



Assistance Dog Institute
1215 Sebastopol Road
Santa Rosa, CA 95407

Spring 2006
Vol: XV
Issue: 2

IN THIS ISSUE:

Page 2:
In Quest of

Page 3
Volunteer Profile -
Bea and Rocky

Home Helpmates

Page 4:
Graduating Teams

Page 5:
Graduate Profile -
Pam Hogle

Page 6:
In the News

Dr. Bergin's New Book -
"Teach Your Dog to Read"

Page 7:
Fundraising Update
Quilt Raffle Winner

Page 8:
Magical cont'd

Page 9:
Huff's Birthday
Pam Hogle cont'd

Page 10:
College cont'd

Page 11:
In Quest of cont'd

Page 12:
Event Calendar
Nick's Letter

A Magical Experience

By Pam Hogle



Hutchins just hours old...
now ADI's youngest grad!



Judy Fridono glows with pride when she talks about Hutchins, a service dog in training who was part of her life for just over a year. It is discernable, palpable, even over the telephone. "It is such a gift to have had this unique experience," she says. "I gained so much. Taking a dog from her first breath to where she graduated was magical to me."

Hutchins was born November 30, 2004, and graduated, at barely a year old, on December 18, 2005. Hutchins' client is

a 10-year-old girl with a spinal cord injury. Disabled from a very young age, Gisel, the client, uses a power wheelchair and has only limited use of her hands.

Judy is convinced that the consistency, constant reinforcement, and their strong relationship is what gave Hutchins a solid foundation that enabled her to become so solid on her skills that she could be placed so young. Judy practiced tasks with Hutchins at home and out in public and integrated them into every aspect of daily life so that performing them became ingrained, second nature to Hutchins.

Judy is pleased that Hutchins was placed with a child and believes she will be able to mature along with her young client. "It's a nice match." *see Magical page 8*

New and Expanded Academic Programs

(...definitely worth howling about)

Master of Science

We are very pleased with the progress of the Institute's Master's degree program, which was launched last August. The second session started on February 20. Students attend concentrated sessions totaling a few weeks per year at the Institute, and complete much of their course work at home, in email or phone contact with their professors. The program is ideal for working people who are looking to earn a degree as a part-time student.

New enrollees may start the program as early as July 31, 2006. Visit our web site or call for details.

A sampling of the Masters course offerings this year:

see College page 10



Magical continued from page 1

Judy made a point of challenging Hutchins during her training. She'd intentionally set up for tasks imperfectly, so Hutchins learned to work under less-than-perfect circumstances. The clients can't always position themselves perfectly, Judy explains, and during client training, "I was so proud to see her working and doing tasks well even when the client wasn't positioned perfectly."

Hutchins was fully trained by the time she was four and a half months old. This was about the time that Judy graduated from the ADI associate's degree program, and she decided to stay on in Santa Rosa to puppy-raise Hutchins and continue working with her. From then until Hutchins graduated, Judy taught the puppy extra, fun skills. "She'd bring me a tissue if I sneezed," Judy says, "and she can open a mailbox and take out the mail, pull up the covers on a bed, and has a super-solid retrieve."

During their extra months together, they also developed a close, mutually rewarding relationship. Hutchins loves to swim and dive off of docks, and they frequently went swimming together. They also did a lot of walking and running so Hutchins grew into a fit, strong, capable working dog. "People think service dogs don't have any fun, but that's just not true. We had a lot of fun, and the client enjoys their playtime together as well."

"She's the reason I stayed in California," Judy says. Judy came to ADI seeking a service dog education. "My dog brought me here to learn a better way to train," she says, "Hutchins showed me that way, gave me my foundation, and gave me the passion to learn, to see how much and how early puppies can learn."

Since graduating from ADI, Judy has worked with several litters of very young ADI puppies, constantly pushing the frontiers of training. She was surprised, over and over again, by how much puppies could learn and how young. "People were impressed that Hutchins was fully trained at four and a half months, but now, to me, that's old news, puppies are learning at younger and younger ages. I've got puppies at six and a half **weeks** consistently turning lights switches on, tugging socks off, and retrieving." She notices a huge leap in their ability to

learn and retain new skills at about five to six weeks of age and tries to do two training sessions a day with puppies of that age.



Judy Fridono congratulates Gisel Rincon and service dog Hutchins at their December graduation

Judy doesn't correct puppies she is training, other than using a verbal marker to indicate to the dog that it is doing something incorrectly. "If the dog doesn't do the command the first time," she explains, "I look at the context, make sure the dog understands." She looks to see if there are any distractions, and makes sure not to give a dog a command until the dog's attention is focused on her. She then asks herself whether the puppy knows what she's asking. "I prefer to redirect, not to correct," she says. She teaches dogs to look at her when told to "leave it" and uses that to refocus a distracted puppy. She'll use "no" when shaping behaviors.

Judy believes her attachment to Hutchins was so strong because she delivered the puppy and watched her take her

first breaths. But at the same time, she says giving up the dog was not as hard as many people believe. "Hutchins has given me so much," Judy says. "Sharing that experience with someone else, it's such a powerful feeling to see her doing all the things I taught her to do, watching her do them for this little girl, I was just beaming with pride...Hutchins was born to be a service dog. She seemed grateful that I was there to help her achieve that."

"Everything with her was a gift," Judy says. "Delivering her, seeing her in that little sac and watching her take her first breath. Being with her for her whole life until she walked away with the client. Training her was a gift. Being her puppy raiser was a gift. Being part of her client training was a gift. And being involved in the follow-up has been a gift."

Judy has visited the client twice since graduation. While Hutchins is thrilled and excited to see her, Judy says Hutchins is clearly not looking to her for direction anymore and knows who she works for. "Sharing her life with her and now sharing the client's life, it has been an incredible journey, a journey that hasn't ended yet."

