

The Journey to Independence



As I reflect on the past year, one word comes to mind: WOW. What an incredible year YOU made possible.



Because of your generosity, dedication, and belief in our mission, Paws With A Cause experienced one of the most transformational years in our history.

Together, we returned to our beautifully renovated headquarters, opened our National Training Center, Veterinary Clinic, and Breeding Center, and celebrated a refreshed brand that reflects both our proud legacy and our bold future. Every milestone was made possible because people like you invested your time, talents, and generosity in our mission.

Your support does far more than fund programs—it creates opportunities for more people to experience greater independence, confidence, and connection through partnerships with our custom-trained assistance dogs and facility dogs.

As we look ahead, we are expanding our capacity to serve more individuals, families, hospitals, schools, and communities across the country. The need is growing, and so is our commitment to meeting it.

The story of this incredible year is, above all, a story about YOU.

Thank you for believing in what's possible and for helping transform lives and strengthen communities every day.

With gratitude,

Michele Suchovsky & SCUBA

Chief Executive Officer
Paws With A Cause



Looking back on this past year, it's clear that Paws With A Cause has reached a defining moment in its history.

From a \$10.5 M facility renovation to a new brand identity after 45 years, each milestone reflects thoughtful planning, strong leadership, an incredible community of supporters, and a shared commitment to our mission. Together, these investments position PAWS to expand our impact for years to come.

As a Board, we are excited about the future. We are intentionally growing our capacity to serve more individuals, families, schools, hospitals, and communities while positioning Paws With A Cause as the national leader in developing and placing exceptional assistance dogs and facility dogs.

On behalf of our Board of Directors, thank you for your trust, generosity, and partnership. **Because of you, the future is brighter than ever, and we look forward to all we will accomplish together.**

Anne Barea & WALLACE (PAWS Foster Puppy #8)

Board Chair
Paws With A Cause



Make the Most of Charitable Giving

Some individual taxpayers have already taken action to benefit from federal tax changes that went into effect this year. Impacts to charitable giving may play a role for you.

Taking the Standard Deduction?

Ninety percent of U.S. taxpayers take the standard deduction rather than itemizing. Thus, in recent years, benefiting from a charitable deduction was not possible for most. A permanent provision that applies above the standard deduction changes the equation. **Now, individuals can deduct up to \$1,000 in cash donations, with \$2,000 for married couples filing jointly.**

Itemizing Your Deduction?

Itemizers need to keep in mind a “deduction floor” of 0.5% of adjusted gross income (AGI), meaning only charitable gifts exceeding that figure will be considered deductible. For example, if your AGI is \$500,000, the 0.5% floor is \$2,500. If you make total donations of \$5,000, only \$2,500 is deductible.

Additionally, for those in the top tax bracket, charitable tax benefits will be capped at 35 percent per dollar donated, a drop from 37 percent. **Greater tax savings may come through the strategic bunching of gifts,** i.e. concentrating multiple years’ giving into one to leverage full benefits.

As always, please consult your tax adviser to see how these changes impact your specific situation.

To discuss making a gift to PAWS, contact Teresa Newmarch, Director of Leadership and Legacy Giving, at tnewmarch@pawswithacause.org or **(616) 877-7297 x246**.

Celebrate Every Month with PAWS Dogs

Bring a little PAWS into your home all year long with our very first PAWS Dog Calendar!

Filled with heartwarming photos of PAWS dogs and puppies of all career paths and breeds, this inaugural calendar is a wonderful way to celebrate the impact of our mission every day of the year. Whether you’re a longtime supporter or looking for the perfect gift for the dog lover in your life, the 2027 PAWS Dog Calendar is a meaningful keepsake that gives back.

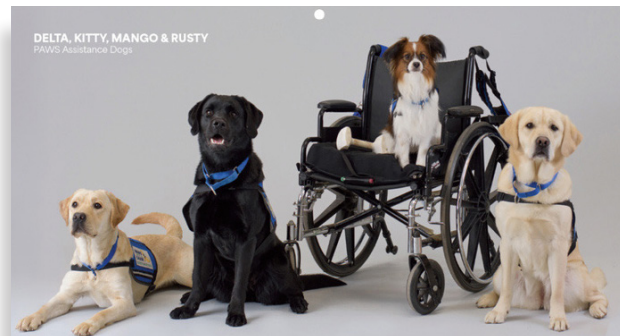
While you’re there, be sure to browse the PAWS Store for even more ways to show your support. From apparel and accessories to gifts and seasonal favorites, every purchase helps advance the PAWS mission.



SCAN HERE

to shop the PAWS Dog Calendar and explore everything the PAWS Store has to offer.

store.pawswithacause.org



The Journey Begins

Every PAWS working dog has a story. Long before a dog is placed with a client or facility, they are surrounded by dedicated volunteers and staff who help prepare them for a lifetime of service. At the same time, future assistance dog clients are taking the first steps toward greater independence, while organizations are preparing to welcome a facility dog that will support the people they serve. Though these journeys begin separately, they come together through dedication, care, training, and passion to transform lives and strengthen communities.

A Client's Path

Do You Qualify?

Every PAWS partnership begins with a simple question: Could a PAWS dog help me live more independently?

Prospective clients begin by completing an online questionnaire to determine if they meet the basic qualifications for a PAWS dog. PAWS trains assistance dogs for physical disabilities, epileptic seizure response, hearing loss, service dogs for children with autism, and medical alert detection.



"The application process took time, but I also had really great information about the process from PAWS every step of the way. So even though I was doing a lot of waiting for background check and in-home video and so forth, I also knew exactly what I was waiting to be completed."

- Jana & DUFFIE, Hearing Dog

A Dog's Path



Living With a Volunteer

At around eight to twelve weeks old, each puppy moves in with a volunteer foster puppy raiser. During the next year, puppies learn basic obedience, practice good manners, and gain confidence through everyday experiences.

From grocery stores and parks to restaurants and community events, every outing with their puppy raiser helps prepare them for their future career.

Puppy Love

Every PAWS dog begins life surrounded by love.

PAWS puppies are purposefully bred for health and temperament characteristics that make them exceptional working dogs. They spend their first months in a volunteer breeding home, where they receive constant care and a strong foundation for the journey ahead.

"GUS (AUGUSTA) has transformed our lives. She is a literal angel. Raising puppies and housing a PAWS mama dog is an incredibly fun adventure and so life-giving. We are so grateful to the PAWS family for this opportunity."

- Bylsma Family & AUGUSTA, Breeding Mama

Meet With a Field Representative

If the application is accepted, a PAWS field representative visits the applicant's home to complete a needs assessment.

This visit helps PAWS understand how an assistance dog could support the client's daily life, home environment, workplace (if applicable), and personal goals. It also gives applicants an opportunity to ask questions and begin imagining life with an assistance dog.

Submit an Application

If an individual meets the initial qualifications, they're invited to complete a full application. This gives the PAWS team a chance to learn about their background, daily routines, support system, and the challenges they face each day.

Every detail helps paint a picture of the individual's lifestyle, needs, and goals, allowing PAWS to determine how a working dog can provide the greatest support.

Ready to Be Matched

After completing the needs assessment, the applicant officially becomes a PAWS client!

While waiting for the right match, clients receive quarterly updates and remain connected with the PAWS team. Although waiting can require patience, a well-matched partnership is worth waiting for.



"From the moment of Penny's diagnosis, we knew a service dog could make a profound difference. The waiting was hard, but absolutely worth it. PAWS truly took great care to match Penny with the perfect personality for her."

- Stephanie, Penny's mother & BLAZER, Service Dog for Child with Autism



"It's a great feeling to know that you could be possibly giving someone or some family the freedom or help they may never have had by raising a PAWS puppy."

- Marcia & Ron, 10-time PAWS Puppy Raisers

It Takes a Community

While foster puppy raisers provide daily care, they aren't raising the puppy alone.

PAWS has a network of volunteer puppy sitters who eagerly step in when a foster puppy raiser goes on vacation or needs to free up their weekend. On-campus volunteers assist with puppy enrichment activities to keep dogs at PAWS entertained. Volunteers work at our reception desk in the PAWS lobby and the veterinarian clinic. Transportation volunteers help dogs travel safely to their clients across the country and within the Prison Partner Program.

Every PAWS volunteer helps shape a PAWS working dog's future.



"I enjoy volunteering in the vet department because I get to meet and interact with so many people in different roles. Everyone is so welcoming and makes me feel like part of the team, even as a volunteer."

- Linda, On-Campus Volunteer

Creating the Perfect Partnership

ASSISTANCE DOG PARTNERSHIP

It's a Match!

PAWS carefully considers each client's personality, lifestyle, pace of life, home environment, and specific needs before selecting the dog that will become their assistance dog.

Only when the right match is found does custom training begin.

"Before I did this program, I was taking three different medications for anxiety. Once I got the dog, I went down to one... The dogs basically tell you it's okay to live."

- PAWS Prison Partner Inmate Handler

Prison Partner Program

After a year with their volunteer raiser, PAWS dogs enter the Prison Partner Program for advanced obedience training.

Working alongside Inmate Handlers, each dog spends several months strengthening the skills they learned as a puppy. Through daily repetition, consistency, and individualized attention, our dogs develop the reliability and confidence needed for a future working career.

Inmate handlers often describe the experience as one of purpose, responsibility, and personal growth. The program changes more than just the dogs' lives.

Growing Into a Working Dog

Preparing for Partnership

Every client has different needs, so every PAWS dog receives individualized training.

Trainers recreate real-life situations the client experiences every day, teaching each dog the specific skills they'll need to provide meaningful assistance at home, at work, and in the community.

Every solution is customized. If a client needs adaptive equipment that isn't commercially available, PAWS will research, design, create, and provide it free of charge.

Finding the Right Career

Assistance Dog

Custom-trained to help people with physical disabilities, hearing loss, epileptic seizure response, medical alert needs, or children with autism live with greater independence.

"Day to day, he is by my side no matter what, and he has a tendency to know when things aren't right. He makes me feel safer."

- Darren & YEOMAN, Epileptic Seizure Response Dog



“One of the things I was most impressed with about PAWS is the care they take in matching the dog to your not only physical needs, but also your household and personalities. GILMORE is a perfect fit. And I think that they do a really great job with that.”

- Anna & GILMORE, Mobility Assistance Dog

Evaluation & Placement

When the dogs return to PAWS, our staff trainers and breeding team begin one of the most important steps in the journey.

Each dog is carefully evaluated based on health, structure, confidence, temperament, and energy level to determine where they can make the greatest impact.

Not every dog follows the same path, but every dog has an important role to play.



Visiting PAWS Dog

Certified volunteer and dog teams provide comfort and connection during visits to libraries, senior communities, workplaces, crisis response centers, and other group opportunities.

“It’s nice to see Visiting PAWS continue to make a difference with company’s employees. Seeing an employee take a moment out of their busy day to interact with our dogs is wonderful.”

- Teresa & KINGSLEY, Visiting PAWS Team



“MURPHY has enhanced our human side of care. She reminds us that healing is not always about treating disease. Sometimes it is about providing comfort, connection, and presence, and MURPHY excels at all three.”

- Kristin & MURPHY, Lemmen-Holton Cancer Pavilion Facility Dog

Facility Dog

Placed with professionals in schools, hospitals, courthouses, counseling centers, and other community settings to support many people.

Partner Placement

Some PAWS dogs are selected for specialized careers through trusted partner organizations. One such career is Electronic Storage Detection, where PAWS dogs use their exceptional noses to help law enforcement locate hidden electronic devices, such as microSD cards and USB drives, that may contain evidence in child exploitation and human trafficking investigations.

“Whether it is a victim being identified and rescued, a suspect being sent to prison, or being invited to speak and making an impact on a family... MAXIM has made an immeasurable difference.”

- Melinda & K9 MAXIM, Murray County Sheriff's Office



Placement & In-Home Training

Once custom training is complete, the PAWS dog goes home with their new partner.

Over the following weeks, a PAWS field representative works alongside the team in their home, workplace, and community, helping both client and dog learn to work together with confidence.

This is where two individual journeys become one partnership.

“Seeing a client meet their new PAWS dog for the first time is probably one of the greatest feelings you can get as a dog trainer. Watching them have that sparkle moment with their person where they make eye contact and everything else just falls away, and it’s the two of them. That is the best moment.”

- Crystal, PAWS Senior Staff Trainer



RENLY
at Rush Pediatric
Neuropsychology

“Our goal is to place a dog whose temperament, energy level, confidence, and working style will allow them to be successful in both the facility and home settings for years to come.”

- Rachael, PAWS Animal Assisted Services Coordinator

Preparing the Team

The same thoughtful approach extends to handlers, with individualized preparation based on their role, their facility, and the people they serve.

Working alongside a PAWS field representative, handlers learn canine handling skills and how to confidently integrate their new PAWS dog into the facility’s daily routine. Together, they build the foundation needed to support the people the facility serves.

FACILITY DOG PARTNERSHIP

A Different Kind of Match

While assistance dogs are matched to one individual, facility dogs are matched to an entire team.

PAWS staff work closely with the facility’s primary handlers to understand the environments where the dog will live and work, and if specialized task training is desired. Through interviews, facility and home visits, and discussions about the populations being served, PAWS trainers identify a dog whose temperament, confidence, energy level, and working style will thrive in both the facility and home settings.

Just like every assistance dog partnership, every facility dog match is carefully planned to ensure long-term success.

Working Together

As the dog settles into the facility, handlers gradually introduce them to staff, routines, and the people they’ll support each day. Whether serving in a school, hospital, courthouse, counseling center, or another professional setting, the dog becomes a trusted member of the team, providing comfort, connection, and support wherever they’re needed most.

Team Certification

Approximately six months after placement, the client and dog complete certification as a working team.

Ownership of the dog is officially transferred from PAWS to the client, marking the beginning of a lifelong partnership built on trust, teamwork, and independence.



WINTON & FAITH
at Mary Free Bed
Rehabilitation
Hospital

A Lifetime of Support

Whether partnered with an individual client or serving an entire community, every PAWS working dog team remains part of the PAWS family.

Throughout every PAWS dog's working career, PAWS field representatives and client services continue providing guidance, recertifications, and ongoing support. Whether advocating for public access rights, teaching new tasks as a client's needs evolve, troubleshooting challenges, or celebrating milestones, PAWS remains committed to every team for life.

Two Journeys. Hundreds of Helping Hands.

Behind every PAWS partnership are donors, breeding dog homes, puppy raisers, puppy sitters, campus volunteers, inmate handlers, PAWS staff, and countless others who believe in the life-changing power of a PAWS working dog.

Together, we are transforming lives, one PAWS dog at a time.

"A key component of our Facility Dog Program includes 12 hours of in-person training with a PAWS field representative. During these sessions, we work one-on-one with the handlers to teach dog handling skills, any task work the dog might have, and how to successfully integrate the dog into their facility setting."

- Rachael, PAWS Animal Assisted Services Coordinator

Team Certification

After about four to six months of training and working alongside a PAWS field representative, facility dog teams complete certification and officially begin serving their communities.

Throughout the certification process, handlers demonstrate their ability to handle their dog, work as a team, and successfully incorporate the dog's skills into their daily responsibilities. Once certified, PAWS continues providing recertifications and ongoing support throughout the dog's working career.

Get to Know Our Newest PAWS Puppies

\$50

for 12 months *or*

\$600

annually

Every PAWS assistance and facility dog begins with a playful puppy and a community of people who believe in their potential.

When you sponsor a PAWS puppy, you'll follow one special dog's journey from their earliest days at eight weeks old, through their time with their volunteer puppy raiser. Along the way, you'll receive exclusive updates, photos, and milestones that bring you closer to the impact you're making.

Your sponsorship also helps provide the care every puppy needs to thrive, including nutritious food, veterinary care, enrichment, training, and supplies during the most important stages of development.

Choose the puppy who captures your heart and become part of their story.

Your support changes lives, one PAWS dog at a time.

BEAUMONT

Breed: Golden Retriever

Sex: Male

Birthdate: 03/02/2026



No matter what I'm doing, one thing is almost guaranteed: at least one of my ears is flipped backward. It's becoming my signature look, and I wear it proudly!

Life is pretty great when I have a rope toy and a little spray cheese. I've been especially determined to win over the cats in my life, though they're still deciding whether they want to join in on the fun. In the meantime, I'm growing like a weed and learning something new every day.

Calm, fluffy, and polite, I have a gentle nature and a strong desire to make my person happy.

GENO

Breed: Papillon

Sex: Male

Birthdate: 02/18/2026



Whether I'm chasing a squeaky toy or playing fetch with my foster family, I'm always ready for fun! I love meeting new people and making new friends wherever I go.

When the excitement winds down, you'll usually find me curled up in someone's lap. I'm a professional snuggler, and I never turn down the chance to be passed from person to person for extra cuddles. The other day, I saw a dog that looked JUST like me in the mirror! That was so cool.

Friendly, spunky, and endlessly cuddly, I bring plenty of energy, curiosity, and affection to every adventure.



SCAN HERE
to sponsor

pawswithacause.org/sponsor-a-paws-puppy/

12 ADA Trainings

500+

Business Toolkits & Window Clings Distributed

4 Media-Covered Trainings

THOUSANDS
of people reached across
the state of Michigan



Advocacy That Lasts a Lifetime

An assistance dog opens doors to greater independence—but sometimes, those doors are still closed. Although the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) protects the rights of people partnered with assistance dogs, access denials continue to happen. Paws With A Cause (PAWS) provides lifetime support and advocacy to help clients navigate these situations with confidence.

According to the *PAWS for Access: A Global Survey on Assistance Dog Rights*, completed by Assistance Dogs International and the International Guide Dog Federation, nearly **one in two assistance dog handlers (43%) reported being denied access to a public place within the past year**. Restaurants and cafes were the most common locations for access issues, followed by hotels, medical facilities, and grocery stores.

When these situations arise for a PAWS client, PAWS is just a phone call away. Our Client Services team is available 24/7 to advocate for clients when they are wrongfully denied access. Whether they're navigating a restaurant, hotel, store, or public transportation, our team is committed to helping clients advocate for their rights and ensuring they have the support they need.

Figure 1
PAWS for Access Results & Impact

Advocacy also means preventing these situations before they happen.

Throughout the year, PAWS staff educates businesses, organizations, and community leaders about the rights of assistance dog handlers and their responsibilities under the ADA. This year, PAWS presented at the American Culinary Federation National Convention, helping restaurant professionals better understand assistance dog access. Our team also shared ADA education at the Michigan Society of Government Meeting Professionals (MiSGMP) Conference, the State of Michigan Reasonable Accommodation Coordinator Conference, and the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM) Conference, continuing our commitment to building more accessible and welcoming communities.

By standing alongside our clients and educating communities, PAWS is helping build a future where every assistance dog team is welcomed with understanding, respect, and equal access.



SCAN HERE
to request an ADA
toolkit or training

Most Common Public Spaces Where Assistance Dog Users Encounter Issues

56%

Restaurants
& Cafés

28%

Medical
Facilities

28%

Hotels & Other
Accommodations

19%

Grocery
Stores

Figure 2
Most Common
Public Spaces Where
Assistance Dog Users
Encounter Issues

Note. Adapted from
PAWS for Access:
A Global Survey on
Assistance Dog Rights,
by International Guide
Dog Federation and
Assistance Dogs
International, p.6, 2025.

PAWS WITH A CAUSE
Assistance & Facility Dogs



4646 Division Ave, Wayland, MI 49348

**BEST
PLACES
TO WORK**

CRAIN'S • 2026

**Named one of the Best Places to Work
in West Michigan & the State of Michigan**

by Crain's Grand Rapids Business & Crain's Detroit Business

PARTNERSHIPS THAT SPAN THE NATION



406
TEAMS IN THE FIELD

Take a look at where PAWS working
dogs are making a difference across
the United States!

Data as reported in our 2025 Annual Impact Report.