

PURPOSE IN EVERY PAWPRINT

SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2025



INDEPENDENCE UNLEASHED



We first shared Anna's story in our 2021 Annual Impact Report, but their story had already begun. This summer, we are sharing a glimpse into the early chapters that led to their life-changing bond we first introduced you to four years ago.

When Anna first heard about Paws With A Cause®, she wasn't sure she would qualify. "Some people think they're not eligible, which is kind of what I thought," she recalls. "I wasn't born with my disability, so I figured service dogs were for people with more visible or extreme conditions." But thanks to a caring physical therapist who happened to be a puppy raiser for PAWS, Anna learned she could apply, and this marked the start of her new beginning.

Since being matched in 2020 with her yellow Labrador Retriever, GILMORE, Anna's life has transformed in both expected and surprising ways. Trained as a mobility assistance dog, GILMORE helps Anna with tasks that once required waiting for her husband or struggling through on her own, like carrying laundry, bringing in groceries, and even helping her up if she falls. "He can open doors, bring me gardening tools, even help me take off my socks," Anna shared about GILMORE. "It's amazing what he's trained to do."

But it's not just the physical support that's made a difference—it's the emotional and mental boost as well. "I was just thinking the other day how far I've come," Anna reflects. "A few years ago, I wasn't in a great place. Now, I'm more confident, more active, and so much happier."

Anna, who uses a wheelchair, shares that GILMORE inspired her to start taking regular walks around her neighborhood, something she hadn't done before. "I wanted to make sure he had a good quality of life too, so I started pushing myself more. I even got a wheelchair that lets me take him out for short walks myself. That wasn't part of the plan, but it's been a really positive change." That connection has only deepened over time. "My relationship with GILMORE is a collaborative effort," she says. "We thrive off each other's happiness—it's a give and take."

One of the things Anna praises most about PAWS is the thoughtful matching process. "They didn't just pair me with a dog who could meet my physical needs; they found one whose temperament and lifestyle matched mine, too. GILMORE is a mellow guy, and our household is pretty quiet. It's like they gave us a young old man. He's just so perfect."

To those considering fostering a future assistance dog but worried about saying goodbye, Anna offers a heartfelt perspective: "Yes, it would be tough. But that dog is going to completely change someone's life, and they'll be so happy doing it. That purpose and that joy? That makes it a little easier."

Anna is living proof of what's possible with the right partner by your side. "GILMORE empowers me. He gives me confidence. He helps me do things I couldn't do before. And the best part? He loves it."



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FROM FIELD TRIP TO FOSTER MOM



For Anika, her journey with Paws With A Cause didn't start when she picked up her first foster puppy. It started years earlier, when she was just a child on a homeschool field trip to PAWS Headquarters.

"I learned about the importance of service dogs and the process of raising a foster puppy," she remembers. "I decided right then that I wanted to raise a puppy for PAWS." That childhood dream was put on pause. Anika's parents weren't quite ready to have a service dog-in-training in their home. But the dream never faded. Over the years, she revisited the idea with her parents, always hearing, "Maybe someday."

Someday finally came in 2023.

Now 22 years old, a dog grooming school graduate, and a small business owner, Anika was reintroduced to the PAWS community through her county fair's dog club. "A friend of mine who had raised a PAWS puppy came to speak to our club, along with a PAWS staff member. That reignited the idea for me," she says. This time, when she brought it up with her parents, the answer was yes.

Since then, Anika has not only raised her first puppy, but also brought her talents as a groomer to PAWS Headquarters. "I had the opportunity to groom at PAWS during the summer," she shares. "I met a lot of amazing people and got tons of poodle practice. I even got to try some creative grooming!"

Anika's love for PAWS is grounded in more than just her love of dogs. "I believe in their mission. Service dogs are a life-changing tool for people with disabilities, but they can be so hard to access. PAWS makes them more accessible, and even dogs that don't complete training are still given a purpose."

It's this purpose-driven mission that keeps Anika committed to volunteering—and it shows. She and her PAWS foster puppy competed in their local county fair, taking home first place in Novice Obedience and Reserve Grand Champion in Novice and Above Obedience. "The skills we teach our foster puppies are very similar to obedience competitions," she says. "It was a fun way to show off how well-trained and socialized these dogs can be."

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Anika's first year as a foster puppy raiser has been transformative, not just for her puppy, but for her. "It's helped me grow in confidence, ease my anxiety, and meet so many new people. I'm already getting my second puppy soon!"

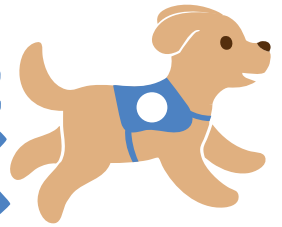
To those on the fence about volunteering, Anika has one piece of advice: "Don't be afraid to ask questions. The staff is so kind and will teach you everything you need to know."

Her story is a beautiful reminder: sometimes the smallest beginnings—a field trip, a spark of interest—can lead to life-changing impact. You can be part of that impact, too! Visit pawswithacause.org to learn how you can get involved.





PAWS IN THE PARK 5K



FUN RUN & WALK AT RETRIEVER FEVER

Saturday, September 20 @ 9:30am

Calling all runners who love dogs! Join us for the first-ever Paws in the Park 5K Fun Run/Walk to benefit Paws With A Cause at Retriever Fever 2025! After the race, stick around for Retriever Fever, a free community event featuring local vendors, food trucks, and engaging activities. You'll also have the chance to take part in a friendly fundraising competition between Team Labrador Retriever and Team Golden Retriever to see which group can raise the most money for PAWS!



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to learn more!

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