



October 2009

Pup E-Connection

The Southwest Region Puppy Raiser Newsletter



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Note from the Editor:

As staff at Canine Companions, we know we are quite lucky to be constantly reminded of the CCI Mission. We see graduates with their dogs on a regular basis, the end product, the reason for it all. The team.

As a puppy raiser, staying attuned to the end goal is often more challenging. It can be easy to become canine-centric, or swept up in the social aspects of volunteerism. While these are all great aspects of the program, our new series is designed to help you focus on the CCI Mission in all its glory. To this effect we have our main article, a repeat, as well as an upcoming supplement called "Meet the Team". Look for the latter end of October.

Enjoy! We at Canine Companions thank you for your love not just of dogs, but your fellow man.

“But how can you give them up?”

(Why We Do What We Do)

****From August 2006 Pup E-Connection***

As a trainer, it is simple. Right from the beginning, these dogs are not ours. We are their teachers, their leaders, their playground monitors. We know our time is limited, and we know our responsibility to prepare these dogs to the ultimate level, so that someone with a disability has not an everyday pet, but a genuine working dog. As much as I give them love, snuggle with them, play fetch, and revel in the joy of teaching them new things, I always have a piece of my heart set aside, for these dogs are not mine to have.

Every three months, an amazing thing happens on our campus, and the reasons for a trainer's hard work become oh so clear. On August 7, nine amazing teams pulled onto the CCI campus. Within a week, within days really, extraordinary things started to happen. Children that had difficulty verbalizing became so motivated by their dogs that they started to build their vocabulary by adding commands. In a Team Training class a few years ago, the commands "Sit" and "Down" led a child back to the word "Mom", which had not been heard by that mother in many years. Muscles become stronger and more relaxed as children reach out to pet their dogs, providing improvements that boggle the minds of their physical therapists. This is why we do what we do. For our new service teams, you can watch their eyes light up in Team Training as the unreachable becomes reachable, both as a metaphor, and as a reality. Suddenly an item

dropped out of reach is not a big deal. For some students this means the increased independence of being home without an attendant, and allows caretakers more free time as well. For one successor grad, having a service dog meant having the confidence to go places on her own-- dropping the car keys or the remote for the van lift were no longer concerns. For a multitude of graduates, having a CCI dog means venturing out new places and spending much more time in public than they ever had before, as suddenly the barriers the public puts up towards people with disabilities were toppled by these amazing dogs. This is why we do what we do.

This past graduation was a great one, and really clarified things for me. As a graduate wrote to me last week, "Keep training those dogs. We need them!" That summed it all up for me. Our graduates need these dogs—as companions, friends, and mobility tools. Each team gets countless benefits, ones that you and I can only imagine. A Puppy Raiser at graduation brunch made a great statement, by taking the graduate's gratitude towards them, and turning it around, saying, "You graduates are a blessing to me and to my family." It is the greatest blessing in life to be able to truly give to another human being, to commit a selfless act and expect nothing in return but the knowledge that you have enhanced someone's life.



You as Puppy Raisers are a different part of this dog's life than I, much closer to being a parent figure. You take them into your homes, and spend the entire day with them by your side. Your job is much more difficult than mine-- a true sacrifice of free time, money, and especially love. For that, we at CCI applaud you.

But in the end, it isn't about you or I, is it? Our title, Canine Companions for Independence, sometimes leads our focus to be a bit too strongly upon the dogs. Certainly these dogs are extraordinary creatures, often seeming more than canines. And certainly this organization does not exist without them. Yet sometimes we forget that these dogs are only half of the equation, that an Assistance Dog team consists of two parts: one-half person, one-half dog. Improving the quality of life and the level of independence for our fellow man is what it is about. So when someone on the street asks you, "But how can you give them up?", just say, "It's easy. There is someone out there waiting for this dog, and they need them. This dog will change their life forever."

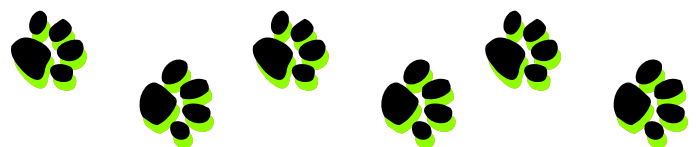
Stacy Webb, Scout Photography



Canine Companions "Speak" 2009

**A mini-guide to help you find the most current terms used within and by the organization.*

NEW!	OLD
Puppy-In-Program (PIP)	Puppy in Training (PIT)
Puppy Raiser	Puppy Trainer
Professional Training (2009)	Advanced Training



Introducing Commands: The Method

Step One: Get the Dog to Do the Behavior

- Tools:**
- **Food Luring**
 - **Leash Luring** (ex: Heel)
 - **Teasing** (ex: Speak)
 - **Movement** (ex: Here)
 - **Clear Communication**
(Motivation “That’s it!” vs. Reward “Good”)
 - **Meaningful Rewards**
(Toys, Treats, Play/Movement, Meal)



TrainerSpeak

***Trial:** A single repetition of a single behavior.

***Session:** A discrete group of trials of a single behavior

Step Two: Name the Behavior

- When it looks like your end goal
- Association: Say the name as the behavior occurs
- Test for Comprehension: See if the command alone elicits the proper response.



Step Three: Generalize

- Vary locations and positions, if relevant
- Use help and ample praise when making changes!
- Small changes to you = big changes to a puppy

Step Four: Proof the Command

- Slowly increase the distraction level
- At this point you can use correction for mistakes, but don’t forget to praise hard work at all times!

Step Five: Use the Command

- Add the command into your daily routine rather than working in sessions
- Puppy should have 80% success rate to consider a command “known”



Known Commands: The Four D's

**Be sure you only work on one of these at a time!*

1. Duration
2. Distance
3. Distraction (Proofing)
4. Difficulty (Ex: Generalizing)



Known Commands: When to Help vs. When to Correct

Help when:

- The dog is fearful or stressed.
- The dog is confused due to changes.

Correct when:

- The dog understands but is distracted.
 - The dog is testing your leadership.
- The dog understands but is making a poor effort.

Introducing Commands – Tips from the Trainers

(based on *Feisty Fido*, by Patricia McConnell)

1. Be Sure You Have What the Puppy Wants.

- What is the puppy willing to work for?

2. The Right Kind of Repetition is Critical.

- Sessions should be shorter than you think (5-7 trials).
- Use baby steps as you add difficulty—you should never jump from Easy to Really Hard without lots of work in between.
- Once the command is known, throwing in single or double trials randomly keeps it fun.

3. Be Flexible.

- Accept that there are good and bad training days, and adapt.
- Don't be afraid to go back a step if the puppy is having difficulty.

4. Always End on a Good Note.

- Stop when you are both still having fun!
- If you get an amazing trial, end earlier than you planned.

Fall Reminders

Progress Reports Due:
October & November 1st

Heartgard and Frontline Due:
October and November 1st

Canine Companions
Invitational Golf Tournament
Carlsbad, CA:
October 16th

Graduation Ceremony
Mission San Luis Rey:
November 14th

Our Mission Statement

Canine Companions for Independence is a non-profit organization that enhances the lives of people with disabilities by providing highly trained assistance dogs and ongoing support to ensure quality partnerships.