San Diego Welcomes IAADP & ADI Conference

The port city of San Diego, on the west coast of the USA, will host one of the most exciting events in the assistance dog field in 2006. The International Association of Assistance Dog Partners will be hosting its 12th Annual Conference on January 19th, in conjunction with Assistance Dogs International’s three-day conference, January 20-22. We anticipate a heavy turnout of assistance dog teams and training programs, large and small, from the US, Canada, the U.K., Japan, and New Zealand. The Town and Country Hotel, a thirty-acre resort with four swimming pools, three restaurants, and a 27-hole championship golf course will be the setting for this wonderful event.

IAADP’s keynote speaker in 2006 will be Tom Sullivan, a guide dog user who is a celebrated actor, musician, athlete and motivational speaker.

Because of the industry-wide recognition of a national drought in the number of suitable dogs available from shelters and rescue groups, a growing number of providers in the USA have turned to breeding their own stock or purchasing puppies or soliciting the donation of puppies from reputable breeders. A number of disabled persons also elect to raise a puppy with the hope it can be trained to be their successor dog. We have asked Paws With A Cause®, the largest service dog provider in North America, to share the knowledge they’ve gleaned from years of testing litters of puppies to find the most promising candidates. A second component of this workshop will be a discussion of the puppy training and bonding exercises Paws With A Cause has implemented in its puppy raising program to enhance each youngster’s potential for a career as an assistance dog.

Dr. Serpell, a renowned consultant to a number of guide dog schools, will be coming from the University of Pennsylvania to unveil a new Temperament Testing protocol for young adult dogs. Five schools have participated in this fascinating research project over the last two years: Canine Companions for Independence, Guide Dogs for the Blind, the Seeing Eye, Guiding Eyes for the Blind and Leader Dogs. This collaborative Temperament Working Group has been developing, refining and validating a series of standardized tests for the assessment of canine behavior. Administered to dogs after they are turned in by puppy raisers, the goal is to determine which responses are the most reliable indicators and which should be viewed as inconsequential as to whether or not the dog has “the right stuff” for placement as a working dog or for acceptance into their breeding programs. It is to be hoped that when used together, the test exercises could provide assistance dog organizations with an excellent tool for predicting the suitability and success of any particular dog for assistance dog work.

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San Diego Welcomes IAADP and ADI
Continued from page 1

A third workshop will feature a new kind of assistance dog specifically trained to increase the safety of children with autism, an Assistive Search Alert (ASA) Dog. Such dogs may also benefit families who have children with other conditions such as Downs Syndrome. Julie Nye, Executive Director at Dogs for the Disabled in North Carolina, author of the new book on service dogs, Practical Partners, has accepted our invitation to share her research to date on breeding and training techniques for the placement of these special dogs.

Terry Barrett, the Director of Training Operations at Guide Dogs for the Blind in San Rafael, CA and Michelle Pouliot, who is involved with their pilot program training guide dogs for wheelchair users, have graciously agreed to give a presentation about “Innovations in Guide Dog Training.” GDB’s ongoing investigation into ways to improve the education of a guide dog has led to a number of experiments and the adoption of some cutting edge strategies.

IAADP’s fifth workshop to foster the sharing of information draws its presenters from the audience. We encourage partners and everyone else who attends to give the rest of us the opportunity to learn from their discoveries, experiments or something they find to be beneficial for a particular disability or type of assistance dog. Topics may include a show and tell demo or a video of new equipment, improvements to existing assistance dog related equipment, introducing new tasks, new applications of one or more task skills, discussing useful products or training methods, reporting on helpful handling techniques or ideas that may improve access, travel or some other aspects of assistance dog partnership.

After the last workshop, we held our Annual Meeting for Assistance Dog Partners. Some years we have an exciting announcement to make about a new benefit for our members.

We report on various activities and initiatives our board has undertaken during the year. We update members about our participation in CADO, the Coalition of Assistance Dog Organizations, which tackles issues that impact the entire assistance dog movement. We provide an opportunity for our members to discuss advocacy issues of mutual concern and interest. (If any IAADP member has something they would like to see put on the agenda, we ask that you get in touch with us by December 1, 2005 at iaadp@aol.com)

I hope you will consider joining us for the IAADP & ADI Conferences at the Town and Country Hotel.

www.towncountry.com For room reservations call: 1-800-772-8527 and mention the Assistance Dogs International Conference, which is in their computer, so you can obtain a special conference room rate. Rooms are $109 in the Royal Palm Tower. Others will be $114. For those who bring a family member along for a vacation, in addition to all the amenities on the property, there is a premier fashion mall with a food court within walking distance. There is also a trolley line that can take you to some major attractions.

Visit our website at www.iaadp.org to obtain our Conference Registration forms and any updates. We suggest you also visit ADI’s website at www.adionline.org to obtain their conference registration forms as soon as possible, since ADI imposes a late registration fee. IAADP does allow registration at the door and does not have a late fee.

IAADP is planning a Hospitality Night Party on January 18th for all those who arrive early. We also arranged for a free Avid microchipping clinic for assistance dog teams on January 20th during the lunch break at the ADI Conference.

ADT prepares New Law Book
by Corey Hudson, Chief Executive Officer of Canine Companions for Independence

I am pleased to announce one of ADI’s latest accomplishments: the publishing of its first edition of Assistance Dogs International’s Guide To Assistance Dog Laws.

The Guide is an introduction to laws relating to Assistance Dogs, their users, and their trainers in many of the member countries of ADI, including the USA, Canada, Australia, England and the United Kingdom, Japan, and New Zealand.

The Guide provides its information in 11 summarized categories: “Applies to” (most states include Guide, Hearing, and Service Dogs in their laws); Accessibility; Interference; Housing; Licenses/Fees; Identification; Misrepresentation; Trainers; “White Cane”; Injury to Dog; Penalties; “Other” (a few states have special other categories, such as provision for quarantine or exclusion from a zoo or wild animal park); and Summary (a brief summary statement that gives the gist of each state’s laws).

“A link is included for each state’s home or index page immediately following the state’s name,” says Carmen J. Finley, Ph.D. “When used in conjunction with either the full citations or the abbreviated citations, users will be able to access the entire sections of code.”

A research psychologist and CCI dog walker, Dr. Finley, headed up the design, research, and coordination of the Guide. “Once the reader understands the way code sections are numbered or named, it should be easy to find the complete text on the Internet,” says Dr. Finley. The contents of the Guide, with live hyperlinks to the states’ websites, are online at www.adionline.org. The hardcopy version of the book can also be ordered from ADI for $7 plus shipping.

ADI would like to also acknowledge the outstanding contributions of other CCI volunteers: Rosie Bertolini, Grace Schulman, and Cheryl Snider for locating online statues; Jill Melendy, Sharon Winterfeld and Leah Volk for online beta testing; and Doris Dickenson for proofreading this 160-page book. In addition, we would like to thank IAADP board members Joan Froling and Ed and Toni Eames and others for the many hours they gave to this project prior to publication. To all: well done. Thanks to your contributions, ADI has another important tool to use as it actively promotes the access rights of its graduates.

EDITOR’S NOTE: To order a copy of the ADI Law book, visit their website to print out the order form. www.adionline.org (http://www.adionline.org). ADI offers volume discounts. Alternatively, readers may send a check or money order to ADI Law Book, P.O. Box 5174, Santa Rosa, CA 95402. Price $7 plus $3.40 shipping and handling. (CA residents must add 8% sales tax).
Nutramax: In Appreciation of a Multi-Strand Partnership

By Toni and Ed Eames

When we first met the folks from Nutramax Laboratories, Inc. several years ago at the North American Veterinary Conference in Orlando, little did we realize how much a part of our lives and the life of IAADP they would become. Initially, they agreed to sponsor the Veterinary Care Partnership program (VCP). Then, extended their support by offering their outstanding glucosamine/chondroitin sulfate joint health product Cosequin to all assistance dog partner members at no cost. Their IAADP outreach has since expanded to include sponsorship of this as well as a previous issue of Partners’ Forum.

Recognizing the international nature of IAADP, Nutramax extended its provision of Cosequin to Canadian members. In addition to Cosequin, U.S. partner members are eligible to receive Welactin, an Omega 3 salmon oil product, and Denosyl, a product supporting and protecting liver function in dogs.

Two years ago, during a business trip to Washington, DC, we were able to visit Nutramax headquarters in Edgewood, Maryland. Hosted by Dr. Barbara Eves, we were pleased to share the IAADP mission with Nutramax’s enthusiastic and caring staff. This year we spent several hours at the Nutramax booth in the exhibit hall at the Western Veterinary Conference in Las Vegas. Nutramax purchased autographed copies of our book, Partners In Independence: A success story of Dogs and the Disabled, to be given to the first 100 conference attendees visiting the booth.

Coming to the rescue in July when Bayer Animal Health was no longer able to administer VCP claims, Nutramax assumed this pivotal role in the IAADP support system. Veterinary Technician Debbie Vischer now handles calls from veterinarians applying for a VCP grant on behalf of an IAADP partner member unable to meet high cost veterinary interventions.

IAADP salutes this caring company for its continuing support and recognition of the role they play in maintaining the highest quality of health of our guide, hearing and service dogs!

To receive products or to apply for a VCP grant, your veterinarian must call Nutramax at 800-925-5187 and ask for customer service. In Canada, contact board member Devon Wilkins at 705-444-4512.

Hurricane Katrina - Guide Dog Rescued

By Anita Kelso Edson, from ASPCA website

Like thousands of New Orleans residents airlifted from their homes last week by rescue teams, Denise Okojo was also separated from her beloved dog. But unlike the multitudes of distraught people who lost pets in Katrina’s aftermath, Okojo’s four-legged friend Molly, a six year old black Labrador retriever, was also her seeing-eye service dog.

Okojo, who is blind, was taken to Lake Charles Memorial Hospital while Molly was left stranded in the murky floodwaters of their apartment. A few days later, Okojo relayed her story to a sympathetic nurse, who contacted an ASPCA representative.

It wasn’t long before Laura Lanza, the ASPCA’s southern regional manager and former director of Calcasieu Parish Animal Services, along with ASPCA volunteer Joelle Rupert, set the wheels in motion.

A rescue team, including Carolyn Page of the Louisiana SPCA, traveled by boat to Okojo’s address. During the six-hour mission, Page broke through a window and swam into floodwaters that filled the first floor. Making her way upstairs in the dark, she found Molly cowering in a bedroom.

Page lifted the petrified pooch into the boat, and Molly spent the night with volunteers in Gonzales. The next day, she was driven to Abbeville by ASPCA volunteer Rae Nell Domingues. Molly spent a third night with Rupert while the hospital arranged a surprise reunion.

“It was very touching,” said oncology nurse manager Penny Choates. “We put Okojo’s hand over the arm of the wheelchair, and right on cue, Molly lifted her head. Okojo’s first words were, ‘Oh, there’s my baby!’ Then we all cried. We couldn’t have done it without the ASPCA.”

Molly is in good health despite her week-long separation from her owner. As of September 15, she remains at the bedside of Okojo, who is still hospitalized. Special thanks to hospital pharmacist Carol Reynolds, who helped organize the rescue team. Molly was trained in Palmetto FL, by Southeastern Guide Dogs, Inc.

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.

See the list of the 2004 Annual Writing Contest Winners on page 12
GRAND RAPIDS — Valerie Franklin has overcome so many obstacles in her life that taking the Pharmacy College Admissions Test should have been a cake walk.

But on Saturday, Franklin, 19, was reduced to tears when she realized she was going to have to fight for access to the test.

The Ferris State University sophomore, who was born with a brittle bone disease, traveled from Big Rapids to take the test at Grand Rapids Community. She showed up early and settled into her assigned seat, only to have test administrators force her out of the testing room at the last minute because she was accompanied by her service dog, Sunny.

He was sleeping on the floor next to her chair.

Test proctors for Texas-based Harcourt Assessment said she could not take the test with the dog in the room because she did not list Sunny, a 5-year-old Golden Retriever, on her application form.

They refused to let her move him to another room, and she was left with no choice but to leave without taking the $105 test.

“It’s not about the money,” said Franklin, who is from Davison, east of Flint. “I missed an opportunity. I’m just angry.”

According to the Americans With Disabilities Act, people with service dogs are not supposed to be denied access to public facilities or isolated from others.

Franklin is an honors student who plans to apply to FSU’s pharmacy program in January. She plans to take the PCAT three times for the best chance to improve her scores. Saturday was to be her first test.

Franklin is 3 feet tall and relies on Sunny for help opening doors and picking up items. The test application’s special accommodations section did not ask anything specific to service dogs, she noted.

“A service dog is not an accommodation,” she said. “I’ve never been denied access anywhere.”

After Franklin was dismissed from the test, she waited about two hours for access to her cell phone, which was locked in the car of a friend who was taking the test.

She called her parents, who called the testing firm and Sunny’s Paws With A Cause® trainer.

Mike Sapp, CEO of Wayland-based Paws With A Cause, promptly called police Saturday.

“A service dog is assistive technology, just like a wheelchair or a crutch. People have their dogs to be independent,” he said. “By denying her the access, they violated her civil rights.”

Since the test was well under way by the time GRCC police were alerted, they could not intervene on Franklin’s behalf. But college administrators are upset and have complained to Harcourt, GRCC Police Chief Cindy Kennell said.

“The outrage is appropriate,” Kennell said. “The error was at our location, and I feel we should be part of the solution. She came totally prepared to take the test by herself and required no announcement.”

GRCC allows service dogs everywhere on campus, and administrators say they will notify testing agencies and others about their policy to make sure the rules are upheld.

The testing firm defended its policy requiring those with such animals to give notice, even though it is not specifically noted on the application form.

“We always accommodate people with special needs,” Harcourt spokesman Mark Slitt said.

“However, we need advance notification that someone is going to need special accommodations. The issue here was this applicant showed up on site without making those requests.”

Slitt said test-takers with dogs are put in a separate room with a proctor because the dog could be a distraction to others taking the test or to those with allergies.

On Tuesday, officials from Harcourt agreed to let Franklin take the test July 8 on FSU’s Big Rapids campus, where she is taking summer classes. She will take the test alone.

Harcourt is requiring her to fill out an accommodations form and bring a letter from a doctor or school administrator describing her “functional limitation” for taking a multiple choice standardized test.

This is frustrating for Franklin, who has no such limitation. Her service dog will not be filling in the ovals on her test. Sunny will be there to help her get to and from the test site and pick up her pencil should it fall off her desk.

The federal disabilities act prohibits businesses from asking about a person’s disability. Permitted questions include what tasks a service animal performs. The act also states that allergies or fear of animals usually are not valid reasons for denying a person access.

Franklin said she will jump through the required hoops to take the test, but plans to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Civil Rights.

Unfortunately, fighting for access is nothing new for the Franklin family.

“We’ve been fighting for her ever since she started kindergarten,” said her father, Harry Franklin.

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A Day At the Bank - a true story

by Roz Silberschein

It was a bright, clear Monday morning at work. It had rained all the week before and I never got a chance to get my monthly banking done and today looked like the perfect day to do it. As usual, my hearing dog (I am profoundly deaf on my left side and have only 50% hearing on my right) “Brenda”, who goes with me wherever I go, got into the car and off we went, about 5 miles away.

We walked in, this is an unusually small branch, with only two tellers, a manager and a loan agent. There was one other customer at another window so I proceeded to the vacant window. I put “Brenda” into a “down/stay” and tucked her leash under my left foot. After about 5 minutes and as I was talking to the teller “Brenda” tugged on her leash, as she does when she’s trying to alert me to something going on either in back of me or to my left. I turned around to see a man standing near the entrance, he said, “I have a bomb!” He continued to speak but because he put his hand in front of his face I could not make out what else he was saying!

“Brenda” who was lying down, now stood up. I went to pick up her leash, all the while keeping my eyes on his face; he said, “Don’t Move!”

“Brenda” started to walk towards him; she hackled her fur and sniffed at the air and at him. She actually startled him, I’m sure he wasn’t expecting to see a dog in the bank. She remained standing in front of him, fur “hackled,” never taking her eyes off of him! In my thoughts I was afraid he would kick at her!

I kept looking at his face to try to decipher what he was saying. He took a huge, black gun from the bag he was carrying in his right hand and proceeded to throw some rags on the floor soaked in what smelled like bleach with his left hand, the smell stung my eyes. All the time waving his gun around at all of us, he then focused on “Brenda” pointing his gun at her. I was so, so scared but at the same time I knew that I had to get “Brenda” away from him! I stepped towards him and “Brenda,” very, very slowly at the same time reaching down to collect “Brenda’s” leash. With the most pleading face that I could muster, I begged him to let me move her away from him. I reassured him that she was my service dog and that she was no threat to him!

He said, “You better move her or I’ll shoot her!”

Standing exactly two feet away from his shoes, I reached for her leash, grabbed her head, hoping to distract her and without looking down or away from his face, I said, in a very shaky voice, “Brenda, let’s go!” She walked with me but kept her gaze on him, as I turned my back to him. I looked for the other customer, who had worked his way towards the very back of the bank and had sat down on a chair.

As I was walking away and looking at the bank tellers for guidance, since I could no longer see or hear him. (I must be facing the person who’s speaking, in order to hear. I MUST be able to read their lips or I hear NOTHING!) The bank teller, looking right at me, kept motioning her head and eyes to the floor. Apparently, as I found out later, the robber had ordered me to “Stop walking and lay on the floor!” I kept walking, slowly towards the other customer. It seemed like a good idea, to get “Brenda” and I as far away from this man as I could! I reached the other customer and sat on a chair. I held on to “Brenda”! She was my eyes, ears and truly my support! She lay down beside my chair but never, never took her eyes off this man!

The bank robber got the money he wanted, he didn’t hurt anyone. He left! There was no bomb. The rags were soaked with bleach to divert our attention and make us think that something was in them. I was told that he was never caught and has been holding up banks and stores in the area and getting away with it for a long time!

The police came, the FBI came, and many, many questions were asked and answered. I spent what seemed like the entire day in the bank. I arrived around 11:00 am and left a little after 5:00 pm. I called my office to let them know what had happened. They were all in disbelief. This was supposed to be just a visit to the bank, not a day at the bank!”

I know that because “Brenda” did not make any sudden moves and because as I walked away from this man, he could see her vest, which reads big and bold, HEARING DOG, he did not do anything to either one of us.

I am so grateful for the training that “Brenda” got. She didn’t bark, she didn’t jump and she didn’t act badly or with any sudden moves. All of these good behaviors helped in assuring my, her’s and everyone else’s safety!

What would she have done had he hurt me or someone else? I don’t know. She’s not trained to be an attack dog. But, as Canine Companions for Independence (where “Brenda” was formally trained) told us, they’re not sure what our companion dogs would do in a “protection mode” but not to count on them for this. She is an amazing hearing dog and does her job with due diligence! All I know is that having her beside me makes me feel safe!

So, when my friends ask me “How was your day at the bank?” I tell them “long!”

IAADP WEBSITE
www.iaadp.org
INFORMATION & ADVOCACY CENTER
Phone: (760) 439-9544 or iaadp@aol.com
The Carrot or the Stick?
Can people with assistance dogs better further their rights through education or legal action?

By Ed Eames, Ph.D. and Toni Eames, M.S.

In October 2004 we joined several other individuals partnered with guide, hearing and service dogs to participate in the first Japanese Assistance Dog Partners Conference in Matsumoto. A theme running through many of the discussions was whether we, as assistance dog partners, could more effectively foster our rights of access through the educational and persuasion process or by legal enforcement coupled with penalties for noncompliance. In contrast with the United States, Japan has no national legislation guaranteeing the rights of people with disabilities, but does have a national law guaranteeing public access rights for those working with canine assistants. As is the case with the Americans with Disabilities Act, however, there are no penalties for access denials by public accommodations such as restaurants, hotels and stores. Recently we were asked to provide our views on whether education or enforcement should be the preferred strategy.

Imagine yourself at work one morning. A new gift shop has opened near your office and you want to go there during your lunch hour. After work you plan to take a taxi to meet a friend for dinner and a show. During these excursions, you may find the gift shop does not have what you want, the air conditioning in the taxi is not working, the meal you order is not served hot and the play was not worth attending. As disabled people partnered with assistance dogs, we may face all these problems, plus the possible hassle of being refused a ride in the taxi and entry to the gift shop, restaurant or theater. Unfortunately, when we discuss the issue of whether the rights of people with disabilities to be accompanied by their assistance dogs in public accommodations should be fostered through educational activities or punitive approaches, the impact on people with disabilities of being rejected by able-bodied gatekeepers rarely enters the discussion.

Impact of Access Denials
With a collective history of more than 60 years working with guide dogs, we have had our fair share of access denials. Usually these challenges in restaurants and hotels are overcome. But it is impossible to educate the taxi driver who slows down to pick us up, observes our guide dogs and then speeds away! In March 2005 we traveled from our hometown of Fresno, California to New York City to participate in a ceremony honoring the Lions Clubs of the World for their role in fostering the work of the United Nations. Within a three-day stay in New York City,

- a taxi driver refused to pick us up as we left the United Nations and
- a skycap at Kennedy Airport demanded we had to place our guide dogs in crates in order to fly with them in the cabin!

All of these incidents took place 15 years after passage of the ADA!

The decision to train with a guide, hearing or service dog is based on the desire to improve one’s quality of life, independence, safety and mobility. However, there are some costs, as well as benefits, resulting from this lifestyle choice. Veterinary care and feeding the canine assistant is an expected commitment, but the psychological cost of facing public humiliation through access denials is rarely factored in.

Many of our peers describe the high levels of anger and frustration they face when confronted by the phrase, “You can’t bring that dog in here!” A universal complaint of people with disabilities is being treated like second-class citizens. They feel demeaned and diminished. Certainly this is the case when a disabled person is denied entry to a business or office because of the presence of the dog who is intrinsic to maintaining an independent way of life. Frequently, these confrontations take place in the presence of a friend or relative and in public places, increasing the sense of humiliation and frustration. In some cases we are aware of, assistance dog partners have either given up their dogs or decided not to work with a successor.

What’s To Be Done?
When the Americans with Disabilities Act was being debated before its passage in 1990, the issue of including punishments for noncompliance was hotly debated. Members of the disability rights movement were afraid that including punitive measures might result in the bill’s not being approved. Since the law was viewed as a civil rights measure, the feeling was it would eventually establish a societal climate in which full integration of people with disabilities in the larger society would be a natural outcome. This, of course, has not happened, and many mandates of the ADA have not been fulfilled.

Although protection of the rights of disabled people working with canine assistants (referred to as service animals) is guaranteed by the regulations implementing the ADA, no punitive measures in the form of fines are included. The exception is in the area of employment discrimination, where significant fines, damages and payment of legal fees can be
assessed. Under federal or national law, the only time an assistance dog partner can receive compensation for an access denial on the part of a public accommodation, such as a hotel, restaurant, taxi, amusement park, etc., is if the U.S. Department of Justice decides to take on the complaint. This has happened on several occasions, including a case in which an airport shuttle service refused to transport a woman because she was traveling with a guide dog. Usually the Department of Justice will not act on behalf of an individual complainant.

In contrast to the ADA, many states have laws with the provision of fines and, in some cases, criminal penalties. In California, a public entity such as a restaurant or hotel that denies a blind person with a guide dog access is liable to a fine of $5,000. (This is a higher fine than the $4,000 in damages for failure to remove barriers.) The California penal code defines such refusals as a violation of the criminal law and the offender may spend time in jail. An interesting recent case involved an ophthalmologist who refused to let a patient accompanied by a guide dog into his office. The ophthalmologist eventually paid a fine of $5,000 to the school that trained the guide dog into his office. The ophthalmologist eventually paid a fine of $5,000 to the school that trained the guide dog.

Some Enforcement Approaches

When the Department of Justice was designated as the major enforcement agency of the ADA, it developed a technical assistance program to help educational, commercial and government entities to understand the law. A highly trained cadre of technical assistants is available through a toll-free national telephone hotline. Questions are answered immediately and documentation from the law is provided if needed. We have used this service to verify our interpretation of elements of the ADA. We have also directed many others to this information source.

Contact the ADA Technical Assistance Center at http://www.adata.org or by phone at (800) 949-4232 (V/TTY)

A number of assistance dog training programs have developed radio and television public service announcements focused on the rights of disabled people to be accompanied by their assistance dogs into all places open to the public. Frequently, these announcements are made by well-known actors and actresses. The California Hotel and Lodging Association has produced two short videos directed at hotel proprietors and police personnel. These are now being reproduced and distributed to members of the national hospitality association and police departments throughout the country.

Some Educational Approaches

When the Department of Justice was designated as the major enforcement agency of the ADA, it developed a technical assistance program to help educational, commercial and government entities to understand the law. A highly trained cadre of technical assistants is available through a toll-free national telephone hotline. Questions are answered immediately and documentation from the law is provided if needed. We have used this service to verify our interpretation of elements of the ADA. We have also directed many others to this information source.

The IAADP Approach: Education and Dispute Resolution

The International Association of Assistance Dog Partners, a consumer advocacy organization established in 1993 and currently numbering more than 2,000 members, has focused its primary attention on the educational approach. In 1996 it created an access brochure to help members educate the public, including taxi drivers, restaurant managers, hotel proprietors, retail store clerks, and others about the guaranteed right of disabled people to be accompanied by their assistance dogs in all places open to the public. The brochure has the part of the ADA pertaining to assistance dogs translated into six languages and provides space for the IAADP member to place a photograph of himself/herself and the assistance dog in the brochure.

Members quickly reported an almost magical quality to this outreach effort. The brochure was republished on several occasions in issues of the IAADP newsletter, Partners’ Forum, where it could easily be transcribed into multiple copies. It has just been revised and will be repub-
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Continued from page 7

lished in a future newsletter issue. IAADP also has a video graphically illustrating the work performed by guide, hearing and service dogs.

But sometimes education does not work! Several years ago, an IAADP member partnered with a service dog was denied the right to have her dog with her in the hospital. The staff at Johns Hopkins Medical Center in Maryland claimed the service dog was not needed and patients’ rooms were not covered by the ADA. On this occasion the Department of Justice took the case on and eventually the hospital was forced to pay $25,000 to the complainant and change its policy to accept assistance dogs in the hospital. IAADP supported this member’s legal action with advice and encouragement.

Conclusions
Here in the U.S. it seems the best approach to eliminating problems of access for disabled people and their assistance dogs is emphasis on education, the carrot or reward approach. However, when educational efforts do not have the desired effect, compliance should be enforced through punitive means, the stick.

Poste June 23, 2005.

Ed and Toni Eames, authors of “Partners in Independence: A Success Story of Dogs and the Disabled” are founding board members of the International Association of Assistance Dog Partners and are partnered with guide dogs Keebler and Latrell. They are adjunct professors of Sociology at California State University, Fresno. They can be contacted at: eeames@csufresno.edu. http://www.raggededgemagazine.com/focus/eames0605.html

Movie Review: QUILL
By Ken Eisner, Straight.com, Vancouver, Saturday, June 11, 2005

he Japanese Quill, told in documentary fashion, follows the life story of a Labrador retriever who shows a particular talent for guiding the blind.


It’s a dog’s life, they used to say. But what does that mean, exactly? The Japanese family film Quill sets out to answer that question, in detail, by following the full journey of one particularly fulsome Labrador retriever.

The animal in question, starting as an adorable puppy among a veritable sea of to-die-for puppies, is a blond lab called Quill because of an odd mark on his otherwise mono-chrome coat. This distinguishing doodle allows us to separate our pup from the pack, and also allows for a number of different dogs to play Quill over the course of his lifetime, from toddling infant in the garden to grizzled old-timer recalling a well-spent existence.

Although we see our hero learning the basics from a pair of “puppy walkers” who raise him until his first birthday, by far the most screen time is spent with Quill’s training as a seeing-eye dog. His young trainer (Kippei Shiina) sees talent in the unusually patient canine and eventually matches him up with a middle-aged blind man (Kaoru Kobayashi) who is initially resistant to the idea of being dependent on a dog. Quill changes that, of course, although his own family still finds him pretty crusty.

This may sound like a recipe for tears and laughter and, indeed, director Yoichii Sai (All Under the Moon), working from a novel of the same name, isn’t embarrassed by bathos, especially at the end. But most of the film is told in documentary fashion, with more emphasis put on the steps to train a guide dog (all the commands are in English, sort of: “straight-a-go, right-a-go”) than on emotional back story. The result is a warm-hearted, visually charming, and ultimately thought-provoking tribute to the ways, little and large, that these creatures improve our lives. But what have we done for them lately?

Triple Purpose Assistance Guide, Hearing and Service Dog in One!
By I C Huddersfield (UK), Friday, June 24, 2005

A HUDDERSFIELD woman has become only the second person in Britain to be given a dual-purpose guide and hearing dog.

Molly Dyson, of Netherton, says her life has been transformed by two-year-old labrador/retriever cross Erica.

Molly, 63, added: “I’ve met my soulmate. She’s made me so happy and such a difference to my life. Erica is like an angel at the end of a harness.”

The mother-of-two and grandmother of three grandsons suffers from Ushers Syndrome. This robs its victims of their sight and hearing by the time they reach adulthood.

Molly, who was a proficient musician, was registered blind at the age of 40 and shortly afterwards lost all her hearing.

She also suffers from arthritis and osteoporosis, which makes it difficult for her to bend.

Erica was specially chosen from a litter of pups to first be trained as a guide dog for the blind and then as a hearing dog for the deaf.

She has also been trained to fetch and carry for Molly, loading the washing machine, picking up the phone and retrieving items which Molly may have dropped on the floor.

She also responds to doorbells, phones, smoke alarms and kitchen timers.

Erica has been jointly trained by the Guide Dogs for the Blind and Hearing Dogs for Deaf People charities at a cost of more than £45,000.

Jackie Boyle, senior dog trainer for Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, was involved with training Erica. Her sight and hearing training took more than six months.
The Consensus Conference, Disaster Relief and Emergency Preparedness for People with Disabilities, we were scheduled to attend in September, was postponed due to the tragic events in the Gulf Coast. A document on assistance dogs we prepared for this conference can be found on the IAADP website, www.iaadp.org:

http://iaadp.org/disaster.html

When you became an assistance dog partner member of IAADP, you received an Emergency Recovery Kit supported by Bayer Animal Health with information to identify your dog and a caretaker if you are separated. If you want a replacement kit, please send a check or money order for $5 made out to IAADP and mail to Kathi Duran-Diaz, 808 E. Pontiac, Fresno, CA 93704.

**Emergencies: Let’s Be Prepared**

*By Toni and Ed Eames*

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**Benefits I’ve Enjoyed**

Dear Joan:

When I got my Reggie a little over a year ago, he was nearly 30 lb. overweight, had a poor coat and lousy teeth. I immediately put him on IAMS weight control, selecting that brand because of the support the IAMS folks have given to IAADP. I also took Reggie to the doggie dentist – first dog I’ve ever had with teeth so bad a dental cleaning was necessary. With the IAMS Weight Control, Reggie’s weight has dropped to near ideal (he has about 5 lbs. to go) and his teeth are in excellent condition. Both Reggie’s primary care veterinarian and his dentist veterinarian recommend IAMS.

Reggie’s coat improved on the IAMS and people commented on it, but I was still concerned, as his overly dry skin was flaking and he was shedding more than what a normal lab should. I received information about Welactin as a member benefit from IAADP. I asked Reggie’s veterinarian. She had recently been to a meeting where she was introduced to Welactin and she said it was a wonderful product, but she’d hesitated mentioning it to me due to the cost.

I used the IAADP benefit and began using Welactin daily. I’m still on the first bottle, and Reggie’s coat is beautiful. It’s shiny, he’s not shedding and his skin isn’t flaking.

When Reggie first arrived, he was a bit stiff after laying down in one position for a while. I put him on Cosequin – with the blessing of his vet, who likes the product – and he doesn’t show stiffness anymore. From what I’ve read about Cosequin and from what Reggie’s veterinarian says, Reggie will be much less likely to develop arthritis as he ages.

The 15% off items from KV Vet Supply is a wonderful thing. Their basic prices are pretty good to begin with, so an additional 15% off gives you a great value, no matter what you are buying. Of interest to IAADP members may be the stretchy leash. It coils up like a phone cord, so is short, but extends to six feet. I’ve not seen this product elsewhere, and I’ve looked at countless pet supply catalogs and websites. The above benefits to IAADP members, together with the advocacy, information sharing and networking, make membership in IAADP a great bargain.

Thanks so much!
Marcia Carlson

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**Reggie’s coat now shines thanks to Welactin, a member benefit provided by Nutramax Laboratories**
Loss of a Leader

By Toni and Ed Eames

It’s always hard to say good-bye to someone whose life has been so intricately interwoven with the health and well being of an organization. On September 10, IAADP lost friend, mentor and former board member Melanie Quint Meenen.

After obtaining a master’s degree in speech therapy, Quint worked as a Special Ed teacher until her autoimmune disease forced her into early retirement. As a college student, she played the clarinet and took part in musical productions.

Despite her extreme health challenges, Quint was never one to not get involved. When her two daughters were young, she was a Girl Scout leader, then an active member of the PTA.

Long before being partnered with her Smooth Coated Collie service dog Lucky, Quint got involved with the assistance dog movement by raising two puppies for Paws With A Cause®. One graduated as a PAWS hearing dog, and the other went through a career change and graduated as a guide dog from Leader.

As the level of Quint’s disability increased, she recognized the value of having her own service dog. That’s when PAWS-trained Lucky came into her life. Anyone observing this awesome twosome recognized the depth of the bond between Quint and Lucky.

Joining the IAADP Board of Directors, Quint’s love of and commitment to the organization was demonstrated in diverse ways. She took on the job of treasurer, database manager, website master and conference coordinator. Her efficiency and dedication were legendary. After leaving the board, Quint continued serving IAADP in many roles.

IAADP is indebted to other members of the Meenen family. When Quint and husband Lynn took up the mobile home lifestyle, daughter Jana provided a permanent address and processed incoming mail. Honoring Lynn Meenen with the IAADP Unsung Hero Award was an affirmation of his constant behind the scenes support and assistance at board meetings, conferences and the everyday tasks assumed by Quint.

In 2005 IAADP surprised Quint with the Spirit of Excellence Award she so aptly deserved. Quint died at the age of 55, leaving behind her husband and soul mate of 34 years, two daughters and five grandchildren. Board member Jill Exposito described the moving burial service when Lucky’s ashes were placed in the coffin with Quint. Her loyal and beloved partner in independence lost his battle with cancer a month before Quint lost her battle. Quint was proud of the fact that she lived far beyond the predictions of her doctors that she would not see her 35th birthday!

The assistance dog world has lost a great champion, and we grieve with Quint’s family, friends and the multitude of those whose lives she touched.
Open Letter to VCP Sponsors

Dear IAADP-Veterinary Care Partnership Program Sponsors:

I would like to give my heartfelt thanks to each of the sponsors of the IAADP-Veterinary Care Partnership Program: ...Fort Dodge Animal Health, Nutramax Laboratories, Nestle Purina, Iams and Bayer Health Care-Animal Health Division.

I am a disabled senior on very limited Social Security income. I am partnered with a beautiful and intelligent 5-year-old service dog named “Missy.” I have several physical disabilities that make Missy’s assistance to me invaluable. I am also a victim of personal crime and Missy’s assistance, training, presence and love provide me the necessary strength and courage to interact with the public and participate in activities of daily living. I would be very isolated and completely dependent, if not for my service dog.

Early June, 2005, Missy ruptured the cruciate ligament, of her left knee. Upon speaking to the vet and researching every alternative, I learned a surgical repair was the only option. However, the cost of the surgery far exceeded my slender financial resources. I became very frightened. It meant the end of my partnership with Missy if I could not alleviate her pain through surgery. The thought of living without Missy was devastating. I enclose a photo which gives you a glimpse of her loving sensitive spirit.

My love and need for Missy motivated me to reach out to every avenue of possible funding available. As it turned out, it was the grant from IAADP’s “VCP Fund” that came to the rescue. It became the key to achieving adequate funding to cover Missy’s operation. The IAADP-VCP Program pledge provided a generous down payment. This enabled our case to meet the eligibility requirements of a local foundation that could cover the rest of the bill.

The surgery on Missy’s left knee was June 20, 2005. Missy was recovering extremely well when, on July 3, 2005, the right knee cruciate ligament suddenly ruptured. (This is a very common occurrence after one knee ligament is affected, in any dog.) I contacted the foundation that had covered the rest of the bill from the first surgery. Because of the generous IAADP-VCP basic pledge for the left knee operation, this foundation let me know I remained eligible to receive the funds to cover the right knee operation.

Words alone cannot express the extent of my gratitude and appreciation to the companies who support IAADP’s Veterinary Care Partnership Program. Your donations to “save a partnership” are a profound blessing. You gave me a gift far beyond something that can be measured in dollars and cents. Missy is my lifeline to a happy and enhanced quality of life. Thanks to your compassionate commitment to the VCP program, she is on her way to a complete recovery.

Most sincerely,
Maxine Hayden & “Missy”

Access Denial in Japan

80% of blind, deaf & disabled people say their guide dogs have been barred, despite laws

Kyodo News, Japan, Wednesday, May 18, 2005

Kyodo) About 80 percent of blind, deaf and other disabled people said their helper dogs were barred from restaurants, hotels and other places even after a law was enforced in October 2003 requiring public places to accept such dogs, a helper dog users association said Wednesday.

The association, founded in January to improve the law and helper-dog users’ quality of life, wants more people to know about the law.

Twenty-nine guide-dog users have so far answered the questionnaires sent by the association in April and May. The association, which released the preliminary results Wednesday, said it is still awaiting more answers.

Of the 29, 23 have been refused entry to public places, and 15 were rejected even after they explained the law.

Of the 23, 12 have been denied entry by restaurants, four by hotels and two by medical institutions.

The survey also showed that some have had a hard time finding an apartment.

One of the respondents said an employer offered a car service in return for not bringing a guide dog to work due to a lack of space for the dog.

Twenty-six respondents said they want consultation services for people who were refused entry to public places.
Can a Service Animal Be Evicted?

Landlord may have legal grounds for an eviction.

By Bob Bruss, Inman News, USA
Thursday, May 19, 2005

What happens if service animal disturbs tenants?

DEAR BOB: I am almost completely blind and have a “seeing-eye dog.” Although the apartment building where I reside does not allow pets, the landlord allows my dog as a “service animal” exception. However, several tenants have recently complained that my dog barks loudly (he is a very protective German Shepherd) and disturbs them, especially at night when he hears noises. The landlord says if I don’t keep my dog quiet, he will have to evict me for breach of the covenant of quiet enjoyment for his other tenants.

The building is very poorly constructed, with virtually zero sound proofing between apartments. What should I do? - Henry H.

DEAR HENRY: The obvious solution is to train your service dog not to bark except when absolutely necessary. I realize that is probably difficult or maybe impossible.

Your landlord has a responsibility to his other tenants to prevent you from disturbing their quiet enjoyment of their apartments. If a tenant moves out because of your dog’s barking, that strengthens the landlord’s reasons for asking you to move.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires property owners to make “reasonable accommodation” for handicapped persons. Your landlord has done that.

If you refuse or can’t keep your service dog quiet so he doesn’t disturb the other residents, the landlord might have legal grounds to ask you to move or even evict you if the dog’s barking is costing the landlord lost rent revenue.


New Heartworm Prevention Guidelines

Baltimore – ACVIM Forum - (June 2, 2005) -

One little bite. That teensy, annoying mosquito sting is all it takes to infect your pet with devastating heartworm disease. But the good news is that the American Heartworm Society (AHS) has updated guidelines so veterinarians can readily educate pet owners about this potentially fatal illness. The new 2005 guidelines recommend annual testing, plus testing in between prevention product changes, and year-round prevention in order to manage heartworm disease.

During the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine Forum in Baltimore on June 1, the AHS announced the “2005 Guidelines for the Diagnosis, Prevention and Management of Heartworm Infection in Dogs,” and the “2005 Guidelines for the Diagnosis, Prevention and Management of Heartworm Infection in Cats.” Heartworms are parasitic worms living in the arteries of the lungs and in the right side of the heart, causing a variety of health problems, possibly leading to death. Mosquitoes help spread the disease in a vicious cycle to and from pets.

“Each year, dogs and cats die needlessly from complications to this very preventable disease,” says Charles Thomas Nelson, DVM and President of the American Heartworm Society. “These new guidelines are based upon the latest, ongoing research conducted around the world,” he adds.

Heartworm infection in dogs has been diagnosed around the globe, including all 50 of the United States. In the U.S., its territories and protectorates, heartworms are considered at least regionally endemic in each of the contiguous 48 states, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands and Guam. Heartworm transmission has not been documented in Alaska and even with the importation of microfilaremic dogs, it is doubtful the climate this far north will permit maturation of infective larvae. Relocation of infected, microfilaremic dogs appears to be the most important factor contributing to further dissemination of the parasite. The ubiquitous presence of one or more species of vector competent mosquitoes makes transmission possible wherever a reservoir of infection and favorable climatic conditions coexist.

Compiled from: Goodnewsforpets.com

2004 Annual Writing Competition Winners

Best Article
Mountain Climbing With A Service/Hearing Dog
By Kyle Walpole (USA)

Best Short Story or Anecdote
“My Magic’al Angel”
By Sanam Rabadi (India)

Best Opinion Piece
“Roddy…the Dual Purpose Dog”
By Neil Ewart (U.K.)

We welcome entries from assistance dog partners, trainers and others involved in our community. Both unpublished and previously published pieces will be considered for inclusion in Partners Forum and once published, become eligible for Annual Writing Competition. The winner in each category will receive a $50 cash prize. We also plan to showcase the winners on our website each year.
Pioneering Guide Dogs in Bulgaria

By Maury Wray Bridges

ALBENA - Alexieva has great vision, but she cannot see. Alexieva contracted meningitis as a child and lost her sight at 14, in 1976. Like almost all-disabled people her age in Bulgaria, she grew up in a parallel society. When she received her German Shepherd guide dog, Kamila, from Germany in 1999, her life changed forever. Because Alexieva now understands what is possible for blind people, she wants to share this feeling of liberation with other Bulgarians.

Alexieva has created the first guide dog school in the Balkans. Alexieva created the “Eyes on Four Paws” Foundation in 2001 after realizing that the blind in Bulgaria would never be able to integrate into society by staying at home, afraid to leave the house. As she puts it, “there are many blind in Bulgaria who are prisoners who like their prisons.” The streets of Sofia are intimidating to able-bodied individuals, because of uneven pavements on which cars are parked, unclear “zebra” crossing zones, and drivers who do not yield to pedestrians. Alexieva knows that despite the challenges facing the blind who wish to walk freely in the world, the benefits of living life fully make it all worthwhile.

I met Alexieva as part of my work as US AID-sponsored consultant at Business Centre Serdon. The foundation engaged me weekly to develop their business plan, and in the process I have found a story whose themes reach far beyond organizational structure, cash flows, and target markets.

Bulgaria has approximately 17,000 blind people, according to the Union of the Blind in Bulgaria. Roughly 60 percent lost their sight as senior citizens and are too old to be considered for a guide dog. The rest either lost their sight through accident or illness, or were born blind. Alexieva estimates there are 1,000 people in Bulgaria, between the ages of 18 and 40, who would be excellent candidates for a guide dog. Today, just two guide dogs work in Bulgaria. If a Bulgarian wanted to go to another country and purchase a guide dog, it would cost approximately 6,000 euro.

One of the most important challenges to the blind is mobility, which can be met through three primary means: a human helper, a white cane, or a guide dog. In Bulgaria, the most common method is a human helper, but that is problematic because a helper serves to deepen the sense of dependency and helplessness. White canes are a less common method used in Bulgaria.

In Alexieva’s opinion, white canes are not a good solution. The cane cannot anticipate information about the surroundings or the way ahead and communicate that to the blind person. That is the unique ability of the dog. The dog broadcasts the presence of the blind to the world, but the dog communicates control. With Kamila, she walks swiftly and confidently, and others around her notice that confidence. They treat her with respect. But most importantly, Kamila has helped Alexieva overcome the feeling of helplessness. To meet Alexieva, it is hard to believe she was ever helpless. But she recognizes the importance of having something that depends on her, not the other way around. She must care daily for Kamila. The psychological power of this experience changed Alexieva’s life, and it was then that she realized that she wanted to share that liberation with other Bulgarians.

The school is close to becoming a reality. Four golden retriever puppies now live with foster families, preparing to start the first class at the Bulgarian Guide Dog School this summer. The school’s first dog trainer, Martina Marinova, is currently training in Russia. In June, to complete Marinova’s training, a blind Bulgarian person will fly to the school, near Moscow, to work with Marinova and the dog Lokos, a yellow Labrador Retriever. Upon graduation, all three will return to Bulgaria, where Lokos will go to live with the blind person, and Marinova will begin work in Sofia with the four puppies.

At the same time, Alexieva is in the process of purchasing a second group of puppies from a breeder in the Czech Republic who supplies dogs to the Guide Dog School in Prague. These puppies need to be placed in foster homes for approximately one year. She is currently accepting applications from interested people.

Many challenges still lie ahead. The Guide Dog School has no school. Alexieva has secured a plot of land from the Sofia Municipality which they intend to buy for approximately 40,000 leva. In addition, the foundation will build a school facility complete with offices, boarding kennels, veterinary facilities, and dormitories. The cost of the building is difficult to estimate, but will be at least 400,000 euro, according to plans drawn up by architects. Fortunately, the foundation has received 100,000 leva as a donation from M-Tel, and other services are being donated. Bulgaria Air offers the foundation reduced fares for flights to Prague and Moscow. Royal Canin donates dog food. Veterinary care is also donated.

Alexieva’s plan is to train the dogs and then provide them to the blind free of charge. In other countries, government support underwrites the cost of a guide dog. That is not true here, where Alexieva has fought to get a guide dog put on the same government-approved medical assistance list as a wheelchair.

Alexieva’s income-generating plan is a combination of grants and a social enterprise—an obedience school for Sofia’s approximately 100,000 pet dogs—which can create revenue for the Guide Dog School.

“Eyes on Four Paws” faces business challenges that would intimidate any small business owner. It faces social challenges that are far more complicated. With little awareness of guide dogs in Bulgaria, Alexieva needs to convince both the government and blind people that the school is worthwhile.

Under communism, the blind were kept separate, working in factories for the blind, living in block buildings together. It is a slow process to reverse that type of pervasive attitude of marginalization and separateness. But I have no doubt that Alexieva can do it.

If any Sofia Echo readers are interested in becoming involved with the work of the foundation, through donations, volunteer work, or acting as a foster family for a golden retriever, contact 980 4241 in Sofia or www.e4p.net ore4p@abv.bg
Swimming Assistance Gear

by Sharon Wachsler

I’ve always loved to swim. When I was a small child – and even into my early adolescence – I could happily spend hours in the pool or ocean. As a teen, I was on a summer swim team and woke up early each morning to attend practice before work. When I became old enough to travel, my favorite vacations spots were lakes and oceans.

In fact, when I was becoming ill at 25, some of the first symptoms of my incipient chronic illnesses were dizziness, nausea, and disorientation during swimming practices. Literally not knowing which way was up when I attempted flip-turns, combined with crashing into the cement sides of the pool, put an end to my attempts to swim for many years.

Now, in my mid-thirties, I still love the water. In fact, one of my favorite destinations is the state forest just a few miles from my house. It boasts a wheelchair accessible trail and a wonderful lake for swimming, canoeing, and fishing. However, my disabilities include chronic fatigue immune dysfunction syndrome (CFIDS). So, while I enjoy scootering around in the forests and wading into the water, I am no longer able to really “swim.”

The good part about being in the water is that I am lighter; this allows me to move around more easily than I can on dry land. I can float a bit or do a gentle backstroke for a few minutes, but then I become exhausted. Wading out of the water, when I’m tired, waterlogged, and returning to cruel gravity is always a struggle. But it would be dangerous for me to stay in the water too long and over-exert, as I might become dizzy, nauseous, or faint.

My first service dog, Jersey, hated the water. She could never be coaxed into putting a single paw in. So, when I went “swimming” (floating), she stayed on the beach blanket.

Four years ago I got a dog, to train as my successor – Gadget. While both Jersey and Gadget are Bouviers des Flandres, they could not be more different. Gadget loves the water. I got him when he was one year old, totally wild and untrained, and one of the first places we went was to the lake. He dove right in, although he was most comfortable swimming near where his feet could touch the bottom.

Once Gadget was fully trained, we went to the state park for romps on the wheelchair accessible trail and dips in the water. When we got to the beach area, I’d take off his pack and the two of us would go in the water. I’d have to spend most of my time sitting in the shallows, so as not to become too exhausted. But I have a hard plastic ball that floats, and if I threw it in, Gadget would enthusiastically swim out to get it and bring it back. That was a lot of fun, but it wasn’t swimming.

However, I started experimenting and discovered that I could attach his leash to a harness, grab onto his leash and then throw the ball, and he’d “tow” me out to get the ball, and then pull me back in. That was fun for both of us, but he would get tired from my extra weight and the game became less fun and somewhat tiring. It was still important for me to have Gadget at the beach to help me brace and steady myself to walk in and out of the water, but I was wary of making him vulnerable to overexertion, himself, by pulling me around in the water.

Now I have discovered a great solution for him to help me “swim”! I purchased a K-9 Float Coat from Ruff Wear. It is basically a lifejacket for dogs. The coat has a nylon shell with buoyancy foam inside. It comes in two high-visibility colors, orange and red, and includes a stripe of reflective trim. There’s a handle on the top, along with a D-ring.

After the jacket arrived, I let Gadget try it on in the house first, and gave him treats and praise for wearing it, just to get him used to it. It wasn’t a big deal to him at all, since he’s used to wearing a variety of gear, including a pack or harness for working, and a reflective cape (also from Ruff Wear, in hunter orange) for runs in the woods around my house during hunting season.

But I still didn’t know how he’d take to it in the water. Nevertheless, I was very excited to test it out. Our first trial of the swimming vest on July Fourth was a great success! For one thing, having him wear a vest in the water with me seemed to make it even more clear to other beach-goers that he’s an assistance dog.

Although I always arrive with Gadget suited up and I use a scooter and oxygen, I nevertheless had a horrible ordeal last summer when one woman tried to force me to leave the beach because “pets” aren’t allowed. Despite my (human) partner and me both explaining that Gadget is a service dog, this woman kept yelling at me that it was dangerous to have a dog in the water where there were children. This, despite the fact that earlier, some kids had been throwing rocks on the beach and I had had to tell them to stop! My partner even gave the irate woman one of the IAADP brochures I always carry in Gadget’s pack, but the woman threw it on the sand without reading it!

At any rate, this time, nobody gave us grief. Also, I brought a new ball to throw (the old one having suffered many puncture wounds). It floats and squeaks, and Gadget was enchanted with it. Every time I threw it, he leaped into the water to retrieve it. I had a leash clipped to the D-ring on the top of the vest, and I let him pull me along.

At first, he didn’t entirely trust the float coat. He seemed to be paddling as hard as ever to swim. But, over time he realized it was doing some of the work for him and he relaxed into it. My partner or I would throw the ball and then I’d let Gadget tow me, floating on my back, out and then in to shore. Sometimes we used the ball and sometimes we just paddled/floated around. We stayed in the water longer than I ever have since getting sick!

A couple of funny things happened. Bouviers are herding breeds, and Gadget has a high herding drive, but in the past he has concerned himself with only my welfare in the water. However, I think the float coat gave him added confidence – and in his mind, authority. If I floated or swam from shore by myself, Gadget would swim out after me. This was not all that surprising because he always sticks by
my side whenever we’re away from home. But, we also discovered that, apparently emboldened by his lifejacket, Gadget decided that he was the lifeguard for the beach! So, if my partner was swimming in the deeper water and I was in the shallows, he would swim out and try to “herd” her back to me and the beach. He even decided, when there was only one other person in the water – an older man swimming at the deep end of the roped-off swimming area – to try to herd him back to us! Because the man was splashing a lot, I think Gadget thought he was drowning. Needless to say I put the kibosh on that attempt.

Now that I know that the float coat works, I’ll add some “service dog” patches to it to make it clear that he’s working in the water. Ruff Wear urges customers to use the smallest size the dog will fit in, as a good, tight fit is important. So, if you’re thinking about getting a float coat, that’s one warning: make sure you look at the charts and discuss your dog’s size and measurements with the Ruff Wear staff.

Second, and more seriously, always remember when you are swimming with your dog that he has four paws – each with sharp claws – churning madly under the water, and they usually reach farther out than you think. Be careful to keep a safe distance between your dog and yourself when you are in front or behind him. (Also, make sure he is a safe distance from other swimmers.) This is especially true if he’s feeling panicky in the water (such as when he’s just getting used to going out past where his paws touch the ground) or if he thinks you are in danger and is trying to “rescue/herd” you. Otherwise you can end up with some nasty scratches or puncture wounds, or he may even be pushing you under without meaning to.

The way I deal with this issue is to use a long leash that allows me to float behind Gadget, past the reach of his hind paws. When he makes a turn, I make sure that I am turning, too. If he’s with someone else, such as my partner, and I set out to swim a bit on my own, I know the chances are good he’ll come out after me. My partner calls to me to warn me when he’s on his way so I can get to his side and avoid a collision.

Despite these cautions, I have to say that I think the float coat has tremendous potential as a piece of equipment for service dog partners. For those who, like me, want to get into the water more and have large, strong dogs, the float coat may be a way to have greater safety for both members of the canine and human team in the water. For those who have smaller dogs or who want to take their assistance dog with them in a boat or at the beach, the float coat can offer greater peace of mind, knowing that their canine partner will not be in danger of drowning should he get in (literally) over his head.

For more information on the K-9 Float Coat:
- website: www.ruffwear.com
- phone: 888-783-3932
- fax: 541-388-1831
- email: luckydog@ruffwear.com
- mailing address: Ruff Wear, 561 NW York Drive, Bend, Oregon, 97701.
Guide Dog Handler Becomes Trainer

Continued from page 15

That appealed to Thompson. She had studied psychology in college and she always loved dogs. She knew she had found her niche.

After an unfortunate experience at one dog-training school – “I learned how not to train dogs,” she said – Thompson took a different path. A friend directed her to Cleveland All-Breed Training Club, where people are taught to use kindness and positive reinforcement when training dogs.

Thompson started training at Cleveland All-Breed in October, though she had been training Kenzie on her own for more than a year.

Kenzie earned his companion dog title on December 11 at the Richland County Kennel Club segment of the Crown Classic shows at Cleveland’s International Exposition Center.

The only concession made for Thompson in competition is that she asked the ring stewards to tell the judges that she is blind, so they would give her voice commands instead of hand signals.

Thompson is also working with Scout, a dog she adopted from the Animal Protective League. She taught him to turn off light switches and how to close a door. She is teaching him how to get laundry from a basket and bring it to her.

And Thompson is fostering an 8-week-old blind puppy for an Airedale rescue group.

“Kenzie inspired me,” Thompson said. “I know I can train dogs to do tasks that don’t require vision to teach.”

Addresses for Where Do I Send It?

How To Reach Us By E-mail

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New Address & Phone Number for Renewals, Other Membership Matters

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Phone: 559-226-3453

Membership Information

Membership Dues: $20 - Partner Member; $20 - Renewal; $20 - Friend Member; $25 - Provider Member. Send check with signed application from website at http://www.iaadp.org/membership.html to IAADP c/o IAADP c/o Kathi Duran-Diaz, 808 E. Pontiac Way, Fresno CA 93704. You may also obtain a Membership Application with S.A.S.E., by fax ($1.00 extra), or send a letter with your signature attesting you’re partnered with an assistance dog. Specify Print, Cassette, Disk.

Renewal Date: All members should check their membership expiration date, which now appears on the mailing label of the most recent copy of Partners Forum. Partner Members will also find their expiration date on their Membership Card. Renewal notices may or may not be sent out, so members should be careful to renew their memberships 45-60 days in advance of the expiration date to maintain coverage for benefits.

Questions? Contact our Information & Advocacy Center
Call (760) 439-9544 or e-mail IAADP@aol.com or the IAADP website: www.iaadp.org. You can also contact us by mail at IAADP, P.O. Box 1326. Sterling Heights, MI 48311.

International Association of Assistance Dog Partners

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Return Service Requested