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LOCAL DOG TRAINER TRAINS AREA'S FIRST BEDBUG DETECTION DOG

When Ray Babbitt, a professional exterminator, was looking for help on the job locating tiny bedbugs and their egg masses, he heard that dogs specially trained for the job are much more accurate than people. To learn about this specialized field of dog training, Babbitt attended a seminar in Roanoke, Va, hosted by the Field of Dreams training center, which featured Debby Kay's Super Sniffer™ workshop. Kay, a local Jefferson County, WV resident, is an international authority on detector dogs and a pioneer in the field of biological detectors.

From the workshop, Ray got the information he needed to begin his search for a dog. He decided on a beagle, whose size and disposition make the breed perfect for the exterminator business. After weeks of searching, he located a litter of 7-week-old purebred Beagle pups in Virginia and picked out a female. He named her Molly. "Right from the start, it was obvious Molly lived through her nose," said Kay, talking about the first time she met the eager puppy, "I knew she would be a good one."

Over the next 5 months, Molly, Ray and Debby met to make sure her education included everything she needed to be successful. She was trained to find live adult and juvenile bedbugs, eggs and even dead bugs, which can also give clues to exterminators when treating areas. Molly spent the last 2 months of her training before her certification test at Kay's training facility in Harpers Ferry, WV, where Debby ran her through drills to put the polish and expertise on her performance. On November 11, 2011 at 11 am, Molly had her final exam for certification. The exam was a double blind test proctored by a former Virginia State K9 Trooper so as not to include any bias in the testing. Molly passed with flying colors, finding all the hidden samples in record time. "In the case of looking for something so small that blends into the environment so well, a dog is one of the best tools you can have," said Kay. "Like Molly proved with her final testing, dogs are very accurate."

The National Pest Management Association has seen a 71% rise in bedbugs since 2001. Bedbugs can hide in the smallest of cracks in beds, walls, baseboards, electrical outlets, furniture, and even within box springs and electronic devices, such as a TV and VCR. They're difficult to eradicate, especially if you can't find them, but with more good dogs like Molly on the job they won't be able to hide for long.



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. Kay 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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