RAISING GUIDE DOGS FOR THE BLIND: A MULTI-CASE STUDY OF HIGH SCHOOL PUPPY RAISERS IN FFA PROGRAMS

A Thesis

by

SHANNON NICOLE BARBEAU

Submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Chair of Committee,	Gary Briers
Committee Members,	Julie Harlin
	Alice Blue-McLendon
Head of Department,	John Elliot

August 2017

Major Subject: Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications

ABSTRACT

As the instructional program of agriculture, food, and natural resources (AFNR) continues to grow, students are offered diverse opportunities. One opportunity is raising guide dogs. Raising puppies is gaining popularity as it correlates with Texas agri-science courses such as Veterinary Medical Applications and Small Animal Management. Students in AFNR and members of the FFA are opting to raise guide dogs as Supervised Agricultural Experiences instead of, or in addition to, the more traditional livestock projects. However, the outcomes of the puppy raising program and the effects on the puppy raiser are unknown. In this qualitative study involving multiple case studies, student guide dog raisers, their parents/guardians, and the Guide Dogs for the Blind club leaders/agricultural science teachers were interviewed to determine the impacts and challenges associated with raising guide dogs as a preliminary attempt to fill the existing gap on this subject.

Face-to-face interviews were used at two Texas high schools that currently have a guide dog raising program integrated into their AFNR program and FFA chapter. Results in the students suggest an increase in maturity, patience, and confidence as well as increased networking opportunities for raisers and potentially influencing students' career paths. Challenges from the students' perspectives included time management, public interference, and advocation. From the GDB leader/agricultural science teachers' perspectives, challenges include starting the puppy-raising program initially, administrative approval, and the time required to run a program of this kind. Comparing

puppy raising to raising livestock, students gained similar competencies. More research is needed to quantify these competencies but this study showed that competencies do exist.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to my committee chair, Dr. Gary Briers, and committee members, Dr. Julie Harlin and Dr. Alice Blue-McLendon for your continual support throughout this research as well as my undergraduate career. I came into graduate school knowing very little about research but with the help of my committee, was able to complete this thesis and, for that, I am grateful.

Sandi Alsworth, Texas Community Field Representative for Guide Dogs for the Blind, also deserves my gratitude. She made this idea possible by recommending schools to include and putting me in contact with the leaders. She has also impacted each of the students involved in GDB programs and does a fantastic job with them. In addition, Sandi has taught me an incredible amount in regards to training dogs. She is a truly talented trainer.

Thank you to the FFA Advisors and GDB Leaders at Byron Nelson High School and James Madison High School for allowing me to come into your program and interview your incredible students. I could not have done any of this without your support.

Lastly, thank you to my wonderful mother who has supported me throughout school emotionally and also for watching my dog when things got busy. I could never repay you for the encouragement you have given me over the years. I love you!

CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES

Contributors

This work was supervised by a thesis committee consisting of Dr. Gary Briers and Dr. Julie Harlin of the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications and Dr. Alice Blue-McLendon of the Department of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences.

All other work conducted for the thesis was completed by the student independently.

Funding Sources

Graduate study was completed without outside financial support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Typically, when people think about FFA and agri-science classes, they think of livestock shows, chapter conducting, and public speaking. There are these and countless other ways for members to get involved in AFNR. Training dogs does not usually come to mind as one of these opportunities. However, some students are raising Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB) through their AFNR courses. Raising puppies is becoming more and more common as a Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) especially in urban areas where raising livestock may not be a viable option. Specifically, students are counting puppy raising as unpaid placement and toward community service hours as puppy raising is often an eighteen month commitment. The puppy lives with the raiser for the entire duration and accompanies the raiser to school, church, extracurricular activities, and everywhere in between. “Raise a puppy, change a life” is the motto of Guide Dogs for the Blind’s puppy raising program (“Puppy Raising,” 2017e). Through this program, potential future guide dogs are raised, socialized, and trained before returning to the GDB campus in California or Oregon. The effect the puppy raising program has on the puppies and the guide dog recipients is apparent. However, the effect puppy raising has on the puppy raiser is less so. Few studies have examined the effect dogs have on their raisers. The few researchers who have touched on training have focused on the dog and not on the raiser.

Students enrolled in agricultural science classes at the secondary level have the option to be members of the National FFA Organization, an intracurricular organization that focuses on developing youth leaders through agriculturally related programs (National

FFA Organization, 2015a). Each student in agricultural science should have a Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE). An SAE can fall into one or more of the following categories: Ownership/Entrepreneurship, Placement/Internship, Research, Exploratory, School-Based Enterprise, and/or Service Learning (National FFA Organization, 2015b). The first thing to come to mind when thinking about SAEs is usually raising and showing livestock. Raising livestock falls under Ownership/Entrepreneurship. Raising guide dogs has exclusively fallen under the Placement category, specifically Unpaid Placement, by the two schools in this study. However, raising guide dogs is completely volunteer based and, therefore, could possibly be counted as service learning.

Service Learning is a relatively new component of SAE, being added to the FFA manual in 2015. Service learning can be related to the principles and theories of John Dewey, the modern father of experiential education (Roberts & Edwards, 2015). The goal of service learning is to develop populations with the knowledge and experience necessary to resolve a community's problems and issues (Speck & Hoppe, 2004). Agriculture is easily tied back to service learning, having farmers and scientists make invaluable contributions to society throughout our nation's history (Cooperative Sate Research, Education, and Extension Service, 2011). Implementing service learning into secondary agricultural science classrooms should be simple because it is relevant. However, because service learning is not widely understood, it has presented a challenge (Roberts & Edwards, 2015).

A placement SAE involves placing a student in an agriculture, food, and natural resources-related business to provide the student the opportunity to "learn by doing"

(National FFA Organization, 2015a). Placements may be paid or unpaid. Raising guide dog puppies is an unpaid placement and relates to the agriculture, food, and natural resources curriculum through the courses small animal management and veterinary medical applications. Students gain a basic understanding of canine health through veterinary visits, basic grooming, and nutrition. Students are "placed" as volunteer puppy raisers for Guide Dogs for the Blind.

Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB), the largest guide dog school in the country, has been creating partnerships with the visually impaired and specially trained canines in the United States and Canada since 1942. Private donors fund GDB so that dogs can be placed with the legally blind at no cost to the client. A guide dog is trained to lead the blind in a straight line from point A to point B. Guide dogs lead their partner around obstacles such as curbs and low-hanging branches (Guide Dogs, 2017d). Guide dogs also practice what is called "intelligence disobedience": if they are given an unsafe command from their partner, they are taught to disobey. For example, the dog knows not to step in the street when there is oncoming traffic even if their handler gives them the command to move forward (Guide Dogs, 2017b).

GDB has two training facilities where formal training occurs: one location in San Rafael, California and one in Boring, Oregon. Their puppies are in more than 2,000 puppy raising homes across Western states including Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Texas, Utah, and Washington. As of 2017, there were approximately 2,200 active guide dog teams in the United States and Canada. There are also a number of career changed dogs providing other services such as diabetic alert and

hearing assistance to their disabled partners. Since GDB's founding, more than 14,000 guide dog teams have graduated from GDB (Guide Dogs, 2017c).

Guide Dog puppy raisers are volunteers who are responsible for teaching potential guide dogs good manners and basic obedience for the first year of the puppies' lives. Puppy raisers must join local puppy raising clubs where ideas and information are shared, training techniques are practiced, and social outings are conducted. After about a year with the puppy raiser, the puppy returns to one of the two GDB campuses. There, the puppy undergoes eight phases of formal training to become a guide dog. When the eight phases are completed, the raiser is invited to the graduation ceremony to formally present the dog they raised to their new partner (Guide Dogs, 2017d).

Guide Dogs for the Blind trains their dogs using primarily positive reinforcement. GDB's training department incorporated clicker training techniques after trials showed that dogs trained operantly with food rewards learned faster and were more engaged in training than the dogs trained in a traditional manner. The "traditional manner" involved positive punishment, adding a negative consequence to decrease the likelihood of the undesired behavior occurring again. Now, instead, puppies are rewarded with food along with verbal and physical praise. Raisers are taught to train puppies using positive reinforcement before receiving a puppy (Puppy Raising Manual, 2016).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the barriers to and effects of raising a puppy through an FFA Guide Dogs for the Blind puppy-raising club. This research will benefit FFA chapters and Guide Dogs for the Blind by providing a better understanding of

the outcome of being a puppy raiser. This purpose was achieved using the following research questions:

1. How is the GDB program implemented into public schools through FFA and AFNR programs?
2. What are the impacts of raising a guide dog on the high school raiser?
3. What are the similarities and differences in raising guide dogs and livestock projects through the FFA and AFNR programs?

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, raising guide dogs has been gaining popularity for students in urban environments where raising livestock may not be feasible. Students in AFNR are opting to raise guide dogs as Supervised Agricultural Experiences instead of the more traditional livestock projects. It is unclear whether students are gaining comparable competencies from the raising of guide dog puppies. It is also unclear if students are learning anything from the experience of puppy raising. Just listening through the grapevine, one would most likely hear positive comments about the puppy raising program. However, there is no documentation of this. Research is needed to reveal the effects that raising a guide dog has on the student raiser.

Significance of the Study

High schools that have an interest in implementing a puppy-raising program in their AFNR program may be able to use this research to justify the benefits to administration. Additionally, new clubs may be implemented better and more effectively

after identifying challenges and barriers faced by agricultural science teachers and student puppy raisers. Existing clubs may find information found in this study to be useful in improving their program.

Definition of Terms

The following terms have been operationally defined for this study:

- Career Change: a dog that was in training to be a guide dog, but for some reason including health, skill, and behavioral soundness, the dog would not meet the standards to become a guide dog. Career changed dogs can become other working dogs or pets (Guide Dogs, 2017c).
- Agricultural Science Teacher: An agricultural education teacher responsible for classroom education, supervising Supervised Agricultural Experiences, and guiding their school's FFA chapter (Job Description, 2016).
- Guide Dog: a dog specially trained to guide a visually impaired person around obstacles. Guide dogs are granted public access rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (Guide Dogs, 2017b).
- Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB): a nonprofit and the largest Guide Dog school in the United States, GDB is dedicated to providing high quality working dogs to those individuals with visual impairments at no cost (Guide Dogs, 2017).
- GDB Leader: acts as a liaison between puppy raisers and the Community Field Representative for GDB and is responsible for reporting any issues as well as being a positive representative for GDB (Guide Dogs, 2017).

- The National FFA Organization (FFA): the dynamic, intracurricular, youth organization for students enrolled in agricultural education programs that focuses on developing leadership, personal growth, communication skills, responsibility, career success, character, and citizenship in students through agriculturally related activities and programs (National FFA Organization, 2015a).
- Puppy Raiser: a volunteer for Guide Dogs for the Blind who raises a future guide dog from eight weeks old to approximately 15 months old. Puppy raisers teach good manners, basic obedience, and socialization to the dog (Guide Dogs, 2017c).
- Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE): a project designed and carried out by students, supervised by their agricultural science teacher, in the categories of Ownership/Entrepreneurship, Placement/Internship, Research, Exploratory, School-Based Enterprise, or Service Learning. SAE is an essential part of the complete agricultural education program based on the idea of learning by doing, also known as experiential learning (National FFA Organization, 2015b).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Humans and animals have always had an inexplicable bond. Animals appear to demonstrate compassion for other animals, including humans, and many would agree upon animals' ability to enhance the quality of life for humans (Fine, 2002). More specifically, dogs and humans have a connection unlike any other. Dogs have been used as companions, aids in therapy, assistants to those with disabilities, and more (Melson, 2003; Kramer, Friedmann, & Bernstein, 2009; Viau et al., 2010; Hamama, Hamama-Raz, & Dagan, 2011). However, existing literature does not acknowledge the effects, if any, raising future guide or service dogs has on the raiser.

Owning a pet has been correlated with increased physical health of the owner. Compared to those without pets, "pet owners were found to have lower levels of cardiovascular risk factors" along with lower resting blood pressure and heartrate (Barker & Wolen, 2008, p. 487). Based on numbers of visits to the doctor's office and medication use, pet owners are in better overall physical health than non-pet owners. One study found dog owners to be more physically active than non-dog owners (Barker & Wolen, 2008). A possible explanation is the "sense of responsibility for the health and well-being" one has for his dog (Barker & Wolen, 2008, p. 488). In addition, those pictured with dogs are perceived as happier and more social than those without dogs (Lockwood, 1983).

Dogs also offer humans mental health benefits including less loneliness and improved social networks (Barker & Wolen, 2008). This may be because dogs serve as catalysts for social interactions (Viau et al., 2010). Dogs can aid in initiating social

interactions and “increasing or strengthening social networks and social provisions thus elevating psychological well-being” (McNicholas & Collis, 2000, p. 61). Many people report being as close or closer to their pets than to friends or family. For example, sexual abuse survivors rated their relationship with their pets to be more supportive than that of family members (Barker & Wolen, 2008). In general, the presence of dogs causes a decrease in anxiety (Handlin et al., 2011). The positive effects dogs have on human health “may be caused by oxytocin release induced by positive emotions such as affection and love” (Handlin et al., 2011, p. 302).

Animal assisted activities and animal assisted therapy have been around for many years but their effectiveness, while widely agreed upon, has not been well documented (Hamama, Hamama-Raz, & Dagan, 2011). Hospitals, residential care facilities, rehabilitation facilities, and hospices in America use specially trained animals for pet visitation programs and have seen positive effects. Patients with dementia reported lower “stress levels and an increase in happiness and contentment” (Kramer, Friedman, & Bernstein, 2009, p. 44) when they received visits from therapy dogs. The visits from the dogs were associated with positive mood increases, lower stress levels, increased happiness, and decreased aggression, anxiety, and mood disorders. The dogs offered patients the opportunity to “interact with, talk to, and touch another living being” which results in more positive social behaviors (Kramer, Friedmann, & Bernstein, 2009, p. 44). In addition to dementia patients, many teenagers who had experienced a traumatic event interacted positively with a canine present, as dogs have been found to lower anxiety and encourage participation in therapy in these teens (Hamama et al., 2011).

Dogs are not the only animals shown to improve health in humans. Horses have been used to treat populations with physical and mental disabilities through therapeutic horseback riding (Bass, Duchowny, & Llabre, 2009). Therapeutic horseback riding is defined as "using horseback riding treatment to improve posture, balance, and mobility while developing a therapeutic bond between the patient and horse" (Bass, Duchowny, & Llabre, 2009, p.1261). This kind of animal assisted activity has been shown to be beneficial for children with neurological and developmental disorders such as autism. Animal assisted therapy with all species provides a multisensory environment that is beneficial to children with disabilities (Bass, Duchowny, & Llabre, 2009). Bass, Duchowny, & Llabre (2009) found that children with Autism engaged in animal assisted activities showed greater use of language and social interaction during their time spent with the animals as compared to standard occupational therapy.

Dogs are used in animal-assisted activities such as reading programs. These dogs are brought into schools to promote and improve reading in children. Relationships with dogs have a positive effect on child development in the social, physical, emotional, and cognitive domains (Harris & Sholtis, 2016). Dogs in library reading programs cause "increases in self-confidence, enthusiasm for library visits, and interest in stories and reading" among children (Kirnan, Siminerio, & Wong, 2016, p. 639). Students who participated in reading programs involving canines showed improved reading skills by two grade levels (Kirnan et al., 2016). Furthermore, students show a positive attitude toward dogs, increase their confidence in reading, are more interested in reading, and are more willing to read aloud as a result of the dogs (Kirnan et al., 2016). Furthermore, "children

having a dog present in their classroom display increased social competence" (Handlin et al., 2011, p. 302).

In addition to dogs, patients awaiting a heart transplant exhibited lower stress and an increase in happiness when an aquarium was introduced in their hospital room (Cole & Gawlinski, 1995). Conversely, a study by Motomura, Yagi, and Ohyama (2004) determined, after multiple visits from therapy dogs, patients with dementia did not show any changes in their irritability and depression mental status but, these patients' apathetic state was improved by the therapy dog visits. Despite the mainly positive results therapy dogs provide, some long-term facilities are reluctant to allow animal-assisted therapy in their facilities for fear of infection, injury, animal care issues, and uncleanliness (Beck, 2000). As a possible solution, Sony created a computerized pet called AIBO, which has been used similarly to a living therapy dog. AIBO showed results comparable to the live therapy dogs in stimulating socially interactive behavior in the dementia patients (Kramer, Friedmann, & Bernstein, 2015).

Children can learn a considerable amount from owning pets. The unpredictability of pets is predictable and, therefore, provides great learning opportunities to children (Melson, 2003). Pets "increase autonomy, self-concept, and self-esteem" in children (Barker & Wolen, 2008, p. 489). Because the "animal is constantly dependent on the child," the child is required "to behave in a mature fashion [and] take responsibility and care for all of the animal's basic needs. This mature behavior embodies a sense of power in the child and raises his self-worth" (Hamama et al., 2011, p. 1976). Children can also

learn empathy from pets. “Children who are highly attached to their pets are more empathetic than those who are less attached” (Barker & Wolen, 2008, p. 489).

Children learn about the care, characteristics, and needs of animals when they have one in their home (Melson, 2003). In addition, pets increase social orientation and create a positive family climate in children (Barker & Wolen, 2008). Children often derive emotional support from their pets, talking to them about things going on in their lives (Melson, 2003). Vygotsky (1978) and Piaget (1969) found that companion animals are highly likely to be motivators for learning for many children. This is for two reasons: (a) children learn more and retain information better when they learn about subjects in which they have an emotional connection and (b) children learn more and better when learning occurs within meaningful relationships.

The effectiveness of experiential learning is widely supported and is beneficial for student learning (Binder, Baguley, Crook, & Miller, 2015; Hamer, 2000; Yardley, Teunissen, & Dornan, 2012). Experiential learning is based on the idea that “learning through real-world experience facilitates critical thinking and reflection by the student” (McConnell, 2016, p. 312). Undergraduate students enrolled in an education class at a university in Singapore participated in an experiential learning activity involving training shelter dogs. The students at this Singapore university were immersed in a dog training environment for two weeks intended to teach students to think critically about the course content and to mimic real world challenges that would not otherwise happen in the classroom. Students perceived their learning to have increased through the dog training

experiential learning activity. In addition, students enjoyed their learning experience with the shelter dogs (McConnell, 2016).

The absence of empathy is "an indicator associated with childhood violence, including the intentional harming of animals" (Zasloff, Hart, & Weiss, 2003, p. 353). Programs involving dog training have been effective at decreasing noncompliant and aggressive behavior in youth. "Teaching Love and Compassion" (TLC) is a three-week program in school that targets boys and girls aged 11 to 13. The objectives of TLC are to expand the students' "knowledge of responsible pet care, improve their sensitivity to other living things by bonding with the animals they work with, and develop new skills by learning to train shelter dogs, working with others, and learning skills for managing conflict" (Zasloff et al., 2003, p. 354). The students who completed the TLC program "increased their confidence, self-esteem, and interpersonal skills; learned positive ways of handling conflict; and improve their attitudes towards school and toward adults" (Zasloff et al., 2003, p. 357).

Dogs have also been trained by inmates in the prison system. About 290 correctional facilities across the United States currently have a dog training program (Cooke & Farrington, 2015). Of these prison programs, it was discovered that the inmates who had animals required half the medication compared to those who did not have animals (Britton & Button, 2005). In addition, those with animals had reduced violence and fewer suicide attempts than those who did not have animals. A dog training program within the prison system reduces the mistrust between inmates and prison staff and decreases the prevalence of violence and behavior infractions among inmates (Britton & Button, 2005).

Dogs that are a product of programs like this "have the potential for transforming lives, both within and outside prison walls" (Britton & Button, 2005, p. 94). One inmate stated she thinks, "we could learn so much more from these dogs than we could ever… teach" (Cooke & Farrington, 2015, p. 210). In Cooke and Farrington's (2015) study, it was found that the inmates with dogs had increased self-reflection, increased confidence, improved psychological and emotional health, increased autonomy, and decreased violence. Some of the prisoners who train dogs mentioned hoping to continue working with dogs once they were released (Austin, 2016). Many of the dogs trained in the prison system go on to be working service dogs for a person with a disability. The other dogs are made more adoptable to families through obedience training (Cooke & Farrington, 2015).

The U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division (2011) defines service animals "as dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability" (How "Service Animal" Is Defined section, para. 1). Service dogs have beneficial effects on individuals with a variety of disabilities. Those with visual impairments use guide dogs who lead them around obstacles and out of harm's way. Leading a blind person is the most demanding task a person has asked of any animal (McNicholas & Collis, 2000). Service dogs also have shown to have beneficial effects on children with autism and on their families (Viau et al., 2010). A study measured cortisol in children with autism before and after the introduction of a service dog and "found that the introduction of service dogs had a significant effect on the Cortisol Awakening Response of autistic children" (Viau et al., 2010, p. 1190). Service dogs serve as a "facilitator of

social interactions for their owners as well as for the work the dog is specifically trained for" (McNicholas & Collis, 2000, p. 62).

The advantages associated with owning dogs are magnified for those with physical and psychological disabilities (Sanders, 2000; Friedmann et al, 1980; Allen & Blascovish, 1996). For a disabled owner, dogs provide a sense of safety, offer companionship, and increase the owner's sense of competence. Dogs impact the social experience of those with disabilities as well. Dogs become the focal point for conversations in addition to increasing positive attention. Instead of seeing a disability, people see a dog (Steffens & Bergler, 1998).

Children can also learn from working with other animals, such as livestock. Participation in raising livestock through 4-H or FFA has been shown to help youth develop valuable life skills (Holmgren & Reid, 2007) as well as competencies from STEM integration such as livestock evaluation (Wooten, Rayfield, & Moore, 2013). The longer the children are exposed to raising livestock, the more likely they are to develop those life skills (Boleman, Cummings, & Briers, 2004). Skills learned through raising livestock include responsibility, sportsmanship, animal grooming, safety, and animal selection (Rusk, Summerlot-Early, Machtmes, Talbert, & Balschweid, 2003). Irresponsible behavior has also been shown to decrease through raising livestock (Boyd, Herring, & Briers, 1992).

The benefits dogs have on humans are apparent, but minimal literature is provided on the benefits a trainer receives through training (Altschiller, 2011). Excluding training as a behavior intervention, literature concerning training is nonexistent. Additional research is needed to formally identify the benefits of raising a guide dog puppy through AFNR

programs. This study aims to fill this gap in the literature. With the information found in this study, both the National FFA Organization and Guide Dogs for the Blind can better articulate reasons for joining the puppy-raising program.

The framework for this study was based on comparing the benefits of and competencies gained from raising a guide dog to the more well-known and documented benefits of and competencies gained from raising livestock through FFA. Raising livestock projects through 4-H and FFA provide youth with an excellent opportunity to develop life skills that will be beneficial to the livestock exhibitors as they become adults (Holmgren & Reid, 2007). Holmgren and Reid (2007) determined that "caring for an animal project requires responsibility and fortitude" (p. 8) and by accepting responsibility for raising these animals, students are learning an incredible amount. Life skills gained from raising livestock as shown in the Holmgren and Reid (2007) study includes accepting responsibility, decision-making, teamwork, confidence building, integrity, and more.

Motivations for joining FFA were compared to motivations for deciding to raise a Guide Dog. Maslow's hierarchy of needs was used to determine psychological, physical, or sociological motivations for joining FFA and deciding to raise a Guide Dog. Maslow's hierarchy is concerned with physiological well-being and based upon the idea that to progress to another level, one must have their needs satisfied at a lower level (Phelps, Henry, & Bird, 2012; Maslow, 1968). FFA has traditionally provided students with opportunities for career development, to achieve personal goals, and "potentially [fulfill] the individual's self-actualizations, esteem, and cognitive needs" (Phelps et al., 2012, p. 72). Phelps et al. (2012) study's results concluded that students' reasons to join FFA

included encouragement from others, personal gain, social reasons, and fun activities and travel.

Britton and Button (2005) conducted a study examining the training of dogs as a behavioral intervention for prison inmates. They utilized a qualitative approach because the research was preliminary and there was little to no documented background information on the subject. Face-to-face interviews were conducted on-site with semi-structured conversations. Results of the Britton and Button's (2005) study reiterated that the training of dogs in the prison program led to better relationships between inmates and the prison staff and less behavior issues among inmates. Britton and Button's (2005) study is the basis for the current analysis of determining the impacts puppy raising has on high school puppy raisers.

The current study was based on a combination of the studies by Holmgren & Reid (2007), Maslow's (1968) Hierarchy of Needs, and Britton and Button (2005). Knowledge, skills, and abilities gained through raising a guide dog and motivations for participation are not currently documented. Utilizing the existing studies, a framework is provided for this study concerning raising guide dogs in AFNR programs. By comparing the known benefits of competencies gained from raising livestock to raising guide dogs, a better understanding of motivations and benefits will be understood.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Research Design

This study focused on interviews with guide dog puppy raisers, their parents, and the Agricultural Science Teachers/GDB leaders who lead the puppy raising programs as a preliminary attempt to fill the gap existing on this subject. Because this is a new subject area to be studied, a qualitative method was used in order to better understand trends and pave the way for future studies. A qualitative study provided a deep understanding of the benefits of and competencies gained from raising a Guide Dog through AFNR. In recent years, qualitative research has become progressively more valuable in educational studies (Fraenkel et al., 2011). The educational field employs this research design because it is easily applicable and calls for the researcher to conduct the survey with small sample sizes and in a natural setting (Dooley, 2007). Data were collected using face-to-face interviews with puppy raisers, parents, and GDB Leaders/Agricultural Science Teachers in their respective high schools.

Study Area Description

Lone Star Guide Dog Raisers is a Texas division of puppy raisers for Guide Dogs for the Blind. In Lone Star Guide Dog Raisers, there are 13 guide dog raising clubs across the state. Of those 13, four are FFA chapters that currently have a puppy raising program. These Chapters are Robinson FFA in Waco, Dobie High School FFA in Houston, Byron Nelson FFA in Trophy Club, and James Madison FFA in San Antonio (Lone Star Guide Dog Raisers, 2010). Two Chapters, Byron Nelson and James Madison, are large programs

with more than ten dogs. Robinson and Dobie are smaller with about five dogs in training. Based on Texas Community Field Representative (CFR) recommendations, James Madison High School in San Antonio, Texas and Byron Nelson High School in Trophy Club, Texas were used in this study. The Texas CFR explained that the two chapters had the largest number of dogs, that the programs were more established, and that the participants were doing the best jobs..

Participant Selection

In the state of Texas, on the four high school campuses that currently have a GDB puppy raising club implemented into their FFA chapter, there are approximately 50 puppies in training. Research was conducted at James Madison High School and Byron Nelson High School. Both schools are public institutions in the state of Texas and background checks and necessary paperwork and permission were granted prior to interviewing.

Byron Nelson High School, in Northwest Independent School District, has approximately 2,552 students enrolled, making it a UIL Class 6A school. Northwest Independent School District is about 20 miles north of Fort Worth, Texas in Denton County. Byron Nelson High School opened its doors in August of 2009 with its first year having all four grade levels being 2011-2012. Byron Nelson's agriculture program sees approximately 300 students each day and has three Agricultural Science Teachers (judgingcard.com). Byron Nelson began its puppy raising program in October 2015 and had eight dogs in its program at the time of this study.

James Madison High School, in North East Independent School District, is, as its name implies, in the northeast part of San Antonio, and has approximately 4,000 students, making it a UIL Class 6A school. James Madison is home to the Agriscience Magnet Program (AMP), the largest of its kind in the state. The mission of the AMP is to "develop the potential of students for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through an educational experience in the agriculture, food, and natural resource curricula" (Agriscience Magnet Program, n.d.). Students from around the San Antonio area can apply to attend this program. The James Madison AMP is housed in state of the art facilities and has ten agriscience teachers (judgingcard.com). James Madison began its puppy raising program in April 2015 and brought in its first puppies in June of 2015. At the time of this study, James Madison had 22 dogs in their program.

At the time of this study, there were a total of 30 guide dog raiser and puppy pairs in these two Texas FFA programs. This number is likely to fluctuate often with new puppies coming in and dogs returning to California or Oregon's campus of Guide Dogs for the Blind's for formal training. The maximum quantity of willing subjects was sought through purposeful sampling using the Agricultural Science Teacher's recommendations. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that, "naturalistic inquiry relies upon purposeful rather than representative sampling" (p. 102). This study examined students along with their parents in face-to-face interviews. This study also examined Agricultural Science Teachers and GDB Leaders who have implemented a puppy raising program in face-to-face interviews. Participants voluntarily agreed to participate in the study and consent was

obtained from parents/guardians and GDB Leaders/Agricultural Science Teachers. Assent was obtained from the students under 18 years of age.

A total of six students, one parent, and two leaders from Byron Nelson High School were interviewed. Sixteen students, three parents, and one leader from James Madison High School were interviewed. Students ranged from seventh grade to high school seniors with a majority being in high school. Of the 22 students interviewed, two were male and 20 were female. Most students were raising their first guide dog puppy at the time of this study. Three students were currently raising their second puppy, one student was raising her third puppy, and one student was raising her fourth. Puppies' ages ranged from twelve weeks to fifteen months old. For the purpose of this study, names of human participants have been changed to gender neutral pseudonyms. Human pronouns have been changed to female. Dog names and pronouns have been changed to male to protect the identity of the raiser.

Students were Alex, Taylor, Morgan, Cody, Ryan, Lee, Drew, Terry, Jordan, Casey, Riley, Peyton, Devin, Jessie, Parker, Reese, Harper, Sawyer, Kennedy, Sydney, Jaimie, and Danny. Parents were Kendall, Kennedy's parent; Mason, Taylor's parent; Julian, Drew's parent; and Spencer, Ryan's parent. Leaders interviewed were Ms. Elliott, Ms. Dylan, and Ms. Carson.

Data Collection

This study used 29 face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Face-to-face interviews allowed for the interviewer to build on the dialogue given by the interviewee. Face-to-face interviews were chosen over phone interviews because communication through the phone

can deprive the interviewer of nonverbal communicators such as body language (Sturges & Hanrahn, 2004). Data collection took place at the respective schools to preserve the normal setting and allow the "phenomenon of interest to unfold naturally" (Patton, 2001, p. 39). The researcher/interviewer had previously been involved in Guide Dogs for the Blind events and, therefore, through her experience, was able to build a trust and rapport with the respondents and, in turn, attain more accurate data (Dooley, 2007). Trustworthiness and credibility were established by the researcher's prolonged engagement in the guide dog community (Dooley, 2007). With the participants' and parental permissions, interviews were recorded.

This study used the combination of interviews of student puppy raisers, GDB Leaders/ Agricultural Science Teachers, and parents/guardians to achieve triangulation. The use of interviews with the three groups improved trustworthiness and credibility while limiting interview bias (Mathison, 1988). In addition, member checks along with peer debriefing and audit trails were used. Multiple methods of data collection allow for a stronger, more reliable case that will be able to withstand cross-data validity checks (Patton, 1999). Multiple perspectives and examiners were used when analyzing data to attain trustworthiness (Patton, 1999). The data were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The interviews analyzed in this study were conducted at each school with the parents and Agricultural Science teacher(s) present in April of 2017. Interviews occurred individually to reduce influence of others' responses. All identities were kept confidential and data were coded prior to being analyzed. This study was reviewed and approved by the

Institutional Review Board in compliance with Texas A&M University's Human Subject Research requirements (IRB2017-0068).

The Human Instrument

Lincoln and Guba (1985) qualified "the human being as the instrument of choice for naturalistic inquiry" (p. 193). In this study, I was the instrument as I conducted the interviews and analyzed the data. To accurately describe the instrument, I must disclose my background. Growing up, I always loved dogs. I became involved with training service dogs my freshman year of college when I joined Aggie Guide Dogs and Service Dogs (AGS), a student-run organization on the campus of Texas A&M University. I was drawn to the idea of service dogs when my dad became disabled after being diagnosed with ALS. My father did not have a service dog, but I imagined his quality of life would have been increased with a service dog.

I raised a service dog, a chocolate labradoodle named Captain, through AGS from December 2013 to February 2015. I trained Captain from eight weeks old to 15 months old, teaching him everything from housebreaking to turning on lights. He was a loveable and goofy but hardworking dog. He was partnered with a woman as a mobility assistance dog and provided her with balance and laundry assistance, picked up dropped items, gave her daily laughs. After Captain graduated, I became the Trainer Supervisor for AGS. My responsibilities as Trainer Supervisor included temperament testing litters of puppies to choose service dog candidates, training potential trainers, overseeing current puppies in training, communicating with veterinarian sponsors and secondary organizations, and

deciding when dogs were ready to graduate. Through AGS, I have worked with a wide variety of people including people from Guide Dogs for the Blind.

I should also mention that teaching secondary agriculture was my dream. While I was an undergraduate, it was brought to my attention that high school students were getting the opportunity to raise guide dogs through GDB and their FFA chapter. The idea of incorporating my two passions—training service/guide dogs and teaching agriculture—intrigued me so naturally, this study unfolded easily.

Interview Questions

The following questions were asked to the student puppy raisers:

1. Why did you join FFA?
2. Why did you decide to raise a GDB puppy? (Motivations for becoming involved)
3. What challenges have you faced?
4. What are the benefits to training?
5. How have you changed since you began puppy raising? (Competencies gained)
6. Would you raise another puppy? Why or why not?
7. Has this experience influenced your potential career path? How?
8. Have you raised other dogs or pets previously? If yes, how does raising a guide dog puppy differ?
9. Have you raised livestock through FFA or 4-H presently or previously? If yes, how does raising a guide dog puppy differ?
10. Would your dog being career changed (does not become a working guide dog) affect your opinion of the experience or your decision to do it again?

11. What were your reservations about raising a puppy?

The following questions were asked to the parents of the puppy raisers:

1. What changes, if any, have you noticed in your child since they began puppy raising?
2. Would you recommend puppy raising to others? Why or why not?
3. Would you allow your child to raise another? Why or why not?
4. What challenges have you/your family encountered because of this experience?

The following questions were asked to the GDB Leaders/Agricultural Science Teachers:

1. Why did you decide to incorporate this program into your FFA chapter?
2. What challenges did you face/are currently facing as a result of adding this program?
3. What outcomes have you seen in your students?
4. Will you continue this program? Why or why not?
5. Comparing puppy raisers to students raising livestock, what differences and similarities have you seen in competencies gained?

Study Limitations and Bias

Interviewing students before and after raising a Guide Dog may be a more effective approach to determine changes in students caused by raising puppies. Raisers have a dog for an average of 14 to 18 months. Bias from the researcher is possible because of her previous involvement in raising guide dogs. Bias is accounted for by using triangulation between the three groups being interviewed. These groups include the student puppy raisers, their parents, and the GDB Leaders/Agricultural Science Teachers.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Results Related to Research Question One

The first research question this study sought to answer, "How is the GDB program implemented into the public school through FFA?" To answer this question, we must first discover why students are drawn to agricultural science classes and, more specifically, raising puppies.

Students were asked why they initially joined FFA to understand their motivations for becoming involved and to see if raising a puppy had any effect on their decision to join FFA. Students' reasons for joining FFA was because of their career goals, family/friend influence, and a love for animals. Student responses include, "To get through my veterinary courses" (Sawyer), "my sister was in [FFA]" (Kennedy), "my best friend showed pigs her freshman year" (Sydney), "I love animals and I wanted to go down that path in my career" (Jamie), "I wanted to become a vet so I joined vet med" (Danny), "I've always had a great bond with animals so I thought it'd be better to actually do something with them" (Alex), "my sister first did it" (Taylor), "I would like to be a large animal vet so [FFA] follows the path I'd like to pursue" (Morgan), "I wanted to get in a group of people that would understand me personally" (Cody), "I have a passion for animals and I want to become a vet when I get out of high school" (Ryan), "I joined FFA initially through family" (Lee), "I have a passion for [animals]" (Drew), "I joined ag because I originally wanted to become a vet" (Terry), "to raise a livestock project" (Jordan), "It was actually a friend. She told me how cool it was" (Casey), "I wanted to be a marine biologist

and, um, classes they offered here would better prepare me for the classes I may be facing in college" (Riley), "my sister did it so she had a lot of fun with it" (Peyton), "because I've always loved animals and I love agriculture" (Devin), "I originally joined FFA to be more involved in my community and also my aspirations is to become a vet" (Jessie), "Because I want to be a veterinarian or anything in the animal field so I wanted to take part" (Parker), and "I joined FFA so I could get more involved because this is something I want to do as a career. I want to go into the animal field so I saw this as a career path and a way to… open up new opportunities" (Reese).

Students were asked why they decided to raise a guide dog puppy in order to compare their motivations for raising to their motivations for joining FFA. Little relation between the two exists besides the students' love for animals. Students' responses to the question, "Why did you decide to raise a Guide Dog puppy?" include, "I've always loved dogs and I was looking for something that wasn't raising livestock" (Harper), "I thought it was a cool program and I've heard about it from my first ag teacher" (Sawyer), "we were in our freshman ag class and [Harper] was coming through and recruiting… it was just a really cool program to like help people" (Kennedy), " I wanted to show pigs and then my mom said no so it was the next best option for my SAE" (Sydney), "I wanted to help society I guess. And I just have a passion for dogs" (Jamie), "I've always loved dogs. I want to become a vet so I just thought this would be a good opportunity" (Danny), "I was in [Ms. Dylan's] class and…I slowly got interested into it" (Alex), "I decided to do this because you get to help someone who's visually impaired" (Taylor), "My dad has a service dog and he's not blind but I get to see how his service dog helps him every day and I really

wanted to be involved" (Morgan), "just change a person's life, it brings joy (Cody), "I felt like it would be a great opportunity to socialize, meet more people that share the same passion as I do. And I felt like it'd be something great to, in the end, put out for someone" (Ryan), "it can really make a difference" (Lee), "I decided to do it… because I know these dogs actually change somebody's life" (Drew), "I thought it was different. It'd definitely be a story to tell kids" (Terry), "Because they're pretty cool. Just to walk them on campus, really" (Jordan), "I love doing community service… I love to be involved with, like, the community and to, like, make changes in people's lives" (Casey), "I love helping others and I know how amazing this would look on college applications" (Riley), "Mainly 'cause it was just very interesting. Like, not many people can say they've done it so, but that immediately grabbed my attention. At the same time I was like, it's for a good cause as well" (Peyton), "I love working with animals" (Devin), "I wanted to be able to help someone and I felt this was a great opportunity especially through FFA to help" (Jessie), "I love dogs and I thought it would be a nice experience to be able to help someone in the future" (Parker), and "I saw it as a new opportunity for me and I thought like, what an amazing way and opportunity to change someone's life" (Reese).

The three leaders were asked why they decided to incorporate a puppy raising program into their FFA chapter/AFNR program. Ms. Elliott said the, "main [reason] was this being an urban school environment. There isn't an opportunity really for students to conveniently have an animal [entrepreneurship] SAE. Shop, we can handle. Floral design, we can handle." Ms. Elliott explained her concerns about her children and others driving to their school barn, located thirty minutes outside of town on the interstate highway. Ms.

Elliott said, “And you know, February, we get ice storms. November, we get ice storms. I just was not endorsing [them] doing that kind of traveling to do this.” Ms. Elliott said that, by offering guide dog raising as an SAE, “it’s a matter of giving students at this campus and ultimately students at other campuses an opportunity to raise an animal.” Ms. Carson explained that:

> [this school] is unique and I think that uniqueness has become a little more the norm in the agriculture education model. Students are expected to have an SAE but I don’t believe that all of our students have the capital to be able to raise a market steer, a sheep, a goat, whatever it may be. So, whenever this idea was presented, it was an awesome opportunity to get students a nontraditional SAE that is going to allow them, in the comfort of their home… be able to serve, to be able to lead, give back, and to be able to enrich their learning experience because of this program. (Ms. Carson)

The idea of incorporating this program was first brought to Ms. Dylan by their local puppy raising club leader. “She came to me and thought it would be a good fit because I teach Veterinary Science and Small Animal Management and she thought it would be a good fit into teaching some of the basic veterinary skills that we do. Um, and it also incorporates into some of the TEKS [Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills] that are in there as well.” Ms. Dylan mentioned that, being in an urban setting, raising guide dogs is a good opportunity for some of their students. “We live in a very urban setting and so a lot of our students, yes they know about agriculture but really, a lot of them, it doesn’t appeal to them to raise pigs and goats and sheep and cattle. And, so, in this instance, with me being

able to put a dog into the situation, it just made perfect sense for that. Something they could raise at home" (Ms. Dylan)

Overall, by incorporating the puppy raising program into AFNR programs, Agricultural Science Teachers were better able to reach a group of students who may not have had the resources or desire to raise livestock. Ms. Elliott said, "It hits a niche of students that the other doesn't. So, it really fit, fulfilled, a hole in our students' FFA programs" (Ms. Elliott).

The main challenge encountered by the GDB Leaders and Agricultural Science Teachers was actually starting the puppy raising clubs. One leader expressed difficulties getting the administration on board by saying, "that's probably one of the biggest challenges: getting school support or endorsement or approval to start the program" (Ms. Elliott). Ms. Elliott admitted the mistake made initially was approaching the wrong people. "The mistakes we've made is that we've had some very motivated and capable students walking into an assistant principal and saying 'Hey! I'd like to bring puppies on board'" (Ms. Elliott). Instead, Ms. Elliott suggests bringing the "community field representative (CFR)… and [going] straight to the top. [The CFR] go[es] to the ISD superintendent, the dean or superintendent of the college. [The CFR] can answer all of the questions. [The CFR] can bring up the ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] aspect of it." Ms. Elliott noted that getting the school principal on board was no problem because she, "already had a rapport with him. [Her child] had a rapport with him. Um, so getting him on board was not the problem. The problem was getting one of the Ag Science Teachers to, um, to sponsor it" (Ms. Elliott). The next step was just that— finding an Agricultural Science

Teacher willing to give their name and signature so that there is a representative present at the school. Ms. Elliott is a volunteer parent, not a school employee. Ms. Elliott walked into Ms. Carson and said, “Alright. All I need is your name and your signature. I’ll do the other aspects of it.” Ms. Elliott described their school’s club design, which includes three adult leaders as “a booster club type program where [they] had a support network specifically for this one SAE.” In this school’s set up, the Agricultural Science Teacher did not do much more than provide a face on campus. The volunteer parent leader did the other aspects. Ms. Elliott added, “I know how much these Ag Science Teachers do. And to throw this full time program on top of that just isn’t fair to them. I really think the key element to making this work is having an adult leader willing to come in as a co-sponsor of the program” (Ms. Elliott).

Ms. Carson expressed time as being the main challenge to incorporating a puppy raising program into their AFNR program. Ms. Carson reported that, “The biggest [challenge] that was very upfront and kind of led to having, or choosing, to integrate [Ms. Elliott] into the program was time”. Ms. Carson described time as “a limited resource” and noted that, because time is so limited, they are not able to say yes to each and every student who expresses interest in the program and that doing so would cause them to be, “spread so far thin.” After thinking and doing research on the time required to implement a program like this, Ms. Carson decided that:

> it [wasn’t] going to be feasible for a teacher that was responsible for other entities— classroom, SAEs, LDEs (Leadership Development Events), CDEs (Career Development Events), so on and forth, all these acronyms. We didn’t really

> feel like it was an opportunity for us to do that at the level that we needed to. So, we really looked to bringing a partnership on and leveraging people who are passionate about this particular program and leveraging it to be able to grow this program to provide additional opportunities. (Ms. Carson)

Ms. Dylan had similar concerns to Ms. Carson: time. Ms. Dylan noted, "Time management for me is huge." Ms. Dylan's responsibilities as an Agricultural Science Teacher and GDB club leader include "being in charge of 17 head of cattle and then on top of maintaining my guide dog program on top of maintaining my classes on top of being a [parent]. That has been very challenging." It should be noted that Ms. Dylan was interviewed at 8:00pm on a Monday night after a full day of classes followed by an FFA meeting, GDB meeting, and, finally, a booster club meeting. Other than time, Ms. Dylan reported that other challenges included "misconceptions. That's really it. Everyone is pretty much on board especially once they follow a dog and they see it go from the start to the end." Ms. Dylan also noted that when administration changed, they "had to re-educate again." Ms. Dylan said, "I just can't get it all done by myself." Because of this, Ms. Dylan made the decision to open up a parent volunteer position, as Ms. Elliott and Ms. Carson have.

Students were asked if they had any reservations about puppy raising before they started and if they did, what they were. The goal in asking this question was to see if there was any opportunities for improvement for the pre-puppy stage. Half of the student raisers did not have reservations (Sawyer, Jamie, Alex, Taylor, Cody, Ryan, Drew, Terry, Jordan,

Riley, Devin) and half of the students did (Harper, Kennedy, Sydney, Danny, Morgan, Lee, Casey, Peyton, Jessie, Parker, Reese).

The student raisers with reservations reported them as being, “other people not understanding what I was doing” (Harper), “My dad’s not a dog person so he kind of, like, downed me for it and it kind of made me question if I wanted to do it. And then throughout raising, it was just kind of like, time. ’Cause I was in softball last year and time, but then I figured it all out and I got everything to work and it helped a lot” (Kennedy), “The time, basically. That was pretty much it. For a livestock animal, you only have to travel to the barn twice a day. When you have a dog, it’s 24 hours” (Sydney), “my family certainly did because we told them what all they have to do” (Danny), “I have three dogs, I’m in a sport, and I have a pig so my parents were like ‘Are you sure?’” (Morgan), “Yes, giving it away. It’s going to be a really rough day” (Lee), “I think the biggest thing was how other people were going to react is what I was afraid of” (Casey), “I knew it was a lot of hard work but, it gets easier with time. That’s one thing. Um, it’s kind of, I’m not typically the kind of person who likes to draw attention to myself but everywhere you go, if there’s a dog with you, people are going to be staring, big time” (Peyton), “Fearing that I would do wrong by [my dog]. That I wouldn’t be able to help him reach his full potential” (Jessie), “Time consuming wise, I wasn’t sure if my family would be okay with it ’cause it’s a whole other dog” (Parker), and “I was always scared that I wouldn’t do good or like [he] wouldn’t succeed or that my parents wouldn’t be okay with it” (Reese).

Students who did not have any reservations responded to the question with, “Nope, not at all. I was like ‘Let’s do it!’” (Alex), “No, just kind of jumped all in” (Cody), and “No, it was always something I wanted to do” (Jordan).

Results Related to Research Question Two

The second research question in this study aimed to explore the impacts associated with raising a puppy as a high school student from the perspective of the student, parent, and GDB Leader/Agricultural Science Teacher. Being previously involved, I had difficulty keeping biases from playing a role in analyzing the data. To mitigate this issue, I documented all responses. Dictionary.com defines “impact” as to “have a strong effect on someone or something.” These student raisers have invested blood, sweat, and tears (quite literally with puppy teething) into raising these puppies. Without a doubt, the puppies have had a strong effect on the students. I set out to find what kind of impact exactly has been left on the raiser. Face-to-face interviews conducted in an informal manner allowed me to gain further insight into the world of raising future guide dogs. Impacts on the students included responsibility/maturity, helping others/selfless service, people/networking, confidence, career paths, patience, time management, and challenges associated with raising a puppy.

Responsibility/Maturity

To no surprise, responsibility and maturity quickly proved to be a theme while talking to raisers, parents, and leaders. Of the 29 respondents, 20 mentioned responsibility and/or maturity. Most respondents mentioned it more than once. Comments about

responsibility and maturity include, “I believe I became more mature and responsible. Like, I’ve only taken care of myself so having a dog, like, gives you responsibility” (Danny), “I feel personally like I’ve gotten more mature” (Parker), and “I’ve become more independent and responsible” (Reese). Parent responses regarding responsibility included, “Definitely learning responsibility, dedication to something” (Kendall) and “the amount of responsibility is incredible” (Mason). One parent began speaking about how her student has changed since beginning puppy raising but stopped and said, “well, no, she’s always been responsible” (Julian).

Many students and parents likened puppy-raising to being a parent of a child. Sawyer put it, “It’s more like being a parent than you would think. Like you have to give up some of your own stuff for the dog” and “it’s like they’re your own children.” Lee said, “I feel like I’ve matured a lot ’cause it’s almost like being a mom.” Other responses include, “I think that raising a puppy has, like, taught me to be not as selfish that I once was because I take care of another organism besides myself” (Jamie), “they always say it’s like having a kid and, like, I didn’t realize, it’s literally like having a child. You get so attached and they’re always with you. It is like having a child” (Casey), “My mom always tells me it’s like having a kid basically. So, you can’t keep your eyes off them for long” (Peyton), “…get that responsibility of kind of taking care of basically a child” (Jessie), and “You learn responsibility. It’s like having a child so you’re constantly having to take care of something. You’re having to feed him, you’re having to take him to the restroom, you’re having to always watch him and, like, make sure he does good” (Reese).

GDB puppy raising club leader, Ms. Elliott, reported "having an awesome group of students…very conscientious, very capable, very motivated, and very mature." Ms. Elliott added that the biggest challenge of running a group like this "is finding a student that is mature enough and responsible enough to take on a 14-month project." Ms. Elliott then added that "it's also the responsibility of the [teacher/leader] to nurture that responsibility and that maturity." Ms. Elliott admitted that sometimes having sit down meetings with the raisers was necessary when things got rocky. However, Ms. Elliott said that it was assumed that other students in the school would be more of an issue than they turned out to be. But, Ms. Elliott opined, "really chalk[s] that up more to [the student raisers'] maturity in handling the situation than there not being a situation." Ms. Elliott stressed that the student raisers "have to grow up because this is not an SAE that's done in a barn where you're never going to have public interaction. They truly have to step up their maturity game to deal with the general public." Ms. Elliott talked up their program's raisers by adding, "just kudos to their maturity." Ms. Carson stated that, since starting the puppy-raising program, "obviously maturity has skyrocketed. Responsibility has skyrocketed and I think parents would probably say the same thing."

Raising Pets versus Raising Guide Dogs

Student raisers were asked, "Have you raised other dogs or pets previously? If yes, how does raising a guide dog puppy differ?" to see if a distinction between the two was present. This question was included to discover if there is a discrepancy between raising pets and guide dogs. If students are allowed to gain credit towards class (counting it as an SAE), it should not be as simple as having a family pet at home.

Students responded with training methods and rules being different with guide dog puppies than with pets at home. Responses included, “they have, like, more strict guidelines and they get to be socialized in places that pets can’t. And, they have a different job than a pet, like, just to be loved on” (Harper), “They definitely have more rules. They can’t be treated like pets” (Sawyer), “You treat [guide dog puppies] a lot differently than, like, you would your own” (Kennedy), “You have to watch them 24/7 and they require a lot more work than just the normal love, I guess” (Jamie), “Different rules, definitely” (Danny), “You’re training more things” (Taylor), “the training is completely different. It’s definitely more strict” (Ryan), “lots of rules. It’s very restricted. There’s only specific things you can do. Like week-by-week your training with them changes and the toys they’re allowed to have changes and how much play time they get changes. With a pet, you don’t have to worry about what they’re doing at all. Like, if they have a bad habit of picking up shoes and putting them by their bed, it’s not a problem. But, when a guide dog does that, it’s a very big problem” (Lee), “you can’t treat them the same. You have to be a little more watchful of what they get into and what they’re doing… a guide dog puppy can’t go anywhere by itself” (Terry), “both dogs abide by different rules” (Peyton), “It’s a lot more structured and you have to think completely different about things” (Devin), “you have to be more strict. You can’t let them do things a normal household dog would do” (Parker), “[guide dogs] go with you everywhere” (Jordan), and “Yes, it’s more vigorous and structured” (Reese).

Helping Others/ Selfless Service

The impact of helping others and being a part of a fulfilling experience seemed to be a dominant theme as well. Seventeen of the 22 student raisers (Harper, Sawyer, Kennedy, Jamie, Danny, Taylor, Ryan, Lee, Drew, Jordan, Casey, Riley, Peyton, Jessie, Parker, Reese) mentioned impacting others, which is ironic in the fact that, by impacting others, they are being impacted as well. Students commented, "It's rewarding to, like, help out other people" (Harper), "you're also changing someone's life" (Danny), "you're helping someone who can't see" (Taylor), and "I chose to raise a guide dog puppy because it can really make a difference. Just one dog in one person's life, it can be their whole world and that's pretty awesome" (Lee).

Students reported a feeling of fulfillment through raising puppies (Jamie, Danny, Drew, Peyton, Devin). Responses included "I feel like if I stopped raising I'd feel empty" (Jamie), "You have, like, a meaning. This is like my meaning in life is to raise these dogs" (Danny), "It's just probably the best feeling in the world" (Drew), "It's just something, I don't know. It makes you feel good" (Peyton), and "It's amazing, it's rewarding. You get to take something from a baby and turn it into something that's going to change someone's life" (Devin). One raiser added that, "we get to meet where the dogs actually go to, like the visually impaired owner. At Statewide last week, we met a bunch of people that have guide dogs and it's really interesting to see how we impact their lives. And it just makes you feel kind of special" (Danny).

Many students reported being able to make a difference in a stranger's life was motivation to begin raising or motivation to continue raising (Taylor, Ryan, Lee, Drew,

Jordan, Casey, Jessie, Reese). For example, “I decided to do this because you get to help someone who’s visually impaired. You are basically training their eyes” (Taylor), “just to see another blind person’s life change” (Jordan), “I felt like it’d be something great to, in the end, put out for someone” (Ryan), “The reason I decided to do it was because I know these dogs actually change somebody’s life. I know that… even though it’s hard… it can change a person’s life” (Drew), and “just the thought that one day there will be a success and that I can potentially change someone’s life and provide such a huge service” (Casey).

Parents (Kendall, Spencer) and GDB Leader (Ms. Dylan) mentioned that raising puppies for GDB was “kind of a selfless thing to do… to know that it’s going to go on to help someone else later” (Kendall), “They’re giving to other people” (Ms. Dylan), and, “it’s wonderful to be able to do something for someone else” (Spencer). Spencer also added that when her child graduates, Spencer plans on continuing to raise puppies herself because:

> I’m an animal lover, first of all. Dogs especially are my favorite, so, you know, going to Statewide this past weekend, being new, and everything is just, I didn’t know anything about this whole process. But, going to statewide and seeing… I was actually crying because they had a little Q&A and we were sitting there… and they were saying how it’s impacted their lives so much and it brought tears to my eyes because I never really… I don’t have that issue. I don’t know anyone close to me that has, that’s dealt with that [blindness] so I didn’t know how isolating- that was the big word. ‘It’s isolating’ is all they kept saying and how they didn’t feel safe either.

> And hearing that and what their dogs have brought to their lives was so amazing. And I definitely want to be a part of that. Absolutely. And I want my whole family to be a part of that. (Spencer)

One of the GDB leaders said:

> I'm humbled that they are learning the act of not being selfish. Being selfless, I guess. And being able to give and so I think I've seen that impact, not only, yes they're talking about a dog and they're being selfless and not as selfish with the dog and learning that. But, also carrying over to other things that they're actually being able to have care and compassion to other things as well. (Ms. Dylan)

Raising guide dog puppies, if done for the right reason, is selfless service that involves hundreds of hours with few, if any, breaks. Guide dog raising is a huge commitment and could not be done effectively without the end goal of helping someone in mind. Even when student raisers have the right mindset, not every dog is cut out to make it as a guide dog. Students were asked, "Would your dog being career changed affect your opinion of this experience or your decision to do it again? Why or why not?" All students interviewed responded with no, if their puppy were to be career changed, it would not affect their opinion of the experience or their decision to do it again. This was further demonstrated by the fact that a few students had dogs that had been career changed and the students continued to raise.

Twenty-one of the students answered with a definitive "no." Responses included, "Just because one dog doesn't work out for a certain career doesn't mean another won't" (Sawyer), "Depending on what they get career changed for… I mean anything would be

cool— even if [he] became a pet. That's what [he] chose to do" (Kennedy), "Career change doesn't mean that your dog failed. It just means that he's getting a different opportunity to try different things. Like, I wouldn't care if he got career changed 'cause I feel like, at least, I did something worth it. Like, at least, it's not what we want 'cause we want them to be guide dogs. But, at least you still get to have the experience and it doesn't matter if they get career changed. They still get to do the thing they do" (Alex), "With your dog being career changed, it could be affecting you a little but it's not affecting how you train. It could be like my dog just wants to be a pet" (Taylor), "No, 'cause even if they're career changed, they're going to help somebody" (Morgan), "I understand that not every dog has the mindset of a guide, to guide someone. So, it wouldn't change my mind. Nonetheless, he did his training and he's going to go, he could possibly be a dog for the deaf or a wonderful pet for someone" (Cody), "I feel like, in the end, it'd still be a great experience no matter how [he] turned out. I mean, I feel like [he'll] do great anywhere [he] goes" (Ryan), "After going to Statewide and learning what they could be career changed to and seeing what they would do in those careers really changed my opinion on career changed dogs. It's like… dogs for the deaf, it's the same thing. It's just awesome" (Lee), "just because if [he] doesn't make a guide dog, I know there's other good programs out there. It doesn't have to be just a guide dog. It could be, you know, something for diabetics or something like that that I know [he] could probably do as well" (Drew), "It would be pretty cool to say your dog is helping a deaf person or something. I mean it would be pretty cool and awesome if [he] got to be what he was supposed to be. [He] accomplished the task he was trained to do. It would be pretty rewarding in that but, if [he] gets career

changed, whatever he does, it'd be cool either way" (Jordan), "it doesn't change my opinion on like the experience in total. Does it suck? Yeah, it's absolutely heartbreaking. But, like I said, I would still continue to do it no matter what" (Casey). "I understand some dogs aren't cut out for it" (Peyton), and "he'd still help someone and I still made a difference" (Parker).

> One student, whose first dog was career changed and returned as a pet, said:
>
> Well, whenever [my dog] was career changed, I was really upset… because I worked so hard on him and I felt like it was my fault that he was career changed. Because, like when I got kicked out [of my house], he was there for me and connected to me. I guess in a way unlike anyone else 'cause we had been through a lot together with us two. So, his confidence was in me and, other handlers, when they took him, he had no confidence… So I felt that it was my fault that he was career changed. But, when I talked to [the CFR], she told me it wasn't our fault. It's just kind of the way life is and some dogs get more connected to others than others do. So… but I feel like it's better now because [the dog will] be with me and also get to help other people with the job that [he's] going to be doing. (Danny)

Danny plans to certify her career changed dog to be a therapy dog. This means that her dog will be able to go to hospitals and nursing homes, when invited, to help provide comfort to other people. Danny did not explicitly state that having a dog be career changed did not affect her opinion of the experience. But, she showed that there is a silver lining even when a dog is career changed to be a pet. Danny, at the time of this study, was raising her second guide dog.

People

More students (Harper, Kennedy, Sydney, Danny, Alex, Ryan, Terry, Riley, Dylan) reported being impacted by the people involved with Guide Dogs for the Blind than the actual dogs. GDB was described as a family, an opportunity for the raisers to make friends, and offered the raisers opportunities for networking as high school students. Students, parents, and leaders that referred to GDB as a family away from family including saying, "You join a big family, like a community of people" (Danny) and "there's the sense of family within GDB so it's a big family" (Ms. Dylan).

Other students mentioned how GDB opened doors for new friendships to form: "You get to meet a lot of new friends and it's helped me a lot. You get, not really known through the school, but, like, makes you known for something if that makes sense. They don't just know you as a basic high school student. You're helping someone" (Kennedy), "It's taught me…a lot through just, like, being a friend and stuff and, like, meeting people" (Kennedy), "It makes it easier in high school because, I know some people don't have as many friends or they're not as sociable and it helps them a lot especially since they have, they always have a dog with them. So, it kind of gives them a purpose" (Kennedy), "It's helped me meet a lot of new people. I met one of my best friends through it so it's such a great… I love it" (Sydney), "I talk to much more [*sic*] people because of Guide Dogs and it's kind of opened me to a different kind of lifestyle. I can come in here [kennel room] and tell everyone and they're always there for me and stuff" (Danny), and "You get a lot more friends from this. You get people that you can… they're always there for you if you have questions or anything like that. You can just, 'hey is this what I'm doing right?'" (Alex).

One student noted that if she were to stop raising puppies, she would hope to stay in contact with people she has met through GDB by saying "And even if I stop helping them I would hope to at least stay in contact with the people I've met through it 'cause everyone's just so nice" (Riley).

The most unexpected response from students was the opportunity GDB has for networking. One student remarked that, "it's actually opened up a lot more [doors] because we went to a Statewide [training] and I actually came in contact with a vet and she said I could go work for her so that really… I wouldn't have met her without [Max]" (Terry). Another informant echoed that puppy raisers "[meet] new people because of connections with Guide Dogs [for the Blind]" (Harper). This particular student has altered her career plans to work for GDB and actually worked a two-week internship at their California campus last summer. Raising guide dogs in general, not just through Guide Dogs for the Blind, has the potential to offer new opportunities to students.

Career Paths

Because raising a guide dog is such a huge commitment and has the potential for continuation beyond high school, a career involving guide dogs is a possibility. Students were asked if raising guide dog puppies had influenced their potential career path and if it had, how so. Twelve students said yes, raising a puppy had influenced their potential career path (Harper, Sydney, Jamie, Danny, Alex, Taylor, Ryan, Drew, Terry, Jessie, Parker, Reese). Three students responded that the experience of puppy raising had not influenced their career path (Casey, Peyton, Devin). Lastly, four students responded that

they were not sure if it had any influence on their career path (Morgan, Cody, Lee, Riley). Jordan did not have a response to this question.

The students who answered yes indicated that they hoped to work for Guide Dogs for the Blind or wish to train dogs in some capacity while others indicated that raising guide dogs had indirectly led them towards another career. Those who want to work for Guide Dogs for the Blind commented, "I plan on working for Guide Dogs as a mobility instructor and further down the line, working as an animal behaviorist for Guide Dogs or potentially like a CFR, a community field representative" (Harper), "I used to want to be a vet and now I definitely lean more towards training dogs or working at the California campus" (Sydney), "So, I said I wanted to be a vet. Now I am wanting to actually be a guide dog mobility instructor so I'd actually train the dogs in formal training like harness training in California or Oregon or wherever the campus is at" (Danny), "I feel like I want to do this as a career. Like at least something like be a vet for just Guide Dogs or just do something that involves with guide dogs 'cause it's just really fun" (Alex), and "When I grow up, I want to become a raiser. I want to be a leader and help someone. You know, help a leader guide a dog. Become like [our leader] Ms. Dylan. Just come into the career of that" (Drew).

Students who responded yes to the question, but do not want to work for Guide Dogs for the Blind said, "I want to be a veterinarian" (Taylor), "It's shown me, like, the different aspects of dogs I guess, if that makes sense. And like, how the dogs are, like, I wouldn't say manageable, but, I basically learn their traits… I want to go down the vet route but I also want to go down the education route…" (Jamie), "It's actually opened a lot

more because we went to a Statewide and I actually came in contact with a vet and she said I could go work for her" (Ryan). "I want to go into the army and train their bomb dogs. That's my plan. There's definitely so many opportunities after you train a dog" (Terry). "It has [influenced my career path] because I was thinking about being a veterinarian actually so something with animals and dogs" (Parker), and "It opened up many different opportunities and it gave me more insight to what it's like to raise and train a dog" (Reese).

Students who reported raising puppies had no influence on their potential career path responded with, "Well, I know I want to be a vet but, um, I guess it hasn't changed anything really" (Casey), "Not really. I mean, I've never really… I have thought of being a professional trainer in a way but at the same time, I'd rather do other things. So, I've considered it, but no" (Peyton), and "Not really, I still have no idea what I want to do" (Devin).

Students who did not respond with a definite yes or no answer responded with, "Um, I mean I already wanted to be a vet. I still want to work with animals" (Sawyer), "Sort of? I've kind of gone back and forth between an ag teacher and veterinarian. Um, and it's kind of leading more towards ag teaching or being an ag teacher. It's kind of helped push me in that direction" (Kennedy). "I would say no but it's definitely a back-up for sure. I'd still like to be a large animal vet but if that doesn't work out then I'd totally get involved with Guide Dogs" (Morgan). "I've always wanted to work with animals so this was just a little boost of, you know, you can help an animal and you can help a person. So, veterinary medicine, I can see where this goes into it. 'Cause, um, you know, I take him to the vet. I have to know his vaccines. I have to know the dosage… So, yeah, I think [it]

helps" (Cody). "Yes and no. It has in that I want to do something that will affect other people. But no as in I don't want to go be a dog trainer" (Lee), and "It has crossed my mind that this is something that I could do as a career but nothing's set" (Riley).

Confidence

Seven respondents (Harper, Sydney, Danny, Riley, Devin, Kendall, Dylan) mentioned gaining confidence and coming out of their shell throughout the interviews. Students bring their dogs with them everywhere. It is hard to avoid confrontation when there is a dog in public. These students have to learn to deal with this kind of constant attention as made evident by Peyton, who said, "I'm not typically the kind of person who likes to draw attention to myself but everywhere you go, if there's a dog with you, people are going to be staring. Big time." Students noted that their confidence level has gone up since they began raising: "It's easier for me to speak to people I guess. I was, like, very quiet and reserved. And now I can, like, go and talk in front of a lot of people and be pretty okay with it" (Harper). "I've become a lot more confident. I was very shy when I joined. I couldn't speak to anybody at all… I am a lot more confident and sure of myself. I used to doubt myself much more but now, you know, I know what I'm doing. Yeah, so, it's nice" (Sydney). "I've gained my confidence through Guide Dogs" (Danny). "I am a lot more open and not as shy" (Riley), and "I'm more vocal with other people. I think I can talk to people better. I'm not as introverted" (Devin).

A couple of parents noted changes in their children's confidence levels as a result of raising guide dogs. One parent said her student, "has a tendency to not be one that's real loud. She's always been a little bit shy so now I see some confidence kind of building up

because she's constantly [having] people talking to her about guide dogs and stuff when we're out in public. So, at first she was very kind of shy and didn't want to go into a lot of detail and now she's like, 'I got this!' She's able to open up a little bit more" (Kendall in reference to Kennedy). Another parent encouraged their student to puppy raise to get out of their shell: "I actually encouraged [my child] to do this to get her out of her shell" (Spencer in reference to Ryan). An Agricultural Science Teacher responded that one of the differences seen in students since beginning puppy raising is, "kids that are very shy, very introverted become completely opposite because they have to learn to be able to self-advocate, etc." (Ms. Dylan).

Patience

Students raising guide dogs report patience as something that has increased because of raising. One student stated that raising guide dogs has, "taught a lot of patience 'cause it can be quite aggravating sometimes" (Harper). This student was referring to dogs having their own minds and not always being cooperative. Another student described that, through puppy raising, she has learned, "just a lot of patience and responsibility" (Danny). Other students said, "It teaches me patience. I am not a patient person. Uh, and horses have taught me that too but definitely with these [dogs]. 'Cause they're so little and they don't have patience either so we work with each other. So, patience is a big thing. And people. Learning patience with people. 'Cause they're like puppies" [laughs] (Cody), "I feel like it's, um, beneficial to both of us in a way. Like, it gives me time to be more patient with [my dog]. It tests my patience with [my dog] and he really… loves training "(Ryan), and, "being calmer with [my dog], more patient" (Kendall).

A parent talked about their child's newfound ability to take a step back instead of getting frustrated. The parent said their child was, "in all honesty… a little more stressed. But she's committed and… when she thinks she's going to lose her temper, she steps back and is like *breathes* 'Okay, hold on.' So, I think it's teaching her a little more self-control and, in a strange way. But, yeah. I see that. Self-control for sure" (Spencer).

Time Management

Balancing a puppy with a high schooler's busy schedule can be tough. Students (Harper, Jamie, Riley, Jessie) described the time management skills gained through their puppy raising experience. More students, however, noted that time management was a challenge and that they had not quite mastered it yet. Harper said she's learned "a lot of time management because I've been having to, like, balance school and other extracurriculars with training and it takes up a lot of time." Other students said they, "manage time better" (Jamie), "I manage my time a lot better" (Riley), and "I have a lot of better time management [*sic*]" (Jessie).

The challenges associated with raising a guide dog puppy have also impacted the student raisers. The challenges reported include time management, public interference, advocating, and dog training. Challenges from the parents' perspectives were explored as well.

Students (Sydney, Jamie, Sawyer, Morgan, Terry, Peyton, Parker, Reese) who reported time management as a challenge said, "Time. I'm busy a lot. That's probably the number one thing I struggle with is managing time and, you know, there's so much that goes with it. You spend 24 hours with them. When you have a job and you go to high

school it's just like *hand gestures*" (Sydney), "Schedule! I'm involved in sports at high school and I'm also taking all Pre-AP classes and it's hard" (Jamie), "Time management" (Sawyer), "Well, I'm in a sport so trying to balance them like I'm missing practice right now to be here. So, it's kind of challenging trying to balance both of them out and just praying that they both don't have something on the same day" (Morgan), "Oh goodness, time management is definitely a big one. Adjusting to having your own dog and then having a guide dog puppy 'cause it's totally different" (Terry), "It just takes a lot of patience and time" (Peyton), "It's very, very more time consuming than I thought it was and you have to put a lot of work into it for the dogs' success" (Parker), and "Responsibility, time management, going to school. You know, it's hard trying to manage time especially with having [the dog] full time" (Reese).

Public Interference

Public interference and perception of working dogs was a reoccurring theme among interviews. Student responses included, "Another thing would probably be, like, public perception of the dogs. They think that they're being tortured because they're having to work. Like, no, no, they actually enjoying doing this. Your dog would enjoy being with you all day, too [laughs]… I was the only one that [raised puppies] my sophomore year so the first year we had the dogs in school and that kind of set a foundation. So, it's actually been, like, it hasn't been that bad. There's the occasional person that was like, they're scared of dogs or they're allergic to dogs or the people that come and, like, pester them in the hallways but, like, it's been pretty easy" (Harper), "Other people trying to interfere" (Sawyer). "Mostly just people at the school but they've gotten used to it— having dogs

there. Probably the challenge is, like, going out in public and, you know, people, I guess you could say, judging us. Some people think that we have the disability or some people think that we're fake and we're just doing this to have our dogs out in public and stuff" (Danny). "They think it's abuse or something. They misinterpret things" (Alex), and "That people are saying things about [the dogs] and saying things about me. Like, when had an issue last year with leash correcting and saying like, 'Oh, they're abusing the dog.' Which we really aren't. So, just like little comments people are saying" (Taylor). One student responded with "Haters" (Jordan). When asked to elaborate, the student said, "When people think it's cruel in what you do [*sic*] 'cause of collar corrections" (Jordan). The interviewer asked the student what she did when people said things like that. The student responded with, "Just say thank you" (Jordan). Other students said, "Just the people that say stupid things… They pick on you and they'll pick on the dog" (Riley) and "A challenging thing is, like, uh, kind of out in public. People don't quite understand really. That's a big one" (Peyton). The interviewer asked Peyton if she was able to educate the public about service dogs and she responded with, "I try to. But sometimes you can just tell they're not going to understand it basically" (Peyton).

Advocating

Student puppy raisers face scrutiny from the public. Because of this, students have to learn to advocate for the use and training of guide dogs. Students have to be familiar with the laws and the rights they have bringing a service dog in training into public. Many students and leaders (Harper, Sawyer, Danny, Alex, Taylor, Cody, Terry, Jordan, Casey, Riley, Peyton, Elliott) noted the need for advocating as guide dog puppy raisers.

Advocating is included under challenges because some students noted the need for advocating but none gave specific examples of advocating themselves.

The need for advocating comes from others causing issues: "…and then other people trying to interfere… like, they'll be in the hallway doing the 'drive-by' petting and they'll ask if they can pet them and if you say no, some of them will still reach out and try. Um, but I'd say for the most part, the student body is pretty helpful" (Sawyer), "A lot of people at school will be like 'Don't correct like that. What are you doing?' They think it's abuse or something" (Alex), "We had an issue last year with leash correcting and saying like, 'Oh they're abusing the dog.' Which we really aren't" (Taylor), "People are difficult. Definitely the school kids with 'Can I pet your dog?' and no is the hardest thing to say but it's for [the dogs'] own benefit. And subs like to come up to them and, "Oh my gosh! Cute puppy!' It's definitely teaching people the right way. 'Cause we have guide dogs all over San Antonio so it's helped me understand, you know, that's a service dog; don't touch it. I tell other people and I think it's going to help us as a society of respecting guides and don't touch it. It's working and it needs to do its job" (Cody), "There's days where [the dog] doesn't want to listen and everyone wants to pet [him] and you just have to say no. And it gets to the point where you want to be done with life 'cause so many people want to pet him and he is acting a fool [*sic*]" *laughs* (She assured me 'done with life' was just a figure of speech) (Jordan), "I think that was the scary part is that people don't like to listen so they don't, like if you say, 'You can pet my dog' they don't listen to the 'but [they have] to be sitting, you have to pet the side.' It's just, 'Oh, I'm petting a dog.' And if not, they'll just come and start petting and start saying things like, I don't know if [other students]

have told you, like, they still do it. They'll be like, 'Oh, I like your cat, I like your lizard.' Like, things that people will tell us. I don't know why. I don't know why they think it's funny but apparently…" (Casey), and "They pick on you and they'll pick on the dog. Like, I was taking a dog and they, like, call it a cat for some strange reason… but other than that if they say anything you just dust it off and keep going 'cause you know what you're doing is so much better than what they're going to say. They accuse you of hurting the animal. I know I hear that all the time both at home and at school. It's just like, I'm doing what I can to teach the dog what they need to know" (Riley).

Advocating was necessary outside of the high school as well: "A challenging thing is, like, uh, kind of out in public. People don't quite understand really. That's a big one" (Peyton), "Mostly just people at the school but they've gotten used to it—having dogs there. Probably the challenge is, like going out in public and, you know, people I guess you could say… judging us. Some people think that we have the disability or some people think that we're fake and we're just doing this to have our dogs out in public and stuff" (Danny), and "Just other people not understanding what I was doing 'cause back then I didn't really want to explain myself but now I love explaining what I do" (Harper).

Evidence supporting the idea that some students were advocating includes one student noting that she enjoyed advocating: "It's just an educational type of thing and it's fun" (Terry). One of the leaders added:

> One of the things that we deal with in a public environment is the perception that because they're students, they obviously can't be old enough or responsible enough or mature enough to have their dogs in public whether it's on campus or out in

public. Nine times out of ten, our kids either handle it or it's not an issue. But that tenth time, that's a lot of responsibility for a sixteen year old. To be confronted by an adult and to maintain their composure and leave the situation, although it's tense, but leave the situation with a positive memory of it. Because they understand that they are ambassadors as well, for Guide Dogs. So, that's been one of the challenges, as a student, dealing with adults, not necessarily dealing with other students. (Ms. Elliott)

Another leader indicated the importance of advocating by saying:

I think the most important one is being an advocate. I think if people are advocates for an organization, for a company, for a product, whatever it may be, you're going to be more employable down the road. These students face a lot of scrutiny. They have [thousands of] students that look at them through microscopes and go, 'Well, why did you just do a collar correct?' and they really have to step out and they have to think objectively. What did it look like to the outside world? And, they have to be intentional there but they also have to be able to educate. Well, here's why we're doing it. Here's kind of the end result. (Ms. Carson)

A parent of a puppy raiser added, "Occasionally you'll get the people that are very rude that our dogs don't belong in the store or some things like that. But, you know, under Texas State Law, our dogs in training have the same rights as a full service dog so… But, other than that, it's been good all around" (Ms. Dylan).

Dog Training

The last theme related to challenges concerned training dogs. For example, “a lot of, like, learning who the dog is. Like, no two dogs are the same so… learning different ways to help them be successful” (Harper), “Also, [a] challenge is probably raising them when they’re younger” (Danny), their “attention span is like a fish… Other than that he learns quick[ly], he comprehends quickly. It’s just the attention span is a little short” (Cody), the dog “is very anxious and super hyper so it’s really hard to get him to listen sometimes. So, that’s really a struggle with him” (Ryan), “when they’re puppy puppies, you have to wake up in the middle of the night and that was horrible. And then just all of your attention is always on them. Like, you can’t have a conversation without checking on your dog and that’s a challenge for me” (Lee), “The challenges I’ve faced is just, you know, the listening part and [him], just, you know, we have some complications where, you know, I get frustrated and the dog is kind of frustrated and it’s kind of just a frustrating situation. But, other than that, everything has been hands down the best with [him]” (Drew), and “Well, I told you about my first two. [laughs] They were both career changed. Um, so like, I think there’s stubbornness of the dogs, getting used to different temperaments. There’s just a lot of struggles. I get the crazies so I get the ones that are just a little bit extra [*sic*] compared to the other dogs” (Casey).

Challenges from the Perspective of the Parents

Challenges from the perspective of the parents included, “Definitely a commitment. Like I said, it’s a sacrifice. Um, just trying to figure out like, well, we have the dog. Where can we go? Where can we not go? Working out baby sitters or puppy sitters for when we

do go on a trip or doing something that they can't do. And then giving them up is a little bit of a challenge. [Our first dog] was an amazing dog so it was a little difficult to give him] up but you kind of have to keep that mindset that, 'This is not my dog, it's going somewhere else. It's not my dog, it's going somewhere else" (Kendall). Another parent noted that her student would be attending college in the fall and the school would not allow her to bring the dog. Mason said:

> Well, the university denying them to live on campus, to attend classes. Occasionally you'll get the people that are very rude that our dogs don't belong in the store or some things like that. But you know, under Texas State Law, our dogs in training have the same rights as a full service dog. So, but, other than that, it's been good all around. I mean everyone thanks you for what you're doing and we really haven't gotten any negative feedback from it other than gentle leaders. 'Why are you muzzling your dogs?' You've got to explain that it's not a muzzle, you know, they can open their mouth and they can eat and chew on toys. And, yeah, we really haven't had anything negative. (Mason)

The last parent who had challenges to report said:

> There's a lot. We have a very hyper one, very hyper, very full of energy. So, patience is definitely something that we have been challenged with. Um, and the fact that we have other animals at home too and it's been interesting. I think it's actually brought us closer together though. We're a close family but it's because we all pitch in. You know my husband even, who was really not on board with this, he has gotten to where he'll take her out when he gets home at ten o'clock at night just

> to take her out, make sure [the puppy] gets to relieve [himself.] And, he does it exactly the way he's supposed to. So, that's been interesting to see that. Even though there's so much, you know, we have to be home quickly; we can't be gone very long. And, it's still been a good, positive experience. (Spencer)

The last parent (Julian) responded with a simple, "No." when asked if their family has encountered challenges because of or through this experience.

When asked if they would raise another puppy, 100% of students interviewed said yes, they would. Despite the challenges faced throughout raising a puppy, they answered without hesitation. Each of the parents interviewed also said they would allow their child to raise again. The overwhelming positivity of the response to this questions caught me off guard, to be honest. I believe students answered honestly based off of their voice inflection and eagerness to answer. Responses began with phrases like, "Of course" (Danny), "Oh, definitely" (Lee), and "Absolutely" (Casey, Devin). Reasons for students wanting to raise again include helping others. For example, "The benefits outweigh the cons for me, the dog, and whoever [the dog is] going to" (Harper), "It's a really fun program and you just get to watch this dog grow and it's like they're your own children and you get emotionally attached. But, they're going on to do something better" (Sawyer), "I feel like if I stopped raising, I'd feel empty" (Jamie), "you're also changing someone's life. You have, like, a meaning" (Danny), "you're helping someone who can't see. You're helping a visually impaired person" (Taylor), "I just love the outcome" (Morgan), "you just see how it can really help someone else and what a great program it is" (Lee), "to see another blind person's life change" (Jordan), "just the thought that one day there will be a success and

that I can potentially change someone's life and provide such a huge service" (Casey), "it's amazing. It's rewarding" (Devin), "it's a good experience to be able to, not only change someone's life, but also to get that responsibility of kind of taking care of basically a child. So, um, I think it's a very good experience that young people should go through" (Jessie), and "I can help someone else and it's just an amazing experience overall" (Parker).

Other students reported that they wanted to raise a second dog to apply what they had learned throughout raising the first. Students said, "he's my first puppy so he's an experiment. And, I want to see if it's a very slim chance that he'll be a guide dog but he will still possible go into formal training… [Ms. Dylan] will definitely tell me the skills I need to work on and then I can process those skills and put it into my next puppy and hopefully that dog will be a guide" (Cody), "I feel like I would know more. I would have more knowledge to be able to face these challenges again" (Ryan), and "I've learned so much just by this dog and we're not even halfway there. You know, we just started the journey" (Drew).

One student who had difficulties with her first dog said:

> It was so rough with [him] 'cause he had so many medical problems. But, I just kept raising because I knew that so many other people had great experiences with it. So, my first dog wasn't the best experience but I knew that other people really enjoyed it. And for the most part, I did too. Once I got [my current dog], [he] was so great to have. [He] was well behaved and… easy to train. I couldn't have given that up. (Sydney)

Another student opened up about experiencing family drama throughout, not because of, raising their puppy. Danny admitted that:

> after [my first dog], I didn't think I wanted to raise another one because, I mean [my first dog] went through everything with me and I didn't think I could be able to raise one. But, when I got [my current dog] it kind of just showed me that every dog is different and you're also changing someone's life. You have like a meaning. This is my meaning in life is to raise the dogs. (Danny)

When parents were asked the question "Would you allow your student to raise another puppy? Why or why not," responses consisted of, "It's been an amazing experience for her and a growth opportunity for her…She's put a lot of effort into it. But, then to know also that it's going to go on to help someone else later. And, then also, it's been an experience for our entire family. My son, I have an eleven year old son, and he's getting the opportunity to work with the dog as well" (Kendall), "Yeah, absolutely" (Mason), "Yes. I've actually thought… [my student] is going to be a junior next year… I've actually thought that I would continue one after [my student] graduates. That I would do it myself" (Spencer), and "Yes, it's actually teaching her discipline. It's kind of like having a kid, right? It's like Planned Parenthood [laughs]. She's with [the dog] 24/7. He's [the dog] like, you know, a baby" (Julian).

Results Related to Research Question Three

The third objective in this study was to explore the similarities and differences in raising a guide dog puppy and raising livestock. These similarities and differences were

identified from the perspectives of the students and the GDB Leaders/Agricultural Science Teachers. Comparing the competencies gained from raising a guide dog to the competencies gained from raising livestock is important because youth raising livestock tends to be widely practiced and supported. If raising guide dogs can produce the same development of competencies, could it gain that same support? To answer this question, GDB Leaders/Agricultural Science Teachers were asked, "Comparing puppy raisers to students raising livestock, what similarities and differences have you seen in the competencies gained?" Similarities reported by the leaders include, "responsibility, um, a sense of work ethic, ownership of one's choices" (Ms. Dylan) and:

> I think it's pretty similar in terms of competencies gained… At the end of the day, the raising of the livestock is not about learning how to do it; it's learning about the responsibility, dedication, the teamwork. And, I think all of those things are evident and are true within this particular organization. They're provided opportunities. They're scrutinized just like we are in the livestock industry… And they really have to do diligence to make sure they're being intentional with everything they're doing. I really see a lot of similarities between the two. (Ms. Carson)

Ms. Elliott did not feel qualified to answer this question, as she is only involved in the Guide Dogs program, not raising livestock.

Differences reported by leaders include:

> There's actually more commitment, there is more commitment in raising a guide dog puppy 'cause they don't get to leave them at the barn, you know? So, I think you definitely see a larger commitment. Not only is it longer, but it's more time

> involved— 24 hours a day, seven days a week. So, I think you see, I think you see more of a commitment that way. I think from my perspective, I think they probably, again, I think they learn more from raising a guide dog puppy. We can feed cows, we can feed pigs, we can feed lambs, goats, rabbits, whatever. And at the end of the day, that impacts somebody's dinner. But, you don't ever get to see that impact. Half the people don't even know where our food comes from. It comes from HEB (a Texas-based food chain) down the street, Wal-Mart. This, they actually get to see the impact of their… what they've done, if they see it all the way through. I think that's the difference. (Ms. Dylan)

Another leader said, "I mean, you've got some uniqueness in terms of animal husbandry. Obviously the biological needs of a cow is [are] different than one of these animals here [dogs]… Financially, it's a little bit different. With livestock, it's going to be more of an entrepreneurship project. The financial burden is going to be quite a bit less for the Guide Dogs for the Blind program" (Ms. Carson).

Raising Guide Dogs vs. Raising Livestock from Perspective of Students

Of the 22 students interviewed, 15 had raised livestock through FFA or 4-H (Kennedy, Taylor, Morgan, Ryan, Lee, Drew, Terry, Jordan, Casey, Riley, Peyton, Devin, Jessie, Parker), six had not raised livestock (Harper, Sawyer, Sydney, Jamie, Danny, Reese), and one student had experiences with horses as a recreational activity (Cody). Students were asked, "Have you raised livestock through FFA or 4-H presently or previously? If yes, how does raising a guide dog puppy differ?" The main theme that emerged was the amount of time that goes into raising a puppy versus the amount of time

that goes into raising livestock. Students said, “[the puppy] is with you 24/7. Like, it’s different with raising livestock. You only go to the barn like twice a day. With [a puppy], [they’re] always there…you’re feeding [them] three to two times a day, you’re training [them] all the time” (Taylor), “Well, the pig did not go home with me. The time I had to put in before I knew I was getting a puppy was- I had to do so much cleaning and, like, puppy proofing my house and it was a lot more than raising a pig ’cause it stays in our barn here. And, I mean, it’s like a twice a day kind of thing” (Morgan), “Raising a puppy is a lot different because a lamb you can just leave at the barn and go home. But, with a puppy it’s 24/7” (Drew), “Livestock don’t go home with you…What I learned from having a guide dog… it can be very time consuming. Like you go to places, you don’t have to take them out but you eventually have to” (Jordan), “You’re taking [the dog] to all of your classes. It’s more extensive” (Casey), “This is 24/7. It’s a lot more fun [than raising rabbits]. It’s a lot more hands-on. It lasts a lot longer than just thirty minutes here and 10 minutes here” (Riley), “The main difference is, since the animals are at the barn, you can just leave them there. But, the dogs, they go with you everywhere. And then, like, raising livestock is kind of seasonal. [Raising guide dogs] kind of is, too. But it’s a long season—like over a year” (Peyton), “[the dog] goes home with you. It’s 24/7 instead of two hours or three hours a day” (Devin), “You have to be more tedious with the dog rather than the livestock” (Jessie), and “The rabbit, it always stays [at the school] and the guide dog goes everywhere. So, it’s a very big difference in my everyday routine” (Parker).

Students who did not mention time as the main difference between raising dogs and livestock reported differences in training techniques and overall experience. Student

responses included, “Show a pig… you get frustrated more kind of for me. I got a lot more frustrated with that than I did with my dog. And it wasn’t an actual, I mean, it was a fun experience, but it wasn’t as memorable [as raising guide dogs]. I guess” (Kennedy), “You don’t teach [goats] sit. And, actually, it’s going to be a struggle for me this year because with goats, we walk on the right and then with puppies, we walk on the left so it’s completely different with their walking” (Ryan), “I raise pigs and pigs are very, very smart. So, if you just work with them and you walk them, they learn quickly and they know what you want and they just listen to what you tell them. [Dogs], however, [they] like to think about it and decide if I can really make [them] do it, if [they] want to do it. It’s not like, ‘Oh, she told me no.’ It’s, ‘Is this what I want to do?’ And that’s a lot different because it takes a lot of patience” (Lee), “There’s a lot more responsibilities with a puppy than there is a lamb. I know with [dogs], you know, you have to constantly keep looking at [them]. You make sure [they] can’t eat anything. You have to constantly keep an eye on [them] rather than a lamb. You go [to the barn] twice a day. Oh, hey look, back in the pen and you leave. So, it’s a lot different. It’s like a child” (Drew), “You have to be a lot more patient with a guide dog. Like, they’re very curious” (Terry), and “The biggest difference is that with livestock, you’re not, like, training them in the same way. Like, yes, you’re teaching [goats] this is how I’m going to hold you and you really don’t have any say in it. But, like, with these dogs here, teaching them, like, sit, stay, wait, come, and, like, everything in between. The whole works. You’re taking them to all of your classes. It’s more extensive” (Casey). One student mentioned hard skills learned from raising guide dogs. Cody said, “So, veterinary medicine… I can see where this goes into it. ’Cause, um,

you know I take him to the vet. I have to know his vaccines. I have to know the dosage. I have to know. [He] was given Tylosin powder which hardens their stools. [He] had that this morning. So I had to give the right dosage. So, yeah, I think that helps." Hard skills other than dog training were not mentioned.

Overall, comments about puppy raising and raising livestock include, "I believe in it 100%. I believe in this more than I believe in probably kids raising livestock projects, kids doing leadership and career development events and that's how passionate I believe in it" (Ms. Dylan), "She also had a pig that she showed this year and you know, the dog… And don't let my husband hear me say this. But, I really think she's gaining a lot more from the experience of the dog than the pig. It's something that… the pig's kind of done. That's horrible to say [laughs] but knowing that she's helping others and there's that service side of things. It's kind of a selfless thing to do. She's put a lot of effort into it. But, then to know also that it's going to go on to help someone else later" (Kendall).

Researcher's Reflections

As I reflected upon themes that emerged during interviews, there were themes that were expected along with some unexpected themes. Being involved with the service dog training community and having previous experience with guide dogs and raising my own service dog, I thought I would get mostly predictable answers from the students. However, I was incorrect in making assumptions.

Repeat Raisers

The fact that each and every student interviewed was planning to raise a second, third, fourth, and fifth dog absolutely blew me away. I asked this question expecting an answer similar to my own answer to this question. I may want to raise another puppy in the distant future but, for now, I will enjoy not having to make the sacrifices associated with raising a puppy. This is far from the response I got from these high school students. My first thought was that the students felt like they had to tell me they wanted to raise again even if they did not wish to continue raising. However, when I listened to the recordings, time and time again, I heard no hesitations or questionable tone in their answer. Students genuinely want to continue raising guide dog puppies.

Gender

Out of all of the raisers at the two schools interviewed, two student raisers were male. That is about 94% female and 6% male. This trend did not surprise me because it holds true in my previous experience with raising puppies as well. I have yet to find an explanation for this gap and why raising puppies seems to appeal more to the female population than it does to the male population.

Networking/ People

I found it to be surprising that students reported being influenced more by the people involved in GDB than the actual dog. I would be curious to see if a study examining this came up with the same results. Hearing this response repeatedly from different students made me further reflect on my time spent raising a service dog. Yes, the

dog impacted my life but the skills I gained through the experience can be better attributed to the people involved. The students' ability to recognize this fact was impressive.

Findings and Discussion Related to Research Question One

The goal of objective one was to describe how and why a guide dog program can be implemented into the public schools. Reasons for incorporating a puppy raising program included location of school, student interests, and student resources. Challenges involved in the implementation of this kind of program were common. GDB Leaders/Agricultural Science Teachers offered their advice on mitigating these challenges.

Motivations for Becoming Involved

Students' motivation for joining FFA did not involve the intention of raising a guide dog. Instead, students were drawn to FFA because of their love for animals, their career aspirations, and family/friend influence. Most students were interested in small animals but a few were interested in large animals. A possible explanation of guide dogs not influencing students' decision to join FFA could be that the guide dog raising clubs are relatively new and students may have already been in FFA before being exposed to the guide dogs. Another explanation may be that the guide dog raising clubs are not recruiting students from junior high. Recruiting students coming into high school could allow FFA to appeal to students who are interested in small animals. It can be concluded that, even without guide dogs, these student raisers would most likely still be involved in FFA.

Students' motivation for deciding to raise a guide dog puppy included encouragement from others, a love of dogs, a desire to help others, and wanting to do

something different. Based on students' responses to these questions and others, it can be determined that these students were functioning in the upper levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs—esteem needs and self-actualization. These students had their physiological, safety, and belongingness needs met and, because of this, they were able to achieve higher levels such as esteem needs and self-actualization.

However, there was one exception: Danny. Danny opened up about the challenges she faced in previous years. Danny was kicked out of her home by her stepmother when she was sixteen years old. She was raising her first guide dog at this time. A friend's family took Danny in immediately but she still had emotional rebuilding to do. Danny lost a huge part of her life overnight along with critical relationships. Because of this, Danny was not able to get higher than belongingness and love needs on Maslow's (1968) Hierarchy of Needs. Danny searched for belongingness and love through Guide Dogs and that is what she found. Danny repeatedly mentioned finding family and community through Guide Dogs for the Blind. She mentioned that, because of having that family now, she was able to grow. She now has people who are there for her.

Why Incorporate a Puppy Raising Program?

Incorporating a puppy-raising program on top of all of the other work agricultural science teachers already do seems ridiculous. Why would a reasonable person willingly take on all of this extra work? The leaders interviewed agreed that, while it was a ton of work, the students benefit so much from it that it was well worth it. The reasons that contributed to the incorporation of this program included being in an urban setting, the

diversity the puppy raising program brings to their chapter, and the capital required compared to a livestock project.

Many students in an urban school do not have the resources to raise a livestock project as their SAE. Students at Byron Nelson high school had access to a school barn where they could keep their projects. However, this barn was located about thirty minutes down the interstate. There was a concern among parents allowing newly licensed drivers to make that drive twice a day—especially on the ice in the winter. Because of this, some parents nixed the idea of their child raising livestock. This left students with limited options of SAEs. There were exploratory, research, and placement options for students but those may not interest the students. This is where raising guide dogs came into play. It offered students interested in animals the opportunity to get hands on animal experience in their own homes.

James Madison High School had its school barns on campus so driving was not an issue. However, money might be an issue for some students. It was an expectation of students to have an SAE if they were enrolled in an Agricultural Science class. However, some students did not have the capital required to have a market animal entrepreneurship SAE. Having the guide dog program allowed students the opportunity to still raise an animal for a fraction of the financial burden.

Raising guide dogs fit into the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for Veterinary Medical Applications and Small Animal Management. Students learned basic veterinary skills through raising as well as concepts in Small Animal Management. Raising guide dogs offered another option for students who are not interested in livestock and

would rather focus on small animals. For schools that currently offer these classes, guide dogs can be easily integrated.

Agricultural Science Teacher/GDB Leader Challenges

Challenges from the perspectives of the GDB Leader/Agricultural Science Teacher were different than the challenges faced by the raisers and their parents. They saw a different side of raising than the students and parents. The biggest challenge mentioned by the leaders was essentially starting the puppy-raising club in their respective school. The hardest part as reported by Elliott was getting the administration on board. When attempting to begin the puppy-raising club in a high school AFNR program, the first mistake made by the schools was approaching the wrong people. Instead of having the Texas Community Field Representative (CFR) pitch the idea, students approached administration. These students were reportedly very capable and motivated but when they approached the assistant principal, were quickly turned down. The advice given by the leaders was to go directly to the top with the CFR. The CFR should approach the Independent School District Superintendent and answer all questions they may have. From there, the next step is to get the campus principal on board. This could be made easier by establishing a rapport with the principal beforehand. One leader added that having the administration follow a puppy in training from start to finish makes a world of a difference to them and helps with the approval of a program like this.

Next, a teacher on campus should be on board for this program. There needs to be a face and name around the school to be a representative for the puppy-raising club. Preferably, this teacher would be in the agricultural science department so that the club can

be integrated into the AFNR program. Another piece of advice was to incorporate a parent volunteer to take over most of the responsibilities. Agricultural Science Teachers have a laundry list of daily responsibilities and cannot realistically add an entire puppy-raising club under their sole supervision. One of the schools had this co-leader model in place and strongly recommended other schools doing the same. Basically, the Agricultural Science Teacher is the face of the organization on campus and signs any needed documents and the parent volunteer does the rest. This is helpful if and when anything happens on campus because the teacher is present and well-known.

Time was a challenge faced by the GDB Leaders/Agricultural Science Teachers. Because time is a limited resource, the leaders were not able to say "yes" to every student who expressed interest in the puppy raising program. Doing so would cause the leaders to be spread too far thin. In addition, every student who expresses initial interest in the program may not realize the true commitment it requires. Saying "yes" to every student who shows any interest in the program is not realistic. A teacher who is responsible for classroom instruction, training Career Development and Leadership Development Events, supervising livestock projects, supervising SAEs, and other agricultural science teacher responsibilities has to spend their time wisely, as they do not have much of it. A parent volunteer co-leader is able to alleviate the stress associated with the puppy raising club on the part of the agricultural science teacher. Having this parent co-leader allows for more growth and opportunities for the students interested as well.

Reservations about Raising

To gain insight on any potential improvements that could be made to the pre-puppy stage, I asked students if they had any reservations before receiving a puppy. Fifty percent of the students had no reservations and reported that they were always ready for a puppy without hesitations. Reservations reported by the students included other people's perception, family not being supportive, time requirement, giving the dog away at the end, and fearing they would not allow the dog to reach its full potential.

Findings and Discussion Related to Research Question Two

The second research question sought to describe the impact puppy raising had on high school students in FFA programs. Responses included increased maturity/responsibility, selfless service, expanding networks, increased confidence, career influence, increased patience, better time management in student puppy raisers, and challenges faced throughout raising a puppy. Challenges include time management, public interference, and working with dogs.

Maturity/Responsibility

Students, parents, and teachers/leaders each reported that they observed an increase in responsibility and maturity in puppy raisers as a result of raising a puppy. Students were responsible for their dog around the clock. These students adjusted their entire schedule. The school did not offer student puppy raisers any exceptions because they have a dog to tend to. If the dog had an accident or a behavioral issue during a passing period causing the

student to be late to class, the students were faced with the same consequences as students that were not raising puppies.

Students were responsible for managing their dogs' nutrition, veterinary records, and training progress in addition to their own responsibilities. During interviews, I noted that students constantly checked on their dogs that were "kenneled" underneath their chair. They had to ensure the dogs were not sniffing the floor, licking their paws, and standing up from their laying down position as these behaviors are unacceptable for future guide dogs. Students managed to continue talking while refocusing their dogs, never missing a beat. Younger puppies broke their down stays and needed to be lured back into a down with treats. Others chased a particularly persistent fly that lingered around each of the interviews. Students were not fazed by the distraction of having a puppy with them at all times.

Many students and parents likened raising a puppy to raising a child and it was easy to understand why. Most students undertook the full responsibility of caring for this puppy without the help of their family; although, some noted that family members were involved and helped. The majority of the responsibility fell on the students. Students had to clean up accidents and housebreak their puppies. Students experienced sleepless nights with crate training puppies crying throughout the night. When students received a puppy, they no longer made decisions without considering their puppy. They had to plan to take the dog with them even when it was not the most convenient. They also had to plan to make accommodations for their puppy if they could not take them along such as a vacation out

of state. Students were responsible for setting up puppy sitters for these times. If no puppy sitters were available, students had to miss out on their original plans.

Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB) had a strict protocol regarding bringing puppies into public. They had a clear outline of where each puppy can and cannot go at each age. GDB enforced these rules in order to set the dog up for success. Students must bring their dog to all places they have "privileges" for. This was because the dog's training and socialization depends on being exposed to different environments. Taking a puppy into public is more complex than one would think. A simple run into the grocery store can turn into an hour-long training session if any behavioral issues were to arise as they often do. Students cannot ignore these behavior issues and must address them as they appear.

Raising Pets versus Raising Guide Dogs

Students were asked if they had raised other dogs or pets previously and how that differed from raising a guide dog puppy. Most students had pets at home currently or previously. The biggest distinction between raising pets and raising guide dogs as reported by students was the strict rules associated with raising guide dogs. Students said that they did not teach their pets much and allowed their pets to behave in a way that was unacceptable for guide dogs in training. For example, the pets were allowed on furniture, allowed to eat table scraps, and allowed to be outside unsupervised; when they misbehaved, it was not a big deal. On the other hand, guide dog puppies were not allowed on furniture, only ate kibble, must be directly supervised outside and relieve themselves on leash, and when they misbehaved, it had to be addressed so that it did not continue to be a problem.

The guide dog puppies learned more than normal pets and are trained in public where pets are not allowed. The guide dog puppies learned sit, down, stand, stay, come, kennel, go-to-bed, and other good manners such as taking food politely, behaving when tethered, and proper crate behavior. The guide dog puppies must be 100% reliable in their commands, as their future partner will not have the sight to see them misbehaving. When pets misbehave, it can be a minor inconvenience or even entertaining. When guide dogs misbehave, it could put their partner at risk.

Puppy raisers received detailed outlines of the training progression the dogs should follow. Each week the raisers were instructed to introduce new commands, maintain old commands, remove and add certain toys, change play time, and begin new public access work. For example, the puppies began going to school after receiving their vaccinations. The young puppies stayed in the crate while their raiser was in their core classes. When the raiser was in an agriculture science class, the puppy went to class. The puppy got let out of the crate between classes to relieve themselves. When they were older and have proven themselves in their agriculture classes, the puppies began going to core classes. Puppies did not go to highly distracting places like restaurants and carnivals until they were older and could handle it. This is so that the puppies and the raisers were set up for success in any environment.

This question was included to discover if there was a discrepancy or perceived differences between raising pets and raising guide dogs. If students are allowed to gain credit toward class (counting it as an SAE), it should not be as simple as having a family

pet at home. After hearing the responses from the students, I concluded that raising guide dogs is not similar to having a pet at home.

Selfless Service

Raising puppies to become future guide dogs is an act of selfless service. Students joined this program in hopes of potentially impacting someone's life down the line. In interviews, students described the enjoyment that comes from providing a dog to an individual with a visual impairment. These students, for the most part, were raising guide dogs to help someone, not for the purpose of parading a dog across their campus. Choosing to raise a puppy was no small commitment. Students sacrificed over a year of their time to raise and train the eyes for a person who cannot see from their own. Many students provided examples of talking about Statewide Training/GDB Fun Day where they had GDB alumni talk about how their dogs changed their lives. Student raisers spoke passionately about the possibility of their work culminating and ultimately affecting someone else's life in the same way.

Statewide Training, known as Guide Dog Fun Day, is an action packed and inspirational two days. In 2017, it took place in Austin, Texas on the first weekend in April. All puppy raisers and their dogs in the state of Texas were required to attend. At Statewide, puppy raisers participated in large and small group training workshops, listened to speakers including working guide dog pairs and working career changed dogs such as diabetic alert dogs, met their puppies' littermates, participate in a simulated guide walk, and more. Student puppy raisers got to see the outcome of their selfless service at Statewide. After experiencing such an impactful weekend, it may be hard to walk away

without a renewed spirit and inspiration when it comes to training. Conducting interviews in the two weeks following Statewide may have skewed the data. Students may have answered questions differently if they had been interviewed before Statewide or a few months after Statewide.

Career Changed Dogs

Very few dogs have what it takes to become a guide dog. It takes a confident, trainable dog that enjoys working with no medical issues such as allergies. Because of this, GDB releases over half of their dogs from their program. Dogs not suited to be guide dogs can still make it as other types of working dogs including dogs for the deaf, diabetic alert dogs, and facility dogs in places like the Ronald McDonald House. Some dogs are released from working completely and become regular pets in loving homes. With career changing dogs being so common, it is likely that many students will be faced with the notification that their dog has been dropped from guide dog training. This can be very disappointing news to receive and has the potential to break spirits. I asked students if their opinion of the program or their decision to do it again would be altered if they found out their dog had been career changed.

Every student responded that it would not affect their opinion of the experience or their decision to raise another puppy. Some students further demonstrated this by training their second, third, or fourth dog while having one of their past puppies be career changed. Guide Dogs for the Blind made it clear that having a dog be career changed is to no fault of the raiser. They also made it clear that ‘career change’ does not come with a negative

connotation. Career changed, to them, means that the dog is picking a job they would rather do whether that job is working as a different service animal or enjoying life as a pet.

At Statewide Training, student raisers had the opportunity to hear from GDB alumni and their partners. Graduated guide dog teams shared their experiences together as well as career changed teams. A dog who did not have what it takes to be a guide dog was career changed to a diabetic alert dog. The partner along with her career changed GDB dog talked about the way the dog has impacted her life. Students got to see that, even if their dog doesn't end up being the eyes for someone, they can still impact someone's life.

Having a dog returned as a pet does not mean the dog cannot impact lives. One student whose dog was career changed and returned as a pet planned on getting him certified as a therapy dog. This means that the dog will be able to go to hospitals, schools, and nursing homes, when invited, to help provide comfort and love to other people. Certifying the dog as a therapy dog was the student's decision. The student said that, even though the dog did not make it as a guide dog, they still wanted to make a difference in others' lives.

People/Networking

More students reported being impacted by the people involved with GDB than being impacted by the actual dogs. GDB was likened to a family by many of the respondents. An organization that involves raising dogs and then giving them up after a year can have emotions running high. There is also the potential for competition to arise. However, no one mentioned a competitive atmosphere. The respondents who mentioned atmosphere did so in a positive light. Raising guide dogs offered students the opportunity

to make friends and even begin networking as high school students. One student reported that they had a job lined up because of a veterinarian they met at Statewide Training. Another student said they hope to continue contact with the people they have met through GDB even when they are not raising a puppy.

Students mentioned that, through GDB, they had made lifelong friends. Others declared that they have found a friend in the dog they are raising. High school can be a difficult time for students and students reported that being involved in GDB has made it easier. Students conveyed that having a dog and having GDB to make friends has made them known for something in high school, as well as improved the high school experience as a whole. Some students even mentioned that they have learned to be a better friend through this experience in addition to gaining better friends. Having a dog with them all the time acted as an ice breaker in different situations. It made the student raisers easier to approach in new environments.

I observed the familial atmosphere during interviews. Both of the schools that were used in this study had a room dedicated to the puppy raisers. In these rooms, there were kennels for the dogs to stay in if they could not attend class, storage space for supplies, and a table and chairs. I experienced students coming in during passing periods and letting other students' dogs out of their crates to take them outside to relieve themselves. One student was having a particularly busy day filled with quizzes and tests, so their dog was spending quite a bit of time in his crate. Another student offered to help and then proceeded to put their own dog in the crate and take the other student's dog to class. Some students came into the kennel room to have lunch with each other and the GDB leader(s).

Student raisers were comfortable around their leaders, talking with them about whatever was going on in their lives. While students were close with the leaders, they were still respectful of them. The dynamic of the raisers and leader(s) was unique and unexpected. It was clearly a team effort. Like one student said, “It definitely takes a village” (Terry).

Career Paths

Through raising for GDB, students were exposed to potential career path options. Students gained marketable hard and soft skills through raising which opens doors for them. Training and working with dogs has the possibility for continuation beyond high school and also allows students to gain skills for other careers such as veterinary medicine. While not all students reported having their potential career path impacted by raising, enough did that it was noteworthy.

Some students mentioned that, because of raising guide dogs through GDB, they hoped to go on to work for GDB in some capacity in the future including Community Field Representatives, Guide Dog Mobility Instructors, Animal Behaviorists, veterinarians for GDB specifically, and some students simply wish to continue raising. A Community Field Representative is regionally based and is responsible for ensuring there are enough puppy raisers for the puppies coming into their state and ensuring there are dogs ready for recall into formal training through supervision, guidance, and direct support of volunteers. A Mobility Instructor trains the guide dogs in formal training including harness training. Guide Dogs for the Blind has a variety of jobs available at any time including nursing, accounting, human resources, veterinarians, neonatal supervisors, kennel technicians, trainers, and more. GDB offers volunteer positions in addition to raising puppies. One

student expressed interest in becoming a leader for a club in addition to the career they choose. Reasons students gave for wanting to continue with GDB included helping others, enjoying the culture of the organization, and enjoying the work.

Other students reported that raising guide dogs had indirectly led them toward another career related to dogs or animals. Students pointed out that Guide Dogs had shown them different aspects of dogs including training and veterinary medicine. Some students said that, because of Guide Dogs, they wanted to become Agricultural Science Teachers and be able to incorporate a GDB club into their program. One student mentioned that her goal was to go into the army and train their bomb dogs. The student included that she learned many of the basic skills needed to train bomb dogs through raising for GDB.

Some students who reported that raising guide dogs had no influence on their career path had their career goals planned before beginning raising for GDB and therefore, GDB had no influence over their decision. Other students were still unsure of what they wanted to do or if GDB had influenced their decision. Guide Dogs for the Blind was noted as a back-up plan for students if their original plans do not work out.

Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAEs) are a required component of the total agricultural education program and each student in AFNR should have one. SAEs offer students the opportunity to try out different careers and occupations. According to the National FFA website, “through their involvement in the SAE program, students are able to consider multiple careers and occupations, learn expected workplace behavior, develop skills within an industry, and are given opportunities to apply academic and occupational skills in the workplace or a simulated workplace environment. Through these strategies,

students learn how to apply what they are learning in the classroom as they prepare to transition into the world of college and career opportunities" (National FFA Organization, 2015). SAEs include exploratory, placement, entrepreneurship, research, school-based enterprise, and service learning. Examples of these SAEs include raising livestock (entrepreneurship), Agriscience fair (research), working in the school greenhouse after school (placement), attending an agricultural career day (exploratory), and raising guide dogs (unpaid placement). Providing students the opportunity to explore different careers is not unique to raising puppies as an SAE. The fact that GDB does offer these opportunities to students indicates that it is accomplishing the goal of SAEs.

Confidence

Confidence built from raising guide dogs is apparent. Students who were once almost invisible in a large high school had a spotlight on them as they walked through the hallways. Nothing they did went unnoticed with a dog by their side. Raisers were confronted with questions and accusations by the community. They had to face those questions with confident answers knowing what they are doing is right. Giving students a task to do and allowing them to excel at it and become experts gives them confidence. These students were experts in guide dogs and could answer any question to public throws their way. The students knew the reason behind what they were doing and the end goal and they knew what they were doing was bigger than any comments made by other people.

Students reported being able to talk to people easier because of their dog. Some students mentioned not enjoying the confrontation at first but then became more outgoing and able to communicate better to the public when they were confronted. Walking through

public places with a well-behaved dog by their side built confidence in the student raisers because they knew that the dog was so well behaved because of their hard work. One parent even admitted they encouraged their student to raise a puppy through this program in order to gain confidence and come out of their shell. Leaders noted that even students who were very shy grew to be able to self-advocate and gained the ability talk to anyone that approaches them.

Patience

Is patience a skill that can be learned or are students just learning to hide their frustrations better? Students, parents, and leaders involved with raising guide dogs would argue that patience is something that can be learned and has been learned through raising guide dog puppies. Having another free-thinking being with you all day every day that needs to behave politely can really test your patience, as some students noted. Students admitted to losing their patience and getting frustrated with their puppies but also told me that they have noticed their threshold has increased. Students confessed they have not only have increased patience with puppies but also increased patience with people.

Teaching puppies how to behave in public takes a lot of patience and repetition. The puppy may be well behaved in an empty hallway at school but act completely different in the busy cafeteria. Student raisers must be consistent in having the puppy behave correctly. This may mean constant treating for the puppy doing something correctly or repeatedly asking the puppy to perform a command.

A parent commented on her child's increase in patience since beginning puppy raising. The parent described their child's newfound ability to take a step back when she

knew she was about to lose her temper. The student was able to breathe, put some space between her and the dog when it causes stress, and then returns when they are both calm. The parent noted that, at the beginning, the student would lose her temper quickly with the puppy and now, she is much slower to anger.

Time Management

Time management was unique because it was mentioned as something the students learned through raising as well as something the students faced as a challenge through raising guide dog puppies. Some students reported an increased sense of time management while others reported time management as something they continue to struggle with. I checked to see if there was a correlation with puppy age or number of dogs raised with time management. Students who had raised more than one dog did not report being any better at time management than students who were currently raising their first puppy.

Raising a puppy is a huge time commitment. The puppy lived with the raiser twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week for over a year. Every aspect of the students' schedule changed because of this new puppy. Students are expected to maintain every other part of their lives while adding in a puppy. These puppies can turn a quick trip to the store into an hour-long training outing. Student raisers were expected to uphold the same expectations as all other high school students while training a puppy. They were expected to make it to class on time, to be at their softball game, and to stay awake in class after a sleepless night of crate training a new puppy. Students who reported better time management as a result of puppy raising described their experience as providing structure and, therefore, allowed them to manage their time better.

Students who found time management to be a challenge reported being busy and involved in extracurricular activities and activities outside out of school. Students involved in Pre-AP classes described struggling with balancing a difficult course load with raising a puppy. Some students missed other commitments in order to continue being involved with GDB. The transition from being a puppy sitter to a puppy raiser was a struggle for the students. As a puppy sitter, students watched other students' puppies when they are not able to take them. For example, students did not take their dogs to classes when there is a wet lab for the dogs' safety. GDB dogs were also not allowed outside of the ten states that currently have GDB raising clubs. For this, the students would ask a puppy sitter to watch their dog temporarily. Puppy sitters were usually students who are hoping to become raisers in the future or student who are currently between raising their own puppies. Some puppy sitters were content with their level of involvement and did not wish to become raisers in the future.

The amount of time puppy raising requires came as a surprise to many students. Even after spending time puppy sitting before receiving a puppy, it was hard to truly prepare the students for the time commitment they were about to make. They could imagine how much time it will take but they did not truly know until they got their own puppy to raise. Students mentioned that it was difficult to manage having the dog full time as opposed to just here and there while they are puppy sitting.

Public Interference

Service dog laws and etiquette are not well known among the general public. Because of this, students raising guide dogs faced interference from the public almost on a

daily basis. This interference may be people distracting the puppy in training or refusal of service in a store, even though it is illegal to refuse service to a working service dog or a service dog in training. Many students expressed public interference as a challenge they faced often as a result of raising puppies.

Students expressed concern about the public perceiving the dogs in training being forced to work. Public perception of the dogs that students expressed concern about was the fact that people thought the dogs were being forced to work or were being abused because of collar corrections when in actuality, the dogs truly enjoyed working. The dogs had free will to decide to work or not. If they chose not to work, they were career changed to something they could enjoy doing.

Guide Dogs for the Blind's training techniques consisted mainly of positive reinforcement but, because guide dogs must resist any and all temptations, it was necessary to use positive punishment at times (Puppy Raising Manual, 2016). This positive punishment consisted of 'collar correcting.' Collar correcting is a short, swift pull back at the leash if the dog does something it should not, such as pulling towards another dog. Many students noted that, to the general public, collar corrections look like abuse. However, if done correctly, collar corrections can be an efficient training technique and go unnoticed by the general public. During my observations, I saw some small collar corrections as well as some rather aggressive collar corrections. Collar corrections are hard to execute correctly and, perhaps, training should be given to the puppy raisers as well as the student body about what exactly a collar correction is and how to properly perform one.

Students noted that they defended their training techniques and reassured the public that they were not abusing their dogs.

Some people who came across these working dogs were afraid or allergic to dogs and issues have arisen over that. However, the Americans with Disabilities Act protects service dogs from discrimination based on fear or allergies. Service dogs in training have the same rights as service dogs in many states, including Texas. The student raisers must advocate for their rights as service dog trainers.

One student noted that the other students at school had improved in service dog etiquette since more dogs arrived on campus. This student said that when there was only one or two dogs on campus and it was new, they faced more interference from students. Some students continued to interfere with the puppies' training by not listening to the raisers or "drive-by" petting. When someone pets the dog as they are walking by without asking it is called a "drive-by" pet. Some students asked to pet the dogs and even if they received "no" for an answer, still reached out to pet the dog. Some students gave the raisers trouble by distracting the dogs and downplaying what the raisers were doing. For example, they called the dogs "cats" just to give the raisers a hard time.

Students reported that, in public, some people judged them for having the dog. The public assumed that the raiser is disabled and required the dog as a mitigation to their disability. The public also assumed the raisers were "faking" a disability so that they could bring their dog into public. To alleviate this issue, students had to become strong advocates for puppy raising.

Many students expressed advocating as something that was necessary but, few students described actually advocating. Students had to advocate for their right to be in a public place with their puppy in training, they had to advocate to other students in their school, they had to give reasons for training techniques. Students faced public access issues when store managers denied them access. Students had to be intimate with the laws regarding service dogs in training. Most students expressed this as a challenge. Many of them reported avoiding advocating. If a store manager denied them access because they have a guide dog in training with them, they should absolutely explain the law to them. This is necessary because if a working guide team were to come in, it is important that they are granted access, as they truly need their guide dog. Because some students admitted avoiding confrontation and advocating when it is needed, training on how to properly advocate could be added or emphasized more within the clubs.

Students advocated in the way that they clear up misconceptions about service dogs and clarify the difference between service dogs, therapy dogs, and emotional support animals. One of the leaders spoke very passionately about the issue that is emotional support animals. Emotional support animals being brought into public pose a danger and threat to actual working dogs who undergo hundreds of hours of training. Students were able to advocate for the use of service dogs by those individuals with disabilities. For a high school student to be able to stand up to an adult breaking the law, they must be confident in their answers and their ability to advocate. This skill cannot be trained before receiving a dog. It seems to come on after having the dog for a time. Students who were raising their first puppy and that first puppy was still too young to come in public with

them did not mention advocating while students with older dogs did mention the need for advocating. Students recognized the need for advocating for public access for the puppies in training required by Texas State Law but there is little evidence that the students were actually advocating for the proper treatment and access for service dogs.

Dog Training

Another challenge students mentioned was simply training dogs. The puppy raisers noted that each dog had differences and required different training techniques. Students reported that they had to get to know each dog on a personal level and could not treat each dog the same. Students could transfer this idea to working with people and the fact that no two people are the same. A couple of students declared that they have learned to be a better friend through this program, which could be related to the concept that no two dogs are the same. An additional challenge related to training the dogs was the short attention spans of puppies. Waking up in the middle of the night to let their puppy relieve himself also seemed to be a reoccurring challenge among raisers. Basically, the amount of attention the puppies required was a challenge among most raisers.

A challenge faced by families of raisers included the sacrifices that come with puppy raising. Bringing a puppy into the house affected not only the student raiser but also the entire family. Families had to consider where they can and cannot go with a puppy, how long they will be gone for, and find puppy sitters if they were planning a vacation. Students who were attending college in the fall had the option to bring the dog with them. However, parents reported that a few Texas college campuses were refusing to allow the

dogs to live in the dorms and attend classes with their raiser. Parents described other public access challenges they have faced.

Having other animals in the house along with a guide dog in training can pose a challenge for families. The guide dog puppy had strict rules in regards to playing with other dogs. The guide dog puppy could not roughhouse, play fetch, or chase other dogs. This is because playing in this manner can cause dog distraction which is an issue with working guide dogs. The puppies could, however, play nicely with another dog lying down and chewing on a toy together. Monitoring play between two dogs was a constant task that could be challenging. The parents noted that, despite the challenges, it was an enjoyable experience and had actually brought their family closer together.

Families admitted to pitching in to care for the puppy while it was at home. Even when one parent was not fully on board, they ended up being committed after just having the puppy a few days. One parent reported that her spouse went out of his way to help with the puppy now whereas he was fully against it beforehand. At the time of this study, this particular parent reported being unexpectedly attached to the puppy.

Giving the puppy back to GDB after pouring their hearts into them for over a year was expectedly difficult. The entire family became attached to the puppy so sending them back to California or Oregon was like losing a part of the family. This difficulty was made easier by the fact that the raisers and their families knew the dog was going on to impact another person's life and that they would get to see them again at graduation with their new partner. Raisers each reported that they would raise another puppy. 100% of raisers

interviewed planned on raising again and answered with no hesitation. The pain that comes with saying goodbye to their dog does not overshadow the true meaning behind raising.

Would You Raise Another Puppy?

Students answered this question very eagerly and in a way that made it sound like they were surprised I even had to ask that question. Based on this, I can believe that they answered honestly. I found their responses to be unexpected. Given all of the responsibilities and sacrifices that go with puppy raising, I assumed some students would want a break. However, many students already had dates set for their next puppy to arrive. All four parents interviewed said that they would allow their student to raise another puppy. One parent even admitted that she would continue raising puppies after her student left for college. Current seniors who had younger puppies planned to bring their puppy to college with them in the fall. Seniors with older dogs whose recall date was approaching reported that they were planning on joining the local puppy raising club in the city they were to attend school in order to continue raising.

Students' reasons for raising again included raising puppies being enjoyable in addition to having the opportunity to impact someone's life by providing them with a guide dog. Even with the pain that comes with giving the dog up after a year, students still wanted to continue raising. Students reported that they would feel empty if they were to stop raising. Raising puppies gives students a purpose outside of themselves. The students really impressed me with their responses and dedication.

Other students reported wanting to raise another puppy so they could apply what they learned from their first puppy to their second. Raisers admitted that, because they

were new to raising, their first dog may not reach its full potential. Some students had had a puppy be career changed and they wanted another opportunity to have a dog be successful in becoming a guide dog. One student reported that her first puppy had medical issues. This particular student was not sure if she wanted to continue raising but, because other students had such positive experiences, she decided to give it another chance. As this student's second puppy neared his recall date, the student admitted that she would not have given up this experience for anything.

Findings and Discussion Related to Research Question Three

The third research question aimed to identify the competencies gained from raising a guide dog puppy as compared to raising livestock. Differences between the two were identified from the perspectives of the students and the GDB Leaders/Agricultural Science Teachers. Raising livestock is almost a rite of passage for many AFNR students. It is widely supported by parents, school administrators, and communities. If raising guide dogs produces similar competencies to raising livestock, should it not receive the same support?

The similarities between raising livestock and raising puppies included responsibility, work ethic, dedication, teamwork, and ownership of one's choices. Student raisers of livestock and guide dogs were both faced with scrutiny from the public and must learn to advocate for their respective industry. One GDB Leader/Agricultural Science Teacher noted that she saw more similarities than differences between the two. The two were reported as similar because the purpose of either was not necessarily learning the hard skills behind it but the soft skills were the more valuable skills.

The main difference reported included the time commitment required by guide dogs as compared to livestock. Raising guide dogs was often the longer commitment, lasting over a year per dog. In addition, more time per day was spent with the dogs compared to livestock. The dogs lived with their raisers 24/7 and required constant attention whereas livestock lived in a barn and usually required two visits per day. One GDB Leader/Agricultural Science Teacher, Dylan, admitted believing that raising puppy required more commitment for that reason; they could not just leave their dog at a barn overnight or during the day. Dylan believed that you see more commitment out of the puppy raisers than you do out of the livestock raisers for this reason. Another observation made by Dylan was that the puppy raisers learned more than the livestock raisers because they were able to impact someone's life whereas livestock raisers impact someone's food but do not get the opportunity to see that impact directly. The puppy raisers got to see their impact all the way through to graduation when they had the opportunity to meet their dog's partner.

Fifteen out of 22 students interviewed for raising guide dogs were currently or had been involved in raising livestock. Again, the main theme that emerged from the students when asked the difference between raising puppies and livestock was the amount of time involved. Students noted that they were able to leave the livestock at the barn and not think about them but they constantly had to be paying attention to their puppy in training. Other students noted the additional time they had to put in prior to receiving a puppy compared to preparing for the livestock. For the puppy, students had to puppy-sit and attend meetings before being considered for a puppy. In addition, students had to puppy-proof their houses

to the standards of the GDB leader. Students mentioned the preparation for a pig or goat was minimal in comparison. Puppy raising was described as “extensive” compared to raising livestock. The student raisers also called attention to the seasonal patterns of raising livestock compared to the continual season of raising guide dogs. This description was not given in a positive or negative matter. It was stated like it was, a fact.

The differences in hard skills included the clear differences in the biological need of a steer or lamb versus a dog. Livestock raisers learned to clip hooves, shear, feed, and show livestock. Puppy raisers learned to clip toenails, groom, train, and feed dogs. One student mentioned the hard skills she had learned throughout raising. This student described experiences with the veterinarian and needing to know the dog’s vaccinations and dosages for heartworm and flea preventatives. She explained that her dog had been having soft stools and that she had to measure the correct amount of Tylosin powder to give the dog in order to harden stools. These skills could be applied to a future in veterinary medicine as well as just a future involving a dog as a pet.

Financially, raising livestock and puppies is different. Because livestock is considered an entrepreneurship SAE, the financial burden is much larger. Livestock raisers pay for the initial animal, facilities, and feed. This can easily reach thousands of dollars. With guide dogs, the financial commitment is lower. Puppy raisers paid for the dogs’ food, toys, bowls, and any travel included, such as Statewide Training. GDB provided the puppy and covered veterinary care. The schools had a set of kennels the raisers borrowed for the time it was needed. In total, a leader reported that a raiser might pay about $1,000 for everything involved in training over the course of a year.

Other themes that emerged include learning different training techniques and the overall experience being different between the two SAEs. One student admitted that they had gotten more frustrated with their show pig than they had with their dog. This could be because students raising puppies were taught how to communicate with their dog through training techniques. For example, students "mark" the correct behavior of the dog with a marker word. The dog was conditioned to expect a reward following hearing the marker word. Students raising livestock were not taught how to communicate with their animals in a way the animal was able to understand. Another student said that they found training their pig to be easier than training a dog because the dog was able to consider whether they *want* to perform the command asked of them while pigs simply listened to what was told to them. Some students added that their overall experience raising guide dogs was more memorable than raising livestock.

One of the GDB Leaders/Agricultural Science Teachers expressed that she believes in raising guide dogs over any other experience the FFA had to offer students. This leader felt very passionately about the experiences and lessons gained through raising guide dogs. This leader did not believe there was anything comparable. A parent admitted that they believed their child gained more through the experience of raising a puppy than they did from raising a show pig. The reason behind both of these statements was that the dogs go on to help and impact other people while the show animals end after the show. The students do not get the experience of changing a life through raising livestock. The respondents were perhaps biased towards puppy-raising. If people more heavily involved

in raising livestock were asked the same question, they would probably answer differently than did the puppy raisers.

This study had three objectives: describe the impact puppy raising has on high school AFNR students, identify the challenges associated with raising a puppy as a high school student from the perspective of the student, parent, and GDB Leader/Agricultural Science Teacher, and identify the competencies gained from raising a guide dog puppy as compared to raising livestock. Impacts that emerged included an increase in puppy raiser maturity/responsibility, networking ability, confidence, patience, and career influence. Challenges included time management, public interference, and the initial start-up of a puppy-raising program. Besides the time commitment, there were no distinguishable differences in competencies gained between raising puppies and raising livestock.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Student puppy raisers, through raising future guide dogs, were offered the opportunity to gain valuable soft skills such as increased responsibility/maturity, networking, confidence, patience, and time management. The puppy raisers reported being impacted by the service aspect of puppy-raising, the people involved in GDB, and the potential to turn this Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) into a career.

Student puppy raisers, their parents, and the GDB Leaders/Agricultural Science Teachers reported an increase in puppy raisers' confidence as a result of raising guide dog puppies. Through puppy raising, students were better able to talk to the general public when faced with questions regarding their puppy. Dogs have been reported to increase self-confidence when they are kept as pets, involved in dog reading programs, and used as behavioral intervention training programs in at-risk youth and prison inmates (Zasloff et al., 2003; Barker & Wolen, 2008; Cooke & Farrington, 2015; Kirnan, Siminerio, & Wong, 2016).

Barker and Wolen (2008) determined that dogs offer humans an improved social network, which can be seen in this study. Students reported a familial atmosphere within GDB and an increased ease in making friends as a result of raising a puppy. Parents and GDB Leaders/Agricultural Science Teacher called attention to the students' ability to speak to the public with ease as a result of raising guide dog puppies. Dogs serve as catalysts for these social interactions (Viau et al., 2010). Students raising guide dogs have

their dogs-in-training to act as aids in initiating social interactions (McNicholas & Collis, 2000).

Student raisers derive emotional support from their puppies in training as made clear by Danny, the student who was kicked out of her house while raising a puppy. Danny described that her dog and the other puppy raisers have been there for her during the difficult times and have continued to support her. Barker and Wolen (2008) described the relationship between humans and pets to have the potential to be more supportive than the relationship between family members. Anxiety decreases as a result of the oxytocin release caused in humans because of the presence of dogs, resulting in positive emotions (Handlin et al., 2011).

Student puppy raisers can gain hard skills through raising guide dog puppies including veterinary medicine skills, grooming skills, and a foundational knowledge of training skills. Melson (2003) described the hard skills children can learn from the prolonged exposure to dogs and other animals. These skills include the care, characteristics, and needs of animals. In addition, the predictable unpredictability of animals offers great learning opportunities to children (Melson, 2003). Previous studies have concluded that students learn more and better through owning as well as working with dogs (McConnell, 2016).

The hard and soft skills learned by puppy raisers through raising guide dog puppies can be applied to different careers. Many students mentioned the desire to build upon these skills in their future careers working with dogs. Prisoners involved in a dog-training program responded during an interview that they hoped to continue working with dogs

after their release (Austin, 2016). Comparing the student puppy raisers to the inmates seems like a stretch. However, working with dog had similar effects on the two groups.

These student puppy raisers faced challenges throughout raising guide dog puppies such as frustrations working with dogs, time management, and public interference. Zasloff et al. (2003) established that, through training as a behavioral intervention, youth were able to learn positive ways of handling conflict. Perhaps students involved in raising guide dogs also learn positive conflict handling skills. More research is needed to confirm this tentative conclusion.

This study was able to begin to fill the lack of knowledge that currently exists on the topic of benefits a trainer receives through training. Raising guide dogs as an SAE is a unique alternative to the traditional, animal-related SAE, raising livestock. Based on preliminary findings in this study, students raising livestock and students raising guide dogs are gaining comparable competencies through their respective SAEs. Incorporating the guide dog raising program allows AFNR programs to become more diverse by offering more opportunities to their students. It allows agricultural science classes and FFA to appeal to students it otherwise would not. Students who have an interest in small animals may be drawn to raising guide dogs while students who have an interest in large animals will be drawn to raising livestock. Some students, as seen in this study, will continue to raise both livestock and guide dog puppies.

Recommendations

Students who were raising guide dog puppies were not required to keep an Agricultural Experience Tracker (AET) Record Book on their project. The only reports the

student raisers were responsible for is a monthly report sent directly to GDB. This report included how the puppy was doing on his commands and what outings the puppy went on in the previous month. The AET is a personalized record book for tracking AFNR involvement, including SAEs. Keeping a record book allows students to qualify for different degrees, scholarships, and awards through FFA. Students record accomplishments in regards to their project, classroom activities, as well as financial transactions. Students raising guide dogs put in an incredible amount of work and deserve recognition for that work. Without an AET Record Book, they were not even considered for these different honors. A recommendation for improvement of existing guide dog raising clubs in FFA chapters is to require student puppy raisers to keep an AET Record Book on their unpaid placement, puppy-raising SAE.

If this study were to be replicated, it is recommended to conduct interviews at a time that does not coincide with Statewide Training. Because interviews were conducted in the two weeks following Statewide, responses may have been skewed. Comparing responses from interviews conducted at a different time to responses from interviews following Statewide would determine if Statewide did, in fact, skew responses.

More research is needed to determine if the skills, impacts, and themes that emerged in this study can be directly attributed to raising puppies. It is unclear if mature and responsible students are attracted to this program or if this program contributes to their increase in responsibility. It is also unclear exactly how much of an impact is made on the students through raising the dogs. A longitudinal quantitative study including surveying students and parents before, during, and after raising a puppy may reveal these trends in a

more measurable manner. A study looking closer at the hard and soft skills gained through puppy raising could provide opportunities to improve the puppy raising program so that students are able to learn more through their experience as a puppy raiser. A quantitative study would also allow for generalizations to the population. Student raisers in AFNR could be compared to those puppy raisers not in AFNR in addition to student puppy raisers in states other than Texas.

My final suggestion for future research is concerning other students in the schools. Students who are not involved in Guide Dogs for the Blind but attend a school with GDB puppies on campus may be affected, positively or negatively, by the dogs in their classes and hallways. Literature suggests that the dogs would have positive effects, such as lower levels of cardiovascular risks and fewer visits to the doctor's office (Barker & Wolen, 2008; Lockwood, 1983), improved social network, increased autonomy, increased self-esteem, and increased learning capability (Kirnan, Siminerio, & Wong, 2016; Barker & Wolen, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget, 1969), and a decrease in anxiety as a result of oxytocin release caused by dogs (Handlin et al., 2011). Research should be conducted to determine if any of those positive effects, indeed, are recognized in students in the schools with GDB dogs.

REFERENCES

Agriscience Magnet Program. (n.d). Retrieved May 11, 2017, from http://agrisciencemagnetprogram.weebly.com/

Allen, K., & Blascovich, J. (1996). The value of service dogs for people with severe ambulatory disabilities. *Journal of the American Medical Association, 275*(13), 1001-1006.

Altschiller, D. (2011). *Animal-assisted therapy.* Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood.

Austin, M. C. (2016). Prison escape. *Louisville Magazine*, 30-33. Retrieved from https://www.louisville.com/content/prison-escape

Bass, M. M., Duchowny, C.A., & Llabre, M. M. (2009). The effect of therapeutic horseback riding on social functioning in children with autism. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 39*(9), 1261-1267.

Barker, S. B., & Wolen, A. R. (2008). The benefits of human-companion animal interaction: A review. *Journal of Veterinary Medical Education, 35*(4), 487-495.

Beck, A. (2000). The use of animals to benefit humans: Animal-assisted therapy. In A. Fine (ed.), *Handbook on animal-assisted therapy: Theoretical foundations and guidelines for practice* (pp. 21-37). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Boleman, C. T., Cummings, S. R., & Briers, G. E. (2004). Parents' perceptions of life skills gained by youth participating in the 4-H beef project. *Journal of Extension, 42*(5). Retrieved from https://www.joe.org/joe/2004october/rb6.php

Boyd, B. L., Herring, D. R., & Briers, G. E. (1992). Developing life skills in youth. *Journal of Extension, 30*(4). Retrieved from https://www.joe.org/joe/1992winter/a4.php

Britton, D. M., & Button, A. (2005). Prison pups: Assessing the effects of dog training programs in correctional facilities. *Journal of Family Social Work, 9*(4), 79-95.

Cooke, B. J., & Farrington, D. P. (2015). The effects of dog-training programs: Experiences of incarcerated females. *Women & Criminal Justice, 25*(3), 201-214.

Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES). (2011). *NIFA overview*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Food and Agriculture, United States Department of Agriculture. Retrieved from http://www.csrees.usda.gov/extesnsion.html

Cole, K., & Gawlinski, A. (1995). Animal-assisted therapy in the intensive care unit: A staff nurse's dream comes true. *Nursing Clinics of North America, 30*(3), 529-537.

Corson, S., & Corson, E. (1987). Pet animals as socializing catalysts in geriatrics: An experiment in non-verbal communication therapy. *Society, Stress Disease,* 5, 305-322. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Dooley, K. (2007). Viewing agricultural education research through a qualitative lens. *Journal of Agricultural Education, 48*(4), 32-42. http://www.jae-online.org/attachments/article/146/Dooley_48_4_32-42.pdf

Fraenkel, J. R., Wallen, N. E., & Hyun, H. H. (2011). *How to design and evaluate research in education* (8th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Fine, A. H. (2002). Animal-assisted therapy. *Encyclopedia of Psychotherapy,* 1, 49-55.

Friedmann, E., Katcher, A., Lynch, J. and Thomas, S. (1980). Animal companions and one-year survival of patients after discharge from a coronary care unit. *Public Health Response 95*(4), 307-312.

Guide Dogs for the Blind. (2017a). *Career change dogs*. Retrieved from https://www.guidedogs.com/meet-gdb/dog-programs/career-change-corner

Guide Dogs for the Blind. (2017b). *FAQ*. Retrieved from http://www.guidedogs.com/explore-resources/faq

Guide Dogs for the Blind (2017c). *Guide dogs for the blind fact sheet*. Retrieved from https://www.guidedogs.com/meet-gdb/about-us

Guide Dogs for the Blind. (2017d). *Guide dog training*. Retrieved from http://www.guidedogs.com/meet-gdb/dog-programs/guide-dog-training

Guide Dogs for the Blind (2017e). *Puppy raising*. Retrieved from http://www.guidedogs.com/support-gdb/volunteer/puppy-raising

Guide Dogs for the Blind. (2016). *Online puppy raising manual.* Retrieved from http://www.gdb-official.com/site/PageServer?pagename=programs_dog_puppy_manual

Hamama, L., Hamama-Raz, Y., Dagan, K., Greenfeld, H., Rubinstein, C., & Ben-Ezra, M. (2011). A preliminary study of group intervention along with basic canine training among traumatized teenagers: A 3-month longitudinal study. *Elsevier, 33*(10), 1975-1980.

Handlin, L., Hydbring-Sandberg, E., Nilsson, A., Ejdeback, M., Jansson, A., & Uvnas-Moberg, K. (2011). Short-term interaction between dogs and their owners: Effects

on oxytocin, cortisol, insulin and heart rate: An exploratory study. *Anthrozoos, 24*(3), 301-315.

Harris, K., & Sholtis, S. (2016). Companion angels on a leash: Welcoming service dogs into classroom communities for children with autism. *Childhood Education, 92*(4), 263-275.

Holmgren, L. N., & Reid, C. R. (2007). 4-H & FFA livestock projects: Life skills gained and knowledge learned. *Journal of Youth Development, 2*(1), 1-9.

Kirnan, J., Siminerio, S., & Wong, Z. (2016). The impact of a therapy dog program on children's reading skills and attitudes toward reading. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 44*(6), 637-651.

Kramer, S. C., Friedmann, E., & Bernstein, P. L. (2009). Comparison of the effect of human interaction, animal-assisted therapy, and AIBO-assisted therapy on long term care residents with dementia. *Anthrozoos, 22*(1), 43-57.

Lane, D., McNicholas, J., & Collis, G. (1998). Dogs for the disabled: Benefits to recipients and welfare of the dog. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science, 59*(1-3), 49-60.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Lockwood, R. 1983. The influence of animals on social perception. *New Perspectives on Our Lives with Companion Animals*, 64-71.

Lone Star Guide Dog Raisers. (n.d.) Retrieved December 12, 2016, from http://www.lonestarguidedograisers.com/

Mathison, S. (1988). Why triangulate? *Educational Researcher, 17*(2), 13-17.

Maslow, A. H. (1968). *Toward a psychology of being*. New York, NY: D Van Nostrand Company.

Maxwell, J. (1992). Understanding and validity in qualitative research. *Harvard Educational Review, 62*(3), 279-301.

McConnell, B. L. (2016). Teaching with dogs: Learning about learning through hands-on experience in dog training. *Psychology Learning & Teaching, 15*(3), 310-328.

McNicholas, J., & Collis, G. M. (2000). Dogs as catalysts for social interactions: Robustness of the effect. *British Journal of Psychology, 91*(1), 61-70.

Melson, G. F. (2003). Child development and the human-companion animal bond. *Sage Journals, 47*(1), 31-39.

Motomura, N., Yagi, T., & Ohyama, H. (2004). Animal-assisted therapy for people with dementia. *Psychogeriatrics, 4,* 40-42.

Naderi, S., Miklósi, Á., Dóka A., & Csányi, V. (2001). Co-operative interactions between blind persons and their dogs. *Elsevier, 74*(1), 59-80.

National FFA Organization. (2015a). *Mission and motto*. Retrieved from https://www.ffa.org/About?WhoWeAre/Pages/MissionandMotto.aspx

National FFA Organization. (2015b). *Supervised agricultural experiences*. Retrieved from https://www.ffa.org/about/supervised-agricultural-experiences

Patton, M. Q. (1999). Enhancing the quality and credibility of qualitative analysis. *Health Services Research, 34*(5), 1189-1208.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Phelps, K., Henry, A. L., & Bird, W. A. (2012). Factors influencing or discouraging secondary school students' FFA participation. *Journal of Agricultural Education, 53*(2), 70-86. Retrieved from http://jae-online.org/attachments/article/1671/53.2.70%20Phelps.pdf

Piaget, J. (1969). *The child's conception of the world.* Totowa, NJ: Littlefield, Adams.

Roberts, R., & Edwards, M. C. (2015). Service learning's ongoing journey as a method of instruction: Implications for school-based agricultural education. *Journal of Agricultural Education, 56*(2), 217-233. Retrieved from http://www.jae-online.org/attachments/article/1910/2014-0985%20roberts.pdf

Rusk, C. P., Summerlot-Early, J. M., Machtmes, K. L., Talbert, B. A., & Balschweid, M. A. The impact of raising and exhibiting selected 4-H livestock projects on the development of life and project skills. *Journal of Agricultural Education, 44*(3), 1-11. Retrieved from http://pubs.aged.tamu.edu/jae/pdf/Vol44/44-03-01.pdf

Sanders, C. R. (2000). The impact of guide dogs on the identity of people with visual impairments, *Anthrozoos, 13*(3), 131-139.

Speck, B. W., & Hoppe, S. L. (2004). *Service learning: History, theory, and issues*. Westport, CT: Praeger Press.

Sturges, J. E., & Hanrahan, K. J. (2004). Comparing telephone and face-to-face qualitative interviewing: A research note. *Sage Journals*, 4(1), 107-118.

U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division. (2011, July 11).*ADA requirements: Service animals*. Retrieved from https://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.

Valentine, D. Kiddoo, M., & Lafleur, B. (1993). Psychological implications of service dog ownership for people who have mobility or hearing impairments. *Social Work in Health Care, 19*(1), 109-125.

Viau, R., Aresenault-Lapierre, G., Fecteau, S., Champagne, N., Walker, C., & Lupien, S. (2010). Effect of service dogs on salivary cortisol secretion in autistic children. *Elsevier, 35*(8), 1187-1193.

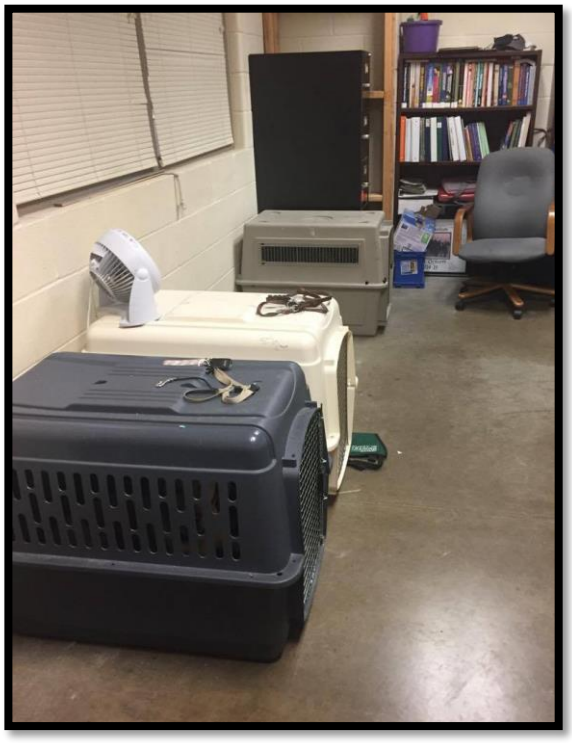
Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wooten, K., Rayfield, J., & Moore, L. (2013). Identifying STEM concepts associated with junior livestock projects. *Journal of Agricultural Education, 54*(4), 31-44. Retrieved from http://www.jae-online.org/attachments/article/1775/2013_0773%20Wooten.pdf

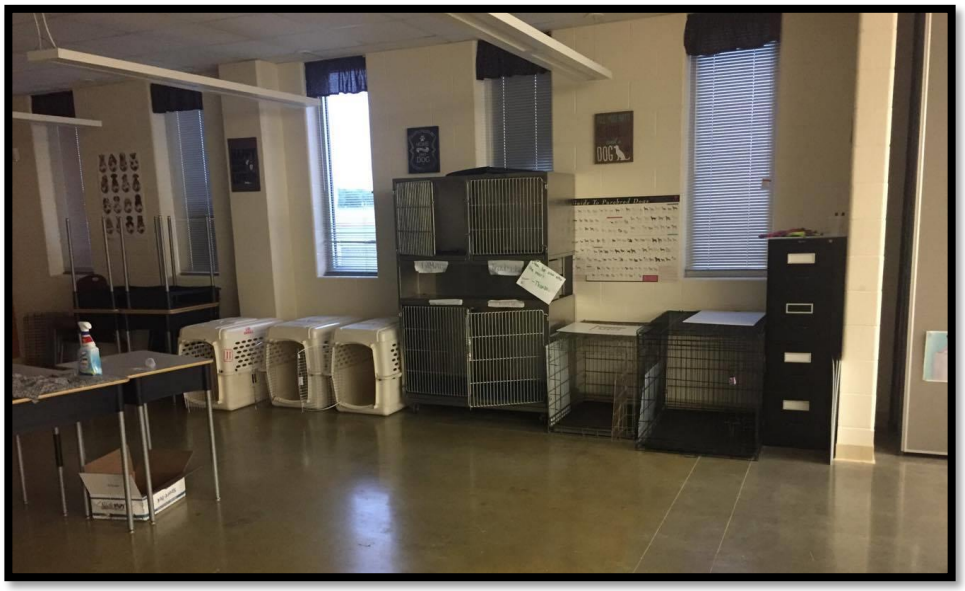
Writer, L. G. (2016, November 09). Job description of an FFA ag adviser. Retrieved May 11, 2017, from http://work.chron.com/job-description-ffa-ag-adviser-28172.html

Zasloff, R. L., Hart, L. A., & Weiss, J. M. (2003). Dog training as a violence prevention tool for at-risk adolescents. *Anthrozoos, 16*(4), 352-359.

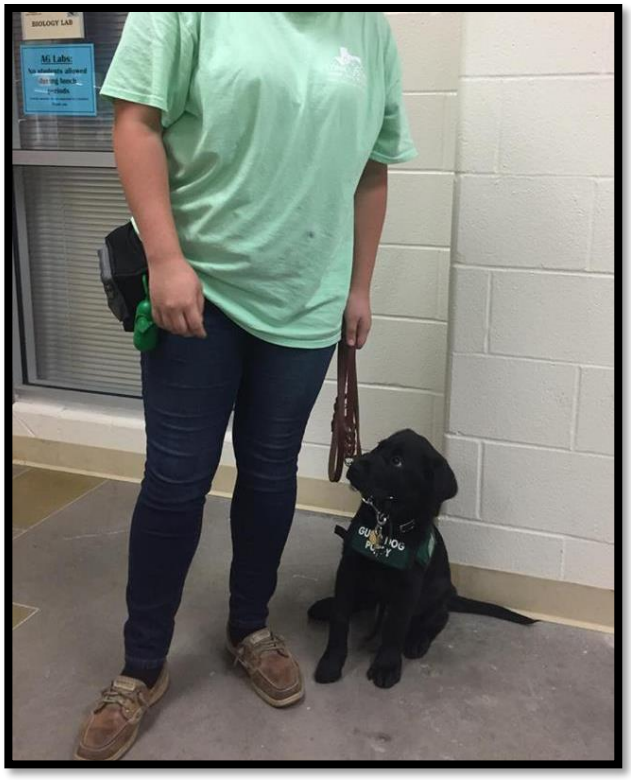
APPENDIX



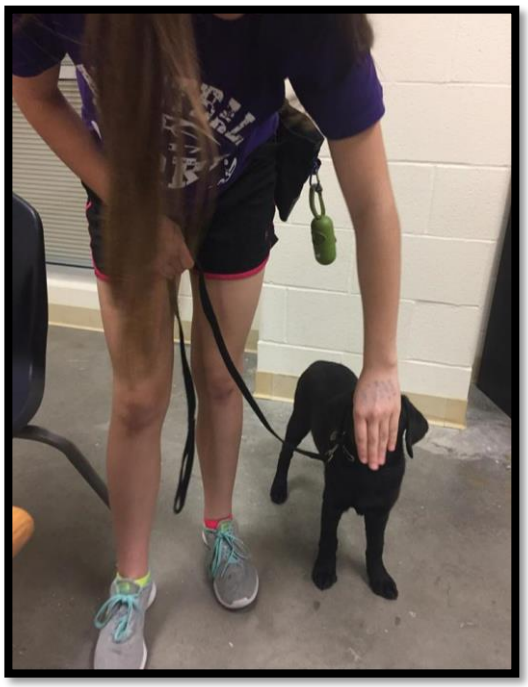
Room dedicated to the puppy raising program including kennels and storage spaces for students.



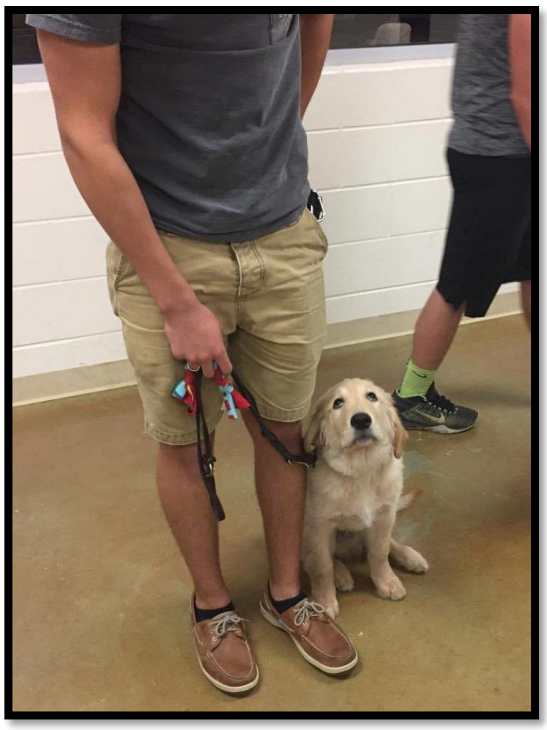
Dog kennels in a large classroom. Students utilized crates when their puppy was too young to attend class.



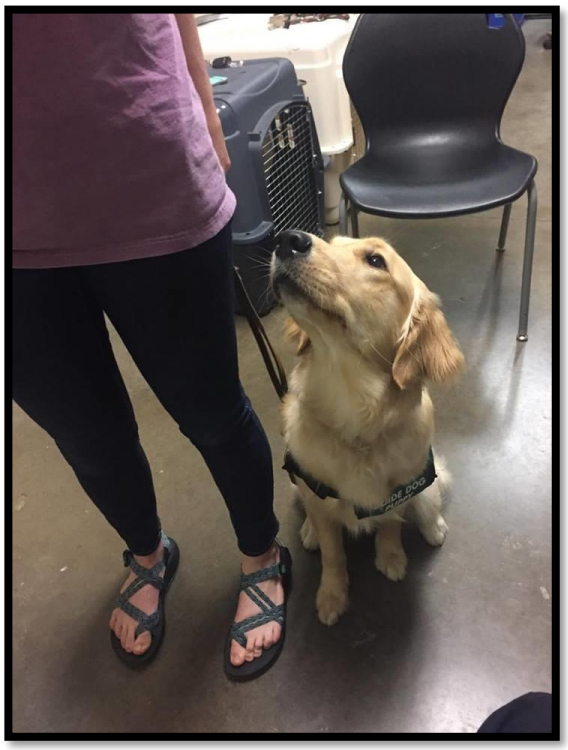
Black lab puppy and his raiser pose for a picture while he sits at her side.



A student puppy raiser gives her black lab puppy a treat for standing in a “heel.”



Twelve week old Golden Retriever puppy in training looks up at his raiser while sitting at his side.



Golden Retriever sits at her raiser's side, looking to her for direction.