



Things You Can Learn From a Dog

**Never pass up the opportunity to go for a joyride;
Allow the experience of fresh air and wind in
your face to be ecstasy;
When a loved one comes home, always run
and greet them;
Eat with gusto and enthusiasm;
When you're happy, dance around and wag
your entire body;
On hot days, drink lots of water and lie under
shady trees;
When someone scolds you, forgive quickly;
Be loyal.**

—Author Unknown



©CHRISTOPHER MARCHETTI

Recently, you may have read news stories about a Jacksonville, Florida, judge who seeks to help man—and woman—with the assistance of man's best friend.

Judge Emmet Ferguson thinks legal matters would go far more smoothly if there was a dog in every courthouse across the country.

"Dogs put smiles on people's faces," he told the *ABA Journal*. "And there usually aren't a lot of smiles in a courthouse."

Many would probably support any idea that reduces the tension in a system where parties are at odds. As the story says, animals can help to calm witnesses and crime victims. And when the nervous person is a child, the animals can be even more effective.

Before you dismiss the notion as unconventional or less than professional, you should know that 13 states have—or are trying to get—courthouse dog programs. One example is in Washington State, where prosecutor Ellen O'Neill-Stephens has sought to introduce dogs in criminal and civil contexts.


"A dog can be a bridge between the defendants and prosecutors," the founder of Courthouse Dogs told the *ABA Journal*.

Closer to home, I can tell you that having a dog curled up at your feet in the law office can have great benefits to your practice. We always had a dog in our both of our offices in downtown Prescott. On several occasions, as I officed above Arizona's oldest funeral home, the presence of a gentle dog was welcomed by families coming to a family visitation. My current dog "Hannah," aka Baby Girl, was rescued and would likely have been destroyed. She is probably half Golden Retriever and half Australian Shepherd. Many senior lawyers,

such as Yuma Attorney Jeff Richards and his canine companion "Counselor," have greeted clients for years.

The Animal Law Section of the State Bar of Arizona is comprised of lawyers and non-lawyer members who might prosecute or defend animal abuse cases. Members also may represent a business that is involved in ranching. All of the section members love animals and believe in their ethical treatment. This section is yet another opportunity where the State Bar of Arizona can help you develop your law practice or make it more enjoyable.

How a person treats an animal says a lot about that person. Even if you cannot bring a pet to your office, you may find that stress disappears if you can manage to emulate the giving and patient spirit of the dog. And remember the old truism about that loyal companion:

"If you are able to start the day without caffeine and you are able to relax without liquor, if you can understand when loved ones are too busy to give you time and if you can take criticism and blame without resentment—then you are probably the family dog." 



Ray Hanna