

An unknown, but extremely wise person once said "He is your friend, your partner, your defender, your dog. You are his life, his love, his leader. He will be yours, faithful and true, to the last beat of his heart. You owe it to him to be worthy of such devotion." Whoever said that, truly "got" what it meant to be a loving, caring, responsible pet parent. We owe it to our faithful companions to be that responsible caregiver. But what does that mean? How do you know if you are, or will be, a responsible dog owner if you are contemplating getting (or already have) a dog? How can you look at someone and know he/she will be a responsible dog owner? This is especially vital if you are a rescue organization looking to place a dog in his/her forever home. To the Pet Assistance League (PAL), a responsible dog owner: 1) Commits to caring for that dog for the rest of his/her life; 2) Is able to afford, and willing to pay for, proper nutrition, vet care, shelter, and love for that dog; 3) Spends time with their dog, making sure the dog is happy and healthy; 4) Makes sure the dog is properly socialized and trained; and 5) Cleans up after their dog, ensuring they and their dog is a good steward to society and the environment. The five aforementioned traits are all imperative in order to be a responsible dog owner. One MUST commit to care for their dog; one must be willing & able to pay for proper care, including veterinary care – shots, vaccinations, and overall health is just as important for dogs as it is for humans. Spending time with a dog is crucial – all the dog has is you, the human they will always love. One must make sure their dog is socialized & trained – dogs are social creatures and they crave interaction, with humans and canines alike. Finally, one must protect the environment and clean up their dog's waste – we want and need clean water for drinking, recreation, and aquatic life – if we do not protect our waterways, future generations of children (both human and furry) will not have clean water. Let us all learn from Gilda Radner, who said "I think dogs are the most amazing creatures; they give unconditional love. For me they are the role model for being alive."