August 22, 2016

Dear Students,

Welcome! I am excited and looking forward to a year filled with learning, success, and fun!  Before I list supplies and acquaint you with some class procedures, I thought it would be fun to share some personal information about myself with you.

My education has taken different paths.  I graduated from Loretto Academy and attended both Texas Tech University and the University of Texas at El Paso.  I started out majoring in Animal Science with plans to become a veterinarian.  I quickly discovered that I was entirely too sensitive toward animals to take the downside of being a vet, so I changed my major and graduated with a degree in Special Education.  My graduate work has been in counseling.

I have also studied homeopathy and nutrition in people and animals.  Trying to maintain a healthy lifestyle, I run and workout on a daily basis while adhering to a diet that is gluten free, mostly dairy free, grain free most of the time, and about 75% raw. I juice daily and eat lots of vegetables, fruits, some chicken and some fish. I completely avoid any fast food (Yes…even Whataburger and Taco Bell!) and try to eat very little processed food.  My animals all eat a raw diet and are treated with homeopathy as well.  Most of my free time is spent running, working out at the gym (EVERY morning at 4:30…yawn…yawn), and working with my animals.  I have trained and shown all of my dogs in obedience and agility; some have tracked and herded sheep for fun. I have my current GSD trained to where she could be used as a service dog.

My family is a blended family consisting of my husband, four children, and three pets.  My husband is Vice-President of Sales for RFGen.  He travels often and plays golf in his spare time.  Kevin, the oldest, works for Snow Software and lives in Austin with his wife Meredith, their son Matthew (whose picture is on a box of Pampers),and daughter Ellie.  Wayne is a bachelor, soon to finally be married to his girlfriend of nine years, Jennifer who is a Marathon runner and a Yoga instructor. He graduated from UT Austin with a degree in Mechanical Engineering and is now a consultant for Accenture.  He has worked on consulting projects in China, Sweden, and all over the United States.  He loves to travel and has been to Central America, South America, and all over Europe.  He surfs, scuba dives, hikes, skis, snowboards, and competes in sprint triathlons.  He just finished competing in the Sonoma County Vineman 70.3 mile race and will actually be competing in the Kerrville Triathlon-Half Iron Course on September 24th.  Loving adventure, he ran with the bulls in Pamplona, Spain (AGGHHH!!!) a few years ago.  Emily is married and lives in Austin with her husband Dave who is a graphic designer.  They stay very busy with two active sons, Aidan and Marshall, and their Golden Retrievers, Hank and Willie.  Emily started a dog walking business, so let me know if you need to hire someone to walk your dog! She also works out daily and is thinking about getting certified as a personal trainer. Sandy, the youngest, graduated from Texas Tech University with a degree in Advertising.  After pouring the big bucks into college, she decided she didn't like the advertising field and chose to further her education with a culinary degree, followed by working as a chef in Portland, Oregon.  After getting married almost six years ago, she changed her mind once AGAIN! She completed a degree in accounting and has a very busy job working with an accounting firm in Portland.  She runs, bikes, hikes, and swims in her spare time, even though it's hard to believe she has any time to spare!!!!!!

In addition to my kids, I spend much of my time with my animals. I actually am working on an animal behavior certification and hope to start training service dogs next summer. After putting three animals to sleep within the last few years (Casey, a 13 year old kitty, Molly, a 14 year old German shepherd, and most recently, Micah, a 15 year old Belgian Tervuren), I now have Greta (9.5 year old German shepherd) and two kitties (Cooper, 13 year old a solid white, blue-eyed Maine Coon, and Annie, a 12 year old Calico who looks like a raccoon with her two black eyes).  Greta has a very strong scent and prey drive, so I do a lot of nose work with her. She would be great at search and rescue or narcotics detection.  I take her out three miles every morning, and do training exercises, swim, or walk (when it’s cool) in the afternoons.  Cooper, and Annie continually investigate and get into anything and everything.  Cooper LOVES his Greta, and Annie looks for ways to constantly tease Miss Greta.  It is not unlike Annie to come out from under the bed chasing Greta!   She also LOVES to lie in all of Greta’s spots just to irritate her!

This will be my 16th year teaching at West Ridge, but I have been in the teaching profession for thirty-something years (long time…lost count!).  I taught for several years in the El Paso ISD where I also coached competitive 7th and 8th grade cheerleading.  When we moved to Austin, I taught 7th and 8th grade English at Hill Country Middle School.  We then relocated to The Woodlands for two years where I taught 8th grade English at McCullough Junior High School and Branch Crossing Junior High School.  Upon moving back to Austin sixteen years ago, I took a sixth-grade teaching position (Yikes! What an experience!!!) at West Ridge, moving up to seventh grade the following year.  This will be my twelfth year teaching part-time, leaving after 6th period every day.   I am looking forward to getting to know each of you.

Sincerely yours,