



All dogs play

BY DEB QUANTOCK MCCAREY

Stacey Hawk says her life is all dogs, all day, all the time and she loves it.

At age 50, the long-time Lincoln Park dog agility trainer is still the active animal advocate who helped push forward the first-ever Chicago and Cook County dog park, Wiggly Field Dog Friendly Area (DFA) in the late 1990s. Hawk is also the co-founder and co-chair of D.A.W.G (Dog Advisory Work Group), a coalition of dog guardians and non-dog guardians working together to help communities improve the overall coexistence of dogs and people who do and don't own dogs.

In 2008, she says, D.A.W.G. "went global" and began doing business as Safe Humane Chicago.

Having grown up near Evanston, post college Hawk settled in Lincoln Park, and would daily stroll to a nearby park to run her dogs.

Even though it was not a sanctioned DFA then, there or anywhere else yet, she says.

"I was frustrated because there were no legal places to run our dogs, as it was before the huge advent of dog parks," the owner of Hawk City K9 says. "Then, the Lincoln Park community started to have conflicting needs for its limited green space and a lot of us wanted space to run our dogs and obviously, other people wanted to use the parks for other recreational purposes."

In 1992, Hawk jumped into the local fracas, becoming a critical cog in the grass roots

movement to create ways dog owners and non-dog owners could share green spaces, which were at a premium.

In 1998, Wiggly Field Dog Friendly Area emerged as a .41 acre designated section in Noethling Park, located on the east side of Sheffield at Schubert Ave.

Wiggly Field under the auspices of the Chicago Park District, as 19 other designated dog parks in Chicago are. It, though, was initially and still is supported by the Wrightwood Neighbors' Association, Hawk says.

All of the DFAs, however, are sections within Chicago parks or on its beaches where dogs are allowed to run and play off-leash, under the supervision of an owner, and with the proper licensure.

"We were and are lucky here in Lincoln Park that we have such strong neighborhood associations, because to get the first dog park going, it all went through Wrightwood Neighbors' Association."

As a professional member of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT), Chair of the Wiggly Field Dog Park and Advisory Committee, she says organizing D.A.W.G. as a nonprofit in 2000 with Cynthia Bathurst was a step in becoming the information resource it is now.

"We had so many great resources on dog park formation and Safe Humane Chicago's dog Court Advocacy program came out of that," she said.

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