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**Service Dog Organization Invites Public to PUPPY SUMMER SUNDAYS**  
*Learn about Volunteering with Canine Companions for Independence*

OCEANSIDE, CA Canine Companions for Independence is a nonprofit organization that provides assistance dogs to people with disabilities completely free of charge. The organization, which opened a Los Angeles Office last year thanks to a grant from The Shirley McKernan Courage Foundation, relies on volunteers to foster puppies in program for the first year and a half of their lives. Canine Companions' upcoming open-house events, called PUPPY SUMMER SUNDAYS, will provide an overview of this life-changing program and show prospective volunteers and charitable community members how they can help the cause. PUPPY SUMMER SUNDAYS will take place on May 22, June 26, July 24 and August 21 from NOON to 2PM at Canine Companions for Independence Los Angeles at 2312 Westwood Boulevard, 90064. The events are open to the public. (No pets, please; working dogs and puppies in program are welcome.)

At PUPPY SUMMER SUNDAYS, Canine Companions will transform its office into a training room for future assistance dogs. Attendees will get a glimpse of the responsibilities and rewards of volunteer puppy raising through witnessing an obedience class, hearing from a Canine Companions instructor and meeting local clients who depend on their canine partners. Learn how volunteers help transform rambunctious puppies into well-socialized, obedient assistance dogs. See demonstrations of how assistance dogs help their human partners by retrieving dropped objects, opening doors, pulling manual wheelchairs and activating light switches. Learn how Canine Companions assistance dogs help a wide range of people, from children with developmental delay to adults with physical disabilities such as spinal cord injuries, multiple sclerosis and hearing loss.

"Puppy raising is the hardest volunteer job that anyone could ever love," explains Linda Valliant, who is the Canine Companions Southwest Region Executive Director as well as a six-time volunteer puppy raiser. Meeting clients who depend on their assistance dogs for help with physical tasks, social inclusion, and loving companionship focuses on the Canine Companions mission and is the ultimate reward." Puppy raisers take the Labrador and Golden Retriever puppies into their hearts and homes when they are eight weeks of age. They provide basic training and ample socialization opportunities to the dogs, along with a lot of love. After 14-16 months, puppy raisers return the dogs to Canine Companions for six months of Professional Training with staff instructors. After mastering approximately 50 commands with the instructors, the dogs train alongside their new human partners for two weeks before graduating as assistance dogs for people with disabilities.

"We invite anyone who is interested in making a difference in the lives of people with disabilities to PUPPY SUMMER SUNDAYS," says Valliant. "There are many Los

Angeles County residents who would benefit from our program, and we need community support to reach them.”

**About Canine Companions for Independence:**

Canine Companions for Independence provides highly-trained assistance dogs to children and adults with disabilities. Established in 1975, Canine Companions has five regional training centers across the country. Canine Companions is recognized worldwide for the excellence of its dogs, and the quality and longevity of the matches it makes between dogs and people. There is no charge for the dog, training and ongoing follow-up services. For more information, visit [www.cci.org](http://www.cci.org) or call 1-800-572-BARK.

**About the Canine Companions Los Angeles Office:**

The Canine Companions Los Angeles Office is funded by The Shirley McKernan Courage Foundation. It is open Monday through Friday from NOON to 5PM. Contact the office at (310) 446-5700 or [LA\\_Office@cci.org](mailto:LA_Office@cci.org).

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