

For the past 16 years, Robert Schwalbe has been an amazing leader and volunteer across a wide spectrum of Dachshund Club of Metropolitan Atlanta, regional and DCA National activities. Initially, his focus was on field trials, earthdog events and conformation. He did everything from digging tunnels to RV parking to filling T-Shirt orders to cleaning bathrooms to developing Premium Lists to judging (including jumping in for judges who had to cancel at the last minute – meaning he unselfishly pulled his own dogs from competition).

Robert has always been a strong, “roll up your sleeves” kind of leader, taking on significant challenges to keep our dachshund community thriving. In 2009, he put together a model field trial seminar for DCA Nationals which included hands-on demonstrations to teach conformation dogs and their exhibitors how to follow scent lines. Over the years, he has delivered numerous judges training and mentoring services, resulting in over 20 new judges and 3 more dachshund clubs being licensed to host field trials. Robert has also served on the DCA Board of Directors and the DCA Performance Events Committee to help community members breed dachshunds who not only meet the dachshund standard but skillfully perform hunting tasks – the purpose of the breed.

In several emergency situations, Robert stepped forward, kept his cool and got the job done by accepting personal liability for dachshund events so they wouldn't have to be cancelled. Overnight, he paid for grounds, supplies, food and beverages while quickly getting new contracts in place. Once, when the Secretary of a DCA Agility and Obedience Trials quit without notice, he stepped in to chair these events and quickly found a new Secretary and equipment, despite never having been to an Agility or Obedience Trial before.

Robert has been an incredible innovator. He developed a “handicapped scoring grid” (based on dog age) so older dogs who are no longer competitive can still enjoy field trialing. When no one else came forward, he volunteered to upgrade the DCA Website to a new platform and operating system which could support new online processes developed during his tenure (e.g. online donations, dues payments and sponsorship fundraising). He also took on the task of managing finances for the DCA Health & Welfare Trust Fund which funds dachshund research.

Robert is a well respected judge in both conformation and field trialing, with ethical standards beyond reproach. To avoid conflicts of interest, in 2009-2010, Robert spearheaded the policy of judges not showing their own dogs at DCA events in which they are judging. This has impacted Robert's own dogs for many years: Robert judged the DCA National Field Trials in 2008, 2009 and 2010 and will judge wirehairs at the DCA conformation show in 2024.

It is hard to find a DCA member who has this depth and range of Outstanding Sportsmanship and selfless service across so many years. We would be honored to have him as our first recipient of this prestigious award.