



# Volunteer Information and Application Packet

TOP DOG, Inc.  
350 S Williams Blvd Suite 150  
Tucson, AZ 85711  
520-323-6677  
Fax(520)323-3512  
info@topdogusa.org



For Office Information Only
Date: _____
Recorded: _____

## Volunteer Information

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### Introduction

We're always happy to provide information about the TOP DOG program, especially to potential volunteers! Our commitment to improving the lives of people who are physically disabled through service dog training and education depends largely on the strong motivation of the volunteers who share our commitment and goals. Many of our volunteers have been with TOP DOG for 5 years and more!

We look forward to having you come and observe some of our training classes and meet the staff and some of our students (both the human and the canine variety). If you have any further questions, or to get class schedule and location information, please email us at [topdog800@theriver.com](mailto:topdog800@theriver.com) or call 323-6677. The office is open Monday – Friday 8:30 - 1:30 p.m.

Following is some general information about our program and a volunteer application. Review the information, and if you would like to submit your application, please return pages 7 through 9 and return the volunteer packet to the Top Dog office.

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**TOP DOG, Inc.**

## **A Service Dog Training Program**

### **What is TOP DOG?**

TOP DOG is a Tucson non-profit organization, which teaches people who have a physical disability to train their own dogs to help them. Unlike many service dog groups, which raise and train service dogs professionally, TOP DOG challenges the person with the disability to do all of the training himself.

TOP DOG uses positive, gentle training methods to achieve its goals. The end product is a team—a person and dog working together happily, and understanding each other completely. TOP DOG teaches the students in the program to appreciate how a dog thinks. We don't just teach them how to get their dogs to sit; we also teach canine behavior, body language, bonding, breed characteristics, pack relationships—all of the different factors that make up a dog. We try to dispel myths about the dog—that he is spiteful or that "he did that on purpose." We limit our beginner class to five owner/dog teams so that we can give each team the individual attention they need all the way through the program. Each team is assigned a "personal training assistant," a volunteer helper who meets weekly with the student all the way through the program to offer advice and encouragement.

There is a three-month session for beginners, during which they learn the basics of obedience and some of the rudiments of canine behavior. Teams then move into the intermediate three-month session, in which they perfect the basic obedience, with distractions, begin to take their dogs out in public, under supervision, and start to learn the service exercises, such as "take it." Teams must then pass the Assistance Dogs International (AD I) Public Access Test in order to move up to the advanced class. All future three-month sessions (for up to a total of 2 years) are spent working toward certification as a TOP DOG team. To achieve this goal, owner and dog must display competence as a team; the dog must show good behavior at home and in public; and the dog must perform several service exercises that help his owner in everyday life.

There are many different skills that the dogs can be taught. Because we teach the disabled person to teach his own dog, he will teach his dog only the skills he needs and wants. The dogs are taught to pick up anything, from a penny to a crutch. Some will carry things from one person to another. Some will turn lights on and off. Others will open and close doors. Some will help their owners get dressed and un-dressed. Others will pull or push wheelchairs. Some will help their owners get up out of a chair, or climb up stairs, curbs or ramps.



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## What is TOP DOG?

Whatever need a particular student has, we put our heads together to come up with a way for the dog to help. We try not to be limited by the idea that a dog has never done that; we just think of a way to make it possible. Some things, of course, dogs cannot do. They don't do windows, but they can help with some household chores. They don't do homework, but they can be quiet company as a student studies. They don't answer the telephone, but they can bring it to their owner whenever they receive a call, or need to make one. For someone with a disability, it can be a wonderfully liberating experience to have his dog do something for him instead of having to rely on others for help. And it is even more enriching when he has trained the dog himself. That's the purpose of TOP DOG.

Stewart Nordensson and Lydia Kelley, two of TOP DOG's founders, have written a two-book training manual entitled **TEAMWORK I** and **TEAMWORK II**, which is devoted to imparting the TOP DOG philosophy and training methods to the general disabled community. **TEAMWORK I** teaches basic obedience and canine behavior. **TEAMWORK II** concentrates on service training by using our step-by-step approach utilizing positive training techniques based on TOP DOG's philosophy.

**TEAMWORK I** and **TEAMWORK II** are also sold in both DVD and VHS format as an accompaniment to the **TEAMWORK** series. Our online courses **Session I** and **Session II** were implemented for the homebound or for out-of-state owners who's lives are empowered to attain the goal of teaching their own dog to be a serviced trained dog.

TOP DOG does offer out-of-state certification. for people who have trained their own dogs and are looking for a place to certify them, TOP DOG offers a process of certification. But you must understand: TOP DOG certification is not something you buy; it's something you earn. More information on certification is available on our website:

TOP DOG has been very successful in promoting public understanding of people with disabilities and their service dogs. We have performed hundreds of educational demonstrations for thousands of children and adults in schools, hospitals, and civic organizations throughout Tucson.

TOP DOG is always looking for qualified students and good volunteer help. Because we keep our class size small, classes fill up quickly. Sessions begin in January, May and September. So if you have a disability and the desire to train a dog to help, you are invited to get in touch with us right away.



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**TOP DOG, Inc.**  
**A Service Dog Training Program**

**What Does TOP DOG Require Of A Volunteer Training Assistant**

**TOP DOG asks that you have:**

1. A sincere desire to help physically restricted people.
2. A real love of dogs.
3. A willingness to learn how to assist a client in training his/her own dog under TOP DOG guidelines.
4. Patience!
5. An open mind; willingness to try new ideas.
6. The abilities to control your frustrations.
7. The willingness and ability to devote time and effort to work with a client/dog team as much as 4 hours a week.
8. The ability to communicate. The key to a successful program is in the team effort and the only dumb question is the one that isn't asked.
9. A willingness to learn to learn about your client's disability by open discussion and research.
10. A willingness to learn about the breed of dog you will be working with.

The TOP DOG staff is prepared to teach you how to work with the physically restricted people and our methods of dog training. What we most need from our volunteers is the willingness to learn and the patience to follow through in times of frustration. With that commitment the personal satisfaction one can achieve from this position is immeasurable.

**THE KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM IS COMMUNICATION!!**

**CONSISTANCY! COMMUNICATION! COMMITMENT!**



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## **\_ What Does Top Dog Require Of A Volunteer Training Assistant?**

POINTS TO PONDER when you meet a person who is physically challenged...

- Remember, they are just people like everyone else
- Relax. If you don't know what to do or say, allow the disabled person to help put you at ease.
- Explore your mutual interests in a friendly manner. This person likely has many interests not related to their disability.
- Offer assistance if asked or if the need seems obvious but don't overdo it or insist.
- Respect the person's right to indicate the kind of help they need or want.
- Talk about the person's disability if it comes up naturally, without prying. Be guided by the person with the physical restriction.
- Appreciate what the person can do. Remember that person may be facing more problems stemming from society's attitudes and barriers than from the disability.
- Be considerate of the extra time it may take for a person with a restriction to get things said or done.  
Let the person set the pace walking and talking.

**REMEMBER, WE ALL HAVE LIMITATIONS.** On some of us they show.

- Speak directly to a person with a disability. Don't consider a companion to be a go-between.
- When conversing with a person in a wheelchair, stand back from the chair or better yet, pull up a chair so you are basically eye-to-eye.
- Do not move a wheelchair or crutches out of reach of a person who uses them.
- Never start to push a wheelchair without first asking the occupant if you may do so.
- When pushing a wheelchair up or down steps, ramps, curbs or other obstructions, ask the person how he/she wants you to proceed.
- Don't lean on a person's wheelchair.
- Give whole, unhurried attention to a person who has difficulty speaking. Don't talk for the person - only give help when needed. Keep your manner encouraging rather than correcting. When necessary, ask questions that require short answers. Do not nod as if you understand when you don't. It does both you and the person an injustice.
- Be alert to possible architectural barriers in places you may want to enter with a disabled friend.



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**TOP DOG, Inc.**  
**A service Dog Training Program**

**Volunteer Application**

TOP DOG is an organization which teaches the physically disabled how to train their own dogs to become service dogs. We need people to volunteer as Teaching Assistants ( TAs) as well as in other areas. If you like people and dogs, TOP DOG may be for you. Please let us know if we are right for each other by completing this application. *Please Print.*

Return Application to: **TOP DOG, Inc.**  
**350 S Williams Blvd Suite 150**  
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Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about TOP DOG? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever volunteered before? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No ( If yes with whom and when)

Teaching Assistants ( TAs) are a very important part of TOP DOG. The TAs help the physically disabled person/dog teams through the program. They advise the teams regarding TOP DOG's training methods, and act as general moral support for the teams all through their training. Volunteer training classes consist of attending training classes for 10 weeks long and are held on Saturday mornings. We prefer our client/dog teams to have the same Training Assistant throughout the entire two- year training program if at all possible. The benefit of watching our client/dog teams develop into a certified team is immeasurable.

Are you interested in being a Teaching Assistant? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_

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## Volunteer Application

Just as important to TOP DOG are our other volunteers. Are you interested in volunteering in other areas?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Please **circle** any areas that interest you..

**Video**  
**Clerical**  
**Fundraising**

**Public Relations**  
**Art**  
**Newsletter**

**General Assistant**  
**Other (Please explain)**

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Do you have any dog training experience? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

(If yes, please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

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Why do you want to volunteer for TOP DOG? \_\_\_\_\_

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Please provide the names of three persons whom we may contact for references (limit to one relative)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Volunteer Application**

Do you have any experience working with people with physical restrictions? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

(If yes, please explain) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If you have any special training or education you would like to share with us, please feel free to use this space to provide any extra information in this space, or attach information to this application.

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