



Service Animals of Mississippi

promoting independence, inclusion and quality of life for individuals with disabilities



This is Sam, the Service Animals of Mississippi mascot. Sam was partnered with Vicki K. for 12 years. He was her best friend.

As a result of an automobile accident in 1983, Vicki was paralyzed. Her entire life changed in a moment. She became dependent on others and was unsure of her future.

Sam gave Vicki her new life - courage to go places, meet people and do things she enjoyed. With Sam at her side, Vicki could be more independent and felt capable of having a productive and happy life.

Sam helped with opening doors and cabinets, picked up dropped objects, provided assistance in moving her wheelchair when needed, and provided companionship and support at all times.

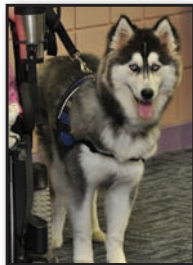
Sam was diagnosed with lymphoma in November 2006 and passed away March 13, 2007. Sam was loved by all who met him and is missed greatly.

Service Animals of Mississippi (SAM) enhances the quality of life for individuals with disabilities – providing highly trained service and specifically trained companion and therapy dogs for Mississippians with disabilities. Service dogs empower individuals with disabilities by performing a variety of tasks including:

- retrieving and depositing objects,
- carrying objects,
- opening doors,
- activating switches,
- alerting others in the event of an emergency and
- mobility assistance tasks – tugging or pushing a wheelchair or stabilizing an ambulatory individual.

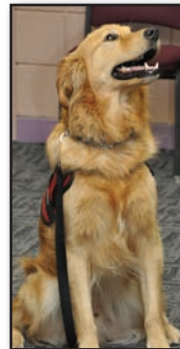
With the added support of a service dog, an individual with disabilities is more self-sufficient, independent and productive therefore, creating opportunities for increased community inclusion.

Applicants are interviewed based on standards and requirements developed by program staff and the SAM Advisory Council.



Education and training are provided for applicants including the care and handling of assistance and companion dogs, legal rights and responsibilities regarding public access for service dogs, required SAM progress reports following placement and veterinary care requirements.

The specific needs of each individual as well as the capabilities and temperament of the dog are considered in matching consumers to dogs, a process called team formation. Teams work together in skills training and spend time bonding. Teams must pass the SAM evaluation before graduating from the program. Each team is considered a lifetime partnership. Follow-up program support ensures the continued success of each team.



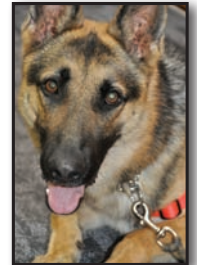
SAM provides community outreach through an advocacy and support center to improve public awareness, education and resources. The outreach portion of project SAM also includes a program to provide reduced veterinary care fees for service animals.

Volunteer support is essential to the success of the program. Volunteers include puppy raiser families who raise puppies until they are 12-15 months old. The families provide general obedience training, socialization and daily care. The program covers approved expenses for puppies in training with volunteer puppy raiser families.

Therapy dogs are trained for use with a professional who is trained in animal assisted therapy. Companion dogs provide a source of social and emotional support for individuals and do light work.

To qualify for a service dog, applicants must be at least 18 years old or have a parent or family member willing to be trained and to be responsible for the care of the dog.

For more information about the SAM program, call 601.266.5163 or 1.888.671.0051 (TTY).



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INSTITUTE FOR
DISABILITY STUDIES

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