



COMMUNITY

German shepherd breeder aims for top dog

Barclay follows strict guidelines for breeding

By Robin Downton-Poirier
SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

Many people dream of the day they bring their new puppy home, envision him romping around the yard with the kids, playing fetch and growing old as a loyal companion.

The reality often is that they become disappointed about health or temperament issues. As a result, many of these dogs end up being passed to a new home or shelter.

Donna Barclay, owner of Emeritus German shepherds in Campbellville, believes a sound breeding program can help to resolve many of these issues.

Loving German shepherds for their exceptional characteristics, Barclay follows strict guidelines set by the Verein für Deutsche Schäferhund (SV), the principal German shepherd authorities in Germany.

"We subscribe to the principles of Max von Stephanitz, breed founder and force behind the establishment (1899) of the SV, the largest single breed club in the world. If the dogs do not have the excellence I expect, I will not breed them," said Barclay.

"I have always loved the German shepherd dog because they are incredibly intelligent, very loyal and such a versatile breed. When I moved to the country, it was a great opportunity to establish Emeritus German shepherds and a small, selective breeding program. I consider genetic health, type, temperament and utility of equal importance in a breeding program and believe that no aspect of the breed standard should be ignored."

The Animal Pedigree Act requires that dogs born in Canada and sold as purebreds be registered with the Canadian Kennel Club (CKC) and permanently and uniquely identified by tattoo and/or microchip before leaving a breeder's premises.

Adherence to these requirements ensures that a breeder can sell a puppy as a purebred but it's not, alone, evidence of a sound breed-

ing program, she added.

Barclay said the CKC website provides guidelines and tips for selecting a quality breeder.

The SV, the German shepherd dog club located in Augsburg, Germany, provides very specific criteria in its breed standard.

These include the dog's general appearance, character, gait, and coat colouring and texture as well as specific details regarding the shape and size of their head, eyes, ears, tail, teeth, neck, nose, body, chest, legs, paws and skin. It also includes proof of workability, mental and physical soundness and ability to work under distractions such as gunfire.

If a dog displays gun shyness, it's viewed as a temperament failure and the dog may not be bred, she added.

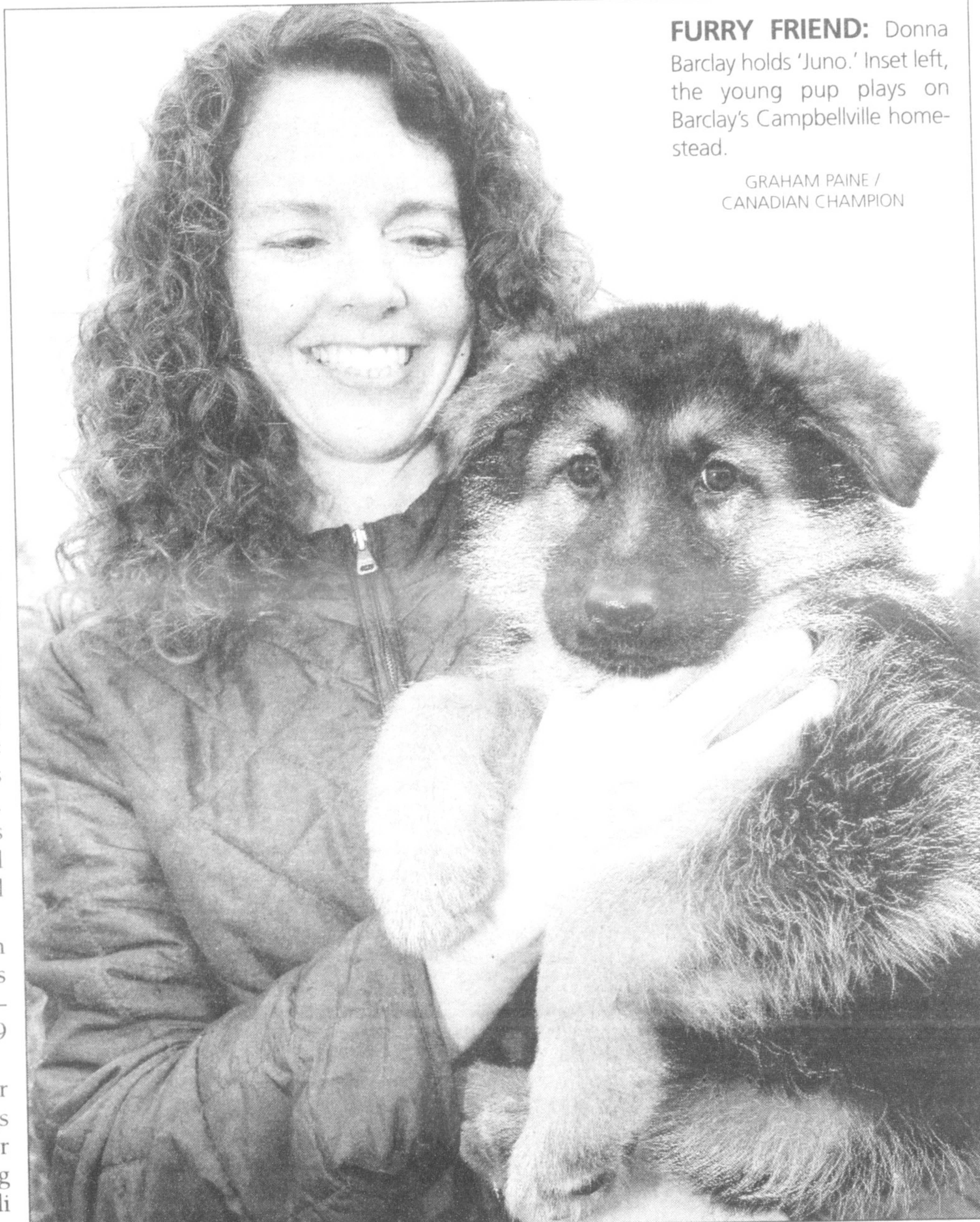
Barclay admitted that the guidelines are stringent but she loves the challenge and rewards of breeding the highest quality companions for herself and her clients.

These guidelines help to ensure that the dogs are less likely to have health or behavioural problems for their new owners, and they will fully enrich their lives, she said.

Barclay also trains her dogs in Schutzhund — a breed test that enhances tracking, obedience and protection skills — at the Niagara Hundesport/Police K-9 Training Club.

"It is very demanding for both the trainer and the dog, but it really makes the dogs very useful and happier companions for their owners," said Barclay. "The training helps expose the dogs to different stimuli and situations as well as new environments. It also helps to socialize them and we can see how they'll react (to different conditions)."

Barclay said that the German shepherds thrive on the Schutzhund training because they're a working breed and are eager to please their masters. By breeding Schutzhund-trained dogs, it greatly increases the likelihood that the puppies will be easily trained as well and will often demonstrate the same characteristics and skills as the parents, she added.



FURRY FRIEND: Donna Barclay holds 'Juno.' Inset left, the young pup plays on Barclay's Campbellville home-
stead.

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Barclay said that she has only one to two litters per year and always has a waiting list for the puppies prior to birth. She's unrelenting about meeting each potential puppy owner in person and learning about them, their experience with dogs, and their goals as well as the environment a puppy would be going to, in order to find a 'perfect match' between puppy and owner, even if it means waiting until a new litter arrives.

Barclay said she's very selective about the

homes her puppies go to and, although she loves the German shepherd, the breed isn't right for everyone.

"I will do my best to make sure that they are a good fit with the puppy or I won't sell one at all. I want what is best for the puppies and the client because that bond is always unique and special."

For more information on Emeritus German shepherds, visit Barclay's website at www.vonemeritus.com.

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