

CANINE LISTENER

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MAKING INDEPENDENCE POSSIBLE



Facility Dog Melvin on Graduation Day

Facility Dog Melvin Brings Joy, Comfort, and Connection to the Classroom

When Facility Dog Melvin walks into Andrea's classroom each morning, the atmosphere instantly shifts. Students and staff alike light up at the sight of him, eager for their daily dose of "Melvin time."

“Melvin brings a sense of joy to the classroom; he lightens the mood,” said Andrea, a special education teacher and Melvin’s handler. “The kids are happy to see him which makes them more comfortable, and that helps them access their learning.”

From middle schoolers to high school students, Melvin has a unique ability to put young people at ease. Andrea has noticed that even students who are normally guarded let down their walls around him. “They speak in cute voices to him, and they don’t seem to be concerned how they are viewed by their peers,” she explained. The staff feels the same way. “Several staff members are so happy to see him walk in the door every morning before students arrive. They get their ‘Melvin time’ before the bell rings or on passing periods or at lunch time.”

For Andrea, Melvin is not just a calming presence but also a motivator and a bridge to learning. “Melvin helps motivate by calming students down and creating a comfortable space,” she said. “When they are calm and comfortable, they can access their learning.”

That impact is perhaps most powerful during moments of stress. Andrea recalled a recent example:

“Melvin worked with a student last week who was having a hard time with anxiety. She was struggling to be in class during a science lab. She came to my classroom and got some Melvin time to calm down and then return to class.”

Melvin also helps engage students who may otherwise be reluctant to participate. His joy and unconditional welcome open doors where traditional methods sometimes fall short. “The kids love him, and they are more willing to engage with him sometimes than adults or their peers,” Andrea said. “So, he is able to connect with students more easily than adults at times.”

The ripple effect of Melvin's presence goes beyond individual students. “Something I noticed when Melvin came to my classroom last year was that the kids were nicer to each other after he arrived,” Andrea shared. Students bond over their shared affection for him, often discovering new common ground with classmates they may not have connected with before.

Staff members have also experienced the benefits. “I am surprised at how much the adults have taken to Melvin,” Andrea admitted. “I have had teachers come in at lunch for time with Melvin, either to say hello or get some love if they are having a bad day.”

Even small, everyday moments with Melvin have an outsized impact. “Melvin gets super excited to see people at the beginning of the day and he looks like he is dancing when he greets people,” Andrea said. “The students and the teachers get really excited that he is so excited and happy to see them.”

Looking ahead, Andrea hopes Melvin's role will only continue to grow.

“My hope is that Melvin will continue to support students and that students will get more comfortable with him and rely on him even more as a trusted and reliable member of our school community.”

In just a short time, Melvin has become a significant source of comfort, connection, and joy for everyone around him. As Andrea put it, “He has completely changed our school atmosphere for the better.”



Facility Dog Melvin giving comfort to a student

New Partnership Launches Puppy Raising Program at Washington Corrections Center for Women

Dogs for Better Lives and Prison Pet Partnership (PPP) have joined forces to launch a new Service Dog Puppy Raising program at the Washington Corrections Center for Women. The initiative, which began in late July 2025, places future Assistance Dogs with incarcerated women who will help raise and train them during their earliest months.

The program kicked off with three puppies, including Julia, the first pup placed in PPP's care. Two of the dogs will later return to DBL's Oregon campus for advanced training as Hearing Assistance, Autism Assistance, or Facility Dogs. The third will remain in PPP's established training track as a Service or Therapy Dog.

Both organizations emphasize that the program strengthens communities in multiple ways.

“This program is a beautiful example of what happens when two missions intersect with purpose,” said Gwen Dudek, DBL's Vice President of Program. Sam Zuanich, PPP's Training Director, added, “Working with DBL allows us to prepare more dogs for lives of service while empowering women with purpose and hope.”



Prison Pet Partnership Staff Member, Sam with the first puppy in the program, DBL puppy Julia

Recap: National Service Dog Month 2025

This September, we proudly celebrated National Service Dog Month with our community across the country. The month was filled with opportunities to honor the life-changing partnerships between Service Dogs and the individuals they serve, as well as the volunteers, trainers, and supporters who make this work possible.



Volunteers and clients gathered in Portland for Barks and Brews with Autism Assistance Dog Serenity and Facility Dog Ruby.

Community members had the opportunity to meet Service Dogs in training, connect with our staff and volunteers, and learn more about the impact of our mission. These gatherings showcased not only the incredible skills of our dogs but also the dedication and compassion of everyone involved in their journey.

This year also marked the launch of our first-ever Calendar Photo Contest. DBL dogs had the chance to enter for a feature spot, while all dogs could be included in our community calendar pages. Supporters joined in by submitting photos and casting votes, helping us create a one-of-a-kind 2026 calendar that highlights the dogs who inspire us every day.

A heartfelt thank-you goes to our Regional Advisory Board members and the many volunteers whose time, energy, and leadership made these events possible. Together, we made National Service Dog Month a time of awareness, celebration, and community spirit.





CHD Orion and Lisa

A year into their partnership, Certified Hearing Dog Orion and Lisa are thriving as a remarkable team. Their bond is both professional and deeply personal, shining through in Orion's precise obedience and reliable taskwork. Lisa's joy is evident with every task Orion completes—whether alerting to the smoke alarm, oven or microwave timers, or her phone alarm. Out in public, Orion remains calm and focused, always attentive to Lisa's needs. Together, they showcase the powerful connection and life-changing impact of a well-matched Assistance Dog team.

FD Deacon and Rosie

Three years in, Facility Dog Deacon and Rosie continue to be an incredible team. Working in a classroom setting, their connection is seamless—Deacon has an instinct for choosing students who need a little extra comfort, often offering his head for a reassuring pet. His calm and steady presence has made a lasting impact, creating a supportive environment that benefits both students and staff. Deacon has continued to excel in his trained tasks, including lap, visit, touch, settle, and high-5, making him a beloved and trusted part of the school community.



HHD Issy and Elizabeth Anne

For seven wonderful years, Home Hearing Dog Issy has been by Elizabeth Anne's side in California, bringing both comfort and security. After the passing of Elizabeth's husband, Issy became an instrumental source of companionship, enriching life for this 92-years-young woman. Still eager in her work, Issy reliably alerts to the oven timer, cell phone, home phone, doorbell, home security alarm, and smoke alarm. Their partnership is a beautiful example of the lasting bond and independence a Hearing Dog can provide.

HHD Nikki and Brenda

In Washington State, Home Hearing Dog Nikki and Brenda have built a strong and life-changing bond over the past three years. After losing her husband of 36 years, Brenda shared that it was the first time she ever felt afraid in her own home—unable to always identify the sounds she heard. Nikki changed that, providing reliable alerts to the doorbell, kitchen timer, smoke alarm, and phone, while also giving Brenda joy, purpose, and companionship. Together, they've created a daily routine that keeps Brenda grounded and connected to her community. Nikki's devotion shone even brighter when Brenda experienced heart troubles; she never left her side and remained calm and focused throughout her recovery. Today, Brenda is healthy and grateful, knowing Nikki has kept her safe in more ways than one.



FEATURED FOLLOW-UPS



CHD Fern and Lauren

After a little more than two years together, Certified Hearing Dog Fern and Lauren make a wonderful team. Fern enthusiastically alerts to the kitchen timer and door knock, and is currently working on relearning the alarm clock to support Lauren's new, earlier work schedule—a task Lauren knows she can count on her for. It's clear Fern takes pride in her job, showing focus and eagerness in her work. Out in public, Fern shines as well, remaining attentive to Lauren while greeting the world with smiles and tail wags. Their partnership is a beautiful example of trust, joy, and teamwork in action.

CHD Trooper and Henry

Nearly a decade into their partnership, Henry and Certified Hearing Dog Trooper continue to shine as a remarkable team. Trooper still alerts with enthusiasm—and a touch of sass—to the name call, doorbell, and oven timer. Out in public, Henry and Trooper move together like a well-oiled machine, showcasing years of trust and teamwork. It's clear how much Trooper means not only to Henry but also to his wife, Debbie.



FD Quest and Kimberly

At their one-year mark, Facility Dog Quest has become an invaluable partner to Kimberly, the Social Emotional Behavioral Health Lead at a K–6 school. Quest's skills—lap, visit, squish, and settle—shine as he greets students getting on and off buses, visits classrooms, or supports students one-on-one in Kimberly's office. From behind the baby gate, he happily accepts pats from any child passing by, spreading warmth throughout the school. Kimberly shared how perfect Quest has been for her students, praising his calm demeanor and the sense of peace he brings to an otherwise busy elementary environment. Quest's presence has clearly made a lasting impact on the entire school community.

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 Hazel and Tracee

In Arizona, Shelter-to-Service graduate Hazel has found her forever match with successor client Tracee—and their placement could not have gone more smoothly. Hazel, a sweet, motivated, and confident dog, excelled in every area of placement, showing her readiness for the important work ahead. Tracee, who has partnered with two previous DBL Hearing Dogs, was especially impressed with the updated placement procedures and deeply grateful for Hazel's partnership. The two have quickly built a bond of mutual adoration. Hazel is already reliably alerting Tracee to the oven timer, phone, name call, alarm clock, doorbell, smoke alarm, and even key drop, giving Tracee increased security and peace of mind. Together, they are starting a new chapter filled with trust, safety, and companionship.

FD Williams and Carrie

Facility Dog Williams has been placed with Carrie, Dispatch Manager at the Northern Utah Interagency Fire Center. With wildland firefighters and dispatchers at high risk for mental health challenges, Williams will play a vital role in bringing comfort and stress relief. Trained in touch, visit, lap, squish, settle, fetch, and spin, he'll support staff during daily check-ins, offer deep pressure therapy, and even join Carrie's peer support team for critical incident stress management. Williams will also visit fire camps during fire season, providing companionship to crews away from home. With his playful spirit, love of fetch, and steady obedience, Williams is perfectly matched for this important role.



CHD Magna and Kathleen

Certified Hearing Dog Magna has been placed with successor client Kathleen, whose previous partner, CHD Harper, sadly passed in March 2024. Missing the security and confidence a Hearing Dog provides, Kathleen quickly found comfort in Magna—who settled in as if she'd always belonged. The two bonded almost immediately, with Magna excelling in both public spaces and her sound work. She now alerts to the smoke alarm, doorbell and knock, timer, work phone, and even "excuse me" in public. Together, Kathleen and Magna make a perfect team, beginning a new chapter of safety, trust, and companionship.

Rocky's Journey: From Puppyhood to Life-Changing Partner



Every Certified Hearing Dog has a story, and Rocky's is one of teamwork, dedication, and heart. His journey has touched many lives along the way—and now, he's ready to change the life of one very special DBL client.

Rocky's story begins with our monthly donors – our **Pack Members**, whose generous sponsorship made everything possible. Because of their support, Rocky had the food, veterinary care, and training tools he needed to start his journey on the right paw. Our Pack Members' collective impact is woven into every success story like Rocky's.

Next came **Jenna and her family**, who opened their home and hearts to become Rocky's Puppy Raisers. When Rocky came into their care, they gave him not just love, but the kind of real-world experiences that would one day help him thrive as a Service Dog. Thanks to Jenna's patient guidance, Rocky grew up with a strong foundation of confidence and curiosity.

When Rocky was 14 months old, it was time for his next chapter. That's when **Eli, his trainer**, stepped in to shape his playful energy into reliable, focused skills. Together, they fine-tuned Rocky's ability to alert to important sounds—a door knock, smoke alarm, key drop, oven timer, phone ring, and even someone calling his partner's name. Eli helped transform a quirky young dog into a steady, dependable working partner.

And now, Rocky has found his person: **Jozlyn**. From the very first day of placement, Rocky and Jozlyn were in sync. Before training was even finished, Rocky was confidently leading Jozlyn to her phone alarm and oven timer, as if he had always been by her side.

This fall, Rocky will travel with Jozlyn to New Zealand, where she'll serve as a ranger on a nature reserve. After their internship, they'll head back to Oregon for college life together. With Rocky at her side, Jozlyn has the confidence to take on the world—knowing she'll never miss an important sound.



How You Can Help

Rocky's story shows what's possible when a community comes together. You can be part of the journey too:

Join the Pack

Provide vital support for dogs like Rocky from puppyhood to placement.

Dogsforbetterlives.org/the-pack

Volunteer as a Puppy Raiser

Help lay the foundation that will change someone's life.

Dogsforbetterlives.org/puppy-raising



10175 Wheeler Rd., Central Point, OR 97502



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Friday, May 15, 2026