

Sunday Column – Adventure Dogs
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PAWS Humane has begun a new partnership with Outside World Columbus to help get people and their dogs outside having fun together. Our first event was a group kayak outing on Lake Oliver with our dogs. For \$25 per person we each got a kayak, paddles and life vest.

Though not all dogs were sold on the idea at first most of them got their sea legs pretty quickly and enjoyed the relaxing paddle around Lake Oliver. Calm water kayaking is one of my favorite things to do though I don't often make the effort to get out there. It helped that the whole event was organized by Henry Jackson of Outside World. He made it easy and I can't wait to do it again.

On most Saturdays Dave and I take our dogs for an outing of some kind. I am a dog park connoisseur, or maybe even a dog park snob. We are fortunate to live within a few miles of Keisel Park in Auburn. Thanks to Auburn Parks and Recreation this is a rare gem of the South with miles of off-leash trails and a creek.

If you prefer, the park offers two large gated areas for your dogs to run loose and play with other dogs. One gated area is designated for small, elderly or shy dogs who may be overwhelmed by the high energy of the larger dogs. If you haven't been there you are really missing something.

This past Labor Day, Big Bear Canine Activity Center in Pine Mountain, Georgia offered \$5 admission for each dog. Tinker, my Olympic dock diver in training, took her turn in the salt water pool and then joined Sam and George in the play yard where we tossed the Frisbee and watched the dogs chase each other until they dropped from sheer exhaustion.

Although Big Bear is about a 50 minute drive from Opelika it is well worth the effort. Besides the pool and large play yard they offer an agility course. If you've ever wondered how your dog would respond to agility equipment this is a good place to check it out. Big Bear offers classes on everything from obedience to agility to barn hunt and duck herding.

The recent issue of Best Friends magazine features an article promoting "adventure dogs". Shelters all over the U.S. have no shortage of large high-energy dogs available for adoption. Because they thrive on relationships and activity they don't do well in sedentary households and are often returned when adopted by a couch potato.

This is a tragedy because these are wonderful dogs who would make great companions for active individuals and families. During my 20s and early 30s my Irish setter mix, Casey, was my constant companion. She went everywhere with me: canoeing, cross-country skiing, hiking and backpacking.

As we both got older our walks got shorter but we still walked every day, morning and evening. It was a way to get outside and meet other people and their dogs. My relationship with Cayce enriched my life immensely. I really can't imagine life without a dog.

Bobbi Yeo lives in Opelika, AL. She is the CEO of PAWS Humane in Columbus, GA, an animal shelter and veterinary clinic offering low-cost spay/neuter and other services to the public. Email her at byeo@pawshumane.org with your comments and story ideas.