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### **ASSISTANCE DOGS OF AMERICA, INC. OPENS DOORS, BREAKS BARRIERS**

Most of us take our independence for granted. After all, it's our right. But some people -- those with disabilities that impair their mobility -- are faced with challenges to their independence that most of us can't even imagine. For some, their lives can be helped immeasurably through the assistance of specially-trained, highly-skilled dogs.

Assistance Dogs of America, Inc., an Ohio-based non-profit organization, is a well-recognized provider of specially-trained dogs to assist the mobility-impaired or differently-abled.

The assistance dog concept is fairly new. Similar in theory to guide dogs for the blind and hearing dogs for the deaf, assistance dogs are specially trained to aid physically-challenged people with the activities of daily living: opening doors, turning on lights and appliances, retrieving dropped objects, and providing companionship, to name a few.

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## **ADAI OPENS DOORS /PAGE 2 OF 2**

Columbus-based Assistance Dogs of America Inc. (ADAI) is one of the leaders in this burgeoning therapeutic field.

One mother whose son received an ADAI-trained dog, says, "she (the dog) has been a catalyst for his social development... he is more responsible, confident, self-assured and joyful." The boy writes, "It's great having somebody (his assistance dog) love me just because I'm me."

"The only thing that amazes me more than the courage of the differently-abled is the willingness of our dogs to assist them," says Tony DiBlasi, Executive Assistant of ADAI. "I'm honored to have the opportunity to be part of an organization making such a difference in so many individual lives..."

The benefits of an assistance dog go beyond opening doors and providing companionship. They often are the impetus for personal growth and have helped thousands return to more productive, independent lifestyles.

Assistance Dogs of America, Inc. is an internationally-renowned provider of dogs for the physically challenged. Animals are trained and placed free-of-charge with qualified individuals. ADAI's new National Headquarters is at 5236 Bethel Centre Mall, Columbus, Ohio 43220 (phone: 614-451-2969), with additional training facilities in the Toledo area.

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