



Date: February 24, 2011

TO: Gale Yonnet, MD

From: Corey Hudson, CEO CCI

This is to respond to your appeal of Canine Companions for Independence's decision to have CCI dog Elon returned to CCI.

In reaching this decision, I have reviewed your written appeal, my telephone conversations with you and character witnesses whom you identified in your appeal, your communications with CCI staff, and information from CCI staff involved in the decision to ask for the return of Elon. I have concluded that CCI staff had good reason to believe that Elon's safety was in jeopardy and to seek the return of Elon. Because your ability to control Elon was deteriorating, allowing Elon to be off lead when you lacked control was a particular safety concern. You repeatedly allowed Elon to be off lead in unenclosed and urban environments, which is a serious safety concern for CCI. Before seeking return of Elon, CCI staff made repeated efforts to address their concerns about Elon's safety and your inability to maintain control over Elon. I have read much of your correspondence with CCI staff and I have seen that you often responded in a very adversarial and uncooperative manner to their attempts to work with you. CCI staff finally concluded that they had to intervene to ensure Elon's health and safety when your control over Elon deteriorated so seriously that you resorted to using an electronic collar on Elon and you reported to CCI staff that you "zapped" him 4-5 times. You did so without consulting CCI or working with CCI staff to improve your control over Elon in acceptable ways. This was both a serious breach of CCI's standards for treatment of its dogs as well as a reflection of your unwillingness to work with CCI in the way necessary for the success of a CCI graduate team.

Your approach as well as your communications with CCI seem to reflect a basic misunderstanding of the nature of the CCI assistance dog program. CCI strives to place and maintain safe, effective assistance dog teams. As you should know, CCI doesn't simply give dogs to individuals. CCI provides extensive training to each dog before matching the dog with a participant. Then, the dog and the participant go through a two-week team training program so the team can learn to work together and so CCI can make sure the two create a strong team. After the participant completes the team training, the participant is considered a graduate, and CCI gives custody, but not



ownership, of the dog to the graduate at no charge.

Custody of one of CCI's dogs requires a commitment on the part of the graduate. CCI also undertakes a commitment to work with the graduate for the life of CCI's dog. In its 36-year history, CCI has placed over 3600 assistance dogs to serve individuals with disabilities and is currently working with 1600 active graduate teams. CCI currently works closely with these 1600 active graduate teams to ensure ongoing effectiveness and safety. Due to CCI's work with graduate teams, in 36 years and 3600 dogs, CCI has had to ask for only a handful to be returned and only when CCI concluded that the health and safety of the dog was in jeopardy. That's fewer than 1 in 500 ever asked to return their Canine Companions dog; CCI makes every effort to work with the graduate to make a successful placement and we stand by our record of service with our graduate teams.

Despite my conclusion that CCI staff had good reason to seek the return of Elon, based on statements in your written appeal indicating that you were willing to work with CCI staff to address CCI's concerns and make the placement of Elon successful, I decided that it would be helpful to meet with you so I could determine personally whether there was a way to make the placement successful. On Friday February 18, 2011 I called you in the morning to offer to meet directly with you here in Santa Rosa at the CCI Campus with me and the CCI managers responsible for Elon. I suggested we could utilize a facilitator to attempt to understand each other's position on the issue of managing your working relationship with Elon. I further offered to have CCI pay your travel expense and stay at the Schulz Campus dormitory. In that conversation, you declined to meet with me or anyone from CCI saying that you had told a CCI staff member that you would create a "public relations nightmare" for CCI and that now you were going to continue to do just that. Similarly, you said you would "destroy CCI" and that you would "bury CCI." You further stated that you had no respect or trust for CCI's staff and that you had told a CCI staff person you would bring a "reign of terror" to CCI.

Although since our conversation on February 18 you have vacillated as to whether you would meet with anyone from CCI and if so the conditions for such a meeting, you have continued to refuse to meet with the CCI staff who would be responsible for Elon if he were returned to you and you have not retracted any of the threats you made in our call. It is most important that CCI staff and graduates establish trusting and harmonious relationships; the ability to exchange points of view is critical here, to say nothing of the



safety issues. I want to again reiterate as I did several times on the phone that in offering to meet, I was hopeful we could have a meaningful dialog.

Unfortunately, your response to my offers to meet leads me to conclude that you would be unwilling or unable to work cooperatively with CCI staff to address CCI's concerns about your ability to handle the dog and the ultimate safety of Elon.

Accordingly, I have concluded both that the decision to ask for the return of Elon to CCI was based on good reason and that returning Elon to you would not be successful or in Elon's best interest because of your unwillingness to work with CCI staff or address their concerns.

Per the CCI Complaint Resolution Policy, this is to again advise you that you may submit a review in writing to the Chair of Canine Companions for Independence National Board. You may send that to me and I will forward it to the Chair.

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