

2018 Best of the East Bay: Pets

These animal services bring out the best in our furry friends.

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Dog-Training Classes

Tony La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation (ARF)

Established in 1991, after then–Oakland A's Manager Tony La Russa saved a stray kitten that wandered onto the field during a game against the New York Yankees, La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation (ARF) is a no-kill shelter and an advocate for animal rights. While the Walnut Creek–based organization has rescued more than 38,000 cats and dogs since its inception, it does more than save animals; ARF also offers behavior education programs. Diablo spoke with public class dog trainer **Kylie Reed** about ARF and its classes.

Q: As a dog trainer, what appealed to you about ARF?

A: The team supports each other. We share plans so we're as efficient and effective as possible, and not reinventing the wheel every time. We also work on tons of behavior programs. The dogs here aren't just waiting to be trained by the public; they're also getting pretraining before they go into homes, so they're really set up for success. The classes are a continuation of that philosophy.

Q: What are ARF classes like?

A: I only have a dog with me for about five to 10 minutes out of the 45-minute class because the goal is to help owners learn how to train their dogs. I do a lot of human coaching and a lot of cheerleading. Helping people understand [how] they can work and bond with their dog more is one of my favorite things.

Q: What types of things do you teach pet owners?

A: Taking something an owner may have previously seen



Tony La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation (ARF) offers classes on manners, agility, and puppy socialization. Photo courtesy of ARF.

as a nuisance and helping them learn that it's actually a wonderful thing. [With] adolescent dogs that pull on their leash toward every person they see—owners ask me, "Is that wrong?" I say, "It means you did an excellent job at socialization. It means they love people, so now, we're going to teach them how to greet them nicely."

Q: What are some common questions you get in class?

A: One of the questions I get is, "Will I always have to reward my dog for their behavior?" And I ask, "Well, do you always expect a paycheck?" Dogs do not work for free! We go over how to start using less treats and using more real-life rewards, but no dog will continue to sit over and over for just a "good boy." They want to be rewarded with real-life things. [Walnut Creek, arflife.org](http://WalnutCreek.arflife.org).