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Dog trainer Brad Howe and his dog, Dusty.

Courtesy of Brad Howe

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Palatine man turn stubborn dog into new career

By Melissa Hollander | Daily Herald Columnist

Contact writer

PRINT E-MAIL STORY

Published: 7/23/2008 12:04 AM

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Palatine resident Brad Howe always had a way with animals, especially dogs. And then came strong-willed, troublemaking Dusty. The dog made Howe think that maybe he was losing his touch.

Ironically, it was right around this time that Howe began exploring a career change. He had been a wholesale live Maine lobster supplier in the Chicago area for 29 years. Although he was financially successful in the lobster business, he didn't find it personally fulfilling. Some health issues about four years ago got Howe thinking about what he really wanted to do with his life and he decided he really wanted to train dogs. And yet, here he was with his own obedience-challenged canine.

"When it came to Dusty, he was the worst dog I ever had, so it really shook my thinking about my ability to work with dogs," Howe said.

Howe researched different dog-training methods and really liked Bark Busters obedience training program. He went through extensive training in Colorado with the company.

"My dog, Dusty, was part of the class. He was the worst dog on the first day and the most advanced by the end of the class," Howe said. "He's very well-trained now."

Howe, 53, is now a Bark Buster behavioral therapist and trainer. And thanks to his experience with Dusty, he can personally relate to customers struggling with a difficult dog.

He works with people on all sorts of canine behavioral issues - aggression, sibling rivalry, barking, jumping, leash work, door manners and counter surfing (a dog taking food off kitchen counters). He isn't a treat-based trainer and he doesn't use prong collars, shock collars or physical corrections. He teaches customers to use their voice to correct their dog.

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He works with dogs from some local shelters to help make the dogs more adoptable.

Howe definitely believes he has found his calling and is making a difference in the lives of both people and dogs.

"I've saved a couple of marriages, a couple relationships and I've saved a few dogs from euthanization. So, it's very rewarding. When I drive home after a lesson like that, it's "Yes God, this is what I was meant to do," Howe said.

Howe works with the adults in the house to teach them how to establish themselves as the leaders of the pack with their dog.

"The magic is in the method ... I'm really more of a people trainer than a dog trainer because if I train Bowser and go home, the training goes home with me," he said. "People have preconceived notions about how they connect with their dogs. But, a dog is a dog is a dog is a dog. People try to interject too many human emotions on their dogs."

Howe offers these tips that all dog owners should know:

- A dog is a dog - they don't communicate like people.
- All dogs think in terms of the pack.
- Dogs don't understand English
- Dogs are not spiteful.
- A dog's natural instincts are never far below the surface.
- Body language is the dog's primary mode of communication.
- You can teach an old dog new tricks.
- Bad behaviors may be natural, but they don't have to be normal

Howe offers a lifetime guarantee for his training. For more information about Howe and Bark Busters, call (847) 298-7988 or (877) 500-BARK or visit www.barkbusters.com.

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