

# Showers of puppy blessings

## Special C.R. event to help service dog

**NANCY KENNEDY**  
*Chronicle*

It's a girl!  
Mardene II, a retriever/Labrador mix, is one of the newest residents in Citrus County, a service puppy-in-training for Canine Companions for Independence, which is a pet project of the Crystal River Woman's Club.

The community is invited to a puppy shower from 1 to 3 p.m. Friday, Oct. 15, at the Crystal River Woman's Clubhouse, 320 Citrus Ave., Crystal River.

"We're not asking for gifts for the puppy, because as a service dog she needs special food and toys," said club member Mary Lee Johnson. There will, however, be a donation jar available to cover things like dog food, toys, cages and gas money for the puppy to travel back and forth to Orlando for specialized puppy train-

ing.  
Local veterinarian Tammy Barron from Plantation Animal Clinic in Crystal River has donated her services for all of Mardene II's veterinary care.

"We've always raised money to buy (Canines for Independence) puppies," Johnson said. "They cost \$500 each, and over the years we've bought seven puppies, but they go elsewhere. This year we wanted to bring it home to Citrus County."

Cynthia Holden will be raising Mardene II for the next 18 months. After that, Mardene II will be placed with a person who needs a service dog.

Holden described Mardene II as "feisty."

"She's non-stop," Holden said. "From the time she gets up in the morning. She loves to go; she loves to learn."

Currently, Mardene II is learning

her first set of commands such as sit, stay, here, drop, kennel and dress, meaning it's time to put on your cape and work.

Working for a service puppy is going out in public and learning to socialize.

"I love watching her interact with people and other animals," Holden said. "Socialization is a very important part of the training."

The public is invited to come meet Mardene II at the puppy shower and learn more about Canine Companions for Independence.

Canine Companions for Independence is a national nonprofit organization that provides service dogs at no cost to children and adults with disabilities, except those with sight impairment.

Johnson added that the Crystal River Woman's Club will help people who need service dogs apply. Call Mary Lee Johnson at 503-3237. //



Special to the Chronicle

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