



Assistance & Facility Dogs

2025 Fall Newsletter





Dear Friends,

We're proud to share some exciting milestones at Paws With A Cause. This past summer, we unveiled our new logo—a modern look that reflects our bold vision for the future while honoring the heart of our mission.

We're also celebrating the successful completion of our Embrace the Journey Campaign! Thanks to your incredible support, our renovated campus, including our one-of-a-kind Training Center, Vet Clinic and National Breeding Center is almost complete and ready to help us serve more clients and train more life-changing assistance and facility dogs.

As we look ahead, we invite you to continue watching us grow. With the strong foundation, we are setting ambitious goals for the years to come: breeding and raising more puppies, placing more assistance and facility dogs across the country and deepening our impact with every life we touch. Each dog placed is a step closer to a world that's more inclusive, supportive and full of possibility and independence for our community.

We can't wait to celebrate with you at our building dedication in November. Thank you for being part of this journey, we couldn't have done it without you.

With gratitude,
Michele Suchovsky
Chief Executive Officer

Dear PAWS Community,

It is a true honor to introduce myself as the new Chair of the Board of Directors at Paws With A Cause. As a longtime supporter and puppy raiser, I've seen firsthand the profound impact a single PAWS dog can have—not just on one person, but on entire families and communities.

Stepping into this role at such a pivotal moment in our history is deeply meaningful. With the successful completion of the Embrace the Journey Campaign and the unveiling of a new logo and renovated campus, PAWS is moving forward with strength, clarity, and purpose.

These milestones are more than just accomplishments—they are a reflection of your dedication and the belief that everyone deserves greater independence, connection, and confidence.

On behalf of the entire PAWS Board of Directors, thank you. We are energized for what's ahead and grateful to have you on this journey.

Warmly,
Anne Barea
Chair, Board of Directors



Planning Ahead: 2026 tax changes could impact 2025 giving

Your generosity changes lives at PAWS one working dog at a time. With major tax changes coming in 2026, now is the time to consider how your 2025 giving can make the greatest impact for you—and for the clients and community we serve.

Non-itemizers: In 2026, you can deduct up to \$1,000 (individual) or \$2,000 (married couples). While delaying your gift until January 2026 could make it tax-deductible, if you are able to give by January 15, 2026, your support will help PAWS start the year strong—ensuring we can move forward with training and placing working dogs without any delay.

Itemizers: In 2026, deductions will be capped at 35% and will only apply if gifts exceed 0.5% of adjusted gross income. Giving in 2025 may yield a larger deduction—and greater impact.

Bunching: Consider grouping multiple years of giving into one year to maximize itemizing, then using the standard deduction in off years.

By planning now, you can navigate these changes and ensure PAWS can continue placing working dogs with those who need them most.

If you anticipate adjusting your giving pattern, contact **Teresa A. Newmarch** at tnewmarch@pawswithacause.org or **(616) 552-1586**. As always, please consult your financial advisor before making your donation to PAWS.

Sponsor a PAWS Puppy and Change a Life

Meet **QUINLEY** and **NUTMEG**. These are two bright-eyed PAWS puppies training to become working dogs for people living with disabilities. With your help, they'll grow into skilled, confident companions.

For \$50 a month, you can sponsor one of these future heroes—and now, you can also gift a puppy sponsorship to a friend or loved one! It's a meaningful, heartwarming gift that keeps giving.

Whether for yourself or someone special, you'll receive a personalized sponsorship kit and regular updates as your sponsored puppy learns and grows.

Sponsor QUINLEY or NUTMEG today!

Visit pawswithacause.org/sponsor-a-paws-puppy/ or call **(616) 552-9770** to choose your puppy today.



Transforming Lives, One Paw at a Time

1979

A Movement Begins

Mike and Antoinette “Candy” Sapp started PAWS with a simple act of compassion: training a dog to assist their friends, Marty and Diane Jansen—a deaf couple who needed a way to hear their baby cry. That dog, CRYSTAL, became the first PAWS hearing dog, and this favor for friends sparked what would become a national movement.



1989-91

A New Name, A Growing Mission

As services expanded, Ears for the Deaf became Paws With A Cause, a name that reflected our growing work in empowering people with disabilities through custom-trained assistance dogs.

In 1991, PAWS placed our first service dogs for mobility assistance, MARK. This new category of dogs helped people with physical disabilities gain greater independence with tasks like retrieving items, opening doors, turning on/off light switches, and more.



2009

Supporting Children with Autism

Continuing to expand, we placed our first service dog with a child with autism, DENVER. This placement was pivotal in the ways we support children and families navigating the challenges of developmental disabilities.



1981

A Vision for Serving Others

Recognizing how many others needed this kind of support, Mike and Candy founded Ears for the Deaf, a nonprofit to train Hearing Dogs for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Working out of a rented office in Grand Rapids, they laid the foundation for a growing community of support.



1995

A Place to Grow

PAWS moved into our permanent home in Wayland, Michigan. That same year, we placed our first seizure response dog, WILLIE, marking the beginning of a program that has grown to serve hundreds of clients with seizures through a custom-trained partner.



2016-21

Expanding Possibilities through Animal Assisted Services

The placement of Facility Dog VANDY at Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital showed how PAWS Dogs could serve entire organizations. Soon after, PAWS launched Animal Assisted Services, expanding facility dog placements to schools, hospitals, therapy centers, veteran programs, and more.

In 2021, PAWS launched our Visiting PAWS Program, sending trained dog-and-handler teams into community spaces to provide comfort, connection, and emotional support—bringing the benefits of PAWS dogs to people who may not require a full-time facility dog.



A look at how far we've come—and the path we're paving for the future

Visit pawswithacause.org to view the full history of PAWS.

2025

The PAWS Mission Re-Imagined



This year, PAWS embraced a refreshed mission: to transform lives through partnerships with custom-trained working dogs. Along with this came a new brand identity, including a redesigned logo that reflects both our growth and our values. Every detail—from the colors and typography to the logo itself—was created with ADA standards in mind, ensuring our brand is clear, welcoming, and accessible to everyone.

Our campus expansion builds on this momentum, giving us the capacity to serve more clients and prepare more dogs for their future partners. With new spaces designed for training, veterinary care, and enrichment, we can shorten wait times, expand program offerings, and ensure every PAWS dog receives the best possible start. Together with our new brand, the renovated campus is helping us open doors to independence, strengthen communities, and bring the hope and joy of a PAWS partnership to even more people.

2026

What is Next?

In 2026, PAWS will begin training medical alert detection dogs (MADD), opening applications for clients whose daily lives are impacted by conditions such as diabetes and postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome (POTS). These specially trained dogs will provide lifesaving alerts, offering safety, confidence, and peace of mind to people managing complex health challenges.

As one of the first major initiatives under our refreshed mission and brand, the addition of medical alert detection dogs reflects our continued growth and ability to meet emerging needs. By adding this new category of service, PAWS will reach more people and expand the life-changing partnerships that define our work—ensuring that independence, connection, and joy are possible for even more individuals and families.

As we continue to grow, we invite you to be part of our journey! Your support helps us transform more lives—one paw at a time.



Jack & RIDER: A Bond That Brings Out the Best

When ten-year-old Jack heads to bed each night, he never goes alone. Just a few steps behind is his constant companion and service dog, RIDER. Ready to curl up, provide calm, and bring comfort when the world feels overwhelming.

Jack, a bright and energetic child was paired with RIDER, a service dog for children with autism, through Paws With A Cause in May 2024. RIDER was custom-trained to be the perfect addition to Jack's life, such as performing calming techniques like squish, where he gently applies pressure by laying on Jack's chest, much like the soothing weight of a blanket. In moments of stress or overstimulation, RIDER brings Jack peace.

What makes RIDER's presence so powerful is not just his skill—it's his connection with Jack.

"Jack has always been a happy child," Michelle says, "but I feel like he is even happier, and always eager to show off RIDER to his friends and family." Before RIDER, social situations were often tough for Jack. Since the two were paired, Jack has been much more confident in public settings, whether at church, family gatherings, or out in the community.

Not only has Jack gained a sense of calm and comfort with RIDER, but he has eagerly taken on responsibility. Having RIDER by his side, Jack has established a routine of caring for him, making sure to feed and brush him regularly.

For Michelle and her husband, the impact goes beyond Jack's emotional growth. "We're more confident as a family in new settings. RIDER brings us all closer, whether we're walking through the neighborhood, attending mass, or just playing in the backyard."

Having two young children, and one having autism, the thought of family trips in public can be stress-inducing. Michelle shared, "My husband and I feel less anxious in social settings with Jack, knowing that he has RIDER to focus on and to help calm him." Michelle and her husband can take ease knowing that RIDER is always looking out for Jack.

As one of RIDER's certified handlers, Michelle is able to bring him to school with Jack a few days each week. Because she works in Jack's school, RIDER can join Jack in the classroom, something that's made a big difference in his school day.



RIDER has made us stronger as a family

"I'm very fortunate that Jack has attended the school where I teach for the last two years," Michelle shares. Having RIDER at school has helped Jack focus in class and given him something to be proud of. For this family, RIDER is more than a highly trained dog, he's a vital part of their everyday lives. "RIDER has made us stronger as a family," shared Michelle.

"To RIDER's puppy raiser, thank you," Michelle says. "You gave him the foundation to change a life. He's doing amazing work, and we're so thankful."

You can help create life-changing partnerships like Jack and RIDER's. Become a Foster Puppy Raiser. Make a donation. Be the reason another child finds their perfect teammate.

Because every child like Jack deserves a friend like RIDER.



Come Celebrate with Us!

We're opening our doors for a day filled with community, gratitude, and the life-changing magic of PAWS.

Enjoy guided tours of our brand-new facility, hands-on activity stations, delicious food, fun games, and plenty of smiles.

All ages welcome! PAWS dogs are welcome to attend (as long as fully vaccinated). For everyone's safety and comfort, we kindly ask that personal pets stay at home.

THURSDAY

November 6, 2025
1:00 pm - 4:00 pm

SATURDAY

November 8, 2025
10:00 am - 3:00 pm



Scan here to RSVP

Or visit: bit.ly/PAWSopenhouse

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MAKE A DIFFERENCE WITH EVERY UPDATE!

Join our mission to transform lives through the power of service dogs. By subscribing to our newsletter, you'll stay informed about our latest success stories, upcoming events, and how you can get involved. Each edition offers insights into our work, updates on our incredible teams, and opportunities to support our cause.

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PAWS Re-Imagined

Look inside to learn more about our rebrand and the future of PAWS.

pawswithacause.org

