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Reiko Chiba in her wheelchair, her "partner dog" Bruce and her cat Hime live in a three-room apartment in Hachioji, Tokyo.

According to the same issue of Shukan Yomiuri, Bruce is perhaps the only "partner dog" in Japan.

The partner dog acts as the hands and feet of its disabled human partner until the person can do things, or most of the things by him or herself. There are some 700-800 such dogs in the United States.

Chiba purchased Bruce, a Chesapeake Bay retriever, from a partner-dog training facility in Philadelphia. Her instructions to her canine partner are in English. Bruce knows to open and close the refrigerator.

Chiba established a partner-dog club (tel: 0426-66-2825 Tuesdays and Thursdays only) and is currently training two dogs. She says that Bruce does only the things that she herself cannot do, adding that Bruce "is not a machine or a robot."

Shukan Yomiuri

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