

# What's good for the pooch is good for master



DEBRA BRASH, TIMES COLONIST

Geoff Cooke and Jan Blanchard walk their dogs at the Dallas Road waterfront yesterday. People with dogs get twice as many walks in as non-dog-walkers, University of Victoria researcher Ryan Rhodes says.

## Canine trainer could keep you healthy

### Researcher looks into dog-walking as way to overcome barriers to exercise

**SANDRA McCULLOCH**  
Times Colonist

Out of shape? You might have a perfect fitness coach under your own roof.

A University of Victoria researcher is looking into the health benefits of dog-walking, something many dog owners may not realize offers beneficial exercise.

Ray Vickson, 65, walks his dog Simon for 90 minutes, five times a week. "I go from Menzies Street to Clover Point, sometimes to the other end of Ross Bay and sometimes up to

Gonzales Beach and back," said Vickers yesterday afternoon along the Dallas Road waterfront.

He doubts he'd be out walking if he didn't have the four-legged motivation provided by his two-year-old miniature schnauzer-poodle cross.

"Sometimes when I feel I'm almost getting the flu and I really don't want to get out of bed, the dog looks at me with these big blue eyes and I say, 'All right, got to walk the dog.'"

"After 15 minutes, I feel great. I call it 'cure by dog.' It really does help."

UVic researcher Ryan Rhodes is looking for 100 people to participate in a study on dog-walking as exercise. His previous work determined that people with dogs get twice as many walks in as non-dog-walkers.

"What we found was that only about half of dog owners were actively walking their dogs," said Rhodes. "So there's still room in there to try to get people who own dogs to walk more."

His research will seek out the best methods for motivating people to walk their dogs. Participants will be divided into groups, with each group getting a different set of motivators.

Anyone visiting the Dallas

Road area can see plenty of folks who appreciate the benefits of dog-walking.

Jan Blanchard and Geoff Cook have five of their own dogs and foster others who are looking for homes. They walk their dogs every day.

"I'm fitter than I've ever been because I'm walking so many dogs all the time," said Blanchard. "Emotionally, it's fantastic."

Cook said dog-walking is also a great way to connect with other people. "Everybody's friendly in the dog world."

Information on the UVic study is available from Holly Murray at (250) 472-5488 or e-mail [hmurray@uvic.ca](mailto:hmurray@uvic.ca). [smcculloch@tc.canwest.com](mailto:smcculloch@tc.canwest.com)