



PuppiesBehindBars

## Puppies Behind Bars Service Dogs for Those Who Served & Protect®

Thank you for your interest in applying for a PBB service dog. The following pages include an application and reference forms, but we want to take a minute to tell you about PBB service dogs so you have a better understanding of who we are and, more importantly, who our dogs are.

First, if you get a PBB dog you will be getting the best service dog possible. We say this not to sound arrogant, but because of all the work, love, and socialization (more on this in a bit) we put into our dogs. By the time our dogs graduate as service dogs, we know there are none better.

All of our dogs are pure-bred Labrador retrievers and all our dogs are bred by us. This is important not only because it allows us to breed only the healthiest, most responsive, and most confident dogs in the country, but it allows us to begin socializing our puppies literally from the moment they are born.

“Socialization” means how many different kinds of experiences a dog is exposed to. Our dogs receive a minimum of 10,000 hours of socialization before they are placed as service dogs. This means they have been exposed to children, the elderly, cities, suburbs, and the countryside. They have all gone to kids’ soccer games and football matches. They’ve gone to churches and synagogues and other houses of worship. They’ve gone to dentist and doctor appointments, to restaurants, to movies, on long car trips and to the local mall. Our dogs have been exposed to so many different experiences and people that by the time we pair them with you, they have learned to take everything in stride – so you can as well. Our dogs will be the one looking out for your environment so you don’t have to.

And because all our dogs are raised in prison from the time they are eight weeks of age until they are paired with you, they have developed an empathy and responsiveness to people to a degree that, literally, we have never seen in any other dogs. Our dogs live in prison with their “puppy raisers,” who are generally people who feel vulnerable and who feel emotionally fragile. Our dogs learn to empathize with their puppy raisers, to comfort them when they are stressed, to curl up on their laps for the command “Tell me a Story,” to be by their sides 24/7. From this our dogs learn to love, respect, and protect their humans.

So that’s about our dogs: what about us and the training you will receive from us? If you get a PBB Service Dog for Those Who’ve Served Us®, you will also get PBB staff in your life. We have been working with veterans with PTSD since 2006. We understand what it is to isolate at home and only go to the grocery store with a family member or in the dead of night. We know what it’s like to go to a mall and scan. We know that you will want to sit with your back to a wall in a restaurant and be able to see an exit. We know you may have a panic attack in public; we know about triggers; we know about depression and fatigue. We will move into the hotel with you in upstate NY for the fourteen days of our “team training” so we are with you whenever you may need us. Our days are

October 2020

long, but they are also fun. We train together, we take our dogs to the woods to watch them play together, we go out to dinner together, we go on “field trips” together – and that’s just for the 14 days. Once you get home, we still have your back.

We are there 24/7 to answer any questions you may have. We are there to help you problem solve. If you need to go into in-patient treatment after you get one of our dogs, we will take the dog back and hold on to him if you cannot take the dog with you. If you are going on vacation and cannot take the dog (our dogs cannot go on cruises, for example), we will take the dog back while you are away. We will help you every step of the way because our goal, and our only real goal, is for you and your dog to succeed.

In the years of working with war veterans, we have seen the differences our dogs can make in someone’s life. Generally, our vets have hit rock bottom before they’ve come to us. They have generally tried self-medicating with alcohol and/or drugs; they have had families fall apart or threaten to; they have been prescribed more drugs to take on a daily basis than they are comfortable with; they have tried or thought about suicide. They are often at their wits end.

And then they get a Puppies Behind Bars service dog and for reasons that, to be honest, even we do not understand fully, their lives change. The dogs provide the confidence our vets need to re-engage with their families and the world. The dogs provide the unconditional trust and support that our vets need to go forward. And we are confident our dogs will provide this to you, our first responders, as well.

As a Manhattan-based non-profit, we were living and working in New York City on September 11<sup>th</sup>. We remember that day as though it were yesterday, and we remember the days and weeks and months and years since. We know how our city and our country changed as a result. We want to thank you for serving us. We want to thank you for keeping our city and country safe. We want to let you know that we feel we can do something to repay you for your service – and that something is to provide you with the best possible service dog there is, with the best possible training and follow-up commitment we can give.

If you have any questions as you fill out the attached application, let us know. Shoot us an email or give us a call. We are here to answer your questions and to help you in any ways we can.

Thank you for your interest in Puppies Behind Bars.

## **HOW TO APPLY FOR a Puppies Behind Bars “Service Dogs for Those Who Serve & Protect”®**

Puppies Behind Bars will donate service dogs to first responders with PTSD, TBI, and/or mobility related disabilities. We have a maximum of twenty dogs to place per year. Puppies Behind Bars pays for 100% of the cost of placement, including transportation and lodging for training. Post-placement, all costs associated with caring for the dog will be the responsibility of the recipient.

### **To qualify for service dog:**

- Be a first responder (police officer, firefighter, EMS worker, sanitation worker, search and rescue, etc.).
- Be able to provide a stable, safe environment for our dog, which includes love, daily exercise, medical care and food.
- Be willing to become more independent and to work with a highly trained four-legged companion.
- Be willing to take your service dog with you virtually everywhere you go and, at a minimum, agree the dog will not be left alone for any more than two hours a day.
- Be willing to exercise the dog off leash in an outside enclosed area or appropriate park for at least an hour every day, regardless of weather conditions. Puppies Behind Bars will work with you to set up a schedule with family, friends, or colleagues if you are not physically able to provide this exercise yourself.
- Be willing to participate in a 14-day “team training” in Chappaqua, NY. About half of team training classes will include working in prison with a small group of carefully selected inmate “puppy-raisers” within a security-supervised classroom that is separate from the general inmate population. “Puppy-raisers” will impart hands-on, professional knowledge to each recipient about his/her dog and will provide detailed information regarding service dog handling and care. Inmate participants in team training are carefully screened by the correctional facility staff and PBB instructors, are closely monitored and evaluated, and are permitted to participate in PBB’s program based on meeting our extremely high standards for their performance and commitment to the well-being of our dogs and those we serve.

### **How to Apply:**

- Fill out the questionnaire portion of the application and return it to the PBB office (the address is on the application).
- Submit two personal references (blank reference forms are included in this application). What we are looking for are character references. If you feel you cannot get two personal references because you have not told family or friends about your diagnosis, tell us and we will work with you on this.
- Submit a reference from your treating clinician.
- Include a copy of your proof of employment and a recent photo along with your application.

### **Application Process:**

- Within two weeks, we will notify you upon receipt of application via email and will request any other documentation we need
- We will conduct an initial review of your application to determine your eligibility. If we decide to proceed with your application, we will contact you to schedule a video phone interview or an in-person interview.
- Within 4 to 6 weeks, we will inform you of our decision
- If you are declined, we will refer you to other organizations
- If you are selected, you will be placed in our next 14-day “team training”