

Please consider my comments in support of B&B K-9 and their non-profit Paws and Badges, to be able to continue operation in their current location. As a client and social worker, I cannot speak highly enough of the service provided by Mike, his family, and staff. Without their expertise, individuals will no longer have access to affordable, specialized services to help make our community safer via dog training, as well as provide service animals to those with PTSD, special needs, and disabilities. Specifically, I want to address the following:

1. Our training sessions have always been 1:1 in a structure about the size of two-car garage. At no time since we have become clients have I seen kennels, noticed building materials necessary for kennels on property, or heard that the intention is to develop large boarding facilities. Utilization of this property serves two purposes: it allows B&B K-9 to provide training that is affordable to those who need it, and allows Paws and Badges to provide service animals to those who could not afford them via traditional for-profit organizations.
2. The care and concern for our rescue dog and their training system allows us to decrease risk of injury to others by providing safe interactions through training a well behaved, controlled dog. They are experts at working with many breeds and situations. But it takes special knowledge to take on damaged, abused animals who need intervention that has extensive components of rehabilitation, not only basic obedience.
3. At no time have I felt unsafe with Mike's personal dogs. They are well trained, kept in a fenced area near their residence when off leash, and are always under he and his family's control. They have always been staunch supporters of leash laws, and emphasize their importance to clients, especially those living in residential areas, like the neighborhood in which they operate. We have also experienced that our safety, our dog's safety, and the safety of others and the surrounding area is a top priority. This is evidenced by extensive conversations the volunteer trainers have with clients before and during training exercises, several "fail-safe" methods to keep clients' dogs under control during particularly stressful scenarios, and multiple trainers present during most sessions I have been present for.
4. As a social worker and mother of a daughter who suffers from severe anxiety, I cannot emphasize enough how important it is to have experts who understand not only canine behavior, but also the special needs of their human clients. Improving the relationship between dogs and their special needs and disabled owners, whether pets or service animals, is vital to Knoxville remaining a safe community. Uncontrolled dogs, no matter how much they are loved, are not conducive to keeping our city safe for everyone. Special needs and disabled owners require extra assistance to feel confident managing their dogs, which B&B K-9 undoubtedly provides. I searched a long time before I found B&B K-9. In my research, I could not find another trainer and staff in this area that holds this specific, invaluable knowledge and experience.

Thank you for considering my comments. I encourage each member to look at all the issues and information that you now have at hand. You have the power to make a difference in lives of others, both human and animal, or choose the opposite and end those opportunities for those who depend on them for help.

Respectfully,

Cheryl Girtain-Lyons