

# BARK



Irmo-Chapin Life  
Family Doggos!



# K in THE PARK

by Kim Becknell Williams

Barks, Tails and Paws-Fun for Fido! It's finally SPRING and time to let our four-legged friends explore and play! Whether your pooch is a new addition to the family, a former rescue or shelter pet, or has been in the family for years, he will enjoy the sights, smells and sounds of the great outdoors. Don't let limited green space keep your dog from enjoying fresh air, interacting with other dogs, trotting leisurely down shady paths and running wide open at full speed!

One great way to spend quality time with your best friend outdoors is to visit a local dog park.

These venues are specifically designed for owners and their best friends to safely share time together away from home. A dog park immediately establishes a commonality among those present, encourages outdoor recreation, provides a central meeting place, and creates healthy bonds. Dogs can run leash-free in many contained areas while playing with other four-legged friends. This type of outing provides a secure environment for owners to introduce their pet to a new dynamic, connect with other pet lovers and, in most instances, add some exercise into their day at the same time. Even people without dogs can enjoy the pleasant outdoor environment and unwind while watching the dogs romp and playfully galavant.

Karen Triplett often takes her granddog, Raya, to a dog park. Raya is a large breed

Leonberger. "She loves it," Triplett said. "She swims in a big pond the whole time." She said some of the advantages to using a dog park include a fenced area, a shady, wooded spot and a faucet for cleaning after playing. Having designated areas based on size is also helpful, especially for smaller breeds. Triplett mentioned a few minor negatives such as a waiting list and more expensive fees at some parks. While she enjoys taking her granddog, she doesn't take her own dog Luna, because "she isn't a huge fan of other dogs," she said. "Dog parks aren't for every dog. I strongly feel that dogs that aren't fans of other dogs need to be introduced to other pups in less stressful situations, like parallel walks, etc."

Dog parks are not best place to teach a dog how to behave around other dogs. Getting an early start on socializing your pup is a huge benefit; generally, you can start between 3 and 12 weeks of age. Playdates on a small scale are wonderful for introducing dogs to others in a safe space; interacting with a neighbor or friend's dog is a good initial test. If your dog is usually shy, reactive, or hasn't been around other dogs you should consider a less distracting environment like doggy daycare or a training class before checking out the dog parks.

### Be Mindful and Respectful

Responsible pet owners take the time to browse individual park websites before EACH visit to make their time as pleasur-

able as possible with no unforeseen problems. A few fundamental and obvious requirements across the board are that the owner must remain on-site with his dog, monitor behavior, and property discard waste. You may also encounter requests for proof of vaccination, documentation regarding spaying, neutering or sterilization, fees for pre-registration and other records for eligibility.

Some parks have age and breed restrictions as well as limitations for young children and toys or treats that may be prohibited. While some rules may seem unusual or annoying, they are designed to reduce the likelihood of any unpleasant confrontation, serious injury, unnecessary aggression or intimidating situations. As a rule of thumb, always refer to each individual park's website or call the administrative office for the most current operating hours, updates, fees, rules and regulations before your visit.

### Start Slow and Have Patience

Keep Fido's first visit to the park short—it can be overwhelming, confusing and scary. Take a few minutes to walk him casually around the perimeter of the park so that he will become acquainted with the area and perhaps sniff a few new friends along the fence line. Be vigilant. During this period, scope out any pets that appear to have a friendly, calm demeanor. If possible, explain to their owner that you are trying



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# LOCAL BARK PARKS

## The Town of Lexington Paw Park

999 Hendrix St., Lexington

Hours: Daily 7:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m. | 803-359-1027 | Lexsc.com

This is the first feature dedicated to dogs in the Town and covers 3 acres. There is a 3 dog per household maximum, with different rates according to residential location.

## Barking Lot Dog Park

5605 Bush River Rd., Columbia (located in Saluda Shoals Park)

Hours: Daily 7:00 a.m.-8:30 p.m. | 803-772-1228 | Icrc.net

*\*Note: closed Tuesdays from 9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m. for regular maintenance*

Dogs can run off-leash throughout a two-acre fenced area, with pools for cooling off in hot weather, a gazebo for owners to find shade and an agility course for dogs with extra energy. An annual fee of \$40 is required for one to two dogs. Parking is \$5; an annual parking pass is available for \$55 annually.

## Bark West

1940 Augusta Rd., West Columbia

Hours: Daily Sunrise to Sunset | 803-939-8627 | Westcolumbiasc.gov

This is a brand new park! Pre-registration and membership are required, forms can be found online. Yearly fees are \$25 for one or two dogs and \$10 for a third dog.

A ratio of three dogs per human is the maximum allowed. Specific areas are designed for different size dogs.

## Columbia Doggie Park

110 Humane Lane, Columbia

Hours: Daily 24 hour access

803-608-0577 | Parksandrec.columbiasc.gov

This park is located beside the Columbia City Animal Shelter. A required annual membership fee is \$36 and includes a passcode for 24 hour unlimited access.

Water is available on site.

## NOMA Bark Park

1250 Parkside Dr., Columbia (Earlewood Park)

Hours: Daily 6:00 a.m.-11:00 p.m. | 803-994-9663 | Nomabarkpark.org

Located in downtown Columbia, NOMA Bark Park has nearly 2 acres just off Main Street. Annual membership is \$25 per dog; foster memberships are also available. Separate play areas are offered based on dog size, as well as water fountains for convenience. The park offers fun activities like photos with Santa, and a clean-up day for members to pitch in and lend a hand.

## Town of Irmo Dog Park

113 Friarsgate Blvd., Irmo

(Rawls Creek Park)

Hours: TBD

803-781-7050

TownofIrmosc.com

This park is still in the planning stages and will offer a fenced area with key fob admission, designated areas for small and large dogs, water stations and shaded areas for warm weather protection.

to socialize your dog and ask if they could spend some time together. He may be willing to have one-on-one time with your dog before introducing him to a large number of friends on the first day.

Be prepared to supervise and interact with your dog at all times while at the park—this is the place to be focused on your dog, not on your cell phone. Be sure your dog has a good recall response to come to you immediately when called, not just at home. Keep his leash in hand at all times and be ready to intercede if necessary. Watch for signs of intimidation or aggression to avoid conflict.



## “Blue” the Lexington Traffic Mascot

If you frequent the Lexington area you have probably experienced slow traffic at one time or another. You may have caught a glimpse of a very large dog hanging his head out of a truck window wearing goggles while you were waiting at a traffic light. “Blue” is a four-year old, full-blooded blue Great Dane and the ninth Great Dane that Emily and Sean Bebbington have owned.

Blue has become sort of a local celebrity as people have come to recognize him around town and at various parks, pet stores, businesses and venues; sightings are regularly posted on social media. Weighing in at 175 pounds, he obviously gets noticed just for his size but is he is loaded with personality and charisma. “He loves the attention,” Sean remarks, “Many people say they have never seen a dog like that.” He points out that although Blue is very sociable when out on the town, he’s protective at home, barking at strangers such as delivery people. “He’s such a big presence in our home, he even has his own couch.” ■

