



LOCAL **SUN DAY**

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

SERVICE-DOG TRAINING PROGRAM MAKES A PAWS'ITIVE IMPACT

Name: Carol Davis

Age: 69

Residence: Rancho Bernardo

Family: A brother and a sister

Volunteer work:

Co-founder of Paws'itive Teams, a nonprofit group that started in 1997. The group will be a beneficiary of funds the Torrey Pines Kiwanis Club raises at the La Jolla Festival of the Arts on June 22-23.

Q. How did the idea for Paws'itive Teams come about?

A. Co-founder Charli King and I were volun-

teers with a service-dog organization. We wanted to work more closely with the disabled who have limited mobility and are teamed up with a service dog, so we founded this group to offer more specialized and comprehensive training and support. Everyone is a volunteer, except for the part-time paid position of executive director.

Q. What services does the group provide?

A. Our work includes the service dog program, where designated trainers have a three-year commitment. They take a puppy

into their home and raise and train it for three years, in conjunction with our group. That is a huge commitment; it's a major part of the trainers' daily lives. We currently have nine such trainers and eight pups in different stages of training.

In a typical year, we place two to three puppies in our service-dog program.

Our clients must live in San Diego County, so that we are geographically close enough to them to offer extended support. We have a small placement fee to make sure each client is fully engaged in the value of our services. Some clients

pay the fee themselves, others raise funds through family and friends or from outside grants. The placement fee is \$2,000, while the value of our group's training and such is at least \$20,000.

Q. You also have a therapy dog program, right?

A. We work with pet dogs and their owners, teaching them how to maximize the dog's therapeutic impact on designated groups of people. We have 50 certified teams, and each team consists of a dog and its handler. These teams have undergone a six-week,

intensive training course by our group.

They also are evaluated more closely afterward before joining the dog therapy program.

They participate with schools for the disabled, at-risk teens, a daytime treatment facility, service members with post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury, children who have to testify in court about abuse, etc.

Our mission is to deliver "goal-directed" therapy through a long-term relationship, not just one-time or occasional visits to, say, a nursing home.

Q. How are you involved with the group these days?

A. I've been involved in every aspect of the group. I always have a pup that I'm training, and I'm on the steering committee for the therapy dog program. On average, I spend, oh, about 80 hours with the organization. I'm lucky because I'm retired now, so I can devote myself fully to this cause.

And I'll be at our group's booth at the La Jolla festival. We'll have dogs performing various tasks that reflect the work they perform for the disabled.