

Paws'itive Teams

Service Dogs for San Diegans
9225 Chesapeake Dr. Unit B. San Diego, CA 92123
858-279-7297 Fax: 858-279-7296



TRAINER'S ASSISTANT (volunteer position)

QUALIFICATIONS:

1. Experience in training basic obedience skills with more than one dog.
2. Experience in resolving basic behavioral problems with dogs.
3. Experience and/or interest in training using operant conditioning technique (i.e. "clicker", positive reinforcement)
4. Able to have a pup live in your home.
5. Ability to take pup to work and other places on a frequent basis.
6. Must live in San Diego County.

COMMITMENT:

1. During first 6 months, will be assigned an experienced service dog trainer as a mentor and will assist with the training of that trainer's pup. Should be available 2-3 weekends each month to work with mentor during initial period, prior to receiving a pup to raise/train. (Schedule varies based on individual needs.)
2. Must be willing to attend monthly practice sessions with other trainers and to work on an on-going basis with Director of Training.
3. Must be available to take at least one basic obedience class with a PT dog in-training and be willing to attend local seminars on dog training/behavior (funded by PT).
4. In exchange for the dog training learning opportunity, you will be expected to make a **3 year commitment** as a volunteer apprentice trainer. (6 months working with Mentor, 2 yrs working with assigned pup, 5 months transitioning dog to partner)

COST:

1. PT pays for the cost of food, training classes and veterinary expenses once apprenticeship is completed and a pup is assigned to you for full training.
2. Volunteer trainers must provide own transportation costs.

BENEFITS:

1. Learn effective training methods using operant conditioning.
2. Learn how to teach essential service dog tasks.
3. Learn about a variety of disabilities and ways to teach individual dogs to work with persons with these disabilities. Trainer will be actively involved in selection process for partner.
4. Able to stay in close contact with Partner and be primary resource in follow-up support.

TO APPLY: Give us a call and/or submit a resume detailing experience. Resume should include the following:

1. Detailed experience in training dogs. (Include number of dogs trained, purpose of training, and breeds.)
2. Familiarity with mobility limiting disabilities. (not required)
3. Experience in teaching people.
4. Description of home and work environment (Can you get permission from your supervisor to bring dog to work?)
5. Other animals living in your home.
6. Describe other persons living in your household.
7. Your long term goals regarding dog training.
8. Send resume to training director via US Mail or email to paws@pawsteams.org

PAWS'ITIVE TEAMS

background information



- We do not use kennels. Each pup lives in the home of the trainer and accompanies him/her on most daily activities, thus giving us the opportunity for 24 hour training.
- Our trainers use operant conditioning training methods. The pups are taught from an early age to problem solve and to think independently.
- We do not use puppy raisers. By starting the pup at an early age with an experienced trainer, we are able to take advantage of the imprint stage to teach the joy of learning and start introducing retrieval, tugging and nudging objects at an early age.
- We only place dogs locally and match applicants carefully with appropriate dogs. Before a match is made, we have been to the individual's home and had the person work with our dogs in-training so that we understand the strengths and limitations of each person.
- Once we identify a disabled partner, rather than an intense 2 week training in which the student is out of the home environment, we work twice a week for an average of 5 months to transition the dog to the individual. These training sessions are led by the trainer of the dog being placed and are scheduled to accommodate the availability of both the student and trainer/instructor. Our Director of Training will oversee the transition training. This training generally includes one session a week in the person's home for skill development and one session weekly in a variety of public places. Our transition training sessions are flexible and customized to incorporate daily activities of the student. For example, if the person works, we schedule a session at the work place and educate co-workers.
- Because we are a grass-roots organization, we schedule monthly graduate practice sessions so that our trainers have frequent on-going follow-up support to the teams. This helps us assure that the dog is working effectively and is healthy and maintaining an appropriate weight.
- Because there are so many variables with young pups, we are unable to determine if the pup will be suitable until it reaches close to one year of age. We will release pups that do not seem to enjoy this type of work or have personalities that are unsuitable (i.e. too much drive, skittish in new settings, dog or people reactive). We will also release dogs with potential for early arthritis or dysplastic hips/elbows. Before placement, we do OFA's for hips and elbows, eye checks and thyroid checks. The working life of a dog is short (about 8-10 years) and the bond very close with the disabled partner. For this reason, we must place healthy dogs. Once it is time to retire a dog, we work closely with the partner to identify the best home. In some cases, the dog may stay in the home with the partner. More often, the dog will go to a family member or friend who has known the dog in its working life. We want our working dogs to enjoy their retirement years...they have certainly earned it!
- If a pup is released, we consider this a "**career change**" and spend considerable effort finding a home where the pup will be happy. Many of our career change dogs become active therapy dogs. Any adopting family is required to sign an agreement, guaranteeing that the dog will be a family pet and will be returned to us if they cannot keep it later. Because our pups are trained in the home of the trainers, we hold an emotional attachment to each pup and make sure we stay in contact.