



Meet Our Trainers | Case Study

Penaran Higgs

As well as running a successful dog behaviour and training business, (PetShrink.co.uk) Penaran Higgs is a volunteer dog trainer for Dog A.I.D. She has already worked with a young woman and her dog, helping them to achieve full assistance dog status. Here Pen talks about what it is like to support people with disabilities in training their own pet dog to become their four-legged helper ...



I have always wanted to be a Clinical Animal Behaviourist, after graduating with a BSc in Psychology. However, after being told that I needed to qualify as a vet first, I focused on using my degree to work with people who have psychological challenges instead. This was until I read an article about a behaviourist who wasn't a vet. Straight away I applied and was accepted onto a Post-Graduate course in Companion Animal Behaviour Counselling, which was hard work but great. It enabled me to become recognized by the APBC. I realised after qualifying, that in order to be a good behaviourist, I also had to be a good trainer; so, I worked towards getting accepted onto Gwen Bailey's team of Puppy School trainers who are trained to a really high standard within the supportive environment of the Puppy School family!

Last year I was approached by Talya, who wanted to train her dog Coby through the Dog A.I.D. programme. After finding out what was involved, I signed up with Dog A.I.D. as a volunteer trainer and we began work. I love that I am learning new skills, despite having been a trainer/behaviourist for a while. It is important to be skilled at getting a dog steady and well socialised, which gives them a base for all the later learning they need. This is where my Puppy School Classes came into force. However, every client and every dog are different, so you have to be able to adapt and work with each one in a way that suits their needs. Coby was a slightly crazy gorgeous gangly pup and initially I did question how we would get him to become an assistance dog, but he did it with flying colours!

Both Talya and Coby were amazing to work with as they listened in class, did all the background research they needed to do and so much more. They were consistent, proactive and once they got going, they didn't need much hand holding at all despite the huge amount of work involved. It was a wonderful experience all round and I highly recommend becoming a Dog A.I.D. trainer. I am already working with another Dog A.I.D. client and will continue to support Talya and Coby as and when they need advice.

The bond between a dog and their owner is really special and it's lovely to watch. I work on a programme of no punishment, believing that the right commands and socialisation provides the foundation of a confident puppy who will want to learn – thus creating the best assistance dog.



Talya and Coby recently featured on the BBC 1 series "One Day That Changed My Life" ...

Everyday, our Trainers transform the lives of people just like Tayla across the uk ...

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