

# THE CANINE LISTENER Magazine

Dogs for Better Lives  
Spring 2020 • NO.136

**Philly & Laurie**  
A Traveling Team

**Community Makes It Possible**  
Celebrating Our Partnerships

**100% Funding Model**  
Fueling DBL's Long-term Viability

**DOGS** for  
better  
**LIVES**







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Photos taken in Maui, Hawaii by Leslie Turner, Leslie Turner Photography.

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# PRESIDENT & CEO

## LETTER FROM BRYAN WILLIAMS

*"Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They're not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can't do is ignore them. Because they change things. They push the human race forward. And while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do." - Rob Siltanen*

This is one of my all-time favorite quotes. Some people are comfortable with change; some people are most at home challenging the status quo. Some people are not. Eighteen months ago, I took a risk and moved my family across the country from Orlando, Florida to Medford, Oregon. It's not too difficult to figure out which camp I'm in. I push for change...constantly. Most of this edition of the Canine Listener focuses on things we've recently changed for the better. The articles talk about how we're growing and scaling.

But we're not changing everything. In order to constantly look for a better way to do something while also putting staff at ease, you must identify constants. There must be something for our team at Dogs for Better Lives to point to as a rock, an unchanging beacon of light. At DBL, those constants are our "why" and values. About eighteen months ago, we started working to identify our "why" and values. These would become our guideposts as we empower each other to make decisions and act decisively.

In early February, we held our first off-site retreat with all staff to review and clarify our "why" and values. And our staff decided that the things we identify as critical to our mission would not be changed. The "why" our staff identified is as follows:

At Dogs for Better Lives we believe it's an honor to be a part of something bigger than ourselves and we're impassioned with what we do. Operating as a team, we put the mission above the individual, trusting in one another to break through challenges and obstacles to maintain our mission of bettering lives by matching people with the amazing dogs we train.

This statement, along with our mission and values, helps our team understand where we will not change, where we will not bend, what the non-negotiables are. In order to constantly change, you have to identify the lighthouse in a sea of uncertainty. In this Canine Listener, you will read about success stories, but we've also had our fair share of failures. We're not afraid of failing because we understand that to make an omelet, you've got to break some eggs. We know that we can't predict the future or know with 100% certainty how these changes will play out. Luckily, our successes have far outshone our challenges.

The only certainty at Dogs for Better Lives is that we'll continue to change and grow because the mission of bettering lives through our amazing dogs is too important not to. With the current coronavirus (COVID-19) environment that we are in, please know that Dogs for Better Lives remains fiscally strong and as committed as ever to our mission, our dogs, and to all who care and support us. There is nothing more powerful and resilient than you – our wonderful DBL community – and we want to thank you for showing your love for our mission and being a part of DBL.

Thank you for reading the Canine Listener and thank you for your support of this amazing organization and the incredible people we serve.



Bryan



# WE GET LETTERS



When you speak to two hundred students in a small, rural elementary school about Floyd and assistance dogs in general, you just hope something—anything—sticks in their minds to make it worthwhile for them, and to be honest, worthy of your own time. You talk and talk and talk about what a Hearing Assistance Dog or other assistance dog might do for its human, why you shouldn't pet assistance dogs in public, how you have to practice sounds or other work daily, etc. By late afternoon, you're worn out from thinking and talking.

And then...in the very last classroom, you meet a fourth grader. A fourth grader with cochlear implants in both ears. A fourth grader who didn't know there were Hearing Assistance Dogs. And you feel like you may have planted a small seed for this child who may remember Floyd years from now and realize there are ways she can live an independent life with help from her very own Floyd. Yes, it was worth our day.



*-Brent M., DBL Hearing Assistance Dog Client, Tennessee*

(Hearing Assistance Dog) Carlie is such a sweet, well-trained dog! When I take her to any public place, I always get compliments on her behavior. Laura, her trainer, would be as proud of her as I am.

*- Mary G., DBL Hearing Assistance Dog Client, Alabama*

Absolutely wonderful tour! It was very interesting and educational. Our guide, as well as the trainer we met, was amazing with the kids—explaining things in a way that was easy to understand without talking down to them. It's really a great way to introduce children to the needs of others and the idea of helping others by finding different ways to meet their needs. It led to a great conversation.

*- Jessy H., Oregon*

We are honored to have been chosen to provide pups to this amazing nonprofit. We will donate a puppy to them this year. They did extensive research on us, poured over our health testing documents and then chose a litter. Our puppies and quality once again speak for themselves. I am so happy when trainers, those that devote their time and energy to provide life-saving dogs, take all necessary steps to ensure they are using dogs of sound temperament and health.

*- 4E Kennel*

Our residents love to share the puppy love! Dogs for Better Lives is an amazing organization that helps people with disabilities.

*- Weatherly Senior Living*



Being a puppy raiser was an incredible experience and knowing that pup went on to make life better for someone who needed her is one of the most gratifying experiences I've ever had. Sure, parting with her after growing so close during her first year of life was very, very hard, but she has a greater purpose in life and my heart is full knowing we had a part in that.

*- Claire, DBL Puppy Raiser*

# PLACEMENT HIGHLIGHTS



## KELLY

Hearing Assistance Dog Kelly, a 2-year-old yellow Labrador retriever, was recently placed with Medora (Dory) in Colorado. Kelly came to us from Guide Dogs for the Blind and is alerting Dory to the oven timer, telephone, smoke alarm, door knock and name call. Dory is looking forward to feeling more comfortable when she is home alone and to the extra awareness Kelly will provide when they are out in public together. Kelly fits in with Dory's family perfectly, and they are thrilled to have him.



## KYRA

Hearing Assistance Dog Kyra was placed with successor client, Stephanie. Stephanie received her first dog, Cassidy, from DBL in 1983. Stephanie is retired and a soon-to-be grandmother. Her family is very close to her heart and visits her and her husband often. Soon Stephanie will be watching her new granddaughter at home with the help of Kyra. Kyra is alerting Stephanie to the door bell, smoke alarm, name call, phone, and a baby crying.



## TEAK

Hearing Assistance Dog Teak was placed with successor client Laurie in Virginia. Laurie has been without her full hearing for more than 40 years due to a hereditary degenerative condition and a major auto accident when she was 24. Teak is Laurie's third dog from DBL and is helping her with the doorbell, oven timer, smoke alarm, cell phone/alarm clock, and name call.

During placement week, Teak's trainer was surprised at how quickly he was working the sounds, with Laurie, in his new home. On the second day of placement, Laurie felt like she was losing her balance, and instinctively leaned into Teak like she had done with her previous Hearing Assistance Dog, Willow. Without any former training or preparation for this, Teak leaned right back into her and helped her stabilize. Way to go, Teak!



## WILEY

Hearing Assistance Dog Wiley was placed with Randee in New Jersey. It was love at first sight—when Randee met the placement team, she shed tears of joy!

Wiley, a 3-year-old poodle mix, came to us from Central California SPCA, in Fresno, CA, and is helping Randee with the oven timer, phone, doorbell and name call.

“He is loving and affectionate...I feel complete having him in my life.”

- Laurel, New Mexico

# PLACEMENT HIGHLIGHTS



## WRIGLEY

Hearing Assistance Dog Wrigley was placed with Barbara in California. They are a perfect match! Wrigley is working the door knock, doorbell, phone, oven timer, smoke alarm, and dropped keys. Barbara recently lost her husband, so Wrigley is providing much more than just safety and sound awareness: she is filling a void and providing much needed companionship. Barbara is a retired teacher and is very social with family and friends. She is thrilled to have Wrigley by her side.



## SOPHIE

Hearing Assistance Dog Sophie has teamed up with Sandra in New Jersey. Sophie, a 2-year-old black Labrador retriever, came to us from Guide Dogs for the Blind. She will be working the oven timer, door knock, name call, smoke alarm and phone. During placement week, Sophie picked up her sound work quickly—it seems like Sandra is a born trainer! Sandra is a professor and will be taking Sophie to work 4-5 times a week. Sandra was relieved to see how easy and consistent Sophie is in public; she is a dream to walk through downtown traffic and people.



## CAMDEN

Hearing Assistance Dog Camden was placed with Richard in California to help with sound assistance such as the door knock, cell phone, name call and oven timer. Camden, a 2-year-old black Labrador retriever, who came to us from Guide Dogs for the Blind, is ideal for Richard, who experiences hearing loss and has major mobility issues due to Cerebral Palsy and a car accident.

In addition to helping Richard with sound awareness, Camden is motivating Richard to get out more. As a professor emeritus for the local university, he was a fervent advocate for people with physical and mental difficulties by giving presentations, lectures and classes. Yet as his hearing loss worsened, he began to feel isolated and withdrawn, as many of our hearing loss clients do. Richard's wife Cindy commented, "Camden and Richard have really bonded. He is definitely Richard's shadow. He is a joy and is making Richard get out of the house more than he has in a very long time."



## WYCLEF

Hearing Assistance Dog, Wyclef, was placed with successor client Laurel in New Mexico. Wyclef is working the phone, oven timer, smoke alarm and door knock. Additionally, he is her walking partner and accompanies her to work. Laurel wrote, "He is loving and very affectionate—he wakes me up in the morning by laying his chin on the side of the bed and licking me! He is patient, work loves him, they feel complete having him there. I feel complete having him in my life."



# FOLLOW UPS



## MINDY

Hearing Assistance Dog Mindy has helped Amy in Rhode Island for a year and a half. Before having Mindy by her side, Amy was very inactive, but now she has the confidence to go out and enjoy life. "Mindy makes me much more aware of what is going on. Life is completely different because I used to not care for anything, but now I care for myself and Mindy. I have never seen a dog as well-behaved as Mindy. She is perfect. You can really tell how much DBL cares about the clients, and the dogs as well."



## MOWGLI

Donna and Hearing Assistance Dog Mowgli have been a team for three years in Pennsylvania. Mowgli, a Manchester Terrier, helps Donna by responding to the smoke alarm, doorbell and name call. Donna commented, "The companionship and communication Mowgli facilitates between me and my husband, Ron, has made life wonderful!"



## RAYLENE

Chris is profoundly deaf, and recently wrote to us about Hearing Assistance Dog Raylene, whom she has been partnered with for six years. "I am a travel writer, so Raylene has been on ten cruises with me and even received a 'frequent cruiser' bronze medallion from the ship's captain in April 2019 on Holland America Line. In November, she awakened me during the night (when my hearing aid and cochlear implant processor are off) to alert me to a door knock, which was my husband standing out in the cruise ship corridor. This was the second time he had locked himself out on a cruise when I was asleep—and the second time Raylene saved the day!"



## FLOYD

Hearing Assistance Dog Floyd has been partnered with Brent in Kentucky for a year and a half. Floyd is Brent's ears at home and in public. Brent recently shared this story about Floyd's training in action: "A half dozen Parkinson patients participate in a special program at the boxing gym I attend. One of them was using a rowing machine that is situated in an out of the way location, and therefore is not in direct sight from the gym floor. I was on the opposite side of the room when I noticed Floyd break his 'down/stay' position while hurrying off at a fast trot—what I consider his 'I'm alerting you' trot pace—towards the back of the room, completely bypassing me. One of the patients had fallen off the rowing machine and was prone on the floor beside the machine. As I turned the corner, there's Floyd, standing over him with his nose

in the man's face—which was the first thing the man said he saw when he opened his eyes! I've had Floyd on occasion break position and come to sniff me when I had flopped down on the weight bench, which is only inches off the floor in an inclined position. Floyd sniffed me, then went back to his 'down/stay' spot. Imagine my surprise (and ultimately pleasure) when he did it for another! Floyd's movement immediately got the attention of other people, and we reached the fallen man as a group. He was fine, he had just toppled off onto the floor at a 3-6 inch drop. But Floyd was 'Johnny on the spot'—even though it's not his job."



# FOLLOW UPS



## WELLIE

Hearing Assistance Dog  
Wellie and Jennifer have been a team for four years. Jennifer shared this story about Wellie's impact on her life, and the lives of others.

"Since October, I have been going to physical therapy twice a week. Wellie is an absolute professional at physical therapy and has become

quite a popular girl...everyone looks forward to seeing her and loves watching her soundwork. Wellie has made a special friend at physical therapy, but we also run into him often at other places. Wellie's first meeting was while we were taking a walk at the park.

This young man was hit by a drunk driver more than 15 years ago while he was a freshman in college. Sadly, the young man lives in a severely compromised state, both physically and mentally, and is now non-verbal. His caretakers assist with his needs around the clock. The one thing this young man loves is dogs, so his caretakers carry dog biscuits wherever they go. Dogs bring this young man joy—you can see him light up and become verbally and physically engaged.

During an aqua therapy day recently, Wellie and I were leaving the locker room and as we walked through the young man happen to spot Wellie. He became excited and was trying to reach for her. Wellie heard and recognized him and went right up to him and gave him a kiss. The young man was overjoyed, and in that moment his therapy seemed to move more smoothly (became less frustrating for him). His therapist asked if we minded staying for a few minutes and if perhaps they could use Wellie as part of his therapy that day. We didn't mind at all. The therapist asked him if he could try to pet Wellie on the head (he tried); if he could try to roll over to say 'hi' to Wellie (he tried); and if he would like to give Wellie a dog biscuit (the important part for his therapy was clutching the treat in his hand and holding it)...and he tried. Lastly, the therapist asked if he could wave 'bye' to Wellie and, ever faithfully, he tried. This young man has very little control over his body and the fact that he recognized Wellie and became 'verbal' was a major milestone. We were honored to be a part of that moment and to help with his therapy session that day."



## HILDAGO

Hearing Assistance Dog Hidalgo and Suzanne have been a team in Humboldt County, California for one year and their bond continues to grow. "Hidalgo flew with me to Colorado for the holidays, our first flight together. He was amazing on the plane, on the light rail, and in the airport. Thank you DBL for putting me in touch with others who travel with their dogs; it really helped me. And it was SO nice having him along to do sound work for me."



## RAMBLER

Winifred recently stated in one of Facility Dog Rambler's progress reports that "One patient spent half the hour sitting on the floor and petting Rambler during the session. This patient is severely depressed, but he smiles so sweetly when interacting with Rambler." She also said, "He continues to be a great blessing and a VERY GOOD BOY."

# DBL NEWS

## 100% of Your Donation Supports Programmatic Services

Now, you can rest assured knowing that every dollar of your donation goes directly towards enhancing the lives of dogs and people nationwide.

Administrative and fundraising expenses are fully funded by our endowment, specifically the interest earned from DBL's long-standing investments made possible by our Guardian Society donors. The generous contributions of Guardian Society members make it possible to cover operational expenses such as office space, fundraising costs, utility bills, and salaries.



This is a model that more and more top tier nonprofits are moving towards, upon hearing from donors that they wish to see their philanthropic support going directly towards key programs that align with the organization's mission. Understanding that administrative overhead and fundraising for the mission is also critical to what DBL does, paying for it is just as important.



"All nonprofits with paid staff need to find a way to cover administrative and fundraising expenses," stated Development Director, Harvey Potts. "Being able to tell our valued donors that 100% of their donations will go towards programmatic services is further helping to fulfill our mission and be even better stewards of their dollars."

**Learn more at: [dogsforbetterlives.org/100-percent/](https://dogsforbetterlives.org/100-percent/)**

## DBL Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

We are committed as ever to our DBL community, and with growing concerns about the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we want you to know that the health and safety of you and our team is our top priority. As we monitor this evolving situation, we will continue to share updates on some of the ways we are supporting our DBL community on our special DBL COVID-19 webpage: [dogsforbetterlives.org/covid-19/](https://dogsforbetterlives.org/covid-19/)

Like many other places around the world, we are currently sheltering in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19. This means that the majority of our employees are working remote while sheltering at home, with just a few allowed on-site to provide premium care for our dogs. We care about you, your families, and our life-changing dogs, and ask for your patience in responding to your emails, calls and letters while we're sheltering in place. Please feel free to contact us:

[info@dogsforbetterlives.org](mailto:info@dogsforbetterlives.org) (general questions/concerns)  
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[dvlp@dogsforbetterlives.org](mailto:dvlp@dogsforbetterlives.org) (donations, communications)





## Celebrating the Launch of DBL's First Satellite Location

This past October, more than 70 people helped DBL celebrate its greater Puget Sound area satellite office launch at the Historic Rainier Brewery Building in South Seattle. DBL client Kai shared his experience with his Hearing Assistance Dog, Palace, and how his life has been changed for the better.

Jess Reichmuth was introduced as DBL's Puget Sound Field Representative, while CEO Bryan Williams provided an update on DBL's expansion and increased services in the state of Washington.

Thanks to Seattle partners Essential Bakery, Lynda Wilcox, and Blue Dog Bakery, for their generous donations of baked items, wine, and dog treats!

- Monica Schuster, Marketing & Communications



## Tributes



### **Marvin Dean Rhodes**

April 1954 - February 2020

Former DBL board member and chair, Marvin Dean Rhodes, passed away in February. He will be greatly missed by the DBL staff and the communities he served. Marvin was a talented radio and television programming director in Medford, Portland and Chicago, and was active in raising awareness for the many nonprofits he volunteered at.



### **Donald Siewell**

August 1933 - February 2020

Don was born in Baltimore, MD but spent his early life in California (mostly in the Lynwood-Compton area). Moving to the desert in 1950, he worked on the Flight Line at Edwards AFB until he was called to serve in the Korean War. Returning home, he attended university and majored in physics and math, and then taught at Antelope Valley area high schools. Traveling and RVing were important to Don and he and his sister Dorothy generally travelled together. Don's legacy will live on and he will be remembered for years to come, as he and Dorothy are honored members of DBL's Guardian Society.

## Solar Energy: Reducing DBL's Carbon Pawprint

Carpooling. Using real plates. Recycling. Working remotely. Going digital. These are just a few of the things that DBL staff do every day to work towards our core value of being an environmentally-friendly organization. These are small choices, made time and time again, that add up to a big impact.

But now, we're excited to announce a big leap forward in our sustainability efforts. This is something that will make a difference in DBL's carbon "pawprint" and in the savings of donor dollars for years to come.

Dogs for Better Lives has received a Blue Sky 2020 funding award from Pacific Power. Blue Sky is an opt-in program that gives Pacific Power customers an option to match all or part of their energy use with renewable energy. Thanks to these Blue Sky participants, and in partnership with Sunthurst Energy LLC, Dogs for Better Lives will soon begin the installation of a 97 kW solar array. Estimated to be completed by the end of 2020, this 306-panel solar array will produce more than 75% of the organization's energy needs, saving more than \$28,000 each year. That's money that can be dedicated to our core mission of rescuing, training, and placing more dogs.



*Sketch of solar array at DBL's Central Point, Oregon facility.*

In total, Dogs for Better Lives has secured grants that will cover approximately 70% of the project.

In addition to providing cost savings (allowing more revenue to go towards direct services) and meeting the organization's value of being environmentally responsible, this project represents DBL's investment in the future of the organization and the local area. As a leader in the nonprofit community, we hope that this will serve to illustrate to other nonprofits that solar energy is attainable and accessible.

Stay tuned for updates as this exciting renewable energy project progresses. When complete, Dogs for Better Lives will celebrate with a ribbon cutting ceremony and a widget on our sustainability webpage to track our energy usage and savings.

- Mary Rosebrook, Corporate & Foundation Grants Associate

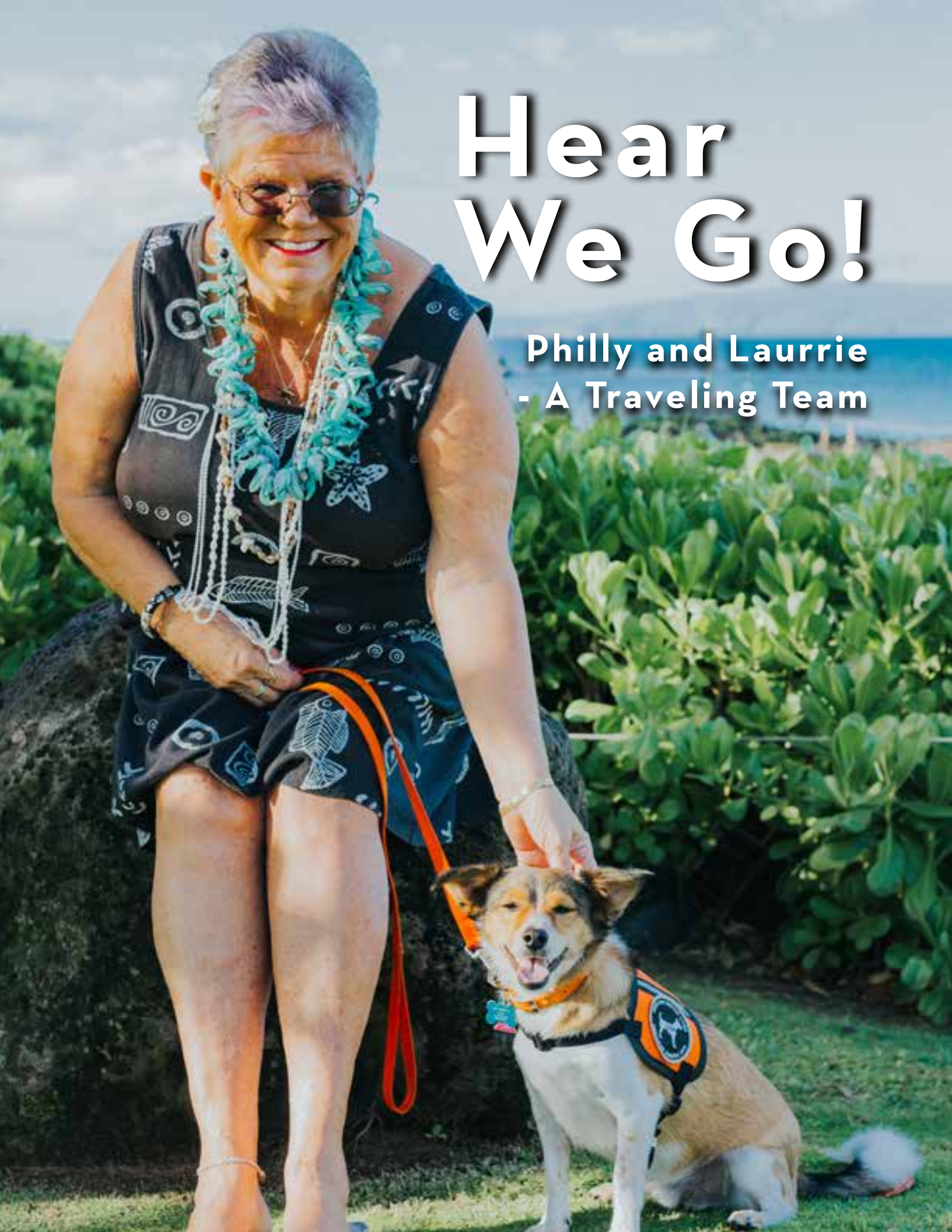
"Unlike most green power programs, Blue Sky goes beyond the purchase of renewable energy credits to help fund additional smaller energy projects for organizations in our communities. Through projects such as this, Blue Sky Block participants are powering a better future for local communities."

- Berit Kling, Blue Sky Program Manager



# Hear We Go!

**Philly and Laurie  
- A Traveling Team**







In the four to six months spent working with their trainer, Hearing Assistance Dogs are taught to alert to as many as seven different sounds. With proper training, many dogs can, in time, learn the skills necessary to perform effectively as a Hearing Assistance Dog. There are some dogs, however, who catch on to the sound work from Day 1, as if they were born for the job. Philly, an adorable 3-year-old Shetland sheepdog mix, was a natural at the sound work.

**“He was great with sound work - he caught on immediately.” - Laura Encinas**

Yet being a successful Hearing Assistance Dog involves much more than alerting to sounds. Since they will also have public access rights, extensive socialization and obedience training are required for the job. Philly came to us from the Rogue Valley Humane Society in Grants Pass, Oregon and much of his time in training was focused on obedience and professional behavior in public. “He was great with sound work - he caught on immediately. He would have been done with training sooner if he just had to learn sounds. It took some time for everything

else to come together... but he was always excited and motivated to work sounds,” said Laura Encinas, Philly’s trainer. Thanks to Laura’s patient guidance and support, Philly finally met all the requirements to become a Hearing Dog, passed his public access test and was ready to be matched with a client.

In 1983, Laurie Zimmerman, a resident of Hawaii, was diagnosed with an acoustic neuroma that needed to be removed. It was benign, but unfortunately, the surgery left her totally deaf in her right ear. Over time, as hearing loss in her left ear progressed, Laurie began wearing a hearing aid. It wasn’t until 2013, however, after a troubling incident at home, that Laurie first started doing research about Hearing Dogs: “I had a flood in my condo which happened in the middle of the night. [The washer shut off had broken.] I did not answer/hear the phone or knocking on the door to alert me until I woke up with our manager standing over me saying, ‘Laurie your condo is flooding.’ I contacted Assistance Dogs of Hawaii, a Maui service dog organization, and found that they did training for many services here on Maui but not hearing.” As Laurie



continued her research, she did find other organizations on the mainland that trained Hearing Assistance Dogs but came to realize that it wasn't quite the right time to bring an Assistance Dog into her life. After retiring in 2015, Laurie had more time to travel and visit family. On a trip from California to Washington state in October 2015, Laurie stopped by to visit Dogs for Better Lives. After taking a tour of the DBL campus and meeting with our Client Services staff, Laurie decided then and there to apply for a Hearing Dog.

As a Hawaii resident and frequent traveler, Laurie needed a dog who would be able not only to alert her to a phone call or someone knocking at her door at any hour but also become her travel partner and life companion. The process of finding the right dog to fit her needs and lifestyle, coupled with the additional requirements and challenges of bringing a dog to Hawaii, took some time. Laurie waited close to three years for a match: "During this time, I'm waiting and questioning whether this was really a direction I wanted to go." However, meeting Philly for the first time erased any doubt in her mind and made the long wait well worth it. She recalls her first impression

of Philly: "When Laura delivered Philly to me we had a great week of training and he was definitely a sweetheart and willing to work hard for me." The connection that Philly and Laurie shared was evident to Philly's trainer as well: "They bonded the first day. Philly was so happy to be in a home and Laurie was very sweet and welcoming. I knew it was a good match the moment I walked in the door with Philly."

The impact of their special relationship would go well beyond the first days of placement. The security and comfort that Laurie and Philly provide for one another contribute greatly to the ease and confidence necessary in handling the extensive travel they do as a team. From their first experience traveling together on the 6-hour flight from Washington state to Maui, to a recent trek flying across the country with multiple layovers, Laurie describes her travel companion as a "trooper" again and again. Now, no matter where she goes, Laurie has the peace of mind that Philly will alert her to what is going on around her: "He has made my life easier as I don't miss out on things like the doors being knocked on or a doorbell ringing or a phone ringing. There was a time when people would



come to my door and knock and leave, I would run into them later and they said, ‘I came by—where were you?’ and I would say I was home but I never heard them. Now, Philly makes sure that I hear them.” As they continue to have travel adventures together, their bond continues to grow even stronger. While they are in training, Hearing Dogs learn all the skills that will be needed for their work, but the overall scope of their role and importance in the client’s life goes far beyond the training they receive. Once paired with their life-partner, they do much more than alert to sounds. These Assistance Dogs provide an endless supply of love, comfort and companionship.



After their first travel-filled year, Laurie looks ahead with confidence to the many more ahead of them and is thrilled to have Philly by her side: “I would highly encourage anyone with hearing challenges to look into dogs for Better lives and consider having a hearing companion in their lives. Yes it is a responsibility, yes you have to take them for walks, you have to feed them, play with them, [practice] the training and [continue to] socialize them but the rewards they give in return are well worth it!”

- Emily Minah, Client Services Manager

“I knew it was a good match the moment I walked in the door with Philly.”

- Laura Encinas, Program Field Representative



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# COMMUNITY MAKES IT POSSIBLE

Nearly everyone has heard the saying “It takes a village to raise a child.” A community must come together to provide its children with experiences, relationships, and support so that young people can grow into the best versions of themselves. At Dogs for Better Lives, we’ve experienced something similar. It takes an entire country (or three) coming together to rescue, raise, train, and place an Assistance Dog.

We couldn’t provide Assistance Dogs, free of charge, to adults with hearing loss, children with autism, and helping professionals without a network of incredible partners across the nation. This issue of the Canine Listener celebrates those partnerships. From monthly donors to corporate sponsors, from board members to other service dog organizations, DBL and the dogs it produces are made better every day by meaningful collaborations with others who share our values.

## A History of Local Community

For 43 years, Dogs for Better Lives has nurtured connections in the Rogue Valley. Every day, local volunteers drive out to our rural location at the base of Lower Table Rock from Medford, Ashland, Grants Pass, and other nearby communities. Once onsite, they walk dogs, help with administrative work, and pitch in to keep the entire operation running smoothly.

As one of the “100 Best Nonprofits to Work for in Oregon,” we’re proud that 37 of our employees are residents of the Rogue Valley—living, working, and supporting the community here.

## Forging New Partnerships

We’ve always believed in building relationships and working together toward a common goal of improving the lives of people and dogs.

We’ve been fortunate to have donors, foundations, community clubs, and corporate sponsors who provide their financial support from all over the country.

And for 43 years, the dogs we train here on campus have gone on to serve people living in all 50 states. But in the last few years, we’ve been working tirelessly to expand our network of partners even further. Strengthening those vital connections across state lines and even across the borders of nations. Many of the strategies we’re using to bridge the distance gap weren’t possible a decade or two ago, but now, through the use of technology, we’re able to bring people together like never before.





## Stronger Together

DBL's governing body is a diverse and national board of directors, with 15 members across four states (North Carolina, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Oregon).

Volunteer Ambassadors promote Dogs for Better Lives through fundraising events, interviews, and presentations. There are currently 77 Ambassadors in 19 states helping to build awareness about DBL and the benefits of Assistance Dogs.

The newly-formed Rescue Assistance Dog (RAD) Alliance program includes shelters from Washington to Texas and even across borders in Mexico. These shelters provide insights about the demeanor and interaction styles of the dogs who come through their doors. Their recommendations and cooperation are vital in rescuing shelter dogs with the potential to become superstars.

We've built important partnerships with other service dog organizations, as well. Guide Dogs for the Blind (Boring, Oregon and San Rafael, California) and Dogs with Wings (Alberta, Canada) have both provided DBL with dogs.

An exciting new fundraiser has connected us to OBX Puparazzi on Roanoke Island in North Carolina. Owner Lisa has created custom doggie bandanas as part of our "Bandana-rama" subscription service—keeping pups stylish and supporting DBL's mission at the same time.



Lisa says, "I am so excited to be partnering with Dogs for Better Lives, and appreciate the technology that allows us to work together from opposite sides of the country. It is awesome to collaborate with other rescue dog lovers, from my island in North Carolina."

With videoconferencing technology now a standard part of our toolkit, DBL is able to be more responsive to clients and prospective clients across the country. Trainers can demonstrate training tips, troubleshoot challenges, and answer questions more quickly and easily than ever before.

This same technology also allows staff to work from other areas of the country, including newly opened Dogs for Better Lives satellite offices in Washington and California, while still remaining part of a closely-knit team.

## The Power of Community

As you're reading through this edition of the Canine Listener, know that wherever you are, and whatever role you play, you are one of our most valued partners. Thank you for being a part of this community. Without you, it wouldn't be possible to improve the lives of people and dogs each and every day.

- Mary Rosebrook, Corporate & Foundation Grants Associate

"Alone, we can do so little.  
Together, we can do so much."  
—Helen Keller



# PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

## DBL Forms Partnerships with Rescue Shelters

Dogs for Better Lives is among the few nonprofits that utilize rescue and shelter dogs in their assistance dog program. We know that many rescue dogs are capable of being wonderful pets, but some can even grow to change a person's life as a professionally trained assistance dog.

We rely on our shelter and rescue partners to help us recruit dogs with the appropriate temperaments for our program so that we may continue our mission to help those in need. These valuable partners belong to our R.A.D. (Rescue Assistance Dog) Alliance.

The dogs selected for our program undergo thorough temperament testing and evaluation by our staff. Insight and recommendations from the shelter or rescue about the dog's demeanor and interaction style are an important first step in this process. Once the dog is adopted into our program, we provide regular updates to the shelter or rescue on their progress and a certificate of graduation when the dog has been placed with the client

as an assistance dog. Although our R.A.D. Alliance is young, we have already formed partnerships with several rescue shelters who believe in our mission and have provided promising candidates for our assistance dog training program.

Rogue was recruited from the Humane Society for Southwest Washington. Originally rescued from Texas, Rogue was transferred to the Pacific Northwest to find a new start. DBL Program Field Representative, Jess Reichmuth, visited the shelter and saw a spark in Rogue that told her that he could have the potential to change someone's life as an assistance dog. Rogue is now in training as a Hearing Assistance Dog at our training facility, and he is doing well. Keep up the great work, Rogue!

- Grace Mitchell, Dog Acquisition Manager





# STAFF SPOTLIGHT

## Grace Mitchell

I'm Grace Mitchell, the Dog Acquisition Manager at Dogs for Better Lives. I recruit dogs from rescues and shelters who show potential to succeed in our assistance dog program. I also find homes for our career change dogs who have been released from our assistance dog program.

I grew up in northern Virginia and received a bachelor's degree in Animal Science from Michigan State University. My passion for animals has driven me to pursue additional educational opportunities including a study abroad to South Africa and an internship at the Animal Kingdom Park, Walt Disney World. Post-college, I moved back to Virginia to apprentice under an established dog trainer and earned my Certified Professional Dog Trainer and Pet Partners therapy dog handler credentials. I

then continued into the field of assistance dogs and gained more than two years of experience training service dogs for people with low mobility, children living with disabilities, and dogs working in a variety of facility roles.

I am currently living in Central Point with my two dogs Duncan and Nova. Duncan has moved across the country twice with me and I am very thankful to have my four-legged companions at my side. I am excited to be a part of the Dogs for Better Lives team and am looking forward to supporting our mission to enhance the lives of both people and dogs.



## Partnerships for Better Lives Celebrate them. Support them. Join them!

Kennel life is a critical component for dogs in training. Pictured here is "North," a Hearing Assistance Dog in training at Dogs for Better Lives who seems quite happy with his kennel renovation.



### Leadership Partner



### Executive Partner

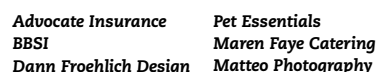


## Businesses Do Make A DIFFERENCE A Positive One

### Senior Partner



### Partner



For more information about this program, or to join their ranks, contact Wanda Cockey at 541-826-9220 ext. 326 or [wanda@dogsforbetterlives.org](mailto:wanda@dogsforbetterlives.org).

# Your Chance for a Better Life



Although it is something she did on a regular basis, Susan was again anticipating feelings of stress and anxiety. When your child has autism, the



weekly trip to the grocery store is no small task. However, this week it wouldn't just be Susan and her son, Luke.

Chance, an Autism Assistance Dog, would be with them

as well. Chance has been trained to act as an anchor in the event that Luke bolts, yet he is so much more than that. With Chance by his side, Luke feels more calm and confident. Simply put, with Chance's help, the shopping trip was better. Life is better. Call to learn how an Autism Assistance Dog can help you.



Serving Oregon, Washington & California

• [dogsforbetterlives.org](http://dogsforbetterlives.org)

• (800) 990-3647



# FOSTER PUPPY PROGRAM

## FEBRUARY PUPPY GRADUATION

We are excited to announce that our second bred litter, Charm's puppies, have graduated from the Puppy Program! On February 3rd, onlookers watched with excitement as each raiser stood up one by one with their puppy and received their diploma. Standing proudly together; Breeze, Birch, Bubbles, Bosco, Bond and their raisers were showing off how well-behaved they all were for the crowd, a pure reflection of the raisers' hard work and dedication. As the ceremony came to a close, emotions ran strong as each raiser handed the puppy they had raised for the last year to their new trainer and watched as they took the next steps in their journey in becoming an assistance dog.

Not only have our raisers selflessly opened their home and heart, they have also worked diligently to get these puppies to this point. Through midnight potty runs, working through teething stages, taking puppies on outings, and attending classes, these raisers have done it all. All in the hopes that one day these puppies will go on to be Autism, Facility, and Hearing Assistance Dogs.

We honestly couldn't do what we do without our amazing raisers and volunteers. Together we are dedicated and determined in our mission to help make someone's world a little brighter. You could say we are changing lives one puppy at a time.



"We are so grateful to have had this past year with Bond. The love, joy and good ol' puppy energy that he has brought to our family will be treasured forever. While we will miss him terribly, it is comforting to know that he will be taking all this to his forever family as well as the skills to make a significant impact on a child's life and that child's home."  
- Kela M.

"Bubbles brought so much joy, love, happiness and laughter into our lives. We look forward to her doing the same for another family."  
- Mitch S.

# CLIENT'S CORNER

Q & A with Andrea and Ace

***Can you tell us a little about yourself and why you chose to apply for a Hearing Assistance Dog from Dogs for Better Lives?***

My hearing was damaged during a traumatic birth. I should have been born via a c-section, but I was born before that was a common procedure. I got stuck and the doctors used forceps around my little head and body to pull me out of the birthing canal. I came out black and blue.

By college, it was evident that I was not hearing up to par. I had a formal hearing test 23 years ago and was told that I had nerve damage and that hearing aids and surgery could not help. I was also told that my hearing loss would continue to decline.

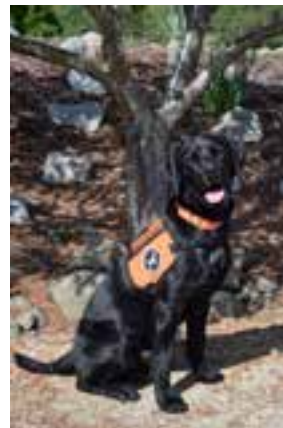
I started gathering information at the beginning of 2018 regarding hearing dogs. My hearing was declining so rapidly that it was affecting every area of my life. My boss and I were struggling to gain an understanding, coworkers were coming up behind me and talking to me, I was struggling with my roommate, to hear in large groups, meetings, eating out, movies, conversations with friends, phone calls, being out in public trying to run errands or do something fun.

DBL very patiently provided me with all the information I requested, answered tons of questions, and helped me assemble my application. I poured through the quarterly publication I was sent, and read every inch of DBL's website more than once. I cried through the videos and while reading all the articles about placements, etc. I officially submitted my application 4th of July weekend in 2018. I was tired of being scared, alone and misunderstood all the time. I didn't feel like I had a lot of options available. If my hearing was going to keep getting worse, what was I going to do?



***A lot of people expect that when they receive a professionally-trained assistance dog that it will be an easy transition for both the dog and client. But relationships take time and training requires lots of upkeep and practice. Can you tell us how long have you and Ace been a team? What were some challenges that you came across after receiving Ace that you hadn't expected?***

I was given five weeks' notice that a dog was ready for me. I was so very excited! I prepared my home and bought all the things he would need to settle in. I didn't know anyone with an assistance dog. Besides what I read on group forums, I knew nothing of what I



was getting into. For lack of a better explanation, I foolishly expected all the pieces to just fit immediately because I was getting this wonderfully trained dog. I did not account for Ace not feeling well and being unable to work for a good part of our precious placement time. It also took Ace time to adjust to his new home and to me. He was shedding pretty bad for a few weeks because he was

stressed. I am not sure why I thought I was the only one that would be stressed?

While Ace is an amazingly sweet and affectionate boy, and we obviously liked each other right away, bonds take time to form. I had no idea what I was doing, and Ace was unsure what I needed from him. I was constantly worried about our practice time, making sure I was following all the rules of the contract, and concerned about doing everything wrong.



A DBL trainer relocated to the greater Seattle area over the summer. We started meeting with her about two months after our placement weekend. Knowing what I know now, I wish I had just focused on bonding with Ace and some practice time and not worried so much about the other stuff.

Ace and I have been a team for 8 months now. We had a rough time for about 4-5 months. There were so many things that I just didn't know. The biggest mystery was his behavior. I was lacking the tools to figure out how to make the situation better. As it turns out, this dog is a Mustang! He has so much energy to burn. When he doesn't get enough physical and mental exercise, he gets extremely restless. We would go down the stairs of my apartment, I would ask him to heel, and he would rev his little Mustang engine with zero warning and nearly dislocate my shoulder in the process. By the time we started meeting with the trainer, I was in pain and was started to wonder if we were going to make it.



The secret to our relationship turned out to be physical exercise; it has made all the difference in the world for him. I don't have a yard and off-leash dog parks are a hard no. I started running him in the very long hallway of my office space on weekends and after hours. I watched Ace turn into a completely different dog right before my eyes. This boy finally found his happy place! He loves to chase his ball and just run laps! He is super fast and loves to leap and show off. It also gave my coworkers a chance to bond with him after hours. I take his vest off and they are free to pet him and throw his ball and everyone is so happy! The owners and HR think it is wonderful and they love Ace to pieces. Ace and I are so lucky that this all worked out the way it did. My little Mustang cannot miss a day of play time; the following day is rough on both of us when he does. There are still days where he plays for 30-40 minutes after work, has two walks and still ends up doing zoomies in my living

room at night. Ace requires lots of cuddle time, belly rubs, snuggles, and interaction with him and his toys on top of the exercise. Figuring all this out has completely changed our relationship. Our practice time is more efficient, and my shoulder is grateful for the reprieve. I did not know what it was like having a dog who is stronger than me and requires so much exercise!

***How long would you say it took before you felt like you and Ace were really bonded and were operating well together? Are there still things you two are working on figuring out together?***

I would say that Ace and I were starting to figure things out by month five. That is when the exercise started to increase and it completely changed his temperament. Honestly, my main focus these days is work (so I can feed us, pay for Ace's care and pay the rent), and then his exercise and activities. The practice and training time fits around that. All of this may cause us to take a little bit longer to completely gel as a team, and to be doing all the sounds well, but I just don't know how else to do it. We are both so much happier. When something unexpected comes up or I have questions, I reach out to his trainer at DBL. We are so grateful for the support. Ace remembers her from his time at DBL. He is just absolutely nuts about her and it is cute!

***Outside of performing his job and keeping you alert to sounds at home and work, are there any ways in which Ace has helped you in unexpected ways?***

Ace is really amazing at sound awareness for me. When we are out in public, Ace turns his head quickly or his body slightly, so I know I need to turn my head and see what is going on, or it alerts me that someone is close to us. At work, I have a baby gate up at the entrance to my cubicle. Ace will go to the gate and wag his tail if someone comes back to my department. Even if the person



## Q & A with Andrea and Ace Continued

is not coming over to speak with me, Ace is alerting me that they are there. Ace is also alerting when someone comes up the stairs at home or knocks on my neighbor's door. Ace was with me at a chiropractic appointment recently. I was lying flat on my back and made a pretty terrible noise because the adjustment hurt. He broke his down stay, came over and nuzzled my left cheek and gave me a quick lick to make sure I was ok. Ace is also picking up my moods and my anxiety. Ace won't leave me until I make contact with him (usually some pets or a kiss) and I tell him it is ok. He stands in front of me, giving me the stare down, and won't budge until he is positive I am all right. I have also cried in front of Ace and he gets very concerned. He stays very close and cuddles and licks me. I didn't realize that spending ALL of my time with him would mean that as I figure him out, he is also figuring me out.

***What are some of your favorite things about Ace? Does he have any silly quirks that make you laugh or keep you on your toes?***

Ace trips over his toys, and runs to me when he gets scared over silly things (like when he sneezes). He likes it when you play the drums on his bum, and when I sing a song to him about wiggle butts when he is being crazy! I wake up in the morning with his little eyes peering over my mattress because he wants to go outside. Ace is not just good at his "job," which is still evolving for us, but he is amazingly sweet, silly, kind and sensitive. He is very generous with his little heart and an amazing companion and ear nibbler, you have to watch him! He warms my heart and has brought a lot of sunshine and joy into my life! I did not expect to fall so hard for this beautiful little kissin' machine with liquid chocolate eyes! I am so lucky that he loves his Mom too!

***Do you have any tips for clients on our waitlist or brand-new clients who are just getting to know their new assistance dog?***

My best advice is to be patient, and throw out your expectations. Everything takes time, and sometimes a lot of it. I have never worked this hard for ANYTHING in my life, but Ace is worth it. We may take a little bit longer than one year to firm up, but I am now absolutely certain that we will get there. There was a time when I was not so sure. When we have a good day, it is amazing! I feel like it is a glimpse of what is to come. I can hardly wait!

**"He warms my heart and has brought a lot of sunshine and joy into my life!"**

- Andrea



**Give Your  
Dog a Special  
Treat**

Order a DBL doggie  
bandana subscription to  
show your off your dog's  
sense of style, and  
support our mission at  
the same time!

[dogsforbetterlives.org/bandanarama/](https://dogsforbetterlives.org/bandanarama/)





“I want to help people

who are Deaf or who have hearing loss to know a greater freedom and sense of safety and independence.”

Ila is a retired gym teacher who worked with children with special needs. She experienced first-hand the profound impact a Hearing Dog can have on people’s lives and knew she wanted to support Dogs for Better Lives.

That’s why Ila has decided to leave Dogs for Better Lives a gift of charity in her will.

Please consider including Dogs for Better Lives in your will or future plans.

Contact Wanda for more information, (800) 990-3647.





*Providing Assistance Dogs Since 1977*

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Central Point, Oregon 97502

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Hearing Assistance Dog, Philly, with Laurie