Former area K-9 officer a dog's best friend

Steve Dunham trains pups of all sizes: "Every dog can teach you something,"

Steve Dunham gets love from Ari, a Pit Bull being held by Sami Clark at Dog Training Personalized in Kettering. MARSHALL GORBY\STAFF

LOCAL NEWS

By London Bishop

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of all sizes for over 25 years.

Dunham has trained police dogs for department all across southwest Ohio, including Beavercreek, the Hamilton County Sheriff, and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. Nearly every police department in Warren County, including Franklin, at some point has had a police dog that Dunham trained, he said.

“Every dog can teach you something,” he said.

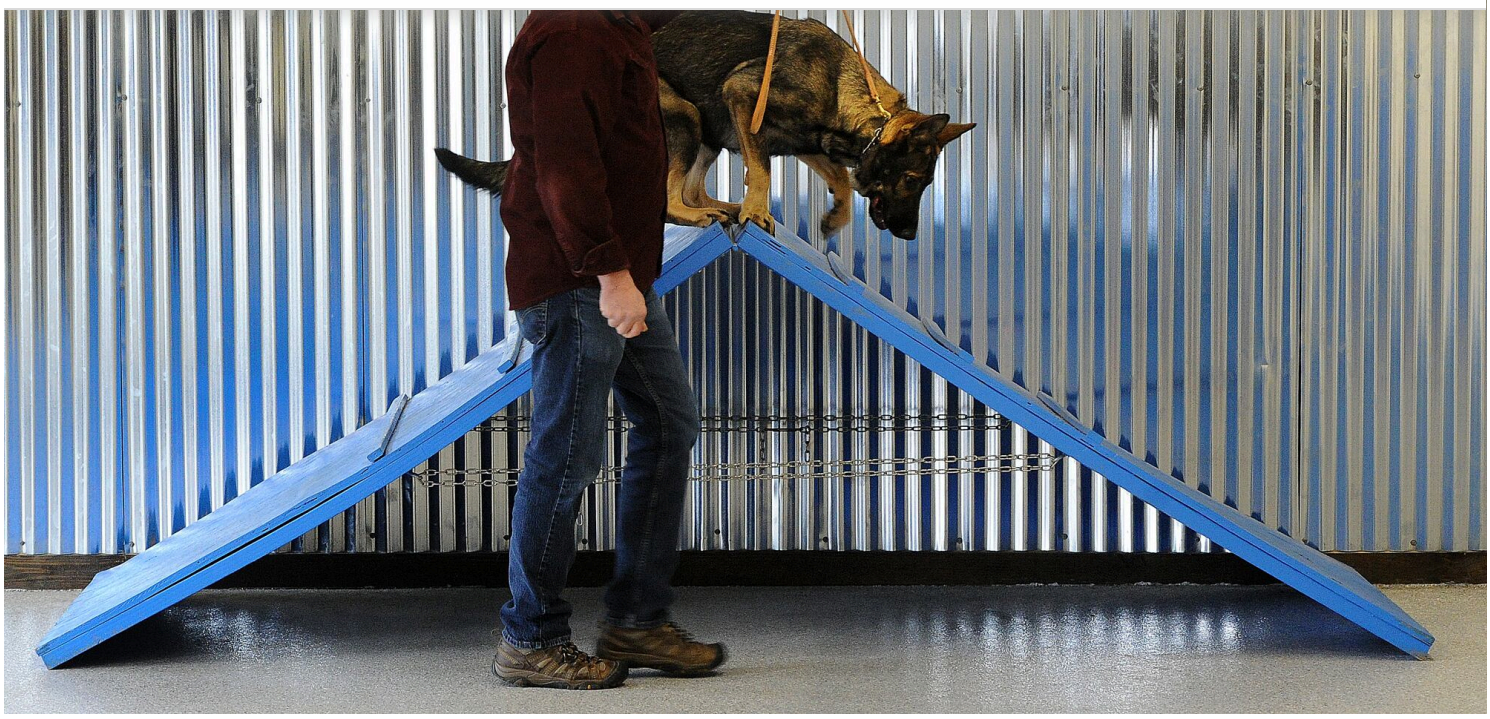
Dunham joined the Franklin Police Department in Warren County in 1995, training police dogs since 1998. He started his own police dog training business in 2006, and after retiring from the Franklin Police Department in 2016, opened his doors to pet dogs as well at his business at 2763 Culver Ave., Kettering.

“Being a K-9 officer, I worked with breeds that had very high drive. They’re very easily stimulated by external things, like animals or people,” Dunham said. “So it really helped prepare me for those kinds of situations.”

Dunham recently changed the name of his business from Police Dog Services to Dog Training Personalized, and his business instantly quadrupled, he said.

“This is my passion. I really enjoyed training dogs and working with police dogs,” he said. “I wanted to do more, and jumping into it gave me opportunities to learn more.”

Working with Anja, a client’s German Shepherd at their Kettering facility Tuesday, Dunham and Sami Clark, Head Certified Trainer at Dog Training Personalized, exhibit a firm and gentle hand with the pups in their care. Anja is very excited to get her treats, but it’s Dunham’s job to show her the boundaries of acceptable behavior and what it takes to do a good job, an endeavor that takes a lot of time and patience.



Steve Dunham works with Anja, a German Shepherd at Dog Training Personalized in Kettering. MARSHALL GORBY\STAFF

“Sometimes people will look at a dog like programming a computer,” Dunham said. “It’s not like that. You’re dealing with living, breathing creatures that do things for their own reasons. And some dogs are wired a little bit different than other dogs.”

People seek out dog trainers for multiple reasons, Dunham said.

“It could be the dog is reactive when they see another dog, or going crazy at the FedEx guy when he comes over,” Dunham said. “Sometimes people will get a new puppy, and it’s either been a long time or they haven’t raised a puppy before and want to make sure that they’re on the right path.”

While many of the behavior issues Dunham and Clark see on a day-to-day basis are easy fixes, they still require lots of practice — for both dog and human.

“It’s like learning a second language,” Dunham said. “The longer you do it, the more consistent you are, the easier it gets.”

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