

PAWS IN THE PARK 5K



2026 Toolkit



WHY WE FUNDRAISE

A letter from PAWS

Dear PAWS in the Park Participant,

Thank you for being part of PAWS in the Park. Your participation already means so much, and when you choose to fundraise, you truly multiply your impact.

Peer-to-peer fundraising works because of you. When you share why you're participating and why PAWS matters to you, you invite others to be part of something meaningful. Every donation raised through PAWS in the Park helps us raise and train future Paws With A Cause working dogs, including Service Dogs for Physical Mobility, Hearing Dogs, Seizure Response Dogs, Service Dogs for Children with Autism, Medical Alert Dogs, and Facility Dogs. These specially trained dogs are thoughtfully matched to individuals and organizations, providing greater independence, confidence, and connection to those they serve.

Our team is here to support you every step of the way with fundraising tips and tools, sample social posts, story ideas, goal-setting guidance, and plenty of encouragement along the way.

Thank you for stepping up, spreading the word, and running (or walking or rolling!) with purpose.

With gratitude,



Ashley Diersch
Chief Advancement Officer



**PAWS IN THE
PARK 5K** 

THURSDAY, AUGUST 6

RACE START: 6:30 PM

MILLENNIUM PARK, GRANT PAVILION

140 Maynard Ave SW,
Grand Rapids, MI 49534

WHY RUN FOR PAWS?

When you participate in PAWS in the Park, you're doing more than participating in a 5K. You're helping change lives.

Paws With A Cause transforms lives and strengthens communities through partnerships with custom-trained working dogs. PAWS serves individuals, families, and communities by placing assistance and facility dogs nationwide.



406

ACTIVE ASSISTANCE &
FACILITY DOG TEAMS



3,500

LIFE-CHANGING
PARTNERS PLACED
SINCE 1979

56

Newly certified
teams

55

Dogs placed in
alternative careers

162

Puppies born

30

States worked in

PAWS DOGS CAN:

- Help children with autism build confidence and connection
- Assist individuals with mobility challenges by retrieving items, opening doors, and providing stability
- Alert people who are deaf or hard of hearing to important sounds
- Provide seizure response and support
- Offer life-changing independence to veterans and individuals with physical disabilities
- Alert to changes in blood sugar or heart rate for individuals with type 1 diabetes or POTS



*All figures represent 2025 data as reported in our Annual Impact Report.

GETTING STARTED

While fundraising is completely optional, it is one of the most powerful ways you can help create more life-changing PAWS teams. Whether supporting a child in a classroom through a Facility Dog, assisting a veteran with social support, or empowering someone with greater independence at home, your efforts directly fuel these partnerships.

FUNDRAISING TIPS



SET YOUR FUNDRAISING GOAL

Whether your goal is \$50 or \$5,000, every dollar moves our mission forward.

TELL YOUR STORY

Personalize your fundraising page with a photo and share why supporting Paws With A Cause matters to you. Your story helps inspire friends, family, and coworkers to give in your honor, or in your dog's name!

SPREAD THE WORD

Use the email and social media tools available through your fundraising page to invite others to support your participation in PAWS in the Park. Keep supporters engaged by sharing updates, milestones, and reminders as you work toward your goal.

DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT

Check to see if your employer offers a matching gift program. Matching gifts can instantly double (or even triple!) your fundraising total.

CELEBRATE WITH PURPOSE

Turn a birthday, anniversary, or special occasion into a fundraiser! Ask friends to donate to your PAWS in the Park fundraising page instead of giving a gift. You can also create a Facebook fundraiser to make sharing simple.

JOIN OR CREATE A TEAM

Fundraising is more fun together! Form a team with coworkers, friends, or family and raise funds as a group for PAWS in the Park.

ALREADY REGISTERED BUT WANT TO CREATE OR JOIN A TEAM?

No problem! Contact our events team at events@pawswithacause.org for assistance.



WHAT YOUR IMPACT SUPPORTS

\$250

Provide a year's worth of grooming supplies for a future working dog.

\$500

Supply adaptive equipment that empowers PAWS clients every day.

\$750

Provide a PAWS litter of puppies a vet visit to ensure a healthy foundation for their training.

\$1,000

Support a year of client training sessions that strengthen the bond between a PAWS dog and their partner.

HOW TO ASK

Email and social media are incredibly effective fundraising tools and a great ways to spread the word about PAWS in the Park, invite others to join your team, and ask for donations to support Paws With A Cause.

EMAIL OUTREACH TIPS

MAKE IT PERSONAL

Tell your story. Share why you care about Paws With A Cause—maybe you’ve seen the impact of working dogs firsthand, or you just love supporting a mission that transforms lives.

- If you participated last year, share a favorite memory or a result!
- If it’s your first time, share your excitement and why you decided to participate.
- Have fun with it! Create a challenge or friendly competition: first donor, largest gift, or most creative message wins a prize from you!

FOLLOW UP

Be sure to thank donors after they give and again after the event. Share a photo from PAWS in the Park so they can see the impact they helped make!

SAMPLE TEXT

You can support my PAWS in the Park 5K several ways. The best and easiest is to visit my personal fundraising page at *(add personal URL)* and make a donation online. On my page, you can see my goal, how close I am to reaching it, and why I’m participating!

Your support helps Paws With A Cause raise, train, and place highly skilled working dogs. If you’re not able to donate, I’d still love your support—consider joining me at PAWS in the Park! You can join my team online at *(add personal URL)*.

To learn more about PAWS in the Park and Paws With A Cause, visit pawswithacause.org

SOCIAL SHARING TIPS

GET CREATIVE

Share photos and videos of your training, your dog, or why PAWS matters to you. If you have a personal story or connection to working dogs, tell it—people love to know why you walk, run, or roll!

SAMPLE POSTS

- Help me support Paws With A Cause and the incredible working dogs they train for our community. Please donate to my PAWS in the Park page! *(Insert link to personal fundraising page)*
- You can make a difference! Help me reach my fundraising goal as I participate in PAWS in the Park to support Paws With A Cause. Every dollar helps PAWS raise, train, and place custom-trained assistance dogs!
- It's PAWS in the Park season! Help me support Paws With A Cause by donating to my fundraising page today and cheering me on at the 5K!

STAY CONNECTED

Utilize Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and LinkedIn to reach out to your friends and family when asking for donations. Make sure you link your PAWS in the Park fundraising page so it's super easy for people to donate right to you!

TAG US WHEN YOU SHARE!

 Paws With A Cause

 @pawswithacause

 @pawswithacause_

Follow our social pages for updates and use **#PAWSinthePark26** to share your photos.

Have Questions?

Please contact our events team at events@pawswithacause.org

COLLECTING DONATIONS

Every gift you help raise through PAWS in the Park moves our mission forward – supporting the training and placement of life-changing assistance and facility dogs.

ONLINE DONATIONS

Donations made online through RunSignUp are automatically charged and sent to Paws With A Cause. PAWS will record the gifts and send the donor a tax receipt letter either via email or mail.

OFFLINE DONATIONS

Donors can also send in a check to Paws With A Cause and have it credited toward your fundraiser. ***Please ask the donor to include a note with your name and giving page information so that it can be properly credited.***

If you collect donations of cash or checks, please drop them off at the PAWS headquarters or bring them with you to packet pickup.

Please do not send cash in the mail.

If you collect donations of cash or checks, we recommend keeping a simple pledge tracking sheet that includes:

- Donor Name
- Email or Mailing Address
- Donation Amount
- Payment Type (Cash or Check)

SUBMITTING OFFLINE DONATIONS

Paws With A Cause
Attn: Events Team
4646 Division Ave
Wayland, MI 49348

If you have any questions, our events team is happy to help:

events@pawswithacause.org | (616) 877-7297

Thank you so much for fundraising on behalf of Paws With A Cause. Your support is helping PAWS staff deliver independence, confidence, and companionship to those who need it most. We cannot wait to see you at PAWS in the Park!



Changing lives,
one PAWS dog at a time.



(616) 877-7297

events@pawswithacause.org

pawswithacause.org/sponsorships-and-fundraising/