

Local canines 'tweet,' er, bark on twitter



Following them

For those who use Twitter, you can "follow" the three dogs featured in this story at:

Ayla: @AylaLab

Midgie: @Midgieboy

Hoyt: @HoytGriffin

■ Popular site goes to the dogs.

By **Jamie Smith**

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BENTON COUNTY — One would think that having thumbs — and command of a human language — would be necessary to use the social-networking Web site Twitter.

Three Benton County dogs have proven that theory wrong — all they need is a little help from their human owners to share their daily lives with the world of Twitter.

Ayla BlackLab Martin-Rademacher is a 1-year old black Labrador retriever who is helped by her "now mommy," Barb Rademacher. (The Lab had a former owner who had

to give her up, and Rademacher adopted her).

Hoyt Griffin Kincy is a 5-month-old Boston terrier who has a big human family: Jason and Tracy Kincy are the dog's daddy and mommy, and their human children are Jenna and Claire.

Midgie Bopper "Pit Bull Jaws" Smith is a 3-year-old dachshund who is believed to have a bit of Manchester terrier in the mix. Midgie's humans are Tom and Carrie Smith.

Midgie and Ayla live in Rogers, and Hoyt lives in Bentonville.

Seeing as how a class in "woof" is not a part of the average journalism degree program, The Daily Record enlisted the help of the dogs' humans to translate answers to interview questions via e-mail.

So what is there for a dog to talk

about on Twitter? Apparently, a lot. All three dogs have nearly daily tweets (Twitter's term for a posted update) that share what's going on in their households, neighborhoods and their lives.

"I just like to tweet about what I'm thinking about," Midgie said.

Recently, Midgie shared his technique for adapting to his relatively short stature.

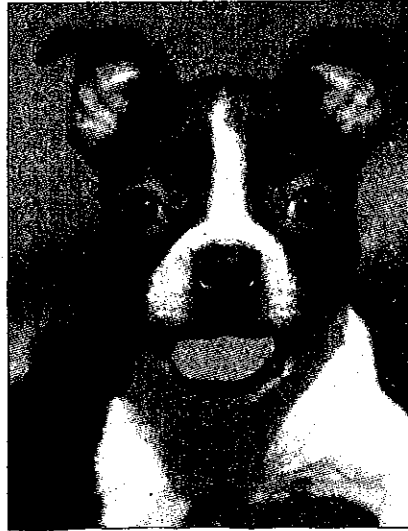
"If I take enuf running jumps on the ottomon, it scoots over 2 the tall table by the window so I can jump 2 it & look out the window. Sweet!" he tweeted.

For readers who aren't educated about Twitter, tweets can only be 140 characters long, so many times the humans doing typing — wheth-

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Ayla



Hoyt



Midgie

TWEET

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Owners are having fun

er for themselves or for a pet — have to be creative with spelling to fit in everything.

Hoyt said he likes to share his various experiences — many of which are new for the young pup.

"I like to share how I'm feeling, or any exciting experiences like going to the farmers market or like (last Friday) morning when I ate a cricket," he told The Daily Record.

For Ayla, being involved on Twitter means an active social life.

"I love to go to pawpawties on Twitter. Pawpawties are paw-parties for anipals. Anipals are animals that talk and are pals to humans," Ayla said. "Humans

call our parties 'virtual parties,' but us anipals just call 'em pawpawties. We dress up in funny costumes and play and eat and dance. We even got our own DJ. Our last pawpawty was a swim party; we all wore our swimsuits. This month's pawpawty was a Woodstock party, and we all dressed up as hippies.

"The human friends of the anipals donate money to animal charities while their anipals are at the pawpawty," Ayla further explained. "That's cuz only humans can have credit cards."

All three dogs say they enjoy reading other tweets — they all follow area dogs and can learn about new tricks from their friends. Sometimes Ayla even reads about political events and gets involved by adding supportive messages to her avatar, she said. An avatar is an icon or image, often a

photograph or a drawing, that depicts the person — or in this case, animal — posting messages.

When Ayla, Midgie and Hoyt aren't on Twitter, they lead otherwise pretty normal dog lives.

"I gots 2 fav things: fetch-ball, and play wif friends at Murphy Memorial Dog Park in Rogers," Ayla wrote through her human. "I like to play in my little pool when it real hot, too."

Chewing and learning new behaviors are the current favorite pastimes for Hoyt.

"My favorite past-time is chewing on sticks and leaves. I'm not sure why I'm obsessed with sticks, but I can chew sticks like a pro," he wrote. "Love to play fetch with Jenna and Claire and enjoy my morning walk. I've also worked hard on learning. I can sit, shake hands and sometimes will even lie

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down on command — when I feel like it.”

Midgie's list of activities is exhausting — even for a human. According to Midgie, those activities include working security at his mother's business headquarters, pretzel time with his dad, emptying the stuffing out of his niece dog's toys (the Smith's daughter's dog), marking his territory around the house and visiting with his parents during various community events such as First Fridays on the Bentonville Square or the recent Frisco Festival in Rogers.

One might wonder why a human would spend time helping their dogs communicate with the world online. So, The Daily Record asked the dogs what their humans got out of the deal.

Midgie said his dad initially set up the Twitter account (Midgie also has one on LinkedIn; Hoyt and

Ayla are both on Facebook), but his mom is the one who helps Midgie now.

“My mom says she uses social media for business use most of the time and she likes the funny stuff my dad and I talk about. Dad set up my LinkedIn and Twitter pages several months ago but he was too busy sitting with me on his lap on the couch to help me update my statuses,” Midgie said. “That's when mom decided she'd help me update my status. Actually, she started it as an experiment to see if it would improve her Twitter ranking to retweet her posts on my page. I started to feel used, but I've had lots of fun meeting other dogs on the Internet.”

To Ayla, having her mommy type for her on Twitter is a way for Ayla to help her mommy relax from the stress of the day.

“My mommy likes typing for me on Twitter when I vis-

it my friends cuz it help her forget all the serious stuff in life. Me and my anipal friends make her laugh: ha-ha-ha,” Ayla said. “Anipals, not just dogs and cats; we also gots bunnies, birds and hamsters. Us anipals have lots of fun together. We also have fun memorial services when one of us goes 'over the rainbow bridge'” (in human terms, dies).

Hoyt thinks his humans get a better understanding of his world from helping him on Twitter.

“I think it helps my humans think about how I feel and maybe have an idea of what the world is like from my view,” he wrote. “Also it has been great to find other doggies (Bostons!) and dog care information.”

Hoyt's own opinion about Twitter might also be true for the human helpers: “Social media is supposed to be fun, and I'm having a good time with it.”

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