

## **Time to Pick the Puppies!**

It's a bright weekday morning as Andy and Steve, the trainers for CIA's fall puppy class, exit interstate 81 onto a two-lane country road in Pennsylvania, rambling past green hills of pastureland and corn, farm houses gleaming in the sunlight, and old barns stubbornly standing against a strong summer breeze. They're headed to Susquehanna Service Dogs in Pennsylvania to evaluate seven Labrador Retrievers as possible candidates for the upcoming puppy class. Officers from Fredrick County Fire Marshal and Fairfax County Police Department in Virginia accompany the trainers, hoping to pick a puppy for their respective units.

As one of the largest K9 Explosives Detection programs in the Washington Metropolitan Area, and the first United States Police Canine Association (USPCA)-certified "Detector Training Center" in the country, CIA often trains dogs for local law enforcement. We also provide ongoing training, evaluations, and certification for local and federal agencies, including FBI and State Department.

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## ***What are CIA Dog Trainers Looking For?***

Like many explosives detection programs, we use Labrador Retrievers due to their non-stop energy, friendly demeanor, and love of food. Our program uses positive training methods only, and the dogs are trained using food rewards, so a strong food drive and a high level of energy are extremely important.

For our Fall 2017 "Puppy Class," we need to find six dogs in total, including the two for Frederick and Fairfax counties. The puppies typically range anywhere from 8-months to 2.5-years old and are almost always dogs that are being released from service dog programs. Our instructors visit several different organizations throughout the region to test potential puppies a few weeks before a new class begins – including Susquehanna and Puppies Behind Bars.

Susquehanna, which raises and trains services dogs to assist children and adults with disabilities to become more independent, intimately knows the personalities of the puppies in its program. Their puppies are raised by volunteer "puppy raisers" for the first year, and then the dogs enter Susquehanna's advanced training program for service dog work. Usually, by the time the dogs are between one-and-a-half to two-years old, Susquehanna knows whether or not the dog will make it as a service dog.

"If we're releasing a dog, it's usually because of health reasons or temperament," says Pam Foreman, Director of Susquehanna Service Dogs. "Temperament could be a number of things: It could be that they are really barky, or maybe they are easily distracted by smells, or maybe they are just too high strung for the type of work we need them for. The dogs we use have to be energetic, but it has to be a specific kind of energy. They have to really want to work – opening and shutting doors, turning on and off lights, retrieving things – or maybe just always attentive to that veteran with PTSD, always looking for those signs of anxiety. But it's not an over-the-top kind of energy."

For dogs that don't make it through the program, "usually their energy level is just a different kind of energy than we need for service dog work," says Foreman.

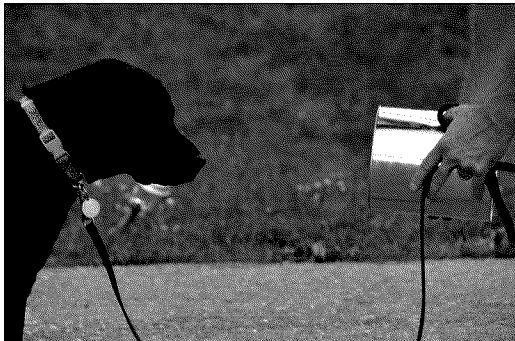
That over-the-top, impossible to turn off energy is exactly what our trainers want in a dog. So when a dog gets released from a program like Susquehanna, they now have another place to go.

"In the beginning," according to Foreman, "some of our puppy raisers were a little apprehensive because they knew working at the CIA was a job that could be dangerous, and they wanted their dog to succeed at being a service dog. That's why they do this. But now people are proud that their dog, the dog they helped to raise and train, can go on and do great things for the country. And save lives."

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The seven puppies Susquehanna released from the program were six females: Suni, Lulu, Freya, Axel, Indigo, and Heide; and one male, Armstrong.

Andy and Steve, with the help of another of our K9 instructors, ran a series of tests to see how the seven pups reacted to various situations they might encounter during training or later on the job:





Once our K9 instructors evaluated and scored all the dogs under consideration for this fall's puppy class, the entire training staff met to discuss all the dogs they'd seen. The dogs were then chosen based on the highest combined scores.

**And the New CIA Fall 2017 Puppy Class is....**

It was a difficult decision and the trainers met a lot of really great dogs, but there was only room for six.

Meet the CIA's first all-female Puppy Class!

*From Susquehanna:*

## Suni



## Freya

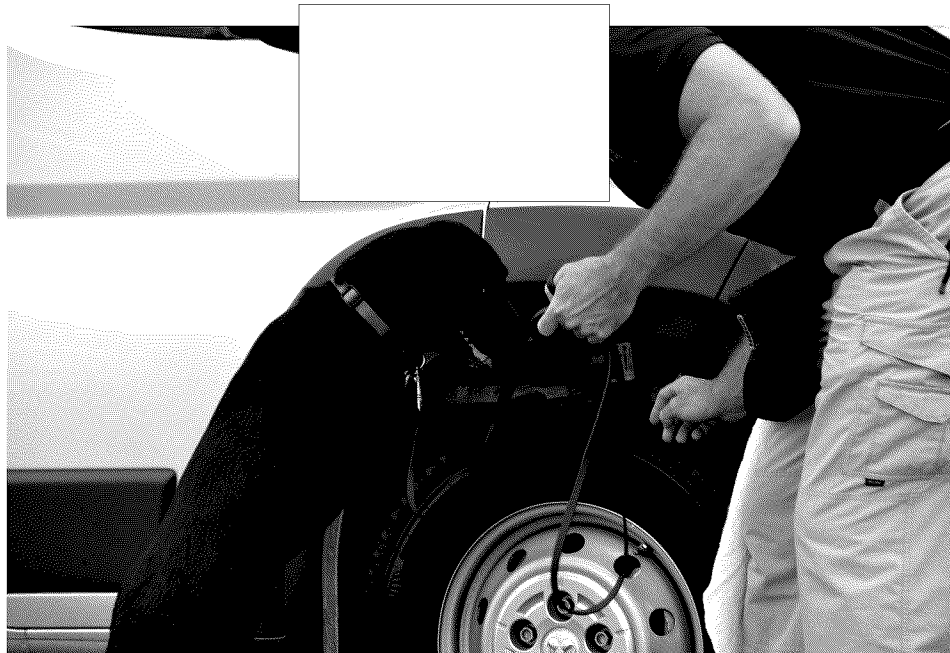


## Indigo



# Lulu

*(Fairfax County Police Department)*



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# Heide

*(Frederick County Fire Marshal)*



*From Puppies Behind Bars:*

## Nicole



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**What's next for the pups?** Before classes can start, the puppies need to visit the veterinarian for a full health exam and any remaining vaccinations.

If you miss any of the articles in this series, visit "Follow CIA's New Puppy Class!" main page, where we are chronicling the puppies' progresses over the next 16-weeks.