President of animal collections and training at Chicago's world-famous Shedd Aquarium, where he developed and supervised animal care programs, staff training and development, and public presentation programs for the entire animal collection. In this position, he oversaw animal care and training for over 32,000 animals including whales and dolphins, sharks and turtles, sea horses and jellies, and so many more. His career at Shedd spanned 25 years.

A 35-year veteran of animal care and training, Ken worked for nine years at Marineworld of Texas. He also coordinated training programs at Ocean Safari in South Padre Island, Texas, and has acted as a consultant for many zoos and aquariums throughout the world. He began his training career working with guide dogs for the visually impaired and has maintained a close connection to dog training throughout his career. His work with dogs has included search and rescue and scent detection. He hosted a popular television series on pet training, *Talk to the Animals*, which ran for two years in Australia.

Ken has been active in several professional organizations, including the International Marine Animal Trainer's Association (IMATA), of which he is a past president, and the Texas Marine Mammal Stranding Network, where he has served on the board of directors since 1987. He also has served on the board of the American Cetacean Society and is a professional member of both the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and the Animal Behavior Management Alliance (ABMA).

In addition to his other work, Ken has written for several scientific publications, including *Marine Mammals: Public Display and Research*, and *Soundings*, published quarterly by IMATA. He teaches a graduate course on animal training at Western Illinois University, and authored the book ***ANIMAL TRAINING: Successful Animal Management Through Positive Reinforcement***, published in 1999. The book has become required reading for many animal trainers in the zoological field.

About HEART. HEARTland Positive Dog Training Alliance is a group of like-minded individuals comprised of dog trainers, pet professionals and dog enthusiasts aligning themselves to create an awareness of the importance and benefits of positive reinforcement, force free dog training.

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