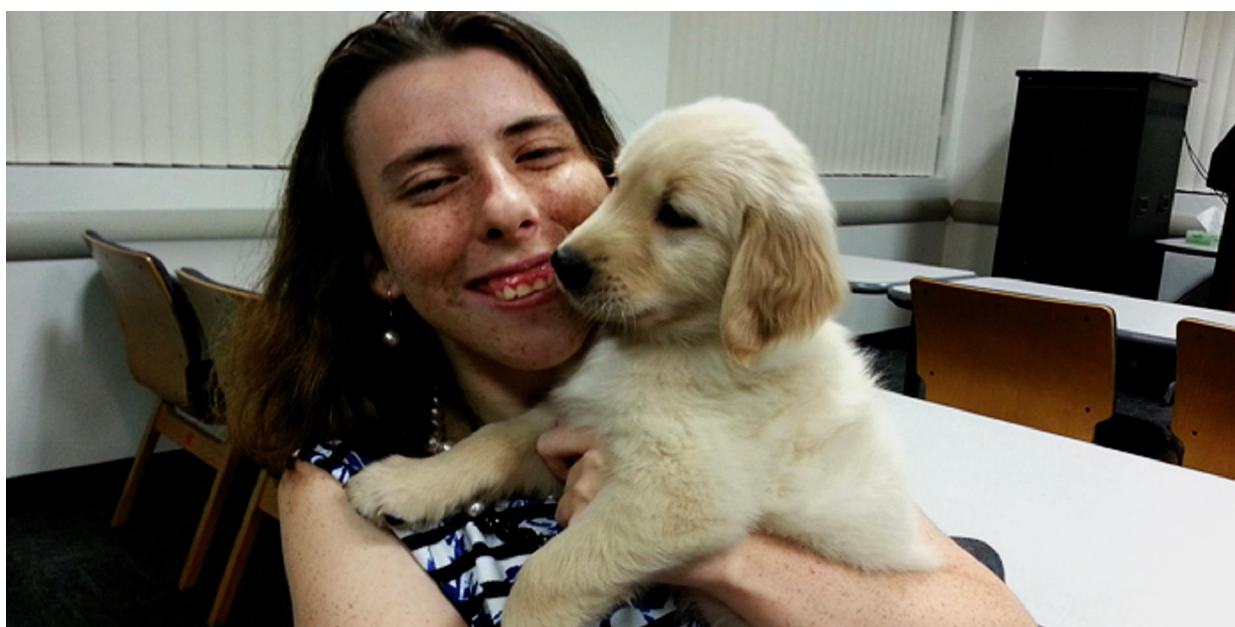


Mesa company trains, connects service dogs with people

ALICIA CANALES/CRONKITE NEWS ONLINE | October 7, 2014 @ 6:51 am

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Jennifer Rose, a 22-year-old student, is seeking a dog from Arizona Goldens to help with epilepsy. She's had to have someone with her 24 hours a day since she was diagnosed at 19. (Cronkite News Photo/Alicia Canales)

Cole Ludwig's closest friend is Bandit, a German shepherd who fetches tennis balls the 8-year-old pushes off his wheelchair and playfully takes off his owner's socks when Cole's mother isn't looking -- and even when she is.

When Bandit barks, as he is trained to do, Cole's parents know they need to get to their son quickly. Suffering from cerebral palsy and epilepsy, Cole has silent seizures up to 10 times a week that can cause him to stop breathing.

Since the Queen Creek family got Bandit a little less than a year ago, Cole's mother, Yvonne, said she's finally been able to sleep through the night.

"For me, I was so afraid of him stopping breathing while having a seizure or something,

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Brian Daugherty, CEO and founder of Arizona Goldens, said the company breeds its own dogs but sometimes will look at outside breeders.

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Once the puppies are born, many spend their first year and a half with contracted puppy handlers who help socialize them and get them to respond to basic commands. Some spend a week or two at a time with various volunteer puppy sitters who have the same responsibilities.

Other volunteers serve as puppy handlers who help out at training meetings that occur the first three Thursdays of the month.

The dogs undergo an examination to make sure they are healthy when they are 12 to 14 months of age. From there it's a matter of connecting dog and client.

Clients pay \$16,500 for a service dog as well additional costs for specific tasks a dog must perform or equipment it needs. Insurance coverage depends on the individual's insurance company and disability, Daugherty said.

The Ludwigs didn't have insurance cover any of the cost for Bandit, which was around \$20,000. The family raised the money in a little less than a year from cookie and salsa sales and a Girls Scout troop donation.

Jennifer Rose, a 22-year-old student at Chandler-Gilbert Community College and Mesa Community College, is seeking a dog from Arizona Goldens to help with epilepsy. She's had to have someone with her 24 hours a day since she was diagnosed at 19.

"It will give me back my independence in life and help me live a better life," Rose said.

Her dog will cost \$17,500 because it must have a vest to carry her medicines. In five



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Once a dog is matched with a client, it begins specialized training for that disability. It takes approximately two years and between 1,500 and 3,000 hours to fully train the dog, he said.

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Daugherty said autism service dogs can learn up to 50-60 commands and up to 200 tasks, whereas mobility service dogs learn up to 120 commands and up to 300 tasks. Tasks include opening doors, retrieving items, pulling wheelchairs and detecting seizure triggers.

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all police must be corrupt. o

The client spends 40 to 50 hours studying the commands before the boot camp. During boot camp, the client spends 50-100 hours practicing the commands with the dog.