

**FLORIDA DOG GUIDES F.T.D. Inc**

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**WHO ARE THEY?**

A statewide program serving the needs of the deaf/hearing impaired residents of Florida that use trained dogs as their ears & assistant. They also serve the needs of those with physical challenging needs that use trained dogs.

**PURPOSE:**

A person who cannot hear has a hidden disability - to others they appear normal. The person with a deaf disability has a life changing experience when they are finally able to carry out daily functions with the help of the dogs ears working for them - they come out of their shell - thus the term "Silent partners".

**OPERATION:**

They have a 7 member Board of Directors (local Manatee area folks).

**FUNDING:**

**1. Funding sources**

- \*Good Sams of Florida
- Lions Club of Florida
- Sertoma of Florida
- General Public
- Special grants (written by them)
- The organization does not receive State or Federal Funds.*

When they are able to write a successful grant - it is usually restricted money coming in for a particular purpose. They have NO corporation or foundation support. The annual "Walk-a-thon" raises about \$12,000 (towards their \$50,000 budget expenses). Arlene said all "donations" are a blessing to the school and help them to meet the needs of those they serve.

*\*Note: Due to the economy donations are down... Generally they receive \$7,000 annually from Good Sam Chapters .... 2009 provided only \$5,000*

**2. Tax exempt status:**

The organization is a non profit training school and holds a Non-profit tax exempt status 501(c) (3).

**2. What is your annual operating budget?**

2008 - \$80,000

\* 2009 - \$50,000

*\* Due to the current economy, donations are less, so the organization had to make adjustments to their operating budget.*

**3. How is your donated money spent?**

- All Donations received from Good Sam Chapters goes directly into the special "General Training Account". These donations are used to assist those who are unable to fully fund their training.
- The Florida Dog Guide organization does keep 10% of all donations to meet their operation and overhead expenses (*which in the non profit sector is acceptable*)

**6. What does it cost to train a working team?**

- It requires about \$2,000 to \$2,200 to train a team.
- Full or partial program grants or volunteer hour grants are available to cover the training fee for persons who cannot afford to pay.
- No applications are refused based on an inability to pay

**2. How many people do you serve?**

- Currently in the state of Florida there are 623 certified working teams – composed of a person and working dog.
- Annually there are approximately 27 training teams in various stages of the training program.
- There are 42 Trainers in the state of Florida.
- There is an average of 50 approved applications on the waiting list.

**THE PROGRAM:**

1. **Founded in 1984** – A state wide program that serves the deaf & hearing impaired resident community in FLORIDA that select and use "Trained" dogs as their ears and assistants. When the Florida Dog Guides were established in 1984 - and even today - they work closely with the Deaf Service Center. Thus the program was and continues to be developed to meet the current needs of the deaf community. The sole purpose Florida Guide Dogs is training.

**3. How much does the training program cost?**

\$2,000 to \$2,200 per team

**5. The school is designed to assist Florida residents with:**

- Hearing Loss – Hearing Dog Guides

- Mobility Loss – Service and support dogs
- Therapy Dogs – Hospital and care giving facilities
- Specialty Dogs – Multiple Disabilities

*All dogs are individually trained to work and perform tasks for their impaired owners.*

#### **4. What population does the program serve?**

Although Florida Dog Guides F.T.D's main focus is the training of Hearing Guide Dogs, they also train a variety of other Assistance and Service Animals. Any hearing or physically challenged Florida resident over the age of 18 that meets the Florida State guidelines regulating their specific disability.

The youngest age they have trained was 16 years old - they prefer to develop a working team with someone 18+ years. The reason is - young children should not be doing some of the things they are teaching (i.e. opening the door, answering the phone, they do not drive, and should not be out in the community alone, etc.) Also a young child is not as capable of handling properly a guide dog - the dog is not a playmate..

Full or partial program, or volunteer hour grants are available to cover the \$2,000 fee for persons who cannot afford to pay. No applications are refused based on an inability to pay.

#### **3. How do Applicant Qualifications?**

- To qualify a person must show proof of 100% hearing loss in one ear or a combination of both ears unassisted by hearing aids.
- A priority list is kept – placement with a trainer is based on various needs: Age, a person who has lost a spouse & has no care giver, Degree of disability is also taken into consideration.

#### **5. How are the dogs teams trained?**

- The program develops the individual and their dog as a “team” and a “Certified” program instructor will teach the necessary skills needed to train each person’s own dog. Then it is the owner’s responsibility to provide the daily training as they were instructed to do by the program trainer.
- For the first 5 years - the team is checked twice a year to be sure they are working in harmony and properly ... then it is once a year. After each check they are re-certified

#### **3. The Dogs:**

- No dogs older than 2 years and their weigh at least 12 pounds.

- 92% selected dogs are rescued from animal shelters in the state of Florida.
- 6% are family dogs
- All dogs must pass a strict health, temperament, sound awareness, and aptitude testing before being accepted for use in the program.
- Average working life of a guide dog is 10 years - then the dog begins to develop age related disabilities. So a new dog is needed - but the older dog is able to remain in the home. The time required to train the Team and 2nd dog is less as the person is already familiar with the process.

## WHAT CAN THE DOGS PROVIDE?

**Hearing Dog Guides** are individually trained to work and perform tasks for their Deaf or Hearing impaired owners. They alert their owners to a variety of sounds they may not be able to hear themselves:

- An alarm clock going off
- A telephone or TTY Communications system
- Someone knocking at the door
- A fire or smoke alarm going off & then taking the owner to safety.
- Letting the owner know when an emergency vehicle, with a siren, is approaching
- Alert the owner that a stranger is coming up behind them.
- Picking up small object that were dropped (i.e. car keys, etc)
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**Assistance Animals** perform some of the following for physically challenged individuals:

- Escorting a person in a wheelchair
- Opening a door
- Picking up dropped items & giving them back
- Turning off a light switch

### **Social / Therapy dogs provide:**

- Work in hospital and care giving facilities – at home, or on request, in school settings
- Assistance to patients
- Assist with physical & speech therapy rehabilitation
- Assist emotional disturbed adjust to every day situations

### **Specialty dogs are trained to assist multi-handicapped persons:**

- Hearing dog
- Alert to special sounds
- Balance & support
- Assistance in getting up

**6. Length of training?** Average training time usually is about eight months and no longer than one year.

**9. Does all training occur at the School?**

The organization also uses the “In the home training concept” to meet the special needs of each individual.

**7. Where is the school located?**

- In 1999 the program purchased 4 acres in Bradenton, Florida
- It serves as the State headquarters for the Florida Dog Guides F.T.D., Inc.
- The site includes and outdoor training course that introduces teams in training to stair steps, moving platforms etc. The building includes 2 offices, a signal training apartment, and a 2,000 square foot indoor training area.
- Hurricane Shelter: The training school is designated as a Host Special Needs Shelter for people partnered with any type of Assistance Animal. Then, when an evacuation order is issued, people partnered with Certified Assistance Animals have a place to go where they know they and their dog will be safe and secure.
- Safe Place: The facilities is located next to an elementary school – and serves as a Safe Place should children need help