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Program Growth, Satellite Expansion, and Board Change – All Amongst COVID-19, Shape up 2019-20 Fiscal Year

CENTRAL POINT, OR – Dogs for Better Lives (DBL) concluded its 2019-20 fiscal year at the end of June, having accomplished several major milestones, while strategically addressing a few unprecedented challenges.

PROGRAM

On the programmatic side, DBL [launched its first satellite office](#) last July in Washington State's Puget Sound region. Program Field Representative Jess Reichmuth is overseeing regional puppy raisers, participating in outreach events, following up with existing clients, and helping to acquire new shelter dogs, among other projects. In January, we launched our second satellite office in Fresno, CA, where Program Field Representative Laura Encinas is working on similar programs.

This past May, DBL hired [Dr. Jennifer Babineaux](#) to manage the Program Department as Program and Veterinary Director. Dr. Babineaux has operated a specialty mobile ultrasound service for the past five years helping general veterinary practices provide specialized care to their patients. Dr. Babineaux is excited to join DBL and beginning to utilize both her business and veterinary background to help lead the Program Department in achieving its goals.

"When I moved to southern Oregon in 2019, I heard so many remarkable things about Dogs for Better Lives, stated Dr. Babineaux. "I am so impressed by the organization's mission and the outstanding care we provide our dogs, and very excited to join the organization in a leadership role, while using my background in business and veterinary medicine to help them reach their goals."

With the unprecedented impacts of the [COVID-19 pandemic](#) starting in February, it has caused significant impacts to our dog acquisition, training, and placement over the last five months. Our overall numbers for dogs acquired, on campus, and placements were looking very good in early February with thoughts of possibly surpassing our numbers from 2018-19. In late February, with virtually all staff sent home and working remote, it has impacted all of our numbers for this fiscal year.

In April, one of DBL's breeder dogs, Pepper, had a beautiful litter of Golden Retriever Lab mix puppies. As of late June, all puppies were placed in southern Oregon and western Washington with [puppy raisers](#) who will teach them basic obedience over the next 12-13 months while attending weekly DBL puppy classes. Once the puppies return to DBL's southern Oregon campus, they will then go through 4-6 months of professional training prior to being placed with clients on the waiting list.

PROJECTS

One of our largest projects in recent years has been the recently launched [306-panel, 97.9 kW Solar Array](#) on the northern end of our Oregon campus. Grant funding through Pacific Power's Blue Sky Participants program and Energy Trust of Oregon covered 70% of the installation costs. This solar array will cover approximately 70% of DBL's annual energy needs, saving the organization nearly \$28,000 each year. A ribbon cutting event was held in early June and those interested in tracking DBL's solar acquisition can find the website tracker [here](#).

In early spring, DBL broke ground on its future [Cynthia Perlman Puppy Sensory Park](#). The approximate 100' x 100' park will provide an invaluable introduction to a variety of surrounding environments throughout our puppies' first year.

Just north of the Second Training Building, the future Puppy Sensory Park will provide numerous environments for the puppies to explore. With underground irrigation, the fully fenced Puppy Sensory Park will include numerous pathways across its perimeter integrating with several sensory elements, including rock, bark, sand, grass, and a water feature, among other items. The Puppy Sensory Park is expected to be completed by early fall.

"The Cynthia Perlman Puppy Sensory Park gives us a unique opportunity to show our puppies at an early age what they will encounter on their journey to becoming future Assistance Dogs, explained Puppy Program Coordinator, Hannah Crane. "It's so important that we provide the tools necessary for our puppies and raisers to succeed, and this Puppy Sensory Park is a big part of that."

Thanks to generous foundation support, we have purchased two [Toyota Sienna vans](#) to augment DBL's satellite staff in Washington's Puget Sound region and central California with their programmatic work. These vans will also support shelter dog acquisitions and transporting dogs to and from DBL's campus in southern Oregon.

NATIONAL BOARD

Longtime Dogs for the Deaf (now Dogs for Better Lives) board member [Marvin Dean Rhodes](#) passed away on February 14th. In honoring Marvin Rhodes' extensive commitment and compassionate support for Dogs for Better Lives (DBL), past and current board of directors are creating a memorial fund to support the completion of running yards next to the North Kennel Building on DBL's campus. One of two running yards will be named in Marvin's honor and will include a plaque with his name, photo, and years served. Marvin served on DBL's board of directors from 1987 – 2016.

"I consider myself fortunate to have served with Marvin on the board of directors for Dogs for the Deaf," stated former board member Susan Bahr. "His dedication to the organization and his leadership skills allowed the organization to move forward as a highly rated non-profit organization serving all of its clients, those with two legs as well as four legs. "

At the end of June, two longtime board members, [Ron Holzkamp and Brian McQuade](#), will leave the national board. During their tenure on the board of directors, each has served in several capacities, including more recently when DBL's previous CEO departed, Holzkamp stepped in as the interim CEO. During the same period, McQuade stepped in to manage the day-to-day operations towards the completion of DBL's new 18,000 sq. ft. Second Training Building on its southern Oregon campus.

"My time on the board has been very satisfying and exciting," stated Board Vice Chairman, Ron Holzkamp. "We now provide dogs for people who are Deaf and hard of hearing, children on the autism spectrum, and facility dogs to different entities.

"Some of my fondest memories as a DBL board member were meeting and watching the DBL staff do such remarkable work with the pups and collaborating with such a talented and diverse group of people who filled other board positions," stated Brian McQuade.

Last October, the board of directors welcomed two new members, [Tom Dobry and Jeff Rhoden](#).

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Since February, DBL has been addressing the [COVID-19 pandemic](#) while following CDC guidelines and working to ensure that staff take all necessary precautions to help reduce and eliminate the spread of this virus. For DBL, our concern has been for clients, staff, dogs, and community partners – ensuring that all are doing as well as they can during this unprecedented pandemic. Fortunately, the transition to working remote for the majority of staff was

and continues to be relatively seamless thanks to having advanced technology and systems in place to support all staff and our communication needs. To learn more about our approach and planning around addressing COVID-19, visit [the COVID-19 page on our website](#).

AN ASSISTANCE DOG LEADER

Thanks to the generosity of DBL's past and present Guardian Society members who have placed the nonprofit in their estate plans, 100% of current donations go directly towards programmatic services. The "[100% Funding Model](#)" allows for interest from the endowment to support administrative overhead, therefore allowing donors to see their gifts go 100% towards program needs. In 2019-20 alone, we saw more than \$2M come into the organization via bequests, further supporting DBL's longstanding endowment.

For the seventh year in a row, DBL has received the prestigious 4-star rating from [Charity Navigator](#), highlighting the organization's financial stability, accountability, and transparency. Further, DBL was once again recognized by *Oregon Business* as a 100 Best Nonprofits to Work for in Oregon (2019), and received Guidestar's Platinum Seal (2020).



Dogs for Better Lives is a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization focusing on the training and placing of Hearing Assistance Dogs, Program Assistance Dogs, and Autism Assistance Dogs. Accredited by [Assistance Dogs International \(ADI\)](#) and recognized by [Charity Navigator](#) as a 4-star nonprofit, Dogs for the Deaf has been rescuing dogs, bettering lives, and providing assistance dogs since 1977.

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