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RAISE A PUPPY, CHANGE A LIFE

Learn about Volunteering with Canine Companions for Independence

OCEANSIDE, CA Canine Companions for Independence, the nonprofit organization that provides assistance dogs to people with disabilities completely free of charge, will host RAISE A PUPPY, CHANGE A LIFE from 5 to 7PM on Thursday, February 23 at La Quinta Inn & Suites at 1625 West Loop South in Houston. The event will provide an overview of Canine Companions' life-changing program and prospective volunteers and charitable community members will learn how they can help the cause. RAISE A PUPPY, CHANGE A LIFE will be open to the public with free admission. Guests are encouraged to RSVP to (760) 901-4327 by February 20. (No pets, please; working dogs and puppies in program are welcome.)

RAISE A PUPPY, CHANGE A LIFE will provide attendees the opportunity to meet Canine Companions staff, local human-canine teams and volunteers with puppies in program. Learn how Canine Companions relies on volunteers to raise future assistance dogs for the first year and a half of the puppies' lives. See how volunteers help transform rambunctious puppies into well-socialized, obedient working dogs and get a glimpse of the responsibilities and rewards experienced along the way. Video presentations will highlight how Canine Companions assistance dogs help their human partners by retrieving dropped objects, opening doors, pulling manual wheelchairs and activating light switches. Canine Companions assistance dogs are partnered with 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. Injured veterans are served through a special program at Canine Companions called the Wounded Veterans Initiative.

"Puppy raising is the hardest volunteer job that anyone could ever love," explains Canine Companions Instructor Becca Gordon. "Meeting clients who depend on their assistance dogs for help with physical tasks, social inclusion and loving companionship 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 RAISE A PUPPY, CHANGE A LIFE," says Gordon. "Canine Companions depends on volunteer support to provide our amazing assistance dogs for free. There are few things as rewarding as seeing a puppy you raised change someone's life for the better."

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 or call 1-800-572-BARK.

About RAISE A PUPPY, CHANGE A LIFE:

Visit www.cci.org/raisepuppy or call (760) 901-4327 for more information and to RSVP by February 20.

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