

Service Dog Rescue Program

A Guide for our Dog Rescue Partners



Letter of Introduction

Dear Valued Rescuers,

Thank you for taking some time to learn about our organization and how we would like to work together. We are a fairly new organization that seeks to improve the lives of dogs and people we work with and know that developing close working relationships with organizations such as yours is essential to our success.

The following pages contain a detailed overview of our mission, our methods, our services and our needs. It is our hope that, upon reviewing them, you see how committed we are to the health and happiness of the dogs we work with. Although the dogs we train are called “service dogs”, we believe that the service dog-human relationship is mutually beneficial, one of mutual service, based on understanding, communication, and appreciation.

Science tells us that humans and dogs have been evolving together, in partnership, for at least 35,000 years (possibly as long as 100,000 years.) The human-dog bond has, historically, always been one of mutual service. Recently, however, dogs have become mostly companions to humans, rather than working dogs. They have gone from guarding our flocks and hunting with/for us, to living lives that ask nothing more of them than affection and companionship.

Obviously, the affection and companionship of a dog is life-changing and very valuable to humans. However, this shift in our relationship with dogs and the associated lifestyle changes often create many challenges when it comes to the happiness and health of our dogs. They no longer perform tasks that facilitate our physical survival. Instead, they enrich our emotional lives (and encourage a more healthy lifestyle). Yet, dogs are highly social creatures and they require a significant amount of mental and physical stimulation in order to be blissfully happy, which, unfortunately, many well intentioned owners are not able to provide.

In their new roles in our society, too many dogs spend long days at home alone desperately waiting for their human guardians to come home, anxious and sad to be alone most of the day. Even when their owners (we prefer the term guardians) return, brief walks are expected to provide enough exercise and stimulation for them to live satisfied and happy lives. As you know better than most, this is often just not enough for many dogs.

When dogs' needs aren't being met, including their physical, social and emotional needs, they often behave in ways that humans don't like. They aren't trying to anger us, inconvenience us or punish us; however that is often the unfortunate result. In order to cope with their anxiety, loneliness and excess energy, dogs often destroy valued possessions (such as our clothing, our furniture, and our homes) and develop behaviors that are difficult to live with (such as excessive barking, hyperactivity and/or hyper-alertness.) A lack of knowledge about what causes such behaviors and how to address them, as well as the considerable demands our society places on humans, sadly, often



has a severely negative affect on the relationship people have with their dogs and their ability to enjoy them in their lives. In the worst (but all too common) cases, it leads to dogs being given up, either by rehoming them or, shockingly, by euthanizing them.

At the same time, there are millions of disabled people whose lives are severely limited in ways that they wouldn't be if they had a trained service dog. The use of (service) dogs to assist individuals with disabilities is fairly recent and has changed enormously over the last fifty, twenty, even five, years. The applications of service dogs and the service tasks they are trained to perform for people multiply on a seemingly daily basis! Society is finally beginning to fully acknowledge the healing power dogs have and that they are capable of changing and saving lives.

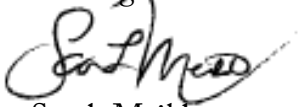
As a result, almost every organization that places and trains service dogs in America has a two to three year waiting list. Many of them also charge ten, twenty or thirty thousand dollars for the dogs they do provide. Sadly, most of these dogs are bred by these organizations, all while so many dogs are being given up or euthanized as a result of their social and physical activities being insufficient!

Diggity Dogs is committed to working to solve both of these problems. We have designed our programs and services so that we can provide stimulating, constant companionship and loving homes to the abundance of dogs in need (rather than running our own breeding program), while also changing the lives of disabled individuals. For over 80 years, assistance dogs have worked successfully in public and won the public acceptance by achieving high behavioral and training standards which set them apart from pets and other animals. Their exemplary conduct led to state legislatures granting access rights to the blind, deaf and mobility impaired. Those early teams paved the way for the Americans With Disabilities Act, which has opened the door to individuals with a wide range of physical and mental impairments being able to have access rights. Our goal is to spearhead the design and development of the most effective training methods and programs designed to produce highly effective, well matched, and joyous mental health service dog-human teams.

There are many challenges in finding and selecting the best dogs for our applicants/program, however, and it is our hope that we can develop a close working and mutually beneficial relationship with organizations such as yours in order to ensure success. We are passionately committed to the success of our program participants and the service dog teams that we help to create. Similarly, we are resolute that our program and staff will become known for their dedication, compassion, ethical conduct, skills and intelligence.

Thank you for your time and consideration. The attached materials will, hopefully, provide a more detailed understanding of how we function. Please do not hesitate to let us know about any questions or reservations you may have. We are very aware that this is merely an introduction. We are excited by the prospect of working together and will look forward to discussing our team, our needs and processes in greater detail with you soon.

Best regards



Sarah Meikle

Managing Director



About Us

Our Mission

Explore how cooperative and mutually beneficial relationships with dogs can provide invaluable assistance to disabled individuals.

Our Practice

Facilitates and encourages trusting relationships between dogs and humans based on understanding, communication, and appreciation.

Our Focus

Provide service dogs, service dog training and training support services in order to develop dogs' abilities to sense their guardian's mental, emotional, neurological and/or physical needs and respond in ways that assist their guardians in coping with and/or overcoming challenges that they experience.

Our Methods

All training and care provided for dogs is done with compassion, patience, and care. Dogs should never be forced, dominated, intimidated, emotionally harmed, physically harmed, or punished. Every effort is made to more fully comprehend the way that dogs perceive and experience the world so that we may employ the most effective methods of communication possible. We remain vigilantly cognizant of dogs' dependence on man and consider it our responsibility to provide for their physical, mental and emotional health. Great lengths are taken to ensure dogs are provided with the experiences and care required to ensure that they may live free from fear. In recognition of the fact that dogs are incapable of malice and relentlessly trusting of humans, they must always be treated with sensitivity, gratitude and reverence.

Types of Diggity Dogs

Psychiatric, Emotional Trauma, & Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Assistance Dogs

Specialized tasks taught focus on “invisible disability” issues such as PTSD, depression, bi-polar disorder, anxiety disorders, social phobias and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Tasks taught might include behavior, such as nudging when dissociative behavior begins, standing between the guardian and others when in public, turning on lights before entering a dark room, entering and searching a home before the guardian enters, grounding/interrupting panic attacks, waking guardian from nightmares, licking face of semi-conscious/unconscious guardian in order to rouse them, waking guardian, getting guardian out of bed, locating objects (keys, car, home, etc.) for those with memory issues, deep pressure therapy or interrupting repetitive and/or self-destructive behaviors.

Medical Assist or Medical Alert Dogs

Medical alert dogs and medical assist dogs perform valuable tasks in response to symptoms or behaviors caused by a medical condition. This may include bringing a phone to their guardian so their guardian can call for help, staying by their side to minimize disorientation from a seizure, bark to alert someone to the guardian’s condition, and/or finding a spouse or other person to render assistance. Such dogs often naturally learn to warn or alert their guardian of an impending medical event such as a seizure. Similarly, diabetic alert dogs are taught to indicate changes in their guardian’s blood sugar levels. We are also proud to announce that we have just begun an experimental program that will explore whether or not dogs can be trained to assist individuals with Addison’s Disease, a rare but life threatening condition that is extremely difficult for people to monitor and manage effectively. Diggity Dogs hopes to change that.

Mobility Assistance

The specialized tasks taught will focus on mobility issues. People with balance problems or dizziness can teach their dog to assist them by offering a steady and strong unmovable stance to lean on. Dogs can bring or carry guardian’s belongings, retrieve dropped items, turn on lights, open doors and drawers, assist with chores such as doing laundry or assist guardian when getting up, sitting down or lying down.



Diggity Dog Standards

Physical, Health & Behavioral Standards

Physical Health - All dogs will have passed a basic veterinary exam. Dogs will possess the physical size, strength, conditioning, and physical structure to perform the expected tasks. Dogs will not be over or under weight, as determined by the examining veterinarian. All dogs will be spayed or neutered and micro-chipped prior to placement. We also strongly encourage all applicants to agree to have their dog's DNA tested to identify genetic traits not apparent in appearance, which will aid in the health and behavioral understanding of the dog, however there is an additional \$90 for this service.

Temperament - Dogs will be screened for temperaments appropriate for the tasks it will be performing and under the conditions it will perform them. The dog will behave in a friendly manner to both people and other animals, will not display inappropriately fearful reactions to normal experiences, and will not behave in an excessively submissive or assertive manner. The dog will display confidence and a willingness to interact with people in a novel environment.

Age & Life Span The dog's age will be identified as best as possible and the dog will usually be at least 12 months old and physically mature enough to perform required tasks before being placed with an applicant, though occasional exceptions can be made with the express understanding that the applicant will not expect the dog to be (or perform like) a working service dog until reaching the aforementioned age and maturity. The dog will have an expected working life of at least 6 years.

Training & Behavior Standards Required for Graduation

- ☑ Service dogs should be given a minimum of one hundred twenty (120) hours of schooling over a period of six months or more, at least thirty (30) of which should be devoted to outings that will prepare the dog to work obediently and unobtrusively in public places.
- ☑ Service dogs must master the basic obedience skills: "Sit, Stay, Come, Down, Heel" and a dropped leash recall in a store in response to verbal commands and/or hand signals.
- ☑ Dogs must be individually trained to perform identifiable tasks on command or cue for the benefit of the disabled human partner.
- ☑ Any training that arouses a dog's prey drive or fear to elicit a display of aggression for guard or defense purposes is strictly prohibited. Non aggressive barking as a trained behavior is permitted in appropriate situations.
- ☑ No aggressive behavior toward people or other animals - no biting, snapping, snarling, growling or lunging and barking at them when working off your property.
- ☑ No soliciting food or petting from other people while on duty.
- ☑ No sniffing merchandise or people or intruding into another dog's space while on duty.
- ☑ Tolerate strange sights, sounds, odors etc. in a wide variety of public settings.
- ☑ Ignore food on the floor or dropped in the dog's vicinity while working outside the home.
- ☑ Work calmly on a leash and refrain from unruly behavior or unnecessary vocalizations in public.
- ☑ Refrain from urinating or defecating in public unless they are given a specific command or signaled to do so in an appropriate places.

Our Training Program

Stage 1: Application & Interview

Applications for service dogs are currently received and reviewed by the Training Director. The Training Director makes a determination regarding the needs of the applicant, the ability of Diggity Dogs to meet the applicant's needs, and interviews the applicant to determine specifically what the dog would be trained to do. After the interview is complete, program contracts detailing the services provided in our program and the participation required are reviewed with the applicant.

Stage 2: Program Contract & Deposit

Upon receipt of a signed contract, a medical referral form that has been completed by a medical professional, a letter of reference, and a deposit, the applicant formally becomes a Diggity Dogs client. If the applicant is able to pay for the cost of their dog, they provide the balance due within two weeks of their deposit or organize a payment plan with us and move on to the fourth stage. If not, the applicant then begins to fundraising initiatives or begins searching for a business or individual willing to sponsor them. All funds raised are considered a donation to Diggity Dogs, which ensures that an applicant's personal income (or disability) is not affected. Funds raised are sent to PO BOX 448, Shelburne Falls, MA 01370, deposited into Diggity Dogs' bank account and then credited to the applicant. Payments may be made by personal check, cashier's check, money order, credit card or debit card (standard transaction fees apply to debit & credit card payments), or electronically through PayPal. Until a deposit has been received, a dog will not be selected for an applicant.

Stage 3: Dog Selection & Veterinary Health Assessment

At this point, Diggity Dogs will begin the process of selecting a dog for the applicant. The applicant is required to complete a few more forms that we provide, including a personality test and an additional form that helps us assess the kind of dog they would be best suited for. Each dog is chosen for a specific applicant and their personality, lifestyle, needs, preferences and environment are all taken into consideration during the selection process.

Stage 4: Foster Placement

The dog is then placed with a local foster volunteer for one to eighteen months. (The average foster is for three to six months.) During this time, the dog will be trained regularly by our staff and volunteers so that the dog reaches the behavioral and obedience skills required for public access as a service dog. They will also be introduced to some of the service tasks they will perform for their future guardian. Foster volunteers have all been instructed in our training methods and are provided with training milestones the foster dog should be reaching and their progress is regularly reviewed by our staff. Fosters also commit to regularly socializing fostered dogs, including meeting new people, new dogs and new environments. During this time, the dog will also be measured and a service vest will be ordered.

Once the dog begins to consistently meet the behavioral and obedience standards required for public access, they are ready to be placed with their guardian. It is possible to bypass the fostering process at the request of the applicant, with the understanding that the dog might not meet the minimum behavior requirements for use in public yet, and that the dog might not be mature enough to immediately begin working full-time. There are benefits to early placement, especially with young puppies, as the bond between the dog and human can sometimes be stronger and we can assist the individual with important early development training and socialization methods. If this option is requested, the program duration will be extended to reflect the dog reaching maturity by completion. In some situations, an additional fee may be required for the longer course format & curriculum.

Stage 5: Uniting the Team, Individual Training & Individual Program Development

The team is united (YAY!) at the applicant's home or one of our training locations. Over the course of three to ten days (depending on the participant's needs, abilities & location), we work closely with the client to cover the subjects listed below and to develop an individual program curriculum designed to teach/perfect the dog's ability to assist the client in managing or coping with their disability. We also practice a variety of training techniques with the dog and client, as well as taking local excursions (to locations such as a the supermarket and a restaurants) to ensure the team is comfortable together in public.

⇒ History of Dogs

The Evolution of Dogs, The History of Service Dogs

⇒ Laws & Regulations Applicable to Service Dogs & Service Dogs in Training

National & State Laws, Rights & Regulations, Housing Laws, Rights & Regulations, The Rights of Others (The Public)

⇒ Dog Communication

Understanding How Dogs Communicate, How to Communicate with Dogs, Dog Social Behavior Standards

⇒ Dog Health

Spaying & Neutering, Vaccinations, Dental Care, Nutrition, Nail Care, Grooming, Annual Veterinary Care

⇒ Dog Handling & Equipment

Dog Handling: Best Practices, Understanding & Using Crate Training, Collars, Harnesses, Leashes, Clickers, Toys, Treats

⇒ Training Methods & Theory

Classical Conditioning, Operant Conditioning, Luring, Capturing, Shaping, Marking Behavior, Generalizing

⇒ Dog Development

Important Developmental Stages, The Importance of Socialization

⇒ Basic Obedience & Manners Training (on & off leash)

Come, Sit, Stay, Down, Off, Up, Heel, No, No Begging, Go To (bed, crate, etc.), Fetch, Give/Drop, Kisses

⇒ Service Dogs in Public

Minimum Standards for Public Access, The Public Access Test, Training Locations (Where to Practice), Traveling with a Service Dog, Interacting with the Public

Stage 6: One Year Training Program (including Progress & Graduation Assessments)

The one year training program includes monthly progress consultations and the following materials.

⇒ Advanced Obedience Training & Service Dog Task Training

As defined in Individual Program Design

⇒ Preventing & Addressing Problem Behaviors

Leash Pulling, Separation Anxiety, Destructive Behavior, Barking

⇒ Progress Assessments & Trainer Consultations

Weekly Training Logs (samples attached), Monthly Progress Consultations, Monthly Video Submissions

⇒ Graduation Assessment & Final Program Certification

Public Access Test, Service Task Performance Review, On/Off-Leash Obedience Assessment, Program Feedback, Testimonial

Follow-up & Aftercare

In order to ensure the ongoing success of all of our graduates, we also provide the following.

⇒ Post Graduation Check-Ins & Resources for all Graduates

Monthly Phone Consultation (for next twelve months), Lifetime Access to Courses & Classes, Online Graduates Forum Access

Training Log



To be completed weekly.

Owner's Name: _____ Dog's Name: _____

Breed or Mix: _____ Gender: _____ Age: _____

Week of: _____ Total Hours: _____ (_____ hrs - On-Site) + (_____ hrs - Outings)

Health: _____

Problems: _____

Outings: _____

Socialization: _____

Obedience: _____

Service Dog Tasks: _____

Manners: _____

Comments: _____

Training Log



To be completed weekly.

Owner's Name: _____ Dog's Name: _____

Breed or Mix: _____ Gender: _____ Age: _____

Week of: May 2 - 8, 2010 Total Hours: 8 hrs. (3.5 hrs - On-Site) + (4.5 hrs - Outings)

Health: "Gave heart-worm prevention and applied flea/tick prevention. Treated ear infection." Note any changes in diet, digestive upsets, hot spots treated or other health problems addressed. Trimmed nails? Blowing coat? Car sickness? _____

Problems: Are there any particular problems distressing you? Improvement on any of the problems previously mentioned? (e.g. barking at other dogs, over-excited in the presence of other animals, reluctant to get into the back seat of the car) _____

Outings: 1 Hour Mon. Registry of Motor Vehicles 45 min. Tues. Bank - inside w/permission, parking lot work too. 1 hr. 15 min. Thurs. Petsmart. 1 ½ hr. Saturday Petsmart, more work on dog distraction issue, _____

Socialization: Note novel sights, sounds, smells, taste or touch, footing, Urban, suburban or rural environments. Different kinds of weather? (e.g. a band in a park, a parade, a mounted policeman, Little League game, strangers in ethnic garb, beards, hats) Note improvements (e.g. elevator ride, dog barking at him from behind a fence, escalator) What needs more work? (e.g. walking near heavy traffic, motorcycle noises, screaming kids on playground, holding a Sit Stay during a thunderstorm) _____

Obedience: Did you practice basic skills? Where? (e.g. house, neighborhood, shopping center). Progress? Improvements? (e.g. Heel, Left, Right) Practice public access skills (holding Sit or Down when adult or child pets the dog, someone drops food on the floor, passes with a shopping cart.) Practice Stay or Come with a dropped leash indoors, outdoors in safe area. Have someone tempt dog with food & say "Puppy, puppy" or bounce a ball while dog is focused on you in a Sit or Down Stay. Practice Stay in public rest room, under table in restaurant, in stores. Off leash, heeling, downs, etc. _____

Service Dog Tasks: What did you introduce this week? What progress has dog made on various tasks, like fetch the phone? Beginner, intermediate or advanced stage? Any setback? Where did you practice? _____

Manners: Which manners were a priority this week? What improved? What needs more work? (e.g.: "Say please" [with Sit Stay] for Supper, for Exiting house....expanded from 30 seconds to one minute! Enter, exit, riding in a car - improved. Lie quietly on side for nail grinder, grooming - needs work! Jumping on visitors - needs work. Honor system - respecting "Leave It" edict re: bowl of treats on coffee table alone! No sniffing other dogs while "on duty" in neighborhood - needs more work. _____

Comments: Anything unusual, worrisome, cute, exceptional? Reason for not practicing this week (e.g. sick, injured, family funeral) Overall progress....fair? Good? _____

Program Contract

Service & Participation Agreement Details

The following contract outlines the specifics of your program contract, including the conduct, performance, qualification, participation, and communication procedures and requirements.

I, _____, *clearly print your name*, understand and agree with following statements.

- I hereby commit to fulfilling my role in this dog/human partnership. I do so knowing that this is a long-term commitment that will require working with my dog daily. My goal is to form a supportive partnership with my dog that will empower me to have more control over the circumstances of my life.
- I understand that success as a service dog team requires hard work and commitment; my dog is capable of learning and serving but needs me to be consistent, patient, understanding and appreciative in order to accomplish our goals.
- I will complete weekly training logs and program feedback forms provided during the program.
- I will not use domination or fear to train my dog.
- I vow to ensure that my dog will never be abused, mistreated or neglected. I will use humane training methods, monitor my dog's stress level and provide rest breaks.
- I understand that my dog will be selected based on how well we would suit each other after both of our personalities, lifestyles, temperaments and needs are assessed. I understand that I will NOT be assigned a dog based on color, coat quality or appearance.
- I will always ensure that my dog is healthy, flea free, has annual veterinary health exams and up to date vaccinations. I will maintain the health of my dog's teeth and nails. I will take time to make sure my dog is well groomed and free of any foul odor.
- I will carry clean up materials and arrange for prompt clean up my dog eliminates or gets sick.
- Since all service dog handlers are service dog ambassadors, I will show respect and consideration to other people/property, be polite and be willing to educate the public about assistance dogs.
- I understand that the certification of service dogs is not government regulated and that there is no official "certification" required for service dogs, however there are training and behavior requirements.
- I understand that one day my dog will need to retire from full-time service duties and promise to continue to care for him/her when that day comes.
- I understand that I am responsible for my dog's behavior in public and will immediately remove my dog from any situation if he/she is being destructive or disruptive.
- I understand that the most service dogs require a minimum of 120 training hours of over a period of six months or more and am prepared to spend the time required to train my dog sufficiently.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Provider Contract

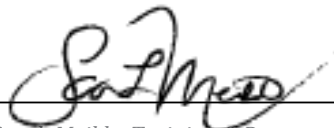
Services & Standards of our Training Program

This contract outlines the specifics of what you can expect from us as a participant of our service dog training program.

Diggity Dogs, Inc. hereby agrees to fulfill the following promises.

- We promise to provide accurate, current, thorough explanations of the laws pertaining to service dogs, including the national and state laws, housing regulations and public transportation regulations.
- We promise to treat all program participants with respect and compassion and to always conduct ourselves honestly and ethically.
- We promise to provide instruction on observing and understanding dog body language and behavior.
- We promise to ensure that all service dogs graduating from our program will meet the minimum standards for assistance dogs in public as defined by Assistance Dogs International.
- We promise to provide a brand new service dog vest that fits your dog. Additional materials, such as a crate or an extra service dog vest, can be requested, however they are not included in the cost of the program and must be paid for separately.
- We promise to provide all applicants flexibility in scheduling monthly performance reviews and in-person training, and to provide training support services to all program graduates for the life of their dog.
- If, in the first six months of the program, any applicant decides that the dog is not a good match for them, we promise to take the dog back and provide an alternative dog for the applicant.
- We promise to always respect the privacy of our clients and the confidentiality of their information.
- We promise to provide the program curriculum and meet the standards defined herein.

Signature: _____



Sarah Meikle, Training & Program Director

Date: _____

Finalizing Enrollment

Materials Required to Finalize Enrollment

- Provide a signed program contract.
- Provide a Health completed by a medical professional. (All medical information is confidential and controlled under the HIPAA, the American Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 guidelines.)
- Provide a letter of reference from someone that can confirm that a service dog would improve your quality of life. (Please include contact details in case we decide to follow up.)
- Provide a \$700 deposit, which can be paid by check, credit card or PayPal.



OUR PARTNERS

Long-Term, Mutually Beneficial Relationships

Gould Farm

Gould Farm is the first residential therapeutic community in the nation dedicated to helping adults with mental illness move toward recovery, health and greater independence through community living, meaningful work and individual clinical care. In a supportive community environment made up of residents, staff and their families, we help adults with depression, bipolar disorder, schizo-affective disorder and schizophrenia begin to rebuild and regain their lives. Gould Farm offers a full continuum of care, with a Boston-area program for those ready for new challenges and structured transition.



Gould Farm and Diggity Dogs are putting a permanent foster program in place on their campus. The staff and residents will engage the dogs daily and some of them will have the opportunity to attend ongoing training classes.

There is wonderful symmetry in psychiatric service dogs being raised at a long term psychiatric residential community and we are looking forward to the success it will surely bring.

Eventually, we will also integrate a service dog placement service into their services, so that residents that could benefit from a service dog would be able to leave Gould Farm with one.

Gould Farm was the first community of its kind in the US and their innovative and holistic approach to mental health has paved the way for many other institutions. Diggity Dogs is excited to be spearheading the first program of its kind with an organization as highly regarded as Gould Farm is.



ASPCA: M.A.P. (Moving Animals Protocol) System Access

The ASPCA has been supportive of Diggity Dogs' business model and our request for access to the MAP (Moving Animals Protocol) system which tracks the populations of dogs in shelters nationwide. MAP was created in order to facilitate the movement of animals from the overpopulated shelters in the country to those with excess space. This system has been effective in reducing the numbers of dogs euthanized purely because of space limitations. As Diggity Dogs will be steadily rescuing shelter dogs for the service dog training and placement program, access to MAP enables Diggity Dogs to focus on developing relationships with the staff and volunteers of the most commonly over-populated shelters so that they can conduct the behavior and temperament assessments required for Diggity Dogs being considered for rescue. Every dog Diggity Dogs selects for rescue will assist the over-populated shelters, and ultimately prevent the euthanization of dogs needlessly. According to the ASPCA, we are the first service dog organization to harness the power of MAP for such results and the first service dog organization to be granted access.



Shelburne Falls a Center & Franklin County Home Care Corporation

All of Diggity Dogs' programs have been designed to have as much positive spill over in the community as possible. By working in partnership with the Shelburne Falls Senior Center and the Franklin County Home Care Corporation, Diggity Dogs will incorporate local seniors into our Volunteer Training Program. This service will assist local seniors who already have dogs by training those dogs to perform service dog tasks that will assist them in coping with the challenges brought on by age, including getting in and out of chairs, pickup up dropped items, and other tasks of this nature.



Extensive research into the affects of animals on aging have shown unequivocally that people who own pets live longer, healthier lives. Diggity Dogs hopes to make this affect even more pronounced, thereby enabling many people to live without assistance longer, as well as to generally live longer.

Diggity Dogs is also dedicated to assisting with the painful affects of Alzheimer's disease and is already working with a local family to train and place our first Alzheimer's assistance dog. (Note: Placement of such dogs is only ever possible when the care of the dog falls on someone other than the individual with Alzheimer's, in order to ensure the quality of care for the dog.)

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Franklin County

Diggity Dogs is excited to launch a partnership with Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Franklin County!



Big Brothers Big Sisters
of Franklin County

Diggity Dogs will participate in the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Franklin County's program at the prestigious Deerfield Academy in Deerfield, MA.

Dogs and puppies will be brought to the Big Brothers Big Sisters events, so that one of the activities that the teams can choose to participate in will be playing with the puppies/dogs.

Adequate socialization is extremely important to producing service dogs that are unflappable in any environment, always attuned to their partners needs and able to perform their service tasks even with an abundance of distractions. This program will assist Diggity Dogs in ensuring that our dogs receive adequate exposure to people and children. Instruction on appropriate dog interaction will always be given at events of this nature prior to handling or playing with Diggity Dogs.



Meals on Wheels

Similarly, Diggity Dogs will also participate in fundraising events put on by Meals on Wheels, such as the upcoming Walk-a-thon, where Diggity Dogs will provide a puppy playpen at the reception.

Dog Rescue Organizations & Breeders

Diggity Dogs has formed multiple partnerships with rescue organizations that rescue dogs from over populated southern shelters and transport them North for adoption. Diggity Dogs is in the midst of training their staff to perform (and record on video) the assessment exercises Diggity Dogs has designed for selecting excellent candidates for the service dog training and placement program. These videos are then sent to the Diggity Dogs team for review and final approval. Dogs that are approved for selection are placed directly from the shelter into a Diggity Dogs foster home to begin training for their careers as service dogs.

Similar alliances will be formed with breeders, where Diggity Dogs will encourage them to donate dogs to our service dog training program.

