

CANINE LISTENER

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MAKING INDEPENDENCE POSSIBLE



The Transformative Bond: Nicole's Journey with Hearing Assistance Dog Freya

Hearing Assistance Dog Freya was one of the first puppies from the Dogs for Better Lives “F Litter” we featured in April’s Canine Listener to be placed with a client. Freya was placed with Nicole in New York earlier this year. We recently interviewed Nicole to find out how their first months together were going. Nicole is running in support of Dogs for Better Lives this summer at the Falmouth Road Race, where she’ll raise funds to pay it forward to other individuals in need of a Service Dog. Read on for excerpts of our interview with Nicole.

Q: Did you have any hesitations about applying for a Hearing Dog?

I had thought about getting a Hearing Dog for a while, but other organizations required I travel to them for training. I’m a nurse so getting that much time off from work, plus the cost of travel, would be challenging. Dogs for Better Lives brings the dog to the client and trains in your home, which made me choose DBL. I was nervous about how I would integrate a dog into my work, but I saw that DBL had placed a dog with a pediatrician before, which made me confident that DBL had the experience to support me.

Q: Do you remember meeting Freya and what that was like?

When I found out Freya would be placed with me, I felt like I must be dreaming! I immediately called my family to let them know. The day Freya arrived, I spent the whole morning rearranging her toys and cleaning. I wanted to make her homecoming perfect. When she got out of the car my first thought was that she was so small! In pictures she looked much bigger, but she’s just a petite princess. She was so full of love and kisses from the first minute. I cried several times that first week when it hit me that she was really mine.



Q: How has life changed since Freya was placed with you?

Everything has changed since I got Freya. She makes me feel so much safer, both at home and out in public. I’m more confident with Freya by my side because I know I won’t miss an important sound. Freya is also a great conversation starter, which makes the challenge of socializing as a Deaf person a little easier. This summer Freya and I went camping alone for the first time; before Freya I never would have felt safe enough to do that. We had an incredible weekend of swimming, hiking, and lazing by the fire. Freya lets me be my most authentic self.

Q: You’re running the Falmouth Road Race this summer as part of the Dogs for Better Lives Team. What inspired you to sign up?

I began running during nursing school. I found it was a great outlet for both the stress of losing my hearing and the stress of school. When I saw that Dogs for Better Lives had a team, I was so excited! I’m looking forward to combining two of my favorite things - my love for Freya and my love for running, while raising money so that more people in need of Service Dogs have the same opportunity DBL gave me.

Q: Anything else you’d like to share?

Freya’s tasks and ability to perform as a service dog are absolutely incredible. But my favorite thing about her is how much love and affection she gives. Becoming Deaf can be incredibly isolating. Conversations can be challenging. But Freya loves me exactly how I am, and we understand each other perfectly. I can’t thank DBL enough for the gift they gave me in Freya. She’s my world and my life is immeasurably better with her in it.

From Shelter to Service Dog Program launches in Texas

Dogs for Better Lives (DBL) recently launched a new program, “From Shelter to Service Dog,” in partnership with Operation Kindness (OPK) – a shelter in Carrollton, Texas.

The program identifies shelter dogs that have the ideal temperament and abilities to become a Service Dog and places them in a training program to become a Service Dog through Dogs for Better Lives.

The collaboration allows shelter dogs to live with foster families during their training, working with DBL’s Assistance Dog Trainers to develop the necessary skills. Dogs that do not graduate from the program as Service Dogs will still benefit from the additional training and be adopted by the community.

“The population of shelter dogs in the Pacific Northwest has dwindled since the pandemic, leading to fewer suitable dogs to be trained to assist people,” said Trish Welch, Vice President of Operations at Dogs for Better Lives. “We’ve been actively working to find ways to continue to train shelter dogs, and this partnership with Operation Kindness is an important step in achieving that goal.”

The program aims to address the high demand for Service Dogs. By training more shelter dogs to become Service Dogs, more people with disabilities can receive the assistance they need.



DBL Program Department Advisor, Emily Minah (Left) and DBL Shelter Dog Program Coordinator, Melissa Fathers (Right)

Learn more about this innovative new program at: www.dogsforbetterlives.org/shelter

DBL Places First Puppies in Prison Puppy Raising Program in Ohio



In April, Dogs for Better Lives (DBL) launched its Prison Puppy Raising Program in Ohio, partnering with Ross Correctional Institution and Madison Correctional Institution to raise future Service Dogs. DBL staff teaches specially selected incarcerated handlers to work with the puppies using positive reinforcement training techniques, giving puppies the foundation for future Service Dog training at one of DBL’s training campuses.

The handlers learn valuable qualities such as patience, problem-solving, adaptability, and communication, enhancing their employability post-release and reducing recidivism rates.

“The incarcerated persons will have the opportunity to give back to the community in a meaningful way and grow as individuals. Madison Correctional is very excited to welcome this new program,” said Madison Correctional Warden, Jenny Hildebrand.

The puppies benefit from socialization experiences and love from their handlers, preparing them for their service roles. On weekends, puppies will spend time with volunteer Puppy Raisers, gaining exposure to new environments and working on their foundational training in public.

“Puppy Raisers are essential to our growth as an organization. We are excited to see the positive impact this program will have on the individuals and dogs involved, and on society as a whole,” said Bryan Williams, CEO at Dogs for Better Lives.

To learn more about the program or to volunteer as a weekend Puppy Raiser, visit dogsforbetterlives.org/prison-puppy-raising.



HHD Rumi and Sally

Sally of CA and her HHD Rumi recently completed a 5-year follow-up. Sally has undergone a significant improvement in her life after receiving a cochlear implant. Although the implant has made a dramatic difference, she still depends on Rumi during the evenings and nights when she takes it off. Rumi continues to be her loyal companion and enjoys playing ball. With his doggie door on the porch, overlooking Mt Shasta, he lives a wonderful life. He enthusiastically handles tasks like the smoke alarm, cell phone alarm, and oven timer.

HHD Slim and Jane

HHD Slim and Jane, of New York City recently had their 7-year follow-up. Their partnership has

flourished, and Slim, Jane's third hearing dog from DBL, continues to prove his unwavering loyalty. With a quick alert to every door knock, oven timer, and dryer beep, Slim ensures that Jane is always aware of her surroundings. Despite nearing the age of ten, Slim remains as energetic and vocal as ever, particularly when engaging in their favorite pastime of playing frisbee in the backyard. The companionship Slim provides is invaluable to Jane, who cherishes the knowledge that he will always keep her informed. Additionally, Jane finds joy in observing Slim's playful interactions with his feline friend, Jeremy, as they engage in spirited chases throughout the house. Without a doubt, Jane declares that she simply cannot fathom a life without Slim by her side.



CHD Marshall and Stacy

Congratulations to Marshall and Stacy on completing their one-year follow-up for CHD! Marshall has been doing a fantastic job with his assigned tasks, which include operating the driveway alarm, oven timer, home alarm, and the doorbell at work. His reliability and dedication have been remarkable. On the other hand, Stacy, who works as a Principal with young children, has admirably maintained Marshall's public access skills. Every day, she takes him to school where he accompanies her while she carries out her responsibilities. She describes him as a "good boy, easy to work with, and so sweet!" The bond between Marshall and Stacy is evident, and their teamwork has been exemplary throughout the year.

We recently completed a one-year follow-up visit with Allison and FD Ruth in Utah, and we must say, their collaboration has been truly remarkable. Allison is an invaluable member of a local K-6 school, and it's clear that Ruth, her trusted companion, has become an adored presence there. The students and staff eagerly line up to interact with Miss Ruth, who effortlessly engages with them through a variety of tasks such as touch, sitting on laps, gentle squishes, visits, and helping them settle. Their teamwork is exceptional, and during the visit, they performed fabulously, further solidifying their reputation as an outstanding duo.

FD Ruth and Allison





CHD Ganache and Lauren

Lauren and CHD Ganache, who currently reside in Oregon, had their one-year follow-up. Ganache alerts Lauren to various sounds like name call, alarm clocks, phone timers, tea kettles, and work phones. Having Ganache has boosted Lauren's confidence in living alone, and she no longer struggles with being consistently late to work or burning teapots. With Ganache by her side, Lauren feels more secure and can fully engage in her daily activities. Ganache accompanies her everywhere, including the grocery store, restaurants, malls, outings with friends, and even horse competitions. Watching Ganache in action was amazing, as her public access skills remained exceptional, and she quickly responded to the sounds demonstrated by Lauren. The team is incredibly happy, and Lauren wants to express gratitude to the DBL donors for enabling her to live a more independent life.

AAD Harley and Tama

AAD Harley and Tama recently had their 5-year follow-up in Oregon. They share a strong bond and love taking daily walks in the neighborhood or visiting the mall to look at toys. Harley continues to work at his designated place, gives kisses, and happily lets Tama use him as a pillow. During the visit, Kelli and Fuji, their parents, impressed everyone with their excellent public access test, highlighting their well-trained AAD.



CHD Thumper and Hannah

After a year of being together, Hannah and their loyal companion, Thumper, have formed an unbreakable bond. Whether they are working on the farm, enjoying a cup of coffee at their favorite local spot with friends, tackling grocery shopping, or embarking on hiking and camping adventures, Hannah and Thumper are inseparable. Thumper has proven to be a remarkable companion, always alerting Hannah to various sounds like door knocks, smoke alarms, name calls, oven timers, and even their alarm clock. With Thumper by their side, Hannah never misses their alarm, alleviating their stress about being late to work. Furthermore, Thumper's presence has boosted Hannah's confidence, encouraging them to take steps towards living independently in the coming months.



CHD - Certified Hearing Dog: Certified Hearing Dogs respond to sounds in the home and have public access with their person.

AAD - Autism Assistance Dog: Autism Assistance Dogs are specially trained to enhance the safety and well-being of children and families living with Autism by providing a minimum of three tasks to assist with keeping children grounded and focused while presenting a social bridge for relationships and friendships.

HHD - Home Hearing Dog: Home Hearing Dogs are trained to respond to sounds in the home but are not trained/certified to accompany their person in public.

FD - Facility Dog: Facility Dogs go to work with and assist professionals such as physicians, teachers, counselors, police officers, and child advocates.

FEATURED PLACEMENTS



CHD Barley and Liz

CHD Barley was recently placed with Liz from California. Liz's excitement was palpable as she eagerly anticipated reentering a vibrant social life that she had long secluded herself from due to her hearing loss. Barley, with his remarkable abilities, is set to be an invaluable companion on this new journey. Equipped with incredible skills, Barley assists Liz with tasks such as responding to cell phone notifications, alerting her to door knocks, setting timers on Alexa, and even detecting smoke alarms. With Barley by her side, Liz is ready to embrace the world with renewed confidence and independence.

CHD Albus and Candace

CHD Albus found his new home with Candace in Washington. Candace, a dedicated social intervention teacher at a local high school, ensured that plenty of training time was spent in her classroom. Albus will have an important role as he takes charge of the door knock duty, which often went unnoticed by Candace in the past. Additionally, he will assist with various tasks, including answering phone alarms, setting oven timers, responding to door knocks, ringing the doorbell, and even detecting smoke alarms on multiple floors within Candace's home. With Albus's well-rounded skills, he is set to become an invaluable asset in both the classroom and household.



FD Chandra (Kona) with Peggy and Alison

Facility Dog Chandra, now known as Kona, has found her new home with Peggy and secondary handler Alison in Idaho. Both Peggy and Alison are dedicated professionals working in a child advocacy center, and Kona will be an invaluable companion during forensic interviews and courthouse visits. Kona's constant calming presence will provide much-needed support throughout the entire judicial process. Peggy was particularly impressed by Kona's calm and adaptable personality, which is reminiscent of their soon-to-be retired facility dog, Ken. During interviews with the children, Kona will utilize commands such as lap, settle, and place, ensuring a comfortable environment. In the courtrooms, Kona will use the commands place and under, demonstrating her well-trained and reliable nature. Kona is set to make a significant impact in the lives of those she encounters, bringing comfort and reassurance when it is needed most.



Getting Involved: How Millennials and Gen Z are supporting Service Dogs

Dogs for Better Lives (DBL) has seen an uptick in support from Millennials and Gen Z in recent years. With their innate passion for social causes and their eagerness to make a difference, these young generations are also emerging as future leaders in the DBL Community. Below are just a few examples of young people supporting Service Dogs.

This Spring, Regional Advisory Board - Pacific Northwest (RAB-PNW) member Danielle Meadows, an ASL Teacher at Wenatchee High School, led an effort with her students to raise funds for Puppy Raiser kits. Over three days, these exceptional students sold root beer floats at lunch, showing their dedication to Service Dogs.

In April, RAB-PNW members participated in two events sponsored by the Bellevue Breakfast Rotary Club (BBRC) to spread awareness about DBL. Rita Brennan joined a breakfast meeting to share the story of one of our Autism Assistance Dogs. The next day, Elena Tello Portoles and Shannon Salverda represented DBL in the annual All In For Autism 10K & 5K Run/Walk along with DBL puppies in training Dipper and Petunia.

Puppy Raiser Claire just graduated from High School this year, but she's already helped raise two puppies on their way to becoming Assistance Dogs! Co-raising puppies with her mom, Megan, was a great experience. "I decided to become a DBL puppy raiser because I loved the idea of helping others and I could put my love of dogs into helping the community," said Claire. Thank you, Claire, for opening your heart – and home, to future Service Dogs!



Puppy Raiser Claire (right) with her mom Megan and Emerald at Emerald's graduation

Bone AppéTREAT Funds TWO Service Dogs



Our inaugural dog treat competition, Bone AppéTREAT, successfully raised more than \$115,000 on May 12, 2023 – enough to fully fund two Assistance Dogs. We look forward to bringing this fun event back in 2024!

Thank you to our contestants, Michele Roeder-Latimer (CA), Lois Malone (OR), Amir Romero-Harvey & Summer Daidon (NJ), CarrieJo Hoelzel (WA), and Dr. Danielle Rose & Alicia Shue (NC); to our impressive judges, Cynthia Murray of 4Legz Dog Treats, Michael Goh of Mud Bay, and Luke Stark, Chad Stark & Autism Assistance Dog Serenity; and our fabulous host, Amy McWhirter.

Led by our presenting sponsor, DCH Brunswick Toyota, Bone AppéTREAT's amazing sponsors included Harry & David, Master Stitch, KOGAP, Peg Beuhler, Ecluse Wines, Dixie Real Estate, Pallet Wine Company and more.

Watch the replay of the program at: dogsforbetterlives.org/boneappetreat



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