



News Photo by Theresa Whitney

## *Trained Dogs Guide Handicapped*

by Theresa Whitney

Simple acts, like walking upstairs, may not be so simple if a person has physical limitations. With a little help from a friendly doberman, the trip may be a little safer.

Sam Maxwell, a trainer for Guide Dogs for the Handicapped, is the person responsible for giving dogs the skills they need to make the world an easier place for their masters to handle.

Sam is shown training Lady, a brown doberman, to negotiate the stairs at the Community Library building in Sunbury.

She explains that Lady will be living with a couple in Illinois, who both have Cerebral Palsy. The wife is in a wheelchair, while the husband is deaf, and walks with a staggered gait, Sam says. This means that Lady is training for both wheelchair use and walking.

Lady will retrieve dropped items for her new mistress, and provide counter balance to steady the walk of her master. In

this case the dog will also be trained to "go get Bill," Sam smiles.

In addition, the dog will be able to turn on lights, and open doors by using specially designed equipment.

Maxwell explains that Guide Dogs for the Handicapped is a non-profit organization that gives dogs to clients in need. She says that groups and organizations will sometimes sponsor dogs, and sometimes a major corporation will donate funds or products. She adds that Purina has funded the training of a dog for a poster child several years ago, and recently, Kal Kan has donated food as well as some cash to the group. A Delaware vet takes care of medical needs, and his services too are donated.

Maxwell, her husband Joe, and long time helper Chris Genari make up the organization. Sam and Joe have trained almost 30 dogs since they began.

The Maxwells live at 16081 Montgomery Rd., Johnstown.