



# COACHING LINES

Dalmatian Club of Southern New England

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## Club Officers

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**Karen Blanchfield**

**Dawn Eliot-Johnson**

**Donna MacCallum**

March 2021

President's Letter

Dear DCSNE Members,

Over the past few months dog events have been opening and members have been able to participate. This has been a positive sign. Although we don't know definitely if our specialties will take place, we are becoming more optimistic. We will need the Cape Cod Fairgrounds to allow spectators in order to organize trophies, have sweepstakes, as well as our Friday Club meeting, and our raffle. However, you would still be able to show to the two conformation judges if spectators aren't allowed. We are hopeful we will be able to have the specialties.

Huge congratulations to Melissa MacWilliams and Monson who have been honored by the AKC with the ACE Therapy award. We are so pleased for her and Monson with this tremendous achievement. When we meet in person at a Club meeting we will celebrate more. The article about them is within this issue.

'Cozy in Covid', a theme created by Sara Bourque for Coaching Lines, is a topic in these pages. It has inspired quite a few people to submit photos. We hope these photos and other articles will lift your spirits as they have mine.

Yours truly,

Richard Baker

Dalmatian Club of Southern New England, President

## Monson: AKC ACE Therapy Award

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Dalmatian “Monson” Awarded 2020 Therapy ACE Award

By [Ranny Green](#)



No doubt about the love affair between Melissa MacWilliams and Monson. Here he’s hanging out near the veggie garden where he gets a daily dose of kale. Photo courtesy Elizabeth MacWilliams.

*Each year, the AKC Humane Fund pays tribute to five dedicated, hardworking dogs for making significant contributions to an individual or entire community. One award is given in each of the following categories: Uniformed Service K-9, Service, Therapy, Search and Rescue, and Exemplary Companion Dog.*

*“Dogs are not our whole life, but they make our lives whole.” –author Roger Caras*

COVID-19 has affected all of us differently, but few have probably been impacted more than Melissa MacWilliams and Monson of Buxton, Maine (2018 population 8,310).

MacWilliams, co-owner of a landscaping company, was seemingly running a daily marathon with her 9-year-old Dalmatian until early March. And you know what happened then. The winner of the AKC Humane Funds Award For Canine Excellence (ACE) Sponsored by Eukanuba Therapy Dog category had found themselves at different sites almost daily interacting with those in need from a teen shelter to a nursing home.

And it’s hard to imagine how much Monson’s galaxy of friends from teens to the elderly are missing the M&M (Monson and Melissa) team these days. No matter what the age, each visit represented a cascading collapse of emotions and the prospect, in some cases that Monson may be the tonic that shapes a young person’s character going forward.

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## Monson: AKC ACE Therapy Award

The 58-pound Monson definitely misses his visits, says MacWilliams. “He knows when his special collar with his Therapy Dogs international tag comes out that we were going to visit his kids and his friends. I made the mistake of moving his collar about a month ago and he got so excited. We have tried to maintain a weekly update on his Facebook and Instagram pages.”

If anyone appreciates Monson’s crisp, colorful, and emotionally rich interaction with others, it’s the refreshingly candid MacWilliams, who battled depression’s demons years ago and learned not to assume the past is the prologue to what’s ahead.

“Monson has always been by my side in times of sadness and joy and seems to just know when I need a paw on the arm to say, ‘Hey, I’m here’ or lick on the face to wipe away my tears. I had been searching for a purpose and seeing a psychologist. Together, we were attempting to find and set new goals for me as my life direction changed dramatically from having a terminal autoimmune disease to seeing my immune system rest itself and enjoy a new life.”



*Looking dapper in his favorite hat, Monson sends*

After losing her first Dal, Harrison, and a good friend, in 2008, MacWilliams began a bucket list hike of the Appalachian Trail from Springer Mountain Georgia. Those losses, plus her autoimmune disorder, prompted her to prove to herself – and everyone else – she could complete the long trek. She came up short, however, saddling her with increased gloominess

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## Monson: AKC ACE Therapy Award

This prompted a visit to her psychologist, where they discussed dogs. It wasn't long before she purchased Eva, another Dalmatian, and eventually, 8-week-old Monson, in 2011. MacWilliams credits the clinician for helping channel her life on a positive track over five years. "My doctor continually boosted my confidence and encouraged me to reap the rewards from Monson and give to others," she smiles. In other words, he's been her psychological ballast for almost a decade.

Monson, incidentally, was named for the town in Maine which the Appalachian Trail winds through, hence the AKC registered name, Miles to Go Monson.

### Starting Therapy Work

A friend, Dawn Eliot-Johnson, of Bryant Pond, Maine, owned a therapy Dal, Ghost, (Monson's grandfather) and from eying the young Monson's affinity for those around him she thought he would be well-suited for the same. Monson began doing unofficial therapy work a couple years later and became fully certified by Therapy Dogs International in March 2017.

"I don't know where my path would have taken me otherwise. They say the recipients of Monson's love are the big winners. But seeing the incredible joy he brings to everyone leaves me feeling even more fulfilled," says MacWilliams.

Sit down, relax, and fasten your seatbelt and check out the enterprising MacWilliams' weekly therapy-dog visitation schedule in pre- COVID times – and hopefully in the not-too-distant months.



*The 9-year-old Dalmatian loves his reading buddies at Sacopee Valley Middle School in Hiram, Maine. Monson is a member of Therapy Dogs International's Tail Waggin' Tutors program, which offers a dog-friendly atmosphere allowing students to read comfortably. Photo courtesy Marcie Russell.*

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## Monson: AKC ACE Therapy Award

### Monson's Weekly Schedule

**Tuesday:** Preble Street Teen Center in Portland, Maine, from 6-7:30 p.m. The facility is the hub of multiple services for homeless and runaway youth from 12-21. As they approach the entrance, MacWilliams explains, the youth come running out to greet them. They see residents suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, drug/alcohol addiction, borderline personality issues, sexual and emotional abuse, and learning disabilities. "We have earned their trust and respect and do not want to let them down. Thus, it has been gut-wrenching not being able to visit this year."

**Wednesday:** Sacopee Valley High School in Hiram, Maine, from 10-11:15 a.m. They arrive a half-hour early for the staff to get its Monson fix. At about 10:30, the M&M team sits in a circle with the students in the library where many will talk about subjects bothering them in their daily lives. "Some ask about me and my life and I share with them what I've gone through. Many close bonds have emerged from those frank interactions," adds MacWilliams.

**Thursday:** Sacopee Valley Middle School, also in Hiram. They arrive a few minutes before 8 a.m. and often are stopped before entering the building by students wanting to pet Monson. They recognize he is a therapy dog and always ask permission before doing so, adds MacWilliams. "Monson loves being hugged and petted but I make certain students know that all dogs are not like this and they must be mindful of that when approaching others." They spend about a half-hour in five classrooms where three to four students – some with autism and developmental issues – read to him. "The kids always ask me what type of books do you and Monson like," she smiles.

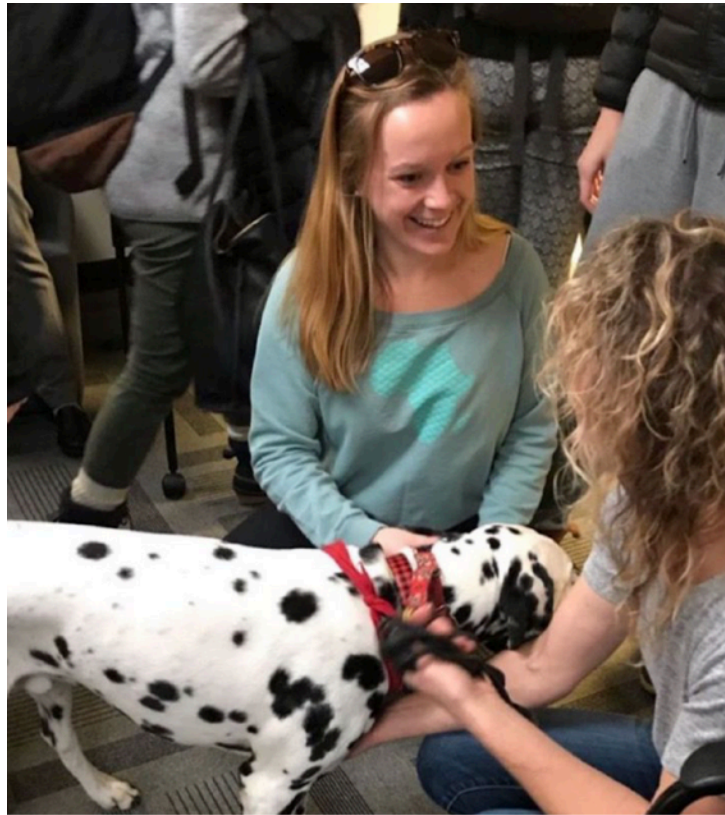
**Saturday:** Logan Place, in Portland, where adults – some suffering from mental illness and addiction transition from the streets into an assisted-living complex. During the 1-2:30 p.m. visit, Monson handles every interaction with patience and love. "He has been exposed to some things that would scare other dogs, like yelling, exchanges, and intoxicated people but always wants to love," says his owner-handler.

**Sunday:** Gorham House, in Gorham, Maine. The pair usually visit the independent/assisted living senior facility from 1-3 p.m. Here, Monson serves up plenty of paws-on therapy to many lonely residents, who "light up" when he approaches. "We visit in the residents' rooms and thus brought smiles to many family members and grandchildren, too," adds MacWilliams.

**Occasional:** University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine, Biddeford, Maine. This includes four to five, 1½-hour visits a year during exam weeks. At these lovefests, sometimes with as many as 75 students, Monson serves up lots of kisses and in return receives countless belly rubs and smooches. "You can feel the stressed energy when we arrive," says MacWilliams, "but it all seems to dissipate after we arrive. It's a much-needed break for everyone."

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## Monson: AKC ACE Therapy Award



*Smiles and pets make exam week more tolerable at the University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine in Biddeford, Maine. Here, Monson lets Kiley Nygren take her mind off finals for a few moments.*

## Lives Changed by Monson

Dozens of visits have produced their share of lifetime memories.

For instance, there was a student at Sacopee Valley Middle School who would never read aloud because he lacked confidence. After two years, he asked to read to Monson and reached out to MacWilliams to assist him with words. "That left me feeling special that Monson had broken down a barrier like this in a non-judgmental environment. This represented the heart and soul of our work and demonstrated we can make a difference."

Then there was a homeless 16-year-old Tennessee youth at Preble Street Teen Center who stuck with Monson and MacWilliams like glue throughout their entire visit one day. "He would lay down beside Monson and eventually opened up to Matt (her husband Matthew Dion) and me about horrible events in his life. Months passed and we developed a very special bond with him.

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## Monson: AKC ACE Therapy Award

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“He would sleep at the teen shelter every night and asked many times if Monson could sleep with him. It broke my heart. Eventually, they found a safe place for him to live.” The MacWilliams remained in contact with him and learned that he and Monson shared the same birthday. The couple visited him monthly until he graduated from high school and moved on to trade school.

During those outings, Monson would go with him to play in the gym and then the four of them would head out on walks in the woods. “It was truly a gift to have him trust us enough to open up and share,” adds MacWilliams.

Yet another poignant memory involved a transgender youth at the Preble Street Teen Center who aged out – older than 21 – and who could no longer enter the building. He knew when we came each week and would wait outside for us just to pet and hug Monson.

“He also asked ‘may I give you a hug. You are a good human being.’ Well, the tears started and I said please take care of yourself we will always be here same night, same time. That hug meant so much.”

And just in case you’re thinking Monson is a one-trick pony, err dog, forget it. The versatile Dal also dabbles in Rally, Obedience, Agility, Barn Hunt, Scent Work, Obedience, Road Dog, as well as Weight Pull. During his COVID layoff this year, he filled in the time by earning an AKC Trick Dog title.



*MacWilliams and Monson wait patiently with Avalon for a Road Dog Trial to begin at Joker’s Wild Equestrian Center in Port Crane, New York. Photo courtesy Sandy Lockwood.*

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## Monson: AKC ACE Therapy Award

### Monson at Home

For Monson, the home setting is like Camelot. MacWilliams and her husband, a huge supporter in her therapy-work and dog-sport endeavors, live on seven acres with neighbors nearby owning horses, donkeys, chickens, and sheep. Directly across the street is a 70-acre recreation area, which they utilize for walking and snowshoeing.

If that's not enough, at home, the goofy, upbeat Monson has an agility area set-up and a separate playfield where he, Eva, Melissa, and Matt play ball daily. "He is very particular about only playing with his Kong squeaky tennis ball, which he will pick out from a whole box of other toys. If we try to switch it for another, forget it, he will not play," she laughs.

**Click on photo to play  
link to Video from AKC  
Awards Presentation.**



A Special Thank You to Melissa MacWilliams and AKC Author Ranny Green for permission to reprint this wonderful article. Published December 1, 2020.

<https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/news/dalmatian-monson-awarded-2020-therapy-ace-award/>



## COZY in COVID By: Sara Bourque

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The pandemic and quarantine have been stressful for so many over the past year. We are navigating new daily routines, working and schooling from home, exploring new ways to digitally connect to our old lives while having meaningful family experiences. We have asked our members to show how they have been getting through this past year. Below is a photo collage highlighting the bond we have with our much-needed canine companions during this COVID experience. Be prepared to smile!



Opposite: Carter Basius & Dal Cali are Cozy in Covid!



Opposite: Tiana DiNola's Desmond with baby, Tony.  
CH Lucas Legend Desmond's Constant at Seapoint.

Nice jammies Baby Tony!

## COZY in COVID



Above: Sara Ettinger, daughter of Jennifer Ettinger, with Juniper.



Fiddners Always Bet On a Lucky Spot Roxy (Roxy) Hiking around a pond in Maynard, MA. 2/25/21



Opposite: Dahlia, Daphne, and Delphi vying for the window seat in a cabin in Ripton, VT when we visited our son and his family.

## COZY in COVID



Above: GGCU Class with Hugh Schoelzel and Delphi.



Above: Ticket with Ed Stuhr sporting her new jacket after being outside on a very cold day.



Above: L. to R. GCHB Baker, Rose, GCHB Lavender on Mary Ramalho's head. Photo by Christine Ramalho.

## COZY in COVID



Above: Donna MacCallum is Cozy in Covid with GCH Riverside's Steady Betty (dam) & CH Riverside's Seattle Seahawk (Sire): 9 puppies, 3 girls, 6 boys with Richard Baker.



Above: Crissy Rojas' Green Starrs A Moment In Time aka Cassie going for a stroll in Sugarbush Village, Warren, VT.



Above: Sally McDonnel's Beloved Forever, CGC (Eugenie) and McDottie Beloved and Beautiful. (Harper)



Above: Barbara and Dave Garceau's AJ. New title for AJ. Scentwork buried novice. SBN. BISS GCH CH S.Xposur N Dynasty's Chasin Neon Rainbows CDX PCDX GN RAE2 CA BCAT SWN SCA SIA SEA CC RATS DN TKN The buried novice title gets bundled into SWN. Achieved on February 6, 2021 Great Barrington KC Scentwork trial at Springfield MA.

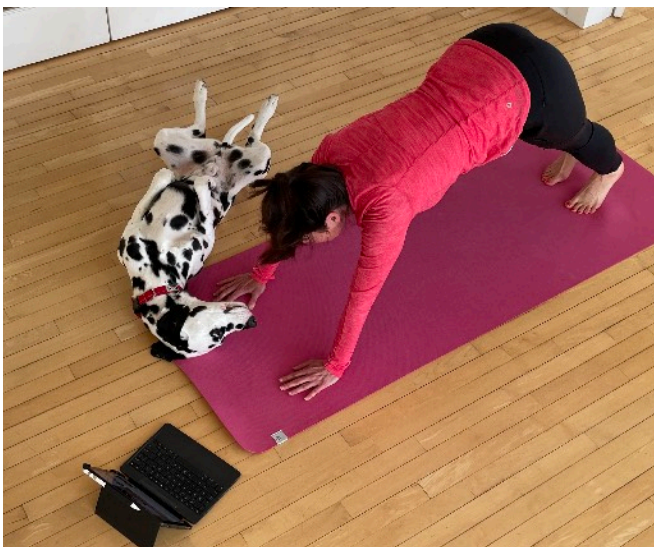
## COZY in COVID



Above: Many Rosenbach's McDottie Streamin' Star (Olivia) and HeeGee's Streamin' Pilgrim (RJ).



Above: Donna Russo and Gracie exploring nearby trails and open spaces. It's become their new weekend thing.



Above: Sara Bourque and Oliver working on their fitness, doing online Yoga classes.



Above: Tiana DiNola's Desmond and Sara Bourque's Oliver out exploring the Newburyport Rail Trail together.

## Dalmatian Distance Log Program: DDLP

In order to recognize the endurance capabilities of the Dalmatian, the Dalmatian Club of America has enacted a membership recognition program to encourage and reward club members who spend a significant amount of time logging mileage with a Dalmatian in an approved endurance activity. Quite a few of our Club members are part of this program. Below is a list of some who revealed their mileage for this Coaching Lines issue.

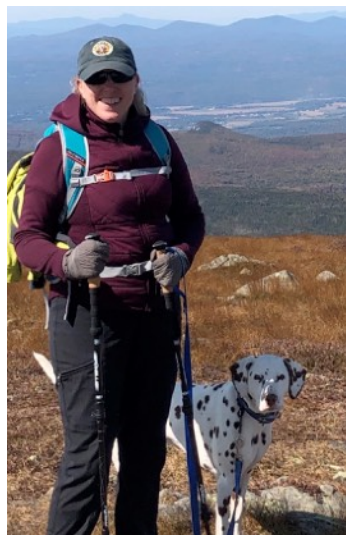


Kathy Pendergast with Lizzie, Roxy, and Tiffany were able to log 763.5 miles last year. Their 2 year total is **1,268 miles**. They earned the Platinum title.



Opposite: Donna Russo's Gracie (Spotted Gem's Garnet of Grace) achieved **585 miles** for DDLP in 2020. Go Gracie & Donna!

Yankee Ingenuity



Above Sara Eastman & Thriller at the summit of Mt Moosilauke for their DDLP photo. They logged **586 miles!**

### DCSNE Members:

- Tiana DiNola and Desmond walked **621 miles** for the DDLP in 2020.
- Christine Ramalho with Rose, Baker, and Lavender logged for the year 2020 **253.2 miles**.
- Barbara + Dave Garceau logged **166 miles** with Abby + AJ.
- Sandy Lajoie and Alex walked **123 miles** last year.
- Melissa MacWilliams and Monson achieved the bronze level. They walked **120 miles** their first year.
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## Yankee Ingenuity

By Ronnie Schoelzel

Last March, when our lives shut down due to Covid, I wanted to continue training my dogs in agility, as there would not be classes to attend, so I set up my agility equipment and began religiously training. One windy April day, I looked down toward the training area and saw that the red agility tunnel had blown against the stone wall. Later I went to the area, and the tunnel was gone! I looked in the field, woods, and the other side of the stone wall, but no tunnel. I decided it must have blown into the pond and sank. I corralled my husband to help find it. The photos tell the story.



With Delphi's help, Hugh tossed a weighted line into the pond to locate the tunnel.



Plan B was to load the canoe in the Kubota tractor to find the tunnel.

Story Continues on page 16

## Yankee Ingenuity



Using a pole, Hugh rowed the canoe around the pond, poking it into the depths to locate the tunnel and finally finding it 30 feet off shore.



FINALLY, he fashioned a homemade grapple and pulled the tunnel out! Daphne is ready to work again. Now that's Yankee Ingenuity!

PS. We had snow after the tunnel sank, and it was more than a week before Hugh could try again. The wind on the pond made the canoe very unstable! He couldn't paddle and poke the depths at the same time.



## New Member Welcome Committee By: Prue Stuhr

Our Board created a Committee to welcome new members to the Club. We had our first meeting with Committee Chair, Sara Bourque, and new Member Mary Rosenbach in January 2021. Some of what they discussed is below. They also discussed trying dock diving and Fast Cat together.

Sample of our talking points below :

**Welcome:** We want you, the new member of the DCSNE, to know that we are here if you have questions.

**Meetings:** We have 6 Club meetings a year.

**Locations:** We now meet by phone, but in the future, some are held at restaurants, some are held at dog shows. Plan to attend and participate.

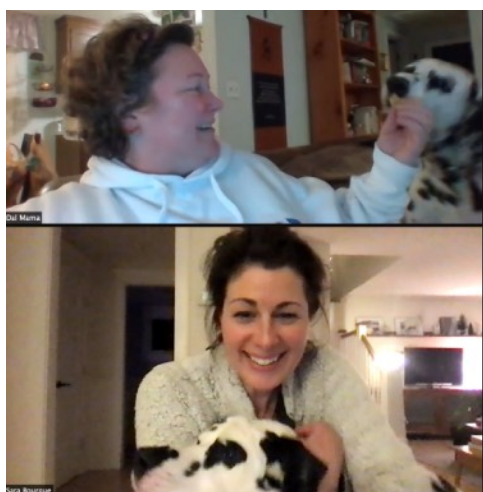
**Activities:** Many activities are available to you and your Dalmatian. You can earn titles if you wish. If you are interested in a particular activity, we can put you in touch with a club member who could give you information to get started.

**Why activities are important:** Action with your Dal means that your Dal is continuing to learn and acquire new skills. This creates an exercised, happy, and well-adjusted Dalmatian. You will also meet new dog owners.

**List of some of activities:** Agility, Barn Hunt, CGC\* Conformation Dog shows; Dock Diving, Fast CAT\*\*, Obedience, Parkour, Rally, Road Trial, Scent Work, Therapy Dog, Tracking, Trick, Dog and other activities.

**Our Regional Specialty Show.** Plan to attend our two September Specialty dog shows. Help in some way, to make it successful. Also, you will meet new people, learn more about Dalmatians and enjoy the beauty of Dalmatians being shown.

**The Dalmatian Club of America.** Apply for membership. **Why?** A way to increase your knowledge about Dalmatians, learn about new events, Health studies, Meet new friends. The Dalmatian Distance Log Program is one activity offered by the Dalmatian Club of America. You can keep a record of walks you take with your Dal. Again, walking with your Dalmatian creates an exercised and well-adjusted Dalmatian. You can receive awards for this program.



Opposite is a screenshot from zoom meeting.

Mary Rosenbach with RJ and Sara Bourque with Oliver. Mary and Sara Have decided to start Fast Cat together this spring. Their first event will be on June 6th at the Mayflower Pembroke Welsh Corgi Club Fast Cat event in East Windsor, CT.

# Performance Report By: Dawn Eliot-Johnson



### Atty

Opposite: "We tied the record, we need 1 more Mach to break the record. However, she is the highest (on points) scoring Dal in AKC history MACH 11" Tod Hebert

Opposite Photo from SureFire Dogs in Westborough, MA. Sunday March 21, 2021.

Also tying the record of MACH titles held. MACH- Masters Agility Championship.



### Zen

Opposite: Road Trial Dawn Eliot-Johnson, and Champion Road Dog! ZEN RDCH CH Blackthorn N Patchmt Zen at Lucas Legend RN ACT1



### Luu Luu

Opposite: Sara Pruyne is practicing Scent Work Advanced Containers with Luu Luu (CH Lucas Legend Blackthorn & Patch Mt Right on Track RE TD OA OAJ NF ACT 1 SWN SCA SIA SEA RD TKN) outside at Linda McSherry's house in preparation for a Scent Work trial in a few weeks. Luu Luu indicated that there was odor in that box and was correct. Sara is bending over to reward her. Photo by Linda McSherry.

## Wins + Achievements



Opposite: Club member, Linda McSherry, and her Dalmatian Felicity\_CH Bellwether Patch MT Worth The Wait BN RI TD NA NAJ NJP SWN SCA TKN earned their Tracking Dog title on August 22, 2020 at the Dog Tracking Club of Maine's test in Augusta, Maine. Felicity is co-owned with Pam Devlin.

DCSNE Member Jody Fraser 2nd to right was one of the judges.



Above: "Daphne" Dapper-Dan's Double Dip

Owned by Bronwyn Schoelzel  
WB (5-point major)  
Great Barrington Kennel Club  
February 7, 2021  
Judge: Dr.Valeria Rickard



Above: "Delphi" Dapper-Dan's Double Exposure CGCU.

Owners: Bronwyn and Hugh Schoelzel  
Show: South Windsor KC, November 21, 2020 WD and BOW  
Judge: Mrs. Sharon C. Smith



# COACHING LINES

Dalmatian Club of Southern New England

### Contributors:

Prue + Ticket



**Prue Stuhr:** Author, Editor and Curator for Coaching Lines.

Sara, Oliver + Fergus



**Sara Bourque:** Graphics + Layout.

**Sue Basius:** Copy Editor, Wins+ Achievements Reporter

**Dawn Eliot- Johnson:** Performance Reporter

### Upcoming Meetings:

- **May 2, 2021** Club meeting via Free Conference Call.Com.
- **June 26, 2021** Penobscot Valley KC, Cumberland ME Supported Entry for Dalmatians by the DCSNE. DCSNE Club Meeting.
- **August, 2021** Specialities Show Organization via conference call. date TBA
- **September 17, 2021 Speciality Show #1** South Shore KC, Meeting at Cape Cod Fairgrounds East Falmouth MA Sweepstakes: Dr. Kelly M Flannigan, MI Conformation: Timothy S. Robbins, TX
- **September 18, 2021 Speciality Show # 2** South Shore KC, Meeting at Cape Cod Fairgrounds East Falmouth MA . Sweepstakes: Gale Passman, IN Conformation: Dr. J. Charles Garvin, OH

*"Nature always wears the colors of the spirit."*

- Ralph Waldo Emerson





THE DALMATIAN  
CLUB of  
SO. NEW ENGLAND INC.

