



Tails for You

a publication of Can Do Canines®

Your support provided
the perfect medicine
for this doctor.



Winter 2021
V. 32 Issue 1

JUST WHAT THIS DOCTOR WOULD HAVE ORDERED

Thanks to you, Gaelen is bringing peace of mind to Valerie.

As a psychoanalyst, Valerie has a brilliant mind and genuinely kind soul. Her determination to help others knows few limits. Though she does not prescribe medication to her Twin Cities patients, her own experience with Can Do Canines has resulted in a prescription that has changed her life.

Valerie has a combination of conditions that—despite her denial for some time—has created a unique set of challenges for her on a regular basis. She lives with a balance problem and mobility limitations that are caused by chronic pain. After a car accident years ago, Valerie was in a body cast and sustained injury to her brain. While she has worked ceaselessly on pain management and rehabilitation since the accident, the trauma resulted in mobility and cognitive complications. She was officially diagnosed with epilepsy recently when she started realizing she may have been having seizures. A form of temporal lobe epilepsy renders her speechless—though she remains conscious—for a brief time.

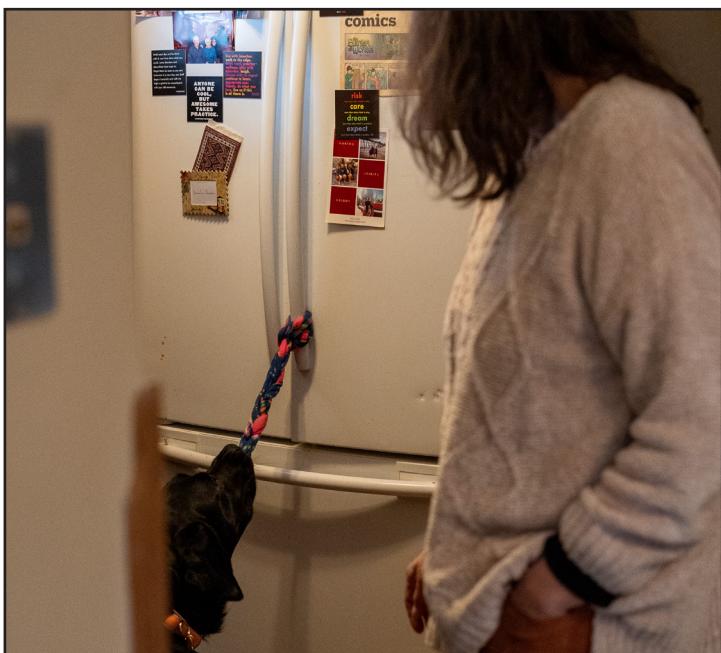


Gaelen is always there for whatever Valerie needs

amazed by how well-trained he was. The gallant Gaelen retrieves various items that fall on the ground, helps with a steady brace when Valerie is going up stairs, and even gets his equipment from where it hangs and brings it to Valerie for “getting dressed.” He cleans up his toys, tugs open the refrigerator and dishwasher, and offers additional braced support when Valerie gets up from the floor or stands up from sitting. And for the cherry on top of his skills-sundae, Gaelen wears a specially designed harness with a hard-handle, which steadies Valerie as she walks. While Valerie used to struggle through a brain fog and stay at home to maintain her safety, she now embraces a new life of security and constant unconditional love.

In his seizure assist work, Gaelen is becoming aware of Valerie’s seizures and able to respond in more beneficial ways. At night, she sometimes wakes up to her leg twitching, but her pooch partner with the perfect bedside manner is snuggled on or next to her. He provides physical warmth as well as a point of contact for her recovery. If Valerie is seated, Gaelen rests his front half over her lap to perform light pressure therapy, helping her remain connected to a tactile reality as she seizes. Experiencing seizures alone is a frightening experience, and just the uncertainty is exhausting to worry about, but Gaelen is able to alleviate that anxiety for Valerie. One night, she was having nightmares associated with seizures, and he nudged her to wake up.

Valerie tells everyone, “I can do so many things with more ease and more peace of mind. I think that peace of mind aspect is what a lot of people could use when they have a disability. In some ways they can’t trust their own bodies; I can’t trust mine to do what I would like it to, but having a helper to what I want to do is such an amazing gift.”



Gaelen loves his job and is eager to please

Valerie researched assistance dogs to help her sustain a safe living arrangement. Her adult children affirmed her pursuit of a canine companion, and she applied for a Mobility Assist-Seizure Assist Dog from Can Do Canines.

The Loving Bond of a Lifetime

A 2-year-old, black Golden Retriever/Labrador Retriever mix named Gaelen is just what this doctor could have “ordered.” Valerie was nervous when she met him but

Since Valerie's children all live outside of the country, they too find great comfort in having Gaelen as a helping presence for their mother while they're far away.

The Gift that Keeps Giving

Valerie focuses on Attachment Theory in her practice, and she shares that the bond between a baby and mother is very similar to her bond with Gaelen. They respond to each other based on trusting communication, creating a safe situation with eye contact and no need for constant words. It turns out that Galen has been the perfect kindred spirit for his human half, as both strive to care for others.

In sincere appreciation, Valerie expresses, "My gratitude is for the people who train these dogs with love. Other

people have given their time and energy to provide [him] for me. It's just an amazing feeling, and the gratitude in that is overwhelming." She continues, "I don't know how to say enough, because there aren't words. He is love and

"...having a helper to what I want to do is such an amazing gift."

just gives it back, and that's what I think Can Do Canines does is give and give and give. He is a gift and all of the people who raised him are gifts in my life."

AUTISM ASSIST DOGS PROVE TO BE A CLASS ACT

You are helping children experience success with online learning.

Ask just about anyone, and they'll probably agree that 2020 has been like nothing we could have imagined. For a child with autism, the challenges have been especially difficult. One noticeable struggle for these youngsters has been with adapting to online learning. Trying to stay disciplined enough to focus on curriculum presented over a computer screen is no small feat for anyone, much less those who have trouble concentrating on a regular basis.

During these situations, our Autism Assist Dogs have risen to the challenge in assisting their best buddy. We've repeatedly heard from families how much their Can Do Canine has made an impact with online learning situations. Instead of perpetuating the stereotype of eating the homework, these canine classmates are helping kids to make the grade.

One example is Autism Assist Dog Nana, who has been with Gavin since the end of October. The timing couldn't have been any better, since Gavin's school district went entirely online shortly after her arrival. Gavin's mom, Jenny, says, "Nana provides many positive benefits to Gavin throughout the school day and beyond." She adds, "As with many children on the spectrum, Gavin is most successful when he has a routine throughout the day, and Nana offers him stability."

Canines Help with Concentration

However, whether it's during reading, writing or arithmetic, online school can get to be a cacophony of voices. Jenny explains, "Imagine having noise sensitivities and being on an online call with 25 other 11- and 12-year-old children; trying to concentrate on the teacher's voice

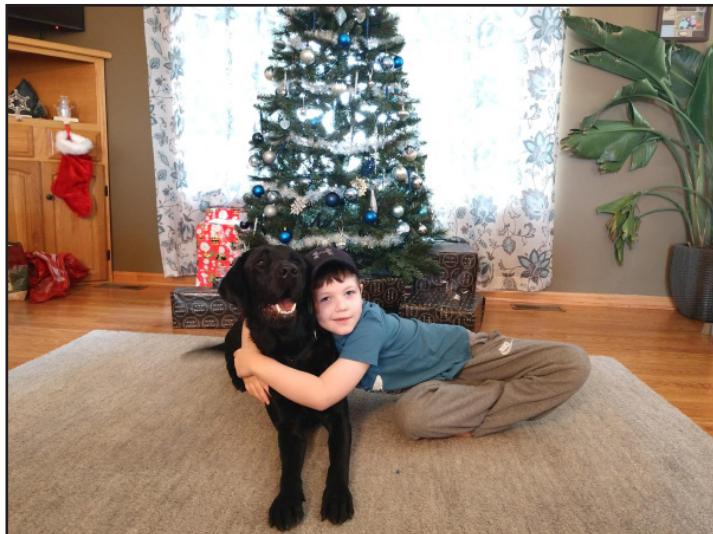


Gavin and Nana are disciplined about learning in a sea of chatter can cause a lot of stress. Nana's presence alone offers Gavin comfort in this chaotic environment."

Gavin appreciates and implements the many ways Nana can specifically assist him. Jenny reports that Gavin "can utilize some of Nana's many commands, such as 'sit' and 'stay,' for Nana to simply be next to him while he listens to class. The simple task of petting her and having her near is soothing and calming to Gavin. When things get

more stressful, Nana can ‘visit,’ where she will put her head in Gavin’s lap and lay with him until he can calm down. She can also ‘lap,’ which is one of Gavin’s favorites commands, where Nana will lay on Gavin’s chest, putting her weight on him, as a calming technique.”

Like many other students, Gavin looks forward to recess each day. “Recess is their favorite time together,” says Jenny. “They can spend the time in the backyard, playing catch, running around and chasing toys.”



Nitro and Nolan pose for the camera



Nitro makes it easier for Nolan to sit still

Nolan is another student who is experiencing similar benefits with his Can Do Canine, Nitro, these days. When Nolan is participating in online school or a virtual therapy session, he’ll sit either in a chair or on his bed. If he’s sitting at a table, Nitro parks under his chair. If Nolan’s on his bed, Nitro applies pressure across his legs to help calm Nolan. Megan, Nolan’s mom, says, “That helps keep Nolan focused, knowing Nitro’s there. Nolan sits still, stays on task, and stays focused. Today for 30 minutes, he didn’t get up once. He sat there the entire time and did his work, and that was incredible. That’s the first time I’ve ever seen him do that.”

Sophia, a sophomore at Blaine High School, shares the success she has had with her own Autism Assist Dog, Rylee. “Rylee creates consistency in my world. This is critical for me since I’m really isolated. For the first time

“**For the first time ever,
I’m getting straight A’s.**”

ever, I’m getting straight A’s and I’m understanding what’s happening in class.” Sophia says that Rylee isn’t shy about being in on the action. “She wants to be on camera and see what’s going on. She likes to look at the people talking.”



Rylee and Sophia conquer classes together

At this rate, these assistance dogs and the many other Autism Assist Dogs we have working right now might just help their beloved student become the teacher’s pet.

Contact Cari Bishop at cbishop@can-do-canines.org to learn how to apply for an assistance dog.

KIRSTEN HONORS FORMER CLIENT IN MULTIPLE, MEANINGFUL WAYS

A nurse goes from caring for a dog owner to caring for his dog.

Kirsten Hahn was right there when Tom Untiedt walked on his own for the first time in many years. A nurse, Kirsten began working with Tom and his Can Do Canine, Tabor, when they lived at North Park Plaza Independent Living Center in New Hope, where Kirsten's office was housed. Tom was so proud of this goal, accomplished through the hard work he and Tabor did during therapy, he made sure he took some steps outside Kirsten's office for her to share in this victory.



Tom and Tabor

Tom and Tabor first became a team in early 2016, after Tabor, an extremely intelligent chocolate Labrador Retriever, was trained in both mobility and diabetes work for Tom. After Kirsten became a part of their team, the three of them instantly bonded, and Kirsten quickly gained an appreciation for all that Tabor offered Tom. Kirsten explains that even when she

wasn't assisting Tom as his nurse, she was spending time with Tabor, often taking him outside to do his business or allowing him to be with her in her office when Tom needed someone else to temporarily care for his best buddy. Kirsten even credits Tom and Tabor for renewing her passion in nursing. She says of the experience with the pair, "They changed me more than I did them."

As their working relationship grew, so did Kirsten's interest in Can Do Canines. Tom encouraged Kirsten's participation in fundraisers for Can Do Canines, and they ended up hosting an annual one at North Park, making thousands of dollars for the organization.

However Kirsten had only worked with Tom for less than a year, when he suddenly passed away. Naturally, Kirsten was devastated by the news. She was also concerned about Tabor's future and worked diligently with Can Do Canines for the best outcome. Once it was decided that Tabor would be retired due to his age, Kirsten did not have to think twice about adopting him. She had seen the incredible work that Tabor did for Tom on a regular basis. Kirsten explains, "Tabor saved Tom's life numerous times," getting him a beverage to correct his blood sugar, moving rugs out of the way, alerting

others in the grocery store when Tom needed emergency assistance, and more.

Kirsten still makes use of many of the commands for Tabor she learned from Tom and has since added at least one of her own. Her other two dogs, a boxer and an English pointer, are older than 7-year-old Tabor, and one of them deals with incontinence. When instructed, Tabor will fetch a diaper for Kirsten to use on his fellow housemate.

Giving Tabor a loving home isn't the only way that Kirsten is continuing Tom's legacy. "When Tom died unexpectedly and I took on Tabor, I vowed to continue to support Can Do Canines and the mission," she says. "I have so much respect for what you do. You enrich the lives of so many." Emphasizing those words, Kirsten has already made two \$3,000 donations since Tom's passing, giving her the privilege of naming two puppies so far. She chose to memorialize Tom with Tommy in 2019 and Taybees in 2020.

Kirsten has also attended multiple Can Do Canines events, including Fetching Ball Galas, Can Do Woofaroos, and graduations. She expressed that learning about the individual lives that are affected by the organization's efforts puts more meaning into being involved. "I feel like part of the Can Do Canines family, and I'm honored to be part of an organization that does such great work." Kirsten wants to share her belief with others that supporting Can Do Canines is a life-long mission. "It doesn't stop with one donation or one event. It's ongoing. The need is always going to be there for more dogs and more people." She believes that since our world has seen such unusual circumstances lately, "We all need to pull together and do what we can."



Kirsten and her boyfriend, Eric, with Tabor at a Can Do Woofaroo

So as long as fate allows, Kirsten will continue the journey with Tabor. Together, they are honoring Tom's memory and "walking" the mission of Can Do Canines—something that would make Tom proud to see.

YOU HELPED MAKE THIS POSSIBLE

(last quarter, unless otherwise noted)

Dogs in for final training as of 1/6/21

21



Puppies named by Name-A-Puppy donors in 2020

30



Active working teams who receive continuous follow-up and support from us:

360



109

dog toys and bags of treats you donated during our Prison Program Toy Drive

Teams certified in 2020

51



Dogs currently being trained in one of our partner prisons

42



UPCOMING EVENTS

Fetching Ball Gala - February 20, 7 p.m.

This virtual event will include an inspiring client story, a unique look into our prison dog training program, exciting auctions, and fabulous entertainment – all benefitting the organization.

For event information, please visit can-do-canines.org/fetchingball.



Tails to Tell Presentations

can-do-canines.org/tailstotell

Thursday, January 14, 7 p.m.

Saturday, February 6, 11 a.m.

Thursday, March 11, 7 p.m.

If you missed the behind-the-scenes training video mentioned in our last newsletter, you can watch it by visiting the Gallery Videos page on our website under the About menu tab.



Our Mission

Can Do Canines is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for people with disabilities by creating mutually beneficial partnerships with specially trained dogs.

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