

The Westfield Republican

More Than Puppy Love *K9 Complex Building Effort Starts In Sherman*

By DAVID PRENATT
editorial@westfieldrepublican.com

While Chautauqua County may always be Buffalo Bills and Sabres country, another competition is drawing more followers than ever — dog sports.

After realizing the need for a place to train dogs for competition, Christine McKay conceived the idea of creating The K9 Complex, a dog training arena in Sherman, which is currently under development.

"Necessity is the mother of invention," McKay said. "I needed a place to train my dogs and I thought other people probably needed a place, as well." Currently The K9 Complex is an open field on Prospect Street, just off I-86, where McKay has set up a practice space for a variety of dog sports.

However, McKay just received a special use permit for a 10- by 24-foot pre-built shed to be placed on the Prospect Street property. A permit was also issued for a 96- by 200-foot structure for which the Village of Sherman Board of Trustees approved a 15% permit fee reduction.

Sherman Mayor Colleen Meeder recommended the reduction because the permit fee would be nearly \$3,000. "It's really a glorified pole barn, but because it's commercial, we have to charge 15 cents per square foot," she said.

McKay said she is very eager about moving forward with the complex. "It's definitely exciting," she said. "Right now, it's just a big field. The vision is to build something really special."

McKay said that dog sports at The K9 Complex will include people and their canines at every level. "There is



An aerial photo taken by Dave Munch shows The K9 Complex in Sherman set up for agility training

a sport for every single person and their dog," she said. "Many people have to travel a long way to compete. There is a need for people to explore dog sports and to have a place to practice."

According to MSN, interest in dog sports is growing dramatically. "From lightning-fast sprints in Fast Cat to the precision teamwork of agility, AKC dog sports are drawing more participants than ever. With inclusive rules that welcome mixed breeds and spayed or neutered dogs, these events celebrate every canine's natural abilities."

Dog sports range from agility and scent work to fast cat and dock diving. Agility and obedience are practically self-explanatory. In Agility, dogs navigate obstacle courses, including jumps, tunnels, and seesaws, guided by their owners. In Obedience and Rally, dogs follow a series of commands to perform exercises with precision.

Dock Diving and Scent Work/Nose Work are what their names imply. Dock Diving requires a dog to jump from a dock into water, competing for distance or height and Scent Work demands that a dog locate hidden scents or follow a trail.

Flyball is a relay race in which dogs jump hurdles, trigger a spring-loaded box to release a ball, and return to their handler. Disc Dog demands that dogs catch flying discs thrown by their owner and they are scored on distance and accuracy.

Herding/ Treibball requires dogs to guide livestock or large exercise balls into goals. Fast Cat is akin to the 100 yard dash in track & field; Canicross: is cross-country running with dogs attached to their owner via a harness and bungee. A sport that is very popular in rural areas is barn hunt which requires dogs to find caged rodents hidden in bales of hay.

McKay noted the American Kennel Club and Canine Performance Events list additional dog sports and, while competition training is her focus, the goal of The K9 Complex is to promote the connection between owner and dog. "Our facility supports both training and competition, but no matter what level a team reaches in any sport, the most important thing is the relationship between the handler and the dog."