



Southeastern
GUIDE DOGS

DOGS AND PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN & TEENS

MORE THAN PUPPY LOVE

It's way more than puppy love! At Southeastern Guide Dogs, all of our dogs and services are free . . . and priceless. These dogs make an incredible impact on the lives of children, teens, and families. Guide dog training is covered in another publication. Here, we will feature our skilled companion dogs for children, including Kids Companion Dogs and Gold Star Family Dogs, as well as our Guide Dog Camp for teens.



Kids Companion Dogs

Kids Companion Dogs build a bridge between the child of today and the independent guide dog handler of tomorrow. Children gain confidence by learning how to care for their dog, which leads to greater self-worth and the ability to handle increased responsibilities. The dog gives the child extra love, encouragement, and purpose to help them move forward in the face of adversity, and the child gains skills that prepare them to one day receive a guide dog.

Gold Star Family Dogs

Recognizing the sacrifices made when a family member dies in service to the nation, Southeastern Guide Dogs offers loving, skilled companion dogs to Gold Star families in need. These well-trained and gentle dogs give the gift of comforting friendship to children and families enduring unimaginable hardship, loneliness, and grief.

WHAT WE PROVIDE

Kids Companion Dogs for children of any age with vision loss

Gold Star Family Dogs for children and families who have lost a loved one in active military

Guide dogs for mature teens 15–17 with vision loss

Guide Dog Camp for teens 14–17 with vision loss (and their parents) considering a guide dog

HOW WE TRAIN DOGS FOR CHILDREN

What makes the best Kids Companion Dog for a child who is blind or Gold Star Family Dog for a military family facing grief? Here's a **checklist** of what it takes to be selected as a skilled companion dog for a child.



Education & Training

- ✓ 8–10 weeks of early education and socialization at our Puppy Academy.
- ✓ 14–18 months of house training, basic skills training, and real-world socialization with a trained volunteer puppy raiser.
- ✓ 1–6 months of professional training at Canine University, depending on each dog's timing of career transfer out of the guide or service dog programs.



Health & Temperament

- ✓ Smart, healthy, and fit.
- ✓ Calm disposition, with a demonstrated ability to be highly comfortable with children.
- ✓ Extremely biddable—eager to please.
- ✓ Demonstrated preference for their handler over other dogs or people.
- ✓ Absolutely no sign of aggression or body sensitivity. For example, if a child with vision loss explores the dog using their sense of touch, the dog must be comfortable being handled and accidentally poked on occasion.



Basic & Advanced Skills

- ✓ Exceptional house manners; ignores toys on the floor and food on the counters, for example.
- ✓ Excellent response to basic cues, including *sit*, *stay*, *come*, *place*, *down*, *leave it*, and more.
- ✓ Strong leash manners with stellar *heel* skills. A child with no vision may use a tandem leash, along with the parent, so dogs are trained accordingly.

Making the Match

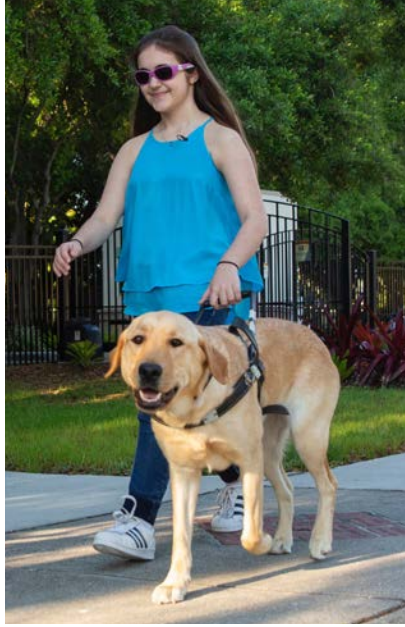
Once a dog is selected as a candidate, a certified instructor takes the dog home for an extended stay. She observes the dog closely in a home environment, assesses its manners, and fine-tunes its training with a specific child in mind. After matching a dog with a child, she delivers the dog to the family and instructs them on how to care for their new forever-friend.

As with all of our dogs and services, we provide our Kids Companion Dogs and Gold Star Family Dogs at no cost to children and families. To give these dogs as gifts, we rely on the kindness and generosity of the Southeastern Guide Dogs community.



THE GIFT OF HOPE

GUIDE DOG CAMP FOR TEENS & PARENTS



At Guide Dog Camp, 14 to 17-year-old teens with vision loss and their parents learn how a guide dog can change a teen's life. There's no charge for this hands-on, overnight, two-day camp.

"I simply cannot thank you enough, including the amazing superheroes who gave time and expertise during Guide Dog Camp. You all gave the teens hope . . . hope for a future of independence, confidence, security, and comfort. Watching Emily take that leap of faith by placing her trust in the dogs to guide her safely was an amazing gift. So, from the bottom of my heart, thank you for the gift of hope!"

—Kami, camper mom

"I wanted to thank everyone at Southeastern Guide Dogs for the amazing experience of Guide Dog Camp. I learned a lot and felt—for the first time—like I could actually get a guide dog. I've wanted one since I was in third grade, but never thought it would happen. Guide Dog Camp gave me hope that it really could. Now I have hope of more independence, and with my orientation and mobility skills combined with the teamwork between my dog, I can accomplish anything!"

—Emily, teen camper

ABOUT SOUTHEASTERN GUIDE DOGS

Southeastern Guide Dogs transforms lives by creating and nurturing extraordinary partnerships between people and dogs. We breed, raise, and train elite guide dogs, service dogs, and skilled companion dogs and provide life-changing services for people with vision loss, veterans with disabilities, and children with significant challenges. We offer our premier dogs and lifetime follow-up services at no cost. Since 1982, we have successfully created thousands of guide and service dog teams throughout the U.S. and currently oversee the wellbeing of over 1,200 puppies and dogs. Learn more at [GuideDogs.org](https://www.GuideDogs.org)



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