

The Eye of the Heart



I only have half my sight and am also physically disabled because of Progressive Dorsal Fibromyalgia. I needed a special friend to help me. I had a service dog from an organization that trains service dogs; however, when he was to retire I found out that I would have to wait about five years to get another service dog.

I've always *dreamed* of having a Boxer as a service dog, but in my province or country they don't take them in training schools. Since I had to wait so long, I decided to look for an organization in Canada or the USA to help me train my own service dog. After finding one in the United States I went to look for my ideal service dog.

After a long search and many adventures, a special pup came into my life. Dot Came into my life on October 15th, 2006 and has grown into a gorgeous white Boxer.

From that day on we worked real hard to train him. It wasn't easy and we experienced a lot of challenges, my bad health being one of them. We finally did it, but Dot still needed to be certified.

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My landlord told me that I could not have a dog in my apartment which meant that certification was a must not to mention my need for public access. I was faced with a dilemma – there was no training facility in Canada that would certify my dog because I personally trained Dot.

I was discouraged for fear of losing Dot and thought all our efforts were for nothing. My health started to deteriorate as a result.

Dot was part of me now and I wasn't and still am not able to do everything I want to do without him. He is part of me and I'm part of him. We work as a team. One day while I was on Dogster a website for pup owners, I met a real special person and she was accompanied by a special furry friend named Emma her

name is CJ Betancourt. CJ was trying to build a peer support network for people who were socializing and training their own service dogs. She also understood the challenges of getting a dog certified and she was addressing it through the development of the *Foundation for Service Dogs Support (FSDS)*. FSDS has developed a program to certify privately trained service dogs.

The threat of losing Dot was escalating so CJ helped me to find an evaluator even though I lived in Canada not in the US.

On April 8th 2009, we went to Fairlee, New Hampshire to get tested. It was stressful, but exciting. I was so proud of Dot because he scored 68/68. We even recorded the test on a video.

Today Dot is a Canine Ambassador for FSDS and our dream (Dot and I) is for all people and their service dogs to have the opportunity we had - an opportunity to become more independent. **You can do it!!!**

Linda Guay and Dot (CSD, CGC)