



We are professionally trained to help you enjoy peace of mind while your dog enjoys his walks. Yes, even while we stop to pick up his poop.

# cheerfuldogs chronicles

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Issue 50

## A World of Dogs: Making a Lassie - The Art of Raising a Service Dog Puppy

Service dogs – assistance dogs trained specifically to help people with various disabilities – embody a modern canine “ideal”. Mellow, stoic, and highly trained, these contemporary Lassies help their humans open doors, answer phones, navigate traffic, or respond to smoke alarms. Coming across a service dog calmly steering through a busy city street or lying placidly under a chair at an outdoor restaurant amid tantalizing smells, it’s easy to think these dogs are made of special stuff, impervious as they seem to distractions. That’s true to an extent – many service dogs are bred from particularly good-natured and trainable parents – but that’s only part of the answer.



What else makes a service dog? Socialisation. That’s where puppy raising enters the picture. Puppy raisers are volunteers who provide service dog puppies with a home for 12-18 months, usually starting when the pups are eight weeks old. They teach the dogs basic manners and, most importantly, socialise them. Consider the many experiences and situations a service dog must be comfortable with. Cars, buses, ferries, and airplanes; hotels, libraries, shops, supermarkets, and movie theatres; escalators, fountains, prams,



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## ...raising Lassie

garage doors, and construction noise. Not to mention all manner of people and everything in a home, from the vacuum cleaner to the hair dryer.

With the support of the service organisation, puppy raisers undertake the mammoth task of helping a dog to, more or less, “see it all”. Few things are left to chance in this carefully planned programme of experiences. Day after day, the handler takes her canine charge out into the world to encounter enough things, enough times, in a calm controlled manner, that most of them become mundane. All that effort and time spent early in the dog’s life make the Lassie we see possible. And perhaps your dog doesn’t need to be quite that sophisticated. Perhaps less will do. But it’s worth remembering that, although some dogs are more naturally calm than others, no dog is born cosmopolitan. That takes training.



### Did You Know: These Canine Skills & Traits

Dogs don’t understand “right” and “wrong.” They are amoral. (Not immoral!)

Dogs do divide the world into good-for-dogs, bad-for-dogs, and neutral.

Dogs master reading body language and understanding hand signals.

Dogs are less terrific at reading our minds and understanding verbal language.

Dogs can navigate complex social worlds – among other dogs.

Dogs can’t think in abstract concepts the way humans do.

Dogs are highly social creatures. Marvellous trial-and-error learners. Easy to motivate.

Dogs are not born to please us. They are not innately able to appreciate the value of Italian shoes.



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