



San Diego



PETS MAGAZINE

APRIL / 06

Rabbits at Easter

The Allure of Koi

Reconsider Reptiles
Why they might
be the best pet
for you



MAGIC 92.5's

JAGGER & KRISTI

Two People, Ten Years,
and One "Little" Secret



May I **PET** Your Dog?

By *Tim Gackstetter*



"What a beautiful dog. May I pet her?" We get this question often whenever I am out with my son, Jason, and Marisa, his Skilled Companion service dog.

Jason has cerebral palsy. He loves to talk with everyone, especially about Marisa.

She came from Canine Companions for Independence (www.cci.org) and can pick up dropped objects, open and close doors and turn on lights, to mention just a few of her 45 commands. Marisa is also Jason's best friend. But most importantly, Jason becomes the cool guy with the dog that everyone wants to say hello to, instead of an invisible disabled boy in a wheelchair.

"May I pet your dog?" Well, actually, we'd prefer that you didn't for two reasons. First, it distracts her. Then she's not paying attention to commands that we give her. Second, if she got used to strangers petting her, she could start to expect it and could begin approaching them, hoping for more. This could make her a nuisance and cause problems because she might not behave properly in a store or restaurant, it could put her into an unsafe position, or could even frighten people that don't want her to approach them.

We would rather have her "shake" your hand. Doing this requires her to sit so she is safely positioned next to us. "Shake" is one of her commands, so she is being attentive, responding to a command, and getting positive feedback for completing a command.

The next time you see a service dog, please do stop to talk. Instead of asking if you may pet the dog though, ask if you may shake hands. Better yet, ask us to give our dog a big hug from you. And don't worry...she already gets lots of petting and love from us.



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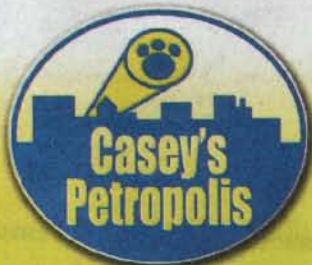
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