



Press Release

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THE AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB NAMES 2017 BREEDER OF THE YEAR GROUP HONOREES

New York, NY — The American Kennel Club® (AKC®) is pleased to recognize breeding programs from the Sporting, Hound, Working, Terrier, Toy, Non-Sporting and Herding groups as 2017 AKC Breeder of the Year group honorees.

“The breeders honored with this award are truly committed to excellence, consistency, breed standard and type,” said Dennis Sprung, AKC President and CEO. “They have made important contributions to the sport of purebred dogs, and dogs bearing the honorees’ kennel names are a testament to their fine breeding programs.

The 2017 AKC Breeder of the Year award will be presented in the ring at the AKC National Championship presented by Royal Canin on Saturday evening, December 16, 2017.

A canine portraitist will be commissioned to commemorate a prominent dog from the Breeder of the Year’s kennel, and their name will be added to the perpetual trophy and plaque on permanent display at the AKC headquarters in New York City. All group recipients will receive a medallion in recognition of their achievements.

The group winners are:

Sporting Group: Helyne E. Medeiros, Seasyde Pointers

Since getting involved in the sport of purebred dogs as a child, AKC Breeder of Merit Helyne Medeiros has excelled in many roles: breeder, exhibitor, mentor, educator, award-winning groomer, dog photographer, and all-breed show chairperson. Medeiros has bred and/or owned and handled some of the sport’s all-time top-winning and top-producing Pointers, with many champions, Westminster winners, multiple Best in Show winners, and the top-winning Pointer in breed history. In 2008, her Ch. Cookieland Seasyde Hollyberry was Best in Show at the AKC National Championship and the National Dog Show.

Medeiros has had multiple National Specialty Bests of Breed, and she owner-handled the first Pointer to win both the American and Canadian Nationals. Dogs of her breeding have achieved at the sport’s highest levels in the United Kingdom, Europe, and South Africa.

Medeiros has had several Senior and Master Hunter titlists, along with the American Pointer Club's award for top-producing sires and dams for several years. She has served the Cape Cod Kennel Club as an officer, director, and AKC Delegate, and was the club's Good Sportsmanship Award winner for 2005–2006.

Medeiros has given seminars on grooming, conditioning show dogs, and raising and evaluating puppies, and has enjoyed volunteering with 4-H to help young people learn how to train and care for dogs. She has served her parent club as a director and is the Pointer columnist for the *AKC Gazette*.

Hound Group: Marie Cotton, Spring Valley Rhodesian Ridgebacks

Marie Cotton grew up around her father's English Setter hunting dogs, but after graduating from college she gravitated to the Hound Group and has been there ever since. Her first hound was a Basset. In the late 1950s, she acquired her first Ridgeback, a rescue and, she says, "my soulmate for 13 years."

In 1979, Cotton bred her first Ridgeback litter by a champion dog, resulting in the Spring Valley foundation bitch, Ch. Spring Valley's PeeZee. Upon this foundation was built an important career in purebred dogs.

Among the many top dogs bred by Cotton at Spring Valley was Ch. Spring Valley's Great Gatsby, the top-winning Ridgeback in the breed's history. Over the past 25 years, she has had the number-one Ridgeback in the nation "at least 12 times," and has placed many others in the top 10. There have also been Best in Specialty Show winners at regional and national specialties, father-son-grandson Bests in Show, the first Ridgeback Dual Champion to achieve Grand Champion, and the First Ridgeback to achieve Grand Champion Platinum.

Around the whelping box, Cotton has had the top stud dog and brood bitch in her breed numerous times, and has produced hundreds of champions. Spring Valley is the home of all-around performers, with many lure coursing Bests in Field and Field Champions, and multiple obedience and agility titles.

"Over the years, I had the good fortune of working with wonderful people," Cotton says, "Dave and Peg Helming, Gene and Maryann Zerwinski, Ed and Mary Smizer, and Jack Secrest. They shared my belief that conformation, movement, and attitude is what we look for. If Ridgebacks have these qualities, they can do whatever we ask of them."

Working Group: Zoila (Tina) and Dr. William Truesdale, Hi-Tech Boxers

Dr. Bill Truesdale's life with Boxers began 55 years ago in the Juniors ring. Bill's family bred Boxers in the mid-1960s, and in 1987, he and his wife, Tina, established the Hi-Tech kennel. Soon thereafter, Hi-Tech produced its first homebred champion.

With the help of their handler, Kimberly Calvacca, the kennel has produced 226 champion Boxers, including 100 homebred champions. Among these champions are six generations of Best in Show winners, with 170 total BIS awards.

Hi-Tech Boxers have won six American Boxer Club (ABC) Nationals, two regional specialties, four Winners Dogs, and a Winners Bitch. Collectively, Hi-Tech stud dogs and brood bitches have received numerous ABC awards, including five ABC Producers of Merit, nine Sires of Merit, and six Dams of Merit.

Two notable Hi-Tech Boxers:

Ch. Hi-Tech's Arbitrage (Biff), 1994 ABC National Specialty winner, a number-one working dog, a Working Group winner at Westminster Kennel Club, and the sire of 50 champions and six Sires and Dams of Merit;

Ch. Hi-Tech Johnny J of Boxerton (Johnny), ABC WD/BOW, Regional Specialty Winner (1996). Three National wins, 1997–2000, and sire of 70 champions and 12 Sires and Dams of Merit.

Bill and Tina received the 2010 AKC Canine Health Foundation (CHF) President's Award for their contributions to canine health. Bill is president of the American Boxer Charitable Foundation and a past CHF director. Tina is a director of the CHF and the American Boxer Charitable Foundation.

Terrier Group: Karen Fitzpatrick, Meadowlake Border Terriers

Karen Fitzpatrick's Meadowlake kennel is responsible for many Westminster Kennel Club and AKC National Championship Bests of Breed, an AKC National Championship Bred-by-Exhibitor Group Winner, and hundreds of all-breed group wins. Fitzpatrick has bred multiple Best in Show winners and International Champions. She currently has America's all-time top-winning Border Terrier, GCh. Meadowlake Simply Sinful. In 2014, Meadowlake was named AKC Breeder of the Year for Earthdogs.

Fitzpatrick comes from a working terrier background. She acquired her foundation bitch from Roger and Doreen Westmoreland. She spent the early 1990s foxhunting with the Westmorelands in the Lake District of England with the Coniston Foxhounds. "Hence my love affair with the Border Terrier began," she says.

Fitzpatrick's belief has always been "form to function" and she has strived to breed Border Terriers that will always have the structure to do what they were bred to do, and still retain the health and sound movement to become either an all-around healthy member of a family or to win a Best in Show. "I would like to think I will someday be known for correct breed type, our breed's famous 'otterhead,' and great movement," Fitzpatrick says, "and that my lines will still retain that lovely working instinct to continue to carry on our breed tradition."

She says that "mentoring and helping those who fall in love with the Border Terrier" are among her greatest joys.

Toy Group: Lou Ann King, Loteki Papillons

Lou Ann King's Loteki Papillons are successful in conformation, obedience, and agility. King began in Papillons in 1978, took a Best of Breed from the Puppy class and, she says, "the dog-show hook was set!"

The foundation dogs of Loteki (a combination of Lou Ann and husband Terry King's names) were Ch. Kvar Supernova, out of Kvar Kennels, a multiple group winner and PCA Sire of Distinction; and Ch. Papstedt My Sharonna My Sharonna, a PCA Dam of Distinction.

Upon that foundation was built a long line of high-achieving champions and producers. "There have been many special dogs," King says, "though Am./Can./Dutch/Int Ch. Loteki Supernatural Being (Kirby)—Best in Show at the 1998 World Dog Show, 1998 Canadian Royal, and 1999 Westminster Kennel Club — is the most well-known."

Many others have made their mark in Papillon history as Loteki has produced more than 225 home-bred AKC champions, four all-breed BIS winners, 11 OTCHs, five direct generations of Dams of Distinction, and numerous BISS, MACHs, and other titles too numerous to mention.

King has held office in several clubs, including Papillon Club of America (PCA), Greater Chicagoland Papillon Club, and Papillon Club of Iowa. She also founded and published the bi-monthly *Papillon Revue* magazine for four years. She shows her own dogs, finishing many Papillons and six Miniature Pinschers from the Best Bred-by-Exhibitor class.

Lou Ann and Terry make their home in rural Iowa. They have two daughters and four grandchildren, all of whom share Lou Ann's passion for the "Butterfly of the Toy Group."

Non-Sporting Group: James Dalton, Fabelhaft French Bulldogs

AKC Breeder of Merit James Dalton acquired his first French Bulldog in 1996 and owner-handled him to the Pedigree Award for 1997's number-one French Bulldog.

Under the Fabelhaft kennel name, Dalton has bred approximately 130 AKC French Bulldog champions and additional champions worldwide. He is the breeder and/or owner of Multiple Best in Show, Reserve Best in Show, Specialty Best in Show, National Specialty Best in Show, and Westminster and AKC National Championship Best of Breed and group-placing champions. These include the only French Bulldog since AKC breed recognition in 1998 to win the Non-Sporting Group at Westminster Kennel Club.

He is breeder and/or owner of multiple AKC number-one French Bulldogs and many top-five ranked French Bulldogs, all systems. Breeder and/or owner of four different French Bulldog Club of America (FBDCA) Top Twenty invitational winners and holds the record for the most dogs qualified to attend this event since it began in 2004. Dalton is a French Bulldog Club of America Breeder of Distinction and a club-approved breed mentor and presenter.

Dalton is a past director of the FBDCA and has served on the club's Breed Standard Revision, Breeders Education, and FBDCA Top Twenty Invitational Revision committees. He will judge the FBDCA National Specialty in November.

Herding Group: Steve Leyerly and Bill Shelton, Coventry Pembroke Welsh Corgis

Over the last 30 years, the Coventry prefix has become synonymous worldwide with Pembroke Welsh Corgis. Bill Shelton began in the sport of dogs in the 1960s, and he joined forces with partner Steve Leyerly in 1986. They have since produced many of the breed's all-time top-winning and top-producing Pembrokes.

In the show ring, Coventry has produced six consecutive generations of Best in Show dogs, including several specialty winners and a national-specialty winner. Leyerly and Shelton had the first and second most winning Pembroke Welsh Corgi bitches in breed history (three in the all-time top 10), the top-winning breeder-owner-handled Pembroke of all time, and America's number-one Pembroke from 2005 to 2015.

Along the way, Coventry has taken two Herding Group firsts at Westminster Kennel Club and three group firsts at the AKC National Championship, where Coventry also took top honors at the 2014 Eukanuba National Breeders Stakes.

The Coventry breeding program is responsible for several Register of Merit and Register of Merit Excellent producers, the third top producer in breed history. In 2012, Leyerly and Shelton were recipients of the *Dogs in Review* award for breeders of the year. Shelton is a noted dog judge, writer, and lecturer. The kennel name Coventry is a nod to Leyerly's other passion, the Jaguar motorcar. The first Jaguars were built on Brown's Lane in Coventry, England.

[Learn more about the award and past honorees.](#)

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About the American Kennel Club

Founded in 1884, the American Kennel Club is a not-for-profit organization which maintains the largest registry of purebred dogs in the world and oversees the sport of purebred dogs in the United States. The AKC is dedicated to upholding the integrity of its registry, promoting the sport of purebred dogs and breeding for type and function. Along with its more than 5,000 licensed and member clubs and its affiliated organizations, the AKC advocates for the purebred dog as a family companion, advances canine health and well-being, works to protect the rights of all dog owners and promotes responsible dog ownership. More than 22,000 competitions for AKC-registered purebred dogs are held under AKC rules and regulations each year including conformation, agility, obedience, rally, tracking, herding, lure coursing, coonhound events, hunt tests, field and earthdog tests. Affiliate AKC organizations include the AKC Humane Fund, AKC Canine Health Foundation, AKC Reunite and the AKC Museum of the Dog. For more information, visit www.akc.org.

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