



Tails for You

a publication of Can Do Canines®

Because of you, Yummy is helping Kaitlyn be more comfortable and confident.



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A DREAM COME TRUE

Her parents' prayers are answered

Seven-year-old Kaitlyn Eliason of Lakeville, Minnesota, loves the newly discovered freedom of putting her face in the water during swim lessons, something she wasn't comfortable attempting just a few months ago before her Autism Assist Dog, Yummy, entered the picture.

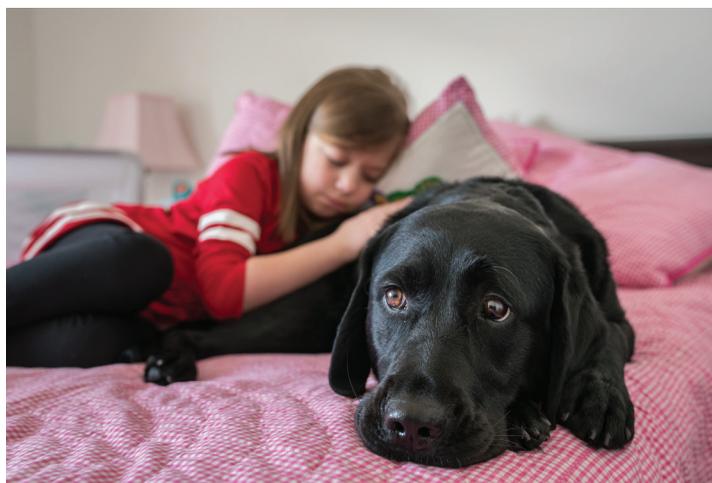
Kaitlyn has autism, and for years has struggled with anxiety, meltdowns, and trouble focusing on tasks. Her diagnosis came during a preschool evaluation when she was just over three years old, months after her parents Karen and Frederick first became concerned that some of Kaitlyn's behaviors differed from those of her peers at daycare. Her parents scrambled to find the best resources and programs for Kaitlyn, and were desperate to do anything and everything they could to support her.



Kaitlyn tells Yummy stories | Photos by Greg Bissen | www.firstlightpictures.tv

Even after enrolling Kaitlyn in extensive therapy and a preschool suited to support children with autism, Karen still remembers crying at night, asking, "What am I going to do for my little girl? What are all the things I should be doing? What else can I do?"

Karen began doing internet searches about assistance dogs and came across Can Do Canines, but it wasn't until she started filling out the application that she realized the organization is based right here in the Twin Cities. Can Do Canines matched Kaitlyn with Yummy, a happy, cuddly Golden Retriever and Labrador Retriever mix. Within a few short weeks, the whole family noticed a big difference in Kaitlyn's confidence and comfort levels.



Kaitlyn is comforted by singing to and petting Yummy

With Yummy by her side, Kaitlyn no longer struggles with many of her former anxiety triggers. Trips to Target with mom, for example, had previously been a challenge, as Kaitlyn might wander off or have a meltdown at the sight of automatic doors or scary Halloween decoration displays.

Now, thanks to her pal Yummy, Kaitlyn is more comfortable in many public settings and situations that once upset her. She embraces putting her face in the water during swim lessons, can sit still during family meals at restaurants, and even sleeps through the night in her own bed—all things that came about after Yummy entered her life.

Yummy's a big hit with family and friends, too. She plays fetch with Kaitlyn's five-year-old brother, Eric, and is quiet and respectful of everyone. The neighbors can hardly believe that a dog could be so well behaved!

Kaitlyn's parents are eternally grateful for Yummy and Can Do Canines. "She's terrific and she's definitely making an impact on our daughter's life and on our lives," they say. "She was something we dreamed about and prayed for."

**"She was something we dreamed about and
prayed for."**

Thank you for making this partnership possible:

Puppy Raiser: The Lindemann family
Special Thanks: Lindsay Merkel, the Lindemann family, and
Laura and Adam Waudby

You: Thank you for your donations!

PUPPIES, PUPPIES, PUPPIES!

From the whelping box:

Thanks to your support, we have welcomed **six** litters of puppies!

Saffron gave birth on December 10 to her 'G' litter: eight adorable puppies. She was hosted by whelping home volunteers the Fonseth-Lais family.

Ulana welcomed her troop of nine puppies in her 'H' litter on January 22. The Herr family kindly whelped mom and pups.

Rylla proudly presented her 'I' litter of five puppies on January 22. She stayed with whelping home volunteers Karin and Elroy Balgaard.

Wednesday had four puppies in her 'J' litter. On February 5, Betty Otto and Mike Ferber and Wednesday welcomed the sweet puppies.

Roux gave birth to her 'K' litter of seven on Valentine's Day. She and puppies stayed with whelping home volunteers Dana and Pete Kittok.

Finally, Tory welcomed her 'L' litter of eight puppies on February 28. Mitch and Wendy Peterson whelped mom and puppies.

How you can help:

We are looking for Puppy Program Volunteers for short and long-term opportunities! Your commitment means changing someone's life for the better.

Contact volunteer coordinator, Robyn Rodrigue, at rrodrigue@can-do-canines.org or 763-331-3000 x119.



New mom Rylla and one of five puppies from her "I" litter



An 'H' litter puppy snoozing

YOU HELPED

and made the following possible in the winter of 2018.

You made 14 graduate teams possible at the Winter Graduation Ceremony.



You helped maintain 56 dogs in five different prisons.



You helped provide food and medication for the 220 dogs in our program.



You made it possible for key staff to attend the Penn Vet Working Dog Conference to learn dog care practices.

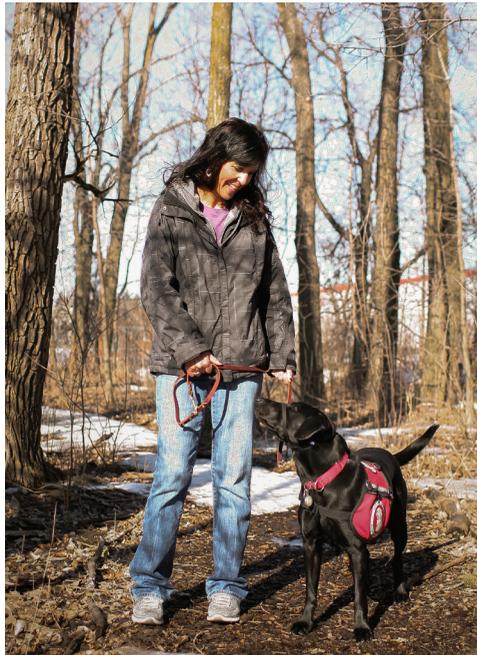


FILLING A VOID

How Tavi is giving Joy a second chance at independence and peace of mind

Karen Kelly of Andover, Minnesota, is no stranger to the struggles of living with diabetes. For almost 30 years, Karen has used an insulin pump and checks her blood sugar eight to ten times a day. She tries to keep her levels at 150, but it has dropped as low as 19. However, having type 1 diabetes with hypoglycemic unawareness means that she can't tell when her blood sugar is dangerously low or high. This is where her new Diabetes Assist Dog, Tavi, has played a big role in her life.

But Tavi isn't her first Diabetes Assist Dog. In 2008 she was teamed with Joy. Unfortunately, Joy passed away in September of 2016 after eight years of dedicated service, leaving Karen without one of her



Karen and Tavi walk in the woods | Photos by Tiffany Hendrickson

most valuable means of assistance and support. "It obviously made my family more at ease that somebody else was here with me when I was alone or out in public," she says. "It added a perk to having a disability that can kind of bring you down."

While Karen wanted a Diabetes Assist Dog to help keep her safe, it wasn't an easy decision to get another dog because she wasn't sure Joy could simply be replaced. "At first, I wanted to get on the list because I knew that empty space," she says. "And life with [a Diabetes Assist Dog] just became a way of life for

me." But Karen wasn't immediately ready to move on. "I needed that healing time," she says.

Once she eventually decided to apply for another assistance dog, she didn't have to wait long. In May 2017 she was matched with Tavi, a Black Labrador Retriever. Comparing Joy and Tavi, she realized that the two dogs had quite different personalities.

"There are big differences," Karen laughs. "If somebody had told me that they were from the same bloodline, other than the occasional looks, I'm not sure I would've believed it. Their personalities are night and day."

"And now, with Tavi, it's a second chance ..."

To the volunteers who worked with Tavi, she expresses her gratitude. "I want to say a big, 'Thank you,'" she says. "I lived with my [daughter's puppy] for a couple of months, and I experienced how much energy they have and the patience that you need—especially to bring them to the caliber that Tavi is now. So certainly a big, gracious, 'Thank you' and appreciation for all that they did to bring her to me."

Like other Can Do Canines graduates, both of her assistance dogs were supplied free of charge. To the donors who help make this possible, she also



Karen and Tavi

expresses her appreciation.

"With Joy, she just changed my life," Karen says. "I couldn't thank anybody enough for having given her to me. And now, with Tavi, it's a second chance so I'm forever in debt to Can Do Canines and the people that support it."

Thank you for making this partnership possible:

Great Start Home: The Greeley family
Puppy Raiser: The inmate handlers at FPC Duluth
Special Thanks: Linda & Rick Stefonek

PAGING DOCTOR MERKEL

Getting involved every way she can

Like many people involved with Can Do Canines, Lindsay Merkel has always loved animals. Throughout her childhood, her family had cats, dogs, and the occasional parakeet and hamster. But when she married her husband in 1988, the two, as Lindsay describes, “developed more of a clan of animals.” By the birth of their first child in 1996, they had six dogs and six cats, two hamsters, and a litter of baby hamsters—a clan, indeed.



Lindsay and Freya at the University of Minnesota | Photos by Mark Falstad

Lindsay even incorporated her love of animals into her work life. After taking her first childhood dog into the vet for vaccinations, she decided then and there that she would become a veterinarian herself. “I was very intrigued by the fact that there was actually a doctor for the dog,” she says. “I never changed my mind from the age of six years.” Now, an Assistant Professor at the University of Minnesota Veterinary Medical Center, Lindsay teaches internal medicine to students in the clinic, as well as supervises interns and residents.

Luckily, Lindsay brought her love of animals and veterinary medicine to Can Do Canines in 2007. A long-time coworker started raising assistance dogs for Can Do Canines, and Lindsay was interested too. “I’d always wanted to raise a service dog,” she says.

However, she worried about how she would explain to her five-year-old that they would be giving back a dog after raising it. But her concerns were relieved when the time came. “The kids actually did better giving her back than I did,” she says. “[And we] sort of got sucked in from there,” she laughs. Since she began volunteering in 2007, Lindsay has hosted females in the breeding program, whelped many litters of puppies, raised dogs both as a Great Start Home and as a Puppy Raiser volunteer, and more.

But Lindsay also donates her veterinarian expertise, something that has helped to alleviate a financial burden on Can Do Canines and their volunteers. Her involvement allows the purchase of medications and to have certain vaccinations in-house, rather than having to go to a veterinary clinic. “[Before, if a dog-in-training] had a bad ear, you didn’t have ear meds here that you could just get and dispense,” she says. Instead, Puppy Raisers or Can Do Canines themselves needed to visit a veterinarian and pay for the expense.

For medical concerns that can’t be handled at the facility, Lindsay provides her expertise on next steps for that dog-in-training, whether that means seeing a specialist or needing to be career changed.

She also consults with program staff regarding breeding, specifically the genetic components and genetic testing. “She is such an asset to Can Do Canines that I don’t even know where to begin,” says Julianne Larsen, director of training. “There is not an aspect of the organization that she hasn’t impacted.”

One of her recent consultations was in late December of 2017. Lindsay was whelping Clover’s ‘F’ litter, and noticed that one of the five-week-old puppies, Freya, had a problem with her eye. After further inspection, it was decided that a surgical procedure was required to correct the issue.



Lindsay and Freya

Instead of heading to Jackson Correctional Institution where her brothers and sisters are being raised and trained, Freya is staying with Lindsay for the time being. “We chose to have her stay with me just because it’d be easier [to monitor her healing progress],” she explains.

This volunteer has made a huge impact on Can Do Canines, especially on their assistance dogs and graduates. Thank you, Lindsay, for your dedication.

EVENTS

Fetching Ball Recap

We want to thank our 435 attendees, those who donated to our silent and live auctions, and our dedicated staff, volunteers, and Fetching Ball committee for their part in raising more than \$167,000 for our mission.

And a special thank you to Sven Sundgaard for being our Master of Ceremonies, Sara Carson and Hero for their exciting performance, and Janice, Kali, and Buddy for their client presentation.

Mark your calendars for next year's Fetching Ball happening during our 30th anniversary!

The next Fetching Ball: February 9, 2019



Graduation

June 16, 2018 | 1-2 p.m. | Can Do Canines

Join us at our Summer Graduation Ceremony to congratulate our graduating teams on their many months of hardwork and training.

Communication Needs

If you have special communications needs, please contact us at least two weeks in advance of an event so we can accomodate your request. Thank you!

763-331-3000 | info@can-do-canines.org

Did you know?

If you have any of the items on our wish list which you no longer need or want, contributing them makes sense in many ways. You'll help us open doors, spare the environment, and turn your unwanted goods into a possible tax deduction! See the list at the link below or contact Al Peters at 763-331-3000 ext.116.



See more items on our website!

can-do-canines.org/donate/wishlist/

- Gentle leaders—medium and large
- Snap-close dog collars—10-22 inches
- Soft training treats
- One or two gallon plastic buckets
- KONG Wubba—large and extra large
- KONG Classic—large
- Paper towels
- Unscented baby wipes
- Infrared heat lamps—250 watt
- Amazon giftcards



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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