

August 23, 2007

In April of this year, we lost our beloved Bernese mountain dog to cancer. Needless to say, we were heartbroken. After a couple of months, though, we missed having a dog in the house. We made the decision to adopt from the SPCA and brought home a mixed breed little girl named Lucy in June.

As Lucy grew more comfortable in our home, some undesirable behaviour began to emerge. She was impossible to walk, pulling on the leash and following her nose wherever it might lead her. She was very anxious, constantly chewing at herself and whining. The final straw was when she started exhibiting aggression with people visiting our home. Lucy even refused to let the dog walker we hired get anywhere near her. She would growl and bark menacingly and no amount of coercing or cajoling would appease her (until the stranger left, then she would be fine). We felt almost that we were being held captive by a dog. We couldn't leave her alone or go away because we couldn't board her when she was acting in this manner.

Luckily (for us and Lucy) I had seen an article written about Spirit Ridge and I got in contact with Jim Tsitanidis. Please understand that at this point, we were at wit's end with this dog. We didn't want to return her to the SPCA because we don't take animal ownership lightly, but at the same time, we didn't feel comfortable having a dog that we couldn't trust around people. Jim and his wife Suzanne made a visit to our home the very day I phoned him for help. Lucy put on quite a show for them, growling, barking and generally making it known that she didn't appreciate their presence. One and a half hours later, she was like a different dog. Or is it that we were different dog owners? As Jim explained to us, we needed to step up and be the leaders instead of allowing Lucy to fill the leadership role. He showed us how to do this in a firm but kind way. Now that she knows her position and accepts us as the leaders, the bad behaviour has diminished greatly.

Lucy is now a pleasure to walk. I can honestly say that I enjoy our morning and evening strolls and trust me when I say that I dreaded it before. She has now decided that she likes people (or is at least indifferent to them), so I don't fear having someone come to the door anymore. We are attending obedience classes at Spirit Ridge and she loves Jim and Suzanne. Spirit Ridge is now her home away from home! We love our new and improved dog and she will have a home for life with us.

If you think you might need help with your dog, you probably do. I am confident that you won't be disappointed if you give Jim a chance to work with you.

Sincerely,

Beth R.