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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO SOCIALISE HEARING DOG PUPPIES

National charity Hearing Dogs for Deaf People is launching a new scheme in the Cambridge area and desperately needs members of the public to volunteer to take puppies and young dogs into their homes for a few months as part of the dogs' early training.

The Charity, which is based in Buckinghamshire, is expanding its operation and is looking to start a puppy socialising scheme around Soham in Cambridgeshire, which is where regular puppy classes will be held. The demand for trained hearing dogs has increased so much recently that the waiting list for a fully trained dog is now standing at two years, hence the reason for finding volunteer socialisers in other parts of the country.

Hearing Dogs recruits puppies and young dogs from between the ages of eight weeks and three years, but all of them need a period of time with a volunteer socialiser. It may be for as little as a few weeks or for several months, but however long or short, the time the puppies spend with their socialisers is essential to help shape the young dogs' personalities and increase their confidence, and is absolutely vital to the continuation of the Charity's work.

The puppy socialiser plays an extremely important role in the initial training of a hearing dog, introducing the young dog to different experiences and environments as well as teaching him basic obedience and manners that will stand him in good stead for the next stage of advanced soundwork training. Puppy socialising is very rewarding and socialisers get the added bonus of knowing they are playing a part in helping a deaf person to enjoy the benefits of confidence, security and independence that a hearing dog will bring them. The Charity will provide everything that the new recruit will need from food to toys and bedding. Trainers will also be on hand to give telephone support, and socialisers will be required to bring their puppies to puppy classes on a regular basis to be held in Soham.

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One socialiser explains why she chose to look after these young dogs. "It is a good feeling knowing that we have played a part in a puppy's success as a working companion. But the best thing is learning about the important partnerships between puppies you have nurtured and their new deaf owners."

Jenny Moir, Hearing Dogs' head of PR explains the importance of puppy socialisers to the Charity's future: "A hearing dog puppy's socialisation period is one of the most important parts of the young trainee's life. As a charity we simply could not continue our operation without the goodwill, time and commitment that volunteer puppy socialisers give in guiding their charges through their puppyhood. It is fair to say that if we cannot find more socialisers, we will be unable to meet the demand for fully trained hearing dogs. 2007 is our 25th Anniversary year, and we really hope that members of the public in the Cambridgeshire area will celebrate this milestone with us by helping us train more hearing dogs for the future."

For further information about becoming a puppy socialiser for Hearing Dogs, please contact the puppy socialising department on 01844 348105.

About Hearing Dogs for Deaf People

Hearing Dogs for Deaf People celebrates its 25th Anniversary in 2007, and is a registered charity that selects and trains dogs to respond to specific sounds. Hearing dogs alert deaf people by touch, using a paw to gain attention and then lead them back to the sound source. For sounds such as the smoke alarm and fire alarm the dogs will lay down to indicate danger.

Hearing Dogs for Deaf People provides a national service and no charge is made to recipients. Seventy four per cent of all hearing dogs adopted into the scheme are either rescued or unwanted and since its inception in 1982, Hearing Dogs for Deaf People has placed over 1300 hearing dogs. The Charity has two centres operating in the UK – Buckinghamshire and North Yorkshire.

For further information contact:

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