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LOCAL DOG BREEDER AND TRAINER JUDGES DOG SHOW IN CHINA

Local Harpers Ferry resident Debby Kay, a long-time dog show judge and trainer, was recently invited to judge a conformation dog show in Shenzhen, China. Put on by the Hong Kong & China Dog Lovers Association, the Fall Open Dog Show was widely attended by exhibitors from across the southern region of China. The weekend included two shows, one judged by Ms. Kay and the other by Canadian William Gunn, also a long-time conformation and performance judge.

Ms. Kay has been breeding and training purebred dogs since 1969 under the internationally renowned Chilbrook prefix. “I was so excited to get the invitation and opportunity to visit Mainland China,” said Kay. “I had heard they are very serious breeders and exhibitors and have some wonderful dogs.” She added that getting the visa and the 22-hour flight were the only difficult parts of the trip.

The show, held outside the city in a rural mountain area reminiscent of Harpers Ferry, was filled with people and dogs together enjoying the event and shopping the vendors. Families walking their pets through the crowd, school groups, and small dogs elaborately dressed to ward off the chilly mountain air were evidence that people there are very proud of their dogs and love them immensely.

The show went without a hitch. Chief Ring Steward Danny Hung, a grooming instructor and long-time dog show attendee, kept the event running smoothly and was also Debby’s voice in a special obedience competition she judged. “All the Best of Breed awards were very nice plaques, more elaborate than I have seen in any other country,” said Kay, noting that the trophies would rival those of the Emmy Awards. Group winners received a lovely crystal globe on a long stem and a large walnut base, and the final Best in Show award was a huge polished gold cup. Showing a keen and consistent eye in the judging, both Debby and William Gunn, her counterpart in the other dog show of the weekend, chose the same dog as Best in Show—a massive Dogue de Bordeaux. This rare breed was popularized in the United States in the movie “Turner and Hooch.”



On learning that Ms. Kay, who has trained police and sniffer dogs around the world, was coming to China for the show, the entire Canine Department of the regional national police made plans to attend and perform a special obedience competition after the main conformation show. “They were outstanding and could easily compete in any country against the best of dogs,” said Kay. “I was very impressed with their skill and the devotion of the dogs to their handlers.” She chose as the winner of the event a young man with a Belgian Malinois whose flawless performance earned a perfect score of 200 and a special trophy marking the occasion.

Shopping and sightseeing rounded out this memorable trip for Ms. Kay. “I hope I can return one day in the future and judge again,” she said. “The people were so friendly, warm and hospitable, it made the long flight well worth it.”

Debby Kay is an acclaimed writer, author, dog trainer, and all breed conformation and hunt test judge. She established Chilbrook Labradors, LLC in 1969 with the goal of creating a select bloodline of versatile performance dogs. Since then, dogs from Chilbrook lines have succeeded as detector dogs, guides for the blind, service dogs for the physically challenged, seizure alert dogs, search and rescue dogs, specialty and group winning show champions, grand master champions in the field, High in Trial obedience competitors, and rally, tracking and agility dogs. She is a founding officer of the Labrador Retriever Club of the Potomac, and a member of the Labrador Retriever Club Inc. and the Blue Ridge Dog Training Club. She is a professional member of the Dog Writers Association of America and the International Association of Canine Professionals. www.chilbrook.com and www.debbykay.com

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