New Benefits for IAADP

The Bond With Bayer Expands!

By Ed Eames Ph.D., President

To further underscore its relationship with IAADP, Bayer Animal Health announces expansion of its benefits to IAADP partner members in the United States.

The Animal Health Division of Bayer HealthCare, LLC recently introduced the next generation of its flagship brand, Advantage®, with the FDA approval of Advantage Multi® for Dogs (imidacloprid + moxidectin) Topical Solution. Advantage Multi® for Dogs is a monthly topical treatment that prevents heartworm disease, kills adult fleas, treats flea infestations, and treats and controls the common intestinal parasites infecting dogs in the United States, including hookworms, roundworms and whipworms.

Distribution will follow the model established for Advantage and Advantix. When requesting Advantage Multi, present your membership card to your veterinarian who will give you a six month supply at no cost. It is strongly recommended that a heartworm test be performed to make sure your assistance dog does not have the disease. Your veterinarian will then fax a prescription form with your IAADP membership number to Bayer and he/she will receive a replacement supply. The fax number is [For IAADP members only].

When using this product, no other flea control or heartworm preventative is necessary.

Bayer has been a great friend to IAADP and letters of appreciation are welcome. Please address your letter to Bayer Animal Health and e-mail it to eames@iaadp.org.

IAADP salutes you, Bayer!!

Bayer Animal Health Celebrates a Decade of Partnership with IAADP

By Bob Walker, Director, Communications and Public Policy

Bayer Animal Health has had a long and mutually beneficial relationship with IAADP for more than 10 years. We have been pleased to sponsor a variety of programs developed to foster the assistance dog movement. As a company committed to maintaining the health and well being of all animals, our unique relationship with the largest consumer advocacy organization of guide, hearing and service dog partners in the world strengthens and nurtures this goal.

Recognizing the importance of keeping assistance dogs flea free, Bayer Animal Health was delighted to provide Advantage, its revolutionary flea control product to IAADP continued on page 2...

Guide dog user, Michael Osborn, with Hastings. IAADP dedicated its 2008 Conference in the UK to Michael’s memory, honoring this former board member for his remarkable dedication to a number of advocacy initiatives on behalf of our community.
partner members at no cost. When Advantix entered the market, the company was pleased to add this product providing protection against ticks for assistance dogs living in environments where ticks are a problem. In this product distribution effort, we believe the relationship between veterinarians and their clients has been strengthened. Maintaining flea and tick free canine assistants is a shared goal of our two organizations and the more than 2,000 people with disabilities belonging to IAADP.

When IAADP president Ed Eames and his wife Toni approached Bayer's marketing director with a request to fund an innovative project, we jumped at the opportunity to become the first company launching the Veterinary Care Partnership (VCP) program. Realizing additional funds would be necessary to make this a viable effort, Bayer helped Ed and Toni network with other animal health care companies to solicit additional funds. The goal was to provide financial support for IAADP members unable to meet the high cost of emergency treatments, critical care interventions and diagnostic tests. Keeping the team together wherever possible became the motto for our two organizations. Within a year, four additional companies had signed on and VCP began its mission to save partnerships. To date, more than 500 teams have been helped. When an IAADP partner member cannot afford high cost veterinary intervention for his/her canine assistant, the member’s veterinarian can apply for a grant from the VCP fund. (See VCP guidelines at www.iaadp.org or contact Joan@iaadp.org).

Knowing IAADP would need expert guidance in administering the program, Bayer’s veterinary staff assumed this responsibility. After several years, this important administrative and evaluation job was turned over to Nutramax Laboratories.

Another project Bayer has been proud to sponsor is the production and distribution of the emergency recovery kit distributed as part of the packet of materials sent to all new members. These kits contain decals and other identification material to be used in case of an emergency separation of canine and human partner.

Over the years a number of different IAADP projects have been sponsored. These projects include support of national conferences and underwriting earlier issues of Partners’ Forum.

IAADP has acknowledged our unique relationship by honoring Bayer with its Spirit of Partnership awards on two separate occasions.

As an international company, Bayer also supports IAADP efforts extending beyond the borders of the United States. Canadian members are provided with free flea control products and the United Kingdom branch became a major sponsor of the 2008 conference held in London.

As a member of the Bayer Animal Health team, I look forward to a continuing and expanding relationship with IAADP. Sponsorship of this issue of Partners’ Forum is part of that effort. This issue of Partners’ Forum reflects IAADP’s expanding presence on the international front, as well as its continuing activities as a cross-disability consumer advocacy organization.

New Benefit for IAADP Members in the UK
by Wendy Morrell

For several years members in the United States and their assistance dogs have benefited from the membership benefit of free Cosequin. For those who are unfamiliar with the product, it is the number one vet recommended joint health product in the US.

For me, one of the highlights of the recent IAADP conference in London was the announcement of the first member benefit for IAADP members in the United Kingdom.

I was delighted to be able to share the news that as of June 2008 members are able to apply to me for Cosequin for their assistance dogs. This has come about by a joint initiative between Bioiberica (the manufacturers in Barcelona, Spain) and Schering-Plough (the UK distributors).

Jenny Lowe and her assistance dog Free, who was trained by Canine Partners, were presented with the first bottles of Cosequin at the conference. Free has been taking Cosequin for his joint health for some time, but previously Jenny was having to purchase the product. Many other UK members were also given a years supply of Cosequin for their assistance dogs.

If you are in the UK and need Cosequin for your assistance dog, please contact me at wendy@iaadp.org in the first instance and I will arrange to get the product to you.

IAADP would like to express their thanks especially to Mr. Jaime Reguant of Bioiberica and Ms. Sarah-Jane Minter at Schering-Plough for their efforts in bringing about this members benefit.

Jenny Lowe and her assistance dog Free, who was trained by Canine Partners, were presented with the first bottles of Cosequin at the conference.
Muttluks is proud to announce its Woof Wish Program, which is a two-fold program involving reduced pricing for assistance dogs. Muttluks manufactures boots for dogs – a basic necessity for many assistance dogs working in extreme hot or cold weather conditions.

Where most companies have a mission statement, Muttluks has a passion statement. The Woof Wish Program was developed through the spirit of Muttluk’s philosophy and passion statement which is as follows: “We are passionate about our planet! We foster Zenformation and Zenlightenment with Zenergy and Zenthusiasm.”

Muttluks is known for its altruistic actions. In 2002 Muttluks won the Toronto Humane Society’s “Be Kind To Animals Award” for their donation of boots to Ground Zero SAR Dogs.

The Assistance Dog Woof Wish Program consists of the following:

- A global program.
- 50% off the suggested retail pricing to individuals with assistance dogs, regardless of volume purchased.
- 50% off shipping costs in North America.
- Available to all IAADP members with proof of membership.
- One free set of Muttluks raffled every quarter (3months) from existing assistance dog customers.
- 5 free sets given to IAADP on an annual basis for every 100 sets of Muttluks purchased for assistance dogs.

Muttluks are manufactured in Toronto, Canada. They are available in two models, Fleece Lined Muttluks for winter use only and All Weather Muttluks for summer or winter use. They are available in eight sizes, Itty Bitty to XXL. Retail pricing ranges from $42 to $56 depending on the size. The company has a sizing chart on their web site, www.muttluks.com. The easiest way to size your dog’s paws is to place a FRONT paw on a piece of paper, mark the paper at the end of the toenails (excluding fur) and at the heel of the paw (coming straight down the back of the leg). Measure the distance between the markings and refer to the fitting chart for sizing.

Orders can be placed by calling 888-muttluk (688-8585), faxing 877-muttfax (688-8329) or email muttluks@muttluks.com

San Diego is extremely proud of the support the San Diego International Airport gives to persons with disabilities! In fact, in 2003, our airport was the first known airport to provide a pet relief area. Fortunately, many airports have since followed suit. A great deal of gratitude from the assistance dog industry goes to Tim Joniec, Port Authority’s ADA Coordinator, for daring to dream and for listening to others in designing a truly accessible relief area. Thanks to these efforts, our relief areas are not placed in obscure areas but rather in areas accessible to all travelers.

On May 14, representatives from Paws’itive Teams, the San Diego Center for the Blind, Canine Companions for Independence, Blind Community Center of San Diego, Deaf Community Services and Harbor Police K9 Unit attended the dedication of the newest animal relief area, located near the entrance to the Commuter Terminal. This fenced area includes artificial turf, fresh water dispenser, clean up bags, trash cans, benches and is surrounded by attractive hedges. Our canine friends attending the ribbon cutting included three service dogs from Paws’itive Teams, three service dogs from Canine Companions for Independence, two guide dogs, one hearing dog and five explosives detection dogs from the Harbor K9 Unit.

This new relief area is the second at the San Diego International Airport. The first area is located at Terminal One and a third relief area is scheduled to open later in 2008 at Terminal Two. The most exciting news is that the new 10-gate terminal scheduled to open in approximately five years will contain perhaps the first indoor (post-security) relief area. This will truly be an event to celebrate! San Diego welcomes all travelers, including the canine ones.

San Diego Airport Opens Second Relief Area

By Carol Davis

IAADP Gratefully Salutes
FORT DODGE ANIMAL HEALTH
A Major Sponsor of Our 2008 Conference!

IAADP Conference Canceled for Jan. 2009

IAADP would like to thank ADI for its hospitality in the UK in June 2008 and for welcoming us to join them in Orlando in 2009 where they are holding the first ADI North America regional conference.

Regrettably, due to circumstances beyond our control, IAADP will not be able to hold the conference announced in the last issue of Partners Forum.

ADI North America still plans to meet in Orlando at the Regal Sun Resort January 12 - 14, 2009. We wish our friends in ADI every success with this upcoming three day event.
New Definition of Service Animal Proposed

By Joan Froling

On June 17, 2008 the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Civil Rights Division published its long-awaited Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) which included a new definition of service animal, as well as a number of questions and comments related to the definition being proposed. The NPRM also announced the intent to incorporate much of the DOJ’s interpretative guidance on service animals from 1996 and 2002 into the regulation. It added requirements that a service animal must be housebroken, kept under control and work on a leash, harness or tether. This was part of a much larger document dealing with many updates to the regulations specifying what the federal law, the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), requires. The DOJ limited the Public Comment period to sixty days.

Here is the proposed definition.

“Service animal means any dog or other common domestic animal individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including, but not limited to, guiding individuals who are blind or have low vision, alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to the presence of people or sounds, providing minimal protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, fetching items, assisting an individual during a seizure, retrieving medicine or the telephone, providing physical support and assistance with balance and stability to individuals with mobility disabilities, and assisting individuals, including those with cognitive disabilities, with navigation. The term service animal includes individually trained animals that do work or perform tasks for the benefit of individuals with disabilities, including psychiatric, cognitive, and mental disabilities. The term service animal does not include wild animals (including non-human primates born in captivity), reptiles, rabbits, farm animals (including any breed of horse, miniature horse, pony, pig, or goat), ferrets, amphibians, and rodents. Animals whose sole function is to provide emotional support, comfort, therapy, companionship, therapeutic benefits, or to promote emotional well-being are not service animals.”

The NPRM addresses some of the issues IAADP and other members of the Coalition of Assistance Dog Organizations (CADO) discussed at meetings with officials at the U.S. Department of Justice in 2001, 2003 and 2007. Our coalition of organizations representing partners and programs in the USA educated the DOJ that an increasing number of individuals with psychiatric, cognitive and other mental disabilities like autism were working with task trained service animals. We made it clear we fully supported access rights for anyone with a mental or physical disability who has a service animal with the required training. What we deplored was the ongoing abuses of the ADA by people who were ignoring the training requirement in the old definition. Our constituents worried that poorly behaved non-task trained animals would erode societal tolerance for our hard won access rights in public places. We hoped for a better definition as soon as the ten year review of the ADA regulations mandated by Congress finally took place.

When CADO delegates drafted CADO’s public comment on the proposed new definition this summer, we thanked the DOJ for the unequivocal statement in the definition which clarifies that an animal whose sole function is emotional support, comfort, companionship, therapy or a therapeutic benefit or emotional well being is not a service animal.

However nothing is ever simple. The rationale cited in one paragraph in the NPRM for including the phrase “do work,” in addition to “perform tasks” was extremely objectionable. The example of “do work” given in the NPRM, that of “grounding,” was quite ambiguous, the way it was explained. Thus it seems inevitable it will be misinterpreted by emotional support animal handlers, thereby undermining the DOJ’s intent to maintain a clear-cut distinction between specially trained service animals and pets who provide emotional support. To try to prevent more years of misinterpretation and debate, IAADP and other CADO members asked supporters to call for the elimination of the phrase “do work” and to urge the DOJ to continue to uphold task training as the fundamental way to differentiate between a service animal and an emotional support animal, as they’d done since 2002, when they issued an update to their interpretative guidance on the ADA. For the last six years, that document, the “ADA Business Brief: Service Animals” defined a service animal as any animal individually trained to perform tasks for the benefit of a disabled individual. If the phrase “do work” is retained in the new definition, CADO’s public comment asked for that phrase to be redefined by the DOJ.

IAADP and other members of the Coalition of Assistance Dog Organizations took the following positions in response to three questions the NPRM asked the public to comment on:

(1) We opposed the retention of the task example “minimial protection.” We believe fifteen years of misinterpretation by a number of trainers and disabled individuals claiming the ADA sanctions protection training [agression training] for assistance dogs is more than enough!

(2) We also opposed a proposed limit on the size or weight of a common domestic animal like an assistance dog. We believe it would discriminate against disabled persons whose height, size and/or the severity of their mobility impairment ethically requires them to work with a very large dog who can perform tasks like balance support without risk of injury.

(3) We reiterated CADO is not against the use of other species as long as they can meet the same or equivalent standards for behavior and training that assistance dogs must meet to qualify as a service animal.

IAADP would like to salute all our members who responded to our Call to Action, submitting a public comment on this proposed Service Animal definition. Time did not permit a newsletter appeal, but we had the email ad-
dresses of most members and also posted a great deal of information about this advocacy campaign on IAADP’s website and on email lists.

We also want to gratefully acknowledge those individuals who responded to requests for public comments from Assistance Dogs International and its member programs, the Council of US Dog Guide Schools and our fourth CADO member, Guide Dog Users, Inc. The DOJ had informed us last year the public comments would be very important to them in finalizing the definition of a service animal. Numbers count!

Roughly 2,500 comments were submitted by email on the ADA updates listed in the NPRM. An estimated 700 or more discussed service animals and approximately 90% supported the position of IAADP and other CADO members on key issues. Some comments were also given during a public hearing in July.

So what is next? A highly placed source in the Department let us know that the goal of the Disability Rights section is to come out with the Final Rule before the Bush administration leaves office at the end of the year. That seems incredibly fast. We shall keep you posted!

EDITOR’S NOTE: For those who wish to read the public comments on the service animal issues, the majority were submitted from August 14 through August 18th. Go to http://www.regulations.gov - and then in the Search Box you can enter DOJ-CRT--2008-0015 - and then the submissions will come up.

U.K. Dog Star Award

Virgin Trains provides First Class Service for Guide and Assistance Dogs

Launching Year of the Assistance Dog at Crufts, five assistance dog partnerships – arrived in style, courtesy of Virgin Trains, on Thursday, 06 March.

During 2008, Canine Partners, Dogs for the Disabled, Guide Dogs, Hearing Dogs and Support Dogs are working together as Assistance Dogs UK (ADUK), promoting rights of access to transport, restaurants, shops and other services for assistance dog partnerships.

After alighting at Birmingham International station, the five passengers – with canine companions – presented a Dog Star award to Bob Powell, Virgin Trains’ On Board Services Manager.

Dog Stars are symbols of excellence, given in recognition that transport operators and other services meet the needs of all assistance dog partnerships. Virgin Trains received particular praise for Braille signage and passenger announcements on board its trains. Hearing impaired passengers benefit from in-carriage display screens, whilst space is made available for wheelchair users, who board and alight using train-to-platform ramps. Virgin Trains was also applauded for making ‘watering holes’ available for dogs at its stations.

Alan Brooks, Chairman of ADUK, explains: “Although there are many examples of good practice, assistance dog users continue to encounter problems accessing some modes of public transport. We’re therefore extremely grateful to Virgin Trains for leading the way.”

For further information, and links to ADUK member charity websites – where Dog Star nominations can be made – log on to www.assistancedogs.org.uk

VCP Thank You

This is to thank IAADP, and the sponsors of the IAADP emergency veterinary fund (Bayer Animal Health, Fort Dodge Animal Health, Hill’s Pet Nutrition, Inc., Nestle Purina, Nutramax Laboratories, Procter & Gamble and Royal Canin USA) for providing financial aid for my Service Dog Chusaka’s recent surgery and follow up treatment. This assistance has enabled “Chewy’s” ability to continue working to assist me.

As you know, Chusaka is a very special fellow, whose skills have been recognized by the State of Maryland Governor. Since 1998, the Governor has annually issued the State of Maryland Service Dog Day Proclamation in recognition and honor of Chusaka’s birthday. Although getting up in age, Chusaka continues to fulfill his Service Dog duties on a daily basis, without fail. Thank you for providing him the ability to continue to do so.

Sincerely,
Sheryl Katzman
New European Union Aviation Regulation

By Wendy Morrell

26th July 2008 was a red letter day for people with disabilities in Europe. This was the date the final part of the “REGULATION (EC) No 1107/2006 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 5 July 2006 concerning the rights of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility when traveling by air” came into force.

The main aim of the Regulation is to improve access to air transport for passengers with reduced mobility. This includes people with disabilities and those who have specific needs who wouldn’t usually be classified as disabled, such as older people and those with a mobility problem that is temporary (such as someone with a broken leg).

The Regulation covers all flights from, in transit through or arriving at an airport within the European Union. It also applies to carriers from the EU arriving from Third Countries.

The main points of the regulation are to
1. Allow people with reduced mobility greater access to air travel
2. Ensure people with reduced mobility receive assistance when traveling by air
3. Cover flights from, through or arriving in the EU
4. Require operators to make available safety rules on the carriage of people with reduced mobility

The regulation came into force in stages with the last stage in July 2008. Since July 2007 it has been law that carriers could not refuse a passenger due to disability and from July 2008 airports are required to provide assistance where needed at all points of a passengers journey from arrival to their seat on the aircraft and to leaving the airport at their destination.

What about assistance dog partnerships?

Article 7, section 2 of the Regulation states:
Where use of a recognised assistance dog is required, this shall be accommodated provided that notification of the same is made to the air carrier or its agent or the tour operator in accordance with applicable national rules covering the carriage of assistance dogs on board aircraft, where such rules exist.

Annex 1 States
Ground handling of recognised assistance dogs, when relevant.

In reality this means that those carriers who had previously refused to carry assistance dogs in the cabin can no longer refuse, airports will have to provide an assistance dog relief area, and in the case of those airports who do not currently accept assistance dogs on international flights as there are no staff to inspect their paperwork, they will have to become PETS compliant.

Within the UK a number of airports (Exeter, Bristol, Southampton, Cardiff, London City, Luton, Stanstead, Birmingham, Leeds, Newcastle, Edinburgh and Belfast International) are all on their way to complying with the new Regulation. Belfast International is expected to be PETS compliant by the end of July and Birmingham during August.

By the autumn of 2008 it should then be possible to enter the UK by air at the following airports, London Heathrow, London Gatwick, Manchester, Doncaster, Glasgow, Birmingham and Belfast. Hopefully with others following soon after.

Clive Wood, Transport Policy Officer with Guide Dogs for the Blind in the UK has been doing sterling work in visiting airports and explaining how they need to adjust facilities and service for assistance dog partnerships. Apart from carrying assistance dogs with their partners in the cabin and providing a suitable assistance dog relief area, another area which Clive has been working on is the elimination of the fee charged by some airports to examine the PETS paperwork. At London Heathrow this fee is absorbed by the authorities, but at other airports it is passed on to the assistance dog partner. As an assistance dog is a mobility/disability aid, it is believed that this fee should not be charged to the disabled person but absorbed by the airport.

After all, they don’t charge for wheelchairs and other assistive devices!

There are some airports and airlines within the UK who are dragging their feet and it remains to be seen how soon all will become complaint with the new regulation.

What happens if I feel an airline or airport has breached the law?

In the first instance your complaint should be directed to the airport manager or carrier concerned. If you are not satisfied with the outcome, in the UK, complaints will be directed to the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) for airports situated in England, Wales and Scotland and airlines that have been issued an operating licence by the UK Civil Aviation Authority. It will also handle complaints about non-EU airlines departing from, arriving at or on transit through UK airports.

The Consumer Council for Northern Ireland will handle complaints from the public about airports situated in Northern Ireland.

A list of enforcement bodies for other parts of Europe may be found online at http://ec.europa.eu/transport/air_portal/passenger_rights/doc/2005_01_31_national_enforcement_bodies_en.pdf

A subtitled video outlining the new Regulation may be seen online at http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/energy_transport/video/prm/wmv/prm_384k_en.wmv

On 24th July, Rosie Winterton, Secretary of State for Transport in the UK said, “This is a major step in ensuring that disabled people and those with reduced mobility have the same access to the standards and services that every one expects when they fly. We expect all airlines and airports to maintain these high standards and for strong action to be taken against anyone repeatedly breaking the regulations across Europe.”

Obviously it will take some time for the new Regulation to come into force across the EU, but the framework is now
in place to ensure that people with disabilities may travel by air with confidence that the provision for special needs is consistent right across the community. Hopefully, gone are the days when an airline within the EU will turn someone away simply because they are partnered with an assistance dog, although it is important to remember that the dog must be prepared for travel to the destination country in the normal way in accordance with local laws. For example; it will still be necessary to have a PETS compliant dog to enter the UK.

Anyone wishing to read the new Regulation in full can find it online at http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/1_204/1_20420060726en00010009.pdf or Google “REGULATION (EC) No 1107/2006”

A Tail To Tell

By Toni and Ed Eames

For months those of us on the IAADP Board have devoted much of our time to planning our first international conference in London in late June. It was somewhat nerve wracking preparing our guide dogs Keebler and Latrell for the trip, but all required veterinary forms were completed and procedures carried out in proper sequence.

Continental Airlines became a sponsor of the conference by donating free tickets to four of our board members, but the two of us needed to fly from Fresno to Los Angeles to catch the Continental flights to England. It was an exhausting trip, but Toni’s fears of being squashed in a pretzel shape for hours in the air with the dogs at our feet were unfounded. Continental’s disability coordinator Bill Burnell recognizing that Toni had had back surgery arranged for an empty seat between the two of us, allowing our legs to move and not be hemmed in. With long layovers between flights, the dogs were able to be taken out to relieve and the 10 hour flight from Houston to London presented no problem.

Arriving in London 26 hours after leaving our home, the entry process was expedited by Dr. Liz Shickle, the veterinarian responsible for checking the dogs’ papers. Going beyond our expectations, she and a colleague took the dogs down the service stairs and both Goldens actually peed on the tarmac. Liz whisked us through the immigration and customs system and got us into a taxi for the 10 minute drive to the airport hotel. Hotel rooms at the Renaissance Heathrow were very small, but comfortable. Staff had been briefed about sensitivity to people with disabilities and were extremely helpful when needed. Nadia, one of the event organizers, was a charming young woman with the most beautiful Scottish brogue. We very much enjoyed chatting with her on the way to and from conference sessions. The patch of grass at the rear of the hotel was adequate and Keebler and Latrell relieved in comfort. Food at the Renaissance was outstanding and the fresh fruit tasted as good as our local farmer’s market produce. Thankfully, Wendy Morrell, IAADP’s European Vice President, arranged for our board to have access to the executive suite, so we enjoyed some get togethers there noshing on yummy appetizers.

Our eight days in London were spent attending three consecutive conferences: The International Guide Dog Federation, Assistance Dogs International and, most importantly, IAADP. We delighted in reconnecting with trainers from Israel, Japan, South Africa, Australia and Canada.

More than 30 guide, hearing and service dogs attended the IAADP conference with their disabled partners. The conference speakers were great and internationally diversified. In addition to British and North American presenters, we had speakers from Hungary, Norway, Sweden, Croatia and Japan. The conference was dedicated to the memory of former board member Michael Osborn, who died in early December 2007. Michael was the guiding light championing the right for disabled people to fly with our assistance dogs to the UK in the cabin. Michael’s sister and niece flew to London to help us celebrate his memory and achievement.

Departure day had some initial hassles with an officious airline employee, insisting we had to sit in the bulkhead instead of our assigned seats. His repeated comments, “Yes, madam, it is illegal for you to occupy those seats” and, “Sorry, sir, but it is an FAA regulation that you must sit in the bulkhead” were infuriating. After a heated dispute, we were finally able to speak with a supervisor who resolved the issue and our pre-assigned seats were restored. We then had a comfortable flight to Houston. Part of the four-hour layover was spent enjoying the company of Bill Burnell, the Continental director of disabled services, who originally arranged our seating on the flights!

Arriving home late on June 27, we needed to unpack and repack for the trip to Louisville, Kentucky on July 5 to attend the Guide Dog Users Inc. conference. We also needed to deal with the news that Latrell had a heart murmur discovered by our veterinarian during last-minute preparation for the trip to the UK. To our relief, the cardiologist we consulted several weeks later pronounced the murmur benign and it should have little impact on his work or lifestyle.

continued on page 8...
Arriving at the Louisville hotel very late on July 5, there was no bellhop to help with the luggage. Foolishly, Toni pulled one of our heavy bags inside and to the front desk, twisting her body and inflaming her back. She paid the price in leg pain for the next few days! Fortunately, after a couple of days on pain killers, the Lyrica brought her back to a pain free state.

We were given the perfect room on the third floor where we could avoid overcrowded elevators and use the stairs, escalators, or walk across the breezeway to the other tower. Within a few days, Keebler had the routes down pat, except finding the stairway door leading down to the garage relief area. She didn’t like that place, so avoided locating it. Since there were two other relief areas, this did not create a problem!

Our hotel room was a huge suite, and we enjoyed having friends in for breakfast or lunch. At lengthy conferences, we travel with a toaster and bring bagels, cream cheese, peanut butter, jelly, bread, lunch meat and cheese. Not elegant, but it avoids the crowds at hotel restaurants.

Among the dog-related events were a clicker training session, a panel discussion about guide dog partnership for individuals with low vision, a discussion of guide dog use in other countries, a presentation about puppy raising and a luncheon featuring the attorney who brought the case against Hawaii leading to that state’s ending of the quarantine for guide dogs. Subsequently, the quarantine was lifted for all assistance dogs.

After a comfortable flight home, it was great to sleep in our own bed and cuddle with the cats. Although we had missed the 110 plus heat in Fresno, it was still pretty hot at 102 on our return!

A major task for us and other members of the IAADP Board has been responding to the US Department of Justice’s new definition of a service animal published in the Federal Register. Initially developed in 1991, the original definition created lots of confusion and misinterpretation on the part of businesses, the public and even some of us partnered with assistance dogs. Some of you have probably read about pigs, snakes and rodents claimed as service animals. They will now be excluded from the definition, as well as Capuchin monkeys and miniature horses. In fact, the new term used by DOJ is common domestic animal, a newly-coined phrase that apparently only includes dogs and cats. IAADP’s response is on the website and has been distributed to members by email.

In July, Latrell had his annual after-care visit by Guide Dogs for the Blind field trainer Emily Simone. To celebrate Ed’s fifth anniversary with Latrell, we took a walk on the sidewalkless streets going north from our home. Both dogs did an outstanding job of keeping to the left shoulder of the road and not wandering onto side streets. We all celebrated their A-plus score with lunch at an International House of Pancakes. So, with great confidence, we ventured off several days later to repeat this grand accomplishment. Latrell took the lead position as we traveled north for half a mile. After crossing the road and heading south, Keebler took the lead position. Unlike the stellar performance when Emily was observing, Keebler wandered off onto a side road and we walked a considerable distance before realizing we had gone astray! Trying to figure out our next move, we were fortunate to be greeted by a woman who had been gardening on her front lawn. Not only did she point us in the right direction, she graciously accompanied us during the four block walk home. The positive outcome was Toni’s ability to handle the extra walking, but the challenge is tackling that route without Emily’s intervention!

Toni and Ed Eames can be contacted at 3376 North Wishon, Fresno, CA 93704-4832; Tel. 559-224-0544; email: eeames@csufresno.edu

U.K. Air Travel Clarification

Kathleen Blank Riether from the Air Consumer Division of the U.S. Department of Transportation has graciously provided IAADP with a requested clarification on whether or not the DOT’s Final Rule will change the policies followed by British airlines for the transportation of assistance dogs in the plane cabin. We appreciate this update very much.

She wrote:

“Regarding the application of the current and the new rule to U.K. carriers, we (DOT) have already determined that regulations of the U.K. Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) do require/permit U.K. carriers to place restrictions on the carriage of assistance dogs in the cabin that go beyond what U.S. law would permit. We have been told by CAA lawyers that the agency’s regulatory guidance carries the force of law for any carrier licensed by the U.K. Therefore, U.K. carriers do not need to seek a Conflict of Law waiver for any restriction that conflicts with the CAA that we have already determined is required by U.K. regulations. According to the CAA regulatory guidance, U.K. carriers must only accept assistance dogs that meet the CAA definition and therefore may require the assistance dog owner to produce an ID certifying the dog’s membership in an assistance dog organization recognized by AD U.K., ADE, or ADI. The CAA definition, as you know, would exclude all emotional support dogs, and any assistance dog that has not obtained certification through one of the recognized organizations.

The CAA regulatory guidance also indicates that the assistance dog should be effectively secured (harnessed) during take-off, landing and during turbulence. Again, the CAA lawyers clarified that this guidance is mandatory for U.K. carriers only, so on flights between the U.S. and U.K. the CAA prohibition on requiring IDs and harnesses as a condition for transporting service animals in the aircraft cabin would still apply to U.S. and non-U.K. foreign carriers.”
Impressions of the IAADP conference in London, UK, June 2008

By Jill Brown

I was most fortunate to be awarded a scholarship by Fort Dodge to enable me and my Dog for the Disabled, Yates, to attend the IAADP conference in London, Great Britain, in June 2008.

I much looked forward to meeting partnerships from around the world, as well as partnerships from around the UK, to learn of their experiences and to exchange ideas. I was also interested to learn from the varied programme of lectures, which had been planned by the Board of IAADP. I was not disappointed. I will welcome any IAADP members visiting UK and help them in any way I can.

The night before the conference, I was invited to share canapes with members of the Board and others who had arrived early for the conference. There was a lot of chatter and so much to say that we didn't manage to meet everyone at this festive event.

The following day was all go from 9:00 a.m. when we were asked to register until the conference was wound up at 6:30 p.m. when we all left clutching our goody bags full of exciting treats for our dogs and ourselves.

The first speaker was President of IAADP, Ed Eames, who welcomed everyone to the conference. He also announced the conference was dedicated to Michael Osborn, who was most fortunate to be awarded a scholarship by Fort Dodge to enable me and my Dog for the Disabled, Yates, to attend the IAADP conference in London, Great Britain, in June 2008.

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The policy of Dogs for the Disabled to find a successor dog as soon as is reasonable and possible for all partnerships who have suffered a bereavement was very reassuring to us. Hopefully other programmes follow this policy.

Her talk was followed by a lecture from Moto Arima, the President of Japan Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, Assistance Dogs Japan and a freelance journalist who has published seven books about assistance dogs. These were excellent credentials for giving a talk on “The Japanese Government’s Public Access Test.” It was quite thought provoking to learn about political policies toward assistance dog teams in one Far Eastern country.

“Maintaining Oral Health in our Dogs – What Every Partner Should Know” was a most interesting and informative talk given by Dr. Cecilia Gorrel, an internationally renowned specialist in Veterinary Dentistry. I think we all came away knowing that we should all clean our dogs’ teeth once every day, as well as keeping a check on their general oral dental health to avoid caries, and periodontal disease. My dog, Yates, loves the taste of his toothpaste so we don’t have any problem with cleaning his teeth.

The morning programme concluded with another set of Door Prize Drawings – an extra bonus for the lucky partnerships whose names were drawn at random. An excellent lunch in the Marlborough room followed when we again had the chance to chat to other partnerships, though it was rather tricky manoeuvring around the tables in a wheelchair to get to speak to many people. However I had an interesting talk with an independent trainer of Guide, Assistance and Hearing Dogs for Disabled People from Belgium. I also met some hearing dog owners with their canine partners, and chatted to people from England whom I don’t meet often.

Afternoon lectures started with “Access Updates from Around the World” with a panel of assistance dog partners. Speakers included Joan Froling – USA, Devon Wilkins – Canada, Wendy Morrell – UK, Kazuya Kishimoto – Japan, Anki Celander – Sweden, Anne Bergljot Dorrum – Norway and Masa Dolenc and Mira Katalenic – Croatia. The panel guests discussed access challenges and victories for the assistance dog movement in their countries, which was most interesting. It appears we are all fighting the same battle to have our dogs recognised as being an essential part of our lives, enabling us to live independently.
Next followed an open forum called “Innovative Tasks, Equipment, Useful Products, Ideas.” Members of the audience were asked by the Facilitator, Joan Froling, to share new tasks, interesting tasks, “how to” information, experimental work, equipment or devices, useful products or ideas, access tools and other information which they find helpful.

Duncan Edwards, Training Manager, Dogs for the Disabled, showed us a special lead which is helpful to those who self propel their wheelchairs. Other ideas were a cozy, light mattress, a warm jacket for our dogs with pockets for tools such as biscuit treats or the ever useful plastic bag, and an adapted fish slice which is useful to a disabled person unable to reach traffic and lift buttons. The fish slice is placed over the control button and the assistance dog assists by jumping up and pressing the slice against the control button. With this, gone are the days of waiting for the traffic lights to change automatically. A home made cloth bag which holds a purse or credit card was also shown to be useful for a Dog for the Disabled or Service dog to pass over to bank or shop counters.

Joan demonstrated a clever way for a service dog to open heavy commercial doors to assist a mobility impaired individual to independently enter shops, doctor offices and other places that lack automatic doors. The technique utilizes a plastic device designed and sold by a U.S. program, Paws With A Cause®, as a courtesy to other programs and disabled owner trainers. It can get a firm group on just about any kind of door handle. One end of a six foot leash clips to the bottom of the inexpensive hook device. The other end clips to the D-ring on the back of a service dog’s balance support or wheelchair pulling harness.

Next Soren Kjendlie, President of the Norwegian Association of Assistance Dog Partners gave a most interesting talk titled “Assistance Dogs in Norway.” We learnt that Guide dogs for the Blind are completely state funded in Norway, but not assistance dogs. Soren is involved in discussions with the Norwegian government to gain state funding for service dog teams.

Wendy Morrell, IAADP’s European Vice President, introduced the panel on “Air Travel 2008.” This discussion featured representatives of the airline industry, the government and assistance dog partner community. Presenters included James C. Forster, a representative from British Airways, Kathleen Blank Riether from the U.S. Department of Transportation, Clive Wood, a Transport Policy Officer for Guide Dogs in the UK, Toni Eames, an IAADP board member and Toni Brown Griffin, a Graduate of Support Dogs, and Liz Shickle, Chief Veterinary Officer, Heathrow Live Animal Border Animal Inspection Post, Animal Reception Centre. In turn they all gave updates on their organisation’s policy contribution to making travel easier and more acceptable for disabled people with their assistance dogs. It seems they are all working towards the same aim which is most encouraging for those of us wishing to take our dogs abroad.

The Afternoon Refreshment break had an extra special treat. It included a birthday cake from a bakery for dogs in honour of the birthday of Wendy Morrell’s service dog, Caesar. All assistance dogs present were given the opportunity to enjoy a piece of Caesar’s cake.

The final presentation was from Dr. Marta Gacsi of Hungary, an Ethologist from the University Budapest, Hungary. Dr. Gacsi is also the training programme leader at Kutyaaval az Emberert Alapitvány (KEA) – Dogs for Humans in Budaors, Hungary. Her talk was titled: “A New Method of Improving Communication and Co-operation between Partners & Assistance Dogs…the potential of PAR AGILITY.” We were shown slides demonstrating the use of Agility training to improve communication and cooperation between mobility impaired partners and their assistance dogs. It was fascinating. We will all get very fit, together with our dogs, going around such a course. It looked like great fun and the Hungarians are convinced it is the way forward.

There followed a farewell from IAADP’s President and a thank you presentation of a book to Peter Gorbing, the Chief Executive of Dogs for the Disabled, UK, and President of Assistance Dogs International. He had given great support to the IAADP Board with the preparation of the conference. The sponsors were also given due thanks for their help, for without them, the Conference wouldn’t have been possible. We gave a round of applause for all the com-
panies who donated to a “goodie bag,” full of varied exciting gifts for our dogs and ourselves.

The Conference ended with the Grand door prizes. One was a Gift Certificate from the assistance dog harness maker, Arnie Epstein, of Circle E Ranch in the USA. The other was a Gift Certificate contributed by Roger Mugford, who also gave every guest a free Halti and free Kong toy. We all left with much to remember and think about, as well as happy memories of meeting and being with members of our International Association, learning how members from other countries tackle their own challenges.

I was so fortunate being enabled to attend. I hope to meet and help other members of IAADP when they visit the UK, as well as working with colleagues to improve Access and the understanding of the assistance dog movement in our own country. I congratulate and thank the Board for organising such an interesting and varied programme.

2008 Donor Honor Roll

These wonderful companies have contributed door-prizes and Assistance Dog “Goodie Bag” gift items to enhance your enjoyment and your dog’s enjoyment of the IAADP Conference.

If you would like to send a note of appreciation, please send it to Toni@iaadp.org so that we may forward them to our sponsors.

We have provided their website urls so you may offer them your patronage during the years to come!

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Dogs for the Disabled
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• Roger Mugford & Company of Animals (gifts to delegates, discount on Kongs)
• Pressies4Dogs.co.uk (for an excellent deal on the dog birthday cakes)
• Dogs for the Disabled (Provided 2 volunteers, poly-thene bags & countless assistance throughout)
• Schering-Plough/Bioiberica for the Cosequin
• Schering-Plough for plush stuffed dogs and sticky bugs for conference bags

Special thanks to the following people for their assistance and support with the conference:

• Liz Shickle and the Animal Reception Centre, Heathrow
• Manager and Staff at the Renaissance Hotel

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
Access Problem?
Contact: ADA Helpline at 800-514-0301
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Hope You Will Support IAADP!
Donate by Shopping Through http://www.IGIVE.com/IAADP
Meet Your Board Member

Interview by Wendy Morrell

Your name: Joan Froling
Your assistance dog’s name and breed: Spirit, Samoyed.
Current location: Sterling Hts., MI

Is Spirit your first dog and how long have you been together?
Spirit is my third service dog. We have been a team for five years.

Is Spirit owner trained or program trained? Spirit is certified by the program to which I volunteer my skills as a service dog trainer. I was Spirit’s primary trainer.

Briefly, how did you become involved with IAADP?
In 1993, I helped launch IAADP with the Eames and other colleagues in the belief guide, hearing and service dog partners could make a significant contribution to the assistance dog movement if we had a way to work together on Education, Advocacy and Peer Support projects. To facilitate that goal, I took on editorship of Partners Forum and I’ve served as IAADP’s Chairperson since 1994.

In terms of the assistance dog movement, what excites you most?
The ongoing exploration of new tasks to empower children and adults with a broad range of disabling conditions to significantly increase their independence, safety and quality of life.

Again in terms of the assistance dog movement, what frustrates you most? Access problems, a social problem that is compounded in the USA by pet owners who “cheat” and disabled persons who ignorantly claim access rights with dogs that are unfit for public access work.

And now to the nitty gritty questions:
Not many people know this, but I’m really good at: sketching dogs and horses
My favourite holiday destination is: San Diego
Reality tv or a good film? Films featuring dogs or horses. As a trainer, I like to figure out how they persuaded the animal(s) in the movie to accomplish the various stunts.
Hamburger or Hot Dog? A burger
Pizza or Pasta? Pizza with double bacon!
Beer, wine or soft drink? Diet Coke
My last meal out was in? Wing Ons…a Chinese restaurant
When relaxing, Spirit and I like to: play with his favorite stuffed squeaky toys

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Partner Member Benefits

Free benefits unless otherwise noted

All Members Worldwide
- “Partners Forum” Newsletter
- Muttluks - 50% discount on boots, 50% discount on shipping in North America
- International Help-line [call or write]

Available in United States
- Sentinel Flavor Tabs from Novartis Animal Health
- Advantage Multi, Advantage or Advantix from Bayer Animal Health
- Dasuquin, Cosequin, Welactin, Denosyl from Nutramax Laboratories
- AVID Microchip - Avid Microchip ID Systems, Inc.
- Registration in PETtrac and/or the AKC Companion Animal Recovery Program
- Veterinary Care Partnership Grant (eligibility guidelines on website)
- KV Vet Supply offers 15% off all non-pharmaceutical products
- Fort Dodge Animal Health - vaccine rebate up to $20
- Veterinary Centers of America - 10% discount
- Kansas State University Veterinary Diagnostic Labs - 50% discount on titer testing.

Available in Canada
- Advantage or Advantage Multi from Bayer Animal Health Canada
- Wyeth Animal Health - vaccine rebate up to $20

Available in UK
- Cosequin provided by Bioiberica, the manufacturer with the cooperation of the distributor, Schering Plough UK

Note: Members in other countries are encouraged to seek similar benefits from companies for their geographical area.

MEMBERSHIP QUERIES? CHANGE OF ADDRESS?
Contact Buddy at 888-54-IAADP
or at buddy@iaadp.org
Dear IAADP:
Just wanted to send you this short note.
I signed up for the free eye exam for School-trained service dogs on the ACVO website at the last minute.
The Website was not particularly accessible for someone who is totally blind, but through persistence, I managed to complete the form.
I found that the Vet near Columbus was Med Vet in Worthington. I called them on May 9th, prepared to find that they were all filled up. I was told that I could have the eye exam for my dog that afternoon.
My sister was able to drive us over. Not only did they do an eye exam, but they did a general exam, as well as orthopedic and neurological exams. They would have done a skin exam, but the dermatologist was busy.
They encouraged me to call other service dog owners in the area to let them know that they would be glad to do eye exams even if people were not able to sign up on the ACVO website.
I will take advantage of the Wellness Report from my primary care vet in June.
Like Toni and Ed, I hope that the ACVO will allow owner-trained dogs to participate in the future.
Xanto was fine. He has what are called Christmas tree cataracts, which apparently is pretty normal for a nearly seven year-old dog. The vet said that they don’t do anything about these in dogs since they primarily cause problems with glare. Since he doesn’t read or drive, there is nothing to be done. I pointed out jokingly that he comes pretty close to driving.
I can’t say enough about how helpful the folks were at Med Vet, and I’ll plan to participate again next year.
I hope that the American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists will consider changes in their program in the future, but I am very glad to have been able to take advantage of what they offered this year.
Sincerely,
Irwin Hott

IAADP wishes to express our Gratitude to
CONTINENTAL AIRLINES
For its Support of our 2008 Conference

Feedback on ACVO’s Offer

With THOR at My Side

I am a veterinarian with mitochondrial myopathy. In August of 1997, I retired from active practice; two months later, Thor and I qualified as an assistance dog team.
Retirement is a relative term. My body can no longer participate actively in much of anything, despite Thor’s able assistance with walking, balancing, alerting, and other tasks. My mind, however, still works well enough to be of use in a volunteer capacity, although admittedly a bit slower these days. I do not deploy anymore with the organization I founded to assist pets and livestock affected by disasters, but other organizations utilize my skills as a volunteer in planning, logistics, data collection, and training. With Thor always by my side, I also help the abled understand how to best assist assistance dog teams during disasters.
Since Hurricane Katrina, much of my volunteer work has been with Veterinary Information Network, where Paul Pion, DVM, is often my teammate. When New York based The Tower of Hope approached VIN’s cofounder to recommend an appropriate honoree for their young organization’s 2008 gala, Dr. Pion claims he knew the perfect candidate: me.
TTOH raises funds to provide assistance animals for soldiers returning with qualifying disabilities. Because I am a veterinarian, partnered with a service dog myself, married into a military family, and experienced in public speaking – well, truly, these awards aren’t all about just the public service! – I was indeed a good match. In August of 2007, I received the exciting call offering me the Beacon of Light Award.
I accepted.
Then I started explaining to them that I have special needs, my husband the disabled veteran has special needs, and my then 12-year-old service dog has a few special needs himself. I was assured that all our needs would be met. Little did any of us realize just how challenging the process would be, but I am happy to report we made it safely from the mountains of Northern California to the Broad Street Ballroom in Manhattan, New York – and back home again.
While assistance dog teams are often offered bulkhead seating, there is no legal requirement for them to be seated there. On the other paw, there is a regulation prohibiting oxygen tanks in the bulkhead.
The airline kept switching our seat reservations to place my disabled husband, his caregiver, and my assistance dog in bulkhead seating while placing my oxygen tanks and me a row or two behind. They insisted that there would not be room for both tanks and dog in my row of seating and that the dog would have to sit with husband and caregiver in the bulkhead. I insisted that they did not want my dog trying to do an inflight alert from two rows away, and that it was very likely I would indeed have an episode of metabolic acidosis during the flight.

continued on page 14...
The organization paying our travel costs was unable to supply the three first class seats that would have made it feasible for our group to sit together with room for dog and oxygen. By the time I was able to obtain private funding from other sources to purchase first class seating, it was unavailable.

Ultimately, our caregiver decided the task was beyond her abilities; she resigned one week prior to our departure date. This meant we now had an extra ticket, but I would have to caregive my husband myself.

At each leg of our flights, I explained to ticket agents that we needed all three seats together in non-bulkhead seating. Yes, I told them, there will be room for both tanks and dog because of the empty seat. Yes, I explained to the eaves-dropping stewardess in Newark, it is too legal. OK, I said, then let the Complaint Resolution Officer explain it. We got the necessary seating, and the folks who traded seats with us were delightful each time.

The stewardess who had been so certain that FAA required assistance dogs to fly bulkhead was rude to us twice early in the flight, then seemed to be assigned elsewhere in the plane for the duration of the flight.

On the return flight, the Houston oxygen desk representative became confused and tried to send us on to California with empty oxygen tanks. The head stewardess later told me that she had asked the pilot to ground the plane until I had the fresh tanks I needed.

Also in Houston on the return trip, my husband became agitated and confused, part of his disability. Personnel were calm and polite with him, helping me get us to where we needed to go in a huge air terminal without escalating his behavioral issues. Once we were in flight for the final leg home, however, the agitation returned and he began removing other passengers’ luggage from the overhead bin. He was quietly surrounded – were those two gentlemen really air marshals? – and we received gentle assistance in giving him the sedative I had brought for just such a contingency.

Our layovers in Houston were far too brief for such a large airport, making it difficult for personnel to get us between gates on schedule and leaving Thor and I with no opportunity to toilet. We should have allowed a minimum of a three hour layover, flown through a smaller hub airport, or driven further so we could fly nonstop. Additional problems arose because airline tickets were purchased with frequent flyer miles and expenses such as oxygen went on our personal charge card while awaiting reimbursement.

Manhattan was actually less intimidating than we expected. There were manageable glitches at the hotel: they were not expecting a service dog, and with New York city taxis: so nice to have the mayor’s office on speed dial! We were confronted at the door each time we entered a restaurant, but we simply asked to speak to the manager and had no further problems.

We visited the police horse stables, Ground Zero, and the natural history museum. I swear Thor was thinking “so many bones, so little time” in the museum’s dinosaur section, but he behaved with his usual decorum and was a huge help despite being 13 years old.

SUV taxis, considered luxurious and appropriate for honorees, were very difficult for me to enter even with Thor’s assistance. However, the drivers were more accommodating than those roaming the streets in sedans and in each case repositioned the vehicle to make entry easier.

The gala was held in a ballroom, and access was easy until it came time to rise elegantly up the steps to the stage and podium. The stairs were an open, metal, semi-portable affair. Thor gave them an inspection and decided on intelligent disobedience. No way he could get us up them safely. So I was assisted up the stairs by three humans while a fellow veterinarian lifted Thor gently to the stage.

During my acceptance speech, I asked the audience to honor my beloved husband for his service to our country; he received a standing ovation. For me, that moment made it all worthwhile. As for the award, well, I think it really belongs to Thor for 11 years of dedicated service. My beloved Norwegian Elkhound is my personal Beacon of Light!
After nearly a decade partnered with Chimette, there’s been a changing of the guard. A new Border Collie is on the scene. Transitioning from the magical dance of a seasoned guide in harness, to playing bumper cars with a tethered young, clueless trainee has been quite an experience. A lot has changed since I was training Met, from my training and handling abilities to the explosion in owner training itself. With this explosion, many of us are now making the decisions that used to be in the hands of programs. So how do we decide when to let them be puppies enjoying their youth, and when to reach for the stars furthering their training with public access? At what point in the trainee’s life should it begin or even advance to more involved access? How does the trainer, especially a novice one know when to move to the next step and when they are doing too much too fast? There is not one right answer, but perhaps from my candor you can draw some conclusions for yourselves.

When Thane came into my life, it had only been two months since losing Met. Having him here even if it was only in a comforting role was great healing to my heart. At the same time, it was teaching me to appreciate his youth and playfulness, rather than focusing on my expectations of the role he would one day perform. I imagined this ridiculous image of my young adolescent, swallowed up by an enormous harness many times larger than he ever would need. To expect the enormity of this harness to fit my pup, would be no different than if I were to expect my pup to be able to handle the rigors of even a mornings’ role that his predecessor performed for me. They are only young once and there is plenty of time to fill the paws of the mature assistance dog down the road.

Training is exhilarating, perplexing, exhausting, and at times quite frustrating, but the rewards for me far outweigh all of this. Reflecting on my training and early access with Met as a novice trainer and first time handler, I knew this time would be such a different experience. My plan was to approach training for what it truly was, a period of time where Thane would learn the role, rather than be baptized into it as Met had been. By taking all aspects of training him slow and methodical, most specifically public access, I was setting us both up to succeed. I see this approach as a preventative of the uncertainty, frustration, and stress that affects many young in-training partnerships which is often due to ill preparation for various components of public access. Over the years I have watched numerous dogs wash out. I knew my heart would not be able to handle being the cause for such a great pup washing out – solely because I got impatient and pushed rather than putting into action, *Slow is Fast*. It’s so easy to think your trainee is ready for the next phase, next step, or next encounter only for the experience to wind up in failure because they just were not ready.

Despite how hard things were the first couple of months following Thane’s entrance, if I could not have my undivided attention on Thane, he would not have freedom. Living alone in a sedentary lifestyle, Thane was not wanting for time to stretch his legs or to run and play like a growing pup needs to. In fact being a puppy with all its snuggling benefits is just what was in store for us. This was our time to get to know each other. A time of bonding and discovery as we each headed down new paths together. At this time, I was realizing the extent to which Met accommodated my needs and what I had lost in his passing. Thane had his own adapting to do as well. He was learning how to play without hoarding – ahh gotta love those Border Collie hoarders! He was also discovering that when he sat, laid down, came when called, targeted my hand, or whatever else I might conjure up, that good things always followed – mmm goodies! As with all young pups, our training included learning to relieve on leash – now that one just about left me bald! Learning loose leash walking with a trainer using a white cane was full of its own set of challenges for a friendly country Border Collie experiencing so many new sights and sounds. All these things are crucial prerequisites to public access. Though some skilled trainers opt to begin public access for a short interval prior to the beginning of fear periods, taking advantage of this great socialization time, this has not been an option for me both due to the age of my trainee’s and my functional ability with an untrained pup.

From many people’s perspectives, I was actually rather slow in beginning public access with both Met and Thane, but this is where the responsibility of the trainer comes in. As a novice trainer, knowing no better, I often got into situations that were too much for Met or myself individually and especially as a team. Rather than withdrawing from the situation as I would now, I toughed it out. The outings I was taking were not training exercises, but part of my life that I tagged him along with me like a parent and their toddler. From the first day we began public access, I took him almost everywhere I needed or wanted to go. Of course looking back on the experience, I shake my head at my own naiveté and especially at the fact that we succeeded in such an awesome way given the circumstances he was trained in. Rather than setting Met up to succeed at each interval, I was in fact, often setting him up to fail. Met was, in reality, teaching me how not to train. The best way to describe my approach to him with public access was, *ready or not, here we come!* I have learned a lot over the past decade. One of the biggest concepts that is hard for many to get their heads around (including myself while I was training Met) is, it’s not whether the law allows access, but whether or not the team is ready for it. Even with Thane, my delay in access continued on page 16...
training has been questioned. I had lived for a decade with an awesome combo trained dog who adapted to my progressive disabilities over the years. After his passing and Thane’s entrance, it was all I could do to adapt to my disabilities without Met. I can just picture it, a funniest home videos entry of my attempt to navigate in my wheelchair with a white cane all the while my bouncy, energetic pup zigzags and dashes to and fro across my wheelchair path in a blur because mom, its a person! Hello, hello, hello! LOL. That is exactly what my early training of Thane involved. I would have loved to be accompanied by my trainee if he had been ready. He was not and I was nowhere near ready as an individual, so how could I ever expect us to be ready as a team to train let alone work together? Taking this responsibility, hard as it was, set us up to have amazing and productive public access outings when it was our time. My patience to hold back truly enabled us to succeed.

Initially it was about training exercises: guiding through just an aisle at the proper speed and pull. It seems so long ago that we were doing that. The true key to our success once more is assuring not just that Thane can handle the situation at hand with ease, but that we have not pushed forward until we are both rock solid as a team handling the little exercises. The larger ones awaited us. They would be there when we were ready no matter how long it took to get there.

Knowing this in ones head though and being patient enough to follow it are two totally opposite ends of the spectrum. It is so crucial to treat our young trainees like trainees at the level they are at, rather than as seasoned working dogs. Though I have focused here on the transition from pups to working status, this process has more to do with a pup or dogs readiness than their biological age. For Thane and I, the concept of slow is fast has rung out loud and clear - we are headed forward towards a long and productive partnership.