



Puppy Raising

Little did I realize, relaxing on vacation and reading the local paper, would change my life and the life of our family. I read a story about puppy raising – and that’s all it took. A year later our family was raising our first little yellow Labrador retriever. Our job was to teach the puppy to love, trust and bond... and to give the trainers a solid foundation to build upon. We learned a lot with that first little puppy. We learned about obedience, being consistent, patience, setting limits, positive reinforcement, setting your puppy up for success and giving to others. We took our puppy to as many places as we could to socialize him and get him used to all the sights and sounds he might encounter as a working dog. As a mom and an elementary teacher these things were not new – but when you had to communicate these concepts to a puppy, it put a whole new spin on things. I found it helped me to become a better mother and teacher.

Finally, the dreaded day arrived when it was time to turn in ‘our’ yellow lab who had grown from a silly, furry pup into a handsome dog. The kids made the drive with me. As we drew near to our destination it became very quiet in the back seat. I glanced in the rear view mirror and the kids were draped over the dog crying. I thought, “We can’t do this again...”

A year later we were able to meet this handsome boy’s forever partner. We met his wife and two little boys. He had been a firefighter and had fallen from the roof of a building. It was clear that ‘our’ dog and this young man were totally devoted to one another. So, when we got the call to ask if we would like to raise another puppy.... the family gave a unanimous YES!

Rudy is #13, and his turn in time is drawing near. We will cry just as many tears as we did over 20 years ago.

What I can tell you... it has been an incredible journey. We have met many wonderful people. We have laughed and cried and shared our stories with other puppy raisers. You see, other puppy raisers understand the joys and toils, laughs and tears. We can be a tight bunch always supporting one another. My daughter told me that raising puppies as a family was one of the best things I ever did as a mom!

The question we always hear as puppy raisers is, “How can you give him up?”
The answer, “How can you not?”

Being a volunteer puppy raiser is a privilege and a gift. While it’s true puppy raisers give time, money, resources and love to a puppy they will return to K9s 4 Mobility, they receive the wonderful gift of



knowing their hard work and dedication will bring greater independence to an adult or child with a disability!

As our daughter, Ashley, put it, "It is an experience unlike anything else. You give everything you have – emotions and love and learn to be selfless. Every one of the puppies have presented us with new challenges and, we hope, have helped us to become better human beings in the end. "