



Puppies with a purpose

We became puppy raisers because we knew firsthand how important these dogs were to their partners. Independence is something that we all take for granted. Having been a little late to figure this out for the benefit of our disabled son, and knowing the difference a service dog would have made in his life, we decided to pay it forward.

We asked, “How can we help?” And although money is a crucial part of the equation, the answer was to raise a puppy. We had discussed this possibility as a family long before this, but never went the next step. We knew, we love dogs, we can do this!

Mickey came to live with us just before Christmas at 10 weeks old, and our adventure began. We wouldn’t “train” him, we would raise him. We would love him and expose him to as many different situations as we could. Basic puppy stuff is of course part of this. Our family and friends became his family; children, grandchildren, friends and family, not to mention all of their dogs.

We learned to let him teach us what he could do and it was quite a game. Rewarding him for picking up the TV remote, a shoe, glasses, and even papers, was a new experience. But in the world that he would be in these would be daily things that he would do for his partner. It was always fun to see what he might do next and call Michelle and tell her what he had done. She was always there to help us when we needed it and most of the time before we knew we needed her. We took him out to public places wearing his cape and were amazed at how he knew this was a time to be on his best behavior.



Shortly after he had been with us for a year it was time for him to begin his formal training. This was a difficult day, for sure. But, we had our own dog and that was the plan, to not have a complete void when he left. We watched his progress as he was trained as did our friends and family. We were all so proud of him! When he was ready to be placed with his new partner, we met her, and the circle was complete. She was a very busy woman who couldn't carry on her life without the help of a service dog, and Mickey was her second dog. Mickey would love the constant adventure.

Since then, we have taken in several rescued dogs and fostered them so that they might someday be service dogs. These dogs are the most loving and grateful animals. How wonderful to be part of saving an animal and helping them adjust as they become somebody else's "everything".

People tell me all the time that they could never do this, give them back. But I know if we can, anyone can, they just have to want to give what you are able to give.

Your time and love can make a huge difference in someone else's life.