For most of us, not enough sleep is the problem. For Steve it’s the opposite.

You helped correct that.
Narcolepsy has disrupted virtually every aspect of Steve Litzkow’s life for years. This serious neurological disorder put him at risk of becoming immobile and helpless for hours at a time. It was a huge worry for his wife Sherilyn, especially when she was at work or out shopping while Steve was home alone.

“I was often stressed, because I’d come home at 5 p.m. and find that he’d been lying there since noon,” Sherilyn says.

Steve’s story starts at age 20, when he sustained two traumatic brain injuries while serving in the military. The first injury led to the development of narcolepsy, and by 25, he was disabled by the condition.

Throughout the day Steve experiences excessive sleepiness and the need to take multiple naps. He also experiences cataplexy—a sudden loss of muscle tone resulting in the inability to move. For Steve, the cataplexy attacks can last up to four or five hours.

“My cataplexy attacks involve anything from my mouth sagging to going all the way down to the floor,” Steve says.

But today, the Litzkow’s risks and worries from Steve’s symptoms have been abated markedly thanks to the arrival of a two-year-old black Labrador retriever named Jojo. As a Seizure Assist Dog, Jojo came to the couple’s home in St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin specially trained to mitigate the symptoms associated with Steve’s narcolepsy.

“When Steve has a cataplexy attack, Jojo provides assistance right away, licking Steve’s fingers and hands. This helps him get sensation back,” explains Sherilyn. “The faster Steve can get out of an episode, the fewer problems he’ll have with losing muscle tone and having spasms.”

Jojo’s assistance has instilled confidence in Sherilyn while she is away, as she knows Steve is in good hands (or paws). Even when she is home, Sherilyn enjoys enhanced peace of mind knowing Jojo is on the job.

And, Jojo’s job doesn’t end with helping Steve wake up. He helps out around the house too, opening and closing drawers and even does the laundry!
“Jojo loves to do the laundry,” Steve says. “If I drop anything on the floor, he’s there to pick it up and carry it to the washing machine.”

Although not able to drive, Steve stays active by Nordic walking (with poles) and using a Segway to travel to town. Jojo keeps pace, ready to deliver his services when needed. While going for a regular walk, Steve can grab onto a handle sewn into Jojo’s vest. This provides stability and eliminates the need for a walking cane.

“Jojo has had a positive impact on my life in so many ways,” Steve says. “Some of his skills may not seem that critical, but when you go through what I go through, it really is a big deal.”

“Before we applied to Can Do Canines, we checked into other places that charge $25,000 to $40,000 for an assistance dog,” Sherilyn adds. “And that would have been on top of the money we need for Steve’s ongoing care.”

Thanks to Can Do Canines donors, Sherilyn says, they can relax and just concentrate on working with Jojo and benefiting from his life-changing assistance.

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Raise $72,985 over the holidays

470 people just like you made a contribution over the holidays and raised $72,985 for the organization. That provides enough funds to train three new assistance dog teams. Thank you.

11 people live independent lives

Can Do Canines trained and placed 11 specially-trained dogs this quarter with people in need. All dogs were provided free of charge due to your support. See the back cover for the list of teams and join us in congratulating them at our Graduation Ceremony on Saturday, April 25.

13 dogs begin final training

Final training is the last step before our dogs are partnered with someone in need. 13 dogs have begun fine-tuning their skills before they begin the next phase of their lives—assistance.

20 puppies start their new journey

Slammer, Rocky, Willy and Sunny are just a few of the new names around Can Do Canines. Our pups in training are growing bigger each day because of your support. And they are already beginning to learn all the ways they can one day help someone with a disability.

YOU HELPED make the following possible over the past winter.
A dog’s nose and your support eliminated one woman’s visits to the emergency room.

Cyndy Frerichs, of Edina, Minn., is not new to the world of diabetes. Diagnosed at age 13, she has lived with Type 1 diabetes for 47 years. But only recently has it worsened to a dangerous stage.

Problems with hypoglycemia unawareness (she cannot feel the usual symptoms of low blood sugar, like sweating and shaking) have made her life more challenging. In one year alone, she was hospitalized 10 times due to low blood sugar. Sometimes paramedics were called because she was unconscious and having convulsions. When she is alone, the dangers of hypoglycemia are the most frightening.

“The unawareness of my low blood sugars became scary, crucial and life-threatening,” she says. “I feel like I have a guardian angel, because there were a number of times that I wouldn’t have made it. Once the cable guy even had to call 911. That’s when I realized I needed something.”

That realization led her to investigate assistance dogs. The results of her search kept bringing her to Can Do Canines.

“As I was inquiring about a dog, Can Do Canines kept coming up over and over,” says Cyndy. “I’m also a member of a number of support groups, and the name came up through them.”

After applying to Can Do Canines, she was teamed with Diabetes Assist Dog Jagger, a two-and-a-half-year-old black Labrador retriever. Jagger’s first day with Cyndy proved to be an event for both of them. She was in the process of moving to a new home, and the day that she moved in, so did Jagger. His moving in wasn’t just one more thing to contend with on an already hectic day—he chipped in.

“He helped me clean up,” says Cyndy. “I’d say, ‘Clean up’ and he’d pick up paper. I learned that I had to put a basket out for some place to put the paper.”

Dangerous blood sugar levels can come on at any time. Jagger can tell Cyndy’s blood sugars are low by smelling her breath and nudging her—letting her know it’s time to test.

“He’s very persistent,” says Cyndy. “He does not stop. If I don’t respond, he’ll nudge me. If I’m sitting, he’ll put his paws up on me. If I still don’t respond, he will bark.”

This has led to a resurgence in Cyndy’s health. The number of emergency hospital visits since Jagger entered her life has dwindled down to zero. Jagger has even begun to alert Cyndy to high blood sugar levels, something Can Do Canines hadn’t trained him to do.

“One day, he nudged me in that distinctive way that he does, and I knew I wasn’t low. So I tested and I was high!” Cyndy says. “So with that, I praised him and I breathed on him, so he could hopefully recognize it the next time.”

Cyndy has a special thanks for those donors who provide contributions, and wishes they could see the fruits of their generosity in action.

“It’s such a gift for everyone who gets an assistance dog,” she says. “I just wish that some of the people who donate could come and hang out with us and see how fabulous it is and how life-changing it is.”

Being teamed with Jagger has truly been a life-saving event for Cyndy.

“He’s given me a sense of security. I feel like, before with diabetes, it was me against the world,” Cyndy reflects. “Now it’s me and Jagger against the world. It’s been great. I know that I have an added measure of security.”
Every person has their preferred dog breed. Whether it’s the squishy face of a bulldog or the majestic coat of a collie, each person is attracted to specific dogs for certain reasons. For volunteer Puppy Raisers Dee Dee and Pat Heffernan and their children Catherine and Samuel ... it’s poodles.

“Poodles are so smart and quirky,” Dee Dee says. “We love the way they ‘talk’ to us when they want something, or sometimes, when they really don’t want to do something.”

But it’s not just a unique personality that has this St. Paul, Minn. family raising poodles; it’s also out of necessity. Dee Dee is allergic to dogs, or more specifically, their fur when they shed. Poodles have a single-layer coat that sheds minimally and is constantly growing (which leads to those unique haircuts). So, it’s been a perfect match.

The Heffernans have been volunteering in a variety of ways with Can Do Canines for 22 years—almost as long as the organization has been in existence. They got into puppy raising slowly at first through short-term fostering. But in 2006, they made the plunge to become official Puppy Raisers.

“Dee Dee really wanted a dog and I didn’t,” Pat says. “Guess who won!”

The Heffernans have since raised eight Can Do Canines, are currently raising their ninth and this spring just took in their tenth. All poodles!

When they began puppy raising, they thought they would raise one dog and that would be it. But, as they’ve become more comfortable and confident as dog trainers, they’ve discovered that with each dog, not only do they help someone with a disability, they learn something new about themselves.

“I used to never do public speaking,” Pat says. “But when you feel strongly about something, like Can Do Canines, it becomes a lot easier. Puppy raising has made me more outgoing.”

The hardest part of puppy raising for the Heffernans remains turning the dog back in. They say it hasn’t gotten any easier over the years. Even after just two weeks with a puppy, they have already bonded with the dog and don’t want to give it up. The only solution for their heartbreak has been to fill that void with another batch of puppy love.

“I equate it to sending your child to college. You’re sad to see them go, but excited for them to take whatever you taught them and go out and do good things,” Pat says.

And for the Heffernans that’s what keeps them coming back for more. They say they love the finished product—seeing a puppy they raised making a difference for someone in need of help. They love the connection that happens when the dog meets their new partner, when he or she understands they are now partnered with someone who relies on them.

“For me, a graduation says it all,” Pat says. “Being able to see what the dogs do for people, how the dogs have changed a person’s life for the better. It’s amazing.”

Would you like a puppy in your life?

As a Puppy Raiser for Can Do Canines, you transform our mission from words on paper into an everyday reality for people with disabilities.

Your selfless gifts of time and caring provide freedom, independence and peace of mind for people with disabilities and their families.

To learn more about becoming a Puppy Raiser visit can-do-canines.org/puppy-raiser or call Volunteer Coordinator Laurie Carlson at 763-331-3000 x113.
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.

JOIN US FOR SPRING GRADUATION
Saturday, April 25, 2015
1 p.m.
at Can Do Canines

Connect With Us
Can Do Canines
9440 Science Center Drive
New Hope, MN 55428
763.331.3000
info@can-do-canines.org
can-do-canines.org

OUR NEW LOOK
Welcome to the new LOOK of Can Do Canines!
As you may have noticed, a few things have changed. Same life-changing stories, different format.
You can now find information such as our WISH LIST, HONORARIUMS & MEMORIALS and all the great people who’ve helped make the teams above possible on our new and improved website:
can-do-canines.org

It’s spring at Can Do Canines and that means more than 20 assistance dog teams are ready to celebrate their many months of hard work and training by participating in our graduation celebration.

Please join us!