

Allergic? Get a pooch that's snoop for peanuts

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Today, dogs are more than just pets. They're saving our lives — finding bombs and drugs, working as companion animals for the disabled, locating disaster victims, even alerting us to our own seizures and cancers.

Dogs are even aiding people with serious food and environmental sensitivities. In Miami, trained dogs find mold problems in homes, hotels and businesses. In Safety Harbor, Bedbug Dogs offers a detection service for homes, hotels and timeshares.

And in April, one of the newest types of aid dogs will debut in Tampa: Peanut-sniffing dogs.

Sharon Perry, a trainer with Peanut Detector Dogs in Florence, Texas, will be in town Monday to give a presentation, hosted by the Food Allergy Support Group of Tampa, for families of children with peanut allergy.

Peanut allergy is among the most severe of allergies, affecting 3 million Americans. Up to 150 people die of peanut allergy in the United States each year.

Perry's dogs are trained in peanut detection, and are obedient to boot. Among other things, the dogs are trained to "greet guests ... and discreetly scan them for peanut residue in order to minimize the chance of contamination," says Perry's Web site.

For more info, visit peanutdog.com.

Go nuts

Is your child allergic to peanuts? For info on Sharon Perry's seminar on allergen-sniffing dogs, contact Danielle Post of the Food Allergy Group of Tampa at dkwmajor@hotmail.com.