



HELPING PAWS

SUMMER IMPACT NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2021

HELPING PAWS ASSISTANCE DOGS AND WHO THEY HELP



Assistance Dogs: An umbrella term encompassing all types of working dogs.

Here's how Helping Paws fits in.

SERVICE DOGS: PHYSICAL DISABILITIES



Helping Paws places service dogs with individuals with physical disabilities. Some disabilities occur from birth, and some are acquired later in life through an accident or a degenerative disease such as multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, or post-polio. In this type of placement, Helping Paws service dogs assist with a large number of activities of daily living including retrieving objects, opening doors, and 80 other cues/commands.

Deb Blakeway is currently partnered with Mitzi, a service dog who is as excited to work as Deb is to get out of the house! Their day starts with the same routine. They wake up together in the same bed and Mitzi helps Deb get going. When it's time for work, Mitzi even sits in the chair next to Deb while Deb is on Zoom calls. When it's time to go out and get groceries, Mitzi will grab whatever is needed for the adventure. Returning home, Mitzi will execute the "Brace" cue allowing Deb to more easily get out of her wheelchair. If Deb needs her crutches, Mitzi will then grab and deliver them. It's a seamless transition that allows them to get on with their day and helps Deb with an activity that we may take for granted.

DEB AND MITZI

"Mitzi is dedicated, astute and always focused. She is by my side 24-7. Mitzi is the mother duck and I am one of her ducklings. I'm proud of the service she provides, how she looks, and how she connects me with the community."

*- Deb Blakeway
Helping Paws Graduate*

SERVICE DOGS: VETERANS AND FIRST RESPONDERS WITH PTSD

Helping Paws places Service Dogs with Veterans and First Responders with PTSD. These service dogs are trained to do specific tasks that allow their partners to feel more comfortable in public settings, reducing isolation, depression and anxiety. For some of our Veteran/First Responder graduates partnered with a service dog, they have seen a reduction in the need for medication and an improvement in sleep.

Service Dog Kevin plays two important roles for Peter Johnson. First, Kevin is his “lifeline to the outside world”. When Peter is in social situations or in public, his anxiety from PTSD can cause him to panic, hyperventilate and even lose consciousness. Prior to receiving Kevin, trips to the grocery store were impossible for Peter. Remarkably, Kevin is so in tune with Peter’s emotions and body language, he can recognize any anxiety, signal to Peter, then instantly provide support and comfort. In rare moments of lost consciousness, Kevin has placed himself underneath Peter’s head. It’s beautiful to listen to Peter talk about receiving the assistance he really needs and deserves.

The other role is that of best friend. The relationship and partnership of Peter and Kevin comes naturally. From the moment they met, it was a perfect match. Kevin’s goofy side is a wonderful reminder of the simple joy of making your best friend smile. Every day, they connect and have full-blown conversations. Kevin’s eyes remain focused on Peter as if he can truly understand. The first duty of love is to listen and Kevin listens, without judgement.

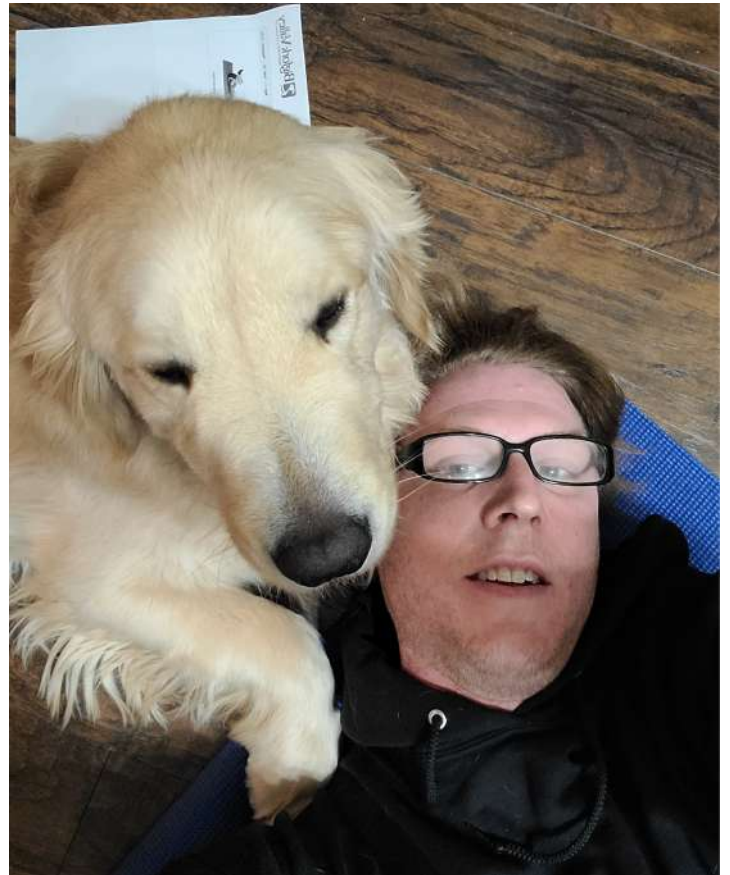
Their companionship saved Peter’s life and marriage. Whether it’s exploring Walmart or the North Shore, Peter has a best friend who always has his back.



PETER AND KEVIN

“I am proud of my service. There is a culture in the military of being tough, strong warriors, but we're human beings. Part of my therapy is discussing and admitting, the military didn't train me for the things I've seen. Being a strong combat vet is recognizing when you need help.”

- Peter Johnson



FACILITY DOGS



Helping Paws facility dogs work with professionals in a variety of settings and environments. This includes partnerships with mental health, educational, first responders, courthouses and health care professionals

Courthouse facility dogs are trained to work in a variety of settings such as the prosecutor's office, child advocacy centers and family court. Primarily, they provide a calming influence for children during stressful legal proceedings.

STACY & ESPRIT



Esprit works as a facility dog at Dunn County in the Behavioral Health Clinic. We are located in Western Wisconsin. The Dunn County Clinic generally serves adult residents struggling with mental health concerns. We also see a limited number of children and some families.

Esprit is involved in individual therapy sessions that take place both in the office and out in the community. She has an empathetic soul and seems to know who in the room needs her. Esprit loves to rest her head near you and bring comfort when situations call for it. Esprit sometimes goes for walks with clients or fetches to increase engagement and assist with emotion regulation. Esprit loves to interact by carrying her basket filled with heartfelt notes for clients. Esprit also interacts with clients by waving, giving high fives, dancing and carrying items to them such as paperwork or kleenex. Working with clients during individual therapy sessions is Esprit's main role; however, she also brings a sense of calm and extra joy to the office setting. Esprit enjoys passing out notes or small inspirational notebooks to staff members from time to time. If a staff member has had an exceptionally hard day, visiting with Esprit is sometimes just what they need to end their day.

Esprit is a joy to work with. She is a smart and intuitive dog. It is a wonderful feeling to see the positive interactions between Esprit and my clients. Since having Esprit, I have noticed a decrease in the time it takes to build rapport with clients, especially children. When anxiety/stress are high, interactions with Esprit provide a much quicker reduction in symptoms during sessions. Clients do hard work during therapy sessions, often times addressing past trauma in their lives. Esprit's presence has enhanced my therapeutic practice in ways I could never have done without her. I look forward many years of positively impacting lives together.

ABOUT US

Helping Paws is a Minnesota volunteer-based non-profit 501(c)(3) organization with 32 years of experience training and placing service dogs with individuals with physical disabilities or veterans and first responders with PTSD as well as facility dogs. Our mission is to further people's independence and quality of life through the use of Assistance Dogs. Since 1988, we have placed over 250 people with a service dog, giving individuals the gifts of dignity, independence, peace of mind and companionship.

Helping Paws is an accredited member of Assistance Dogs International. We train and place Golden Retrievers and Labrador Retrievers as hard-working partners and companions. Foster Home Trainers take a puppy into their home for approximately 2½ years, during which time they oversee the dog's training and development. Foster Home Trainers and dogs attend weekly service dog training classes led by our professional staff and develop the dogs' repertoire of more than 80 cues.

Photo Credit: Deb Blakeway, Molly DePrekel, Peter Johnson and Steve McCuskey



Helping Paws, Inc.
PO Box 634
Hopkins, MN 55343
952.988.9359
www.helpingpaws.org