



November 2011 Monthly Bulletin

*More than just a
best pal*

Service dogs: friends, helpers and heroes

People who have service dogs may experience the most powerful of all animal-human relationships. We see such a relationship in the book *Thunder Dog*.¹ It's a compelling story written by Michael Hingson, a man who has been blind since infancy.

Thunder Dog tells how Michael's guide dog, Roselle, led him out of the World Trade Center to safety during the 9/11 terror attacks. Bolstered by reassuring words and gestures from Michael, Roselle led her owner down 1463 slippery, wet stairs from his office on the 78th floor that day.

A true hero

Roselle was usually frightened by the sound of thunder. Yet she kept her composure through the loud explosions, smoke, heat, and dust of the 9/11 disaster.

It hardly mattered that the stairwell was dark. Roselle remained calm and focused on her job. She received credit for helping to save Michael and many others making their way down the steps that day.

What is a service dog?

A service dog gets training to help someone with tasks specific to that person's disabilities.² There are service dogs (and some cats) trained to assist people who are blind, deaf, diabetic, experience seizures or extreme anxiety.

Many people with disabilities lead better lives thanks to their service dogs. Their dogs are working companions that help them maintain independence and wellbeing.

Raised with love and purpose

Dogs picked to become service dogs receive special handling and training starting as puppies. Dedicated owners raise them with love — knowing their pets will leave at some point to do an important job.

The dogs get lessons and tests as they grow up. They must have special characteristics and abilities to be service dogs. The dogs chosen must meet high standards.

Chosen dogs are put through intense training. Then they are matched to people with disabilities based on personalities, energy levels and needs of both dog and owner.

Teamwork and trust

Michael Hingson and Roselle had the unique relationship that often develops between service dogs and their handlers. Roselle died in 2007 and, to honor her, Guide Dogs of America retired her name forever. In October 2011, she was named top hero at the first American Humane Association Hero Dog Awards.³

If you're interested in finding out more about raising or obtaining a service dog, contact www.deltasociety.org.

Getting help

Confidential support, information and resource referrals are available for a variety of concerns — both work and personal. Call for assistance for you, your household members or your adult children under age 26, whether they live at home or not. Call or visit us online today!

¹www.guidedogs.com

²www.deltasociety.org

³www.marinij.com



Contact your EAP for 24/7 access for you and your eligible family members:

1-888-825-3509

www.HorizonCareLink.com

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Relationships make the world go round