

Service dog faithful friend

BY TIFFANY S. JONES
STAFF WRITER

Greensboro resident Mia Ives-Rublee doesn't let her disease incapacitate her.

Rublee has osteogenesis imperfecta, or brittle bone disease, and uses a manual wheelchair.

She also has a service dog, Arianne, to help with physical tasks.

"She can pick stuff up for me, especially when it's under things," Rublee said.

Rublee, 25, received her first service dog from Canine Companions for Independence when she was 13.

"It gave me a lot of confidence," she said. "I felt like people were looking at me because of the dog and not because of my disability." CCI is a nonprofit organization that breeds, trains and places assistance dogs for people with disabilities.

Rublee said people are often intimidated by wheelchairs and don't know what to say.

"She is a bridging point," Rublee said about her dog.

"People ask about the dog instead of asking what's wrong with me."

Like her first dog, Stephen G., her new one, Arianne, is trained to pull, push buttons, operate light switches, pick things up and is learning to



PROVIDED BY CANINE COMPANIONS FOR INDEPENDENCE

Mia Ives-Rublee of Greensboro recently graduated from "Team Training" and received Arianne, an assistance dog, from Canine Companions for Independence.

open doors on command.

Rublee was paired with Arianne in May after she completed her master's degree in social work at UNC-Chapel Hill.

"When Stephen turned 12 years old, I decided to get another service dog," Rublee said.

She reapplied with CCI and the process took a couple of

years to complete.

Now 14 and retired, Stephen is living with Rublee's parents.

Rublee and Arianne are now getting along great, she said, but it wasn't like that at first.

"When you have a service dog, you sort of have expectations based on the first one," Rublee said.

Both dogs are Labrador-golden retriever mixes, but with very different personalities.

"When I first met her, she seemed a little more nervous,

and she wasn't all lovey-dovey like Stephen," she said.

"She's a little more timid than Stephen, but at the same time she's more assertive."

After training with her for a week, Rublee said, she fell in love with Arianne.

"You start to notice all these quirks about her, and you just love her," she said.

Contact Tiffany S. Jones at 373-7157 or tiffany.jones@news-record.com