



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Thinking Outside the Crate with COVID-19 and Its Ominous Path

CENTRAL POINT, OR – As news broke in China about the Coronavirus (aka COVID-19) in the early days of 2020 it seemed so distant and inconsequential to those of us in America. Then COVID cases began to appear elsewhere including in the United States.

In February 2020, the leadership team at Dogs for Better Lives (DBL) took notice, as many businesses and nonprofits became further concerned and more cases were showing up locally, including in Oregon. Abiding by the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) guidelines and following protocols set out by the Oregon Governor, DBL continued to establish protocols and procedures to move the organization forward. In March 2020 we established a dedicated [COVID-19 page](#) on our website, as a resource to staff and the public.

“From the very beginning our leadership team took the threat of COVID-19 very seriously. We immediately took action to ensure the health and safety of our staff and dogs were safeguarded to the best of our abilities,” stated operations director, Trish Welch. “Throughout the pandemic we have remained agile, flexible, and are making the best of a very tough situation.”

For nearly a year, DBL has been carefully dealing with and navigating around COVID-19's path, as it has certainly impacted the way the organization does business, across all departments, including how the organization acquires and places dogs nationally.

Beginning in March 2020, DBL moved most staff off its Southern Oregon campus, to then working remote. Fortunately, the national nonprofit already had much of the technology and equipment in place to establish this overnight.

Working with dogs, many of our programmatic staff continue to stay on campus, caring for and training the dogs, while practicing social distancing, continuously cleaning hands, and wearing masks, among other CDC practices.

“External outreach and communications with the public is very limited, though I have been able to give presentations and participate in community meetings via conference video,” stated regional field representative Laura Encinas. “It certainly has been difficult but we at DBL will persevere.”

Laura continues to work with her local puppy raisers in central California, though only through virtual calls and outdoor classes where they can socially distance. Animal shelters are open by appointment only, restrict time allotted to evaluate dogs, and many have a limited number of dogs available. The

short supply of dogs at the shelters is primarily due to more people working remote, now having more time, therefore adopting dogs in mass numbers throughout the COVID pandemic.

“Working through the Covid-19 pandemic has certainly been challenging, but our team was quick to adapt and rose up to meet that challenge,” stated puppy program coordinator, Hannah Crane. “Implementing safety protocols have allowed those of us who need to continue working on campus to do so, while others work from the safety of their home. Those same protocols have helped us to continue to have puppy classes both virtually and in person.”

Hannah is further encouraged by how the management team has kept staff up to date on local restrictions and guidelines, found alternative methods of communicating with colleagues, clients, and volunteers, as well as continuing to provide excellent care to the dogs in training.

During unprecedented times, unprecedented steps are required, while done in a thoughtful manner that puts staff and dogs first. The organization realizes that we are far from out of this pandemic and that some of the procedures implemented most likely will continue to be a part of our updated procedures moving forward indefinitely.

To learn more about our COVID-19 plan, visit our website [here](#).



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

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