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Elizabeth Oliva, a 2000 Glenbrook North High School
graduate, awards her dog, Luigi, with a
treat at the Village Green in Northbrook on Oct. 16
after he successfully obeyed a command. DAYNA

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LIFE &
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LA



Local couple trains both dog, owner

DAYNA FIELDS, Editor

Elizabeth Oliva and Carlos Aguirre think the biggest thing that dogs and people have in common is that they are both happiest when they have a job to do.

The Northbrook couple began Wolf's Lair K9 in 2012, and since then, they have helped nearly 100 pet owners better understand and communicate with their dogs — which the couple says alleviates stress for both the dog and owner.

Aguirre's interest in dogs peaked during his service in the United States Army from 2003-2009. He served two tours in Iraq and also spent time in Japan and Norway. In 2006, he earned the Purple Heart for taking shrapnel to the shoulder while under enemy fire.

"The dogs we worked alongside [in the Army] would find bombs, find weapon caches, they would apprehend criminals or bad guys, if need be," Aguirre said. "So many different ways we utilized them, from the aspect of finding the things we need to find to just having a stronger camaraderie inside that small platoon because having a dog in the element puts a smile on people that you're not used to."

After the military, he attended Tom Rose Dog Training School in St. Louis and has worked at various training facilities around Chicagoland ever since.

It was at a training class in Chicago that Aguirre met Oliva and her pit-bull rescue, Luigi.

"I've been in rescue, so I'd been aware that Golden Retrievers and poodles don't need help finding homes as much as pit bulls," said Oliva, a 2000 graduate of Glen-



Elizabeth Oliva, 2000 graduate of Glenbrook North High School, plays with her dog, Luigi.

brook North High School, who volunteers with Chicagoland Bully Breed Rescue and Midwest Rescue of Illinois. "I'm so passionate about helping this breed that has been given such a horrible, horrible reputation."

Luigi was once used in fighting rings, and he was "in pretty bad shape" when Oliva adopted him from Orphans of the Storm in Riverwoods.

Today, however, Luigi has earned several titles with the American Kennel Club, recognized as a Canine Good Citizen and a Companion Dog, and he is certified as a service dog. Luigi has also been trained as a protection dog for his owner, Oliva.

"Luigi is fully protection trained to watch me because I was living alone, and just to have another set of eyes, ears and nose on my house, on my car," she said. "Being a single woman [at the time], I wanted to not only teach him all these positive

things in the community, to live alongside other humans, but also to take on a job."

"And it's his job to protect her," Aguirre said.

But the couple's dog training service is for any kind of dog for any situation, from basic puppy training to learning in-house manners for older dogs.

Wolf's Lair K9 does away with the stressful kennel environment and, instead, Oliva and Aguirre house dogs-in-training in one of two structures erected in their half-acre backyard that is complete with heating, air conditioning and tile floors.

"[The kennel] is where dogs can get sick or stressed out and they just don't do as well," Oliva said.

Most lessons take place during the day, while the owner is at work, and morning pick-ups and evening drop-offs are free for Northbrook residents. Day-time sessions are then coupled with private in-home lessons.



Northbrook residents Elizabeth Oliva (left) and her husband, Carlos Aguirre, founders of Wolf's Lair K-9, pose with their two dogs, Luigi and Beulah, at the Village Green. PHOTOS BY DAYNA FIELDS/22ND CENTURY MEDIA

GETTING FIDO TRAINED

What: Wolf's Lair K-9
Perks: Flexible daytime schedule, pickup/drop-off for Northbrook residents
More info: www.wolfslairk9.com or call (847) 691-7088

"We teach them what we have been doing during those day lessons so the owner can maintain it when the dog is with them," said Oliva, describing her teaching as more hands-on than others. "We always look to tailor and customize the training according to your dog, because your dog isn't going to learn the same as his dog or my dog."

As much focus is placed on training the owner as is the dog because owners need to recognize that what they say or do influences their dog's reactions, said Aguirre.



Carlos Aguirre, an Iraq War veteran, gives his dog, Beulah, a command to lie down.

"All the training you put into it, you can't blame the dog [if it doesn't work]. It's always the human's fault," he said.

"When you see a dog,

a working dog, who has a job and loves what he does just as much as the human who he's alongside, you see a whole different side that's unbelievable," Oliva said.