

News From The AKC

Chairman's Report

April 2012

-- Join Us in the AKC Conversation --

This isn't so much a Chairman's Report as it is a little straight talk among friends. And I intend it to be the first of many.

We are fortunate that my predecessors, Ron Menaker and David Merriam, had the foresight to carefully plan for a financially sound American Kennel Club. Your Board and Staff developed and are executing a plan for this year that will allow the AKC to be in the black and still maintain the deep resources of our reserves and endowment.

The challenges we have been addressing seem to occupy all of our conversation, but I assure you, they do not occupy all we are doing. Beyond the challenges, there are exciting opportunities in every area of everything we do. It is our opportunities, those we have in hand today and those we will innovate tomorrow, that hold the true future of the AKC - and they require attention from us all.

Our potential for successful growth encompasses the 100 million Americans who own a dog - purebred or mixed breed. Today, we only scratch the surface of those who make

dogs an important part of their lives. We are concentrating on three major areas in order to engage, excite, and enroll more of them into the world we all hold so dear.

At the core is our advocacy for the purebred dog, which is the gateway to so many defining aspects of the AKC. The discernibility of the purebred dog in form, purpose, and temperament is undeniable - and desired by millions of people. Responsible breeders need our support, encouragement, and recognition. The AKC Breeder of Merit program is an example of how we put that commitment into practice - it is no surprise the Fancy has enthusiastically embraced the program. Our successful "AKC Meet the Breeds®" events in New York and Orlando bring purebred dogs to the public in an entertaining and educational format. We will continue to explore ways in which we can bring this event in some form to more people. An exciting new initiative is the re-imagining of our website, which draws more than 1.5 million unique visitors each month. The new website will serve as an important and useful resource for breeders, puppy buyers, owners, exhibitors, clubs, judges, and the general dog-loving public. And, yes, it will be much easier to navigate.

Our sport is evolving to be more inclusive and inviting than ever before. There are plans in place to create greater ease of entry into each of our sports and compelling reasons to continue participation. We have conducted significant research to understand the needs of our exhibitors and have subsequently created innovative new programs aimed at growing participation in every sport. Some are completed, some are being pilot tested today, some will be launched soon, and some are still being developed. Most importantly, the quest for continuous invention, while still maintaining our heritage, is unwavering. These initiatives include the 4-6 Month Puppy competition, the new Grand Champion achievement levels, the Owner Handler Series, the soon to be launched Open Shows, the "My Dog Can Do That!" introduction to Agility and Rally, the Coursing Ability Test for all dogs, and others.

Our commitment to improving our sport includes event process improvement as well. Our new Competition Management System will provide faster, easier, and more flexible service to clubs and exhibitors in Conformation, Companion, and Performance events. There is a current pilot test being conducted and we will be rolling out aspects of the program later this year, with even more to come.

The third major opportunity is community impact in support of dogs, dog ownership,