



HSSV dog scores third obedience title



Proving that shelter dogs are anything but second best, Hana, a 4-year-old purebred Boxer adopted a few years ago by Marie Tiraschi, an executive assistant at the Humane Society of Silicon Valley (HSSV), has been honored with three American Kennel Club (AKC) obedience titles: a Rally Novice title in 2006, advanced titles in 2007, and a Companion Dog obedience title this past January.

At 5 months old, Hana was dropped off at the HSSV as a stray. “I looked into her eyes, and I thought, ‘Oh dear, she’s mine,’” says Tiraschi, who has been with the HSSV for 22 years. Tiraschi had trained two other Boxers to obedience victory before meeting Hana three and a half years ago. Since then, they have trained together once every week.

What makes this story remarkable is that Hana has been competing against dogs with a championship lineage and obedience degrees. “She was a little rough around the edges at first, but it just showed me that she has personality,” says Tiraschi. “We work as a team at the dog shows. If Hana makes a mistake, it’s our error, not hers.”

Hana has also recently completed her certification as a therapy dog. She visits the

elderly at Villa Sienna in Mountain View, where she provides not only love and attention, but comic relief as well. “She makes the residents laugh,” says Tiraschi. “She’ll lie on her back and kick her feet in the air. She gets goofy.” Hana also educates children on how to be safe around dogs with HSSV’s Bite Free educational programs. “She loves to give the little ones kisses,” adds Tiraschi. “I tell the kids they can keep the kiss or give it back by patting it on Hana’s head.” With support from the whole Tiraschi family, Hana has become well trained and loved by all who meet her. “She’s made us very happy. She’s surpassed all our expectations,” says Tiraschi.