

# TRAINING WAYS

## 'SUPERNANNY OF PETS' TEACHES OWNERS TO BEHAVE



September 23, 2007 -- WITH school back in session, Los Angeles dog trainer and behaviorist Inger Martens is on a mission. The author of the excellent book "Paws for a Minute: People Training for Dog

Owners" (HarperCollins, \$13) envisions the day when educational institutions will sponsor nationwide seminars to teach kids how to properly handle dogs.

Martens has worked with hundreds of children and their families with dogs to live together happily. Some of her clients include Kevin Costner, Will Ferrell, Kathy Ireland and Marg Helgenberger.



**GOOD OWNER: Inger Martens, with her pup Augie, advises pet owners on how to properly behave with furry family members.**

Alarming statistics indicate that we could all use a refresher course in safety. "Approximately 77 percent of all dog bites involve a family pet, so it's important to prevent accidents through education," says Martens. "Moms and dads need to teach kids to respect a dog's space at home."

And when it comes to pets other than your own, "never run up to [them] on the street. Always ask the owner, 'May I please say hi to your dog?'" says Martens.

The "Supernanny of Pets" also advises kids wheeling around the neighborhood on bikes or other modes of transport to dismount when a dog is nearby: "Always get off your bicycle, skateboard, or razor to walk past a dog, and please don't yell, scream, or stare at any dog," she says.

And when you finally approach the pet, she warns against putting your hand on its head as it will encourage the dog to jump up. Instead, she recommends petting it gently on his chest "This gives the person a chance to put the dog into a sit and crouch down next to him for control. I taught my German shepherd, Augie, to 'shake,' something he does when socializing with kids," she says.

Lastly, Martens warns against judging a dog by his looks. "Just because a dog is big doesn't mean he's unfriendly," says Martens, "and very small dogs, no matter how tiny, are not toys to be picked up. I've met sweet Dobermans and pit bulls - and snappy poodles and Chihuahas that will take your face off.

"The truth is, it's not a breed or dog issue," Martens concludes, "it's about dog owners and parents being responsible."