

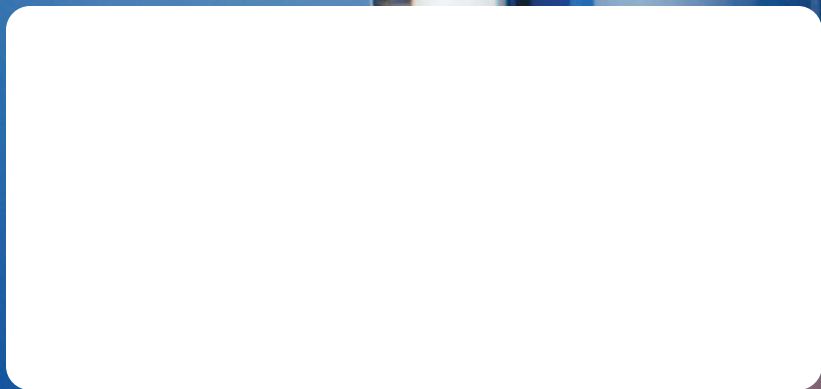
# prince william living

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## Influential Women Awards



# Megan Judge

## Top Dog in a Male-Dominated Field

By Amanda Causey

Since purchasing a dilapidated property in Nokesville 10 years ago to house both her business and residence, Megan Judge has literally built her operation from the ground up. She has risen to the top along the way to be recognized internationally in the male-dominated field of dog breeding and training.

Judge owns and operates Haus Juris German Shepherds, a full-service dog kennel and training facility where top-quality German Shepherds are bred and sold. She owned and trained Liedo vom Kuckucksland, renowned in the dog-training world as the youngest “Sieger,” or top-ranked German Shepherd, in the history of the German Shepherd Dog Club of America Working Dog Association. He was 6 years old when named 2009 USA Sieger.

The prized dog, which Judge imported from Germany, won numerous other awards and championships. Judge includes a memoriam on her company’s website for the Sieger, who died in 2012. Under Judge’s care and training, Liedo’s offspring, some also award-winning, have contributed to society as patrol dogs, protectors, therapy work dogs and loyal family members.

On any given day, Haus Juris is full of activity: Breeding, grooming, boarding, training and selling pet care products. Judge and her trainers offer group and private lessons for levels from puppy through intermediate, as well as therapy dog training. While she specializes in breeding top German Shepherds, all dog breeds are welcome in training classes. Judge’s business has grown and her training staff with it, from one trainer plus her when she started to now four.



Photo courtesy Amanda Causey, Beau Monde Photos

*Megan Judge breeds top-quality German Shepherds at her Nokesville kennel, Haus Juris German Shepherds.*

Judge, who also served in the U.S. Army and is an ovarian cancer survivor, has been training dogs for 25 years. *Prince William Living* sat down with her at her business to learn her challenges in the dog-breeding world and what she did to lead in her field.

**PWL: How did you get your start working with dogs?**

**Judge:** It started out as a hobby, and my parents told me to get an education before I could continue. ... While I was in college I did not know what I wanted to do at first. I have my degree in

sociology and criminal justice because I wanted to work with the FBI. I enjoyed working with dogs so I decided to go forward with that. I started my first business in McLean, Pet Guardians, and I would do grooming, training and pet sitting and I would actually go to my clients' homes.

**PWL: When you moved to Prince William, was it hard to get or retain clients?**

**Judge:** That was scary, not knowing if my clients would come to me from McLean, but the people followed me. Since I worked at a veterinarian [office] the people there would recommend me, and my past experience and relationships I made helped. ... That kind of took off really well. So, fortunately, I did not have much of a struggle, other than I didn't have a vacation or a day off for 20 years.

**PWL: What other obstacles did you encounter in building your business?**

**Judge:** Being a woman in the breeding world, which is dominated by men, was a struggle. It was hard to be taken seriously, until I was able to show my abilities and my passion for the dogs. Here I was in my late 20s, early 30s and I was not taken seriously at all.

I knew I wanted to be connected with the top breeders in Germany so I started to make contact at shows. It took time and proving myself to make these relationships happen. Now I go to Germany to work with them and they come here several times a year to work with the dogs.

[Also] when I first moved here to Nokesville ... this whole place had to be gutted. You had to wear a mask to get in here. ... I had to clear the property in order to get a training area constructed.

I put the training lights up before I had a bed [for myself]. It was summertime and it was hot [so] we couldn't train during the day. So I bought huge stadium lights so we could train at night. I slept on the floor with my dogs for months because everything I had was going into the business and my dogs.

**PWL: What made you decide to focus on breeding and selling German Shepherds?**

**Judge:** When I trained my first German Shepherd she just blew my mind. The owners had a 3- or 4-year-old child that the dog kept herding away from the edge of the deck because there was no railing. I watched the relationship between the child and the dog and saw how amazing it was. ... This dog changed my life forever. After that I knew I wanted to breed shepherds.

**PWL: What sets apart your dogs from most other German Shepherds bred in America?**

**Judge:** There is no standard on breeding for American-bred shepherds. My dogs are bred by German standards. They have to undergo a breed survey, meaning that the dog is recommended for breeding. This includes training certification, bloodlines, title, behavior certification and the physical appearance.

If all of these are not met, they are not recommended for breeding. All of my dogs are strongly recommended for breeding. We train



Photos courtesy Amanda Causey, Beau Monde Photos

*Megan Judge has bred and trained many award-winning dogs over the years. Right: Kloud vom Solebrunnen is the current stud at Haus Juris.*

them for shows so that we can breed them and give my clients the best German Shepherds for their families.

**PWL: Where do most dogs that you breed end up—as working dogs or as family pets?**

**Judge:** Ninety-nine percent of our dogs [become family pets]. ... My job is to match the dog with the best families. I have people from California to Canada that come here to get my dogs. We are very serious about what we do here. This is a lifestyle. It is not just my job; this is the life I live. The reason why I do this is because I want my dogs with a family, and I want my dogs to be happy.

**PWL: What has allowed your business to grow, even during economic downturns?**

**Judge:** I have a really good team. ... It is all based on trust between my partners, me and my team.

I am happy with where we are and how far we have come. I would like to continue to have the top dogs in the country. Being top in the country takes a lot of work. It's a process and it requires me to continue to have a team that is passionate and wants to be a part of this.

For more information about Haus Juris German Shepherds, call 703-594-9925 or visit [hausjuris.com](http://hausjuris.com). **PWL**

*Amanda Causey joined Prince William Living as its marketing director last year, when she moved to the area from Alabama. She is also a photographer and avid "DIY-er," posting her projects on her blog, [greenowcrafts.com](http://greenowcrafts.com). To contact her, email [acausey@princewilliamliving.com](mailto:acausey@princewilliamliving.com).*