



BMDCA Info Series

Juniors, Dog Sports, Getting Started, & Resources

2023 #25

"Children and teenagers are the future of the sport of dogs and responsible dog ownership. The more they learn, the more they will grow in dog sports and as a person. The values, attitudes, and responsibility learned while competing as Juniors serve children throughout their entire lives."

(www.akc.org/sports/juniors)

Introduction ► Dog sports aren't just for adults! The BMDCA proudly welcomes and encourages participation in dog activities from enthusiasts of all ages. There are a wide variety of resources available to Juniors (9-18 years old) aimed at fostering sound animal husbandry, developing handling and training skills, teaching responsibilities, and encouraging participation in multiple events.

BMDCA Juniors Program ► The BMDCA is dedicated to encouraging and supporting Juniors. The Juniors Program offers assistance, mentorship, and advice to kids of all ages who wish to explore dog sports.

BMDCA National Specialty:

Each year, the BMDCA National Specialty features a wide variety of Junior activities, including Junior-specific seminars/classes, social activities, fund-raising opportunities, and ringside mentorship for all Specialty competition events. In addition, the top Junior handlers in Conformation are recognized by the Club as part of our annual awards program. This is in addition to the scholarship and Top 20 Specialty-specific awards.



15-year-old wins Junior Conformation competition at the BMDCA National Specialty.

BMDCA Membership: The BMDCA encourages Juniors to join the Club! Junior membership is available to individuals between the ages of 9 - 18 years who have applied to the AKC for a Junior Showmanship number. Qualifying Junior members may join the BMDCA with no annual dues. Juniors may convert to regular membership upon reaching their 18th birthday. Click here for a membership application - <https://www.bmdca.org/membership-application>

Financial Assistance & Scholarships: The Juniors Committee also works closely with the BMDCA Top Twenty Program. The annual National Specialty Top Twenty event raises funds to

support our Juniors in multiple ways. The proceeds are used to offer up to \$500 to help pay for costs and expenses of Juniors who qualify to show at either the Westminster Kennel Club Show or the AKC Nationals Competition. In addition, the Top Twenty Committee sponsors the "Double Your Fun" Award, which is for Juniors who compete in Junior Showmanship and at least one performance event at the annual National Specialty. The Club also offers a yearly scholarship of up to \$500 to qualifying Junior members.

Activities Juniors Can Enjoy With Their Berners

The AKC has a well-established Junior Handling Program for kids who want to learn how to show their dogs in Conformation, and it has been expanding their program to encourage participation in companion events as well, such as Obedience, Rally, and Agility. The AKC offers detailed, comprehensive resources at their website - www.akc.org/sports/juniors.

Conformation: The AKC Junior Handling Program encourages kids from 9-18 years to show their dogs in Conformation. Juniors classes are split by age and experience so kids are competing against others at the same level. Mentorships and apprenticing opportunities are available for Juniors with professional handlers, which expand the educational opportunities available beyond the time in the ring. Juniors may handle their own dogs and/or dogs owned by family members. Spayed and neutered dogs are permitted in Junior handling classes.



Junior handlers presenting their dogs in the Conformation ring.



From long ago, a young Junior Handler competing in Conformation with her Berner Brace. She has gone on to become a top professional handler who achieved back-to-back Best In Show wins at the Westminster Kennel Club Show.

For more information, please visit our website at www.bmdca.org.

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Obedience:

The AKC does not offer a specific program for companion/performance events, but Juniors are welcomed, encouraged, and recognized for their achievements in sports other than Conformation. Obedience and Rally Obedience involve training and showing a dog with specific skills, including heel work, recalls, and stays. Rally Obedience is the less formal of the two forms of AKC Obedience competition, and handlers are permitted to talk to their dogs throughout their performance. Rally is often a great introduction to formal Obedience for both dogs and handlers of all ages.



12-year-old Junior competing with her Berner in Obedience.

Agility: Agility competitions are offered through a variety of organizations including the AKC, NADAC (North American Dog Agility Council, www.nadac.com), and the USDAA (United States Dog Agility Association, www.usdaa.com). Agility is a fast moving, exciting sport that requires the dog to complete an obstacle course that includes jumps, tunnels, weave poles, and contact obstacles (such as an A-frame and elevated dog walk). All organizations welcome Junior handlers. All participants – regardless of age – are encouraged to attend appropriate training classes to ensure the safety of both handlers and dogs.



While competing in Agility, this Berner cleared the bar jump with its 12-year-old Junior handler.

BMDCA Draft: The BMDCA has a well-established national draft program, celebrating our breed heritage of carting work. Titles can be earned in BMDCA Draft at different levels for both single dogs and brace teams of two dogs pulling together. Juniors are welcome to compete in Draft; however, the BMDCA recommends that Juniors be at least 12 years old to participate.



12-year-old Junior handler competing in Draft with her Berner.

4-H Activities and Resources: 4-H – America's largest youth development organization – offers a wide variety of programs that involves working with animals, including encouragement and training for kids and their dogs in different sports and activities. 4-H is a family-focused organization offering dog project involvement in Agility, Obedience, Conformation, dog science, and animal husbandry. With local chapters spread throughout the country, 4-H groups might be the perfect launching point for Juniors who wish to explore dog sports!

Resources ►

AKC Juniors Organization – <https://www.akc.org/sports/juniors/>
AKC Junior Recognition Program – <https://www.akc.org/sports/conformation/junior-showmanship/junior-recognition-program/>
AKC 4-H Outreach Initiative - <https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/news/akc-4-h-outreach-initiative-club-can/>
4-H Clubs of America Dog curriculum/program - <https://4-h.org/parents/curriculum/dog/>
4-H Clubs of America – National Organization (main page) www.4-H.org

Questions? ► Want more information and guidance? Contact the BMDCA Juniors Activity Chair, Debra Jones – lazybernese@msn.com

