VA Approves Study on Service Dogs for Veterans

By Joan Froling

Senator Franken of Minnesota introduced legislation in 2009 to require the Veterans Administration in the USA to carry out a pilot study on the efficacy of service dogs for veterans injured in the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. His highly publicized bill which received the unanimous support of colleagues in the Senate called for the placement of a minimum of 200 service dogs, with 50% to go to veterans with physical disabilities and 50% to go to veterans with mental disabilities including post traumatic stress disorder. Eventually both Houses of Congress passed a reconciled bill and appropriated funding for the study.

A number of Assistance Dogs International programs and other organizations have participated in forums held by the VA in the past year to educate key personnel about service dogs and placement protocols of potential providers.

All along, it was assumed that veterans with spinal cord injuries and other physically disabling conditions would be included in this important study on the efficacy of service dogs. However, the recent publication of the study’s parameters on the website titled “Clinical Trials.gov” reveals the Veterans Administration has decided to limit participants in the study solely to veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This startling development shifts the focus away from looking at the benefits of prescribing highly trained service dogs as a form of prosthetic device for veterans with serious mobility impairments or a severe hearing loss as part of an overall assessment on the value of service dogs to injured veterans. Instead the VA will investigate the merits of only one kind of service dog, as described in the section to follow:

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to evaluate use of service dogs for individuals who have been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Objectives include: (1) Assess the impact service dogs have on the mental health and quality of life of veterans; (2) To provide recommendations to the VA to serve as guidance in providing service dogs to veterans; (3) To determine cost associated with total health care utilization and mental health care utilization among veterans with PTSD; and (4) Explore meanings and

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CCI Service Dog “Caspin” assists Wallis Brozman with her parade sign so she can use sign language to interpret for a deaf IAADP member at the Assistance Dog Partners Conference in Japan. See story on page 3.
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perceptions of roles that service dogs fill in the lives of the veterans and their caregivers.

Primary Outcome Measures:
• Mental Health Outcomes [Time Frame: 3, 6, 9, 12, 18 and 24 months after receipt of service dog] are defined by the following measures: CAPS & PCL-C – PTSD diagnosis; Depression – measured by PHQ9; Anxiety – measured by STATE/TRAIT and Alcohol abuse – measured by the Audit-C

Ages Eligible for Study: 18 Years and older
Genders Eligible for Study: Both
Accepts Healthy Volunteers: No

Criteria
Inclusion Criteria:
• Age greater than or equal to 18 years
• Referral from provider
• PTSD diagnosis
• In active therapy for at least three months at time of study for PTSD
• Acceptance by the dog agencies
• Ability to adequately care for a dog
• No current dog ownership

Exclusion Criteria:
• Allergy to animal dander – self-report
• Been hospitalized for mental health reasons in the prior 6 months
• Not living at the same residence for six months
• Diagnoses: psychoses, delusions, dementia, active alcohol/substance use or dependence
• At time of entry – past or active suicide, homicide, cognitive disabilities that would preclude safety of animal and ability needed for participation in the study

Estimated Enrollment: 230
Study Start Date: May 2011
Estimated Study Completion Date: March 2014
Estimated Primary Completion Date: January 2014 (Final data collection date for primary outcome measure)

After sending out a Request for Proposals to researchers, the Department of Veteran Affairs selected Shirley Groer, PhD MS, at the James A. Haley VA Hospital in Florida, as the principle Investigator.

A survey protocol was completed, and sent to research advisory panels for approval. (Approvals were required for both the human and animal subjects.)

The protocol has recently been approved. The link is: http://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT01329341.

As of the study’s commencement date, May 2011, the eligibility requirements for the agencies interested in providing service dogs for this purpose were not yet available.

National Assistance Dog Week 2011

IAADP is excited about National Assistance Dog Week in the United States. How about you?

The week will be August 7 - 13, and we hope you can join in on the celebration.

You and your local assistance dog organization are invited to come up with an educational and/or fundraising event for National Assistance Dog Week that will involve and engage people near you. Help educate people about assistance dogs and raise much needed funds for assistance dog organizations by coming up with something fun and creative.

The NADW website at www.assistancedogweek.org will help you get started. You can download free materials, and submit your event, which will then be posted on the Local NADW Events page.

Both individuals and organizations are invited to hold events. The best one will even win a prize.

Get your governor to sign a proclamation. There’s a sample one posted on the website that you can download. Show off your highly trained dogs’ skills. Hold a dog wash, or dog painting day. Meet up at a pet store, training facility, public park or amusement park. Have a dog walk or motorcycle run. Throw a party. Get creative and have fun!

Let your local newspaper or TV station know. Make a call or send a press release. There’s a sample press release you can download at the website that will help you craft your own. It’s all about spreading the word so more people know about and understand the need for assistance dogs.

Sign up to get the NADW newsletter at the www.assistancedogweek.org website, or click to follow NADW on Facebook or track us on Twitter.

Help assistance dogs get the attention they deserve this summer during National Assistance Dog Week, August 7-13. Don’t wait too long. The days are flying by, so start planning today.

IAADP Writing Competition

Offering Annual $50 Prize in each of 3 categories:
Best Article
Best Opinion Piece
Best Short Story or Anecdote

Entries accepted year round. Unpublished and published material welcome. Photo may accompany article, but not required.
Japan’s Partners Conference
Second International Assistance Dog Partner Conference
By Toni Eames, Wallis Brozman, Cara Miller, Devon Wilkins

TONI (speaker): Moto Arima, director of Japan Hearing Dogs for Deaf People with the generous sponsorship of Yumiko Ookawa, President of the International Assistance Dog Partner Conference in Hyogo, invited 5 IAADP members to return to Japan for this exciting second conference in October 2010. In addition to guide dog Keebler and me with my personal assistant Lynn Danell, the group was rounded out by Canadian Board member Devon Wilkins with guide dog Vestor, Board member Jill Exposito waiting for a successor hearing dog, Cara Miller with hearing dog Maya and Wallis Brozman with service dog Caspin. Cara and Wallis worked as a team. Wallis signed for Cara, who is deaf and Cara spoke the words Wallis signed to her since Wallis has lost the volume of her voice.

WALLIS: International travel is stressful for anyone. The process for getting my service dog onto an international flight and through customs was harder than I anticipated. Japan has rather stringent requirements for entry, and our group started filling out our paperwork three months prior to our departure to Osaka. The first thing we learned was to carefully read the directions for getting a dog through international customs! If these directions weren’t strictly followed, there could be a serious hold up with the paperwork. Certain steps had to be completed in a specific order when applying for waiver of quarantine.

First, we contacted the Japanese quarantine office to be sure we were filling out the right forms, which we were able to find on the internet. Next it was off to the vet for a rabies booster. I was very surprised to learn how specific these quarantine restrictions were: exactly two weeks after the rabies shot, my service dog, Caspin, and I were back at the vet for a rabies titer. Thanks to our IAADP’s membership and the relationship with the Kansas State Laboratory, we were able to have the titer results rushed, so we could proceed to the next step of the process.

When traveling with an assistance dog internationally, it is essential, and required, your dog be microchipped. Most quarantine offices prefer the ISO microchip, the international standard. When filling out your paperwork, always remember to put your dogs microchip ID number on the form.

Our group was fortunate that Moto facilitated communication with the Japanese quarantine office. While this is not always possible, it did make our entry much smoother, since none in our party spoke Japanese and English was often limited. The quarantine office was able to expedite our paperwork and double-check it for accuracy. What a joyous moment it was when our dogs were approved for entry and the in-house 180-day quarantine was waived! We treasured these approval numbers, which would be our ticket into the country with our dogs. Each subsequent form was labeled with this approval number.

Just when I started to feel that I had filled out every form in the world, it was the week before departure, and the stress kicked into full gear. The week of departure is full of packing, preparations, and lots of rest, but also full of veterinary appointments! Within 10 days of departure to a foreign country it is essential that you make some veterinary appointments! Within 48 hours of departure, you need to bring the health certificate and quarantine forms to a USDA office to be stamped. Be warned, these stamps are not free.

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and often require an appointment, however, you can overnight the forms with a pre-paid envelope to your nearest USDA office. Most importantly, make copies of everything. Your most important forms are your rabies titer and health certificate.

Within our group traveling to Japan, it varied whether the airline requested to see our papers before boarding the plane. Personally, my gate agent requested the papers, and I was more than happy to oblige. Then it was off to San Francisco to meet the girls (and their dogs!), and a mad dash to Osaka.

TONI: On Wednesday, October 27, Lynn’s husband drove us to the Fresno airport for our flight to San Francisco. Jill would be flying in from Arizona and the others were coming in from the east coast. Knowing I would have difficulty walking long distances or standing for long times, I brought my own wheelchair.

Lynn took Keebler out for relief during our long layover, but Devon had no way of relieving Vester between flights. Lynn to the rescue! The plane was beginning to board passengers, but Lynn and Vester were not back! As I sat alone with the adjoining seat empty, I became more and more agitated imagining the doors would close and Lynn and Vester would be stranded until the next day. At the height of my anxiety, Lynn returned her canine charge to Devon and buckled in for the long flight!

The six of us had purchased extra space on our United Airlines flight, and it definitely made a difference. The 12 hour flight was long and boring, but thankfully, uneventful. With the 16-hour time difference, we took off at 11:30 A.M. on Wednesday and landed at 3:30 P.M. on Thursday! Just as we began to take naps, it was time to land and face the quarantine officers!

Upon landing, we were whisked to the quarantine office. They took forever going through the papers for the four dogs, but nobody seemed distressed, and we were allowed to leave the area. Moto and several members of her staff escorted us to the airport lobby. When Lynn and the others took their dogs for relief, they were asked to put piddle pads under them, so no urine would contaminate the area. Lynn subsequently noticed folks sprayed the area with disinfectant after the dogs urinated or defecated.

CARA: The conference proceedings were varied, lively, and enjoyable. On October 29th, our first full day, we marched in two parades in the cities of Ashiya and Kobe. As IAADP members, we joined a large contingent of people involved in the assistance dog movement in Japan, including government officials, legislators, trainers, partners, supporters, and friends. Our parade routes took us across streets, down sidewalks, through downtown metropolises, and even through a bustling outdoor mall. Many heads were turned as we passed through, proudly wearing orange jerseys proclaiming the conference and cheering as fliers and pamphlets were handed out to spectators. As the assistance dog movement is a newer and growing phenomenon in Japan, we hoped to draw attention to assistance dogs and their partners with disabilities.

Both parades were kicked off with rousing and meaningful speeches made by the mayors of Ashiya and Kobe, who pledged their commitment to increasing public awareness of assistance dogs. Hyogo governor Toshizo Ido welcomed conference participants and spoke of new, specific legislation regarding the rights of individuals with disabilities partnered with assistance dogs.

That evening, IAADP members were honored and delighted to don traditional kimonos as we joined a celebratory conference banquet. Kicked off by conference Executive Committee Chair Yumiko Ookawa, the banquet boasted delicious food, raffle prizes, and rousing musical performances. Toni was a featured speaker and went on stage to share her experiences as a longtime guide dog partner and international assistance dog advocate. Throughout the evening, we English speakers gratefully relied on the assistance and expertise of our Japanese-

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English translator Aki Nakano! Banquet attendees also were treated to a stirring musical performance done in Japanese Sign Language. Maya and I enjoyed the wonderfully festive atmosphere and went to sleep that night exhausted but absolutely happy.

October 30th was a full day of conference with lectures, panels, and question-and-answer sessions. The day started off with a discussion forum where Japanese schoolchildren and community organizations were invited to meet and interact with assistance dog teams. Of note, the conference center technology was eye-popping in terms of accessibility. I especially marveled at the high-tech stairs leading up to the auditorium stage which, at the push of a button, could flatten into a moving wheelchair lift rising to the stage. For the rest of the morning, IAADP delegates joined Japanese hearing, guide, and service dog partners in answering questions about our experiences with public access, the bonds we have with our dogs, and the many tasks our dogs perform. After a generous lunch provided by the conference organizers, we rooted for Toni as she presented a lecture on IAADP’s mission of promoting the assistance dog movement. The rest of the IAADP delegation was then invited on stage to participate in a panel discussion about our experiences as assistance dog partners and advocates in North America. Throughout the day, Japanese interpreters translated conference proceedings into spoken Japanese, Japanese Sign Language, and live written and transcribed Japanese for conference attendees.

As I looked around the auditorium, I couldn’t help but marvel at the unified efforts of the many people who pitched in to make the conference a success. As the Japanese government funds assistance dog organizations and their training, a limited number of assistance dog applicants per prefecture are approved with their doctor’s permission. In fact, during the conference, I heard a statistic estimating the number of trained hearing dogs throughout Japan at approximately twenty. Thus, I was especially taken with the deaf and hard of hearing individuals in attendance with their orange-vested dogs trained by Moto Arima and her staff.

As we communicated via improvised sign language, I was struck by appreciation for how much the Japanese assistance dog partners have persevered in the face of great challenges. This includes navigating and surviving within a closely regulated application, training, and matching system; advocating for and educating the public about assistance dogs; and living by the very stringent Japanese cultural norms around hygiene and cleanliness. Among conference attendees, it appeared the Japanese assistance dog partners made every effort to limit shedding, mainly by using custom-sewn full body suits or handmade floor mats.

TONI: The evening entertainment was a light dinner at the home of Mrs. Ashida, one of the conference supporters. Since we had been to the city of Kobe, we joked with Moto about wanting to eat Kobe beef. At the party, to our great culinary delight, each of us was given several slices of the most moist and flavourful beef I ever ate! Kobe beef is probably the most expensive beef in the world.

CARA: On October 31st, the final day of the conference, proceedings began with a keynote speech by Assistance Dogs International (ADI) North America President Corey Hudson, CEO of Canine Companions for Independence (CCI). After discussing the assistance dog industry in North America and presenting on the mission and operations of CCI, he joined CCI graduates Jill Exposito and Wallis Brozman in a panel Q&A discussion about the relationship between assistance dog partners and their programs.

Following this event, assistance dog partners took the stage with their dogs and introduced themselves while speaking meaningfully about their lives and experiences together.

Afternoon sessions included memorable demonstrations and speeches by the assistance dog teams in attendance. Japanese and American service dog teams including Wallis and Caspin demonstrated tasks such as retrieval of...
fallen items and removal of clothing such as socks. Guide
dog teams including President Toni and Keebler as well as
Devon with Vestor discussed their increased independence.
A number of Japanese hearing dog partners demonstrated
how their dogs alert them to sounds such as the ringing of
a bell and their names being called. After Jill spoke lov-
ingly about her late hearing dog Uriah, I had the pleasure
of demonstrating how Maya alerts me to a beeping timer,
keys accidentally dropped, and a friend calling my name.
To share such events and swap stories with other assistance
dog partners is an incredibly special and unforgettable
experience.

I’m honored and humbled to have contributed to this
growing international movement to raise awareness about
assistance dogs. I remain most grateful for the experience
and everything that I learned.

TONI: It was sad saying farewell to our new friends.
Before leaving the very accessible conference center, we
were beyond startled when Moto and a dozen helpers got
down on the floor to lint roll the carpet. Moto explained
some dog hair might stick to the carpet and a vacuum
cleaner would not get every last strand. One always left an
area as clean as one originally found it! If only that senti-
ment were adopted in the U.S.!

DEVON: One of my favorite events occurred during the
conference. Prior to one of the afternoon proceedings, we
were escorted to the nearby hot springs pool where folks
removed shoes and socks to soak and cleanse their feet in
the warm water. According to an article on ask.com, the
sulphur in the water has positive therapeutic effects on
skin disease, women’s diseases, asthma, neuralgia, arterio-
sclerosis, rheumatism and shoulder, neck and wrist pains.
Sulphur is a mineral naturally occurring near hot springs
and volcanic craters. Sulphur is known as “nature’s beauty
mineral” because the body needs it to manufacture colli-
gen, which keeps the skin elastic and young-looking. Aside
from all of that, though, dangling our feet in the water, a
comfortable bath tub temperature was positively heavenly.
My request to hold the remainder of the conference there
was politely but firmly denied. In anticipation of a question
you might be dying to ask, let me say that our assistance
dogs were not allowed to take a sulphur bath.

At the close of the conference, the kind and generous
volunteers who had been with us since our arrival drove us
to a hotel in Osaka. After breakfast the next day, we were
driven to the city’s downtown sector. Vestor and I cur-
rently live in a central Ontario town with a population of
about 18,000, but I lived in Toronto for seven years back in
the 1970’s, so I’m quite used to the hustle and bustle there.
That, however, did absolutely nothing to prepare me for the
bedlam that awaited us.

Within a few blocks, we were out of the organized chaos,
and preparing to stop at a stand selling octopus pancakes,
officially known as Takoyaki. Our volunteers picked up
the pancakes on short sticks, dipped them into a steaming
sauce, and handed them to us. I found that I pretty
much had to put the pancake in my mouth all at one time,
because it was dripping with sauce. To me, the octopus
seemed a bit sinewy, but I wouldn’t have passed up the ex-
perience for the world.

For lunch, we stopped at a restaurant serving udon soup.
Cara said the look on my face was priceless when I dis-
covered the bowls were easily ten inches in circumference,
and asked me to strike the pose again for a photo. Try as I
might, I soon became my usually ungraceful self as I at-
tempted to shovel the long noodles into my mouth.

From there, it was off to the aquarium, where the high-
light for those of us who were blind was the petting com-
ponent. Once elbow-deep in water, we made the acquain-
tance of a sand shark, who felt quite scaly, and a sting-
ray, much slimier to the touch than the sand shark. The
recollection that it was a stingray that got the best of the
late Steve Irwin gave me a moment’s pause, but I simply
couldn’t pass up the opportunity to say hello. The hand
of our esteemed president, Toni Eames, came too close to
the stingray’s tail, and he flicked it, leaving her thoroughly
drenched, and providing the rest of us with a good laugh at
her expense. We made valiant attempts to capture photos of
our dogs peering through the glass, but they remained to-
tally unimpressed by the various species of fish.

Nearby, there was a ferriswheel. Both Toni and I initially
wondered at the wisdom of the decision made by Cara and
Wallis to take their dogs on with them, but soon realized
it wasn’t anything like the carnival seats riders are usu-
ally strapped into. Instead, it was more like an elevator car

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that slowly took us high above the city. Lynn commented the people looked no bigger than ants. Apparently, the view was fantastic, but pictures didn’t turn out because of the glass windows.

Before Cara, Wallis, and I left for the airport the next day, we all made the 30-minute uphill journey to the Osaka castle. Our companions with sight were awe-struck by the mote and 30-foot wall that surrounded it. For Vestor and me, the advantage to making the long journey from the hotel to the castle and back was that by the time we board ed the plane for the 10-hour flight back to San Francisco, we were both tired enough to sleep.

At times, language did prove to be a bit of a barrier, but all of us were able to laugh off any miscommunications that arose. The fact that our volunteers were so gracious and so kind made it a wonderfully enjoyable trip.

TONI: In Osaka, Lynn and Jill were thrilled with the view of the castle from our thirteenth floor hotel window with its motes and wall. The next day they were delighted to see the interior of the castle.

The weather was very good to us during the trip. One morning Lynn got soaked when she took Keebler and Vestor out, but by the time we gathered for sightseeing, the rain had left. It was a very long walk from the hotel to the castle, so I was grateful to Lynn and Corey’s wife Kathy for their push power.

I must brag about my Keebler girl. Whether guiding me in the hotel, heeling next to my wheelchair or being handled by another member of the group, she was unruffled. One funny observation; Keebler had no opportunity to scavenge, since Japan is the cleanest country I ever visited. No dried gum under tables and chairs and no crumbs on restaurant floors.

After a narrated boat trip, our final sightseeing venture was the bunraku puppets. Totally performed in Japanese, these actors operated large puppets while instruments played and another actor told the historic story.

That night I surprised Moto and company by picking up the check at our Chinese dinner. Throughout this trip, our hosts treated us like most valued guests, and I wanted to show our extreme appreciation for their kindness. It was a very enjoyable dinner with fun interactions and translations.

The morning of November 3rd found us preparing for our trip back to the States – Jill to Arizona and Lynn and I to California. We arrived early to the Osaka airport to get Keebler checked out of quarantine, a fairly long process. It left a bit of time for gift shopping, and then it was a teary farewell to Moto and her escorts. The trip to San Francisco was a bit shorter, 9 and half hours.

It was extremely hectic gathering our luggage to get through customs, then re-entering security. It was gratifying being back home in Fresno and returning to my life with my cats and retired guide dog Latrell.
Fake Service Dogs
Some pet owners try to skirt rules with fake service dogs. They get look-alike certifications and vests off the Internet
By Wayne K. Roustan, Sun Sentinel, April 8, 2011

Legitimate service dog owners and trainers in South Florida say they are increasingly frustrated by loopholes and gray areas in state and federal law that allow some pet owners to pass off their pooches as certified service dogs. The deception allows their pets to live in restricted housing, accompany them inside restaurants and hotels or fly for free in airplane cabins rather than in cargo holds.

“I don’t want to say it’s a scam, but it is a scam,” according to Nick Kutsukos, 72, who runs the Elite K9 Academy in Jupiter and has trained service dogs for 40 years.

All a person has to do is log onto one of many service dog certification websites, fill out the form online and send a check, money order, or credit card number and perhaps a photograph of their dog.

For between $20 and $300, the pet owner will get a specially marked vest or collar for their pet to wear, special identification tags or ID cards, a certificate suitable for framing, training DVDs, information CDs and other official looking items not required by law.

One website recommends annual certification, while another offers increasingly expensive bronze, silver, gold, and platinum packages. Still another site features misspelled words and poor grammar.

“There is no certification required, so there’s no such thing as a legitimate [document],” said Toni Eames, president of the Michigan-based International Association of Assistance Dog Partners.

“Anyone who sells you a certification is a scammer,” said Eames, who also is blind and has her own guide dog.

Kutsukos, who has a service dog to help with his seizures, said the fake certifications “make it difficult for people with legitimate service dogs to do things.”

The Americans with Disabilities Act was passed in 1990 to protect the rights of the disabled, including their use of service animals. But confusion ensued when monkeys, cats, ferrets and other critters were utilized to help people with special needs function in public places, such as restaurants and hotels.

The U.S. Department of Justice amended guidelines on March 15 to narrow the definition of service animals to dogs that are trained to perform specific tasks related to the owner’s proven disability.

Guide dogs are the most recognizable, having assisted the blind or visually impaired for more than 50 years, according to Jose Lopez with the Lighthouse of Broward, which serves the sight impaired. He has had a guide dog for five years and is a consultant for guide dog training schools.

“It’s a heavy gray area,” Lopez said. “Basically everybody can print [certifications] from the Internet and say ‘That’s my assistance dog.’”

“Legitimate service dogs of almost any size or breed can be taught a variety of tasks that include alerting a deaf person to sirens or alarms, retrieving medication, warning of impending seizures, or stopping autistic children from wandering off.

“The dogs are also trained to wake up a veteran with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder who’s having a nightmare, and help to prevent or interrupt destructive or impulsive behavior by people with a neurological or psychiatric disability,” Kutsukos said.

Dogs that provide emotional comfort are not considered service animals under the new ADA rules, but dogs, monkeys, ferrets and other support animals still are allowed in airplane cabins under the Air Carrier Access Act and in homes under the Fair Housing Act with appropriate proof from the owner’s doctor, according to Eames.

Still, not everyone bothers.

“People come up to me all the time and ask ‘Where do I get one of those harnesses to take my dog with me?’ ” Eames said. “They don’t have any clue [my dog] had two years of training before I was able to take her on a plane with me.”

There are about 20,000 legitimate service dogs across the country and between 600 and 2,000 in Florida, according to Ken Lyons, director of Orlando-based Service Dogs of Florida.

“It takes up to two years of training with a three-year waiting list at most training schools and only 2,500 dogs graduate each year. Training guide dogs for the blind can cost up to $40,000,” Lyons said.

“If you are truly disabled, then it’s worth the money,” Kutsukos said. However, given the time and money invested in training service dogs, disabled users and trainers are angered by those who buy or sell worthless service dog items online for imposter pets.

“I’m condemning the people who are irresponsible and force people into cheating,” Eames said.

“Any certification, ID card, vest, tag and harness should include contact information for the service dog’s school and trainer but it’s not mandatory,” Lopez said.

By law there are only two questions that can be asked of a disabled person with a service dog: Is this a service dog for disabilities? What tasks or assistance does the dog provide you with?

Barring a disabled person and their service dog from a restaurant, hotel, airplane or other public places is a second-degree misdemeanor in Florida, punishable by up to 60 days in jail and a $500 fine.

Or a federal judge can order a change in business policies to allow access by disabled customers and their service dogs. Monetary penalties are rare.

If a person tries to fake a disability and pretend their pet is a service animal, they risk a fine at the very least or federal fraud charges in extreme cases, Lyons said.

“If you portray yourself as disabled, or your pet as a service animal, the minute you go out in public you’re committing a crime,” he said. “It’s felony fraud.”

* Reprinted with permission from the South Florida Sun Sentinel.
I remember glily saying a few years ago, that when I lost my service dog, Lucas, I would be at the animal shelter the next day picking out his replacement. What I had no clue about then was how deeply the loss of a service dog would effect me and how hard it is to find a suitable dog from the shelter. I am passionate about rescuing animals from shelters so they will not be euthanized and I am sure many great service dogs could come from that resource. However, when trying to find the right size, age, and temperament there are a lot of dogs to sift through.

Lucas, a German Shepherd, came to me with a lot of baggage at age 2. He had been abandoned and survived on his own for several months before being rescued. I wanted a pet and a well behaved dog, but first I had to get him healthy. Heartworms, ear infections, and other parasites were easily cured. His relationship issues were not. But what we found in working with him was a very intelligent, analytical, easily bored dog with untold potential. A very special trainer convinced me that I needed a service dog and Lucas needed a job. It took two years of daily hard work, but he passed his public access test with flying colors able to help me at home and in public. But he was only able to work for about three years when degenerative spinal myelopathy took its toll. I had him euthanized three years and three months later.

I desperately wanted another service dog and thoroughly enjoyed the training process, but I was also ten years older and not as mobile as I once was. I had to have a large dog to use a mobility harness with, a calm dog that didn’t eat cats, and of a temperament to work in public. I started contacting rescue groups in the area and was amazed at how many turned me down flat because I was going to train the dog to be a service dog. I understood some of their concern that I wouldn’t keep the dog if it didn’t complete training, but some said “no” even after I explained that I would keep it to work around the house even if it wasn’t suitable for public work. Others thought it was wrong to have a dog work for fear it would “overtax” them. Frankly, I was afraid to lie or just omit the fact I was going to train it as some groups turned me down flat because I was going to train the dog to be a service dog. I understood some of their concern that I wouldn’t keep the dog if it didn’t complete training, but some said “no” even after I explained that I would keep it to work around the house even if it wasn’t suitable for public work. Others thought it was wrong to have a dog work for fear it would “overtax” them. Frankly, I was afraid to lie or just omit the fact I was going to train it as some groups retain ownership of the dog and can repossess it. Besides, I think being a service dog is a great fulfilling life for a dog. I found two rescue groups who agreed with me, so then I got down to finding the right dog.

One of the groups that approved me to adopt a dog was Missouri German Shepherd Rescue. I wasn’t sure I wanted another GSD because of the health problems they have, but love their personalities. Again finding the right combination of size, age and temperament proved challenging. When I found a dog I really thought would work, I wanted my dog trainer to look at him, but he was adopted before that could be arranged. The other group had very few large dogs (I was looking for one 28 inches at the shoulder for my harness) and agreed to keep their eyes out for such a dog to rescue. I also scoured the local shelters, whose populations change daily. A couple of dogs that I thought might work had NO basic manners or training and could have been dangerous for me to tackle. (I also have my 85 year old mother and her safety to take into consideration.) One dog at the local shelter was BIG, calm and willing to learn but was a habitual fence-jumper. Another pulled the shelter worker over on the leash. And then there was the cat-friendly problem.

Let me be clear. If I had wanted just a pet, I found hundreds of great dogs needing homes. During this process, I realized a couple of things: How special Lucas was, how big a job taking him on had been, how daunting a task finding the new dog would be.

The trainer I work with has a small business out of her home and she is a service dog partner also. I trust her instincts about dogs implicitly and wanted her to look at any dog I considered. Jennifer had trained Lucas (and me) and knew what I needed. I also wanted a dog that had less baggage than Lucas so training would go faster and I could work with the dog longer. I was also praying for good health.

Jennifer knew a trainer of service dogs in Florida and had spent time at her home. She found two dogs that might work for me in Florida: Jethro was a handsome redbone mix, but he became very touchy about his feet; Echo was an 18-month-old Doberman she had trained for a young man who bought her as a puppy. When the man went off to college, his family wouldn’t keep the dog and he asked the trainer to take her. She was 29 inches at the shoulder and a striking dog. Jennifer was going to Florida in a month and said she would check her out for me.

Reports from Florida were promising. Echo was a bit of a “diva” but was calm and sensitive and smart. She knew basic obedience and had a willingness to work. She was lacking in confidence and took her time adjusting to things that scared her. She had spent a great deal of her life in a crate without exposure to lots of new things but she didn’t panic in new situations. Jennifer thought she just might work and brought her home.

I think it is interesting that the local Doberman Rescue was one of the first groups that turned me down flat. I had owned a Doberman years ago and thought they were wonderful, in spite of their “devil dog” reputation. Echo proved me right. The agreement with Jennifer was I get to know Echo, and then decide if I wanted to keep her...It was love at first sight.

Three months later Echo is retrieving reliably at home and closing the dishwasher door, she is working on “tug” on various doors, getting the cordless phone, taking the trash to the garage, picking up her toys and putting them away and getting laundry out of the dryer. We haven’t worked much with the harness yet, but my PT is anxious to help out on that task when she and I are ready. Echo has a long way to go, but is calm and much more confident in public. She is well on her way to becoming a real partner for me and I have enjoyed every minute of the training process.

What I have learned from this experience is how very little people know about a service dog’s life and how happy they are. Echo loves to go with me and I think anticipates seeing new things now. She is a real lady. If more rescue groups were willing to work with trainers to find dogs in shelters that could have this wonderful fulfilling life as a service dog, more lives could be saved.
An interesting model has evolved in France for providing guide dogs to the blind and assistance dogs to adults and children with disabling conditions other than blindness.

French history attributes the first guide dog trained in France to Paul Corteville, who reportedly trained one for a friend in 1952, then went on to pioneer the first guide dog school near Lille. Twenty years later, Paul Corteville met with Joseph Micou, the founder of a second guide dog school in the South of France, to launch the nonprofit organization, the French Federation of Guide Dog Associations.

The French Federation has grown since 1972 to encompass ten schools as members. Both the French Federation itself and the ten schools individually are dues paying members of the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF).

Let it be noted that in spite of only referencing the term “guide dog” in the names of the French Federation and IGDF, both organizations have members that have expanded their services to encompass the training of different kinds of assistance dogs for disabled children and adults.

Since its inception nearly forty years ago, the French Federation has fostered a set of training standards for member schools, developed a curriculum to educate and license guide dog instructors in France and it enables schools to better communicate on other issues of mutual interest or concern, such as access issues, fundraising ethics and equipment innovations.

To ensure an adequate supply of guide dogs and assistance dogs, the French Federation established a Breeding and Selection Centre. The current goal is to breed one hundred puppies per year for member schools. It seems most unusual to have one source supplying the majority of the dogs trained for this career to ten different schools. I can’t think of another country in which this kind of resource exists.

One of the standards these schools must follow for official recognition is to place puppies who are future guide dogs in a puppy raiser home for ten months. Pups selected as future assistance dogs must spend sixteen months in a puppy raiser home before returning to the school for at least six months of additional training prior to placement.

The French Federation is credited with the passage of the first piece of legislation granting access rights to the visually impaired in 1982. However, as many of us know, getting legislation passed is only the first step. It can take decades to educate businesses, the public and law enforcement about a law granting “access rights” to disabled individuals.

Reportedly it was uphill work till 2005, when a very important piece of civil rights legislation for the disabled was finally adopted. The translation of the name of the law is “The Equality of Rights and Chances, the Integration and the Citizenship of the Handicapped Persons.”

During 2005, the French Federation and the French Association of Guide Dog Users worked closely with the government to establish national standards for the training and use of guide dogs and assistance dogs. As an incentive for schools to follow the new standards, only those which meet all the specified criteria are entitled to have “an official label,” which means their graduates will be eligible for a monthly allowance for the upkeep of the dog. Other programs may place guide or assistance dogs, but their graduates will not qualify for this allowance from the French government.

There are an estimated 1,200 working teams in France. Collectively, the ten schools train about 140 “units” each year. They must do regular follow up with teams in the field. They employ sixty state licenced guide dog instructors to accomplish this, according to the French Federation’s website statistics.

The government does not pay for guide or assistance dogs through a government operated health care system such as that supported by taxpayers in Austria. Nor can the schools charge the disabled for a guide dog or assistance dog. The French Federation requires member schools to support themselves by the solicitation of charitable donations and legacies.

To be eligible to apply for a free guide or assistance dog, the applicant must be officially certified as disabled by the government. The next step is to go through an interview with the school’s allocation committee. As required for the “official label,” there must be a doctor and a guide dog instructor on the committee and if the individual is blind, an Orientation and Mobility Instructor will provide input. The individual must be capable of properly looking after a dog.

If an applicant is accepted, the applicant will receive an education course on how to work effectively with the dog. The course must run a minimum of two weeks. At least one week of instruction must take place in the area where the person actually lives if the person is blind.

To reduce the problem of doting pet owners with fake credentials bought on the internet, businesses in France have a right to ask to see the handler’s card from the government verifying the individual is disabled. A business can also ask to see official paperwork documenting the dog is a guide dog or assistance dog.

Access can also be refused if the dog does not behave appropriately. In France, that means the dog must toilet in the street, not up on the sidewalk according to the guidance provided. The dog should not get up on the seat in a taxi cab or get on a bed in a hotel room. The dog should not solicit attention from other patrons in a restaurant or jump on people.

In the event attempts to educate a business owner about your access rights proves futile, the French Federation recommends calling the police to generate a written report about the denial of access. The disabled person is encouraged to file a complaint with the French Association of Guide Dog Users. A substantial fine can be imposed for denial of access.

Under the civil rights act passed in 2005, a disabled handler is entitled work with his or her dog in stores, libraries, restaurants and just about anywhere the public is welcome.

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This includes access to public transportation. For sanitary reasons, the dog is not allowed in the kitchen of a catering business or in certain rooms or areas of a hospital. Handlers may be requested to muzzle their dog on air transports.

France now considers itself an official “rabies free” state, so it imposes requirements similar to Great Britain’s for entering the country with a dog from countries like the United States which do not qualify as “rabies free.” Such a dog must be microchipped, then have a rabies titer test at least thirty days after the rabies vaccination is given. The team must then wait another three months minimum before being permitted to enter France.

Ten days before departure or less, the dog must obtain a health certificate from a certified veterinarian, documenting the dog shows no clinical sign of disease and the dog has not been in contact with rabid animals during the past six months nor will the dog be in contact with animals of lesser sanitary status until arrival. The veterinarian must also verify that this dog has had vaccinations for canine distemper, viral hepatitis, leptospirosis and canine parvovirus. A bilingual health certificate is available for downloading from the government’s website.

Feedback from IAADP members in the USA who have traveled to France with a canine partner has largely been very positive. Eurostar’s acceptance of guide dogs and assistance dogs for wheelchair users and other disabling conditions in recent years is a welcome development for French teams and also for foreigners who travel to this beautiful country with their assistance dogs for business or pleasure.

Pawz for Furry Paws

A quick and easy way to protect our dogs’ feet

By Toni Eames

They look like a colorful cross between galoshes and balloons, but they are foot protectors. Pawz Boots are biodegradable, inexpensive, waterproof and reusable. They go on easily and securely without zippers or straps.

Without padding, your dog can feel the ground providing a sense of security.

Suggested uses by the Pawz Boots Company: ice and snow, salt, liquid chloride, lawn chemicals, pesticides, fire ants, grass allergies, pad rashes, sand irritation, pool liners, dog run bacteria, traction control, hot pavement, hardwood floors and post surgical infections.

They come 12 to a package and are available in tiny to extra large sizes.

I tried them on both my working guide, Keebler, and my late husband’s retired guide, Latrell. I found them a bit cumbersome to get on, but the dogs adjusted quickly, particularly since the paw bends naturally in the boot. They are available from KV Vet Supply, from whom we get a significant discount, and they can also be purchased at Petco or PetSmart. I think you’ll be very pleased if you give them a try.

Introducing Dr. Barry Watson

Newest Member Appointed to IAADP’s Animal Health Care Community Advisory Board

By Toni Eames

B arry, a graduate of Colorado State School of Veterinary Medicine, recently retired as Sr. Veterinary Affairs Manager at Hill’s Pet Nutrition. Barry and his brother Rick, also a veterinarian, owned three small animal hospitals and worked in private practice for many years before joining Hill’s.

On a more personal side, Barry enjoys woodworking, watercolor painting, hiking/hiking, basketball and walking his nine-year-old Golden Retriever Molly. His favorite actors are Clint Eastwood, Humphrey Bogart and Burt Lancaster. Most scrumptious dessert: chocolate non-fat yogurt with marshmallows. Greatest dinner choice: Barbecued hamburgers, beans, corn on the cob and Corona light beer or Sierra Pale. Country most beloved to visit: Ireland. When needing a respite from the hassles of work days, he enjoys vacationing in the mountains or at the seashore.

Barry loves to read and among his favorite books are: Jane Goodall’s A Reason for Hope, Earnest Shackelton’s Endurance, Lee Strobel’s A Case for Faith and Jeannette Wall’s The Glass Castle. Television watching includes: favorite TV shows Old Yankee Workshop, HGTV, ESPN, History Channel and NBA Basketball. Barry does have pet peeves: waiting in line, most tv commercials – especially irritating ones about medication and most sitcoms.

Barry has been married to wife Robbie, a Speech and Language Pathologist, for 38 years and they are the parents of two daughters. The Watsons live in the Sacramento, California area.

I met Barry in May, 2010 when I traveled to the University of California at Davis to do a Hill’s-sponsored presentation. He was the liaison who assisted me in setting up presentations at that veterinary school and subsequently at Western University of Health Sciences, Oregon State and Washington State. He is a kind, concerned, man wanting to learn and become further involved with the assistance dog movement. IAADP welcomes him to our Advisory Board.

Hope You Will Support IAADP!

Donate by Shopping Through
http://www.IGIVE.com/IAADP
The Skies are Getting Friendlier!

By Sarah Broderick

In the fall, my husband and I decided it was time to spend a Thanksgiving with my expanding family in Washington D.C. We had not gone for over 20 years but with me feeling I could handle the trip this time and my father soon to turn 90, I knew it was important to go. We booked a round-trip flight on Alaska Airlines from Seattle to D.C.

At the time, I did not give much thought to having my service dog Luna accompany me. She was having some health issues and I was not sure I should take her but I ultimately decided she would be fine and I really needed her to go with me. If Luna, my 9-year-old Golden Retriever cannot be with me most of the time, it is really hard on both of us.

My service dog has helped me with bipolar depression and ever increasing anxiety and panic attacks. She knows when I am about to have a panic attack or get upset and is by my side in a second. I have taught her to come between strangers and myself to prevent people getting in my personal space. I also trained her to paw me when I make a slight hand movement on my thigh indicating that she needs to go potty. It is an easy out if I want to leave a situation. One time when my depression was particularly severe Luna helped locate our car in a busy parking lot – another useful skill I had trained Luna to perform. Because of Luna, a great psychiatrist and new meds, that debilitating part of my depression disappeared.

Like many people with disabilities, I experience a profound closeness in the bond with my service dog. Pet owners do as well however I believe our relationship is different because we depend on our dogs in so many more ways and to accompany us everywhere we go. In addition to the unconditional love dogs provide all their owners, service animals have that extra unique ability to learn from our cues and provide comfort, support or just a furry head to pet when the situation dictates. One of the most important things Luna can do for me is provide a tactile diversion. While not “a trained task” per se, she is so sweet, calm, and mellow, petting her is something that calms me.

Having a psychiatric service dog does also present problems. People look at me and, though it’s not proper etiquette, often ask me what’s my disability since my condition is virtually “invisible.” I am constantly asked if I am merely training the dog for a disabled recipient. Sometimes I say, “Yes,” because it is just easier not to explain though on occasion, depending on my mood, I do admit that she helps me with panic attacks. Some of this is what I decided to tell the airlines.

I soon called the airline back to say I would be bringing Luna and requested a bulkhead seat for the three of us. The agent at Alaska Airlines was less than helpful and insisted no matter what I said that there was no bulkhead available in either direction. A few days later, I tried again in hopes that perhaps a different agent would be more helpful. I thought it would help if I explained that although my assistance dog was trained to curl up in a ball, she was aging and needed more room to lie even under my legs. She has some arthritis in one back paw and needs to stretch her leg a bit occasionally. This was to be a 5 and 6-hour flight.

I also explained what I needed her for. But I got no further with this agent than the other. She did tell me I could upgrade but it would cost me $75 to activate my mileage program and about $160 and 15,000 of my miles (half of what I had). For Luna’s sake I decided to do the upgrade although it was not something I could really afford.

Luna and I would remain in first class, but my husband – whom I rely on traveling as I do Luna – would need to remain in coach. I was not happy about the separation.

A week or so later I received some information from IAADP. In it was a survey form and one of the questions was have you ever been denied a bulkhead seat within 48 hours of departure. I thought to myself this is interesting and timely. I felt if IAADP was asking this question then there is something wrong with being denied the bulkhead seat for someone with a disability. Because I do not have an obvious mobility problem, some airlines now ask a letter from my psychiatrist stating that Luna needs to accompany me on planes. I have two letters specifically for that reason for both Southwest Airlines and Alaska. Even though Luna is a certified service dog through Summit Assistance Dogs in Anacortes, WA, has a jacket and an ID card, I still need proof that I need her.

I am no stranger to confronting misconceptions and out and out ignorance about public access for service animals having been an advanced trainer for Summit Assistance Dogs for over eight years (and given Luna when she was about six months old). I continue to train service dogs privately who will now be certified through the Foundation for Service Dog Support for whom I am a rep. I also train as an independent contractor as an advanced trainer for Canine Partners of the Rockies in CO.

I am cofounder for Dogs on Call, an all-volunteer club in Anacortes, WA, made up of certified therapy dog teams. My cofounder and I have implemented elementary school programs; a Juvenile Detention program and many elder care visitations as DOC members. We have certified over 25 teams.

I am certified to give the Canine Good Citizen control evaluation tests and the evaluation test for Love on a Leash for people wanting to become a certified therapy dog team. I teach Therapy Dog Preparedness classes as required. I am hoping to work with veterans in the future.

Luna is also a certified therapy dog. For over six years we have been part of DOC’s reading enhancement program for primarily 2nd and 3rd graders. Luna patiently listens to children struggling with reading. She neither judges or criticizes and her mellowness and kindness encourage the children to read out loud with confidence.

We have participated in one on one counseling with elementary school children and a school counselor. I think the most fun Luna and I had was working with a 3rd grader with cerebral palsy. The young boy beamed on the days he

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worked (played) with Luna. Luna helped him with his fine motor skills and balance issues in many fun ways!

We often visit the elderly in nursing homes, memory care and adult day care and assisted living facilities in our county and community. Last year Luna and I received the Governor’s Award of Excellence for “Outstanding Volunteer Service.”

Before my flight to Washington D.C., the news was abuzz with the uproar about pat downs and going through scanners. It prompted me to contact TSA to ask how my service dog would be handled if I needed to go through the scanner. At the same time I mentioned I had an issue with seating for Alaska Airlines. I received an answer quickly and TSA gave me the contact information I needed for The Department of Transportation (DOT) explaining they are the ones I needed to contact if I had a problem like this with a particular airline. I explained the problem to DOT and to my astonishment within an hour I received a call from a reservation supervisor at Alaska Airlines. She was extremely polite and helpful and said I should NOT have been denied a bulkhead seat. I explained that two agents said they could not possibly give me the bulkhead seats and being that this violated DOT policy, she agreed to inform the airline staff. She also said she would reimburse my money if I wanted to be given a bulkhead seat with my husband. At that point I decided what the heck, Luna and I might as well enjoy first class. The agent made sure we had coach bulkhead seats for the return flight.

A few short hours later I received a follow-up call from The Department of Transportation advising that I should receive a call from Alaska. I told her I already had and informed them what the woman did for us. I was very, very impressed with the help I received and the quick action that took place.

One of the best things was when we arrived at the airport and checked in for our outbound flight, an agent said: “Mr. Broderick, you are upgraded to first class (along with your wife and dog) and I hope you enjoy your flight.” We hustled away in case they realized their mistake! We were so pleased and what a wonderful cross-country flight we had!

The lesson I learned was if you feel your rights are not respected, then it is worth persevering and advocating for yourself. If you are polite, patient but persistent it is amazing what you can get in return. It is equally amazing to me the government reps, typically criticized for working bureaucratically in slow motion, could be so efficient and accommodating.

I wish I had this all in writing in case I have another issue about bulkhead seats. But most important I hope people with disabilities never get denied the proper seats whether their disability is invisible or not.

I am so grateful to TSA, DOT and Alaska Airlines for their swift action and help in this matter.

DOT Forum in DC

By Becky Barnes

In January, 2011, I was invited to participate in a forum hosted by the U.S. Department of Transportation. The two-day event was held in Washington, D.C. and its focus was on travelers with disabilities. Specific topics were traveling with service animals, enplaning and deplaning assistance and passenger/airline communications.

The first day consisted of four panel discussions, each followed by a question-answer period. The second day consisted of three breakout sessions. Participants were assigned to a group and each group cycled through all three sessions. The day closed with a reporting session from all three groups.

On day one the first panel, in which I was a participant, focused on perspectives of people with disabilities. Represented on the panel were service animal handlers (that was me), a representative from Paralyzed Veterans, the National Federation of the Blind, Hearing Loss Association of America and a woman representing families with children who have autism. We each had about ten minutes to speak and I talked about two main issues: the importance of providing relief areas in airports and consistency of policies on seating passengers with service animals. I also talked a bit about how security screening is not always handled in a consistent manner, particularly when it comes to who needs to be “patted down!” if only the dog sets off the alarm on the machine. During the question period most questions focused on wheelchair and autism issues.

The next two panels were made up of representatives from air carriers, the first panel being US carriers and the second foreign. Each discussed the various policies and programs they offer for travelers with disabilities. The last panel of the day was made up of representatives from government agencies, each of whom addressed regulations from its own perspective.

On day two the three breakout sessions were on service animals, enplaning-deplaning assistance and passenger/airline communications. The service animal session consisted of a panel of a representative from the Department of Transportation (DOT) and three service dog handlers, a guide dog handler (who works for the Department of Transportation), a woman with a hearing dog and a woman with a service dog who is trained to pick up objects, open doors, and other tasks to assist someone in a wheelchair. Each presented on what their dog is trained to do. Then there was discussion around airport relief areas, service animal documentation, seating policies.

The vast majority of the audience was representatives from the airlines. One question I asked was whether the DOT was planning to make any adjustments to its definition of service animal in light of the Department of Justice’s new language? The answer was no, they would maintain their consideration of both emotional support animals and service animals other than dogs.

We were also told that there will be a new notice of proposed rule-making from the Dept. of Transportation re-

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On the Loss of a Service Dog

For PIPER – July 25, 2010

By Ashley Foster

You weep at night and cry for I am not there.
You say you go to touch me, and do not feel,
you listen for my voice, it no longer carries
on the air.

You say you see, hear, and feel reminders
everywhere you turn;
And, to you I ask - is this not enough to learn?

For I am always with you,
not just in memory.

Reach beyond what you know -
See beyond what you can see.

And, once again near you,
my voice will echo in the wind,
for I am always with you:
still your dear and faithful friend.

Housing Discrimination?

Fighting illegal housing discrimination is a top priority of the U.S. Department of Justice. The Federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin and disability. As part of enforcing the FHA, the Justice Department from time to time will send in agents posing as prospective tenants to “test” the landlord’s treatment of guide dog users seeking to rent a unit at a multi-family housing complex. Assistance dog partners who believe they have experienced or witnessed unlawful housing discrimination may call the new Housing Discrimination Tip Line at 1-800-896-7743, email the Justice Department at fairhousing@usdoj.gov or contact HUD at 1-800-669-9777. More information about the Fair Housing Act can also be found at www.justice.gov/crt/housing or www.hud.gov/fairhousing.
IAADP Conference Highlights

By Joan Froling

IAADP’s conference took place in Seattle the last weekend in September 2010. We dedicated this celebration of assistance dog partnership to the memory of IAADP’s beloved cofounder and President Emeritus, Ed Eames, Ph.D. who had been deeply involved in the planning of this gathering.

The Assistance Dog Club of Puget Sound (ADCPS), a regional group, held their conference the next day. This gave assistance dog partners, trainers and program founders a two-day event to attend in the Pacific Northwest. To our surprise we sold out over a month before this conference, as did the ADCPS, which necessitated turning away quite a few prospective guests for lack of space.

It was a delight to see all the different breeds in action during the few breaks I had on IAADP’s Conference Day. Among all the beautiful Goldens and Labs I espied a black and tan Airedale, a spunky Schnauzer, a regal German Shepherd, at least one friendly Laboradoodle, two gorgeous Collies, a number of elegant Standard Poodles and several handsome mixed breeds, to name just some of the guide, hearing and service dogs who were resplendent in their colorful vests, backpacks and harnesses.

We are very grateful to Nutramax Laboratories for generously providing two scholarships! These were awarded to IAADP members, Beth Shea and Melissa Williams, honoring their advocacy work as volunteers.

We’d also like express our profound appreciation to the wonderful companies that donated gifts to enhance the conference experience for our assistance dogs and conference guests. Some of our friends sent terrific door prizes too! We salute Aspen, Bramton, Direct Pet, Doggone Good, Dogwise, Drs. Foster & Smith, JW Pet, Kong Company, Lupine, Magic Zoo, Multi Pet International, Muttluk, Our Pets, Petco, Petmate, Planet Dog, Premier and THF/ Nylabone.

A special thank you to Jeanne Hampl, founder and President of the ADCPS. Among other things, she offered to accept deliveries and truck all the toys, chewies and other lovely items in cartons to the Embassy Suites hotel after we arrived. We subsequently had fun assembling “goodie bags” for the dogs belonging to our conference guests and anticipating the pleasure these gifts would bring.

With the help of some outstanding volunteers and excellent guest speakers, our conference became a day that will be remembered and cherished by all who participated.

I hope those who were unable to attend will enjoy my effort to summarize the presentations on IAADP’s Conference Day.

Our Keynote Speaker

Yvonne Peters, a lawyer from Canada, has worked with five guide dogs in her lifetime, all from the Seeing Eye. The audience enjoyed her compelling narrative about the impact guide dog use has had on her life for more than 30 years.

We learned she has been deeply involved with the disability rights movement in Canada as far back as the 1970’s. It began when she stood up for her right to work with a guide dog in a hospital setting. One of the hospital administrators became very irate when he found out Yvonne’s guide dog was on the premises and he ordered her to leave at once. Yvonne decided to file a complaint with the Manitoba Human Rights Commission. She later learned the commissioners would have preferred a case involving a restaurant or store as the offending party when they received their first complaint of access denial from a guide dog user, but to their credit, they took on the hospital, which sparked off a huge public debate. The case went on for years, reviving the debate over and over due to the publicity received every time the hospital appealed a court verdict in Yvonne’s favor. Eventually the case went to a high court from which there could be no appeal, with the verdict supporting access rights for guide dog teams.

While it had been very difficult to handle the rhetoric from citizens siding with the hospital, especially those who came up to her in public to sound off on their views about a blind person bringing a dirty, smelly dog into the hospital, the publicity ultimately proved beneficial for other teams, educating many businesses and even taxicab drivers that they had a duty to accommodate guide dog users. One affirmation of that outcome came from a cab driver when she returned to Winnipeg after a number of years to visit her sister.

She said, “The driver asked me where I was from and I said Winnipeg. He said well, you won’t have trouble getting around this city with your dog. Years ago a woman with a dog fought to ensure dogs like yours were accepted everywhere.” Yvonne waited for us to stop chuckling, then added, “So this made me smile. I was pleased that my efforts made a difference and thrilled to be a part of the taxicab lore!”

Yvonne frequently evoked laughter with other interesting stories involving guide dog use. In the process, we learned she had participated in protest marches and battled to get protection for the disabled included in the civil rights code when Canada decided to write a new Constitution in the 1980’s. She subsequently decided to go back to school to become a lawyer to work for human rights rather than continue down the career path of a social worker.

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In response to questions from the audience, Yvonne helped us to better understand Canadian laws, how she handles access challenges and the debate currently taking place as to whether schools in Canada have an obligation to accept assistance dogs for children under the age of fourteen in the classroom. A recent case involving an eight year old autistic child had raised serious questions such as “Does a child need to be capable of looking after a dog in a school setting? Is it reasonable to require the teaching staff to take on that responsibility?” Yvonne ended by expressing an interest in hearing from other assistance dog partners on this topic.

The Attack – Coping Strategies Before, During, After

Carrie Skym, a trainer with Guide Dogs for the Blind, who now works in graduate services, told the audience that a poll of guide dog users had revealed the fact 89% had experienced some type of interference from other dogs. We also learned 49% of these incidents involved an aggressive dog, 22% of which were repeat offenders.

Carrie urged us to research our state laws. If we do not live in one of the 39 states that passed legislation on dog attacks, we should look into city and county laws we might use, such as a dangerous dog ordinance and leash laws. Educate the police and animal control about these laws before an attack on an assistance dog occurs. Do it in person so as to build a relationship with officials, as this could greatly increase the chances law enforcement will be helpful rather than dismissive when contacted post-attack.

Did you know that your dog’s jangling tags will announce his presence to territorial dogs as you go through a neighborhood? To reduce encounters with dogs who feel they have to defend their turf, Carrie told us we can buy a device at www.itzadog.com to silence the tags on outings.

If a dog does come rushing up, try to evaluate the threat level. Get between the strange dog and your’s, time permitting. One strategy is to carry kibble in your coat packet and throw a handful or two at the dog. If he stops to eat the kibble, you continue on your way. If he ignores the kibble, you can stomp your feet to make noise, point and yell at the dog to go home.

Carrie thinks a “shaker can” is a valuable asset. [e.g. a plastic bottle filled with ten pebbles or coins]. Shake this noise maker when you order the dog to go away. If he is not intimidated, throw the can at his feet to startle him into retreating. Don’t worry about littering. Escape the situation as fast as possible, before the potential aggressor overcomes his apprehension.

Those who purchase a two foot long baton type stick to velcro to the dog’s harness or wheelchair should point this at the dog when telling him to leave. If the worst occurs and the dog attacks you or your dog, she said the baton could be used in self defense.

The stick and shaker can were Carrie’s tools of preference. While pepper spray may stop an attack at close quarters, it could potentially be very harmful to you and your dog unless you take the time to test the wind’s direction. Testing the wind is something most handlers will not have time for in this kind of emergency. If you do decide to carry pepper spray, she advised purchasing the type made for joggers that dangles from your wrist, since fumbling through a purse trying to find the canister during an attack is impractical.

If all else fails and the other dog attacks yours, give your dog plenty of leash so your dog is free to defend himself or flee or try submissive behaviors to placate the attacker. Drop the leash if need be. The worst thing you can do is hold your dog’s head close to your body trying to protect him, as then he can’t defend himself.

Another piece of advice was to never pick a small dog up to shield him, as you could easily be bitten in the attack. Your own dog might accidently bite you if you try to intervene.

If the worst happens and you are knocked to the ground, curl into a ball. Try to protect your face and the back of your neck.

 Afterwards, check your dog for deep puncture wounds. Often they don’t bleed. Without antibiotics and wound cleansing, infection is a very serious risk.

Ask who owns the dog if bystanders come to your aid. Ask the neighbors in the vicinity, circumstances permitting.

If you call 911, explain you are disabled and in danger and YOU need help right away. If you simply say your dog was attacked by another dog or is under attack, it may be two days before the message filters through to Animal Control and they bother to investigate.

Carrie suggested we follow up interference by a loose dog, especially one displaying aggression, by filing a complaint with Animal Control. Insist they put it in that dog’s file or create a file. Seek a written report from the official of the incident. Ask if the dog has other reports on his record, as this can trigger a city’s dangerous dog ordinance penalties if there are other complaints. In the event the dog has a clean record, insist this loose dog, interference or aggression report go on his record to ensure if more incidents occur, officials will have the necessary documentation when you or someone else presses them to take stronger measures.

Carrie went on to discuss post traumatic stress disorder in both the handler and the dog. Among other things, she urged us to seek help immediately if our assistance dog begins displaying aggressive behavior toward other dogs after an incident. Counter conditioning with treats is GDB’s method of choice for helping a guide dog to overcome aggressive posturing.

Another strategy Carrie suggested is to go several streets out of our way to avoid confrontations with aggressive acting dogs we have previously encountered or heard about. Consider taking a taxi to stay safe.
In closing, Carrie warned us not to tense up when we hear or see other dogs on an outing, as it can travel down the leash, making our dogs hyper vigilant. Our dogs need to see that we are relaxed and confident in the presence of other dogs.

Your Family Said What?
Facilitated by Kim Samco, a counseling specialist from Guide Dogs for the Blind, members of the audience discussed problems with various family members and received input from assistance dog partners, trainers and program founders in the audience on how to handle these issues. Everyone seemed to agree there is no pat answer. No one founders in the audience on how to handle these issues.

Air Travel with Service Animals
Barbara Marrin, a trial attorney from the U.S. Department of Transportation General Counsel’s Office on Aviation Proceedings and Enforcement, (Enforcement Office) in the Air Consumer Division, covered a broad range of issues from foreign air carriers to cruise lines to airline escorts not knowing where the Service Animal Relief Area is located at an airport to passengers with allergies. She also discussed pending rule making and took questions from the audience.

One problem she identified is gate agents demanding written documentation of a service animal’s legitimacy mid-travel, when someone with an invisible disability is changing planes. The DOT’s position is that it is not allowed, unless the animal has been misbehaving.

Another problem is airlines peddling bulkhead seats for a premium to businessmen, then denying these seats to disabled persons with service animals who have a priority right in the USA to a bulkhead seat as long as the individual gives the airline at least 24 hours advance notice of that seat selection, clarifying he or she is traveling with a service animal. You can also inform the airline you will be traveling with a personal assistant, which means they must provide a seat next to you in bulkhead for a designated family member or colleague to assist you. If you already paid for two seats in coach, the airline cannot tack on an extra charge for either bulkhead seat when you call to reserve them. To reduce last minute problems, she urged us to give the airline at least 48 hours advance notice if you need these seating accommodations.

She did warn us that some airlines have eliminated bulkhead. Some now combine it with an exit row. An FAA safety regulation prevents disabled persons with a service animal from being seated in an exit row, so in that circumstance, the DOT can’t intervene on our behalf.

Something important for our community to realize is that the DOT can not take action based on hearsay. Barbara said they need written complaints from assistance dog partners like you and I. We need to file a written complaint every time we have a problem with a seating reservation or seating in the cabin or a documentation demand or when some other problem arises. It not only empowers the DOT to investigate our complaint, it will let them know if something is merely an isolated incident or if there is a pattern of abuse by an airline, in which case they can impose a very hefty fine.

Barbara reminded the audience that Congress had the DOT establish a hotline, Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., to provide “real time help” to disabled passengers. Also you can call it for general information, as many persons with emotional support animals or psychiatric support animals have been doing. If you think the airline failed to respect your civil rights, you can call after you get home to find out whether you have grounds for filing a written complaint. She let the audience know we also have the right to ask for a Complaints Resolution Officer, (CRO) if an airline denies boarding or some other problem occurs, especially when it is after hours for the hotline.

I was interested to learn the DOT has been conferring with the TSA and FAA about the problem of relief areas being set up outside the secure perimeter. She informed us that this may be the subject of a future rule making proposal.

Barbara also let us know that the DOT’s Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) definition of a Service Animal which includes emotional support animals and other species in addition to dogs won’t change just because the ADA’s Service Animal definition has changed. The ACAA is a different law.

Last but not least, she responded to IAADP’s query as to whether the DOT planned to take further action on a petition from the Psychiatric Service Dog Society seeking to eliminate the documentation requirements for psychiatric support animals spelled out in the Final Rule that amended the ACAA regulations in May 2008. The answer was “yes,” the DOT intends to address this issue in 2011 in a Supplemental Notice of Proposed Rule Making (SNPRM). They also will address oxygen, kiosks and access to on board entertainment in the SNPRM.

Training Assistance Dogs for Mental Illness – the New Frontier
The presenter Jane Miller, started her power point presentation with the sobering news the National Institute of Mental Health estimates one in four adults in the USA suffers from a diagnosable mental disorder. About one person in seventeen suffers from a serious mental illness. Nearly half meet the criteria for two or more disorders. Statistically, mental disorders are the leading cause of disability in the USA and Canada.

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Jane briefly discussed her new book, Healing Companions, which covers many aspects of partnership with a psychiatric service dog (PSD) from selection to tasks to family dynamics to retirement considerations. She told us how she combined her career as a therapist and interest in dog training to help some of her clients train a service dog to perform useful tasks, beginning in 1996, when a patient recently discharged from a psychiatric hospital told Jane she needed a dog like the wonderful Golden Retriever therapy dog who assisted Jane in her practice.

Initially, Jane wondered if her client could properly care for a dog, but learned over the years that one of the tremendous therapeutic benefits is the structure the dog typically imposes on a client’s life. Someone who might not get out of bed all day, does get up and get dressed as her dog needs to go out to eliminate. Making dinner for the dog can remind a client to eat or take medication.

Jane emphasized that these service dogs need time off, should never be considered 24/7 caregivers. A practitioner of Reiki, she teaches her clients to use relaxation techniques and the importance of helping their service dogs to relax through massage and calming signals on a daily basis.

Due to space limitations, it is just not possible to share all of her advice to trainers, her examples as to how PTSD symptoms may affect each client differently so the tasks have to be different, some unusual tasks she mentioned and her work with veterans. She is available by email to those who may have questions. To find her website with contact information, just google the title of her book, plus her name.

An unexpected dividend was Jane’s invitation to Kim, a conference guest from Canada, to come up and talk to the audience about the ways her Standard Poodle service dog had been trained to mitigate the symptoms of bi-polar disorder. Afterwards, Jane and Kim took questions from the audience. In response to how long it takes to help someone train this kind of service dog, both agreed it took at least a year, sometimes longer, depending on the severity of the mental illness, which can impact how often the client is available for lessons, as well as his or her ability to work out in public.

Courthouse Dogs
This program founded by Ellen O’Neill-Stephens, was inspired by her son, Sean, and Jeeter, his skilled companion dog from Canine Companions for Independence (CCI). Jeeter’s presence changes the way people view Sean, a young man with spastic cerebral palsy who can’t talk. Jeeter opens the door to communication between Sean and Jeeter’s admirers.

When Ellen, a deputy prosecuting attorney in Seattle, began taking Jeeter to work with her one day a week, rather than leave him home alone while Sean pursued another activity, she was surprised by the impact the mellow Golden Retriever had on witnesses she had to interview. Soon her colleagues wanted to borrow him when they had children afraid to talk about the crimes they had seen or the abuse they had suffered.

Seattle’s court system was just the first to apply to CCI for a full time “courthouse dog.” These low key, gentle dogs make it possible for children to open up to adults about unspeakable things and to summon the courage to face their abusers in court when required to testify.

Ellen and her partner, Celeste Walsen, DVM, have pioneered a movement with their program, Courthouse Dogs. They have been putting on seminars, helping a number of courthouses across the country and overseas to incorporate the awesome benefits of highly trained facility dogs from programs belonging to Assistance Dogs International into the judicial process. The capable handlers are employees who work in the system, after going through intensive team training. The dogs get to go home at night and on weekends and holidays with their handlers for rest and recreation in a family setting.

This presentation included video taped testimony from parents and others who have been helped by the loving presence of a courthouse dog. The audience broke into spontaneous applause several times. We may not embrace the designation of these dogs as “assistance dogs,” based on the technicalities of the definition, but no one could deny that these dogs assist children and adults in an important way during a time of crisis in their lives. They make an excruciating ordeal much more bearable for all concerned, including the staff members in the judicial system who must do their job no matter how difficult.

Sharing Tasks, Equipment, New Products, Useful Ideas!
My contribution was a short video of a black Lab service dog performing mobility assistance tasks and innovative medical response work for disabled children.

While on stage with Keebler, her Golden Retriever guide dog, IAADP’s President, Toni Eames, demonstrated a feat of training that prepares assistance dogs for planes that lack bulkhead seating. She told us it comes in handy with theater seats too. You need a chair like those often found at a food court or fast food restaurant or in a clinic’s waiting room. A simple design, just four legs with no obstructions underneath to block the dog from positioning herself under that chair.

Toni asked Keebler to sit in front of her, between her legs, both of them facing the audience. It is one of Keebler’s favorite positions for petting. On command, Keebler slid into a Down position and with a bit of hands on help from Toni, wriggled herself backwards till a good portion of her body was under the seat. Voila!

Katrina Boldry, a harness maker from Colorado, exhibited a harness she designed for those who could use some assistance with walking. It featured a traditional, upright steel handle for balance support with a z-shaped grip for comfort. The handle can fold nearly flat so a dog can go under a table in a restaurant. Weighing less than three pounds,

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the harness sits further back on the dog’s spine rather than up on the shoulders. When tested by a trainer friend of mine, we learned the typical wobbliness produced by a dog’s rolling gait is significantly reduced due to the design. As an “extra,” it also features a short leather pulling strap for those who may have trouble with walking momentum due to abnormal muscle fatigue or muscle weakness, especially on inclines. The dog can be trained to gently, steadily tow the handler along like a boat towing a water skier. However the dog works in approximately the same position as a guide dog rather than far out in front. Katrina also showed us some interesting leashes from her company, Bold Lead Designs, and a head collar made of leather, with the leash attaching to the top of the neck, between the dog’s ears, rather than to the nose band under the dog’s chin like a Gentle Leader or Halti.

Jane Miller talked about the virtues of the CANNY collar from the UK, a head collar which is similar to Katrina’s design, saying that her clients often pull on the leash without realizing it, so attaching the leash to the back of the neck is more humane. She also liked the Dream Walker harness for handling a dog that pulls or lunges. In addition, she discussed the environmental virtues of inexpensive pick up bags called “Flush Puppies,” available on Amazon.com, which can be flushed down a toilet.

Another guest spoke about the virtues of the head collar, flyball harness, backpacks, leashes and other products he had obtained from Australia at www.blackdog.net.au. He told us that he was not a company rep, just a happy consumer.

Susan, an assistance dog partner who shared a variety of clean up items she liked, also introduced the idea of attaching a hard plastic sign to our dog’s collar, about 3” x 4”, so that people approaching us from the front can find out we have a Service Dog, since a patch on a vest won’t be visible. Her favorite message of the many available is, “DO NOT DISTRACT” which she thinks works far better than “Do Not Pet.” She also mentioned the efficacy of a patch shaped like a stop sign and let us know the shop will make custom patches and signs upon request. A visit to the website revealed a wide variety of signs plus an enormous selection of patches for vests or backpacks under six dollars each. http://stores.ebay.com/Danny-and-LuAnns-Embroidery/SERVICE-DOG-COLLAR-CLIPS

Advocacy Report

A meeting for partners was scheduled after our last workshop. Among the subjects discussed, I reported on the specifics of the new Service Animal Definition under the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA). I explained IAADP had worked with Guide Dog Users, Inc., Assistance Dogs International and the Council of U.S. Dog Guide Schools under the auspices of the Coalition of Assistance Dog Organizations (CADO) on this controversial definition and on a number of other advocacy issues since 2001.

CADO enables those who work with highly trained assistance dogs and providers who train such dogs to present “an united front” on issues of importance to our respective constituents.

Our most recent concern was the Final Rule published by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) on the ADA obligations of cruise ship companies and other passenger vessels to accommodate persons with disabilities. The service animal provisions adopted by the DOT were commendable. However, the DOT took the unusual step of posing several questions in this Final Rule. Two of them concerned service animals. The DOT was seeking public comments. As there was still time for members of our audience to submit public comments in September, I went into specifics.

One question seemed to be a “no brainer.” The DOT asked if it should substitute the new ADA service animal definition language for the old definition cited in the Final Rule to prevent confusion.

The other question was disturbing in its implications. Essentially the DOT was asking if it would be appropriate for them to the scrap the ADA definition of a service animal and substitute a new definition of their own devising, so they could compel cruise ships to treat emotional support animals like assistance dogs. The DOT mentioned its own service animal definition under the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) which is inclusive of emotional support animals, as an example of what they were considering.

IAADP and other members of the Coalition of Assistance Dog Organizations strenuously objected to this proposal by the DOT in the public comment we submitted just before IAADP’s conference. The ADA service animal definition currently applies to all forms of public transportation except aircraft, as per the decision by Congress when passing the ADA in 1990. We believe it should stay that way!

Because the rule making process moves so slowly through all of its stages, it could be another year or more before we find out the DOT’s decision regarding substituting a brand new definition inclusive of emotional support animals for the ADA definition in the Final Rule, applying it to all passenger vessels, thereby setting a legal precedent. Could trains be next? I don’t mean to be an alarmist, but the DOT’s proposal is very unsettling.

Another important issue for our community is the DOT’s decision to issue a Supplemental Notice of Proposed Rule Making (SNPRM) sometime in 2011. The airlines continue to be deeply concerned about the pet owners who fraudulently claim service dog status for their dogs so the dog can have a free ride in the plane cabin. The airlines would like to be able to require documentation from passengers claiming...
IAADP Conference Highlights
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ing the animal with them is their service animal. Disabled persons want to be able to travel with an assistance dog without having to disclose their disability or submit written proof of a dog’s schooling to gate agents.

The DOT sought input in 2009 from our community on how to resolve the dilemma, giving us an overview of the options available to them. Whether the DOT will continue to require documentation from handlers of emotional support animals and psychiatric support animals, as an anti-fraud measure, in accordance with their Final Rule updating the ACAA in May 2008, or drop the documentation requirement or conversely, expand the documentation requirement is unknown at this time. Watch IAADP’s website. When the DOT publishes the SNPRM, seeking public comments on this volatile issue, I will post it to our homepage.

Near the end of our conference, we held a short Memorial for IAADP’s cofounder, Ed Eames, Ph.D., giving members of the audience who wanted to speak, the opportunity to share heartfelt sentiments about how this passionate advocate for the assistance dog movement had touched their lives.

Toni closed the conference with a short speech, wrapping it up on a very positive note. After the applause faded and the CART provider and volunteer who put together a magnificent slide show of photos turned off their projectors, most of us lingered afterwards to socialize with each other and to visit the vendor booths and to make dinner plans.

Some of us later participated in a photo session. One of the companies who generously sent items for our “goody bags” had requested some photos of our assistance dogs playing with their new toys for an upcoming catalog. Glen Gregos, the board member who helped us “MC” the conference and his wife are both talented photographers, so the company was in luck!

The following day, the Assistance Dog Club of Puget Sound took center stage. They divided their day into two in-depth workshops. The one in the morning featured a renowned veterinarian, Dr. Karen Overall, who lectured on aggression issues with working dogs. In the afternoon, the subject was workplace access. During the lunch period, conference guests could take their box lunch and go to a discussion group topic of their choosing, which made for an interesting change from the luncheon banquet that IAADP held the day before.

If you have a workshop topic that you’d like to suggest or a speaker you think others might like at a future conference, please drop us a note! If willing to volunteer for the Conference Committee to help us with preparations for IAADP’s Conference in 2012 in the USA, we’d like to hear from you.

Access in Israel
By Phyllis Collett

I’m 71 years old, not particularly “politically correct,” came to Israel in 1960 at the age of 20 and hold dual citizenship. Since arriving in Israel, I have lived on a kibbutz. This has been, and still is, a fascinating experience. The whole structure of the community has changed completely during the past fifty years and, looking back, every one of the changes has been, in my opinion, a positive move. Forget Leon Uris’ “Exodus”; the “socialist” part would be closer to a limited corporation. We all have salaried jobs, bank accounts, pension plans and the kibbutz general meeting no longer has a voice in our day-to-day private lives. There still remains a strong, cooperative and supportive community – I love it!

I haven’t divorced myself from my US roots. One adult child and two grandchildren still live in Florida; a brother lives in Washington D.C. I am a happy yo-yo, bouncing between the two countries, visiting all.

When I arrived home in Israel, in August of ‘03, with my first guide dog, Ella (blond lab, Leader Dog), I knew it was going to be a challenging experience.

On a personal level, as a partially sighted person, I was dealing with huge changes in my self image and my lifestyle. The wider picture was that I was bringing a service dog into a country where a sizeable percentage of the population has no personal experience with dogs, or equates all large canines with mental images of vicious guard dogs and police dogs, or thinks dogs are dirty and contaminating, or believes that any dog might be a true incarnation of Satan. I hasten to add that the larger part of the population all seems to have, “One at home, just like him. Aren’t they wonderful?”

At home, in my tiny, rural village [kibbutz], there were no problems beyond the need to explain to each and every one of the 250 adult inhabitants about “no talk, no touch, no eye contact.” This seemed to be viewed as quite unreas-
somewhere behind me. Better than a thousand words. I faced a complicated set of obstacles and I hear a quiet "Wow!" from me.

"Do not pet me, I am working" sign in the harness handle and am often asked why I don't replace it with one in Hebrew. The answer is simple: Israelis are so very proud of their abilities in other languages that the extra time it takes to puzzle out the message, allows me to forestall the soon-to-be proffered affection. Sometimes they ask, "What is 'pet'?' This is wonderful opening to expound on one of my favorite topics – my guide dog.

The fight for access rights, while anchored in law, is still an ongoing process. I carry three laminated cards in my wallet, issued by THE ASSOCIATION OF THE BLIND IN ISRAEL ASSISTED BY GUIDE DOGS.

Card #1 contains (English one side, Hebrew the other) my name, address, phone number and contact information for the Guide Dog Users Assoc.

Card #2 (on one side) lists the basic laws regarding the right of a blind person with a guide dog not to be refused on public transportation: bus and taxis. Trains aren't listed, but possibly because they aren't a problem. Why? I have no idea, but it is refreshing, especially since we travel free by rail. The other side relates specifically to places where food is served and states that the law was amended to read; instead of forbidding access to "domestic pets" (literal translation, "house animals"), the wording now is "all animals with the exception of guide dogs for the blind."

Card #3 defines "public place" and affirms the right of a blind person with a guide dog to the use, with no special limitations, of all public facilities.

It sounds wonderful: try getting someone to actually read the card instead of yelling, "You can't come in with that dog!" Even better, try getting into a taxi without "creeping out as ammunition – the power of the printed word.

Israelis also like to get involved; they don't sit by quietly. Once, as I stood blocking the entrance to Home Center, trying to persuade the security guard at the door that "no dogs" did not include service dogs, help came from an exiting customer. As he (rather a large man) pushed roughly past me, he shouted over his shoulder to the guard, "Let her in, unless you want to see yourself on the five o'clock news!" We entered without further ado. Another time, I was trying to buy a tablecloth in a store where the majority of staff were quite fearful in the presence of a dog. As I went to the counter to pay for my purchases, I could hear one of the sales people muttering about "no place for dogs." I turned to her and explained quietly that this was not a dog, but a GUIDE dog for a blind person. The response? "I don’t care if he is a GOOD dog."

There was one incident when an irate shop owner threatened to call the police and I said, "Good idea." The officers who arrived were also uninformed as well as being friends of the proprietor. The following day's telephone call brought an apology from the captain of police.

It was not, however, all uphill. Many restaurants were openly welcoming. Many times, a bowl of water arrived for the "poor dog, it's so hot" even before our order was taken. Others, after experiencing Ella's impeccable behavior, also greeted us with smiles at a later date. The doctors at the local HMO always let my dog lie next to me for all procedures. (Most of them, it seems, have a Lab at home.)

And then there are those wonderful "guide dog moments" when my dog has just helped me negotiate a complicated set of obstacles and I hear a quiet "Wow!" from somewhere behind me. Better than a thousand words.

These days, I hear more and more parents explaining to their children why the "doggie" can’t be petted. Sometimes it’s the kids explaining to Mom and Dad. I keep the "Do not pet me, I am working" sign in the harness handle and am often asked why I don't replace it with one in Hebrew. The answer is simple: Israelis are so very proud of their abilities in other languages that the extra time it takes to puzzle out the message, allows me to forestall the soon-to-be proffered affection. Sometimes they ask, "What is ‘pet’?" This is wonderful opening to expound on one of my favorite topics – my guide dog.

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It sounds wonderful: try getting someone to actually read the card instead of yelling, "You can’t come in with that dog!" Even better, try getting into a taxi without "creating a situation."

I believe there are also references in law to rights of housing, work opportunities, etc. The best thing in recent years has been the establishment of a hotline for information as to the rights of the disabled. The person on the other end will even take the time to find out the right office or person to whom to address a complaint if these rights have been violated.

I am now paired with Leader Dog #2, a fun-loving black lab, with a sense of humor, DeeDee. Ella has retired to live with my niece in Washington D.C.
Heartworm Preventative

By Joan Froling

In 2009 IAADP announced in Partners’ Forum that Novartis discontinued providing Sentinel heartworm preventative to our partner members. If you want your veterinarian to help you obtain heartworm preventative through IAADP, you need to explain “the current system” for obtaining this life saving product.

Please let your veterinarian know that Bayer Animal Health now provides our members with a six month supply of Advantage Multi. Like Sentinel, it is a multi-parasite protection product. This one is a topical ointment containing the flea preventative “Advantage” as well as Heartworm preventative. It also works to prevent or control a number of other health debilitating parasites which may attack our assistance dogs or may already be in their system.

We are thrilled that for the past two years, Bayer Animal Health has provided this product to IAADP Partner Members in North America.

Failure to use heartworm preventative can result in sudden death without any warning symptoms. I vividly recall that lesson I learned years ago while working for a large boarding-training kennel in Michigan. I lingered after work one summer evening to play with a beautiful Samoyed, no older than five, whose owner asked me to give him some special attention. As I had always been fascinated by the breed when I saw them at dog shows, I was happy for this chance to get to know one better. I came in a half hour early the next morning intending to spend some extra time with this playful, loving dog. I was shocked to discover his corpse on the floor of his indoor kennel run. The following week, it was a cute toy poodle who mysteriously died while in an outdoor run. Autopsies revealed white worms were attached to their hearts in such large numbers, cardiac arrest had occurred.

Apparent heartworm disease carried by mosquitoes used to only be a menace in the Deep South, but in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s an epidemic swept north to put all our dogs at risk. Forty years later, the annual map of the USA in my veterinarian’s office continues to show preventable deaths from heartworm disease in every state on the mainland.

The treatment for a serious infestation of heartworms can be life threatening. Some dogs sustain lifelong damage to the heart even if treated successfully. It all depends on what stage the disease is caught in.

Forgetting the preventative medication for even just one month can leave your dog vulnerable. While it is very rare, I’m told that occasionally a dog may develop the disease in spite of receiving a preventative on a regular schedule, which is why a heartworm screening test should be considered a vital part of an annual checkup.

The earlier the disease is caught, the better the chance of the dog surviving the costly treatment procedure. Many veterinarians use x-rays to estimate the damage, plus follow up heartworm testing, which increases the treatment expense. The dog has to be crated for many weeks, with almost no exercise permitted, in the attempt to save the dog’s life.

Similar to the process for obtaining Advantage, your veterinarian can give you a packet of Advantage Multi after your assistance dog receives his/her annual heartworm test. Bayer will send your veterinarian a replacement packet in the mail at no charge to the practice.

As you will probably be the only IAADP member client in the practice, come prepared to explain the procedure for obtaining the Bayer product on your initial visit.

I strongly recommend you discuss it with your veterinarian first, rather than the front desk staff, as the decision to help you obtain this benefit is up to the veterinarian. Let him/her know that Bayer has a wonderful program to protect the lives of our assistance dogs, providing Advantage Multi at no cost to members of the non-profit organization you belong to for disabled persons with guide, hearing and service dogs. Tell the veterinarian the way it works is to fax a prescription to Bayer with your member ID number on it and Bayer will send the veterinarian a free replacement packet of Advantage Multi.

When you talk to the staff member assigned to get your information, please explain this process carefully. Do NOT have your veterinary clinic call the 800 number for Bayer on the back of your membership card. That 800 number is only to be utilized by the veterinary clinic for obtaining a replacement packet of the products Advantage or Advantix, which some members may prefer if they have an alternative source for heartworm preventative.

If you want Advantage Multi, ask the staff to FAX a prescription to Bayer, writing your Member ID Number next to the initials of our organization, “IAADP.” The fax number can be found on the back of membership cards mailed out after September 2009. If your card lacks the Fax number, contact Joan@iaadp.org and I will email the Bayer fax number to you. Ask the staff to put a copy of your ID card, front and back, with the phone numbers for products into your dog’s file for future reference.

If your veterinarian does not carry Advantage Multi or is unfamiliar with IAADP, ask him/her to fax the prescription to Bayer and then call you when the replacement packet of Advantage Multi arrives so you can pick it up. This solution has enabled other IAADP members including me to obtain this product without having to change veterinarians. The veterinary staff will be very impressed at how fast the replacement packet arrives in the mail, thanks to our friends at Bayer.

If you live in or travel to areas that might expose your dog to a deadly heartworm infection from a mosquito bite during the winter or if your dog may be exposed to fleas, mange or other parasites and your veterinarian thinks your dog should receive this protection year round, he/she can provide a refill after you give the dog the last topical treat-

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ment in the packet of six. A replacement packet can be obtained by faxing another prescription.

Please be aware you should never give your dog Advan-tage and Advantage Multi in the same season, as double dosing your dog with the powerful flea preventative could make your dog sick.

If you read the directions for Advantage Multi, you will discover it differs from dosing instructions for the flea preventative alone. Be sure to put the topical ointment high on the back of your dog’s neck in three spots as shown on the box so he or she cannot turn around and lick the product off before it dries. It was never meant to be ingested! As a precaution, keep other pets from licking your dog’s fur in that area in the short time it takes for the topical liquid to be absorbed through the skin.

I always wash my hands after administering any topical ointment, but I don’t worry about it once it is absorbed. You don’t have to be concerned if your dog goes swimming or plays in the rain, as it does not wash off. Just be sure to give your dog another dose to keep him/her safe on the 1st day of every month.

Have you ever told Bayer how you feel about this wonderful program to protect our assistance dogs from heartworm disease, flea infestations, mange and a number of other parasites? It is a great deal of work for their staff to send replacement packets each year to veterinarians throughout North America. How will Bayer know if giving you Advantage Multi [or Advantix or Advantage] is worth all the trouble as they evaluate which charitable projects to fund next year and which ones to drop?

The last time I checked the dog catalogs, a six month supply of Advantage Multi for dogs over 55 lbs. runs between $80 - $99 retail, and there is often a shipping charge. In these hard economic times, what does a savings like that mean to you?

Please provide Bayer with feedback by sending an email note to our President, Toni Eames, at toni@iaadp.org and she will gladly forward it to our Bayer contacts. If you do not have internet access, you can send me a letter from your assistance dog and you and I will gladly forward it to Bayer. Mail it to IAADP at P.O. Box 1326, Sterling Hts., MI 48311.

I know some assistance dog partners who have had to buy heartworm preventative from their veterinarian, one tablet at a time, as they could not afford a whole box at once. I don’t want to see those days return. Personal testimony from those who receive the product of their choice from Bayer will be far more memorable than IAADP mailing the company another thank you plaque to hang on the wall. This remarkable program to protect the health of our assistance dogs has been an answer to a prayer.

Election 2010, Survey, Drawing!

By Joan Froling

Six candidates who are Partner Members of IAADP, recommended to the membership by the Nomi-nating Committee, have been elected to the board of directors for a four year term commencing on January 1, 2011. The six directors are Toni Eames, Jill Exposito, Joan Froling, Margie Gray, Glen Gregos, and Devon Wilkins. We appreciate your votes and the wonderful return rate on the Access Surveys too!

Those who mailed back the surveys in the ballot packet had the opportunity to enter the “Lucky Dog Drawing” by filling in contact information at the top of the sheet. My Samoyed service dog, Spirit, was drafted to choose a winner. Instead of dumping the entries into one big pile, we spent three hours narrowing down the field, having Spirit retrieve one entry at a time from each row that my assistant, Cindi, laid out in front of the television set. Spirit has a great work ethic, but after more than fifty retrieves, Spirit became a bit silly, sometimes grabbing two entries at once or standing on one, ripping the corner off the sheet and delivering the scrap of paper to me. We gave him a well deserved break.

Once Spirit got his second wind, so to speak, we continued narrowing the field, then asked him to start over to select the semi-finalists, continuing our effort to give all entries a fair shot. We eventually came down to six final-

ists. Once Spirit determined the prize winner with his last retrieve, we made quite a fuss over him. Being a Samoyed, his expression clearly said “Cut out the mushy stuff and get to the IMPORTANT part, MY TREAT!” Never mind that he’d eaten half a pound of treats already...like a Lab, a Samoyed never gets “full.”

When I notified the winner of the Lucky Dog Drawing by email, I discovered Jason is a thirteen-year-old boy with cerebral palsy, whose nine-year-old service dog, Marisa, a Lab Golden cross, performs tasks like retrieving dropped objects and opening the handicapped accessible entry doors on buildings for his wheelchair by nudging the push plates with her nose.

Our friends at Multi Pet have sent Jason their latest catalog and donated a Fifty Dollar Gift Certificate, so he can have the fun of selecting some nifty toys for his best friend, Marisa, who is a very lucky dog indeed!

In closing, I’m looking for a volunteer with the advanced math skills for a statistical analysis of the answers to certain questions on our Access Survey. We have the figures compiled, but higher math is not my cup of tea. Please contact me at joan@iaadp.org if you can give us a half-hour of your time to help us analyze the results for future advocacy work.
Visiting Hawaii with a Guide Dog

By John W. Barbee

Note: John and Nancy Barbee have lived and worked in international assistance in Africa, Central Asia and Afghanistan, but had never traveled with pets. John retired from his work in 2006, due to serious deterioration of his eye-sight. In 2008 John and Nancy decided he needed a trained Guide Dog to enable him to get around and mitigate somewhat the risk of walking around their mountainous area of Colorado. They traveled to KSDS (Kansas Specialty Dog Services) in Washington, Kansas, a well-known and highly respected dog training center of long standing and John became the proud partner of Piper, a certified Guide Dog, in June, 2009.

Nancy and I set off to Kansas to pick up my new Guide Dog, Piper. After successfully transferring our “bonding” and receiving training (for me — Piper was already well trained) from KSDS’s skilled trainers, we returned home to Colorado. The first few months were spent getting us (Piper and me) settled into a daily routine of activities and Piper familiarized with the sights, sounds, smells and terrain our area. Soon we were eager to address the challenges of alternative means of transportation, including bus, train, truck, boat/ship, cable car and, of course, airplane. The possibility of flying to Hawaii to visit one of our sons in early 2010 provided the opportunity to see how we would do on a long (9+ hrs.) uninterrupted flight. In the Fall of 2009, we started preparations for the trip.

I am a rather big guy — 6’5” and 260 lbs. — and Piper is a tall handsome yellow Labrador of 95 lbs. Coming down the aisle of a jetliner bound for Hawaii from Denver, Colorado, we would make the aircraft look pretty small and cramped. Even with economy-plus bulkhead seating for Nancy and I, there would be precious little room on the floor for Piper at our feet. But, after careful discussions and negotiations with the ticket agent (United Airlines), Nancy and I received economy-plus bulkhead seat reservations on the UA flights from Denver International Airport to Honolulu Hawaii and back. According to our agreement, Nancy and I paid the extra fee for economy-plus and UA guaranteed an empty seat between us, so that Piper could use the floor space in front of the unoccupied seat. UA came through on their end of the agreement, and, twelve hours and fifteen minutes after boarding the aircraft, the three of us arrived at Honolulu airport without mishap. Despite the over two hours delay on the runway at DIA (for unknown reasons) Piper endured with neither complaint nor incident.

The arrangements for this happy transit to Hawaii were done by telephone in advance with a UA ticketing agent. It involved clearly communicating with the agent, mutual willingness to negotiate and agree on the travel plan and the mutual trust that the plan would be carried out to the best ability of the travelers and the airline. Basically, we (the travelers) agreed to pay the additional fare for an upgrade from economy to economy-plus for our two bulkhead seats. The airline agreed to leave an empty seat between Nancy and I at no additional cost to us, so that Piper would have adequate floor space. The ticket agent advised us that the plane was not full, but if that changed and the empty seat had to be booked, we would be advised well in advance. We decided that we would accept this “tentative” guarantee. And it worked out very well!

To prepare for the flight, and learn about Service Animal Relief (SAR) areas at US airports we found in a 2009 IAADP Newsletter article by Ed and Toni Eames on the topic. They had transited Denver International Airport (DIA) with a Service Dog and discovered a SAR area and described it as adequate, but distant from their boarding gate. We tried to contact the airport in advance to learn more, but were unable to get any responses. However, after we arrived at DIA and proceeded to our departure gate through the security screening, we asked a volunteer assistance person where the SAR area was located. He called for information and then kindly guided Piper and me to the area, while Nancy stayed at the gate with our carry-on luggage. The SAR area was about a ½ mile walk from our gate, back through the security screening. It turned out to be adequate — it was small (not a viable “dog run”) had a bit of gravel and sharp broken rocks. It was not a good place in which to release your dog to play. It is located near the NW corner of DIA in an outside, but sheltered alcove. We were glad to have it. But we were thankful that we had plenty of waiting time, as it took us well over an hour to get to the SAR and return through security screening to our gate.

The inter-state transition from mainland USA to Hawaii did pose some problems and worries, mostly surrounding the State of Hawaii administrative constraints and perceptions pertaining to entering the state with a live animal. We learned the requirements for Guide Dog clearance from the State of Hawaii’s Department of Agriculture (http://hawaii.gov/hdoa/ai/aqs/info). We also visited the IAADP website, where we found Joan Froiling’s informative and detailed article on the situation and changes in Hawaii’s animal quarantine requirements and their administration. We had visited the IAADP website before when we were getting registration and ID microchip injection for Piper. That information and services were very helpful and all went smoothly during the first few months of the “John and Piper partnership.”

We found the requirements for entering and obtaining clearance into Hawaii with a Service Dog daunting, and were very glad that we had begun the process about five months prior to the trip. We were also very glad to have advice and insights via IAADP and the detailed requirements from the Hawaii Department of Agriculture. To engage the latter, we contacted the responsible office in Hawaii. We expressed our intent in visiting Hawaii accompanied by a Service Dog and requested guidance to help expedite the clearance process. After about two weeks we heard from the State of Hawaii animal quarantine office that they required service dogs to have up-to-date rabies vaccination, certified current test results (directly from Kansas State

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University) to validate the vaccination’s effectiveness, a certificate from local authorities in our home area that the ID microchip was readable and a certificate of good health (including up-to-date vaccination record) from our local certified veterinarian. All documentation had to be originals when presented for clearance on arrival in Hawaii. They also asked for copies of all original documentation be supplied to them in advance. Regarding the place of processing on arrival at the Honolulu airport, they advised us that their office was open from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM daily, and that dogs arriving for processing and clearance at other times would have to be quarantined until the office re-opened the next day.

As our flight was scheduled to land in Honolulu at about 7:30 PM, I replied back to the Hawaii office, reminding them that the animal involved was a duly-certified Service Dog (not a pet) and, under the ADA regulations, they could not separate a service dog from its human partner. If they insisted on quarantining Piper overnight, they would have to provide overnight accommodations for us both—together. We soon received a response from the Hawaii office that they would arrange for a United Airlines employee to meet us when we arrived and take us to their quarantine station at the airport for processing and clearance. We were very glad to hear that!

On arrival in Hawaii it was after 10:00 PM, almost three hours late. We were met by a UA employee who guided and transported us to the quarantine station where two technicians greeted us and proceeded to review the documents and inspect Piper. They completed the clearance process in about 25 minutes without a hitch. Mercifully, Piper found a greensward right outside the quarantine facility’s door, where trees and shrubs were plentiful. He gratefully relieved himself after that long flight and legal entry to Hawaii! And I cleaned up after him. Just over two weeks later we boarded our UA flight and returned to DIA. The flight was neither delayed nor full and we had the same seating we boarded our UA flight and returned to DIA. The flight office that they would arrange for a United Airlines employee to meet us when we arrived and take us to their quarantine station at the airport for processing and clearance. We were very glad to hear that!

DIA and other airports some advice—place the dog service area(s) as close to the arrival/departure concourses as possible and, as possible, size and landscape them a bit with light gravel and a few shrubs (and perhaps a fake fire hydrant!) and clean and maintain the site regularly to invite and sustain appropriate interaction.

States such as Hawaii have come a long way in recognizing service animals as different from pets and as integrated important partners in support and assistance. The highly effective efforts of IAAADP staff and its members continue to motivate and facilitate this process. I thank all for their hard work in education, advocacy and actions to improve access.

Travel well and safely, and may your trips be interesting and enjoyable!

Retiring an Assistance Dog

By Joan Froling

When preparing to put on the workshop titled “The Successor Dog Challenge” at the Assistance Dogs International Conference in Toronto in 2010, we decided to augment our panel discussion and film with four handouts. The programs in attendance could utilize them as a springboard for a discussion with graduates on those topics. I also wanted to share them someday with IAAADP members and this “double issue” has made that feasible insofar as space.

The first one titled “Assistance Dog Retirement - Factors to Consider,” is intended to be thought provoking. Some of the factors to be weighed stem from an IAAADP conference workshop discussion on the feasibility of keeping a retiring assistance dog under the same roof as your new canine partner. Emotions often run high on the topic. Over the years, it has become abundantly clear that there is no “one size fits all” easy answer. I should also note that this list was not intended to be all encompassing. Other factors can play a role, such as the retiring dog’s attitude toward other dogs on his turf, so the particulars can vary from case to case.

Titled “Helping a Retired Dog adjust to Life with a Successor Dog,” this handout recapitulated information from an article I wrote several years ago about retiring Nikki, my first Samoyed service dog. I wish I could have found some guidance on this subject fifteen years ago, instead of having to figure it out through trial and error at Nikki’s expense. I’ve added what I learned about retiring a geriatric assistance dog in a multi-dog household, to this one page document. I found I could do a lot to protect my second service dog, Dakota, from age ten to age twelve, from arrogant young dogs who had no respect or sympathy for their elders. As a result, his retirement was far more enjoyable than it would have been if he just had to fend for himself. I’m doing the same for my third service dog, Spirit, to preserve his dignity and sense of self worth as old age sets in. I have talked to so many assistance dog partners over the last seventeen years on this topic, to educate myself and to compare notes, I no longer recall the origin of the ideas. I’m just glad they worked for me and hope by sharing them, it can benefit others who decide to try to keep an assistance dog in retirement.

I would welcome input if anyone has additional suggestions on how to improve quality of life for a retiree or a new assistance dog or both.

The third handout was titled “Health Issues to Monitor with a Veterinarian in a Geriatric Assistance Dog.” I have to thank my good friend, Lynn Hoekstra, for her input on this topic, sharing what she learned from experience and from other programs during the years she worked for a large agency that trained different kinds of assistance dogs.

The fourth handout is titled “Resources for Assistance

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Dog Retirement and Grief Support.” Initially created for the programs attending IAADP’s workshop in Toronto in 2010, as part of our effort to provide consumer input, I think some of the resources named could be valuable to all IAADP Partner Members, whether they work with privately-trained or program-trained assistance dogs. It may help those who must deal with the devastation when and if a puppy or beloved adult dog “in training” fails for health or temperament reasons after many months of intensive work together. Some of our members may want to make use of the beautiful piece I included, *The Rainbow Bridge*, when someone they know loses their companion dog or an assistance dog. I am sure it is familiar to many of you, but for some, there is always a first time. I initially learned of it when the program that certified my first service dog included it with their letter of condolence when he passed away. I value the comfort to be derived from the sentiments it encompasses.

Much more could be written on the topics covered in these handouts. I hope members will continue to share their thoughts and experiences on these subjects through Partners Forum.

Assistance Dog Retirement - Factors to Consider

Some disabled persons consider keeping their assistance dog in retirement rather than re-homing the dog with a friend or relative or asking their veterinarian or school to help them find a very good home for the retiree. Each person’s situation differs. Often it will not be feasible for someone to do justice to both dogs. Much thought should be given to the practicalities involved.

**Financial Considerations:** Veterinary care costs often soar in old age due to health issues such as heart disease, diabetes, cancer or kidney, liver, bladder or orthopedic problems, etc. Surgery to remove tumors, other growths or cataracts plus supplements, prescriptions and special diets are not uncommon. Would it be affordable to spend thousands of dollars extra to care for a dog in old age when a successor dog’s maintenance expenses average over one thousand per year?

**Time commitment:** If your lifestyle is already hectic, how will you fit in lots of “quality time” to meet a retired dog’s emotional needs? It also requires twice the time for you to do grooming, ear cleaning, stool pickup and nail trims, etc. If you lack a fenced backyard, come home tired from an outing or job, you still have to provide exercise in all kinds of weather for the dog who stayed home cooped up all day. Is it realistic to add the extra work entailed to your schedule?

**Legal Issues:** A retired dog will be considered a pet by many apartment managers and condo associations, thus subject to their size or weight restrictions or a “No Dogs Allowed” policy. The objection to you having two dogs in your household from neighbors or managers could prove extremely problematic. If they will make an exception, it would be wise to get it in writing.

**Stress:** It can be very stressful to meet your retired dog’s desperate demands for reassurance while not cheating your new dog of a meaningful partnership with you, especially in the first six months. Be prepared for separation anxiety issues. Most dogs will adjust, but some will not.

**Food for Thought:** “Dogs live in the here & now. It allows them to easily acclimate to doggy daycare, a boarding kennel or a new home. Dogs do not appear to pine for loved ones as long as there is no scent, sound or sight to trigger the dog’s memory of that person. When a kennel owner explained this to me in 1971 after hiring me as a trainer, I couldn’t believe it, till I witnessed it for myself with thousands of temporary boarders each year. The only dogs who acted depressed were those few whose owners left behind a toy with their scent on it for the dog. Whenever a dog refused to eat or moped around, we’d remove the toy and within 24 hours there was a remarkable transformation. Soon that dog became just as happy and full of beans as all the others vacationing at the AAA Dog & Cat Motel. Of course, as soon as the dog would hear familiar footsteps or a beloved voice and caught the owner’s scent when someone came to pick him [or her] up, the memories came flooding back and the dog was beside himself with excitement. It was hard to convince someone their dog had not acutely missed them while separated, so I rarely discussed it, but those considering retirement options for an assistance dog deserve the truth and may take comfort in it. A dog is fully capable of enjoying retirement in another home because he lives in the here & now.”


**The Bottom Line:**

Not all senior dogs can bear to give up their role as the center of your world and adjust to playing second fiddle to a successor dog. Adoption into a “one dog household” where everyone dotes on him could be the key to a happy retirement. Let the dog’s needs be the deciding factor.

Helping a Retired Dog Adjust to Life with a Successor Dog

**Advance Preparation:** Most assistance dogs become far too emotionally dependent on their partners. It is essential to wean the dog off a 24/7 lifestyle, six months in advance if possible.

- Use a puppy gate to build up a retiring dog’s tolerance for spending time apart. Crate socialize him so he can calmly accept confinement, go on overnight visits, won’t cry or bark.

- Enlist family and friends to play with a retiring dog, cuddle him, take him for walks or a visit.

- Optional: Will someone in household make the retired dog into “their pet” with obedience practice, walks, play and petting sessions? Can the retiree do a new job like pet therapy visits?

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Do NOT ask your dog to retire “Cold Turkey” – He needs to still feel important to you!

- Create a special task – like retrieving a certain object or carrying items for you so he can still experience the thrill of your excited praise, earn a treat, bask in your delight every day. Retired dogs acutely miss that thrill. Much more content if you pretend you need his help once a day.
- Teach your retired dog that he will get a treat too, if he hangs back or holds a Sit Stay and permits the successor to perform a task for you that he used to do. This strategy usually puts a stop to jealous interference, gives your retired dog “a substitute behavior” for which he can earn a reward at such times. It is the key to peaceful co-existence in many homes.
- Give a retired dog the morale boost of a short outing “in uniform” when possible, health permitting. Alternatively, take him for a walk, just the two of you! It will improve rather than hinder his acceptance of you frequently going out with a successor dog, leaving him behind.

**Prevent or Reduce Separation Anxiety:** From this day forward, NO more Welcome Home parties or Goodbye Parties when you come and go. Behaviorists think such parties will create or exacerbate separation anxiety in the dog(s) left behind. Ignore your dog(s) from 5 - 15 minutes before leaving and once you get home. Do not let your dog(s) out of the crate or puppy gate area till the dog(s) stop barking at you in a demanding way. You want your dog(s) to relax, not be a nervous wreck in your absence. Your return should NOT be the two most exciting minutes of your retired dog’s day for either of you.

**Maintain your Retired dog’s “top dog” status for his own protection and happiness!** As the pack leader, you can greatly influence how other dogs in the household will treat your retiring dog. Send the message you hold him in high regard and will not tolerate bullying as he gets older. You need to practice the following strategies consistently, in order to help him.

- Feed the retired dog first whenever passing out treats, to reinforce his “top dog” status!
- Whenever letting dogs out to the yard, insist the old dog go first and a successor must respectfully hold a Sit Stay and wait for your permission to follow. Don’t let a retired dog get trampled by the younger dog(s). In their culture, the leader always goes first!
- Let a retired dog establish his pack position with a growl or snarl if a young one tries to steal his bone or toy or tries to mount him or rough house. Any dog has a right to stick up for himself. If your retired dog tries to take a bone or toy from the successor, tolerate it.
- Enforce YOUR law that NO mounting or very rough play is permitted, especially indoors.
- Older dogs often eat more slowly. Stand guard, insist other dog(s) give him all the time he needs while eating a large biscuit that breaks into several pieces or his meal, otherwise he’ll be pushed aside, which is terribly demoralizing to him and definitely lowers his pack social status.
- Schedule “private time” 3x a week or more. Leave the other dog(s) behind a puppy gate or in a crate, inviting the retired dog to have lunch with you or keep you company for a while. Make a big fuss over him at the beginning and the end, in front of the other dog(s). This is such an ego booster! Goes a long way to soothe his ruffled feathers and reassure him you still love him.

**Health Issues To Monitor with a Veterinarian in Geriatric Assistance Dogs**

Geriatric dogs are those who are susceptible to the diseases associated with aging. For large dogs, it is likely to begin about age nine. Medium dogs - about age ten. Small dogs - about age 11. Geriatric dogs will show signs of aging that include:

- Decreased tolerance of cold and heat
- Gradual deterioration of organ functions
- Decreased strength and flexibility
- Increased susceptibility to certain diseases including cancer and heart disease

In conjunction with the veterinarian, it is important to monitor the overall condition of geriatric Assistance Dogs. Some health issues to be evaluated on a regular basis include:

- Overall health screen – may include bloodwork, urinalysis and/or a thyroid function test
- Eyes – including age related cataracts or any condition that affects the field of vision
- Weight, nutrition, dietary changes
- Teeth and gums
- Ears and hearing
- Gaits and balance
- Lungs and respiratory function
- Exercise tolerance
- Heart and cardiovascular system
- Paws/pads
- Behavior changes
- Bowel changes
- Urinary habits – including incontinence, increased water consumption
- Skin and coat, including evaluation of any surface or subcutaneous masses
- Musculoskeletal system – including hips, elbows, shoulders, spine, stifles and hocks. Check for presence of arthritis and his muscle and nerve functions including evaluation for intervertebral disc disease.
- Does the dog have any difficulty climbing stairs, leaping into a van or car or jumping into bed? Does the dog show some reluctance to put his feet up into your lap?
- Does the dog seem slow to respond or get up sometimes? Seem depressed or confused
- Assistance dog tasks – every 6 months, evaluate which tasks may no longer be appropriate due to the dog’s age or health condition. Can you make things easier for him?

IAADP “The Successor Dog Challenge” workshop at ADI Conference, June 2010, with input from Lynn Hoekstra

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Resources for Assistance Dog Retirement and Grief Support
Pet Loss & Grief Support Hotlines
http://vetmedicine.about.com/od/petlosssupporthotlines/
Pet_Loss_Grief_Support_Hotlines.htm
International Association of Assistance Dog Partners
(IAADP) www.iaadp.org
Guide Dog Users, Inc. (GDUI) www.gdui.org
The Delta Society State by State List of Resources for
“Working Like Dogs – The Service Dog Guidebook” by
Marcie Davis, Melissa Bunnel
“Partners In Independence,” revised edition by Ed and
Toni Eames, Barkleigh Publications

Suggestion:
Acknowledge the Graduate’s Loss of an Assistance Dog.
A letter from a program can be a thoughtful and much ap-
preciated testament to your caring philosophy when an as-
sistance dog passes away or the heartbreaking decision is
made to euthanize a beloved canine partner. The following
piece, titled “The Rainbow Bridge,” is a beautiful and time
honored bit of comfort that might accompany such a letter.

Just this side of heaven is a place called Rainbow Bridge...
When an animal dies that has been especially close to
someone here, that pet goes to Rainbow Bridge. There are
meadows and hills for all of our special friends so they can
run and play together. There is plenty of food and water
and sunshine, and our friends are warm and comfortable.
All the animals who had been ill and old are restored to
health and vigor; those who were hurt or maimed are made
whole and strong again, just as we remember them in our
dreams of days and times gone by.

The animals are happy and content, except for one small
thing: they miss someone very special to them; who had
to be left behind. They all run and play together, but the
day comes when one suddenly stops and looks into the dis-
tance. The bright eyes are intent; the eager body quivers.
Suddenly he begins to break away from the group, flying
over the green grass, his legs carrying him faster and faster.
YOU have been spotted, and when you and your special
friend finally meet, you cling together in joyous reunion,
ever to be parted again. The happy kisses rain upon your
face; your hands again caress the beloved head, and you
look once more into the trusting eyes of your pet, so long
gone from your life but never absent from your heart.

IAADP workshop, “The Successor Dog Challenge,”
ADI Conference 2010, Toronto, Canada

What it Takes to Make a Service Dog
By Jill Sweet

People often come up to me and Moses, my CCI
service dog, saying, “What a calm dog. What a good
dog. I wish my dog would act like that!” What rushes
through my mind when I hear these comments, is what it
actually does take to make a dog like Moses. To begin it
takes selective breeding. Only dogs with good health, in-
telligence, confidence, and a calm demeanor will become
breeders of the next generation of potential service dogs.
Further, it takes a devoted puppy raiser and an understand-
ing public. Then it takes a period of professional training
and proper placement with a disabled individual. This pro-
cess typically takes about two years. Finally, it takes regu-
lar training by the disabled handler throughout the dog’s
career to keep him mentally and physically sharp. I guess it
takes a village to make a service dog.

The devoted puppy raiser and the understanding public
are of tremendous importance to the entire process. None-
theless, I recently read in my town’s local newspaper that a
man was annoyed enough to write a letter to the editor be-
cause one of those puppy raisers brought her young trainee
to the pool at the YMCA.

Moses and I go to the “Y” regularly for my morning swim. Moses stays on the side of the pool as I do my laps.

I know he loves to swim (He’s a Lab), but I also know that
he will not jump into the pool after me. Instead he resists
his urge to swim because I tell him, “Moses down, Moses
wait.” When I finish my laps Moses follows me out of the
pool area (proudly carrying my float in his mouth) and into
the women’s shower room. While I shower he waits under
the counter where swimmers dry their hair. Once I am
dressed (with help from Moses and a very kind employee of
the Y), we are ready to go. Moses calmly walks beside me
in my wheelchair, jumps up to push a button with his nose,
opening the heavy exit door, and out we go to continue our
day together.

On two occasions, Barbara, a friend of mine who is a
puppy raiser for Guiding Eyes for the Blind, brought her
young retriever, Lorna to the pool while she participated
in a swim class. Lorna did very well, but she occasionally
let out a bark. It was not constant barking, but simply a
few barks letting Barbara know she would rather be in the
pool with her and the other swimmers. Nevertheless, Lorna
held her ground and waited at the side if the pool. This was
the puppy that the man wrote about, complaining that he
couldn’t even go to the Y for a swim without some dog
ruining it for him.

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Part of a puppy raiser’s job is to expose the puppies to all kinds of situations so when she graduates with her new human partner, she will remain calm and confident in any setting. Many people understand this, and the YMCA with all the excited children and lots of action is a perfect place to teach Lorna to remain calm and confident. Other places Barbara has taken Lorna include restaurants, the mall, and the grocery store. In addition, Barbara gets advice from her regional representative of Guiding Eyes for the Blind. This advice comes in classes and discussions. For all this, Barbara gets no monetary compensation. She gives her time and covers the costs of feeding and caring for the puppy because she knows her pup will one day change someone’s life for the better.

After more advanced training with professionals, practice with the matched disabled partner continues throughout the working life of the dog. Once the dog is retired, he can be replaced with another and the process begins again. Sometimes the disabled partner will request that the retired dog stay on as a pet. When my first service dog, Vida, reached twelve-years-old I retired her, but wanted to keep her with me as a pet. Vida (Spanish for “life”) now has a grey muzzle and has slowed down with arthritis, but she still loves to eat (She’s a Lab) and enjoys going with Moses and me for our shorter afternoon walks.

The message here is a thank you to the puppy raisers and all the establishments like the YMCA that welcome puppy raisers like Barbara who need to train their charges in a busy public place. The dogs that make it to graduation grow up to be calm, affectionate, and attentive like Vida and Moses; they grow up to be valuable helpers for people like me. More than once Moses or Vida have found and retrieved my keys from the snow and my cell phone that sometimes slides in between the seats of my hand control van.

I have always felt that my service dogs are the best part (maybe the only good part) of being disabled. Service dogs are the silver lining in the often frustrating and sometimes distressing world of the “differently-abled.” And none of this would happen without the devotion and care of the puppy raisers as well as an understanding public. Yes, it does take a village to make a service dog.

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**Airport Check-In**

The following is current information from the US TSA (Department of Homeland Security) FYI:

**What you can do to facilitate the screening process.**

1. Inform the Security Officer that the animal accompanying you is a service animal and not a pet, and carry appropriate identification to verify this fact.
2. Inform the Security Officer how you and your dog will walk through the WTMD (walking together or with the assistance dog walking in front or behind you).
3. Keep control of your service animal while the TSO conducts the screening.

**What else you should expect.**

The TSO should:
- Offer to assist you in placing your accessible property on the x-ray belt.
- Provide you with verbal instructions regarding the x-ray belt.
- Allow you to stay with your dog throughout the entire screening process.
- Allow you to go to the front of the screening line if you choose to do so.
- Allow you to go to the front of the line to be re-screened when you have to leave the checkpoint to take your animal to a service animal relief area.

**What are some Other Important Things to Know?**

If you leave the sterile area to relieve your dog, you will have to undergo the entire screening process again. When you return to the security checkpoint, however, you are entitled to move to the front of the screening line to expedite the process.

Medication for service animals is permitted through security checkpoints once it has undergone x-ray or visual inspection screening. All liquids, gels, or aerosols will have to undergo Liquid Container Screening.

**What to expect if you are blind or visually impaired and use an assistance dog:**

If you are blind or visually impaired and use an assistance dog, both you and your dog will have to go through screening.

**What choices, if any, do you have in the screening process?**

You will not be eligible for screening using Advanced Imaging Technology (AIT). You can choose to undergo Walk Through Metal Detector (WTMD) screening, or request a pat-down. A pat-down may be conducted in a private screening area by an officer of the same gender.

**If you and your dog go through the WTMD together and set off the alarm, BOTH of you will have to undergo additional screening.**

1. To resolve the passenger alarm, the Transportation Security Officer (TSO) will conduct a pat-down to verify that no prohibited items are present.
2. Since your dog’s harness most likely contains metal, the TSO will need to physically inspect your dog and its belongings (collar, harness, leash, backpack, vest, etc.) in order to resolve the alarm. Although the dog’s harness will not be removed, it and other items that s/he may be carrying such as a backpack are subject to screening.

**If you or your dog walk through the WTMD individually and one or both of you set off the alarm:**

Additional screening will be conducted as described above on whoever causes the alarm.

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Service Dogs for Sensory Processing Disorders

By Katrin Andberg

I have a type of neurological disability, slowly becoming better known with the influx of publicity about autism in recent years. Due to my autism I have a neurological disorder called a Sensory Processing Disorder, or SPD. The vast majority of autistic children and adults have some degree of a SPD. The severity of the SPD can range from minimally to severely affected for each sense a person has. I have a significant to severe impairment in visual and auditory processing as well as with proprioception. I have slight tactile and taste impairments, my olfactory sense is not really affected at all.

With sensory impairments, a person can be hypo- or hyper-sensitive. In my case, I am generally hyper-sensitive to sound and visual input. What occurs when my nervous system becomes overloaded in sensory stimulating environments is that my brain, on a neurological level, ceases to properly process information it receives from my senses. When my vision is non-functional I am essentially walking around blind. When my hearing is non-functional I am essentially walking around deaf. While I may be able to “see” that an object is there, I cannot process what it is or what it means. While I may be able to “hear” a sound, I cannot process well enough to know where the sound is coming from or what it means. How impaired I am at any given time depends on the stimulation level in the environment and some other factors. Again these impairments happen due to processing difficulties on a neurological level, so I am not considered legally blind or deaf. Due to my proprioception problems, I have difficulties judging depth perception and often walk into things.

The first dog I trained to assist me with functioning was a Flat-Coated Retriever named James. I got James from a rescue situation in 2002 with no intention of him ever being a service dog. My intent was for him to become my next competition obedience and agility dog. I have been involved in competitive dog sports since 1996, and at the time James came into my life, I was a college student attempting to adjust to life away from home. When it became clear that the severity of my impairments was making college impossible, I returned home and after much discussion with my medical team, began to train James as my service dog.

James was the dog I chose for this training for a number of reasons. I needed a young dog that took to training well, was temperamentally stable, structurally sound, wasn’t noise sensitive, and liked to be in different environments. James had already, through various things he did around my home, shown me that he would enjoy working as my service dog, so he was a natural choice. James was ten months old, with a good solid obedience foundation, by the time I started to train him in service tasks and public access skills, and once he had finished training, he then worked as my partner for the next seven years until cancer caused his immediate retirement in July, 2010. The main task James did for me outside the home was guide work same as a guide dog for a visually impaired person would do. I trained him in obstacle avoidance, indication of change in surface, intelligent disobedience in traffic and other situations, and in the “find” and “follow” cues. James was also trained to lead me to an exit door when I began to go into sensory overload and in weighted pressure tasks.

When I moved to living independently two and a half years ago, I trained my Cardigan Welsh Corgi, Monty, to assist me with sound recognition at home. Monty, now 6 years old, is trained to alert to sounds such as the oven and microwave timers, as well as alert me to the smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. Due to his small size, and some behavior issues, Monty would never make a suitable public access service dog for me, but he thoroughly enjoys his job at home.

In September, 2010 I received a call about an adolescent female yellow Labrador Retriever that had been returned to a breeder I know. When I went to evaluate the dog, I took Jess out by herself into a fenced yard and I did a number of “tests” with her to judge her desire to be with a stranger, motivation with food and toys, desire to retrieve, bite inhibition, ability to tolerate physical handling and lastly desire to problem solve and learn a new skill through shaping. My initial evaluation of Jess was that she was a nice, even tempered young dog, with excellent bite inhibition, good tolerance of being handled as a child would handle a dog, little desire to retrieve and an independent streak a mile wide.

I decided that, based on Jess’ baseline good temperament, I would take her to my house for a week to see if she would, with some training, be a good fit for one of my clients. Well, as they say, the rest is history. Within 48 hours, I knew I had struck gold. Jess had been “impossible” in her previous home because she had been bored out of her mind. In my home, she was the picture perfect dog, loved learning new things, and within six weeks her list of cued behaviors went from 2 to 40. Jess’ independent streak, was more learned independence, and truly she is a very willing dog who loves to please.

I have now had Jess for a little over three months, and she is doing excellently as my service-dog-in-training. Jess is learning formal guide work, weighted pressure tasks to assist with sensory overload, and to alert me to sounds such as smoke alarm, as well as competition level obedience skills and retrieves. In training Jess, same as I did with James and Monty, I utilize the principles of operant conditioning, clicker training and food rewards. That being said, I still consider myself a “balanced” trainer, though my corrections are probably less harsh than most would use.

When teaching a complex task such a guide work, I break each part of the overall skill into manageable pieces. For example guide work can be broken down into parts such as “obstacle avoidance,” “stop at up and down curbs,” “stop at staircases,” etc. Each of those parts of guide work can be broken down further. Saying a dog does “obstacle avoidance” is a general phrase for a rather complex set of behaviors. A dog must be able to safely find a path wide enough for the dog and his or her handler to move around.
the obstacle in the way. This can mean the dog needs to go
to the left of the obstacle, or the right, or maybe even needs
to take the handler off the sidewalk completely and into the
road to get around the obstacle. The dog also needs to learn
that an obstacle could be above his own eye level; the dog
must learn to have an awareness of height, width and length
that is greater than his own being. A dog needs to learn
each of these parts in turn so that the final result is the dog
is confident in finding a safe path for both himself and his
handler no matter how the obstacle is presented to him.

In teaching obstacle avoidance, I generally start with
teaching the dog to find a path to the right. This is because
when the dog takes a path to the right, it is fairly simple. He
is not having to think about moving far enough over to get
both himself and his handler past the obstacle as he would
if he were moving to the left, he just has to think about
moving around the obstacle, thereby simplifying the begin-
nings of the skill for the dog. So to start, we walk along a
path that the dog is already familiar with, with various
obstacles placed to the left of the path. As we walk, every
time the dog moves off his center line, to get around the
obstacle I click, praise and reward. I teach my dogs a cue
called “find the way,” to mean find a path around the ob-
stacle that is wide enough for us both and I begin to intro-
duce this cue at this time, paired when the dog is moving
us around the obstacle. Once we have walked down the
path with the obstacles on the left hand side, we then turn
around and retrace our steps. Because we are now follow-
ning the route backwards, the obstacles are now on the right
hand side of our path, and we can begin to work on teach-
ing the dog to find a path that is actually wide enough for
the both of us. I generally start these exercises on-leash, as
I teach solid leash guiding before I start harness guiding
with my dogs. I find that having a dog that is comfortable
guiding both in and out of harness to be a very good asset
to me, as I am not dependent on having a harness on my
dog to stay safe.

When I am teaching obstacle avoidance, if the dog walks
too close to the obstacle and I brush or bump it, I generally
make a surprised high pitched yelp sound, which sounds
similar to the way a dog yelps when they are hurt. My
dogs have always responded well to this sound and seem
to understand it as a, “Mum is hurt,” sound. After I yelp,
I tap the obstacle with my hand, to draw attention to it for
the dog, then we turn around, walk back a ways, and re-
approach the obstacle. With most dogs who are learning,
as they get close to the obstacle the second time, they will
slow down or even come to a halt. At that time I praise and
encourage the dog to “find the way.” When the dog makes
an effort to choose to walk a path around the obstacle, I
praise even more, “Good dog!” and once we are clear of the
obstacle, I click and reward with praise and a food treat.
With consistent repetition, the dog soon understands that
he needs to be sure that the path he chooses is wide enough
for us both. As the dog becomes more confident, he ceases
to slow or come to a halt at difficult obstacles, and instead
deftly guides around anything in our way.

Another task that I teach my dogs is to lead me to an exit
door when I am starting to become over stimulated and
going into sensory overload. I start to teach this through
basic pattern training of two parts. The first part is teaching
the dog to find exit doors (I teach the dog to find entrance
doors as well, but that is a different task). I begin this in my
home by anytime I take the dogs outside through either my
back or front door, I say, “outside.” My dogs quickly learn
through this patterning the basic concept that the word,
“outside” means we are going outdoors. Once I have start-
ed public access training with a dog, I pattern the “outside”
cue further this time by marking with a click, food reward
and praise when we go through an outside door in any es-
Abbreviations:

establishment or building. At first I only say “outside” as we
are actually going through the door, once the dog has be-
gun to associate the word with the behavior, I then begin
to cue the word while we are still in the store, until I can
say, “outside” and the dog will take initiative to lead me to
the nearest outside door. When I begin public access train-
ing, I generally only take my dog into places that I am very
familiar with the layout, so I can fairly easily find the exit
doors, or I go out to train the dog along with a family mem-
ber or friend who can assist me in finding the outside door.

When I have a young, green, in-training dog, for me to
stay inside a public place while in sensory overloaded shut
down, would be completely detrimental to the dog’s over-
all training. Much of the time, if I am paying close atten-
tion, I can begin to notice when I am becoming overloaded
due to difficulties I start to have with sensory processing in
my visual and auditory acuity. When I am in a public space
with my training dog, the moment I begin to notice myself
getting impaired, I cue the “outside” cue and the dog and
I leave the establishment to go to a less stimulating envi-
ronment. Because I repeat this pattern so many times in
the dog’s early training, as time goes on, the dog begins to
pick up on the physical cues that I exhibit when I am am-
bining to get overloaded and initiate the moving us to an
exit door on their own when I begin to get impaired. James
honied this skill to the degree that he would lead me to an
exit door even before I knew I was getting impaired. Upon
occasion I would, tell him, “No, James, I’m fine,” and try
to go back to my shopping, only to find myself once again
being guided to the outside door. James was always right
though, and I soon learned to heed his reminders to leave
the stimulating environment.

Many people on the autism spectrum find deep, heavy,
weighted pressure to be soothing and relaxing as well as
an effective way to assist with sensory overload. While
I would not want the weighted pressure tasks I teach my
service dogs, to be the only tasks they had, I do find the
behaviors to be very helpful for me both in and out of my
home. I teach my dogs four weighted pressure behaviors –
to sit leaning their body weight against my legs when I am
in a seated position, to rest their head heavily in my lap,
jump up and place their front ends in my lap when I am sit-
ing, and also to jump up and lie their entire body weight
on top of my when I am lying down. The first two tasks are
useful for me in public situations, the third, I use mostly at
home but occasionally in certain public situations and the
fourth, I use solely at home.

I teach my dogs the “up” cue to mean place your front
feet up onto the indicated place. If they hear a second “up”
cue, they are then to jump up entirely on top of the indi-
cated place. So for teaching my dog to rest their front end
body weight in my lap, I cue the dog to “up” and then to
“down” and the dog will place his front feet in my lap, then
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move his front into a down position resting in my lap. For teaching the dog to lay his entire body weight on me, I will cue the dog, “up, up” and then “down” and he will jump up entirely on top of me and lie down. All of my dogs, even my pet dog, Niche, really enjoy doing the weighted pressure tasks. When I lie down on the couch and cue “up, up” the dogs race to see who will be first to get the prime spot on my chest.

Though Jess still has a long way to go in her training as my public access service dog, I am hopeful, that with continued practice and training she will blossom into an excellent successor to James. With James I learned what being partnered with a service dog was all about. How to safely navigate through different environments, how to live independently, how to handle the general public and the few minor access disputes we encountered and, most importantly, I learned just what an asset a trained canine can be in the life of a person with a sensory processing disorder.

With James my horizons became so much larger, and I hope they will continue to expand with Jess at my side.

Inexpensive suction cup device and a Samoyed eager to carry out the beverage retrieval task can overcome the problem of a refrigerator door designed without a handle for attaching a tug strap.