



Southeastern Guide Dogs Suncoast Puppy Raisers Meeting Announcement & Newsletter for March 2011



Southeastern Guide Dogs
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Puppy Saturday Meeting

Date: March 12, 2011

***Where: Sponge Exchange
Shopping Village
735 Dodecanese Blvd.
Tarpon springs, FL 34689***

Time: 10:00am-12:00pm

Access: guide dog puppies only

Hi everyone,

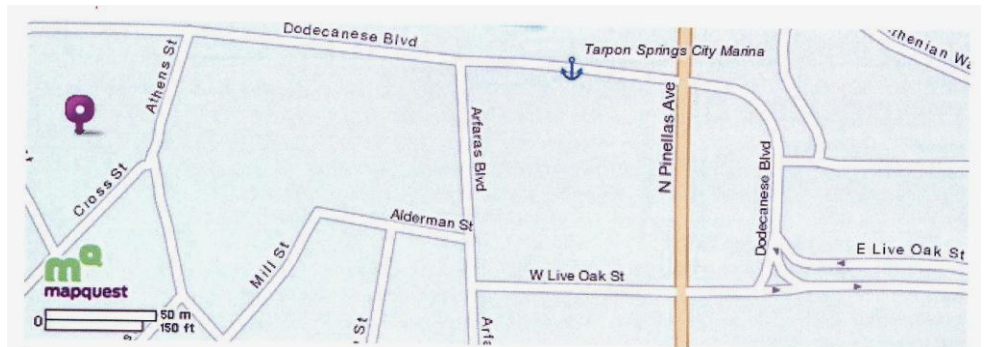
When Chuck and I moved to Florida in 1984, we found the Greek fishing village and sponge docks of Tarpon springs as one of the most fascinating tourist areas. It is rich in Greek culture and has an interesting history. The first settlers were Americans in 1876, it was a popular vacation area for northerners. By the 1880's, Tarpon springs was established as a well known resort area for the rich. Then a man named Chaney, realized money could be made by harvesting sponges. In the 1890's, Greek divers were brought in to harvest the sponges. A village developed to house and feed the divers which became a booming industry. By 1907, the Sponge Exchange was the largest producing hub of buying and selling sponges in the country. This lasted until about the 1950's when the sponge industry was almost wiped out due to blight. It was revived in the 1980's, when new sponge beds were found bringing Tarpons springs back to being the leader in the world's natural sponge market.

Today, the Sponge Exchange is a refurbished shopping village hosting 31 specialty stores and restaurants featuring gifts fashions and food from Greece and around the world. I have been there several times and still have not explored it all. We will meet in the parking lot area behind the mall and proceed with announcements and a walking tour. It is great for the puppies because many of the items for sale are displayed at "doggie" level. We will definitely plan to stay for lunch so join us if you can.

Directions: From US Hwy 19 go north to Tarpon Springs Stay on 19 and cross Tarpon Ave, continue north to the last left turn before the river. This is East Live Oak street. Turn left onto Live Oak street go several blocks, once you cross the Pinellas Trail it will make a turn to the right stay on it as it goes right. The Light you come to is Alt 19 North Pinellas Ave, cross over North Pinellas Ave. You are now on Dodecanese Blvd, go to the 2nd left Athens Street, turn left on Athens then right on Cross street. The parking lot for the mall will be on your right. You can park on the Street or go straight on Cross Street for additional parking. Call Chuck on his cell if you need different directions or need help finding it.



Above a map of downtown Tarpon Springs, Below a map of the location of the sponge exchange.



Last Month

We had a nice turn out for our meeting at the Lion's Club Beach House. We originally had planned for two guest speakers, but one was not able to attend. We did, however, have informative hands on session about pet massage with Eileen Newsome. Touch is another form of communication with our furry friends and massage is an excellent and beneficial way to do it. In class, graduates are taught to groom their dogs, clean their ears, brush their teeth, cut their nails, etc. A dog will be more comfortable with this type of physical contact if they've been conditioned to accept it at an early age. Massaging your puppy can start that conditioning with an added benefit of relaxing your puppy as well as yourself. Eileen only had time to give us an overview, but if you would like more information about pet massage and techniques, let us know. Eileen does have a wonderful DVD that explains it in more detail.

Revealing the mysteries of the Receiving Kennel

The following excerpt came from a presentation to AC's at a recent teleconference. I thought it was well presented, so I copied it from the teleconference minutes.

"IFT Day should be considered a day of celebration for all of your hard work and accomplishments. Everyone has heard the dreaded "black hole" rumor and I'd like to take this opportunity to explain the beginning stages of training for the puppy that you have put your heart and soul into.

Before you even arrive on campus, the Training Department has been busy preparing for you and your pup. Kennel and food cards are made so that when you arrive, we already have an idea of who your pup's new "roomies" might be. Although we have a coed kennel, we do not have coed runs. Boys are matched with boys, and girls with girls. No oopsadors on our watch!

As you bid a fond farewell to your pup, his or her training begins. On that walk to the Receiving kennel that you all know so well, the kennel assistant is praising your pup and introducing him or her to their new surroundings. There are lots of new smells and new "roomies" to meet.

The Receiving kennel is a serene area where the kennel staff can take extra time to start to get to know each and every pup that comes in for training. Although we've seen their names on cards, and anticipated what they might be like, IFT day brings everything full circle for the staff.

There are community runs and single runs in the Receiving kennel. The community runs can accommodate up to six pups together and the single runs house two. The kennel staff will spend the first few hours introducing your pups to each other and making sure that everyone loves their new mates.

Commands are not given to the new in for training pup until they have had a few days to get used to their new home. That's right...it's free time for them to just settle in and get to know the staff. Extra time is spent during exercise time and feeding time to help "the newbies" through their transition into training. It is not abnormal to find the kennel staff sitting inside the runs, getting and giving some extra love from our new group. A lot can be learned about them during the first few days. Whether they like to play in the water buckets, if they are excited by all of the new mates that they are meeting, if they like or dislike cats...that's always fun!

Within the first week of arriving on campus, IFT physicals are performed by Dr. Edington, our on-campus vet, and his medical team. Doc will give them a thorough check over and address any health concerns. Ears get cleaned, teeth are checked, coat and skin are checked, and a "target" weight is set for each pup. Occasionally a diet will be ordered for those pups that have a few extra pounds. By the end of the physical, your pup has been introduced to at least 5 kennel staff, and Doc and the vet techs.

During this week, the kennel staff will also evaluate the food that each pup is eating. If he or she is not already eating Royal Caning Large Breed Maxi, a transition diet will be started. Of course there are exceptions if your pup has a history of not tolerating a certain food. The kennel staff work diligently with each pup to make sure he or she is eating a healthy diet. There have even been times when Chef Rob has fixed a batch of chicken and rice for a pup that needs some extra encouragement at feeding time.

Now that we are all getting settled, x-rays can begin. Hip and elbow x-rays are done right here on campus by our outstanding medical team. Since a lot of your pups are being evaluated for breeders, eye exams will also be on tap within the first few weeks.

After your pup has been back on campus for a week, the kennel staff will start to work on basic obedience commands. Each kennel assistant is assigned to a new IFT dog. The kennel assistant will take them on a trip of many firsts. The very first time the dog comes out with the assigned KA, we give him or her a long leash so that

he or she can just be a dog on a walk around campus. Lots of smells, lots of people, different surfaces, and grooming sessions are plentiful. The next step is to start introducing the dogs to commands on a training leash. We walk them on specific routes around campus that include: Down curbs, Up curbs, Steps, Cross walks, Tactile curbs and, Doors. Lots of “find the” and lots of praise. We can learn even more during these specific routes than you can imagine. Some dogs know their stuff, while others teach us a few things. All in all, it is a learning experience by everyone involved. At the final stage of introduction, the dogs are put in harness and taken on the same routes. No one picks up the handle, as not to put too much pressure on our four legged friends. These routes are done a number of times by the kennel staff in preparation for the Training team to take over.

The training team assigned to each string sneaks a peek at their new team during the final week of their on-campus introduction. Once the training team is ready to take over, they are responsible for the total care of the new dogs. Every morning the training team comes in to exercise, feed, and load up the dogs for their first trips off campus.

The very first trip consists of “temperament testing” where the dogs are exposed to all sorts of interesting sights, sounds, and of course, distractions.

Within the first few weeks of training with their team, it’s time to move up to “The BIG House”, also known as the Training Kennel. Once the string has moved, it’s time to prepare the Receiving kennel for a whole new string of newbies, and the excitement begins again.”

Thank you puppy department for presenting this information.

In For Training

Speaking of the receiving kennel, we do not have any puppies being called back until April 25th. So we don’t have any announcements at this time.

Terminology, Dog Swap and Puppy Camp

Every raiser has strengths and weaknesses as does every puppy. Many of our raisers have littermates and like to compare notes, some raisers can take their dogs to work and some cannot, some raisers have multiple pets in their household and some do not, some have young children while others have none. The point is, no single family can provide every possible experience and/or exposure. Therefore, the “dog swap” was created. A dog swap is when two raisers mutually agree to exchange dogs for a specified period of time. The object is to give each puppy a wider variety of exposures. Most raisers pick the person they wish to swap with and just let us know. A swap could also be just one way. A raiser may be extremely busy at work, moving, or just need a break, and will ask another raiser that may have more time for the puppy to handle them for a couple of days. It’s all voluntary and there is no special paper work, it’s usually just for fun.

Next, we have a “puppy camp.” This is more of an evaluation on a specific puppy that has been identified as having environmental, medical or behavioral issues. We require that a puppy camp request be made through the area coordinator and only a qualified, experienced puppy raiser do this camp. A puppy camp is for no less than two to three weeks, and an evaluation form is filled out which includes identification of the issues and a plan of action for the raiser after their puppy is returned to them. Sometimes, the school requires that the camp evaluator be one of their own trainers. The final evaluation will be placed in the puppy’s file along with the rest of their evaluations. A puppy camp can be requested by a puppy raiser, Area Coordinator, or by the school.

Fortunately, we have a large group of raisers with a variety of experiences, so we generally do not have trouble finding a suitable puppy camp evaluator. So if you want any help with a dog swap or puppy camp ask your AC or Co-Coordinators for help.

Puppy Sitting Guidelines – for both the “sit-ee and sitter”

When we do our “In Home Visit” with new puppy raiser applicants we always talk about “Puppy Sitting.” The potential raiser always wants to know what they should do with their puppy when they go on vacation. Our first response is, take the puppy with you. However, sometimes that is not possible or practical. In that case, your puppy will go to one of our other raisers to be “puppy sat.” We require that only another “approved” puppy raiser, that is one that has gone through the “IN Home Visit” process, sit for our puppies. Although we know your Uncle Joe or Aunt Betty would love to sit for your cute little puppy, they can unintentionally ruin 6

months of your hard work by not knowing our puppy raising guidelines. The puppy is not allowed to sleep in the bed or eat potato chips on the couch while watching TV.

We have puppy sitting guide lines in our manual but we would like to be more specific as to how our particular “Suncoast Puppy Raiser” group, in Pinellas, should fill their puppy sitting requests.

First, we have a wonderful volunteer puppy raiser, Larry Harrison, who has agreed to have all requests emailed to him. We have given Larry a list of all qualified raisers, and then he will send out a group email. Our first choice is, for the puppy to be sat by a first time raiser that is waiting for a puppy. This is to give them a chance to experience a “real-life” situation with a puppy to make sure this program will fit into their lifestyle. Our second choice is either a former puppy raiser or repeat raiser currently not raising a puppy. Our third choice, we go to a current raiser that can handle another puppy in their household. Other considerations are the age of the puppy and the puppy raiser’s handling ability. A higher energy young dog will require a more dog experienced family than one who has never had a dog before. After all, we don’t want to overwhelm anyone the first time they get a puppy sitting. We’ll save that for later!

So what information should you include in your puppy sitting request? First, the date you will need to drop your puppy off and when you will pick them back up. These may not be the same dates you will be gone. You must consider if you need to drop the puppy off a day sooner or pick them up a day later than your actual traveling dates. It is also suggested to include the name of your puppy, their breed and age. Finally, include the best way a potential sitter can contact you. I suggest a phone number. It is timelier than an email.

After a sitter has been confirmed, it is the responsibility of the puppy raiser family to arrange the following:

- 1) Dropping off and picking up the puppy.
- 2) Consult your puppy manual or our web site for a “packing check list” This will help you with the following information: The puppy’s food, dishes, and feeding instructions; puppy coat, ID card, and clean up supplies; crate, tie down, buckle collar, training collar if the puppy is over 6 months old, leash; toys or grooming supplies. Provide heartworm or flea prevention or any other meds that may be required while you are away. A schedule of required meetings or vet visits. If you are sitting during our main monthly meeting the second Saturday of the month, or during the puppy’s required subgroup meeting, fourth Tuesday of the month in the south group, or fourth Thursday of the month in the north group, it is the sitters responsibility to either attend those meetings with the puppy or get another raiser to bring the puppy. Only a phone call to the AC or Co-coordinator is considered an excused absence.
- 3) Provide your puppy’s assigned vet info, your Co-coordinators contact info and a way you can be reached while you are out of town.
- 4) Plan a few moments with the sitter to discuss any training issues or weaknesses in house manners and a plan to work through them.

A little advice for puppy sitters:

- 1) If you have personal pets, have the new pup and your pets meet on neutral ground outside. Then allow the newcomer to enter your home first.
- 2) No Matter the age of the puppy, do not assume that they know even the basic commands. Take the first day of puppy sitting as your first day of training.
- 3) Do not be surprised if even an older puppy has an accident in the house. Remember, the puppy is not used to your schedule and you do not know their body language as to when they need to go out. Just be fair and take them out frequently until you both get adjusted.
- 4) Do not expect the puppy to behave with you as well as they do in their own home. They will test you to see if the same rules in their house apply to yours. Be firm the very first day and the puppy will fall in line.
- 5) Do not hesitate to contact your AC or Co-Coordinator with any adjustment or behavioral concerns.

These puppy sitting guide lines will be added to our www.suncoastpup.org for future reference. I do want to remind you that these are guidelines specific to the uniqueness of our group dynamic. This may not be true for other PR groups. We will see you in Tarpon Springs! You’re A/C’s Debbie & Chuck