

Mailey E. McLaughlin, M.Ed. has been the Atlanta Humane Society Behavior & Training Manager for 15 years, a Professional IACP member for 12, and a CDT since 2007. She is currently co-Vice President of the IACP Board of Directors. She is also *The Pooch Professor*, solving pet behavior problems in homes in the metro Atlanta, GA area, and she is a certified Pet Tech Pet First Aid Instructor. An Atlanta native, Mailey has been working with people and their pets for over 30 years, starting at the veterinary clinic down the street the day after she turned 16 and was old enough to work. She started there thinking she wanted to be a vet, and realized quickly that training was more up her alley. After training family dogs and friends' dogs, as well as doing training for some of her petsitting clients while she earned her BA in English, she got her Master's degree in Education while working in retail. Then she signed up on a whim to be a volunteer at the Atlanta Humane Society, the Southeast's largest shelter (and one of the oldest in the United States), and her dog training and education worlds merged—finally.

Within a week, she was hired as a Humane Educator and was taking her dog into schools to teach responsible pet ownership and safety around animals. She began teaching the AHS' Basic Training Classes a few months later, and started revamping the entire curriculum and making it her own. She has been teaching professionally for almost 15 years, and has built the Atlanta Humane Society's Training program (offering group classes, socialization, and private lessons) from the ground up. More than half of every class' student body is referrals from past clients or word-of-mouth advertising about the program. She teaches 5-6 classes a week (Basic and Intermediate), and offers private lessons, traveling between the AHS' two shelter campuses. She also manages the retail Shop operations in both campuses.

Mailey has years of experience working with shelter pets and their owners, and she developed shelter dog training classes/socialization for dogs waiting to be adopted. These classes, staffed by hand-picked volunteers, take the shelter dogs and work on more than commands. She says, "I believe commands for these dogs help them get adopted, but I have put my focus more on what I call connectivity and handling exercises in addition to socialization. Each class involves seeing how the groups play together, as that gives us 'intel' for adopters, as well as exercises that help these dogs handle restraint (which they will all encounter) and improve their sociability to humans. Potential adopters can be and are impressed by dogs who can perform commands, but I tell you: what's way more important to them is whether the dog connects emotionally with them. If they feel that, they are hooked. Basic commands can come later if

need be; I need to get these people to fall in love. A well-trained dog that doesn't connect well with a potential adopter isn't going to find a home."

She also has extensive experience in customer service, and this has been extremely helpful in her sheltering work. She specializes in toy breeds and shelter adoptees, as she understands their needs (and the emotional needs of their owners).

She says: "I believe training should be fun, fair, results-oriented, and geared toward pet owners who 'have a life' and do not have hours every day to devote to training. I am devoted to improving the relationship between pets and owners through calm, positive, balanced communication, not confrontational techniques. Since there is no "one right way" to train every dog, I continue to educate myself professionally and I have cultivated many approaches to problem-solving. I have used most tools out there in some way, and though I have my favorites, all of them have a place. I believe the dog is the best indicator of how well the training is going. Results matter, and clients need the tools to get results in timely ways while fostering relationship.

One of my favorite quotes is 'You fit the training to the dog, not the dog to the training.' Dogma has no place in dog training. Get the job done and leave your dog-human team happy in the process.

Why IACP? I joined IACP in 2003 just before the annual conference. I found the org. online after I became discouraged that all I was getting from APDT was positive-only. I came from a Koehler-type background, and was swayed to "go more positive" after joining APDT. While I enjoyed learning about clicker training and tools with which I was unfamiliar, as well as Operant and Classical Conditioning, I was unimpressed with the (lack of) results I was seeing in my classes, and I remember thinking, "there has to be a happy medium between lots of corrections and no corrections at all." I think I actually Googled "balanced dog training" and up popped the IACP. I couldn't believe there was an organization dedicated to exactly what I was seeking.

I joined right then and decided to attend Conference. I walked into that first conference with some trepidation. I knew no one, and wasn't sure what it would be like. Martin Deeley came up and welcomed me, and that gesture helped me realize that I was in the right place. It was a very positive experience for me, and I met some great people. I also had my mind blown by the presenters, and I returned to the shelter and implemented some changes to my classes right away.

I became a Professional member as soon as I was eligible, and became a CDT about 5 years ago. I didn't technically need the letters after my name, but I wanted to support the IACP's effort to credential trainers and so I took the exam. I'm proud of my CDT and I salute the work that has gone into making it what it is.

I took over editing the *Safehands Journal*, after begging for a volunteer job (I had been editing the Atlanta Humane Society's newsletter since 2000, and I knew I could do a good job), in 2010. It's challenging to drum up content each quarter, but I enjoy the process and I want it to be a top-notch publication, on par with the APDT newsletter (which has a lot of content, only a portion of which is truly worth reading as far as learning about dogs and training is concerned). I have to give props to my partner Evelyn, who graciously donates her time to do the layout and graphics work for *SHJ* after I edit.

Being named an Ambassador at the 2012 Conference was a huge honor for me, as I owe much of my success to the people I have met, and the speakers I've learned from, at IACP. I have seen the organization go through some serious changes, and it keeps on going! I've always been an IACP supporter, and I'm proud to be considered an Ambassador.

Being named "Member of the Year 2013" was a lovely shock! I had considered running for the BOD before, but it never came together. This award made me really want to step up and do more for the organization that has given me so much.

I will bring an excellent command of the English language, writing skills, public speaking skills, research in customer service, over a decade of successful pet dog training experience, and a love of IACP and what it stands for to the BOD if I am elected. The benefits I've received from this organization are too many to count. I am ready to give back."

In her "spare time," Mailey enjoys scootering, reading, biking, softball, recreational tree climbing, writing, camping, shooting, and hiking. She owns 4 dogs, all under 15 pounds, and they love to go camping with her and her longtime partner. "Dog trainers give me crap for owning Chihuahuas," she laughs. "And 10 years ago, I said I'd never own them. But now I can't imagine not having them. They're not 'dog trainer dogs,' but they are smart, trainable, and portable. They are all obedient, and I want them to be examples of toy dogs who are not purse accessories. I also like them because they are cheaper to keep and live longer than larger dogs.

“One day in the not-too-distant future, I hope to have a dog with which I can compete in Obedience. I’ve never had an appropriate dog for it, and I think it would be well worth it.”

You can read Mailey’s articles on her website, [The Pooch Professor](#), and more musings on her blog, [Carpe K9](#).