

CANINE LISTENER

DOGS FOR BETTER LIVES • SUMMER 2026 • NO.152

MAKING INDEPENDENCE POSSIBLE



Certified Hearing Dog Maverick and David

Maverick: A Loyal Partner in Every Moment

When David welcomed Certified Hearing Dog Maverick into his home, he gained far more than a Service Dog — he gained confidence, companionship, and peace of mind.

David has been part of the Dogs for Better Lives community for decades. He first received a Hearing Dog from the organization — then known as Dogs for the Deaf — back in 1992.

Today, after receiving cochlear implants, he still faces complete silence when his processors come off at night. For both David and his wife, MaryJo, that reality brought understandable concern, especially when MaryJo traveled and David was home alone. The couple decided it was a good time to apply for another Hearing Dog from DBL.

“If an alarm sounds, I would not know it was going off. But now, with Maverick, I’m confident that he would let me know. I feel much safer,” David explains.

That sense of security is life changing. Maverick alerts David to critical sounds like smoke alarms, home security alarms, the doorbell, and even keys dropped in public. But it’s often the everyday moments that mean the most.

“I would say that the name-call alert is the biggest day-to-day change in my life,” David says. “When I’m in a different room or floor and MaryJo calls me, Maverick can be so enthusiastic in his response by alerting me taking me to her.” Beyond his skilled alerts, Maverick’s calm presence continues to amaze David and MaryJo. Whether quietly resting under a

restaurant table or lying patiently at David’s feet during church, Maverick demonstrates the dedication and training that make Dogs for Better Lives dogs so extraordinary.

DBL’s Vice President of Program, Gwen, raised Maverick. She says watching the partnership between David and Maverick grow has been especially meaningful. “Maverick came into my life as an eight-week-old puppy full of energy, curiosity, and heart,” Gwen says.

“I watched Maverick grow, learn, and discover the world, so seeing him now with David is incredibly emotional and rewarding for me. Watching a dog you helped raise go on to change someone’s life in such a meaningful way is one of the greatest gifts imaginable,” says Gwen.

Maverick has also woven himself seamlessly into David and MaryJo’s family life. Together, the trio enjoys road trips, games of fetch and frisbee, and looking forward to warmer days when Maverick can splash and play in the Puget Sound. Through it all, Maverick continues opening unexpected doors for connection.

“Having Maverick has opened the door to many conversations,” David says. As an introvert, David admits those interactions can sometimes feel challenging. But he also recognizes the opportunity to educate others about Service Dogs and the independence they provide.



Because of DBL, and the dedicated donors and volunteers who make its work possible, David faces each day with greater confidence, connection, and safety, knowing Maverick is always by his side.

How a Passion for Service Inspires Volunteer Puppy Raiser Karla

For volunteer Puppy Raiser Karla, raising a future Service Dog is about more than teaching commands—it's about helping transform lives.

Before becoming a Puppy Raiser, Karla worked as a client liaison for a Service Dog organization, guiding clients through the process of receiving a Service Dog. The experience left a lasting impression. **"I was able to see, up front and personal, the difference a dog can make in a person's life," she says. "I saw how a dog can literally be life changing for someone. That was and is my motivation for raising."**

It was natural for Karla to say 'yes' to raising Peak. Karla helped care for his litter from the time the puppies were just days old and quickly formed a special connection. **"Peak 'spoke' to me from day one," she says. "I like to say he chose me!"**

Today, Peak's days are filled with training, socialization, grooming, and plenty of puppy naps. What has surprised Karla most is how eager these puppies are to learn. "They learn so quickly—they want to learn. I think DBL has done a great job with their breeding program," she says.

For Karla, the greatest rewards come through watching Peak grow and succeed. "When he masters a task or a behavior, I am always so proud of him!" she says. Along the way, she has learned that every puppy is different. Adapting training to each dog's individual personality and learning style has become one of the most valuable lessons of the journey.

As for Peak's future? **"My hope for Peak is that he finds HIS path—whatever that is and whatever will make him the happiest."**

For those considering becoming a Puppy Raiser, her advice is simple: do your research, connect with current raisers, and ask questions. **"I form a very strong bond with my puppies. Yes, it is very hard to turn them in, but the rewards one receives in return are boundless!"**



WILL YOU RAISE ME?

**Puppy Raisers are urgently needed!
Help raise a future Service Dog
and change a life.**



Learn more about this rewarding volunteer opportunity at:

www.dogsforbetterlives.org/puppy-raiser/





CHD Wyclef and Laurel

Six years after being matched, Laurel and Hearing Dog Wyclef continue to share an incredible partnership built on trust, teamwork, and unwavering support. Wyclef accompanies Laurel each day to her job at a VA hospital, where he reliably alerts her to door knocks, phone calls, and smoke alarms. His devotion was on full display last winter when Laurel fell on an icy sidewalk while heading into work. Wyclef stayed by her side and successfully drew the attention of a passerby, ensuring help arrived when it was needed most. Whether at work or at home, where he alerts to her alarm clock, phone, and smoke alarm, Wyclef's life-changing assistance helps Laurel live with greater confidence, safety, and independence every day.

AAD Addie and Noah

One year after placement, Autism Assistance Dog Addie continues to make a remarkable impact on Noah and his family. Noah absolutely adores Addie and loves having her by his side, whether they are spending time together at home, visiting stores, playing ball in the backyard, or snuggling on the couch at the end of the day. Their bond has grown tremendously over the past year, creating a source of comfort, companionship, and joy. Addie supports Noah, his mother, and his grandmother through tasks including lap, touch, shake, and settle, providing meaningful assistance while helping the entire family feel more connected and supported each day.



AAD Percy and Yelani

Since being matched last summer, Autism Assistance Dog Percy has helped open up a world of new experiences for Yelani and his family. With Percy by his side, Yelani has been able to confidently participate in more public outings and family activities that once felt overwhelming. Percy provides comfort, stability, and reassurance during moments of dysregulation, helping Yelani navigate new environments with greater ease. One particularly meaningful milestone came during Yelani's school field day, where he eagerly chose to participate because Percy could join him. Moments like these highlight the powerful bond they share and the life-changing impact Percy continues to have on Yelani's confidence and independence.

FD Ruth and Allison

Since being placed in December 2021, Facility Dog Ruth has become an invaluable partner in Allison's classroom, bringing comfort, connection, and support to countless students. As a grade school teacher, Allison incorporates Ruth into her daily work, where her calm presence and natural love for children make a meaningful difference. Ruth performs tasks including touch, shake, lap, visit, settle, and squish, helping students feel supported during both everyday activities and challenging moments. Whether offering a reassuring nudge or a comforting cuddle, Ruth has a special way of connecting with children and creating a positive learning environment, making her the perfect partner for this important role.



FEATURED FOLLOW-UPS



FD Scully and Jen

One year into their partnership, Facility Dog Scully continues to make an extraordinary impact alongside Jen in her work supporting crime victims. As a victim advocate, Jen relies on Scully to provide comfort and stability to individuals facing some of the most difficult moments of their lives, whether preparing to testify in court or processing traumatic experiences. Through tasks such as visit, lap, settle, and his popular shake and wave, Scully helps create a sense of safety and connection for both children and adults. One client who was considering withdrawing from a court case found the courage to appear after spending time with Scully before the hearing. Stories like these demonstrate the profound difference Scully makes every day, helping victims find strength, healing, and support when they need it most.

FD Williams (AKA Willie) and Carrie

Over the past year, Facility Dog Willie has become a beloved and impactful presence alongside Carrie in her work supporting Utah fire dispatch centers. Carrie works closely with firefighters and dispatchers, and Willie has quickly earned the admiration of everyone he meets. In addition to performing tasks such as touch, settle, squish, visit, and lap, Willie has accompanied Carrie to multiple areas of need throughout the department, providing comfort and support during challenging situations. Demonstrating his intelligence and versatility, Willie has also learned to alert Carrie to her phone. Whether offering reassurance to first responders or supporting Carrie throughout her day, Willie continues to make a meaningful difference wherever he goes.



FD Melvin and Andrea

Facility Dog Melvin continues to be a source of comfort, connection, and support for students and staff at the high school where he works alongside Andrea. Together, they serve students who need additional encouragement as they navigate academic, social, and emotional challenges. This year, Melvin's impact became especially meaningful following the tragic loss of two students in a car accident. During a time of grief and healing, Melvin provided a calming presence for students and staff alike, offering comfort when words alone were not enough. Through tasks such as squish, settle, go visit, touch, and lap, Melvin helps create a more supportive school environment every day. His gentle nature, friendly spirit, and willingness to connect with anyone who needs him have made him a beloved member of the 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

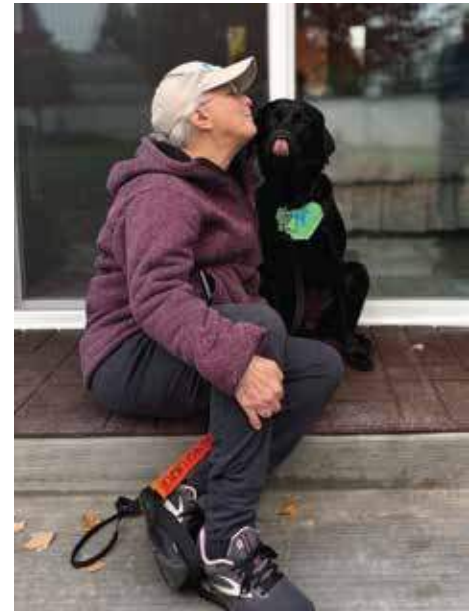


AAD Clark and Matthew

Recently placed with Matthew and his family, Autism Assistance Dog Clark has already become a cherished companion and source of support. From the moment they met, Clark matched Matthew's energy and enthusiasm, and the two formed a strong bond throughout placement week. Whether attending horse therapy, piano lessons, or spending time together at home, Matthew was excited to have Clark by his side. While Matthew is naturally energetic, Clark's calm presence has already made a positive impact, with Matthew often choosing to relax alongside him during afternoon naps. Together, Matthew and his family will continue reinforcing Clark's tasks of settle, lap, visit, spin, shake, touch, and squish as they begin this exciting new chapter together.

CHD Minnow and Bonnie

Beginning a new chapter together, Hearing Dog Minnow and longtime client Bonnie are already forming an exceptional partnership. As Bonnie's third Hearing Dog from Dogs for Better Lives, Minnow follows in the pawprints of beloved partners Bogart and Nanuq while bringing her own unique strengths to the team. Throughout placement, Bonnie shared her appreciation for the high standards, exceptional training, and supportive community that have remained a constant throughout her journey with DBL. She was especially impressed by Minnow's focus, responsiveness, and eagerness to work. Minnow now alerts Bonnie to door knocks, oven timers, cell phone and landline rings, and name calls both at home and in public, helping Bonnie continue to live with confidence, independence, and connection.



CHD Pablo and Paul

Certified Hearing Dog Pablo and Paul formed an instant connection, making placement week a smooth and exciting beginning to their new partnership. Pablo quickly learned the sounds that support Paul in daily life, demonstrating the confidence, focus, and eagerness to work that made training progress seamless. He also proved to be an excellent companion during social outings, confidently accompanying Paul and Marie as they practiced working together in public settings. Pablo's success is an especially meaningful milestone, as he was raised through Dogs for Better Lives' Prison Puppy Program at the Ross Correctional Institution, where dedicated inmate puppy raisers helped build the strong foundation that prepared him for this moment. With his steady temperament and outstanding work ethic, Pablo is ready to make a life-changing difference for Paul for years to come.

Bringing People Together: Bone AppeTREAT 2026



A huge thank you to everyone who joined us at our 4th annual Bone AppeTREAT event on May 15th! The energy at our watch parties was electric, and we hope at-home viewers had a great time watching our contestants compete for Top Dog. Big thank you to our Presenting Sponsor, Boehringer Ingelheim and National Watch Party Sponsor Harry & David, along with our other amazing sponsors who supported the event. We couldn't have done it without you!

The winning line-up for 2026:

The Most Chomp-Worthy Treat:
Norm Johnson (Washington)

The Re-Bark-Ably Beautiful Treat:
Jarius Wynn (Georgia)

The Most Paw-Some Video:
Dont'a Hightower (Massachusetts)

The Ulti-Mutt Chef:
Chad Cota & David Cuttrell (Oregon)

2026 Top Dog Winner:
Jeff Severson (California)



Download this year's treat recipes at:
dogsforbetterlives.org/bone-appetreat



Watch the replay of our Puppy Matriculation Events!



In early June we hosted Puppy Matriculation events for dogs returning to our Northeast and West training campuses. The celebrations marked an exciting milestone as our newest class of future Assistance Dogs began their professional training journey.

While we were celebrating the dogs, the events were about so much more. Attendees heard heartwarming stories from clients whose lives have been changed by a Dogs for Better Lives Service Dog. Dedicated Puppy Raisers who have spent months nurturing and preparing these dogs for their future careers also shared their stories.

The events also included a special thank you to our incredible volunteer Breeder Caretakers, whose commitment and care help give every puppy the best possible start. Their contributions, along with those of our Puppy Raisers and other volunteers, are essential to everything we do.

From the moment a puppy is born to the day they are matched with a client, volunteers play a vital role in helping create life-changing partnerships. Whether you're a longtime supporter or new to DBL, we invite you to watch the replay of one or both of our events to celebrate these amazing dogs, and see firsthand how volunteers, donors, staff, and supporters come together to change lives—one puppy at a time.



Watch the replay: dogsforbetterlives.org/june2026-puppies



10175 Wheeler Rd., Central Point, OR 97502



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SCAN ME!

