

Building an Unbreakable Forever-Bond With Your Adopted Dog

Meet an incredible team of dedicated dog trainers who are bridging a huge gap in the no-kill movement. Learn about the invaluable tools they've created to help stressed and special needs rescue dogs transition successfully into new homes.

Analysis by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Today, Dr. Becker interviews the team behind a wonderful new movement to help rescue dogs and adoptive guardians learn to communicate effectively and form an unbreakable bond. The creators of the movement, called A Sound Beginning Program, are Julie Dorsey-Oskerka and Pat Rattray. Both Julie and Pat have backgrounds in dog training and dog rescue
- Julie and Pat first co-authored a book along with Rebecca Cann, called "Adopting a Dog? Start off right with... A Sound Beginning." The book isn't written in "dog trainer-speak," but in a way that every pet guardian and prospective adoptive owner can easily understand. The book is also designed to be read in small manageable bites over a period of 14 days
- Once the book was published, Julie and Pat decided to develop classes for new owners of rescue dogs to help them understand, for example, how human body language affects a dog, and also how to read a dog's body language, and respond in a way that encourages more communication. The women firmly believe it is communication that ultimately saves a rescue dog's life – the ability to be understood, and to understand
- Leanne Falkingham is one of the dog trainers working with A Sound Beginning Program. Leanne trains primarily in shelters, and thinks A Sound Beginning classes are perfect for adoptive families with dogs who aren't quite ready for a mainstream training class. These dogs are still trying to recover from the stress of their former lives, and need a calm, non-confrontational setting where they can learn to interact and communicate with their new owner, and their owner can learn to interact with them
- Next, we meet the CEO, Chris Stirn, and the shelter manager, Mike Heck, of the A.D.O.P.T. Pet Shelter. They discuss their goals for successfully transitioning dogs into forever homes, and how A Sound Beginning fits into their programs. We also visit A.D.O.P.T., where Leanne introduces us to some of the dogs waiting for homes. Then we meet the amazing jazz musician Bruce Oscar, who composed the music for the A Sound Beginning CD. After meeting Bruce, we take a car ride with Doozie the dog, as Julie and Pat explain why the right music is a crucial component in helping stressed dogs
- Next, we meet several dogs (and their humans) who have reaped the benefits of the A Sound Beginning Program. There's John Boy, Chaz Bolton, Angie, Apple, and a very handsome special needs boy named Bentley. We also meet Leigh Casino, owner of Hightails Hideaway dog daycare, whose generosity provided Julie and Pat with space to start holding A Sound Beginning classes
- As our journey winds down, we meet the one-and-only Lou Ann Forbes, who explains how she developed the Sniff-It, an ingenious invention that uses essential oils in a unique, convenient way to help stressed dogs calm down and relax. To wrap up our day, we get to meet all the incredibly talented and dedicated trainers working

with A Sound Beginning to improve the lives of shelter and rescue dogs and the people who have opened their hearts and homes to them

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Today, I'm extremely excited to be talking with two women who are changing the world for rescue dogs – Julie Dorsey-Oskerka and Pat Rattray. Julie and Pat co-authored a book called "**Adopting a Dog? Start off right with... A Sound Beginning.**"

One of my veterinary clients, Lou Ann Forbes, recommended the book to me. She brought it to my practice and said, "Listen, you see a ton of rescue dogs, and this book can change their lives." So I read it, was totally onboard with it, and ordered a bunch of copies for my practice. When I had a new canine patient fresh out of rescue or a shelter, I automatically recommended the book to the owner. I'd say, "This book tells you what you need to do. It's an easy 14-day program. It explains things step-by-step."

I wanted to interview Julie and Pat, and the entire group of people who came together to make A Sound Beginning happen, because I think it's a program with the potential to change the whole universe of dog rescue. It is the product of the passion and commitment of many volunteers who work together toward a common goal – improving the lives and the emotional health of homeless dogs that have been given a second chance.

So today, I'm going to take you on a journey that tells the story of how this amazing project came together. We're starting out with a chat at the facility where A Sound Beginning classes are held, and from there we're going to meet a lot of different people in a variety of settings.

Pat Rattray Is a Longtime Dog Trainer and Rescuer of Boxers

A Sound Beginning Program co-creator **Pat Rattray** has over 20 years' experience as a dog trainer. She was with Narnia Pet Behavior and Training in Naperville, IL for almost eight years, where her focus was taking training programs to park districts and veterinary clinics. For the last 13 years, Pat has been working for **Dr. John Ciribassi**, a board-certified veterinary behaviorist.

Pat has also been involved in Boxer rescue organizations for 25 years. She's passionate about her work in this area because she recognizes that so many rescue dogs are in jeopardy of not having a good life and never finding a forever home.

One day, Julie Dorsey-Oskerka, who happened to be doing some work as a pet photographer at the time, called Pat. They had met while Pat was Director of Training at Narnia and Julie came in looking for well-trained dogs that would make good subjects for photo shoots for her advertising clients. Pat became Julie's mentor and opened up a whole world of behavioral training for her. They became good friends and years later after working toward the same goals, Julie called Pat and said, "Let's write a book." And that is how A Sound Beginning was born. It's not just a book, either – it's a 14-day program to help people acclimate rescue dogs to new homes. The full program also includes a CD of piano music (the "sound" part of A Sound Beginning) designed to calm and de-stress dogs in shelters as well as those transitioning out of a shelter environment into a new home.

Julie's Dog Was the Inspiration for 'A Sound Beginning'

Julie's background also included experience with rescue work, and she happened to adopt a beautiful Doberman who was really the canine inspiration for A Sound Beginning. The Dobie, Keri, was about 18 months when Julie brought her home, and though she'd been adopting dogs all her life, she had never encountered a reactive dog before Keri.

Julie had big plans for all the wonderful things she would do with her new dog, but quickly learned she couldn't even take Keri out in public because she barked at anything that moved, and everyone she encountered. The trainers Julie was working with at the time were telling her that she needed to let Keri know who was boss. She needed to get control of her. They even told her to get on top of her to control her. But Julie thought, "I love this dog. Why would I want to do anything to hurt this dog? She's barking because she's worried." Julie knew she wasn't getting good training advice.

The Magic of Compassionate, Positive Reinforcement Training

One day, Julie and Pat were talking about an upcoming photo shoot – Julie was planning to photograph Pat's dog, Sugar. Julie explained her new dog's behavior problem to Pat. Pat told Julie to take Keri out somewhere and find a spot that was far enough away from other people and dogs so that the dog could see things she normally reacted to, but was still far enough away not to feel the need to bark and become anxious. Pat told Julie to just stay in that spot and give Keri treats for not reacting. Julie thought that sounded pretty easy, so she followed Pat's advice and thought, "Gee, that worked really nice!"

The next time Julie took Keri out, she was able to get a little closer to the scary sights and sounds and smells that typically triggered the dog. Julie says it took a while, but believe it or not, Keri ended up being the model that trainers wanted to have in their classes to demonstrate how dogs should interact with people and other dogs.

In fact, Keri wound up sort of the "poster child," as Julie puts it, for what compassionate, positive reinforcement training can do for a dog that has a lot of fear issues due to their past. Keri was a "breeder reject" who hadn't been adequately socialized, much like many other dogs that enter the shelter system. They've been under-stimulated, which means everything is new to them, and often very scary.

Julie says Pat gave her a lot of great knowledge about dog behavior, and they ended up staying friends. Julie began reading everything she could find on positive dog training. The first book she read was "Don't Shoot the Dog! – The New Art of Teaching and Training" by Karen Pryor, which opened her eyes to the fact that many of the principles of positive dog training apply to people as well.

A Book About Dogs That Every Dog Guardian Can Understand

A couple of years ago, Julie realized that people were bringing their dogs to her training classes and it was a waste of time because they were trying to get dogs that didn't even know their names yet to sit, stay, and come. Many of the new owners had just adopted their dog, and there was no relationship between them yet. Julie said to herself, "This is crazy. We've got to do something about this." So she called Pat and said, "I think we could write a book about this. I've got a really good idea." Pat's response was "I'm in."

Pat and Julie contacted another friend, Rebecca Cann, who was the director of training at Narnia at the time. The three women got together, but it took a couple of months because they all had other things going on. Julie and Pat did a lot of the work in the wee hours of the morning because it was the only time things were quiet and they could concentrate.

When they had the book put together, they began testing it. Julie has an adult daughter with a very minor learning disability who proved to be a perfect test subject. The women wanted to have something that was very understandable to everyone. They didn't want to write in "dog trainer-speak" using their own language – one that people outside the industry wouldn't necessarily understand.

So they had Julie's daughter read the book as they wrote it. She works as a veterinary technician, so she knew quite a bit already about dog training, but *A Sound Beginning* is a different approach. They had Julie's daughter read sections of the book and then they would ask if she understood it. And they would ask her to tell them in her own words what she'd just learned. She was able to do it easily, so Pat and Julie knew they were on the right track.

The women didn't want prospective pet owners thinking, "Oh, gosh, I have to read a novel in order to adopt this dog. I can't do it." So they wrote it to be read in small bites – for a couple of minutes a day, or a couple of times a day.

Helping Guardians Communicate Effectively With Their Dogs

Next, they developed the training program, which kicked off in the spring of 2014.

After the book was published, Pat and Julie realized they really needed to add classes, at least in their local area, because many people who bought the book still didn't understand, for example, about human body language and how it affects a dog. Or how to read a dog's body language, and how to respond to it in a way that starts a flow of communication back and forth. This was crucial, because as Julie and Pat know, it is communication that ultimately saves a rescue dog's life – to be understood, and to understand.

They knew the thing they needed to teach people was canine communication, so that owners could understand their dogs, and also learn how to talk to their dogs so their dogs understand. In the dog-training world, it's called common conditioning and desensitization. It's about helping a dog have a better attitude about things he might be reactive to. As Pat says, "It's just getting nice, simple information out to people in really easy-to-do exercises."

Learning to Connect With Your Rescue Dog Feels Good!

When new guardians start learning to train their dogs in *A Sound Beginning* class, they feel so much better. Pat and Julie have heard from people who, for example, say they had no idea that reaching toward their dog triggered the dog to start backing away. They thought the dog was being stubborn, not realizing that reaching forward and bending over is threatening to a dog. It's natural for the dog to back away – it's an appropriate response. So they learn to approach their dog differently, by turning sideways, for example. It's a simple thing to understand and do.

As Pat explains, the training gives owners information about how their dog sees the world. It also encourages people, when faced with an issue with their dog, to think in terms of what they can do to make things easier and less threatening for their pet. The goal is to give guardians sort of a blueprint for what to do in a variety of situations so their dog succeeds, regardless.

Julie says, “We help people become problem solvers.” We help them get a basic understanding of behavior and communication with their dog. For example, let’s say a dog isn’t coming when called. A Sound Beginning teaches owners to take a step back and ask, “How come he’s not coming when I call?” And then, “Let me think about this. What am I doing? Am I chasing him? Is that why he’s not coming? Or am I yelling at him in a loud voice?” And then they remember they’ve learned from A Sound Beginning that the approach they’re using isn’t helpful in communicating in a positive way with their dog.

Owners learn to try a different approach, with a different attitude toward their pet. It isn’t about dominating the dog, it’s about working with him just as they would any family member.

Providing the Missing Link in Many Shelter Programs

Joining the conversation with Julie and Pat is Leanne Falkingham, also a dog trainer with A Sound Beginning. Leanne started working in animal shelters when she adopted a dog with behavior issues. While working as a Shelter Manager, advisors from Maddie’s Shelter Medicine Program at Cornell University introduced Leanne to clicker training. She liked it so much she signed up for the Karen Pryor Academy and became a certified trainer in 2008. She’s been training in a shelter setting ever since. Leanne believes training can make a dog’s stay at a shelter more humane. It also helps reduce dogs’ stress, increases their adoptability, and helps them transition more smoothly into new homes.

Leanne co-authored the online course, **Shelter Training and Enrichment**, for the **Karen Pryor Academy**. She currently works with the **A.D.O.P.T. Pet Shelter** in Naperville as their trainer and behavior consultant, where she implemented their first training and behavior programs. Leanne says that as more shelters move to no-kill, they realize there’s a huge need to have training and behavior programs in place to increase the adoptability of shelter pets. She says there are lots of opportunities for trainers in the sheltering world these days.

Leanne feels A Sound Beginning is one of the missing pieces in shelter programs. When she attended her first class with Julie and Pat, she thought, “This will be perfect for our adoptive families.” A lot of dogs at shelters aren’t ready for a mainstream training class. They’re not ready for Obedience 101 because they are still trying to recover from the stress of their former life of neglect or abuse. These dogs need a class where they can learn to interact and communicate with their new owner, and their owner can learn to interact with them. They also need a calm, non-confrontational atmosphere, and Leanne feels that’s what the classes at A Sound Beginning provide.

She hopes that her shelter can put a lot of new adoptive families and their dogs into A Sound Beginning classes. As the A.D.O.P.T. shelter’s only trainer, she can’t be there as much as she’d like for each adoptive family, and she sees A Sound Beginning as a way to fill the gap. Leanne feels the more owners and dogs she can get into A Sound Beginning class during those first few critical transition weeks, the more long-term adoption successes she’ll see. A Sound Beginning helps people understand their dogs, which has been the missing link in so many failed adoptions.

Giving Shelter and Foster Dogs a Sound Beginning

Pat says she and Julie wrote their book as a way to help adoptive owners and their dogs in their first 14 days together. It’s the period during which so many problems arise, mistakes happen, and many dogs are returned to the shelter. So the original goal was to catch owners and newly adopted dogs at home during those crucial first two weeks. But if they can also get programs in place in shelters, rescues, and foster homes so that everyone with exposure to the dogs can

learn “dog language” and get a communication flow going, the transformation for the dogs can begin before they are even adopted – which of course makes them more adoptable. For example, they can begin to willingly approach visitors instead of shying away when a prospective adoptive family walks by their kennel.

Ideally, a waiting-for-adoption shelter dog will be handled by people trained in *A Sound Beginning*, and then when he’s adopted, his family will receive the book and perhaps sign up for a class. But, of course, Pat and Julie can’t do it alone.

As Pat explains, if they can get shelters, fosters and adoptive families involved in *A Sound Beginning*, they can assure those dogs a forever home, which is the ultimate goal. In order to do that, they need almost a franchise set up so they can branch out to North Chicago, South Chicago, Iowa, or wherever there’s a need. But to pull that off, they need trainers like Leanne to go out and put the program in place.

As Leanne points out, it’s a heartbreaking thing to watch. A dog that has suffered in her former life because her owners didn’t know how to treat her or communicate with her arrives at a shelter, which is very stressful even under the best circumstances. Then perhaps she’s adopted into a new home and has problems transitioning due to past trauma, and because her new family doesn’t know how to communicate with her. These situations, which are common, go from bad to worse for the dog. Leanne sees *A Sound Beginning* as a way to fill that gap for the dog in such a way that life will get better for her, and her adoptive family as well.

Preparing Dogs and Prospective Owners for Successful Adoption

Chris Stirn, Executive Director of the A.D.O.P.T. Pet Shelter where Leanne is a trainer, and Mike Heck, shelter manager, join the conversation. Chris says one of the goals of her shelter’s adoption process is to provide lots of counseling and education to new adoptive pet parents. She and her staff focus on insuring they find the right fit for the dog. Chris says it’s fabulous to have a trainer on staff who works with the dogs, because it helps to nourish the relationship between them and their new adoptive families. Chris and her staff also learn the personalities of the dogs so they can not only place them in the right homes, but help them make the adjustment from shelter to a new home, which can be quite stressful.

Mike Heck, shelter manager at A.D.O.P.T., says one of the shelter’s latest efforts is to identify behavior problems before adoption so that shelter workers can be very frank and upfront with prospective owners about potential issues with a dog. That opens the door to being very proactive in preparing adopters to manage situations as they arise.

Every dog leaving a shelter is stressed, simply because staying in a shelter – even the best run shelter – is stressful. So working to learn about each dog, providing necessary enrichment, performing a thorough evaluation prior to adoption, and offering continuing education once a dog is in a new home is crucial to long-term success. As Chris says, “The dog you see today might not be the same dog in three weeks,” and it’s the goal of her shelter to be available to support new owners as issues arise.

Mike says that when he looked at “*A Sound Beginning*” (the book) the first time, he realized it was set up to be followed day-to-day for 14 days. It instructed owners to do “X” on day 1 and “Y” on day 2, and so on. Mike thought it was an especially good approach for new owners who’ve never experienced bringing a stressed dog into their home. He also thinks the musical component of the program is important, since there have been studies done on the positive benefit of calming music on dogs.

Chris adds that A Sound Beginning is important because it builds a relationship and trust between human and dog. Even well-adjusted dogs with no history of abuse or neglect must learn to trust their new owner, and vice versa. A slow, step-by-step approach is crucial to building that trust. Mike says the program is also a confidence builder for dogs who have been abandoned by their owner (or a succession of owners).

A Visit to the A.D.O.P.T. Pet Shelter Kennels

We're at the A.D.O.P.T. kennels now, where Leanne uses the A Sound Beginning CD in their sound system to help relax the dogs. She considers it part of their enrichment program, along with clicker training. The goal is to be able to walk down a row of kennels and see dogs who are calm, relaxed, and make a good first impression on prospective adopters visiting the shelter. The dogs need basic skills as well, like sitting when asked, making eye contact, and not barking.

As Leanne moves down the row of kennels with her clicker and dog treats, she introduces some of the dogs, including Sally, who is very shy. Leanne says Sally is an excellent candidate for A Sound Beginning because she's showing a lot of stress. She has trouble even coming through the main doors, because she doesn't like thresholds, but Leanne has been working very hard with her to get her to go in and out of her kennel. She sees Sally as the perfect kind of candidate for this particular program, because the atmosphere is very calm and controlled. Leanne feels a lot can be learned about canine communication from shy or fearful dogs.

Meet the Brilliant Music Composer for 'A Sound Beginning'

Now I'm meeting with Julie and Bruce Oscar. Bruce is the music composer for A Sound Beginning. He's a jazz musician, and when Julie and Pat were conceiving the idea for the A Sound Beginning Program, Julie approached Bruce and asked, "Do you think you could do music to calm me, without making it sound jazzy?" Bruce told her he could. As the recording date drew closer, Julie got a little curious and asked Bruce, "Aren't you going to rehearse?" He replied, "No, I'm not. I'm rehearsing in my head. I have themes I'm working on, but the recording will be totally impromptu."

On the recording date, Bruce just sat down and played. I find that amazing, but according to Bruce, as a jazz musician he's constantly improvising. For A Sound Beginning, he improvised, but as he puts it, "I just kept it un-jazzy." I told Bruce that my dogs actually like jazz, so there are canine jazz fans out there!

At their recording session, Julie was thinking, "My gosh, this is just incredible music!" All she told Bruce ahead of time was that he needed to stick with specific tones and tempos that fit within a certain range, and he just went into the studio and did it. The music is all his own, composed from his heart and soul.

His roots are actually in classical piano, but during one of his lessons, his piano teacher asked him, "Why did you play it that way?" And Bruce replied, "Because I think it sounds better that way." And the teacher said, "That's not the way it's written." Bruce answered, "I don't care. I think it sounds better that way." So his teacher decided he wasn't destined to be a classical piano player! She taught him how to be an entertainer instead, and he was on his way.

Bruce says he feels blessed to be a part of A Sound Beginning with so many talented people involved. He's passionate about animals, and A Sound Beginning provided him the opportunity to work with music designed for dogs.

Why the Music CD Is a Crucial Part of 'A Sound Beginning'

Now we're in Julie's vehicle. Julie is driving, Bruce's music is playing, and Pat's in the back seat keeping Doozie the dog company. Julie and Bruce adopted Doozie several months ago. Bruce's soothing music CD helps relax Doozie while he's in the car, because car rides can be stressful.

Pat explains that in situations where you know a dog will be stressed, for example, a car ride or entering a strange house, it helps to play calming music. In those new and unfamiliar situations, the dog doesn't know where he belongs. For optimum benefit, the music should be played continuously while a rescue dog is getting used to his new crate, eating his dinner from a new bowl, and observing his new family from his safe place (which was prepared for him ahead of time). The calming music will help him relax as he adjusts to a brand new living situation.

Julie says that she has a 10-year-old dog who recently started waking up at 3:00 a.m. with a lot of anxiety. She thought the dog might be in pain, but her holistic veterinarian ruled that out. The vet believed the problem might be neurological, and suggested Julie play the A Sound Beginning music CD for the dog at night. Julie thought, "Why didn't I think of that?"

So that night, Julie loaded the CD into her computer and set it for continuous play. Her dog slept right through to 6:00 a.m. She now puts the music on every night before bed for the dog, who sleeps very comfortably on the couch in Julie's office. And now Julie gets a good night's sleep as well.

Pat explains that the music also helps dogs with thunderstorm phobias. She uses it during bad weather and notices that her dogs pant and pace less, and enjoy a better night's sleep, as does she. As Julie puts it, "If you can calm down the dog, you calm down the people. It goes hand and paw."

Introducing the Rock Star of 'A Sound Beginning'

Now we're back at A Sound Beginning meeting Cathy Butler and Linda Chicola, who are volunteers at the **West Suburban Humane Society** in Downers Grove, Illinois. These ladies put a lot of time and effort toward helping dogs become more adoptable. Cathy and Linda are bringing their second dog through A Sound Beginning. His name is John Boy.

Cathy explains that the first dog they brought to the program, Chaz, would not approach people at the shelter. But after A Sound Beginning, he grew much friendlier and was adopted by Sue Bolton, who is also here today. John Boy has similar issues to Chaz's, so now Cathy and Linda are working with him.

Julie says that Chaz is their rock star. He was the first dog to go through the pilot A Sound Beginning program earlier this year. Then he was adopted by Sue and her husband, and now he has a wonderful life. Julie and Pat couldn't be happier that Chaz has found such a great forever home.

Chaz's mom, Sue, says that when she and her husband saw him at the West Suburban shelter, he looked right at them and started playing with them. Sue and her husband asked their kids if they wanted to take a look at Chaz, and they fell in love with him. The family had lost their first dog, so Chaz is their second. He has a very different personality from their first dog, which they love. And they feel A Sound Beginning has been a wonder program for him. They can't believe before the program their dog wouldn't even look at people, because that's not the dog they met for the first time at the shelter.

Meet Angie and Apple, Two More 'A Sound Beginning' Students

Next we're meeting Pat and Tom Reiff, and their dog Angie, who was adopted from **DuPage County Animal Care and Control**. Another trainer with A Sound Beginning, **Erica Kendzora**, works with the DuPage County (Illinois) shelter and helped Pat and Tom with Angie's transition from the shelter into their home.

Angie is like so many of the dogs in shelters – a young adolescent with tons of energy who needs a lot of mental and physical stimulation in order to thrive in a home. Pat and Tom are doing a great job with her.

Pat says they really enjoyed A Sound Beginning, and especially clicker training. They learned a lot in class, practiced at home, and things just got better and better.

Now we're meeting Lisa Jo Clark, her husband Dan, and their dog, Apple. Lisa Jo set up the A Sound Beginning Program website and has donated an incredible amount of time and effort to the program. She actually approached Pat and Julie and told them how much she loved their book. She told them they needed to get their program out to more people, and she could help them with a website. They've been working together ever since.

Apple Dumpling, as her mom calls her, was rescued from a puppy mill. The Clarks got her out of the mill when she was about six months old, and she had never been socialized to anything or anyone. She was scared of the world – scared of everything. The first time Lisa Jo and Dan brought her to class, she couldn't come through the door. She was shaking like a leaf.

These days, Apple is a different dog. Lisa Jo says her pet loves A Sound Beginning training and really responds to it. Lisa Jo says she believes in the program, especially for dogs that come from rescues or shelters. She's working with other shelter dogs, using clicker training, the music CD, and scents. Lisa Jo sees Apple as an example of how even dogs from terrible backgrounds can overcome their fears and learn that the world can be a good and positive place.

Meet Bentley, a Very Handsome Boy with Special Needs

Next we're meeting Dr. Fiia Jokela and Liz Geisen of the **Deer Run Animal Hospital** in Schererville, Indiana, and their dog, Bentley. We're keeping a little distance from Bentley because he's a bit fearful of new things. Rather than stress him out by getting too close, we're giving him some space. That's another great thing about A Sound Beginning classes – the trainers realize every dog has different needs, and they try to make each dog comfortable and insure every association is a positive one.

Dr. Jokela explains that Bentley was a little lost puppy on a cold January day in Gary, Indiana. He was trying to get into a school building. He was covered in fleas, had parasites, and horrible diarrhea. Some teachers took him in, but they couldn't keep him. So he was brought to Dr. Jokela's Deer Run clinic, and Liz said, "Can we keep him?" Dr. Jokela said they could keep him only if Liz could train him, because she (Dr. Jokela) didn't have time.

But Liz's mother wouldn't let her keep Bentley. So the dog became Liz and Dr. Jokela's project, and according to the doctor, "He has opened up a million doors for us on behavior." At first, Bentley seemed like just a sickly pup physically, but as they worked more with him, they discovered he's a special needs dog. He has a lot of fear and anxiety, probably some of it genetic, but also from bad experiences living as a street dog. So in caring for him, Dr. Jokela and Liz have been getting an education in dog behavior. Liz attended the Karen Pryor Academy and she took Bentley through the program with her.

Bentley had a pretty intense fear of new places before A Sound Beginning. When Dr. Jokela and Liz first started working with him, they couldn't even get him into a building. He would panic in the parking lot. Now he can cross the room, where before it was a fearful thing for him. He's learned that his cubbyhole (at A Sound Beginning) is a very safe place and that good things happen there. He's starting to relax. He's had lots of people meet and greet him. He's made a lot of progress and is much more relaxed being in a new place with new people. He's come a long way.

This Dog Daycare Is the Home of 'A Sound Beginning' Classes

Leigh Casino is the owner of **Hightails Hideaway**, a dog daycare in West Chicago, and she's here with a dog named Hazel. It's thanks to Leigh's generosity that A Sound Beginning is now open to the public. Julie and her team needed a place to hold classes and Leigh helped out by giving them space at her facility.

Leigh also volunteers for several rescue groups, and she's here today to talk about Hazel, who has been through three sessions of A Sound Beginning for a total of nine classes. During the first session, Hazel could not be touched unless she was leashed.

Leigh explains that at Hightails Hideaway, her primary goal is to treat dogs in a positive manner, respecting what makes them tick and what makes them comfortable. She started using A Sound Beginning with the music CD. She plays it at night when the dogs are tucked into bed, and they fall asleep. It's part of the routine and they love it. Then she added the 14-day book for all her fosters, 20 so far that have been adopted successfully, with positive feedback from all the adoptive families.

Lou Ann Forbes and Sniff-It

I mentioned my client Lou Ann Forbes at the beginning of the video, because she's the person who first introduced me to A Sound Beginning.

Lou Ann owns a company called Blue Sky Prairie Textiles in Maple Park, Illinois that specializes in felted wool. Over the last decade or so, Lou Ann developed a keen interest in dogs, and dog rescue. She primarily works with Beagles because she feels they fit her character and energy.

Lou Ann began working on projects, for example, handbags and leashes that combined her love of felted wool and her love of dogs. In the process, she realized that felted wool had many more uses and applications than even she knew. That realization came in the form of a dog of a very overweight Beagle she rescued.

Cal was so obese he could barely breathe. We did get his weight down once he was transitioned to a raw diet, but weight wasn't his only issue. He had no training, wasn't housebroken, didn't have a name, and had no social skills. The poor guy didn't know how to climb stairs or jump up on a couch. As a result, Cal was on sensory overload and he really couldn't focus on anything. He had doggy attention deficit disorder. He was so wound up from all of his new experiences that he had a hard time being calm, mentally present and able to hear and learn from his surroundings.

I said to Lou Ann, "I wonder if your felted wool would be able to carry essential oils." Lou Ann didn't know the answer, but she went home and got to work. What she came up with is the **Sniff-it**.

Since Lou Ann is an artist and works with fabric, she was able to design her own packaging. Each small Sniff-It package is tied with a piece of felted wool. You open up the package and the instructions tell you exactly what to do. The little piece of felted wool inside fits on a dog's collar. The scent from the essential oils goes from the collar right into the dog's nose, and in 10 to 20 seconds, the oil is in every cell of the dog's body. Within a matter of seconds, dogs feel calmer and are able to make better decisions. Lou Ann realized her Sniff-It was a much bigger gift to the dog world than a handbag.

While developing the Sniff-It, Lou Ann was introduced to the amazing Dr. Melissa Shelton, a veterinarian who specializes in essential oils for pets. Dr. Shelton had just released an entire line of essential oils specifically for dogs, and she and Lou Ann began collaborating, using Dr. Shelton's essential oils and Lou Ann's carrier (the Sniff-it).

Lou Ann knew that Julie and Pat were in the process of developing A Sound Beginning program and classes, so she asked them if they would do some research and development on her Sniff-it. She gave Julie a dozen Sniff-its and asked her to try them out in her "feisty Fido" classes and see what happened. Next thing she knew, Julie was calling her to say "What feisty Fido? That was the most peaceful class we've ever had." And Lou Ann thought to herself, "Hmm... I think we're onto something."

Nowadays, the Sniff-it is another part of the A Sound Beginning program, and Lou Ann is ecstatic that her wonderful little invention is helping to change the lives of rescue dogs.

A Sound Beginning: Meet the Trainers

An amazing group of trainers is responsible for helping create and keep A Sound Beginning growing. Without this group – without their knowledge and expertise and their compassion for rescue animals, there would be no program.

Leanne Falkingham, who we met earlier, has a background in sheltering and more recently, in training within shelters. She feels A Sound Beginning fills a huge need for dogs coming out of shelters and going into new homes.

Terri Klimek's background is in training and rescue. She wishes A Sound Beginning had been around years ago. She feels the program can make a huge difference in the rescue and shelter community and she plans to introduce it in several of the places where she does training.

Liz Mishima became a Karen Pryor Academy trainer last year and then got involved with A Sound Beginning. Liz's passion is rescue, and she has learned from her own adoptions a lot about what dogs need as they enter a new home, and once they're living in their new environment. She feels A Sound Beginning prevents failed adoptions and makes life better even for dogs that aren't returned, but continue to struggle in their new homes.

Amy Saletta is a Karen Pryor Academy trainer as well, and helped kick off the full program last year. She helped Julie develop the modular design of the classes, which brings newly adopted dogs in right away instead of making them wait until a new class is starting. In fact, the entire curriculum was written by Amy, with Pat's guidance as director of training. Amy says that when she read Julie's and Pat's book, she knew she needed it for the rescue dogs she worked with, and their often frustrated owners. She sees A Sound Beginning as a bridge between the adoption and getting dogs into regular training classes.

My Interview at 90.9 FM WDCB in Glen Ellyn

Bruce Oscar, who we met earlier, is not only a jazz musician and composer, he's also a radio host, and I joined him in the studio for a quick chat.

As I explained to Bruce's radio audience, everyone who has, is currently, or will ever open their heart and home to a rescue or shelter dog should visit the **[A Sound Beginning](#)** website and take a look at the program. The book is wonderful, the music CD is wonderful, the Sniff-it is a great addition, and the classes – if you're lucky enough to be local – are amazing.

A Sound Beginning is a perfect way to help give your newly rescued furry friend the very best opportunity to come into your life feeling calm and relaxed. And as Bruce points out, it's also about helping people learn how to interact more productively with their dogs.

Bringing a new dog home is stressful for everyone, and this is especially true for first-time pet parents. And the dog may very well bring some baggage from her past along with her that can complicate things. A Sound Beginning helps reduce all that stress for everyone involved.
