

The best of man's best friend

SVALINN DOGS

In the amber hills tucked between the Bridger, Crazy and Absaroka mountain ranges, five dogs sit on benches around a fire. They stare into the blaze with inquisitiveness more simian than canine.



PHOTOS FROM SVALINN

It's an image that harkens back to ancient days, long before "man's best friend" had been coined, when but a few key wolves born more curious, more social, crawled toward fires lit on cold nights in hopes of a handout. As with any great risk, it came with great reward.

Early human societies saw utility in those ancestral dogs, hailing them for their companionship, usefulness and protective qualities. The period kindled a roughly 15,000-year relationship that has flourished over time yielding a partnership unparalleled in the animal kingdom.

That partnership has reached an apex at Svalinn's 167-acre facility in Livingston, Montana. There is no question: These canines constitute the very best among man's best friends.

As for the immediate history of the Svalinn dog, one need only travel back to 2005, when Kim Greene and her husband Jeff, security and protection specialists working in Kabul, Afghanistan, moved to Nairobi, Kenya—an equally dangerous capital city in an unstable pocket of the globe.

"We like to say that these dogs were actually bred out of necessity," says Kim Greene, Svalinn's co-founder and owner. "When my husband and I started the company about 14 years ago in East Africa, we were expecting twins. The notion of our safety and wellbeing for our family was very much at the forefront of our minds."

Ironically, she had placed a condition upon the marriage: Dogs would never be a part of the family nor the Greene household dynamic. Yet it's a position that softened immediately once her husband insisted she meet the well-trained, family protection assets that served as precursors

to the Svalinn venture.

"I was actually not a dog person but once I saw some of these dogs in action I saw their stability, their agility, their highly lovable, capable selves and I understood right then that this would be a no brainer for us," Greene says.

For a new mother in a city rife with violence, Svalinn dogs provided a sense of unmatched security, allowing her to enhance the quality of time spent with her family—particularly when her husband was not immediately present.

The couple soon saw opportunity in cultivating this particular form of security asset on their own, with a mission to share the ease their dogs provided with individuals and families the world over. And Svalinn was born.

"What these dogs really provide is peace of mind," Greene says. "They're a true deterrent that possesses some real capability if, God forbid, you ever need it. [They] truly are your best friend, your best protection, your best option for your family's safety."

It would be another eight years before the company went transatlantic in 2013, seeking an ample American market and a stable environment to grow their business and nurture their family. The Greenes and their world-class company first formed roots in Jackson Hole, and eventually found a permanent home in southwest Montana in 2016. There the operation has truly matured into the "overnight, 14-year success story," as Kim Greene calls it due to the crucial, steadfast ingredients of their secret sauce.

Once one digests the Svalinn method, the reasons behind the poise



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and curiosity of the five dogs around the fire are easy to understand. Those traits aren't an accident; they're a direct consequence of carefully tended bloodlines dating back to World War II.

Couple that lineage with the Svalinn curriculum, an Ivy-League-for-dogs regimen that boasts more than 2,000 hours of training in a puppy's first year of life and years of additional training, and the end product is an animal that gives weight to the phrase "seeing is believing."

Svalinn dogs, a thoughtful fusion of German, Dutch and Belgian shepherds with only the best qualities and attributes of each breed represented, are much like any other—playful and friendly, eager to join in the throng of littermates and humans working their way through the gorgeous Montana landscape surrounding the Svalinn grounds.

But they aren't like other dogs, from the fundamentals of their psychology to the minutia of their top-notch physiology.

On the latter, that rigorous Svalinn curriculum includes a physical training regimen so demanding that muscle groups down to the paws are visibly more developed than those of their counterparts. In this sense, it's fair to liken them to the highest caliber of professional athletes.

The true sticking point of the Svalinn program, however, is the curriculum's unique and proprietary emphasis on honing a dog's ability to discern a human's intent. In a sense, they're mind-reading dogs.

By tapping their natural talents to sense our biological rhythms, a

Svalinn dog can alert an owner to danger well in advance of potential conflict with a stranger, or in some instances acquaintance, by detecting spikes in vitals and hormones associated with anger, aggression and violence. If necessary, the dog will then put its physical advantages to use in providing time and space to evade a threat.

Even with that ability, the Svalinn team emphasizes their dogs are stable and obedient, first and foremost. "A lap dog that's ready to protect you at need be, but will just as fast lie down and lick a newborn," says Svalinn President Holt Price.

"The investment in a Svalinn dogs is obviously significant for families, but the great thing about investing in a protection asset from Svalinn is you're not only buying the three years of training and care, but also 15 years of a breeding program, 15 years of a training methodology that has been developed in real-world circumstances," Price said.

It's somewhat a mantra at the Svalinn facility: stable, social, obedient and agile. Pair those with a superhuman sense of detection of intent, a world-class training program and a highly capable staff and you have a protection asset—a best friend—that is priceless. 