

## SERVICE OF THE MONTH

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Photo courtesy of Google

# Puppy Love



THEIR gorgeous chocolate brown gaze could melt a heart of granite – and they could change someone's life. But first, the pups who'll grow into guide dogs need temporary loving homes to get them through babyhood. Jemma Walton spoke to Frances

Green who have volunteered to be puppy dog walkers for Guide Dogs for the Blind. 'We know the great work that the dogs do'

FRANCES Green loves welcoming a new member of the family into her house. And although she sheds a tear when a man comes to take them away a few months later, she knows it's for the best.

The mum-of-three is one of the thousands of people across the country who regularly take in puppies from the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, and helps train them before they go off to guide dog school.

She said helping raise a pup has been one of the most rewarding things she has ever done, and something she and her family will be doing for a long time to come.

"My father-in-law is blind," she said. "And although he doesn't have a dog, we knew what guide dogs meant to



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**Anybody who doesn't know what soap tastes like never washed a dog.**

**-Franklin P. Jones**

*...continued on back!*

blind people. Having said that, our first dog nibbled his fingers the first time he met him. He could be quite naughty at times!" The idea is that people like the Greens take in guide dog pups aged between six to eight weeks until they are approximately 12 to 14 months.

During that time they introduce them to basic good behavior, and take them to a wide variety of places where guide dogs are expected to work, such as train stations, shopping centres, and on public transport.

The pups will then go on to specialized guide dog training. If they pass all the tests they will go to live with a blind person when they are about 18 months old, to help that person live an independent life. After passing all the checks the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association carries out to make sure their puppy will be in good hands, the Greens took delivery of their first puppy, Guinness, in November 2005.

"We got a lot of help," said Frances. "You get a big manual about how to deal with the dog, and

they visit you at home to make sure you're getting on OK.

"After that, you go to about four sessions of puppy classes with other guide dogs, and as the pup gets older you're given new objectives. You're very closely monitored, never left to fend for yourself." In return for their efforts the Greens – 11-year-old Rachel, Chris (15) and Adam (18) as well as dad Nigel – have got all of the thrills and spills that living with a puppy brings, with all vet's bills and food very handily paid for by the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association. "The whole family have found that puppy walking is worthwhile. It's a big commitment, and you can only really work part-time when you've got a pup, but for us it's a way of enjoying having a dog, without any of the expense.

"We've really enjoyed and benefited from looking after Guinness and now Wilfie. When Guinness left, my daughter and I cried, but we knew it was for the best. And now we've got our hands full with Wilfie."

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## Tip:

### Ask Scoopster!

Dear Scoopster,

How can I stop my dog jumping all over my guests when they come into our home?

Some of our guests insist they do not mind, but we find it troublesome. It makes it hard to enjoy our guest's arrival.

Julie Freeport

Dear Julie, a host of questions comes to mind. But first, let me reassure you that this is a problem easily solved and managed if you will invest some time into training your doggie in basic social manners.

Let us first understand why dogs behave this way. Often dogs jump up as a way to greet us. They want to get into our faces to receive some good old "primate" affection. They are saying, "Hey, I am here." What is our normal reaction when a dog jumps up? We either cuddle them, give them verbal encouragement or, when their jumping is unwanted, we physically push them away.

Any of these reactions by us achieves your



dog's desired objective, our attention. We have reinforced our dog's behavior with our verbal or physical attention. Because the jumping is rewarded, the behavior becomes stronger. Training your dog in simple and basic behaviors has numerous benefits. The most prevalent advantage is that it gives us a way to communicate with our dog. What is the practical application of all of this? The easiest way to modify an unwanted behavior is to teach an alternate, desirable behavior, such as, in the case of a jumpy social dog, Sit.

So let's look at our formula.

1. First, we need to be consistent and have all members of the family consistently behave toward your dog in the same way. From this point onwards, no jumping should be reinforced by anyone in anyway.

2. Now if doggie jumps, you turn your back to them and completely ignore the behavior. That means no eye contact, no verbal communication and no touching.

3. Your dog will quickly realize that the jumping behavior does not get them the attention they want. They will usually go into a default Sit position while they consider their options.

4. As soon as the dog's rump hits the ground, you say "good dog" in a friendly but controlled voice. You then bend down or kneel to greet them, giving them the attention they want with your eye contact and physical touching.

By following this method you have removed the reward gained by jumping and are teaching your dog that if they exhibit an alternative desirable behavior (sitting), they get the attention they want. Remember, be consistent and, over time, the jumping will cease.

Niki Tudge  
Owner Pet Butler Florida.  
APDT, NADOI, CBC

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