



FIDELCO GUIDE DOG FOUNDATION, INC.

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www.fidelco.org
Partners In ExceptionalSM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: Monday, February 4, 2019

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Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation Tests Worthiness of Its Elite German Shepherd Guide Dogs In-Training in Westport, CT

Training exercise to validate potential of future guide dogs raised by Fairfield County Volunteer Puppy Raiser Families

WHEN

Tuesday, February 5, 2019 at 1:30pm EST

WHERE

5 Church Lane, Westport, CT

WHO

Connecticut's own, internationally accredited guide dog breeding and training organization, Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation, Inc., will be conducting real-world training validation tests of several guide dogs in-training who were raised by Fairfield County residents and Volunteer Puppy Raiser Families. Upon successful completion of the six-month, professional guide dog training program, they will join three Fidelco Guide Dogs – Kato, Haddie and Kayla –who were also raised by Fairfield County families and are currently working as guide dogs across the USA.

WHAT

Future Fidelco German Shepherd Guide Dogs that are being trained exclusively in Fairfield County and are now learning the challenges of Westport's town center of vehicular traffic, pedestrians, dogs and other potential distractions.

"Blindfold walk" with the guide dogs' trainer – the first of three increasingly difficult proofing tests and a significant milestone in the two-year training program – designed to prove the worthiness of Fidelco Guide Dogs to safely guide their human partners who are blind.

The first of three blindfold walk tests Fidelco Guide Dogs professional training program and includes: **Guiding ability** (motivation to guide, speed of walking, stop at down and up curbs, crossing streets, and obstacle and overhead avoidance); **Guide commands** (forward, turn left, turn right, and halts); **Reaction to distractions** (environmental sniffing, other dogs, people, loud noises); **General behavior** (willingness to work, social behavior, temperament); and **Obedience** skills (name recognition, loose leash walking, sit/stay, recall, and appropriate meet-and-greet).

INTERVIEWS AVAILABLE

G. Kenneth "Ken" Bernhard, Westport resident, current Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation Board member, seven-time Fidelco Guide Dog Volunteer Puppy Raiser and former CT State Legislator; Tommy Mourad, Vice President, Director of Guide Dog Training; Doug Fuchs, Chief Operating Officer and Volunteer Puppy Raiser of guide dog "Kato"; and Eliot Russman, President & Chief Executive Officer.

About Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation, Inc.

Together, Unstoppable.

Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation is dedicated to limitless potential – to ensuring men and women who are blind enjoy increased independence to improve their lives and the world around them.

Fidelco Guide Dogs is inspired every day by our clients. They climb Mt. Everest, win gold medals as world class athletes, serve America in the military and sacrifice on the battlefield. They educate, create documentary films, work in business and government, raise families and advocate for those who are visually impaired.

Fidelco Guide Dogs partners exceptional men and women who are blind with its elite-bred German Shepherd Dogs. It takes 2 years, 15,000 hours, and \$45,000 to create each guide dog. All Fidelco Guide Dogs are provided to clients *at no cost* thanks to the generous support from individual donors and organizations.

To learn more or to support Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation's charitable, life-improving mission please visit www.fidelco.org

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Photos on next pages.



Future Fidelco Guide Dog puppy



Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation, Inc. client, Lt. Brad Snyder, USN (Ret) battle-blinded in Afghanistan, with his Fidelco German Shepherd Guide Dog "Gizzy"

