

PROJECT OF THE MONTH "CHILDREN'S VILLAGE"

This month we would like to introduce **Children's Village**, a non-profit charitable organization based in New York, USA, that specializes in working with vulnerable children, at-risk adolescents and families. One of the programs carried out which we would highlight is "**Assistance Dog Training Program**" which started in **Children's Village**, in partnership with **Educated Canines Assisting with Disabilities (ECAD)** in 1999.



While the primary purpose of service dog training programs is to provide independence to the handicapped, this program is noteworthy for its social significance as ECAD is a pioneer organization including students with emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties as trainers of the dogs that will be delivered to people with physical and mental disabilities; people in wheelchairs, people who have hearing problems, people with limited or no use of their arms, people with severe mental problems and people with mobility problems. Each dog's training is customized to match the disability of the person who will eventually be adopting him or her.

The program is of educative character and it has been designed in order the adolescents learn to set goals and solve problems using patience, communication skills, self-control, frustration tolerance and motivational techniques. As a result, they get into less trouble, are better able to control their tempers, and in many cases, their school attendance and grades improve.



The students also perform a community service by helping people with disabilities to become more independent, they teach handicapped youngsters how to work with their new dogs. Through this mutual-help cooperative approach, ECAD has been able to reduce the cost of training assistance dogs and decrease the waiting time for the people who need these dogs.



The therapeutic benefits of working with dogs go far beyond the educational, though. Most of the students have difficulty succeeding at traditional schoolwork, and often feel incapable of giving or receiving love. Working with the dogs helps even the most difficult children establish a sense of self worth, master their tempers, and learn to trust again. For many of the students, it is the first time they have experienced ongoing success due to the perseverance and this, help them to acquire capacity feelings combined with the conviction of being loved.

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