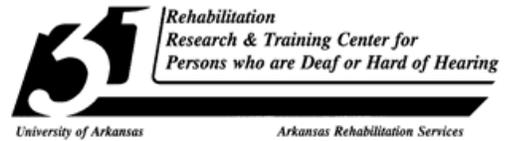




Selected Proceedings of ALDAcon 2005



SERVICE ANIMALS

Presenter: JUDI RUBERT

JUDI RUBERT: I would like to tell you about how Dogs for the Deaf started. We were founded in 1977. We are the largest, oldest hearing dog center in the world. We started this because one woman had a little dog that naturally responded to sounds for her. Unfortunately, that little dog was hit by a car and died. She went to her doctor and he realized she was withdrawing from everybody. The Doctor called the Colorado Humane Society and asked, "Can you train a dog to respond to sounds?" They said that they would try. Unfortunately, they were having trouble training a dog to alert to sounds and the founder of Dogs for the Deaf, Roy Cabot was called and asked for his help.

Roy Cabot was a famous animal trainer in Hollywood. He trained the animals in the movies *Dr. Doolittle* and *Born Free*. He did the preliminary training for circus animals and he did preliminary training with dog acts. The doctor called Roy and asked if he could go there and train a little dog for this woman. He said what does she need the dog to do? The humane society explained and Roy said he should be able to help. So, he went to Colorado and he went to the humane society and helped them train a little dog.

Roy was an animal person. He loved to be with animals. He would have spent every minute of his life with an animal rather than people. But when he trained this little dog and he saw the instant bond between the woman and this dog, he asked if other people needed this, and that is how hearing dogs started. There were no other hearing dogs except dogs that had naturally alerted to sounds. The doctor said yes, do you know how many people are deaf in the United States? A few weeks later the humane society called him and said "Roy, we have another person who needs a trained dog and we can't train the dog." Roy said he'd would help one more time. Again, he saw the bond between the person and the dog.

Hearing dogs are more than sound awareness. They are also companionship and there is an instant bond. A recipient with their dog is totally different than a pet and a dog. They become one; they become a team. Roy decided to train dogs in Applegate, OR

where he was retired. He had a farm and he built an apartment in the barn so he could train it in a home like atmosphere. He went to the humane society in Medford. I love to tease the Medford Humane Society because when he went there for a little dog, they said you cannot have one of these dogs because you are from Hollywood. This is a big gimmick! He said fine. He went to another town's Humane Society and got a dog. Now, of course, we are in close partnership with all the humane societies.

All of our dogs are rescue dogs. Roy was adamant about this. Our dogs come from shelters. He felt not only can he help people, he can help dogs. There are so many dogs in the United States put to sleep every year. We rescue over 125 dogs a year.

Out of that 125, we are very happy to get 40 working dogs. They have to want to do this. This is not something you can force a dog to do. Guide dogs, service dogs and hearing dogs wanted to do the work. This is what their whole driving force is a job. Jasmine, my little demo dog loves to do hearing work. Unfortunately, when we took her to be spayed and to have her health check the Veterinarian found a large bladder stone that had ruined her kidney. They had to remove that kidney. We could not place her with somebody as a Certified Hearing Dog even though this was what she was trained for. Her food and her care is very cost prohibitive. So, we decided that she would become my demo dog. She travels all over the country and shows what hearing dogs can do. She loves to work a little and the rest of the time she sleeps, which is pretty cool.

After awhile I'll set off a sound and you'll see Jasmine run over to the chair, and then come back to me, and then take me back to where the sound is coming from. This is how we start our training, just this way. We start with an oven timer. We work with door knocking, name calling, baby crying, if there's a baby in the family. Name call is especially important. Older couples and people with children worry that one person will fall and the other won't know it or the child will need assistance and the parent will not hear them call. This way the dog will go get you and take you back to that person calling your name. Jasmine will do name call with my husband. Also, she ignores phone rings. She used to work my cell phone and it got to be where even in a crowd, she was alerting me to everybody's cell phone and it got very embarrassing.

Now, if I was a recipient, I would have worked with her and just had one tone on my phone and then she would have just worked with that one tone. So, it's a lot of work to have a hearing dog. It's not just fun and games. But even having a demo dog is really, really special. I'm very happy that she's mine. I told her when she can't be a demo dog, she is my forever dog and she joined my family of two very large dogs.

I want to talk about the classifications of the hearing dogs. There is a Certified and a Home hearing dog. There is no difference in the sound work these two classifications of dogs do. The certified hearing dog does have public access. Wherever the recipient goes, the certified dog can go.

At this time I will turn on the beeper so when I do that, watch what she does. It's set for two minutes. She may alert the interpreter. We'll let you know when the beeper goes off.

As I started to say, we have two types of Hearing dogs. The Certified dogs go every place. When I first went to Dogs for the Deaf years ago, we received calls from recipients almost daily, they were getting turned away from places. Fortunately now, we only get those calls once every three or four months.

There are two types of laws that protect people with service dogs. There is the law under ADA, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and State laws for service dogs. This State Law book is your Bible. This book tells you what is required by each state to identify your service dog. Each state has different requirements.

For example, in Oregon, where I'm from, Jasmine only has to have the orange leash and collar that says Hearing Dog. If she has on her orange leash and collar, she's allowed every place. In Utah, she has to have her ID card, which I carry with me at all the time. But if you have the State Law book, you can check and see what identification is needed in each state.

Under the ADA, in order to get assistance if you are turned away from a business establishment, you have to call the Justice Department. The Justice Department will file charges against the establishment. Usually it's a lack of education on the businesses part rather than unjustly turning away a service animal. Some people do not realize that these are not pets. That these are working dogs. Once you've explained it to them, then they are generally wonderful. They usually are more than helpful. They will be appreciative for the information and they generally go out of their way then to help you

The buzzer just went off. And she's going to alert the interpreter. Oh, good girl, good girl. (She ran over and jumped against her leg and leads her back to the timer). She would do that all day long. She loves it.

Now, most of the time we reward with toys, whoever owned Jasmine originally apparently didn't play with her. I'm teaching her how to play. It's really kind of fun. With my big dogs she finally is chasing them. She isn't chasing toys, but she's chasing the big dogs. We are starting to teach her to have fun. Then I'll take her off food treats. Jasmine is ruled by her stomach.

When her leash is on and her jacket is on, she's a good girl and on best behavior. When I take that jacket off and that leash is off, she's a normal dog. She will run, chases me over the beds, and jump over furniture. And that's one of the drawbacks about having a dog. They are still dogs who have a lot of energy to burn.

Now, the difference between Home Hearing dogs and Certified dogs is socialization in public. Some dogs may have a few fears. They may be afraid of loud noises like

shopping carts as an example. We actually did have one dog in training that attacked a shopping cart every time we took him to the store. So, we could not certify that dog, because it didn't have perfect manners in public. That one would become a home hearing dog, because it loved to do all the work, but just hated those shopping carts. There are other fears that we sometimes can not work through and these dogs are not eligible to be certified. That is the main difference between a home hearing and a certified dog.

Also, some people do not want to take their dogs in public all the time. If you have a certified dog, you have to take your dog to town at least three times a week. That's just to keep up their training so that they know that when that leash, jacket and collar is on, that they have to behave. They know that when it's off, they don't have to.

The collar that Jasmine has on is bright orange and says hearing dog. Her leash is bright orange and says hearing dog. There are different collars—almost all states that allow hearing dogs have orange ones. The vest is optional. That tells you what training center the dog is from.

Is a dog is right for you? The thing to consider the most is whether you have time to spend with that dog. Especially the first year that you have a Hearing Dog. You will have to practice your sound work daily. Now, if you think about it, a smoke alarm goes off how often in your house? Not very often. (We do have a couple of our trainers who set it off quite regularly when they cook). You have to have a tape recording of that sound. We don't train for the baby cry unless you have a baby. You wouldn't want your dog running around the grocery stores or in the parks or in public every time a baby cried. You wouldn't want that. It would make it difficult. Like I said, you have to keep training with them so they will learn which sounds that they will work.

Our dogs, once they are placed, will learn many, many other sounds in the home because they have that routine down. We start with the oven timer. From that oven timer we go to all of them. We had one gentleman call us. He said, "Okay, you guys snuck in here in the night and trained his wife's dog to get me in trouble."

We were laughing, what are you talking about? He said, "Well, ever since I had my heart attack, she doesn't want me in the refrigerator, our dog tells her when I open that door." I said, "Your dog gets rewarded for telling on you and she will keep doing that. That's what happens." Almost all dogs learn to respond to the toaster. Why do you think that is? Because they alert you that your toast is done and you break off a little piece and give it to them. Yes! Reward! So, they love the toasters. They like microwaves very much. They love doorbells and door knocks, because that's company and time to show off and probably a treat for being really good.

Our recipients put a special toy by every sound that they want their dog to work on. It's a toy that that dog really wants to have. That's when the dog gets to play with it, when

they respond to that sound, they get that special toy. We only train with positive reinforcement.

It's getting much easier to be in public with your service dog. Sue Thomas, who is one of our recipients, took her dog to Hawaii and they would not allow her dog in the country. Then they said she had to go to quarantine. Sue said no. The governor of Hawaii invited Sue Thomas there to speak. So, she called the governor and said you are not putting my hearing dog into quarantine. She was allowed to do her speech and go back to quarantine. She spent the night in quarantine with her dog. Sue came back to the United States and sued the state of Hawaii. That is why now service dogs are allowed in Hawaii. But it was a long, tough process because they have strict quarantine laws.

If you ever get a chance to watch Pax television, there is a television program called *Sue Thomas, FBEye*. That is our recipient and she did work for the F.B.I. The dog that is in that show is not her original hearing dog, because that's not Sue. But they really took a lot of license with what a hearing dog would do. I mean, they almost make the dog the agent instead of the other way around. But a lot of it is so true.

While Sue worked for the F.B.I. they would videotape gangsters and Sue would lip read and say what they were saying. That was her whole career. She had a wonderful career with the F.B.I. She's had three hearing dogs so far. She is so beyond good at lip reading. It's almost uncanny. People ask her if she is truly deaf, because her speech is very good. Sue travels around the country and does motivational talks. She can answer questions from the audience. It astounds me. She went from working for the F.B.I. as a file clerk to lipreading gansters. When they found out she had this talent, they used it.

So anyway, hearing dogs, like I said, are not for everyone. You have to have patience. First thing in the morning, when I get up, I don't really want to go in public looking the way I do, but I throw on my sweats and walk my dog because she has to go potty. If, in the middle of the night, she comes and wakes me up because she has to go out, I have to get up and take her to go potty. That's part of having a dog. I have to feed her at regular times. I'm very lucky that way because I have three dogs and she more than alerts me to dinner time. She's never off by more than five minutes.

A certified dog like Jasmine gets a bath every week. My at-home dogs don't have to have baths that often. If I'm taking her in public to restaurants, I have to make sure she's clean, tidy and looks her best at all times. I can't say forget it, you can be a smelly, muddy dog today. She doesn't get that option anymore. You have to think of that. You have to also think if you want people to come up to you and ask you questions about your service dog. Because, if you have a hearing dog in public, guess what people do? They stop you to chat. They want to know about your dog. This can be a blessing and it can be very hard. If I even think I need to use the restroom, in a convention, I leave

much earlier than I have to because I know I will be stopped five or six times walking to the bathroom.

It is a misdemeanor to ever interfere with your service animal. Explain your service dogs rights and if the person is unwilling to listen this is when you call the police. You call the police and they come and explain to the owner of the business or the establishment or a person that is confronting you about taking your service dog into their business. This can be embarrassing, but you need to do it. If you're stopped, you need to do it if they will not allow you in, because if you let them get by with it, they'll do it again to the next person and the next person and the next person.

Having the strong recipients we have had for all these years is why we can go every place. One state even has a law that your dog can only bark twice in the movie and then you have to leave. Now, if your dog is barking in the movie, I think you would want to get up and leave any way because it draws a lot of attention to you. I have taken Jasmine to two movies. Fortunately, she was very happy because I have popcorn and I drop popcorn frequently. Another case of making sure your dog behaves properly in public.

Also you have to think that this dog is a life long commitment. It is not an appliance that you can replace on a whim. When you get your hearing dog, that dog is going to bond to you and it's going to be your life. I have even had recipients say "Oh, my goodness, the dog even wants to go to the bathroom with me." If you're out in public, that dog has to be in the bathroom with you, sit in the stall and behave and not sniff at other people because people get frightened when little black noses go underneath.

That's something I want you to really, really think about if you're considering a dog. If you want companionship and sound awareness and are willing to do the work with your dog and you love dogs, come and see me. I will give you all the information on how to apply for a dog. It's a very relatively simple process. You fill out an application that is very long and involved. People ask why. It's because, when that comes to us, it's evaluated by audiologists and we have what we call life choice committees. That is psychologists, animal trainers, everything. They go over this application and try to see if that dog would fit in with your lifestyle.

Perhaps you're an airline pilot. You are not going to want to take your dog into the cockpit of an airplane. For one thing, there's not enough room. For another thing, you would be leery that you would hit turbulence or anything that could injure the dog and not be able to strap your dog down.

If that person wanted a home hearing dog, that would make sense. A certified dog would not make sense for that person. They would have to leave it all the time. We take all of that into consideration. And if they feel that this dog would work for you, we send an in-home interviewer out to ask you specific questions about your life style. This will help determine what type of dog would work best for you.

Dogs for the deaf. We train all of our dogs in Oregon. With a lot of training centers, you have to go spend a week or two in that place to train a with your dog. Our trainers come to your hometown but they don't stay in your home. They stay in a hotel near by. After a day of working with them, you don't want them in your home. But you work for a solid week in your home with your home sounds. If you have a certified dog, they take you to town, they take you to the stores that you normally frequent, restaurants that you normally go to. This way you feel more confident the first time you have to do it on your own. It's five days of intensive work. During this time, you have to make the commitment. No vacations, no parties to go to. You have to devote that five days; you have to take your vacation or make arrangements to miss school or work and have no distractions during your training period. You have to be committed to doing this. Plus you have one day to take the dog to work with you if you have a certified dog. You get to go to work, all your coworkers get to learn about the dog before you have to go there on your own.

At first, it's a very funny feeling. You wonder, is this person going to come up to me and tell me to leave? When I first went in public with a dog I was nervous but knew to stay calm for the dogs sake. Alaska is one place where I was stopped a lot. They don't have little service dogs up there. They have big German shepherds and labs as the typical service dogs they are used to seeing. I come in bouncing with Jasmine and they say oh, yeah, that's a service dog. I had to explain what she's doing, why we are there and they were wonderful with me after that point. I got stopped at a Fred Meyer's in Alaska. The clerk was polite and said I can't bring the dog in to the store. That's no service dog. I said get your manager because it is. The manager came up and they were very nice after I explained Jasmine to them.

Actually it's the small dogs that we have trouble finding in the shelters, because they are more adoptable, which makes us happy. When we get people that want a big dog, we shout for joy. For every 125 dogs we bring in, if we get 30, 40, hearing working dogs, we are happy. A lot of people say what do you do with the rest of the dogs? They are called career change dogs and we adopt them out. We never return a dog to a shelter. If we rescue a dog, that dog is in our care and in our hearts for the rest of its life.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: How does a dog, a service dog handle other dogs?

JUDI RUBERT: For one thing, usually we keep them away from any other dog in public. If you have a certified dog, they have to be dog friendly. Our dogs are trained around cats. We cannot have a certified hearing dog chasing a cat down the street. The cats in our training facility are the meanest, nastiest cats you ever met and the dogs learn to leave cats to themselves. They scare those dogs to death. It's really great because we have a lot of recipients that have other pets that are like cats and birds.

If a person has a bird, we actually have a pet shop in town that lends us parrots, parakeets and all that. We have them chirping in the training apartments. They get

used to that, too. We have dogs that almost make it through training and all of a sudden, they don't want to the work. They will still work some sounds in the home. The child becomes accustomed to taking care of a dog and all the work involved so that by the time that child is ready to have a certified hearing dog, they know what is involved and it works out well. Actually, the youngest person that we placed a certified hearing dog with is a 12 year old. She had a career change dog since she was six. That dog passed away. Her mother has brain cancer and was worried about Katie and asked if we could get her another career change dog. We said it's time for you to have a certified hearing dog.

She took the dog to school and we didn't realize that Katie had been teased a lot because of being deaf. The kids wouldn't play or socialize with her on a normal basis. Once she got her hearing dog, they love Luke. Now it's so great. One little boy said: I didn't know Katie could smile. But Katie smiles because she has a dog. Everybody was going around saying, well, how do we become deaf so we can have dogs in school? Katie, being the mature 12 year old she is, said it's a different world. Maybe it wouldn't be a good world for you. So just be happy that I have my dog.

She is doing so well. We're all proud of her. She says the next show we have near Portland she will get up and tell people what hearing dogs are all about. Dogs make a difference in people's lives. My best friend, Janice, has a dog named Cajun. Janice is a chiropractor. She had to have a kidney transplant. She went in and had the transplant and the doctors were excited, but she couldn't hear what the doctors were telling her after surgery. She went totally deaf during surgery. They said it was the combination of the medications that they give and the anesthetic. Her life shut down.

She did not know how to cope. She quit her job as a teacher. She quit her practice and sold it. Sold her home and moved into a friend's, and she thought that was going to be the rest of her life. She was so afraid. One of her friends talked her into applying for a hearing dog. Cajun came to her and changed her life. She became a doctor again. She never quit being a doctor, but she opened a practice and the Dean of the chiropractic school in Portland wrote us and said thank you dear people for giving Janice back. Now she's teaching again. She runs a consulting business and is traveling all over the country and talking about Dogs for the Deaf. She went to Japan and talked about Dogs for the Deaf. We had a contingency from Japan at our company two years ago. Robin Dixon, our founders daughter and CEO of Dogs for the Deaf will be going to Japan this year to do a certification test on the Japanese Hearing Dog Center.

We are going all over the world. There are many training centers. This is one thing I want you to think about if you are applying for a dog. A lot of people want to know if they can train their own dog. There are ways to do that, but if you have professional trainers working with 125 dogs and they are getting only 30 dogs to work, the odds are not good. Your pet may be the most wonderful, loving, greatest pet in the world. That does not mean it's going to want to do hearing work. So you are going to have to be prepared to say, okay, this doesn't work. You are not going to want to send your pet to a training

center for six months and have the training center say sorry, it doesn't work. It costs a lot of money to train a hearing dog.

We are a nonprofit organization, so our dogs are placed with everybody free of charge. We do this by generous donations from people all over the country. That's usually who I get to work with. We are the national charity for the national Good Sam organization. I get to go to their get-togethers and tell them what they do and how important their support and interest in our program means.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: No insurance covers it?

JUDI RUBERT: No, but you don't need insurance, because we don't charge. We have no fee. You do not pay anything.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: But I thought you just said -- maybe I didn't hear it correctly. I thought you just said the training is very expensive.

JUDY RUBERT: It is very expensive, but we do this by donors all over the country who donate to us. We don't do any government funding and don't go through insurance companies. The reason we do absolutely no government funding is because if the government gives you money, they are going to tell you who the dog goes to, when they go and who deserves a dog. We do not base anything on your financial shape and placing the dog with you except for the fact that you must have enough money to afford to feed your dog and take your dog to the vet when it needs it. That's it.

We even have an emergency vet fund that if, say, your dog has a life-threatening illness and needed expensive surgery, we have a very special fund that was put up by a foundation. We can go and apply and have those medical expenses taken care of. I know, it seems funny, but Roy was a feisty man. I'm glad he set some of these precedents. I have seen so many really good organizations get funded by the government when they start and the very first time there's a budget cut, guess who gets cut? Your nonprofit organizations. So, we do this all by donations. Like I said, we are the national charity for the Good Sam organization. We have all kind of clubs, because they believe in what we are doing—not only helping people but rescuing those dogs.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: There is a growing number of deaf and blind people, people who are losing their hearing and their sight. Is there any service provided for dogs that can work with someone who is both deaf and blind?

JUDI RUBERT: There is only one organization that I know of that cross-trains dogs. To be a hearing dog is actually more work than to be a dog for the blind. A hearing dog has to think, "Oh, that's a sound I respond to. Where is it? Go find it. Who do I go back to? Find that person." Then take that person back to that sound. Then you throw in the physical part and you are asking a tremendous amount from any dog. There are a few that can do it. It has to be a big dog. You couldn't have a small dog do that. You have

to have the physical part for leading the blind. There is one organization that does do that. It's Helen Keller Institute and if they train one or two dogs a year, it's pretty remarkable. It's very difficult.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: When they are not working they are just dogs?

JUDI RUBERT: When they are not working, they are just dogs.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: If you have a house where you have a collection, say, of dolls, you have to take them down and clean them and sometimes you forget them. It's up to you to train them not to play with your dolls?

JUDI RUBERT: You would tell them no or leave it. "Leave it" is something we say a lot. Everywhere I go, especially because there's food in the rooms and Jasmine is on a diet and she would like to break that diet right now. I tell her leave it, leave it. It means you are not allowed. Today I'm not having trouble with her so I must have gotten the leave it through to her. I hope so.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: If you go out and come home, some dogs chew up the house.

JUDI RUBERT: If the dog is chewing up the house, that means the dog was bored. You have to find an activity so the dog will be tired before you leave. There are many tricks that you can do when you leave to keep the dog from chewing. If you have a puppy, six months, who is teething, you can try all the tricks and you will still get something chewed. Hearing dogs are through that puppy stage and won't do that. In the pet stores, they have a toy called a Kong. You can fill that toy with treats and peanut butter. Give it to them when you leave. They will be busy licking that out until they fall asleep. I have seen the dogs in our kennels slumped over their Kongs sound asleep. That's what we do to relieve stress and tension.

Also if you come in and your dog has been neglected all day and it's torn something up and you just go into this big fit, you know, you're a bad dog, shame, shame, shame, La, La, La, you've just given that dog attention. Maybe negative, but it's attention and that's what the dog is asking for. You need to remain calm, pick up the stuff, take your dog to that torn up furniture and simply say leave it and no! and then you have to walk off. Then you watch. Every time that dog gets near that certain thing again you go: Leave it! No! And you keep doing that.

Now, I had a dog that as a puppy that was a garbage dog. Every time I left, they got in the garbage. I hid in the closet, with a water bottle. Every time it went towards that garbage, I would open the door and spray him in the face and he didn't see it coming. To this day, he goes by the garbage and looks in the air like God is going to get me.

It's more positive. You don't have to scream and yell and everything. If you see a behavior that is wrong, you have to take care of it. You may not want to right at that

time, but you have to do it. Otherwise, if you let it slide, they are like children. They need consistency, firmness and kindness. And if they feel they have all those three you will never, ever have a bad dog. I don't believe there are bad dogs. I believe there are bad owners. I'm guilty of being that way with my biggest dog and he is just such a baby that I let him get away with stuff. He's 13 years old now and, unfortunately, he's pretty stubborn. My other two are wonderful. They are well behaved. Do I take my big one in public? Absolutely no way. He would be on everyone of your laps. I don't think you want a 119-pound dog on your lap.

I learned. And with my Australian shepherd I learned that if I'm consistent, firm, and fair, it's not going to make them love me less. It will make them actually love me more. They know they can rely on what my behaviors will be, just like I rely on what theirs are. They know if I'm upset by the tone of my voice when I say no or yes. And they work with that. Because I'm their pack leader.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Do you place your service dogs in homes that have another dog already?

JUDI RUBERT: No. The reason we don't is, think about if you are working in the office and you are getting paid five dollars an hour for doing all this work. Another lady comes to work and she sits there. And she gets a paycheck. Guess what? You know your good behavior is not going to make this other person work. That person not working is going to make you work less because you'll sit there and say why am I doing all this and they are getting all of this and that makes no sense to me so I'm not working anymore. That's what happens with the hearing dog. A hearing dog will be around a pet dog and say excuse me, they get the special toys, they get the special treats and they do nothing! Well, I don't have to do it all the time then. I'll just do it when I want to. That's what happens. We will place a hearing dog with a retired hearing dog. And Louise, one of our recipients, her dog went deaf and we retired her. She was the first we placed two dogs with. The retired dog would watch Samantha go to the sound and go get Louise -- we had a hearing dog for a hearing dog until she passed away. That's how it works.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: When your dog gets to be 13 and can't do it anymore, what happens to the dog? What happens to getting another one?

JUDI RUBERT: You can have another one with your retired hearing dog. We've had very few recipients who wanted to turn their dog back in. They are so bonded. That's their pet, their love. If the recipient is good and we know the recipient will work with both dogs, then we will place another hearing dog in that family. But it has to be with the retired hearing dog.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: So you don't want to give it back?

JUDI RUBERT: No. Also sometimes people say if the dog is in the family and the recipient passes away, are you going to take his dog away from us? Because it

becomes part of their family. If the family wants to continue having the dog, we'll go decertify it and it will stay with the family as a pet dog. We don't take that away from the family. Right now we have a 14 year old hearing dog that came back to our facility because the owner passed away and the family had one son and he was going to put the dog down. We said, "No, this dog saved that person's life three different times. Your dad's life. And we said put it on a plane. We're taking it back."

He said he wasn't going to pay for that. We said he didn't have to pay for that and we brought the dog back. It's hard to find this dog a home. It's 14 years old. Pretty arthritic and it didn't have the best diet for the past four or five years. What we are doing is we are getting her all healthy as much as she can. She will be the official office dog.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Living in an apartment right now, we are not in a house. Does that prevent us from getting a hearing dog?

JUDI RUBERT: We require a fenced in yard. We place dogs with people in apartments as long as they have an area fenced off outside so that dog can run and play without you. They need to run and play and need a break from the recipient. They need that special time especially in the beginning to be a dog. She gets exhausted just from following me around. I mean, that constant vigilance. They need that time away from you. To be truthful, you need that time away from them. Now, if you have an apartment and you have the physical desire and means to walk your dog about 2 miles a day, then yes. Then we can do that, too.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I work with the terminally ill and go to their homes --

JUDI RUBERT: You take your dog with you. A hearing dog is almost like a therapy dog. You can't pet them. They are not in public. They are not really working sounds. What they are doing is making the public aware of you, what you are doing. Any dog, even a pet dog, if you watch your dog, it will turn if there's somebody behind you, it will turn if there's a loud noise to either side. We teach the recipients, pay attention to your dog. If you walk with the dog, he's paying attention to you, you pay attention to the dog and you'll know what is going around you.

When I have the vest or leash on the dog, people know there's something different. I also had people say, you know, tell me -- recipients tell me, people came up and said we just thought you were rude. We always thought you were so rude -- we would say hello and we didn't realize that you were deaf. But with a dog, people know this person is deaf. They can't hear you. And in a grocery line is a big one. You know, how people get in grocery lines and they are kind of shoving through and everything. If you have a dog, people are so nice. They help you unload your cart. I hate to say it, I have used that, you guys.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: What about other family members? Are they supposed to ignore the dog? Pet the dog? Do what?

JUDI RUBERT: In the first year you have that dog, you are the only one to feed it. Unless you're ill or something, you should be the only one to take it out. I only had Jasmine for three months and my grandchildren wanted to walk the dog really bad. I said sorry, guys, I have to walk with you. But we'll take off her vest so she can walk without the leash.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: My son is 40 and lives with me. Would other people be upset that they are ignoring the dog completely?

JUDY RUBERT: No, because the dog is depending on you. Sometimes when there's a family member that doesn't like a dog, it's a fear inside and once they are around a dog for a long period of time, they will change their opinion.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: It's not that he doesn't like dogs. He just ignores them. I have a parakeet. He ignores that.

JUDY RUBERT: You may find that a hearing dog is harder to ignore than a bird. They make themselves known. Yes, you can let them play with the children, but they have to know when they're working.

That's why for a dog to be a demo dog, it's harder than being a hearing dog. She learned this job and sometimes she has to ignore part of it. Sometimes I hear, sometimes I don't. That's a lot of thought for a little black dog, I'll tell you. She has to sit there and say: What does she want? Why does she want me? I try to stay with the same basic sounds. And even in the house we practice that. Somebody knocks at the door, I allow her to alert me, even though my other dogs are over there looking at me like: What is wrong with her? She brought this dog in and she can't even go to the door anymore without her. It's what you want from the dog and how much you're willing to give. And they will work with you. But you have to be consistent, firm, fair, and loving.

If you can be that with your dog, you will have the most remarkable experience in your life. It will change your life. You will always have companionship. When I travel without a dog, I'm a little leery in strange towns and strange hotel rooms. I'm not with Jasmine. How will I know if somebody is around. I used to have the little thing on the doorknob, you know. One time I forgot about it. I stayed late in the room because I didn't have to do a conference until 1:00 o'clock. The maid came in and the siren went wailing, all those embarrassing things.

Now I have Jasmine. I know if somebody comes to the door, somebody is at my window, anything like that. And I'm not afraid. I will go for walks in the city and I'm not afraid. Jasmine is not a killer dog. It's not like a big Doberman that will intimidate somebody. She will let me know if something is coming up. A lot of people say our hearing dog or guide dogs are protection. They are protection if you pay attention to

your dog. But they are never, ever trained to attack. They will protect you like your normal pet would. They are not attack dogs.

We have to know that this dog is going to be comfortable with 99 percent of the people out there. That's part of one of their tests. They have to be around all sorts of people. They have to be comfortable with those people. If Jasmine ever did growl at somebody, I tell you, I would pay special attention to that right then, because she doesn't growl. She may bark, but she doesn't growl. So, I will know if somebody is not quite right. She barks at construction workers. Now, every time I go to a construction site, I have to stop and say would you please give my dog a treat? She hates you.

That's all because a road worker yelled at me in the car. Then she decided, I'm barking at every one of these people for yelling at my mom. I stopped, rolled down the window. I'm sorry, my dog is having trouble with construction workers. Would you give him a treat? They all do. Now she thinks they're not bad, but if mom my doesn't roll down the window, I'm barking. I'm getting people working on the road close to me to wave. They're doing it. I'm doing that because I want her to feel comfortable wherever I take her, wherever I go.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: If your dog passes away, I know a lot of people like to have a little funeral and maybe just have a grave. Can you do that?

JUDI RUBERT: The dog is yours. If you want to bury your dog, you can. Also, we have a memorial garden where I work. It's a beautiful garden where we have a special monument. We bury ashes three times a year, have a service, and put up little plaques. I try not to be at work because I get a little overwhelmed.

People have different religious beliefs, but my belief is all my dogs will be up in heaven when I'm up there. I think of the rainbow bridge and I truly believe in that. I'll cross that bridge and I'm going to be met by a pack of dogs and that's okay with me.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: If you're deaf, how do you know when your dog growls?

JUDI RUBERT: You can tell. A dog's whole posture changes when they growl. They will be kind of soft and loose and cuddly looking when they feel good. When they growl, their backs hunch up. They get a ridge on the back and you watch that hair stand up. That's a growl-meter.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: You can also feel it in the leash usually.

JUDI RUBERT: Yeah, you can feel that tension, tension. But like I said, there's a lot of really good service centers out there that train dogs. I hate to be discouraging about training your own dog, but a lot of dogs don't want to do it. It's hard to get it certified because most centers will only certify the dogs that they train. We have insurance in case our dogs attack somebody. We never had it happen and we never will, but we

have to know the dog. It may be great around a bunch of women, but when men come in and it will go off. I hate to say that since there are some gentleman in the audience, but one of the biggest things with our shelter dogs is that they are afraid of men.

Men can be the authority -- a dog looks for the pack. If that dog has been mistreated by the pack leader, it gets fearful. And a lot of times when a dog is growling or aggressive, it's usually fear-based. Usually not because they are a bad or mean dog, they are usually afraid.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: If I apply for a dog, how do you know that it's not going to react badly to me?

JUDI RUBERT: The trainers have got a dog ready to go. They go through the waiting list and match the person with the best dog on the list with the best personality. Say you're a college professor and you want a dog quiet in the classroom, but you're a jogger. We pick the right dog for that. We send you the picture, tell you about the dog, bring the dog to your home town. Within, 24 hours we know if it's a match or not. If it's not a match, we take the dog back. That does not take you off the waiting list. It just means you have to wait a little longer and we'll place that dog with somebody else.

We have gone back and gotten dogs after a time, too. Sometimes family circumstances change. We had one woman who was very lonely. Loved her little dog. Her son, her daughter, all of her grandchildren moved in. The grandchildren were very abusive to the dog. So, she called us and said she couldn't see her little dog going through that anymore. We went and got her. Usually if a dog has been in a home for three or four years, we're not going to place it with somebody else. That's very rare that we would do that. So we found a new home, a forever home is what we call it. That lady did the right thing. It was sad for her, but right for the dog, because the dog probably would have gotten aggressive with the children.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: How long is the waiting list?

JUDI RUBERT: Our waiting list can be anywhere from six months to two years. Two years is usually the longest it will be; six months is usually the fastest.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm profoundly hard of hearing rather than deaf. Would that preclude me from getting a dog?

JUDI RUBERT: When you send an application in, you have to send in an audiogram with it. They go by decibels and pitches and everything. You don't have to be totally deaf.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: If you are a jogger, and you are running, do you have to have them on a leash? Or if you're skiing or something? What do you do?

JUDI RUBERT: You always have your hearing dog on a leash. If you go downhill skiing, you're not taking your hearing dog with you. That's too much. But jogging, they have waistbands that you can get for your dogs. You have to train it to run with that on your waist. One of our trainers is a professional runner. She runs 5 miles every lunch hour. She hooks her dogs right to her waist leash and runs that 5 miles.

Skiing, that's too much. You would have to leave the dog in your room or whatever. I don't want to say that, because we do have dogs that like to water ski. And we have a dog who is an official surfer now. She went to an 18 year old in Florida and that girl surfs all the time and the dog surfs with her.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Does the dog have to have a leash and jacket on to know it's working?

JUDI RUBERT: They are working 24 hours a day. When a hearing dog gets its jacket and leash off, it knows it can play and it knows it can run around and doesn't have to stay calm. But it will listen for sounds 24 hours a day. In fact, the trainers even allow the dogs to go to sleep and set off the smoke alarms. We have to know that those dogs will instantly get that person and go back.

When you get your dog you have to continually practice and get confident with it. The first year, it's commitment. You have to be willing to commit to working with that dog.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: My dog was run over by somebody in a wheelchair and is afraid of them. If we get that man in the wheelchair a treat, do you think she will get over being afraid of them?

JUDI RUBERT: You actually need to start off slow, but yes, have people in wheelchairs give her a special treat. Anything that she really, really loves. Anything really special to her. You have to keep doing it. With Jasmine and road workers, I have been working over a month. It's embarrassing to stop. If they come up to me aggressively. I have to say give the dog a treat, she's scared of you. Your friends with wheelchairs, tell them you're coming over. Give her a treat as soon as you see her. Make her want to see these people. If they are in a wheelchair, pretty soon she'll forget about the wheelchair. That can traumatize the dog.

Judi Rubert is a teacher and has a strong love of animals and is happy to be representing Dogs for the Deaf Inc at this con. Her family has a history of hearing problems and many of her close relatives. She and her husband Dennis live in Medford, Oregon with their three rescue dogs.