

GALLANT HEARTS GUIDE DOG CENTER

PUPPY RAISER HOME MANUAL

INTRODUCTION

You are embarking on one of the most rewarding ventures of your life, the early preparation of a guide dog who will be the companion, mobility aid and helper for a person who is blind. Gallant Hearts Guide Dog Center staff want to make this a rewarding experience for you and your family and make it easier for you to provide the training, behavioral interventions and overall nurturing that the dog will need in order to become an exemplary guide dog. The puppy raiser home and the early training that you will give the dog is, without a doubt, the most important part of the dog's training for its future work as a Gallant Hearts guide dog.

Your job, as a puppy raiser home, is to provide the following:

- ❖ Living space in your house
- ❖ A stimulating learning environment
- ❖ Teaching the puppy to remain calm in all situations
- ❖ Housebreaking including urination and defecation while on leash
- ❖ Basic obedience
- ❖ Socialization with other dogs and animals, people, both adults and children, travel outside the home at least twice a week
- ❖ Good house manners
- ❖ Familiarize the puppy with activities that it will execute as a future guide dog

On a weekly basis, and more often if necessary, the Gallant Hearts staff will talk with you, by phone, to make training or behavioral suggestions to help you have a successful experience with your puppy. The Center's staff will try to visit you and your dog, on a monthly basis, to assess your progress, answer questions, and physically help you with any problems you may be encountering. No problem is too small so do not hesitate to contact the School staff, whenever you have a question or problem. The sooner a problem is corrected, the easier it will be to resolve and the less likely you and the dog are to build a wall between you.

On the inside front cover is a pouch which contains a form with your puppy's health information. Please carry this with you on each visit to your veterinarian so it may be kept current. In the event your puppy should swallow something potentially poisonous, record your veterinarian's number in the space provided. There is also a number for the ASPCA Poison Control Center in the event you are unable to reach your veterinarian. There may be a charge for the consultation and this may be reimbursed.

IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY, PLEASE CALL YOUR VETERINARIAN IMMEDIATELY AND CONTACT GALLANT HEARTS GUIDE DOG CENTER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. We are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

CARING FOR YOUR PUPPY

For your puppy to remain happy, eager to learn, and a pleasure to have with you on outings, your puppy must remain healthy. Here are some tips for maintaining a healthy dog:

- ❖ Feed your puppy a good quality food; either feed the same food that Gallant Hearts gives its puppies, or talk with the staff about the food you wish to use; do not feed scraps or people food
- ❖ Feed your puppy twice a day and at about the same time each day; preferably eleven to twelve hours apart; remove any uneaten food within 30 minutes of offering to the puppy; do not “free feed” (leave food down for puppy to eat at will)
- ❖ Watch your puppy carefully to make certain that it does not eat its bedding, plush toys, socks, nylons or other foreign bodies.
- ❖ Never give your puppy rawhide bones, rawhide treats or toys with squeakers. Hard rubber balls, sterilized natural bones or nylabones are the safest choices.
- ❖ Puppy-proof your home, carport and yard by making certain that any pesticides, cleaning supplies, fertilizers, gasoline, antifreeze or poisons are behind closed doors and out of reach of the puppy. Coins and all medicines, both canine and human, should be kept out of reach. Bottom line, if you would not let a child eat it, your puppy probably should not eat it.
- ❖ Never feed your puppy chocolate, raisins, grapes, onions or alcoholic beverages as these are potentially lethal or may cause systemic and gastro-intestinal problems.
- ❖ Never have your puppy off-leash outside a fenced area.
- ❖ Never leave a collar of any type on your puppy while in a crate, kennel or around fencing where the collar could be caught, or while playing with other dogs.
- ❖ Never leave your puppy unsupervised while tied, and never leave the puppy outside on a tieout. It takes just a few minutes for a dog to get tangled up and choke and on hard lunge to break a neck.
- ❖ Never leave your dog outside without supervision for more than a few minutes, as it could be easily stolen.
- ❖ Never allow your puppy to ride in the bed of a truck or in a vehicle with the windows down far enough for the puppy to jump out.
- ❖ Take your puppy with you in your vehicle as often as possible. Please do not leave your dog unsupervised in a vehicle as it could get too hot, have heat stroke and die; also if the vehicle is left running, the dog could knock it out of gear.

For your puppy’s health and safety, the following must be done:

Use the same veterinary clinic all the time to ensure continuity of care.

Your puppy must have a rabies vaccination at four months of age.

Your puppy must be on heartworm preventative starting at three months of age.

Heartworm preventative must be given monthly and at the same time each month.

When in public, your puppy should have a collar with his rabies tag and Gallant Hearts identification tag attached.

THE WORK OF A GUIDE DOG

To see a person who is blind confidently walking, head up, chest out, with a well trained, beautifully behaved guide dog is one of the most heart warming experiences you will ever have. The bond and trust between the person who is blind and the dog is obvious to the casual observer. Your home can make this trust, bond, teamwork, coordination and communication work for the dog and its new master who is blind.

The guide dog's job is to:

- ❖ Stop at all step-ups, step-downs, ramps, breaks in sidewalks or pavement;
- ❖ Avoid allowing the master to hit an obstacle;
- ❖ Avoid overhanging objects such as signs or car side mirrors;
- ❖ Locate doors;
- ❖ Locate stairs;
- ❖ Locate elevators;
- ❖ Locate escalators;
- ❖ Locate counters and chairs;
- ❖ Practice safety disobedience such as not allowing the master to go into a street if a car is crossing their path.

Do not teach your puppy to “fetch” as some dogs enjoy the sport so much that they will go through stores fetching things that they should not have and were not asked to fetch.

A guide dog must remain calm so that it can hear and obey commands. If the puppy is taught to be calm, from the time you receive the puppy, this calmness becomes a way of life for the dog, making it easier to train and easier for the new master, who is blind, to control and work the dog. Certainly, the dog can go outside, in your backyard, to run and burn off steam, but in the house and in public, it must remain very calm. To help with this, you must be calm and send that message to your dog.

Many people like to take their dog for a walk and let it run ahead on a long leash to sniff and explore. Your guide dog prospect should not do this. The dog should walk at a good heel position with its head up. If a guide dog learns that it is allowed to sniff, that's what it will do while it is guiding its blind master, who may not be aware that the dog is sniffing and not paying attention to its work. **Do not ever allow your dog to get in the habit of sniffing while on leash.**

We want to make sure that your dog has the opportunity to expand its vocabulary while it is quite young which is, in essence, teaching the dog to learn. We will work with you on this after you and your puppy have completed basic obedience training.

Remember, the master who is blind cannot use their eyes to control the dog, so when you are teaching the commands to come or stay, do not make the dog come or stay by looking at it.

Although we discourage food rewards, whistles or clickers while training your dog, occasionally, a dog will need a little extra incentive when given the command “come”, so, for a short time, food rewards may be used but must be phased out as quickly as possible.

Other activities common to puppies should be discouraged, such as jumping on people and barking. The dog can bark, when someone comes to your door, but should be quiet when the dog sees that you are aware that someone is at the door. Many people live in apartments or in close proximity to others, so the dog should not develop the habit of incessant barking.

Frequently, the dog will be called upon to lie quietly at the master’s feet for a couple of hours or more. When you are sitting on the sofa or in a chair, watching television, it would be a good idea to put your dog on leash, put it down by your feet, and make it stay for longer and longer periods of time. By the time it returns to the school for training, it should be able to lie quietly for a couple of hours. During their monthly visits, Gallant Hearts Guide Dog Center staff will help you with the “stay” command and let you know how long your dog should be able to stay.

As we have said, previously, communication with your dog is very important and this communication should be verbal or through hand signals and not with your eyes. For all commands except “stay” you should precede the command with the dog’s name to ensure that the dog knows that you are talking to it. All commands, except stay, are indicating to the dog that you are going to engage in some motion activity, but with stay, you want the dog to not be active, so do not make it jump to attention by first calling its name.

PROGRESS SCHEDULE

Many of our dogs will be placed in puppy homes when they are 8 to 10 weeks old. Some rescue or donated dogs may be placed in foster homes up to the time they are 15 months old. All dogs, unless the Gallant Hearts Guide Dog Center staff indicate otherwise, during an evaluation, will return to the school when they are 12 to 18 months of age.

While you provide a home for a Gallant Hearts Guide Dog prospect, the Center will pay all normal veterinary expenses; however, anything other than a routine visit to the veterinarian should be reported to the Center prior to the veterinary visit. Arrangements for food will be made on an individual basis.

When you return your dog to the school, the dog should know basic obedience commands of heel, sit, down, stay, come, off-leash recall (come), and leave it. The dog should know basic house manners such as not jumping on people or kitchen counters, table, or stealing food. The more you socialize your guide dog prospect, the easier the training will be for the dog. Your dog should have been walked near heavy traffic, construction, other animals, and people. Any temperament problems or failure to adjust to any of the above situations should be reported to Gallant Hearts Guide Dog Center staff.

Each month, a progress form will be completed, jointly, by Gallant Hearts Guide Dog Center staff and the puppy raiser. This form will be completed either at the time of the staff member's visit with the puppy raiser home, or by telephone interview with the puppy raiser. You will be asked to provide information about the puppy's progress, what the puppy has learned during the past month, how well you think the puppy can perform various commands, and relate any training, behavioral or temperament problems.

At any time during the time the puppy is in the care of the puppy raiser, it is reported that the puppy is being allowed or encouraged to be aggressive toward people or other animals, it will be immediately removed from the home.

When the dog is returned to the school, it will begin its comprehensive training program which includes a minimum of sixty hours of actual training by professional staff. The first few days after you return the dog to the school will be spent in acclimating the dog to its new living and work environment, and undergoing some basic health testing. Gallant Hearts Guide Dog Center staff will also evaluate your dog to see how well it responds to obedience commands, and how well it handles distractions, noises, other animals, people, and other activities or problems it may encounter as a guide dog.

If, at any time during the puppy raising or guide dog training the dog is deemed by Gallant Hearts Guide Dog Center staff not to be suitable to become a guide dog, the puppy will be offered to the breeder or person who donated the dog. If neither of them can take the dog, then an excellent home will be located for the dog.

When the dog completes its guide dog training and passes a rigorous test walk, it will be matched with a person who is blind. Training of dog and new master will either be done in the area in which the master lives or in the Jackson, MS area. The dog, its equipment and training will be provided at no cost to the qualified person who is blind.

The dog's new owner, who is blind, will be given the option of getting to know the puppy raiser home family. If they indicate that they wish to contact their dog's family, contact information, with the permission of the puppy raiser family, will be provided to the new owner. In communicating with the dog and its new owner, care should be taken to always be very professional and never interfere with the dog's training, the way in which the person is handling the dog, and should not make suggestions of how to resolve behavioral problems. If, during your communication with the new owner, you learn of problems with the dog, the owner should be encouraged to contact the school for assistance in resolving problems.

After watching a puppy grow, living with it, and working closely with it for over a year, we understand that giving up the dog is going to be very traumatic. We will work with you to make this experience the best it can be. You may want to consider raising another puppy, if you have had a good experience. Remember, you have made a real difference in the life of a blind person by giving them a well trained guide, and a beautifully behaved companion. We trust your life will forever be enriched by this puppy raising experience.