

K9 Caring Angels Therapy Dogs

Welcome Packet

Welcome to K9 Caring Angels, Northern Virginia. We are excited to have you and your dog join our team. We are growing! In the last two years our dogs have visited over 100 locations and loved thousands of people! We visit schools, libraries, nursing/assisted living homes, juvenile detention centers, hospitals, and courthouses. We had the first certified therapy dog in the country to work in a federal courthouse. We placed the first dogs in the country to live full time at a fire department to work with the firefighters. We train and place our Warrior Angels with wounded veterans, survivors of human trafficking and Military sexual trauma that are in need of a service dog. We have chapters in the following states: 3 in Maryland, New York, 4 in Florida, 2 in California, 2 in Nevada, 3 in Colorado, 1 in Massachusetts, 2 in Ohio, 3 in Texas, 2 in Nevada and were still growing! We have created this welcome packet to help answer some of your initial questions about our group, how to find volunteer opportunities, and what is expected of you as a volunteer. Please use this information when people ask you about our organization and who we are!

Your Requirements

In order to remain in good standing, we require each member to volunteer for a minimum of 2 hours per month. We consider any visit you go on to be a “volunteer” opportunity. We count travel time as part of your time commitment. After all, if you weren’t volunteering for us you would not be traveling to that location! For example, you sign up for the reading program at the library. It takes you a half hour to drive to the library from your house. The reading program itself lasts for one hour. It then takes another half hour to drive home. We consider that to be 2 hours of volunteer time. Additionally, if you are a client of Sit Means Sit Dog Training, you may count one hour of class training time a month towards your 2-hour total time commitment. This is considered to be “training” time. It is your responsibility to keep track of your volunteer time and mileage.

A bit of information about your taxes. K9 Caring Angels is a 501(c)3 non-profit. Therefore, if you itemize, you may be able to deduct expenses on your taxes. It’s possible that any money you pay to Caring Angels and any expenses you incur may be deductible. For example, you buy a training cot specifically for your dog to use during his volunteer visits. This purchase may be deducted. Your mileage to and from visits may also be deducted, so it’s important to keep track of this information. **Check with your tax advisor for more information.**

Your dog is required to wear his vest and identification card at every visit. We encourage you to wear your Caring Angels t-shirt, sweatshirt, or hat. Additional attire can be purchased at the Sit Means Sit training facility; contact Samone Puffenbarger for more information at ppuffenbarger2@gmail.com.

To remain in good standing, you must also submit your dues on time every year and complete any necessary recertifications. Information will be provided each year, but dues are generally due by June 1st each year.

Time Sheets

Part of your requirements included completing and emailing your time sheet to Brenda Buckman (VA) every month, or your local chapter. Each time sheet includes the date, name and location of visit, hours, and mileage. Once you pass your certification test please make sure that Brenda, or your local chapter has your correct email address. They will email to you an example time sheet that you can use as your template. It is your responsibility to remember to submit this time sheet every month. It is IMPERATIVE that you submit your time sheets monthly and on a timely basis. Our group liability insurance will only cover you and your dog if your time sheets have been submitted! It may be helpful to put a reminder on your phone for each month. You are welcome to obtain your own liability insurance; most often personal insurance can be obtained through your homeowner's insurance and/or an umbrella policy. Check with your insurance agent for more information. However, our dogs are covered under our group policy.

How to Find Places to Visit in VA.

Once you have passed your certification test, please make sure that k-9 Caring Angels office has your correct email address. Every time an opportunity becomes available, you will be emailed the sign up through Sign Up Genius (VA) or your locals chapters preferred sign up program.

If you are using Signup genius, you can click on the link through the email and create an account with Sign Up Genius (www.signupgenius.com). Each sign up will include a bit of information about the visit, the date, time, address, and number of dogs who can sign up. Each sign up is on a first come, first served basis. If you know you can make it to the event then you can sign up, including your dog's name in the notes. If you sign up for an event but your plans change, please make sure you go back to Sign Up Genius and delete your name from that visit. This allows another volunteer to take your place. You can also log into Sign Up Genius at any time and see what visits are available. You can sign up directly from the website without clicking on the link from Samone. In the description of each visit there should be the name and email of the Caring Angels contact person and the location contact person. Feel free to reach out to the

Caring Angels contact person with any questions you may have – parking, directions, cot or blanket, etc.

If an event on Sign Up Genius is full please do NOT simply show at the event anyway. First, reach out to the Caring Angels contact person listed in the description to see if additional dogs are okay. Some locations have space limitations or other issues limiting the number of dogs. However, you can frequently check back on Sign Up Genius to see if another volunteer has cancelled and you can now take that spot.

When you first start volunteering we encourage you to try different places to visit – nursing home, library, school, hospital. This will help you determine which places both you and your dog enjoy visiting. Our visits should be fun for everyone, dogs included! If you are apprehensive about a particular location, or unsure if it is the right fit for your dog, this is a good time to reach out to a mentor or on our group chat.

Our organization is 100% volunteer driven. That means we count on YOU to find new places for our dogs to visit. We encourage you to make connections within your own community where our dogs can provide comfort and love. If you find a new location (school, library, nursing home, etc.) please email Main office with all the information. They need to know the name and address of the location, date, time, number of dogs requested, and a location contact person. In addition, they will need a small write up about what we will be doing or who we are visiting. For example, you want to start a reading program at the library near your house. If you do create a new partnership with a location, you MUST email the name and address to main office so that we can be covered by our insurance policy.

When you read these visit descriptions there will often be a note about bringing a cot and/or blanket for your dog. This helps to provide a boundary and location for your dog so he knows where he is supposed to be. It also provides some comfort for your dog. We suggest buying a cot and blanket/bed specifically for this purpose. You may purchase one of the training cots from Sit Means Sit at your local training facility or on line. A number of volunteers also use Carlson Pet Products that can be found on Amazon (here is an example:

https://www.amazon.com/Carlson-Pet-Products-8035-Elevated/dp/B01MU8SYA6/ref=sr_1_3?ie=UTF8&qid=1542503814&sr=8-3&keywords=carlson+dog+cot). Any type of dog cot of your choosing is acceptable.

It is acceptable for your dog to wear an e-collar at any visit you go to. If you have any training issues or encounter something new that makes your dog unsure, please contact your evaluator for additional assistance.

Social Media

Have you checked out our Facebook page or Twitter feed?! We love to showcase our amazing dogs and incredible volunteers! We love to post pictures of our dogs hard at work loving on

members of the community at all the places we visit. We encourage our volunteers to take pictures of their dogs at each visit! PLEASE NOTE: Please ASK PERMISSION at each location if it is okay to take pictures for us to post on Facebook and Twitter. This is especially important when children are involved! Some locations will allow full pictures of children. At other locations we are permitted to take pictures of the dogs with the children, just not include the child's face. Check out the photos on our Facebook page to see examples (often you'll see a dog sitting in a person's lap and the photo cuts off at the person's neck). Please email your pictures for Facebook to Lynn Ritter at Lynn.caringangels@gmail.com and for Twitter to Olivia Cassandra at oliviac.sitmeanssit@gmail.com . When you send these pictures please make sure you name ALL the dogs included in the photos. We want to make sure everyone gets appreciated! Facebook is also a great place to become familiar with places we visit and what to expect at a particular location.

Trading Cards

While this is not a requirement, many volunteers have created "trading cards" for their dogs (think baseball cards). The cards feature a picture of your dog and some statistical information like date of birth/age, breed, favorite toy/treat, and a small story. The kids we visit especially love these cards and like to collect all of them. They are also a great way to promote our organization. You can go to this link to see an example and complete the form <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdTc74j3wJ7hQ-DcNbuDo48HJNcmR3Nd4CUG0pmjxrKaipMkg/viewform>. If you have any questions about the trading cards or need help creating or formatting yours please contact Heather Crouch.

Mentor Program

We understand that there is a lot of information to absorb and going to your first visit can be intimidating. You might be a bit unsure as to what to expect and what to do. For your first few visits we encourage you to sign up for an event that already has other volunteers signed up. That way you won't be alone and there will be someone there to show you the ropes. Just like our dogs, we are a very welcoming and nurturing group of humans and like to help each other. When you look at a specific sign up online it will show you the name of the people and dogs who are already signed up.

Additionally, we have developed a list of volunteers who are willing to be mentors to our new handlers. You will see the list of volunteers and contact information at the end of this document. Feel free to reach out to any of these volunteers at any time. They are more than happy to answer your questions and hopefully put you at ease. You will see though that you will quickly become confident at visits. Your dogs are the stars and they know what to do!

Code of Ethics

Attached to this document you will see our Code of Ethics. We hold our volunteers and our dogs to the highest standards! We expect both of you to be on your best behavior at all times. If you see anything that makes you uncomfortable, please contact Sonny Madsen. She is here as our founder and advocate. Our visits should be fun for the people we are serving, for our dogs, and for ourselves. It is also important for us to protect our dogs. While there are times we visit with “special needs” children and adults who may be a bit “rough” with our dogs, it is NEVER acceptable for any person to hurt or harm our dogs, or our volunteers, in any form. If you see this happen to your dog or any other dog in our organization, please immediately contact your evaluator & Sonny Madsen. We must protect our dogs and our reputation.

Contact Information

K9 Caring Angels Therapy Dogs

9823 Godwin Dr.

Manassas, VA 20110

703-755-0394

Our website: www.k-9caringangels.org

Our Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/caringangelstherapydogs/>

Our Twitter: @angels_k

Sonny Madsen (Founder, General Information) – sonny.caringangels@gmail.com, 571-284-9554

Samone Puffenbarger (Office manager) – ppuffenbarger2@gmail.com, 703-342-6164

Lynn Ritter (Facebook Pictures) – lynn.caringangels@gmail.com, 703-634-3135

Olivia Cassandra (Twitter Pictures) – oliviac.caringangels@gmail.com, 540-216-2131

Brenda Buckman (Time Sheets for VA) – brendabuckman@comcast.net, 703-598-9054

Beth Sloan (fund raiser) – beth.caringangels@gmail.com, 540-358-1821

Heather Crouch (Trading Cards) – heatherlcrouch@gmail.com, 703-328-7244

Code of Ethics

- A. Members will maintain a high standard of honesty, integrity, and impartiality free from any personal consideration, favoritism, or partisan demands.
- B. Members represent a professional level of therapy dogs and as such must adhere to the rules set for by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Members will not misrepresent her/his therapy dog as a service dog for the purpose of gaining access to planes, restaurants, public buildings, stores, etc.
- C. Interactions with the public are to be courteous and considerate at all times.
- D. Members shall be firm, fair, and consistent in the performance of their volunteer duties and will treat all others with dignity, respect and compassion.
- E. Members will report to a board member any violations of the Code of Ethics or Policies and Procedures, or any unethical behavior.
- F. There will be no cursing or abusive language while attending any events.
- G. Possession or use of alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs at a Caring Angels event or training session, or reporting while under the influence of alcohol or drugs is strictly prohibited.
- H. All handlers will be courteous and polite towards all individuals with whom they engage during an event.
- I. Verbal, physical, or sexual harassment of another handler, volunteer, member of the public, or any dog is strictly prohibited.
- J. We are committed to act honestly, truthfully, and with integrity in all our transactions and dealings.
- K. We will respect the confidentiality of sensitive information concerning other members and the public where we visit.
- L. We will honor our commitments and promises to the best of our abilities.
- M. A member will report any case of animal abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities.
- N. Members will be neat and clean and dressed appropriately for all activities. All dogs will also be clean and properly groomed.