

“Edgemont Resident Files Complaint Against Putnam Valley Dog Boarding Facility”

By Administrator [Joanne Wallenstein]

scarsdale10583.com

April 25, 2012

Dog Obedience Girl, LLC, d/b/a The D.O.G.

Corrections & Clarifications

April 30, 2012

Note: Information developed and distributed by others often requires amplification, correction, clarification, and sometimes commentary. Analyses like these ensure that the most accurate, complete, and clear perspective is available to those who are interested in, engaged in, and care about our work and purpose.

Text in bold in the left column is the subject of clarification, correction, or commentary in the right hand column.

	Article	Corrections & Clarifications
1	<p><i>Here is a follow-up to our story about Edgemont resident's Susy Kahn's loss of her family dog Coco at a boarding facility in Putnam Valley. The following information was provided by Ms. Kahn's press consultant Nina Reeves:</i></p> <p>Susan Kahn has filed a complaint in Supreme Court in Westchester County against The D.O.G. dog boarding and training facility and Joanne Willard and Trever Willard concerning the death of Kahn's dog Coco, while she was at the D.O.G. facility.</p>	<p>“Our hearts go out to Susan Kahn and her children on the tragic loss of their family dog, Coco,” Willard wrote in an email. “This tragic death occurred while their pet was in our care. We feel an intense sense of responsibility for what happened. We are terribly sorry that this occurred. In the coming days, we will make every effort to help the Kahn family deal with their grief and suffering. We have carefully studied what happened and have taken important steps to prevent something like this from ever happening again.”</p>

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2	<p>The complaint alleges that on March 15, Ms. Kahn sent Coco, a 6 year-old, 17 lb. Cockapoo to board with The D.O.G. which is reputed to be a “top-of-the-line” dog training and boarding facility in Putnam Valley owned and operated by Joanne Willard. Willard claims to be a specialist in anxiety, fear and other behavioral issues.</p> <p>Coco was to be boarded for a 3-week program recommended by Joanne to comfortably acclimate Coco to other dogs, as she tended to be fearful and intimidated by them.</p> <p>The owners of the facility made the decision to socialize Coco, who was not accustomed to being off-leash with other dogs, by putting her in a room with several dogs, including a 40 lb. pitbull [sic] mix who aggressively attacked Coco.</p> <p>Coco was dropped off at a local veterinary hospital which did not have specialists present to deal with Coco’s injuries; Kahn’s husband had Coco transferred by ambulance to the Animal Medical Center in NYC in an attempt to save Coco’s life. Despite life-saving measures, Coco died several hours later, after enduring pain and trauma.</p>	<p>Coco came to The D.O.G. for three weeks of Training Camp to address her “anxiety around other dogs”.</p> <p>We accomplish this by creating a safe and positive environment that fosters trust in the dog. As confidence improves we introduce the dog to small, supervised play groups with dogs that have a history of playing well.</p> <p>Over time, the dog’s sense of confidence increases and carries over to every facet of life, providing both the dog and those around a happier, less stressful life.</p> <p>Coco and Ella (a female pit mix) were part of a small group of 4-5 dogs under the direct supervision of our Manager/Senior Trainer and another D.O.G. Counselor. After 15-20 minutes of playing well together, Coco became scared and growled at Ella. Ella responded immediately and attacked Coco.</p> <p>Although this horrible event lasted only seconds before the dogs were separated, fatal damage was inflicted.</p> <p>Coco was immediately transported to Katonah Bedford Emergency Animal Hospital, “the most comprehensive advanced care veterinary hospital in Westchester County.”</p>

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	<p>Autopsy results show multiple bodily injuries including skull fractures and brain damage so severe that her brain had ultimately stopped signaling the heart to beat. Under the care of a trainer who claims to be experienced in “behavior modification for issues like anxiety, fear and aggression...as well as temperament testing”, Coco should never have been mauled to death by another dog.</p>	
<p>3</p>	<p>The complaint further alleges that the trainer, who advertises herself as an experienced certified dog trainer, refuses to accept responsibility for Coco’s death.</p> <p>Soon after attacking Coco, the same dog, according to a violation issued by Putnam</p>	<p>We are continually expressing our regret, sorrow, and responsibility for what happened to Coco. It is our hope that by demonstrating the lessons we have learned, and publically acknowledging the profound suffering we have caused the Kahn family, that at some point in the future perhaps they can share some level of forgiveness for what happened.</p> <p>In addition to taking responsibility for this tragic incident, we are reviewing all our operations to prevent a similar situation from happening again. These are the immediate steps we have taken:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dogs of such different size and strength will always be kept separated. 2. Overall staffing has been increased and playgroups have been reduced to a 1:8 ratio. 3. Staff training has been increased and made more rigorous. 4. We are also employing for our staff a continuing education program in canine behavior and body language. 5. Dogs are now physically inspected more often and given additional care and attention. <p>Coco’s death has created a legacy of greater caution for all pets in our care.</p> <p>Ella was in the custody of her new owner at the time of this incident. Putnam Valley</p>

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	<p>Valley Animal Control “bit, chased, jumped upon or otherwise harassed any person in such manner as to cause intimidation or put such person in reasonable apprehension of bodily harm.”</p> <p>The person involved in this incident was a child, who was grabbed.</p>	<p>Animal Control issued one appearance ticket for “dog at large” and another for “harassed, grabbed, intimidated.” The generic language quoted in the article is part of a civilian complaint form.</p> <p>The Putnam County Sheriff’s report states that, at about 3:45 PM on April 4, “dog jumped the homeowner’s fence, ran around youth’s birthday party. Dog, Ella, grabbed [child] by the left wrist with her mouth. Left marks, no skin broken.”</p> <p>Later, both the child and the father expressed that they believed Ella was “just playing.”</p>
4	<p>The owners of the boarding facility state on their website that they only take dogs which they have personally trained - they had not personally trained the Kahn’s dog before, but were happy to change their policy when a substantial training and boarding fee was available.</p> <p>The complaint further alleges that Joanne Willard does not have an operating permit to operate her business out of the kennel where she boards the dogs.</p>	<p>Our website states that we only <i>board</i> dogs that we have personally trained. Coco was in training rather than boarding.</p> <p>The D.O.G. is in full compliance with all zoning regulations for boarding kennels. There is no regulatory agency or permitting process in the state of New York.</p>
5	<p>Asked for a comment, Joanne Willard of The D.O.G. provided the following statement to Scarsdale10583.com. “Our hearts go out to Susan Kahn and her children on the tragic loss of their family dog Coco. This tragic death occurred while their pet was in our care. We feel an intense sense of responsibility for what happened. We are terribly sorry that this occurred. In the coming days, we will make every effort to help the Kahn family deal with their grief and suffering. We have carefully studied what happened and have taken important steps to prevent something like this from ever happening again.”</p>	