

# The Youth Experience in Schutzhund

by Hannah Axley

**E**ven though Schutzhund might not be the first thing to come to mind when most kids are thinking about sports, there are some of us whose minds go into “Schutzhund mode” right from the start.

Schutzhund is unfortunately one sport that isn't well known, but it's a sport that is competitive yet friendly. We're not only competing against each other, but also with ourselves. We push ourselves and our dogs to compete at the level that we know we can, and sometimes even to exceed our own expectations.



There are so many friendly people in this sport who are very willing to help. I know that having others work with me to train has helped me a great deal with my dog. There were times when I didn't want to continue because I was discouraged, but people I barely knew were telling me that everyone felt the same way at some point in their Schutzhund careers. At one of my first trials, which didn't end up the way I had wanted it to, I had competitors I'd never met before supporting me and letting me know that they had been there too and that it was just a step to something greater.

My experience as a youth handler has been many different things all at once, hard and rewarding, difficult and beneficial. I believe we all go through hard times with our dogs, but getting support from others helps us learn and grow. Being from a small club, I have received a lot of support from my club members who lend me their experience and friendship. In life, young people are often discounted because of our lack of experience, but in Schutzhund, you can be any age and make it a great experience. Some of us are born into the sport by having parents who are involved with Schutzhund, and there are also some of us who stumble upon it in other ways, just as I did.

No matter which way you enter the world of Schutzhund, there is a wealth of experiences to enjoy. The past few years that I've been involved in Schutzhund have exposed me to an atmosphere of hard work and competition, but also a great camaraderie among the participants and a chance to make life long friends who share their love of the sport. I encourage you to get the word out about Schutzhund, because one day we will be the adults of Schutzhund, and we need to keep the sport alive.

If you would like to share your experiences, you can contact me at [hannah\\_614@hotmail.com](mailto:hannah_614@hotmail.com). Happy training!

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*Hannah is a youth member of O.G. Inselstadt Schutzhund Club.*

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