

# DOGS *for* better LIVES

ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022





## Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 2021-2022 BY THE NUMBERS                        | 3  |
| WELCOME   | 4  |
| MAJOR GIFTS                                     | 5  |
| Invested in Service Dogs                        |    |
| FOUNDATION GIVING                               | 6  |
| Signing on to Support Passion for Service       |    |
| GUARDIAN SOCIETY                                | 7  |
| Investing Today For Tomorrow                    |    |
| CORPORATE PARTNERS                              | 8  |
| Sneakers, Paws and a Leash                      |    |
| NONPROFIT PARTNERS                              | 9  |
| Off to the Falmouth Races                       |    |
| COMMUNITY CLUBS                                 | 11 |
| A Vintage Relationship of 30 Years              |    |
| AUTISM ASSISTANCE DOGS                          | 12 |
| Acceptance Through Serenity                     |    |
| HEARING ASSISTANCE DOGS                         | 13 |
| Freedom with a Furry Friend                     |    |
| FACILITY DOGS                                   | 14 |
| Calm Fillbert Makes His Rounds                  |    |
| CAREER CHANGE DOGS                              | 15 |
| Cedar Provides Stress Relief in Public Safety   |    |
| VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT                             | 16 |
| Flexible Opportunites Lead to Rewarding Service |    |
| 2022 FINANCIALS                                 | 17 |

## Mission

Dogs for Better Lives is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that professionally trains dogs to help people and enhance lives while maintaining a lifelong commitment to all dogs we rescue or breed and the people we serve.



## Why We Do It

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.

## Values

Care for the dogs by keeping their well-being (physical, emotional and mental) at the root of all decisions.

Care for clients by providing our services with kindness, compassion and patience.

Care for donors by being responsible stewards of our "donor dollars" through mindful and conscientious use of company time and money.

On the Cover: Facility Dog Fillbert creating a pawssitive light wherever he goes

# YEAR IN REVIEW

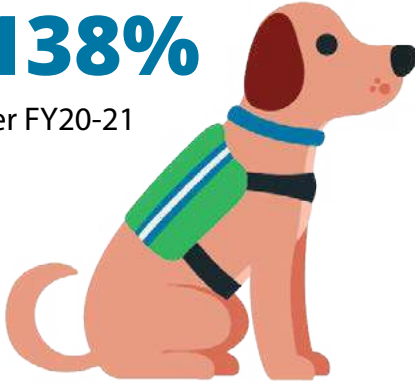
## 2021-2022

### A RECORD BREAKING YEAR

#### PLACEMENTS

**+138%**

Over FY20-21



**PLACEMENT RATE 61%**



+54% over 4-year average

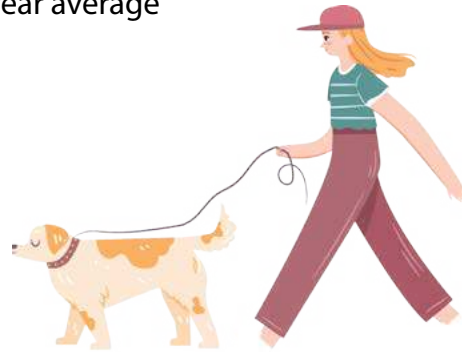


**PUPPY RAISERS**  
**31**

As of 6/30/2022

#### RECORD GIVING

Most online and foundation giving in DBL history



**151 ACTIVE CLIENT TEAMS**

As of 6/30/2022

#### OPENED SECOND TRAINING CAMPUS



Northeast Campus opened in April 2022

#### TOP RATED CHARITY

Recognized for 9 consecutive years



### MILESTONES

#### LAUNCHED NORTHEAST REGIONAL ADVISORY BOARD

Joining our Pacific Northwest Chapter



### TRAINING STATS

**11,780**

Hours logged by professional trainers

**73,345**

Volunteer hours logged, the equivalent of 35 FTE

**2.7**

Million tail wags

**THANK YOU!**

Donors | Clients | Volunteers | Partners | DBL Staff  
Regional Advisory Boards | National Board of Directors

# WELCOME



In last year's annual report, I wrote the following: "Covid concerns continue to impact operations, specifically how we acquire, train, and place dogs. There still were no in-person fundraising events and our development staff remain limited in meeting with our passionate donors. But not only is there light at the end of the tunnel, we feel like we're already exiting."

Looking back on that statement, it is now clear to see that we truly were headed in the right direction.

I'm pleased to share that all key metrics from the 2021-22 fiscal year were up. Assistance Dog placements were a record high for Dogs for Better Lives, more than doubling the number of placements in the previous year. There are more active teams across the country than ever before. The number of puppies being raised increased 80% and our success rate grew from 42% to 61%. Our first dogs came into training on the Northeast campus and the very first placement from that facility should happen in early 2023. Things

continue to progress as we execute the organization's long-range vision.

With our current strategic plan expiring this year, the Leadership team will work closely with the Board to create the next iteration of our four-year strategic plan to continue the goal of placing more dogs with our deserving clients across the country.

Our successes in the 2021-22 fiscal year aren't just reflected in data. What isn't lost on me and is highlighted throughout this report are the individual stories of the clients we help and donors who so generously give to make these placements possible.

While we focus on moving the organization forward across the country, it is still the people that make the work so rewarding, whether that is the Board, staff, clients, donors, or volunteers.

There is so much that goes into training and placing a dog. Acquisition and breeding, puppy raising, obedience training, professional training, placement, follow up and so much more. There are far too many people to thank for their hard work and dedication.

As one young child said when asked what his favorite thing about his Assistance Dog was, "she licks me and makes me happier by a billion percent." I echo that sentiment in my opportunity to continue to lead this organization as CEO, working alongside an amazing Board and team. Especially when I get to play with puppies on campus.

I hope you enjoy this Annual Report and share in the successes we experienced as an organization. Because all our support comes from the generosity of the donors that believe in the mission, none of what was accomplished would be possible without you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bryan Williams".

Bryan Williams  
President & CEO



"I love the mission of Dogs for Better Lives."

- Jori Jordon

A backroads-only adventurer, Jori Joran (left) has visited all of the U.S. service dog training center, including DBL. She is pictured with DBL Board Chair, Dr. Danielle Rose (right) and Hearing Assistance Dog Delight.

## INVESTED IN SERVICE DOGS

### MAJOR GIFTS

A roly-poly, little Heinz-57 mix of a dog named Hazel was not Jori Jordan's image of a service dog. But when Hazel showed off her skills during a demonstration from DBL at a local civic group, Jori's jaw dropped.

"Hazel got better looking by the minute," she remembers.

Jori stayed after the meeting to learn more, thus beginning a relationship with DBL that now spans more than two decades. In addition to making regular donations, Jori has volunteered for the organization by meeting with service dog applicants, sometimes driving several hours from her home to conduct interviews.

One of Jori's mottos is, "I brake for service dogs," because she can't pass one by without stopping to say hello.

She directs all her philanthropic efforts to canine causes.

"Dogs are worthy," she says. "I love the mission of Dogs for Better Lives. I totally agree with saving dogs from shelters. I like that someone who has challenges will be greatly helped by one of these dogs."

In 2022, Jori donated the funds to provide 300 new vests for all of the DBL service dogs. The new vests are bright green and better unify the three types of service dogs that are trained through DBL. Knowing that all the current dogs and some in the future will be wearing these vests is fun for Jori and makes her happy that she is able to help.

Jori lives in Raleigh, North Carolina, with four dogs of her own, including a new puppy.

# SIGNING ON TO SUPPORT PASSION FOR SERVICE

## FOUNDATION GIVING

Ashley Hopkins decided to take an American Sign Language class for personal growth even though she has her hearing. She enjoyed it so much that she kept taking classes. Through the Deaf community, she met her partner, Mackenzie Goranitis, who was born deaf and now works with deaf children.

The pair have three dogs, including Jax, an Australian shepherd who is deaf. Jax was the product of irresponsible breeding, Ashley says, leading to an underlying genetic cause for his deafness. Deaf dogs often come to a bad end, so the pair deliberately sought out a deaf puppy. His deafness doesn't keep Jax from loving everyone he meets. He is training to become a certified therapy dog.

Ashley works for the American Endowment Foundation in Hudson, Ohio. Each year, the foundation offers employees the opportunity to submit grant applications for worthy nonprofits. Ashley found DBL while researching organizations that support the deaf. "I wanted to find a good program with a passion for their work," she says. "When I called Dogs for Better Lives, I could tell they cared, grant or no grant."

Ashley completed the extensive application on behalf of DBL. Last spring, the American Endowment Foundation awarded DBL \$10,000.

"It means a lot to me since I personally would never be able to give that amount of money," Ashley says. By living with a deaf partner, Ashley is aware of the challenges and safety risks for the deaf. By going through training with Jax, she's also aware of how intense training a service dog can be. These experiences have given her respect and gratitude for the work of DBL.

"The Dogs for Better Lives program is just fantastic; the service they provide is so incredible," she says.



Ashley Hopkins (left) and Mackenzie Goranitis celebrate with their deaf dog, Jax, at his graduation from his Canine Good Citizen program to become a therapy dog.



“They answered the call for something very needed and they keep answering it every day.”

- Marilyn Wilson

## ENTRUSTING TRAINING FOR DOGS INTO THE FUTURE

### GUARDIAN SOCIETY

As a dog owner for most of her life, Marilyn Wilson knew dogs were smart and protective. But she didn't know how beneficial they could be when trained to help people until she attended a DBL demonstration at the local library in Jacksonville, Oregon, about 25 years ago. Since then, she has been a regular supporter of DBL.

“I was impressed by how well they run the operation and their care of the dogs,” she says. “It's an important thing that they do. They answered the call for something very needed and they keep answering it every day. And they are also expanding to help more people.”

During her lifetime, Marilyn receives an income from a charitable remainder trust established by her parents. She has decided that DBL will receive half of the principal of the trust after she is gone.

“Dogs for Better Lives is so talented at training dogs,” she says. “It's amazing to see how smart and eager the dogs are. I wanted to be part of that and help them monetarily.”

Nowadays, Marilyn gets her dog fix when she dog sits for her grand-dog. Much like grandchildren, the fun is enjoying the time together and also enjoying when the parents come to pick them up.

For more information on how you can become a member of our Guardian Society, visit [dogsforbetterliveslegacy.org](https://dogsforbetterliveslegacy.org) or contact Wanda Cockey at (541) 423-8385 or [wanda@dogsforbetterlives.org](mailto:wanda@dogsforbetterlives.org).

# SNEAKERS, PAWS AND A LEASH

## CORPORATE PARTNERS

Ten years ago, WoofTrax founder Doug Hexter had an idea. What if we connect all the people who love their dogs to the animal nonprofits that need their support? He created a free app that tracks your steps while walking your dog. With each walker and each step, pet charities receive a donation.

Every month, thousands of dog walkers log half a million miles or more for their chosen charity among the 8,000 nonprofits registered with WoofTrax. Doug feels it provides a win-win for the dog and the owner, who are incentivized to walk routinely.

Periodically, WoofTrax holds a challenge for the dog-walking community with a corporate sponsor

providing up to \$10,000 if the steps are met. Last summer, Doug connected DBL with Boehringer Ingelheim Animal Health USA Inc, a maker of pet medicines, to run a nationwide challenge called “Step Up for Service Dogs.”

Shawn Hooker, head of U.S. Pet Health Business at Boehringer Ingelheim Animal Health, USA, says, “Boehringer Ingelheim is happy to join Dogs for Better Lives in its unwavering commitment to show compassion and love to every animal!”

Walkers achieved the challenge, and the full \$10,000 donation went to DBL.



Doug Hexter gave an insider tip to DBL supporters that nonprofits benefit the most on WoofTrax by having more people walking for them. If you would like to support DBL through your daily dog walks, sign up on WoofTrax. The app is free through sponsored support and advertising. Download the app at the Apple App Store or Google Play.

Get all the details at [www.wooftrax.com](http://www.wooftrax.com)





The 2022 race team included volunteers Jameson Buttafuoco, Kelley Calkins, Jessica Deckinger, Josie Kasuto, Mario Nimock, Gary Santaniello, Michael Tempesta, Holly Wilcox-Cline, Michael Wyatt and board member Emily Nelson (pictured) and staff member Danielle Kempe.

# OFF TO THE FALMOUTH RACES

## NONPROFIT PARTNERS

Last summer was the 50th running of the ASICS Falmouth Road Race, a cult favorite among the running community which features a seven-mile run along the seaside of Cape Cod, Massachusetts. For the first time, DBL was represented in the race by 10 volunteer runners. The philanthropic arm of the race organization chose DBL as a charity partner to receive bibs and become one of 183 teams running on behalf of a nonprofit.

Only Massachusetts-based nonprofits are eligible to be charity partners. DBL officially opened the Northeast Campus in 2022, the first permanent foothold outside of Oregon in DBL's history.

Being part of the local race provided DBL local visibility, with significant promotional support from the race organization. Each runner committed to a fundraising

goal of \$820. When DBL board member Rich Perlman of East Northport, New York, heard that DBL would have a team, he was happy to provide a matching gift challenge for the team's fundraising. Some years ago, Rich ran the ASICS Falmouth Road Race himself.

"Running was dear to me for a long time, so I'm glad to make a contribution that's good for Dogs for Better Lives," he says.

With Rich's additional gift, the runners raised \$21,355 for DBL. The team has already applied to participate in 2023.



DBL Runner Holly Wilcox-Cline



DBL Runner Gary Santaniello



## NEW CAMPUS IN THE NORTHEAST

The Northeast Campus of Dogs for Better Lives officially opened April 26, 2022. The facility will operate as a boarding and dog day care facility for the public and will also offer training and kennel space for our Assistance Dogs-in-Training. Profits from the day care and boarding business directly support our Assistance Dogs programs.

Watch a virtual tour of the facility at: [dogsforbetterlives.org/ne-virtual-event](https://dogsforbetterlives.org/ne-virtual-event)



For 30 years, shoppers at the Medford Armory Antiques & Vintage Sale have been able to meet some of DBL's dogs and trainers as part of the event.

## A VINTAGE RELATIONSHIP OF 30 YEARS

### COMMUNITY CLUBS

When people attend the biannual Medford Armory Antiques & Vintage Sale, 20% of their entry ticket supports DBL. Over three decades, the gate percentage has provided DBL with more than \$11,000 in donations. Each show also has a 50/50 drawing, with half of the winnings going to DBL.

Carole Berry of Reading, California, inherited the connection to DBL when her business, Twin Bridges Antique Productions, took over promoting the southern Oregon show in 2008. She didn't think twice about continuing the relationship, as she has always had a passion for people living with disabilities.

"It's an honor to be able to help spread the word about the services of Dogs for Better Lives," she says. "About a thousand people attend each show, many coming from around the region and other states. Dogs for Better Lives has a table in the front and provides demonstrations. My sense is that seeing the dogs inspires people and generates a lot of enthusiasm."

In working with DBL over the years, Carole says what impresses her most about the organization is the sincere,

lifelong commitment made to each dog in the program. "Whether it is a shelter rescue, a puppy, a career change or a retired dog, they will get a credible family to adopt them and make sure they receive the right training for their skills," she says. "I've always respected that Dogs for Better Lives gives dogs a purpose. Then they transform the lives of individuals, giving them independence and dignity."

Recently, Carole passed on the promotion of the show to James Wesley Antiques but ensured the new promoters will continue to support DBL.

"So many organizations say they are doing good work, but Dogs for Better Lives is the real deal," she says.

If you can travel to Medford, Oregon, and enjoy browsing for unique items, visit the Medford Armory Antiques & Vintage Sale. The next dates are:

- May 20-21, 2023
- Oct. 14-15, 2023

# ACCEPTANCE THROUGH SERENITY

## AUTISM ASSISTANCE DOGS

Ten-year-old Luke Stark loves slobbery dog kisses, which Autism Assistance Dog Serenity is happy to provide. Serenity joined the Stark family home in Portland a year ago.

Luke's mom, Stephanie, learned about DBL from a flyer in an occupational therapy office. Knowing how much Luke loved dogs, Stephanie and her husband, Chad, applied to DBL. It took three years of patient waiting, but then Serenity arrived and lived up to her name.

"She is an amazing black Labrador, so calm and the joy of our entire family," Stephanie says. "She meets my every expectation for Luke. What I wasn't expecting was how great she is for our entire family. I'd never had a pet in my entire life and my daughter, Addalyn, was nervous around dogs. But we are all so in love with her now and she is the most well-mannered, sweetest thing."

Stephanie says Serenity's best command for Luke is "lap." She will rest on his lap and ground him, giving him the sensory input he desires. Her favorite game is chase, and she sleeps on the bottom bunk in Luke's room at night. Every morning, they all go for a walk to help calm some of the anxiety of facing a new day at school. Before Serenity, Luke would resist going out for walks. Now, he understands that Serenity needs to walk, and cooperates with the routine.

"When we go to school and he's nervous, she's in the backseat, and he's petting her the entire way," Stephanie says. "We will park and walk with Serenity to the building. Luke struggles socially, so Serenity's presence is an instant way to connect with others. She is such a blessing."



### Autism Assistance Dog Program Expands to the East Coast

DBL is now accepting applications for Autism Assistance Dogs for children ages 4-8 who live in the following states: California, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington.

"I was overwhelmed that a service dog was free to me."

– Barbara O'Connell

Rescued Enzo loves his job as a Hearing Assistance Dog, alerting to important sounds.

## FREEDOM WITH A FURRY FRIEND

### HEARING ASSISTANCE DOGS

Enzo's favorite sound is a door knock because that means company. DBL found Enzo in a kennel in Washington and brought him back to the West Coast campus in Central Point, Oregon, to become a Hearing Assistance Dog. He got his person, Barbara O'Connell, eight years ago.

Barbara was born with reduced hearing in both ears. She was 30 years old when she saw an advertisement for DBL. She applied and received her first Home Hearing Dog, Mattie, a springer spaniel.

"I was overwhelmed that a service dog was free to me," Barbara says. "I knew I was missing a lot of sounds. At the time, the quality of hearing aids was not good. Having Mattie lowered my anxiety."

Barbara's second dog from DBL was Jack, a black Labrador. Together, they worked with their DBL trainer to get him certified as a Hearing Assistance Dog. Then Jack could assist Barbara anywhere she needed.

"What a freedom that was!" Barbara remembers. Enzo is Barbara's third dog from DBL. She describes him as a "mixture goober dog."

"He's very happy and likes his job and being a helper," she says.

The two live in Goodyear, Arizona. Enzo has traveled with Barbara to hotels and on airplanes, providing reassurance that she can be away from her normal environment and still be safe. Some of those travels have been on behalf of DBL, to promote awareness and interview applicants.

"I have loved spreading the word about Dogs for Better Lives," Barbara says.

"I love telling people that once a dog is rescued, even if it's not trainable, it will get a suitable home. Dogs for Better Lives has been a huge part of my life. I don't think I would have had the confidence to do what I've done in my life without them."

# CALM FILBERT MAKES HIS ROUNDS

## FACILITY DOGS

Stacie Bianco of Clackamas, Oregon, was already deeply involved in DBL as a volunteer puppy raiser and member of the Regional Advisory Board – Pacific Northwest when she decided to fulfill a dream and apply for a Facility Dog. During her childhood, Stacie's sister was hospitalized for a whole year. That experience left a deep impact on Stacie. She wanted to find a way to help others in the hospital.

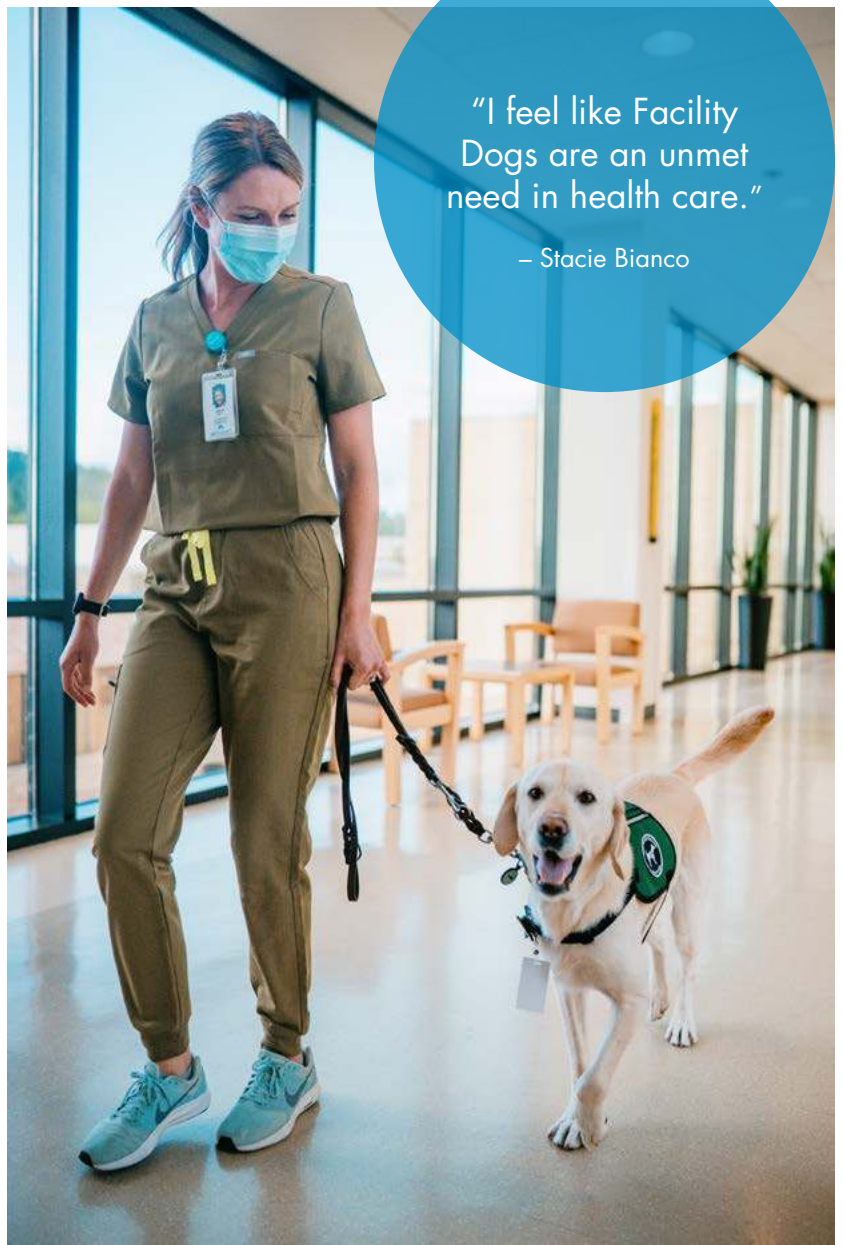
Filbert began training as a guide dog, but he needed a career change. The DBL trainers could tell he would be a perfect Facility Dog with his mellow personality and brought him into the program. Stacie and Filbert became a team in 2022.

Three or four days a week, Stacie and Filbert visit adult and children's hospitals, Ronald McDonald House, specialty day camps and/or a group for adults with traumatic brain injury. Filbert is the first DBL dog serving in a hospital setting, visiting patients and their families.

"Filbert just lights up a room," Stacie says. "He brings everyone together. People bond with him very quickly. Filbert's favorite is the children's hospital. He loves children, and he's very gentle with the patients."

But it's not only the patients who find comfort in a friendly dog. Stacie remembers how it touched her to visit a family member bowed over by worry and grief sitting beside an unconscious patient in the intensive care unit. When Filbert peeked in, the person sat up with a smile and a warm pet for the Facility Dog.

"I feel like Facility Dogs are an unmet need in health care; I feel like I could be there all day," Stacie says.



"I feel like Facility Dogs are an unmet need in health care."

– Stacie Bianco

Stacie Bianco works full-time in veterinary health but volunteers a dozen or more hours a week by taking Filbert to visit patients in the hospital.

But Filbert needs rest time too. He gets the zoomies when his vest comes off, Stacie says. Having volunteered often, she believes that the DBL staff and leadership engagement are key strengths of the organization.

# CEDAR PROVIDES STRESS RELIEF IN PUBLIC SAFETY

## CAREER CHANGE DOGS

Working in public safety is stressful and sometimes traumatic. As Assistant Vice President for Public Safety, Chief of Police Shanon Anderson is charged with the public safety of more than 30,000 students and faculty at Oregon State University in Corvallis, Oregon. Her team copes with everything from crowd control to crime and medical emergencies. To increase wellness, Anderson decided to seek a canine companion for the team.

When Anderson met Cedar, she knew immediately he was the right dog for them. Cedar had recently career changed from Dogs for Better Lives. Instead, he transferred to Working Dogs Oregon, an organization that trains therapy dogs for law enforcement and veterans. He spent six weeks training to respond to emergency situations and to gain comfort around sirens, crowds and tense situations.

Now Cedar lives at the OSU station house full-time, except for weekend breaks with Anderson. The team created a chore board to ensure that Cedar gets his meals, walks, baths and grooming. All staff members get to help. There is always someone to play fetch with Cedar.

“Cedar greets everyone when they arrive,” Anderson says. “They put their bags down, pet him and smile. Cedar just listens and never lectures; he doesn’t try to solve all their problems. He’s the perfect friend. The staff says that having him here is one of the most amazing things they’ve ever experienced on the job.”

Though Cedar is not task trained, he has been an asset in several situations when comforting was crucial. “He has these eyes that are so welcoming,” Anderson says. “He will lay his head in your hand. You can tell that he trusts you, and you can feel the warm energy from him.”

Cedar visits the campus library during the exam weeks for any students who need some dog time. The interactions help break the ice with students and safety officers.

“I look at the joy Cedar brings, and it’s very eye-opening to see how service dogs improve the quality of people’s lives,” Anderson says. “Cedar has made a difference in so many lives already.”



“I look at the joy Cedar brings, and it’s very eye-opening to see how service dogs improve the quality of people’s lives.”

– Chief Shanon Anderson

# FLEXIBLE OPPORTUNITIES LEAD TO REWARDING SERVICE

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Rory is a labradoodle Career Change dog who needed a quieter place than DBL's West Coast campus to wait for her forever-family adoption. Kela Meredith took her home as a temporary foster. Living in Medford, Oregon, Kela is always on standby to assist with the many tasks a canine-centered organization needs. She's been a puppy raiser and helps a "puppy pack" group of other volunteer puppy raisers. She has transported dogs that need to come in or out of DBL as part of a career change. She's attended many local events to share the DBL story.

"I have a personal passion for dogs, service dogs in particular," she says. "I think dogs are amazing, and I love to see them trained to excel for themselves. I appreciate that Dogs for Better Lives obtains dogs from more than one avenue: breeding, shelter rescue, a career change from other service dog organizations. I love that Dogs for Better Lives is open to finding the right path for the dog."

The DBL puppy she raised, Bond, was too high-energy to be an assistance dog. Instead, he went to work

for the National Disaster Search Dog Foundation in California, assisting firefighters.

"He's very successful there," Kela says. "He repels out of helicopters with goggles on and is having the time of his life."

Kela and her husband, Richard, are currently dogless for the first time in their married lives. This makes their home a good waystation for DBL dogs in transition. They recently sold their restaurant business, giving Kela more time for volunteering. When they owned the restaurant, they opened it to DBL trainers to bring their pups-in-training to practice visiting a restaurant and gave a free meal to the trainer.

"One thing that is so wonderful to me about Dogs for Better Lives is that no matter what season of my life I've been in, there was an area to volunteer that would fit my schedule and circumstances," Kela says. "There are many ways to volunteer, and it's incredibly rewarding."

"I love that Dogs for Better Lives is open to finding the right path for the dog."

– Kela Meredith

Kela Meredith has volunteered with DBL since 2019 in several capacities, including promoting the nonprofit at local events.





# FINANCIALS

## 2021-2022

### Support and Revenue

|                          |             |
|--------------------------|-------------|
| Contributions & Grants:  | \$3,051,689 |
| Program Service Revenue: | \$314       |
| Investment Income:       | \$576,460   |
| Other Revenue            | \$(355,491) |

**TOTAL SUPPORT & REVENUE: \$3,272,972**

### Expenses

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
| Salaries, other compensation, employee benefits: | \$2,520,281 |
|--|-------------|

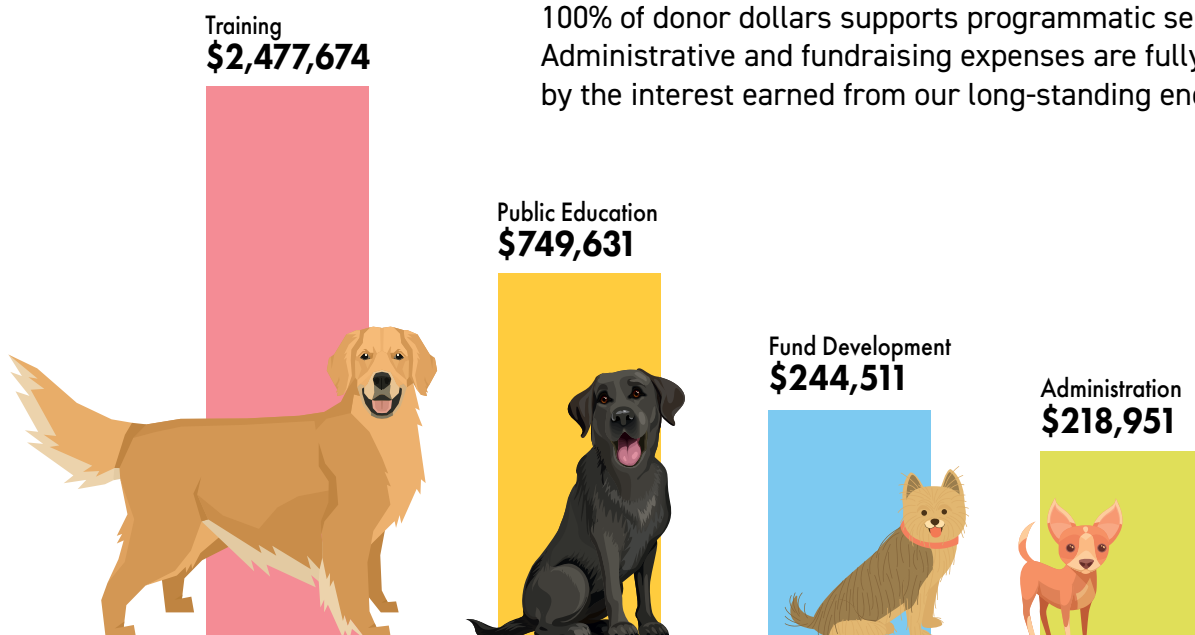
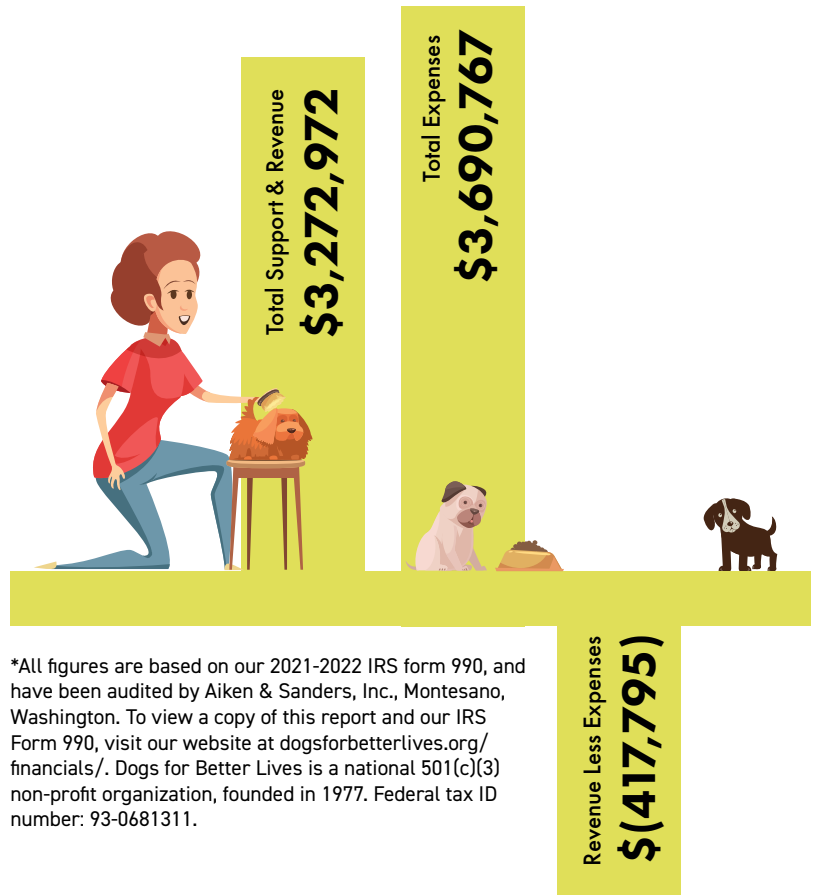
|                |             |
|----------------|-------------|
| Other Expenses | \$1,170,486 |
|----------------|-------------|

**TOTAL EXPENSES \$3,690,767**  
**REVENUE LESS EXPENSES \$(417,795)**

### Assets

|                   |              |
|-------------------|--------------|
| Total Assets      | \$17,690,343 |
| Total Liabilities | \$633,869    |

**NET ASSETS \$17,056,474**



## Board of Directors Officers

**Dr. Danielle Rose**, Chair  
**Tom Dobry**, Vice Chair  
**Blake Thurman**, Treasurer  
**Garrett West**, Secretary

## Board of Directors Members

|                  |                     |
|------------------|---------------------|
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Hannah Thornton (Board Fellow)

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