

**USCA Helper Committee Report
2014 General Board Meeting
Medina, Ohio**

Scott Boedecker, Interim Director USCA Helper Program/Committee Chair

Introduction

Our United Schutzhund Clubs of America Helper Program is now entering into its 11th year as an approved program of this organization. We continue to recruit more members into the program, both as Helpers and Teaching Helpers. The USCA Helper Program continues to lead the way in Helper Education for all Working Dog Organizations in the United States, through an education program that is focused on Knowledge, Safety, and Performance in Trial Helper Work.

Participation

During the past year (through mid-August) we have held 17 Seminars and Evaluations (down from 30 last year), including the 2013 National Helper College. There are currently:

- 26 Seminar Only Participants (up from 23 last year)
- 116 Entry Level Helpers (up from 98 last year)
- 462 Basic Level Helpers (up from 398 last year)
- 130 Club Level Helpers (up from 115 last year)
- 32 Regional Level Helpers (up from 28 last year)
- 29 National Level Helpers (up from 26 last year)
- 33 Teaching Helpers (up from 31 last year)
- 3 Apprentice Teaching Helpers (down from 5 last year)

Our total is 831 active USCA Members participating in the Helper Program (up from 724 in 2013).

We currently have five (3) active Apprentice Teaching Helpers who are working on their apprenticeships, John Bochenek (Mid-Eastern Region), Ralph Burrows (North Eastern Region) and Richard Shook (South Eastern Region).

Next, I personally wish to thank Charlie Snyder for all his assistance in helping me query the records in the Helper Program database to obtain the above information.

Interim Director USCA Helper Program / Committee Chair

Dennis Vander Linde, after a long and successful run as the chair of our Helper Committee, has decided that, due to increasing demands in his "real" life, it is best for USCA if someone else chairs the committee. While disappointed to see Dennis step aside, the committee thanks him for the hundreds (maybe thousands) of hours donated to USCA and applaud his work over the past 5 years.

Dennis will remain on the helper committee and will assist in the transition to a new chair. In the interim, Scott Boedecker is the acting chair and can be reached at seboedecker@gmail.com should you need anything.

New Member of the Helper Committee

The Helper Program allows for a minimum of seven (7) and maximum of eight (8) members as deemed necessary by the President. Jim Alloway appointed Frank Phillips as the eighth member this year. Thank you to Frank for joining the committee and bringing his helper, handler and judging experience to the program.

Helper Program Database Integration with USCA Membership Database

The Helper Committee work with the USCA Office Staff to integrate the Helper Program database with the USCA membership database was completed. If a Helper's USCA membership expires their Helper Classification will also expire and the state is now reflected in the Helper List on the USCA website.

Helper Program Database Development

Charlie Snyder has been hard at work in cooperation with the Technical Committee and Helper Committee to rewrite the Helper Database. The new system has a drastically improved user interface with integration into the membership and event database. Several new admin features have been added to assist the committee such as an email facility with the ability to include helpers based on classification level and a location based helper search.

The new system is only weeks from parallel testing with the existing system. A huge thank you to Charlie and all those involved in this much needed project!

Pending Helper Program Revisions (Issue No. 9 in preparation)

The Helper Program continues to evolve based on member feedback and input with the goals of clearly communicating the expectations of helper work in USCA trials for the education and benefit of both handlers and helpers.

During the revision process this year (listed in the 2013 Helper Program Report), several gaps in the existing Helper Program reference material were identified. The documentation "hierarchy of authority" that we generally follow when researching helper topics is to start with USCA's Trial Rules, Helper Program and then the FCI Trial Rules. The result is that when a particular topic is not specifically mentioned in USCA's documents but it is listed in the FCI document, we default to the FCI's position. While this is not inherently a bad practice, it has led to some gray areas surrounding the interpretation of the content from the FCI.

One of the goals of this review and update process is to address the gaps in the USCA documents and continue to evolve our program into a single source of authority. The agreed upon approach is to document the intent of the exercises, acceptable parameters in helper technique and list what is not acceptable. We will NOT attempt to document detailed movements, etc. This will allow for individual style and variance within the acceptable parameters versus a rigid, "cookie cutter" interpretation.

The Helper Committee has formulated a Plan of Attack for updating the Helper Program that includes collaboration with the Judges' Program and an emphasis on the continuing education of our Teaching Helpers.

Helpers Pre-Selected for 2014 National Events

The Helper Committee would like to congratulate the Helpers that were selected to work our National Events in 2014:

- The Working Dog Championship: Ryan White, Dominic Scarberry, Don Yelle and Marcus Hampton.
- The Sieger Show: Don Yelle, Sean Murphy, Lionel Madden and Scott Carlson.
- The USA (USCA-GSDCA) WUSV Selection Trial: Marcus Hampton.

Seven (7) Helpers submitted their qualifications for consideration to be pre-selected to perform that the helperwork at the 2014 German Shepherd Dog National IPO 3 Championship. The helpers pre-selected for Event are Marcus Hampton, Ryan White, Dominic Scarberry and John Buckingham. Final assignment will occur during a Helper Tryout at the Event.

Thank you to O.G. Buckeye Schutzhund Club for supplying the dog/handler teams and hosting the helper tryouts.

To all the Helpers in the Program, thank you for your sportsmanship, hard work, time and support of the Helper Program.

2014 Helper College

The 2014 National Helper College will be held in coordination with the 2014 German Shepherd Dog National IPO 3 Championship. This year, the organization of the College will be split with members of the Helper Committee, our Teaching Helpers and Apprentice Teaching Helpers each leading the practical portion among the varying levels of classified helpers.

Thank you to O.G. Buckeye Schutzhund Club for hosting the 2014 Helper College and all the members who provide dogs for the helpers to work during the College. We couldn't do it without your help!

Getting Information Out

The Helper Committee is committed to getting information out to the membership both on the USCA Website and in the Magazine. We will continue to do our best to have updates regarding the Helper Program available to the membership in a timely manner. We would like to hear from the membership in the form of questions that they want to address.

Closing

In closing, I want to thank our general members, Executive Board, Helpers and Teaching Helpers for supporting the Helper Program, as it is their support that has made the Helper Program so successful.

Lastly, I want to thank my fellow Committee members: Dennis Vander Linde, Danny Grayson, James Laney, Mark Scarberry, Nathaniel Roque, Jim Alloway and Frank Phillips and their families for their commitment, support and hard work given to the Helper Program this year. I look forward to continuing to work with them in the coming year as we maintain our focus on our achieving our collective mission: Knowledge, Safety, and Performance of Trial Helper Work.

Scott Boedecker

Interim Director USCA Helper Program/Committee Chair and Director at Large

seboedecker@gmail.com