

**Risa G. Davidson, M.S.**

Dog Trainer

The Buddy Project Manager



Risa has an undergraduate degree in special education from the University of Connecticut and a Master's Degree in special education from Central Connecticut State University. She taught learning disabled children for six years in Woodstock, CT. After receiving her Master's Degree, Risa entered into private practice in Hartford, CT. As a special education consultant for eleven years, she specialized in diagnostics and developed individualized education programs for learning disabled children around the state.

Risa developed an interest in dog training about 15 years ago. As her interest in dog training grew, Risa became an avid reader of material on canine behavior. She volunteered in the dog socialization program at the Connecticut Humane Society for a year and a half. She also participated in pet therapy work at area nursing homes and schools for several years. She attended numerous conferences on canine behavior and training. Risa completed the Instructors' Training Course at Sue Sternberg's shelter in Accord, New York in May 2003. She joined Our Companions in 2003 and became an active participant in the Canine College program. She began assisting in classes at that time and was promoted to instructor in the fall of 2004. As a head teacher, she continues to remain actively involved in the canine programs at Our Companions.

She currently manages the Buddy Project, teaching youth how to train homeless dogs from Our Companions Animal Sanctuary to increase their adoptability. Dogs recently rehomed by Our Companions have also been included in this program in an effort to provide the families with ongoing support to help ensure the success of the adoptions.

In August 2013, Risa completed the Animal and Human Health Certificate Program through the University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work's Institute for the Human Animal Connection. The eight-month professional development program consists of courses studying the therapeutic and educational benefits of a wide variety of Animal Assisted Interactions (AAIs).