

Gillis Update

My buddy Gillis and I are working hard everyday that he is here and he is well on his way to being a NEADS Service Dog. Will I be sad to see him go? Not really, because the whole reason for being a part of this program is to train dogs that will go on to help enrich the life of a person with a disability. If he graduates, then I'll know I had a significant hand in that actually happening.

Gillis is basically at the point where he knows all of the commands he needs to learn. He's doing some really cool stuff. He turns on lights, opens and closes doors and drawers, can differentiate a cell phone and keys from other items and toys, can fetch anything gently including a playing card laying flat on the ground, and even does "Fridge" (opens the fridge door, gets a specific item, closes the door and brings it to you). As far as that stuff goes, we are just working on refining stuff now. The main goal is to get him a bit bigger. Right now Gillis is earmarked to go be a walking dog for a woman with some stability problems. He is a little under 25 inches tall and weighs 72 pounds. We're feeding him extra and walking twice as much while wearing a weighted backpack to beef him up. The goal is 26 inches and 75 pounds. In the past three weeks he's gained nearly $\frac{1}{4}$ inch and 2-3 pounds while still remaining nice and lean. So we're on the right track.

It's a lot of work, but fun and rewarding and if I can make someone's life better in the long run, then isn't that what it's all about? I don't know how much longer Gillis will be here with me, maybe a month, maybe several, but we'll just keep working hard and I'll keep you updated.

until next time...