

(From left) Andrew Fontan, 13, and Kevin Sanchez, 10, receive helpful tips on the correct way to feed a dog from trainer Paul Owens at the Hathaway Family Resource Center in Highland Park. Below, Rosendo Leon, 10, shares a light moment with a cuddly canine while learning how to properly hold a puppy.

Getting a paw up on things

Trainer helps children with puppies from Burbank and Glendale animal shelters

Ryan Carter
NEWS-PRESS

BURBANK — Be careful when you ask Paul Owens to spell his first name. He might spell it P-A-W-L.

Owens is no stranger to those who frequent the Burbank Animal Shelter and the Glendale Humane Society.

Many know Owens — an author and yoga teacher — for his Burbank dog-training seminars, based on the philosophy that to successfully train a dog you don't need to berate it.

Others know him for his Paws for Peace, an after-school program in which Owens adopts adult dogs from shelters to teach fourth- and fifth-grade children how to train them non-violently.

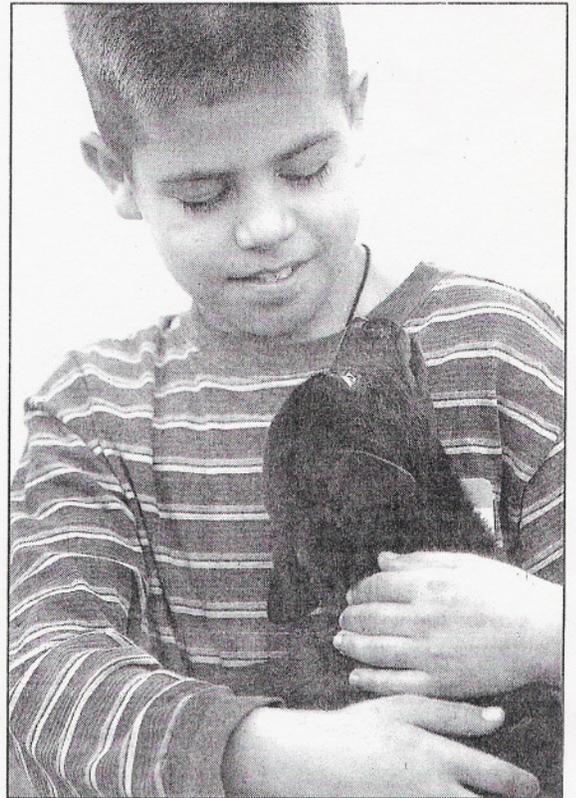
In the meantime, the children learn principles of peace. Afterward, Owens finds a home for the animals because he can't keep them all.

Owens has a new twist for his children's program: puppies.

"We're going to help socialize the puppies by bringing them into Paws for Peace and get them used to the sights, sounds and smells of the world in a positive way, which will give them a real paw up on a happy and healthy life," Owens said.

Burbank Animal Control Officer Claudia Madrid is supportive of Owens' efforts. Owens adopted his first batch of puppies last week from the Burbank facility for the children's program.

"All the studies have shown that there is a direct link between how we treat animals and how we treat each other," Owens said.



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Given the link, Owens thought the puppies and the children could be socialized together.

Most recently, Owens arranged for a batch of puppies to be brought from the Burbank Animal Shelter to the Hathaway Family Resource Center, a counseling center in Highland Park, where for the next 12 weeks he will teach the children how to train the pups.

"The first day, the kids just lightened up," said J.B. Sloan, the youth program

manager at the center. "He really provides a service that no clinician can provide because there's a unique relationship between a child and a dog."

Glendale Humane Society Executive Director Fred DeLange also supports Owens' quest.

"We have seen him work and I like his method," DeLange said. "It's a gentle and rewarding type of training. I'm pleased with it. He trains the animal and he trains the people as well."