

REGISTERING YOUR DOG WITH AKC

To register your dog with the American Kennel Club, take the following simple steps: 1) find the American Kennel Club at <https://www.akc.org>) click on Registration and click on Register Your Dog 3) Follow the ques. It is as simple as that. All C4C dogs have to have earned the Canine Good Citizen Certificate and this requires them to register with the AKC.

AKC is a solid professional organization. They are usually very helpful and it is not too hard to get help from them when you call. HOWEVER, they charge for many things including, in this case, \$19 to register your dog.

If you need to contact them for any other reason, they may be reached at: AKC Operations Center, 8051 Arco Corporate Drive, Suite 100, Raleigh, NC 27617-3390 Telephone: 919 233 9767 Office Hours: 8:15am– 4:30pm ET Customer Service Hours: 8:30am – 5:00pm ET Weekdays (Monday – Friday) except holidays.

EARNING THERAPY DOG PATCHES / KEEPING TRACK OF YOUR VISITS

Registering your dog with AKC and getting your Therapy Dog patches is something our members do on their own, but you may need our help when you apply for the higher-level patches. To get your Therapy Dog patch go to the same Dog Owners icon at the AKC.org website, click on it, then look further down below the “registering your dog” selection to find the Therapy Dog selection and information. There is lots of good reading in this section including the labeling and quantifying of the five therapy dog levels which are:

THERAPY DOG TITLES

AKC Therapy Dog Novice (THDN) – 10 visits

AKC Therapy Dog (THD) – 50 visits

AKC Therapy Dog Advanced (THDA) – 100 visits

AKC Therapy Dog Excellent (THDX) – 200 visits

AKC Therapy Dog Distinguished (THDD) – 400 visits

If your dog already has over 10 visits, we would suggest you just wait until you have 50 visits. Ten visits qualify your dog for the “Therapy Dog Novice” patch and 50 visits qualify it for the “Therapy Dog” patch. AKC likes to charge for every level when you apply, but you do not have to pay for levels you do not apply for. Instead of paying the \$20 they charge for the novice patch, just work to get the 50 visits and apply just for the Therapy Dog patch. That way they will only charge you for the 50 visit Therapy Dog patch. Remember to log all your dog’s visits on a record showing visit number, date and place. Many of you have seen my simple log done on Microsoft Word. This is just a simple log showing the number of the visit, the date and the place. No other information is necessary. Here is just a short section of a visits log:

4448) 1/17/17 Lodges

4449) 1/17/17 Learning Your Function

4450) 1/17/17 CARE

4451) 1/18/17 Pyramid

4452) 1/18/17 Arden Courts

It is just that simple. Filed electronically like that makes it easy to apply for your patches and to send to us to show us how many visits you are making. When you get to the higher levels, AKC asks that you get someone at

each of the facilities you visit to sign your visit log or give you a note saying you have made the visits. We may be able to help you with your lists, but all of this is really only possible when you keep the “visit number, date and place” records. AKC ONLY COUNTS VISITS MADE TO “THERAPY” FACILITIES, OR SPECIFICALLY WHEN USED IN THERAPY SITUATIONS. You will be safe to count visits to hospitals, assisted living facilities, memory care facilities, schools, churches, special events, etc., but where your dog is clearly used in a therapy situation.

THERAPY DOG VS. SERVICE DOG

Canines for Christ only requires your dog to be a Therapy Dog. Accordingly, most of you have Therapy Dogs NOT Service Dogs. Service Dogs are usually specially trained to do the service they perform like the “seeing eye dogs” most of us have been familiar with our whole lives. Federal law mandates that a Service Dog can essentially go anywhere with the person it serves. Our dogs are Therapy Dogs and not protected by that law. Any facility manager can tell you your therapy dog is not welcome in that facility. It is dishonest to promote your dog as a Service Dog when it is not. HOWEVER, with permission from a manager, you can take your dog into a facility as long as it has its CFC vest on and is well behaved. Even better, many of the managers of these facilities tell us they enjoy our visits, because their customers like seeing our dogs. Home Depot is a great example of a business that has determined the worth of allowing customers to bring their dogs into the business. You will also enjoy the attention your dog gets in these other places and the amazing number of times you will get to witness for Christ. OUR MINISTRY IS CHRIST. WE JUST USE DOG THERAPY TO DO IT! We encourage you to take your dog with you when you go to places like Publix, Sam’s Club, and Walmart (with permission), but remember that AKC does not count those visits. Canines for Christ will count all of the visits toward all of our “Visit Level” Awards. Take your dog (vest on) with you and count the visit!

WHERE TO SERVE

Some volunteers have expressed concern about where they can do the ministry. The answer is almost anywhere. Most facilities will want you to serve, because they love how our dogs make their clients feel. Your job is to decide where you want to visit, then go to the facility with your dog (his vest on, your shirt and ID lanyard on, ministry card in hand) and ask how you can serve at the facility. Usually that is all it takes. This is a better approach than calling the facility, because when you visit, they can see that you have a well-behaved dog and that you come from a credible organization, things they cannot see when you call. Don’t call, just go.

Occasionally a facility will have requirements that they want you to meet before you serve. If you want to meet their requirements, then no problem. If not, you can try to negotiate, but, whatever, if you do not like the administrator’s requirements, then go to another facility. What you will discover over time is that most facilities will welcome you and your dog with open arms. There are more places who want you to serve than you can possibly go. With very little effort you will find two or three facilities close enough to where you live to make it easy for you to go there more often.

Our dogs have been just about everywhere you can imagine including but not limited to: long term care facilities, hospitals, memory care, rehabilitation facilities, special needs, schools, churches, 911 centers, crisis centers, police departments, grocery stores, fire departments, airports, doctor offices, local festivals, pubs – really, anywhere you can imagine. People love dogs. So, suit up and go! Remember, there are no blessings

shared unless you make the visits.

WHAT TO BRING ON A VISIT WITH YOUR DOG

- Shirt, Lanyard and Dog Vest
- 4-6 Foot Leash with Flat Collar, Martingale Collar, Gentle Lead or Harness
- Water / Water Bowl
- Copy of C4C Insurance and Rabies Certificate in Car
- Poop Bags
- A Few Paper Towels
- Paper and Pen
- Hand Sanitizer
- Small Package of Baby Wipes
- Treat Bag and Treats
- Charged Cell Phone
- Contact Information for Facility You are Visiting
- Small Flashlight (optional)
- Small Soft Dog Brush (optional)

You may want to consider having two leashes in case of client wanting to hold leash.

MAKING VISITS

Once inside the facility hallways, usually with rooms on each side, we just start walking, stopping to talk with anyone in the hallways including staff. We use a CONSERVATIVE APPROACH where our first concern is to not disturb or upset anyone. Not everyone is a dog lover and not everyone wants a visit. If someone is talking to a staff member or having any kind of cleaning or medical procedure, or talking on the phone or sleeping, we do not want to disturb them. Of course, if they see you and wave you in, then you will go in. If they are talking with family, they often do want you to come in. We usually just ask “would you like to pet a dog?” We go into the room when they say yes and when they say no, we usually just say “we will send some prayers up for you” and go to the next room.

When we receive a “yes” which you will most of the time in this ministry, walk into the room and introduce your dog first then yourself. Remember although our ministry is Christ, we are in the room because of the dog. You are not in there to talk about yourself, and you are not in there to start preaching. They know why you are there by the bright, easy to read “Canines For Christ” sign on the vest. You will find people who want to talk about their faith and even pray together, but always start by talking about your dog. Most of us have short little stories about our dogs, his breed, age, and maybe a bit about him that will help us break the ice, but often the resident will excitedly tell you about their dog at home or a favorite dog they once owned.

Again, remember, this is not about us. It is about God, the dog and the resident. The first goal is always to make it a positive, fun, relaxing, uplifting interaction. Part of the joy and power of the Canine For Christ ministry is how easy it is. Your position, first, is to let God work through the dog. Usually you do not have to do a whole lot yourself. That said, we always look for opportunities to share Christ and or say a prayer, letting the resident lead you in that direction. It is amazing how the more you do this the more opportunities you will have to share the love of Christ. Never forget, though, that your first job is to let God work through the dog.

Most room “stays” will be relatively short with duration of maybe only one to three minutes. We don’t time them, instead using our people skills to see when a stopping point is reached. On the other hand, we have spent as long as an hour in a room when a resident really needed to talk. Sometimes you may want to reschedule with a resident to come back when both of you are more comfortable spending more time. This is God’s ministry, and we let Him lead.

These are great places for your dog to do a trick or two. My dog, Bruce, can do a series of six tricks in about 12 seconds, which I use sometimes to break the ice or get attention to him. A cute trick used at the right time can really help, but it is not about the tricks. It is about the loving between the resident and the dog.

Always remember the STAFF in your visits. Many will love your dog as much as the residents, and often will enjoy a little lighthearted “banter” which can really help the mood. Also, the staff often will tell you residents who really want to see your dog. Most of the staff appreciates it when we tell them we will pray for staff too! Most often you will find them very supportive even if they are not dog lovers, because they know how much the residents love the dogs – and how good the visits make the residents feel. It is not unusual for some staff to keep treats for your dog. Your dog will love that and often remember where he got the treat and from whom.

Many facilities have group rooms, activity rooms, dining rooms or gyms. We always try to go to these, because they often offer the opportunity to talk with more people. Still always ask “would you like to pet the dog?” My dog and I do room to room far less than we do these large room activity centers or dining rooms. This way we get to far more people far quicker than the room to room way. We often find ourselves talking to the whole group at once, and having a good time with them. On the other hand, we are always looking for individuals who want the deeper discussions about something that they need, prayer, or even a presentation of the gospel.

Our motto is: Building caring relationships with the hope of gaining permission to share the life changing good news of Jesus Christ. But notice it starts with building caring relationships.

Sometimes in nursing homes and more often in hospitals you will see a “CONTACT” sign hanging on a door. The sign indicates some kind of contagion or sensitivity problem. Generally, it is better not to go into these rooms. It is always better to ask staff before going into any room if you have any concerns.

Your ministry will be more effective at any facility the more often you visit. The more the residents and staff get to know you the more comfortable they will be with your visits. It is humorous and pleasant that staff and residents will often say “here’s (name of your dog)” rather than calling out your name when you arrive. It is about the dog. I have been to many places hundreds of times, and many times they do not even know my name. They almost always know my dog’s name.

Some facilities will want to schedule your visits, but usually how often you visit a facility is up to you. Let God lead. It would be unusual for you to visit a facility more often than they want you there. Almost always they want you there more than you can go.

MALL VISITS OR VERY LARGE OPEN SPACE VENUES

Reading the other “visit” information will give you good information on how we think most visits and facility “setups” should happen. Mall venues present a somewhat different scenario where you are essentially visiting

people in a large space rather than in small rooms.

We have found wonderful success at malls using two different techniques: 1) simply start walking and interact with any people showing interest, and 2) station yourself and your dog in a central location, especially where there is cross traffic, and let people come to you. In both instances we often tell people the dog is a “petting dog.” Without that information many people will think your dog (because of the vest) is a service dog and not to be touched. If you like interacting with kids the mall is a great place to go since it is usual for many kids of all ages to be at malls. We get many opportunities to witness, recruit, and share at malls. All of you should consider ministering at a mall on occasion if not regularly.

Remember that an important part of our ministry is the “Canines For Christ” sign on the dog’s vest. That sign will be seen by hundreds of people when you go to the mall. These “visual only” interactions may not be as powerful as the direct individual contacts we have with other folks, but they are a form of witness nevertheless, and reach many folks. Don’t discount the value of the sign on your dog. We know God uses all these things for his purposes.

ADDITIONAL CREDENTIALS

You really do not need any additional credentials to do the Canines for Christ ministry. We have asked all of you to sign a statement that you are a committed Christian – something that the vest on your dog pretty much tells all who see it. Moreover, this is a God-lead ministry. Our prayer before we go into any facility is that God will work through the dog and through us as Christians. It should never be about us. The rest of the prayer is that “we” will get out of the way and let God do the work. As long as you understand these points there are a few other credentials, while not at all necessary to do this ministry, some of you might want to consider.

CHAPLAIN: The leadership of Canines for Christ Ministry, Inc. would like to offer you the opportunity to obtain a Certificate of Chaplaincy as a Chaplain with Canines for Christ. The Chaplain designation will open many new doors for you to minister to people as they will view you in a different way as you reach out to them in Christ’s name. If you are interested, the following are the requirements:

1. Be an active C4C volunteer with at least 100 CFC community visits.
2. Complete the “Sharing Hope in Crisis” course offered by Billy Graham Rapid Response Chaplain Ministry. This course can be obtained here [Crisis Response team](#).
3. Complete the Chaplain application listed on the website.
4. Pay the \$75 Chaplain fee.

The course and your visit experience will better equip you to do this ministry. The bigger difference will be how people view and react to you when they see the “Chaplain” designation below the Canines for Christ logo on your shirt and the Chaplain designation on your ministry cards. Still, these differences are subtle and some of the very best folks in any ministry have no credentials. Their power and effectiveness comes from a Christian life focused on getting closer and closer to God and letting Him lead and work his power, grace, and love through them. That should be our goal too. **CRISIS RESPONSE TEAMS:** The purpose of the Canines for Christ Crisis Response Therapy Dog Teams is to deploy two or more dog/volunteer teams who will bring a ministry of presence and prayers and appropriately share God’s love, comfort, and hope to those who have been affected by man-made or natural disasters. Our dogs are used as the vessel to open the door to share this message. This is usually much more stressful service, so the requirements to be a part of one of these

teams is higher. Go to our web page to get more information. Our CR teams have served in many of the crisis situations in America since we started this program over three years ago. This is a powerful way to serve.

Other More ADVANCE COURSES are also available to those of you who are interested. The Billy Graham organization offers excellent Evangelism courses. Even more advanced and requiring a much deeper commitment are Board Certification programs offered by the American Association of Christian Counseling. Helping our volunteers be better equipped to do this ministry is a major goal of the ministry. We are happy to discuss any of these course opportunities.

AKC EVALUATOR: All Canines for Christ dogs have to have passed the AKC Canine Good Citizen evaluation. That procedure is spelled out on the AKC website if you care to research it. It involves a ten-test procedure, the passing of which assures insurance, facility, and just folks, that your dog is a well behaved, capable dog. This is important to our ministry for many obvious reasons. Someone has to do those evaluations for all the new dog “teams” joining our fast-growing ministry. As an AKC Evaluator you can sign off on the request for this credential for any dog you feel has passed the test. Chaplain Larry and I are both AKC Evaluators. We know arranging for, meeting, and testing takes a bit of time. We spend a fair amount of our own time doing this in the Tampa area. It would be a great help for us even in Tampa to have other folks who can serve as evaluators. But as we reach out nationally, it will be even more important for us in other areas where we are growing quickly. If you have reasonably extensive experience with dogs and feel called to help our organization as an evaluator, please contact us.

MINISTRY IMPACT

“What you do to the least of these you do to me.” The impact of Canines for Christ is powerful and far reaching. We do not think there is any real way to quantify how the Holy Spirit works in the individual lives of all those touched. There are some variables we can quantify, however, that verify the “reach” of the ministry. Anyone who has actually done the ministry could take those numbers and better understand its power.

ACTIVE TEAMS: We define the number of active teams by how many have paid the annual \$50 fee plus how many new teams have signed up this calendar year paying the \$125 sign-up fee. This fee also pays for ministry cards, T-shirt, lanyard, dog vest, and more. The fees are relatively small, but indicate a commitment by the teams paying to continue to be active, and helping a bit with our overhead.

INDIVIDUAL “VISITS” MADE: This is a powerful variable which can only be accurately computed by a reporting system that is dependent on volunteers simply keeping a record of their visits. We encourage the simple “visit number, date, and place” record keeping of your visits on a Word document. This is discussed in the Keeping Track of Your Visits video and in the Volunteer Manual.

STORIES & PICTURES: These are very popular. Many of our members send us stories and pictures documenting their activities. These stories tell in beautiful and compelling ways how those served are touched, and often, how even more blessed are our own members who are serving. We also get them from folks served and folks observing (more evidence that our reach is more than we can fully document). Many of these stories and pictures are very powerful. They can be viewed by anyone who wants to go to our web page. One of the interesting “sidelights” are stories of how excited the dogs get when they know they get to go on a

visit. Our Canines for Christ dogs love their job.

FACILITIES & EVENTS: We used to keep track of all the facilities our teams visited. That is simply not possible now with the number of volunteers we have and all the places they visit. We do want to share with our volunteers when teams use creativity in discovering new places to share the love and compassion of Christ. A few recent examples are visits to a car dealership, law enforcement facilities, fire and rescue, and 911 call facilities. We encourage your stories of sharing Christ's love when you visit a venue new to our volunteers.

THANK YOU LETTERS: We have received hundreds of thank you letters from facility staff, doctors, nurses, and directors; from people directly served, from family, and even from folks just observing the ministry. As direct service providers, we experience God's touch on the people we visit. Having them put it into their own words helps us communicate the effectiveness of this ministry to others further confirming its "impact."

MINISTRY CARDS: When you become a volunteer for Canines for Christ you are given 250 "ministry" cards with the picture of your dog on it. Of course, the card says "Canines For Christ" in bold letters, because sharing the love and compassion of Christ is what we are all about. On the back of the card is "How to Make Heaven Your Home." That includes John 3:16 and a Prayer of Surrender. Many of our volunteers have personally led people to Christ using what is written on the back of the card. We have no way of knowing how many of the approximately 250,000 cards our volunteers have handed out have also been used to help people draw closer to Christ. No doubt the number is significant. Hand your cards out when you do the ministry. We will replace them when you run low.

RECRUITING

We love this ministry because we experience how easy it is to do and how powerfully God works through our dog every day. We see the beautiful responses of love and relief and fun we get. We know how many opportunities we get to pray and witness over folks who are scared or worried or are hungry for Christian fellowship. And we know how powerfully we, ourselves, are affected every day we make visits. If you do not start your visit feeling full of the Holy Spirit, then you will certainly finish feeling that way. That is why we promote your making more visits and that is why you should be eager to recruit new volunteers.

Even with something like 200 "teams" in the Tampa area we cannot "touch" the demand. The doctors, nurses, and staff know how the outlooks of their patients are improved by these visits. Most of the 100 or 150 facilities our volunteers visit only get one to three visits a week if that. Most of those facilities would love to see a dog team twice every day, and those facilities visited represent likely less than 20% of those that would like us to visit. You can see the incredible opportunity existing for many more volunteers.

Hand out cards given any reasonable opportunity, always explaining that the kind of interaction we are having at that moment is what happens to us during all our visits; that people are hungry for the love and compassion these visits bring; and that they can share in this joy, love and compassion with many if they become a volunteer or if they know someone who loves dogs and Christ who would like to become a volunteer. I often do a quick explanation of the statistics in the paragraph above about the need for more teams, then I talk

about how easy and how powerful the ministry is.

Each card you hand out has the web page information www.k9forChrist.org the people can go to for any information they may need including a phone number they can call if that is better for them. Your job is to make them want to go to the web page and make the call. It is our job to help them with the application or to get them their “gear,” and get them started in the ministry. The very best way is to get their name and number, then you or we can call them back.

Your Home Church CFC Ministry Opportunity

Seems to me that sometimes we might forget one of the biggest mission fields for us as Canines for Christ (CFC) volunteers is the ministries of our own church. Each of you can consider yourself the Ambassador (liaison) of CFC to your church. Take time to review your church web page, talk to church leaders, and maybe even visit the church office to determine what ministries your church is doing that our CFC ministry will synergize. You already know some of them, so this is really easy to do.

You only need one other ministry to start. Get a contact person in that ministry and talk with him or her about how the CFC ministry will benefit what they are doing. Make an appointment to be there with your dog so all can see how well the two ministries work together. Then determine how often visits will be made. Frequently, the leader of the ministry who has experienced the powerful blessings of CFC will talk to leaders of other ministries who will present more opportunities for CFC. Often, more than one dog will be requested which may encourage others to join our ministry especially when they see how easy, fun and powerful the ministry is.

Always “Suit Up” for the appointments you make with your church leaders and with the other ministries. Have the vest on your dog, wear your CFC shirt and lanyard, and have CFC cards in your pocket. You should always have your dog’s vaccination records in your car, should they be requested, and a copy of the CFC insurance coverage, which can be found on our web site www.canines4christ.org if anyone asks for proof of insurance. Seeing how well your dog behaves and the credibility of the CFC ministry will help them be persuaded that the CFC ministry will aid them to forward the goals of their own ministry.

In our church, CFC has served in the elementary school we sponsor, in special needs work, any kind of crisis work, special events, community outreach, camps, festivals, grief counseling and almost any ministry where there are people and stress.

Many of our volunteers are concerned where they can serve when right in front of them is a gold mine of opportunity, the ministries of their own church! Start talking to the ministry leaders of your church today.