

DOGS FOR DIGNITY

Stories of the Journey to Independence

Fall 2020



THE
SKY
IS THE
LIMIT

PAWS Dogs find
alternative travel to
their forever homes





Meet two of PAWS's newest standard poodles. These eight-week old puppies are starting their foster puppy journeys as future Assistance Dogs.

A LETTER FROM THE CEO

I hope that this letter finds you all safe and healthy. Like yours, our days at PAWS look different from the way they did before the pandemic began. Now masks, extra cleanings, and social distancing weave into daily lives in unique and sometimes unexpected ways. Throughout these many months of change, the PAWS team has been blessed and touched by your words of encouragement, support, and friendship. Thank you!

For my part, I have been reminded about how important a PAWS Dog is for individuals and communities, maybe now more than ever. I know that you join me in our belief that people deserve the opportunity to live with dignity, companionship, and confidence. A PAWS Dog is the bridge between dependence and autonomy, isolation and connection, doubt and self-assurance. And so, even during a pandemic, our work continues.

This newsletter features a timeline which illustrates how PAWS has responded to COVID-19. For example, in March, classes with foster puppies turned virtual, which featured fun training videos teaching basic obedience skills. In July, those classes evolved into a hybrid model alternating between small, in-person classes and virtual online training. We are grateful that our puppies are thriving thanks to our amazing volunteers who give their hearts to PAWS puppies every day.

In addition, PAWS trainers continued to work with the dogs in final stages of training. At the end of May, we resumed placing dogs with

waiting clients. A beautiful golden retriever named PAX was the first dog to be placed after a sixty-day hiatus due to shelter-in-place orders. PAX loves to snuggle and simply wants to be a partner and friend to his own special human. Now he gets to do just that as a Service Dog for a Child with Autism. And PAX was just the first!

Over the next two months PAWS changed the lives of 25 additional clients who had been eagerly waiting for their new best friends.

While we are joyfully forging ahead, other challenges remain. Fundraisers, community events, and supply drives that provide needed resources for the care and training of our PAWS dogs have been indefinitely postponed or canceled. We continue to evaluate ways to reduce expenses and remain good stewards of the gifts that you have entrusted to us, while maintaining the highest levels of care and excellence in our work. If you are able, I hope that you will continue to support our life-changing mission.

Thank you again for your encouragement, support, and friendship. We are stronger together. I wish you and everyone in your family continued good health and happiness.

With deep gratitude,


Michele Suchovsky, CEO

PAWS Means Lifetime Support. No Matter What.

When someone becomes a PAWS Client, they become a member of the PAWS Family. As family, we walk alongside our Client/Dog Teams... in good times and in bad. During the first days of the pandemic, the PAWS Client Services team called each of our over 430 clients. We ensured that everyone was safe and talked through support plans if they were to fall ill. We also updated our records to be a resource if contacted by emergency personnel.



Training Continued in New and Innovative Ways

PAWS Trainers created a plan to make sure training continued uninterrupted. From creating new schedules to allow for social distancing on campus to taking dogs home for real-world experiences, PAWS Trainers remain committed to helping our future Assistance Dogs learn and thrive.



This year has been challenging, but three things remain true:

1. The importance of PAWS Dogs in the lives of our Clients
2. The commitment of our staff and volunteers to PAWS, our dogs, and the people we serve every day
3. Our belief that people deserve to live with dignity, companionship, and confidence



PAWS Dog Volunteers Are Unstoppable!

PAWS Dog Volunteers provide loving homes for puppies and their parents and are the glue that holds PAWS together. Between March and May, PAWS welcomed 29 future working dogs into foster puppy homes. Implementing new safety and social distancing protocols, we revised our procedures for dropping off and picking up puppies. This provided our PAWS Dog Volunteers an opportunity to show off their best protective gear.

Focused on the Future

PAWS was one of the first organizations in our area to apply for and receive a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) Loan under the CARES Act. Our goal? To continue to be good stewards of your investment in us and to remain stable, sustainable, and focused on the future. With careful management, this loan is on track to become a grant.



Paycheck Protection Program

“With school closed and our normal routines upended, our PAWS Dog has been a lifeline in calming my son.”

– Mother of a Client with a PAWS Service Dog for children with Autism

Safety and Smiles

PAWS Research & Development has always been on the forefront of innovation and is dedicated to creating flexible solutions to meet the unique needs of each of our Client/Dog Teams. Many of our clients who are deaf or hard of hearing rely on reading lips, making traditional masks a communications barrier. Our R&D department responded quickly by fabricating special masks with clear, plastic cutouts over the mouth. This innovation allows people to read the lips of the speaker.



Puppy Care Anywhere

Our veterinary staff is using technology to maintain the health of our dogs. Medical questions are being fielded through a veterinary telemedicine experience, with staff ready to answer questions and troubleshoot minor problems. When puppies need to be seen, we practice social distancing and even hold appointments outside.



Making New Friends

In the final stages of their training, PAWS Dogs practice their skills in real world locations like restaurants, malls, and doctor's offices. When many of our favorite training spots closed, PAWS reached out to our friends and fostered new "public access" partnerships, including the YWCA of West Central Michigan and the nonprofit Community Food Club! These new partnerships provide our dogs with plenty of space to learn to navigate elevators, ramps, dropped food, and different sight and sound distractions. Thanks to these partners our Assistance Dogs in training stayed on track and we were able to place 25 dogs with their clients between May 25 and September 30.



Puppy Turn-In

Foster Puppy turn-ins at PAWS have shifted from a large group event to smaller solo dog affairs. While this milestone looks different this year, it is a meaningful time when PAWS Dog Volunteers say goodbye to their foster puppy. Thank you to all of our PAWS Dog Volunteers who have worked so hard to give PAWS Dogs loving homes and the best start in life!

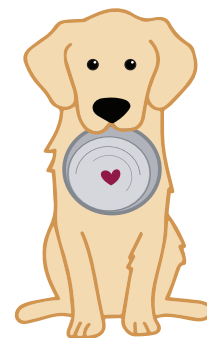


PAWS Dogs on the Move

With PAWS Dogs being placed in 33 states one of our challenges was finding safe transportation during the pandemic. Fortunately, a corporate partner donated their private jet several times to fly dogs across the country. PAWS volunteer, Sara, who accompanied our dogs in flight, summed it up perfectly: "We all felt the same today: [PAWS Dog] WIDGET had fun, and we had fun. It was a beautiful day to change a life!"

Best Friends

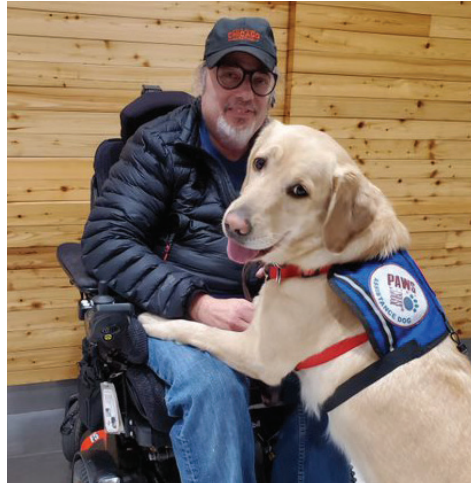
Our Best Friends monthly recurring donor program has been a lifeline during COVID-19. Thank you to every donor who continued or increased their gift during this difficult time, and a warm welcome to all donors who have recently joined the program!



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Thanks to your support, PAWS has continued to place and certify dogs throughout 2020. Each PAWS Dog gives the gift of comfort, joy, and security. And each PAWS Client has a story to tell about how their PAWS Dog has changed their life.

Andrew & YANKEE



Annette & KIRBY



Kathleen & TJ



In addition to all the custom-trained tasks KIRBY performs for Annette, he makes her laugh. "I never knew a dog could have a sense of humor. And he is funny! KIRBY likes wearing his cape; and when he wears his cape, he struts. He loves it, and it makes him feel important. 'I am a man with a uniform,' says KIRBY, 'I am a man with a job.' And if you ask him to come help, he loves to do it!"
– Annette & KIRBY

Michael & GILLY



Sharon & ELF



Jerry & PINTO



"GILLY has comforted all of us during COVID. Whenever GILLY sees that we are upset, he comes up and makes us feel better. He will hug you and then say 'Let's play!' and grab one of his toys. Michael has not had a meltdown since we got GILLY. Before GILLY, Michael broke three doors, his window, and several toys. But since GILLY has been here, we have not had any issues."
– Holly, on her son Michael and their dog GILLY

You can
help send
me home!



WHAT COMES NEXT: PAWS TO BE THANKFUL!

We have walked you through the PAWS 2020 timeline and now you might be asking "What comes next?"

PAWS To Be Thankful, our annual online fundraiser, starts **November 17** and runs through #GivingTuesday on December 1.

This year our theme "**Help Send a PAWS Dog Home!**" is centered around the logistics needed for a dog to be delivered to their forever human. PAWS Dogs are placed with clients in 33 states, many of which are not a drivable distance from our headquarters. Flying a PAWS Dog to their destination is often the best way to **send them home**.

Additionally, the moment a client receives their PAWS Dog, a Field Representative is there to help them through every step of their journey. In the beginning the Field Rep meets with the Client/Dog Team daily until they are working smoothly together. The Field Rep maintains a relationship with the client to provide support and ensure the match is successful for years to come. The only way PAWS can provide this unique model of support is through your generosity.

Join us again this year by creating a PAWS To Be Thankful page and raise funds to "Help Send a PAWS Dog Home!" <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/thankful>



Paws With A Cause®

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Open to see **WIDGET** get her wings!

HALLOWEEN SAFETY TIPS

for dogs



— **Costume safety first!**

We all love to dress up our pets, but remember that it is more important that they are comfortable and safe in what they are wearing. Be sure that there are no small pieces that could be bitten off and choked on.

— **Have your pet identified!**

Pets can sometimes run away due to stress. Make sure they are wearing a tag and/or are microchipped.

— **Keep your pets away from jack-o-lanterns!**

Lit pumpkins are no different than any other open flame. Keep pets away from this fire hazard.

— **Candy isn't always a treat!**

Candy is a sweet treat for us, it can be very harmful to our pets. Be sure to keep any candy out of your pet's reach.