

SUMMARY

HEALING COMPANIONS: ORDINARY DOGS AND THEIR EXTRAORDINARY POWER TO TRANSFORM LIVES

By: Jane Miller, LISW, CDBC

Just as the role that service dogs can play in the lives of people with invisible disabilities has started to receive national media attention -- in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New Yorker*, and on *Oprah - Healing Companions* is the first book to profile these extraordinary dogs and how they can transform lives. Service Dogs have been assisting the blind, the hearing impaired and those in wheelchairs and with other disabilities for a long time.

This ground breaking book provides a window into the new world of Psychiatric Service Dogs (PSDs) for people with psychiatric disabilities (such as depression, post-traumatic stress, bi-polar disorder, anxiety and panic attacks, and more), showing how the dogs can change and enhance the lives of their human companions. In *Healing Companions* you will meet these amazing dogs and see how they have helped a number of individuals improve their lives in profound and unexpected ways, allowing them to gain self-esteem, self-confidence, assertiveness and so much more.

These dogs provide emotional support, as all dogs do, but they are specifically trained to perform certain tasks unique to the individual's needs. More recently, psychiatric service dogs have helped many veterans returning from combat to overcome the effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and return to more fulfilling lives. Through the stories of these individuals and their dogs, I show how you, a friend, or a family member might benefit from working with such a healing companion.

In addition to these remarkable stories, this book also explains which dogs are the right candidates for the job, which dogs are not, and how to tell the difference. Here's a hint: it has nothing to do with the dog's breed. Mixed breed dogs are very well suited to assist those with invisible disabilities. These dogs can be in-home companions or full-time Service Dogs who also accompany their companions out in public and to work. *Healing Companions* discusses how these dogs are trained, how the dogs may

impact other members of the family, and how they make one's life more comfortable and less stressful for the dogs while they are undertaking their essential tasks. A helpful list of resources for further information, support, and services is provided.

For anyone who may not know about the profound benefits that these service dogs may bring, as well as for anyone who loves dogs and enjoys learning more about their value to their companions, this book will serve as an informative, practical, and inspirational guide.