



Suncoast Puppy Raisers

# Guide Dog Foundation's Suncoast Puppy Raisers Meeting Announcement & Newsletter February 2017



## Puppy SUNDAY Meeting

**Date: February 19, 2017**

**Where: Derby Lanes**

**10490 Gandy Blvd.**

**St. Petersburg 33702**

**Time: 11:30 – 5:00pm**

Hi everyone,

Please note the date and time change from our regularly scheduled second Saturday of the month Meeting. We have changed it to accommodate manning a booth at a very fun event, the “Mutt Derby.” For 30 years this was an annual event, but it’s been 20 years since the last Mutt Derby. Potential doggie participants sign up to run with their peers on the dog track. Dogs are placed into smaller groups according to size etc. and when their race is called, they line up and run down to their owners at the other end of the track. You can imagine the chaos when many dogs do not run directly to their owners. I wonder how well our puppies would do in these

circumstances. Well, we are not racing but manning a booth at the event.

We are asking puppy raisers to take a 2 hour shift starting at 11:30. So email us with your preference of: 11:30 -1:30, 1:00 -3:00pm, and 3:00pm -5:00pm. The times are not exact and we want it to be convenient for you.

If anyone wants to enter their personal pet into a race, the entrance fee is \$20.00 in advance and \$25.00 the day of the event. Half the proceeds from the event go to Grey Hound Rescue. Twenty years ago, Chuck and I entered our personal pet Sheba. But, in racing terms, Sheba did not “win, place or show,” rather, “DNF,” did not finish, but it was very exciting to be on the racing track.

**Directions:** Derby Lanes is located directly on Gandy Blvd, east of 4<sup>th</sup> St. and before the approach to the Gandy Bridge. Parking is on premise. Since we do not have the exact location of our booth, we recommend you call when you arrive, 727-515-2105. See you there!

Our regularly scheduled 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month has also been changed. The Thompsons are inviting the pups to the Museum of Fine Arts Porch Party on Thursday February 16<sup>th</sup>. Each pup is invited to bring 2 guests for complimentary food and beverages along with 2 free passes to the Museum. The regular admission to the Museum is \$5.00, so anyone is welcome to come join us even if you don’t have a pup. The fun begins at 5:30pm but the official meeting will not start until 6:00pm. The puppies always get invited to such great cultural events. I’ve always said, if it wasn’t for my puppy, I would have no social life at all!



Above: Donna and Sunny talk to Harriet at Tavern at Bayboro during last month’s meeting. Below Andy and Ashley at Tavern at Bayboro



## *Last Month*

The puppies and raisers got to act like tourists at last month's meeting in downtown St. Pete. Gathering in the parking lot of the Tavern at Bayborough, we welcomed potential new puppy raisers, Harriet Hoke, Francesca Dimaio, and Elaina Schmidt. After announcements and some dog obedience, we boarded the Downtown Looper bus for a ride around downtown highlighting points of interest, museums and restaurants. Then we hit the Saturday morning market. As usual, the market was in full swing and very crowded. Each pup and raiser wandered off in their own directions to shop and get some snacks. Occasionally running into each other we compared notes as to who ate where and who bought what. Everyone thought the chaos of the market was a good exposure for their pup. I dragged around my "guide husband" until he screamed for mercy, but we bought some kool stuff. Thanks to everyone for coming and we are looking forward to working with our new raisers.

## *In for Training*

By a narrow margin, we have no pups going in for training. The first recall had Ashley, raised by the O'leary's but at the final countdown, she was given a reprieve. The next recall will not be until March or later, for now, but that could change at any moment so stay flexible.

## *New Arrivals*

We are very excited to announce 2 new arrivals. First, Bethani Shilladay, happily announce that "Cory is here." Cory is a male Golden and arrived via air transport at the end of January. Bethani says he is so fluffy, very cute but a pistol! We have complete confidence that you and your service dog Billy will get that little whipper snapper right in line. And, sooner or later, your cat will come out of hiding.

Next, Eileen Newsome had an unexpected arrival from Southeastern Guide Dogs, a black Lab named Ivan. Ivan is an exchange from Southeastern for using a Guide Dog Foundation male for breeding purposes. Eileen got the call around noon on Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup> and had her hands on her car keys even before she hung up the phone! Congratulations to all and I can't wait to hold the new puppies.

## *Zoo Project*

The Lowry Park Zoo partnership continues with another meeting scheduled on February 16<sup>th</sup>. The last 18 months our puppy raisers have volunteered their time to meet with Larry Kilmer, the Zoo's director, primarily to desensitize the zoo animals to the presence of service dogs and to train the staff on how to make the zoo more accessible to a visitor accompanied by a service animal. So far, it has been a smashing success and the goal is to put it all on a training video to present to the national Association of Zoo's and Aquariums. We want to thank everyone past, present and future for helping us with this ongoing endeavor.



Above Nancy and Ashley Board the Bus;  
Below Francis Mickey and Francesca ride  
the Looper.





Above; Nancy and Ashley shopping at the Saturday morning market, Below Shannon and Ashley do the same.



## *Training Tip – Moving Forward – Part 1*

The goal of every puppy raiser is to successfully raise a puppy that eventually becomes trained as a guide dog and matched with a blind person. In most cases, the raisers are invited to a celebration to meet the person their dog has been matched to. As raisers recount this wonderful day, what we hear most is, “we couldn’t have asked for a better match.” Puppy raisers know how much time and energy they have put into help set up this match, but what does the blind applicant go through to get there? I can assure you it is almost as much work as raising a puppy but doesn’t take quite as long. The following is just a basic overview of what the average blind applicant must do to receive and deserve to have one of these highly valuable specially trained dogs, free of charge.

First, it is a long and somewhat invasive process to just put in an application for a guide dog. Once completed, it can take up to 3 to 12 months to find the perfect dog for that individual. It starts by the applicant doing some basic research. Although each guide dog school offers great guides the application and class requirements may differ. Other considerations are transportation to and from the school as well as after care/ownership agreements. This is a highly individual decision and most

applicants depend on their peers and web sites to answer their questions.

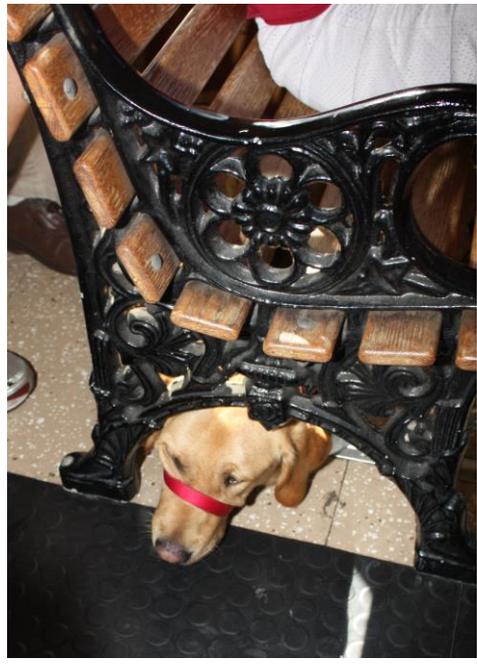
Once a decision has been made, and initial application is submitted either on line or by mail. Preliminary qualifications are that the individual is legally blind, physically healthy to handle a dog, financially able to care for a dog and active enough to need a dog guide. If yes, then a more in depth application packet is sent out. Now the work begins. The applicant has to have a medical form filled out and signed by their physician, a form signed by an ophthalmologist verifying their legally blind status, hippa form to be signed to share the information and release forms for liability and permission to share photographs and/or video images. Other requests are a list of references and finally a short video demonstrating the applicant’s ability to travel independently. Whether you are applying for your first or fifth guide dog, these steps are still required because as a person goes on in life, their visual acuity and physical health may change.

Many of you know I am now actively applying for my third guide dog. I initiated the process December 5<sup>th</sup> and I have only recently completed the above steps in my application process and it has taken me 2 months. So as you can see, it is a very big decision and commitment just to get a guide dog. The next step is for a trainer to contact me and schedule an in home visit. You’ll have to wait until next month to find out what happens next, even I don’t know. So stay tuned.

We hope to see you all at Derby Lanes. Call or email if you have any questions and enjoy some more pictures from last month as well as our new arrivals. Your Area Coordinators Debbie & Chuck Hietala.



Top left; Cory picture thanks to Bethani; Center Ivan picture thanks to Southeastern guide Dogs; right and bottom left Wednesday meeting at Bill Jackson's photos thanks to Eileen Newsome; bottom center Walter B riding the Looper; and right Shannon and Amy with Harriet and Ashley at the Saturday Market.



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