



Suncoast Puppy Raisers

GDF Suncoast Puppy Raisers Newsletter & Meeting Announcement

February 2016



Puppy Saturday Meeting

Date: February 20, 2016

Where: Gateway Mall

7751 Martin Luther King Road (9th St. N.)

Time: 4:00pm-6:00pm

Hi everyone,

First off, I want to remind you all that in puppy raising, it pays to be flexible. February's two monthly meetings are not going to follow our standard schedule of second Saturday and 4th Wednesday. Instead, our main monthly Saturday meeting will be on Saturday, February 20th at 4:00pm., and our subgroup meeting will be Wednesday, February 10th, time and place to be announced.

Honestly, we're not purposefully trying to confuse you but sometimes things come up. First, we are moving our main Saturday meeting to accommodate meeting with our GDF Field rep, Deana Izzo. She covers all of Florida and likes to meet with each group at least once a year. This also was more convenient for Chuck and I as we were going to be on vacation during our regularly scheduled second Saturday monthly meeting. We don't like to miss our meetings either!

Secondly, your subgroup leaders, Don and Donna, wanted to spread out the times our monthly meetings fall in order not to have the second meeting just 4 days after the first one. So, they are planning your subgroup meeting on February 10th, time and place to be announced.

So if we haven't thoroughly confused you yet, on February 20th, we will be meeting at Gateway Mall located on Martin Luther King Rd, between 77th and 83rd Ave. N. We will meet on the south end in, parking in front of Office Depo and meeting outside the store facing the bus stops. We will start with a bus exposure and then walk the strip mall to the other end by Target. This is my regular stomping grounds and you'll be surprised at how many obstacles there are getting to the other end of the mall. Most of them are the automatic doors you trip open as you walk by, passing Pet Smart, avoiding numerous shopping carts and concrete poles. I should make you all do it blind folded! This will give our GDF Field rep, Deana Izzo a chance to see us in action.

After our meeting, we plan to eat at the Ale House in the same shopping plaza. Dinner is not a required part of the meeting, but I'm sure by then we will all have worked up a thirst and appetite.

Directions: Gateway Mall is located between 83rd Avenue North and 77th avenue North on Martin Luther King Blvd also known as 9th street north. From north Pinellas county take US 19 to Roosevelt Blvd stay on Roosevelt Blvd to ML King turn right on ML King. When you get to 83rd Avenue Gateway Mall will be on your left. We will meet at the south side of the Mall in front of Office Depot. If you need directions from anyplace else give Chuck a call or send him an email.



Top & bottom a walk on the beach at last month's meeting.



Last Month

We had perfect weather for our outing at John's Pass. Along our walk on the beach, it was fun to watch how the puppies reacted differently to the incoming waves. Next, we took them over to the Village and had them walk up the "open backed" steps. This can be challenging for some dogs because they can see through to the ground, but no puppy seemed to have any problems. After shopping, we walked across the Madeira Bridge to Treasure Island to eat at Gators. The traffic on the bridge can also be daunting to some puppies, but again, ours came through with flying colors. Great job pups and raisers!

The weather for our subgroup meeting was far less than perfect. It was cold, wet and rainy. Good thing we met indoors at Celebration Station. Lots of noise and kids to distract the pups, but not too much for our dogs! It is also a good idea to expose our puppies to some rain since in the real world, blind people often have to walk in the rain to and from their destinations with their guide dogs. Although Maddox, my Shepherd would give me dirty looks, he never refused to work in the rain. Maggie, my first dog guide, a Labrador, saw the rain as an opportunity to play, but she diligently did her job. See how your pups react in the rain and mention it on your evaluations.

New Arrivals

We are VERY excited to announce we have 3 new arrivals this month. First, we have a black Golden Lab, named Amy going to Darleen Bigham. Darleen is going to be co-raising with first time raiser Shannon Rhodes. Due to Shannon's full time work schedule and Darleen's propensity for traveling, this seemed to be a perfect opportunity for Darleen, who has raised 8 dogs and has 8 matches, to mentor Shannon raising her first puppy.

Next, we have Amy's littermate, Walter B. going to Mike and Alicia Masterson. This is the St. Pete Lions Club sponsorship from raising money from the American Vet Dog fund raisers. It is especially appropriate that Mike and Alicia raise this puppy since they are both members of the Lions club and Mike is a veteran as well.



Top, middle and Bottom, Suncoast Puppy Raisers are working their pups on the sea wall, and under the bridge during last month's meeting.



Last but not least, we have a little black Lab named Peaches coming to Bethany Shilladay. Bethany is a former raiser but due to circumstances, took a few years off. She also lives near Fort Meyers, so it will be quite a commute, but that hasn't stopped her before. Besides, we are hoping to hear of a future Poodle placement for Phyllis Ulrich who also lives down south in the same vicinity.

As well as awaiting a Poodle placement announcement, Joe and Nancy O'Leary are also patiently waiting for a pup. They live in Brooksville so will also have quite the commute, but that doesn't deter them either. Some things, like raising a cute pup for a good cause is worth a little inconvenience!

With these new arrivals, our group will almost double. We are so looking forward to greeting and welcoming our new family members.

In Training

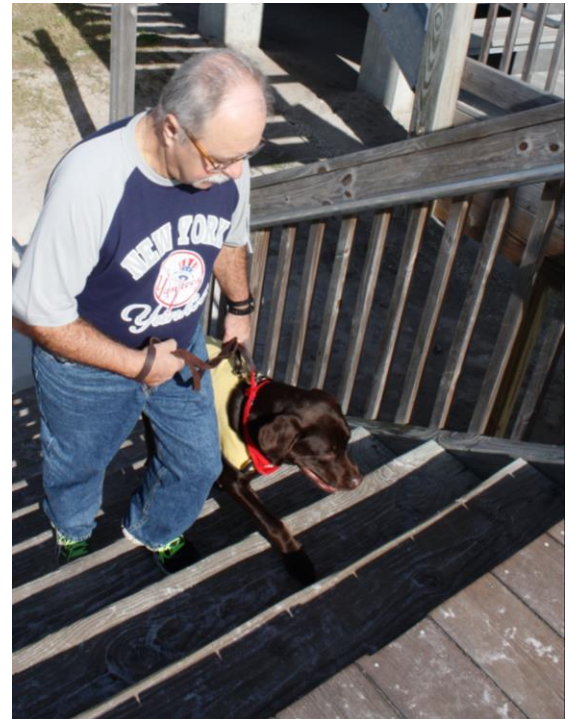
Last month we did not have a conclusion whether Mel, raised by Mike and Nancy Decker, was matched. All we knew was that he was class ready. Well, yes, he was matched in the January class to a repeat guide dog user that lives in New York. Congratulations to Mike and Nancy and I know you are proud of your boy. We are proud of you doing such a good job raising Mel, he had a good foundation for success. Great job!

In for Training

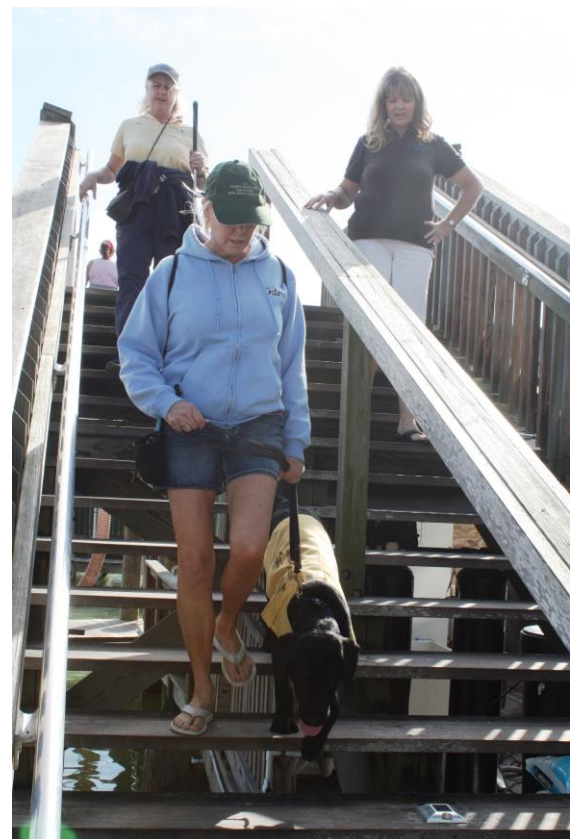
Tucker, raised by Karen Killen is still scheduled to return for training this month. He will be traveling with Deana back to Georgia for his first leg of his transport. So will all have a chance to say good-bye and good luck to Tucker at our Feb. 20th meeting.

Training Tip – Evaluations

A major commitment to raising a GDF puppy is to fill out timely evaluations. The evaluations are scheduled when your pup is 3, 6, 9, 12, and 14 months of age. The time frames reflect well accepted phases of maturity for the types of breeds we use for guide dog work. For Example, a 3 -5 month old puppy is curious and bold. They show little fear. By the time they are 6 months, they've learned that "No" is either their first or last name. They've also start to learn fear and become tentative about new things. By 9- 12 months, they are reaching sexual maturity and start acting like teenagers. They've either become deaf or pretend they have never heard a command before such as come, sit, and stay. By 14 – 16 months of age, you wonder where your puppy went and when did this amazing wonderful dog arrive. Unfortunately, that's when you know you've done your job and your dog is ready to go back for their advance training. While filling out your evaluations, we want you to be brutally honest. We are well aware that all of our raisers have varying degrees of experience. We do not expect anyone to feel they need a course in puppy training to successfully raise a dog for GDF. However, within our group, we have a lot of training experience to help with almost any training issue.



Steps oh so many steps! Above Joe O'Leary, works with Tucker on up steps. Below, Siglinda & Jesse joined us from the Ocala group for the day work on down steps.



But, we have to know about it first. So, if your puppy is uncontrollably jumping up on people, not responding to your commands such as sit before leaving the house or entering the car, we want to know about it. As they get older, we want to know if they are tipping the garbage can, eating the roll of toilet paper or “counter surfing.”



These are behavioral issues that need to be immediately addressed and easy to fix if you let us know and let us help you correct them. These behaviors can become very serious ones if not addressed and if not corrected, could prevent your pup from becoming a guide dog.

Lastly, contact us immediately if you are not able to fill out your application due to technical difficulties. Unfortunately, technology has far advanced past many of our personal abilities. As for myself, I have a love/hate relationship with it, I love when it works and I hate when

it doesn't. To add to our difficulties, there are so many forms of technology, PC's, iPhones, iPads, Tablets, and so many operating systems that are constantly being updated, that it makes it impossible for them all to interact with each other the way we need them to do. Again, fortunately, we have raisers with advanced knowledge and are offering help to those in need to get these evaluations done in an acceptable format and timely manner. So please, let us know right away when you are experiencing a problem and we will do our best to advise you. What

ever happened to snail mail anyways?

We look forward to seeing you all and meeting with Deana on the 20th at 4 PM. You're Area Coordinators Debbie & Chuck Hietala



Top left Buddy takes Elvis for a walk. Top right, crossing the Johns Pass Bridge with car and bicycle traffic. Middle, Eileen & Carmen at Celebration Station. Bottom Rugby & Tucker playing Golf Picture courtesy of Karen Killen



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