Can Do Canines®
ASSISTANCE DOGS

Tails for You

a publication of Can Do Canines®

Suzanne and Miya can display the fine art of teamwork, due to your support.

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A NEW KIND OF MUSIC TO HER EARS

Thanks to you, Suzanne and Hearing Assist Dog Miya have found their rhythm together.

Music's power can be felt rather than heard. Suzanne has proven this through her immeasurable talents, despite being nearly deaf since birth. Even with severe hearing loss, she has devoted her life to learning to play music and sharing it with others. "Operating to the rhythm of my own drum, so to speak, I refused to let my disabilities get in the way of anything I wanted to do," she reflects.

Suzanne's hearing loss was not understood by doctors, and as she grew up, it was other people who recognized her disability. Since Suzanne's unapparent disabilities have been complicated to explain, she adopted an independent mindset while holistically caring for others. Music and animals became her passion, and she immersed herself in realms where words were not needed. Wearing hearing aids has helped her to detect some sounds during the day, but she still misses many important audio signals. Plus, although she's remained as physically active as possible, Suzanne's mobility declined due to multiple injuries.

In 2012, Suzanne was raising a Labrador mix named Enzo, and her hearing rehabilitation path led her to Can Do Canines. She applied to become an owner-provided team with Enzo, and they were accepted to the program. She had guided Enzo since he was six weeks old through basic obedience training, then worked with Can Do Canines staff to teach him skills that would enhance her everyday life.

The Hearing and Mobility Assist team graduated and flourished until Enzo passed away in 2020. Suzanne recognized that having another puppy at this time was not a realistic option, but she had never brought an adult dog into her life. Enzo had taught her the value of allowing others to help her, and without her partner, she felt vulnerable again. She made the challenging decision to apply for a Hearing and Mobility Assistance Dog, leading her to the perfect partner named Miya.

Living in Perfect Harmony

Miya is a 2-year-old black Labrador Retriever that may look small, but has a spirit too great to measure. She lives to help others, very similar to Suzanne's drive. Suzanne remembers wondering if they would be a good match, and was nervous about the connection with an adult dog that had been raised by other people. But after learning and bonding, Suzanne shares, "There's nothing to dislike about Miya."

They move to a shared beat now, knowing what the other needs without being told. Miya alerts Suzanne to the smoke alarm, a door knock, her phone ringing, the oven timer going off, and an item hitting the floor that Suzanne is unable to hear. Beyond these incredible feats, Miya retrieves items from lower surfaces that are difficult for Suzanne to safely reach, tugs open drawers, cleans up items to a designated bin, activates push plates for automatic doors, and makes Suzanne laugh at her endless enthusiasm.

> "Miya reminds me of the gift I've been given by this tremendous organization."

Suzanne loves her "wild child" because they both have a common exuberance for everything they do. "Miya reminds me of the gift I've been given by this tremendous organization, even more so than Enzo, because Can Do Canines raised Miya for me," Suzanne shares. Trusting and watching Miya respond to their environment has allowed Suzanne to feel secure, to let go of much anxiety. Miya has again shifted Suzanne's world from one of silence and caution to a safer place where she can thrive.

All The World's Their Stage

Suzanne's gratitude for the organization in this new light comes from a place of empathy. "This is an organization that gives, and that organization is all those people involved. I know what it takes because I've been in their shoes raising puppies," she says. She is reminded of the song *Someone to Watch Over Me* because the mutual care flows constantly for these leading ladies. To everyone who was a part of Miya's journey and the Can Do Canines community, "These people were gifts, they were angels of love, support, and mercy to do the heavy work that I'm familiar with."

Just as music empowers the listener, Miya has given Suzanne the confidence to march on again.

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

A BETTER LIFE WITH A FAMILIAR COMPANION

You are helping honor the memory of Diabetes Assist Dog Tory in a special way.

Annika and Leah

People often say, "Everything happens for a reason." What happened in Annika's life the past few years, though, seemed without reason until she met a miracle with four paws.

A few years ago, a unique form of diabetes caused Annika to experience life-threateningly low blood glucose levels without her feeling it. Diagnosed with advanced chronic pancreatitis at 19 years old, Annika had her entire pancreas and spleen removed, resulting in Type 3c diabetes. She has been insulin-dependent ever since, navigating additional health considerations as well as anxiety. Type 3c diabetes mimics Type 1 diabetes and includes hypoglycemic (low blood sugar) episodes.

Annika has experienced being unaware of her low blood sugars until she is nearly unconscious. She describes her diabetes management before having a diabetic alert dog as "volatile," and she spent entire days eating or taking extra insulin. Her biggest worry after a day of exhausting glucose level swings was having her blood sugar crash overnight. She would check her glucose levels constantly but would still wake up in the dangerous 30s or 40s just in time to consume sugar. She describes her fear, "It was really scary just going to bed every night. I wasn't sure if everything was going to be okay." In college classes, she would have horrible headaches or almost pass out due to abnormal blood glucose levels. "It was chaos," she says of the vicious cycle of fixing a problem and creating a new one. Annika's different devices that help monitor and manage her glucose levels just weren't able to keep up with her sudden drops.

While Annika was visiting a friend, the friend's Diabetes Assist Dog alerted her to a low blood sugar before she or her equipment had recognized it. She decided to research finding a dog for herself, and applied to Can Do Canines. In the summer of 2019, she was placed with a yellow Labrador Retriever, named Tory, that had retired from the breeding life but showed fantastic potential for assistance work. The team graduated and spent several months together before a sudden and aggressive cancer took Tory across the Rainbow Bridge. Annika and her family grieved the loss of her life-saving friend, but she chose to apply for another Diabetes Alert Dog from Can Do Canines. The staff trainers believed they had her perfect successor match. However Annika would need to make the final call.

A Serendipitous Solution

She met Leah, a 2-year-old yellow Labrador Retriever, before officially training as a team to make sure she felt confident in the new placement. Leah wasn't just any new dog to Annika though. Leah is one of Tory's puppies, and is as beautiful and caring as her mother. A veterinary team conducted an extensive assessment to verify that Tory's cancer was not hereditary, and they concluded that her litters were not at any higher risk than normal for developing cancer. With that reassurance, Annika felt Leah was a wonderful way to keep Tory's memory with her, and the team started training together in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Leah actually alerted Annika the very first time they met. To see them today, you'd think they've spent a lifetime bonding together.

> "She can tell me before I get to that crashed point."

Leah is reliably notifying Annika with a paw-touch that her blood glucose levels are dropping. She is actually aware of these lows before the devices can detect them. "She can tell me before I get to that crashed point," explains Annika. After alerting Annika to her oncoming problem, Leah can retrieve a blood glucose meter to confirm Annika's levels. If she is low or about to be, Annika asks Leah to retrieve a nearby source of sugar to prevent any further concerns. In addition to diabetes assist skills, Leah has learned that Annika anxiously bouncing her knee means that Leah

should rest her chin on that knee. This light pressure therapy interrupts Annika's main signal of anxiety and alleviates her increasing worry—a tremendous benefit in these stressful times. A pre-law student and artist, Annika is again thriving with Leah by her side.

To Know Leah is to Know Love

With the team now at college, Leah brings Annika and her family a sense of security that another angel is keeping an eye—and nose—on her. Annika shares, "I'm so grateful for the people who have helped train her, the prison program that was an incredible opportunity for her, and for the Can Do Canines community working through the pandemic who still managed to match me with her and helped me train." Annika is thankful for every single one of Leah's amazing skills as she prepares for the LSAT with an added peace of mind. She says that Leah is always excited to work, and with such heartfelt bonding, Leah can anticipate what Annika needs. To everyone who brought Tory—and now Leah—into her life, Annika says, "I cannot thank them enough for the time, effort, monetary commitment, and love: everything that they put into these dogs to make them incredible teammates. I cannot say 'thank you' enough for the gift you've given me."

PEACOCKS AND PIGS AND PUPPIES...OH MY!

Learn how assistance dogs, emotional support animals and therapy dogs differ.

We've seen all the news stories about actual wild animals that people are bringing onto planes. Some of us have also witnessed the complications that unruly dogs in capes are causing for valid assistance dog teams. The world of working animals can be confusing due to changing laws, as well as people buying equipment on the Internet for their dogs. So let's take a closer look at the main categories of dogs with jobs: Emotional Support Animals (ESA), Therapy Animals, and Assistance Dogs. While technically any animal can be considered for emotional support or therapy work, we will focus on dogs.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines and protects "service animals" as ones that accompany their handler in most public places. As an Assistance Dogs International-accredited organization, Can Do Canines uses the internationally accepted term "assistance dog." The two terms are interchangeable as far as the ADA's regulations are concerned.

An assistance dog is individually task-trained to help mitigate their handler's disability. It also must display appropriate behavior in public, not disrupting the business environment or being solicitous. If any dog, even a true assistance dog, shows aggression or their handler is unable to control it, the business authority may ask that the dog be removed from the premises. Assistance dogs can be identified in public because the handler is obligated, if asked, to share what the dog does to assist them without disclosing their personal medical condition.

Emotional Support Animals are not required to have any training. Their purpose is to provide companionship and comfort to their handler. The ADA does not protect them for being legally permitted in public. A mental health professional must write a letter verifying that their patient benefits from the animal's company for them to be allowed in non-pet housing (Fair Housing Act).

Mobility Assist Dog Ellie at a recent Flight to Nowhere

Finally, therapy dogs usually must complete training and pass an evaluation in order to be allowed in certain settings for their work. They provide comfort to people other than their handler and are meant to interact with anyone. Therapy dogs are often seen in hospitals and assisted living homes, after traumatic events, or even working with mental health professionals. Their handler has no public access rights with them. Therapy dogs are only allowed in certain places with explicit permission and appropriate behavior requirements.

Each group of working dogs can wear capes to signify they have a purpose beyond being a pet, but a patch that says "service dog" does not necessarily indicate an actual working assistance dog. The training and behavior of the team are what set these dogs apart, and the laws try to protect as many individuals as possible.

HOW OUR BREEDING PROGRAM WORKS

Can Do Canines is committed to the highest industry standards and most up-to-date research for our breeding and whelping programs. Appropriate evaluations of hips, elbows, eyes, heart and DNA, also known as "health clearances," are completed on all our dogs. The dog's health and well-being are priority in each and every breeding decision. If a dog is not ideal for breeding, the dog will be spayed or neutered and will return to training for placement with a client.

Where Do Our Breeding Dogs Come From?

Our breeding dogs come from three sources.

Most of our breeding dogs come from within our own breeding program. Each puppy born within our breeding program is evaluated for characteristics that could make it a good candidate for future breeding. Staff and veterinary professionals conduct ongoing assessments for behavior, health, hereditary traits and physical structure. The best candidates are kept intact and included in the breeding program.

A second important source is Assistance Dogs International's (ADI) American Breeding Cooperative (ABC Co-op). Membership in the ABC Co-op allows us to include some of the best puppies, from all across North America, that are produced by the various member organizations. This sharing improves both the genetics available within each program's own breeding program, and within the entire assistance dog industry. This is why some of the puppies born here are sent to other organizations, and puppies from other organizations come to us.

Finally, breeding dogs are occasionally provided by top quality breeders from around the country who may donate breeding dogs or semen.

Breeding of our females usually begins around age 2 and may extend to age 5. Breeding moms may produce as few as one litter or as many as five. The age and numbers of litters vary with the specific health evaluations of each dog. The health of each mom is the top factor when deciding whether to breed her again or retire her from breeding.

Breeding males can be bred at a slightly younger age. They are bred with our females or females from other assistance dog organizations.

How Breeding Dogs are Chosen

All our puppies born in our breeding program have their first assessment at the age of 7 weeks when their structure is evaluated and a simple temperament test is done. By about 14 months of age, they have had their first eye exam, along with hip and elbow x-rays. Next up is the Behavior Checklist (BCL) evaluation at around 16 months of age. This is when staff take a more focused look at each dog. From the BCL results and another look at their physical structure, both male and female dogs are identified for further breeding consideration. Each dog's training, behavior and health histories are reviewed.

Once a dog successfully completes this process, an echocardiogram is scheduled to ensure the structure of the heart is normal. At age two, another set of hip and elbow x-rays are taken. The final step is a DNA panel that tests for 11 different heritable diseases. This information enables the healthiest breeding matches to be made. When all clearances are complete, final evaluations are made and the dog may join the breeding program.

Volunteers Needed!

The breeding program provides two unique niches for volunteers.

A "Breeder Host" gives a home to a single breeding dog when they are not having puppies. We need breeder hosts willing to foster either intact female dogs or intact male dogs.

A "Whelping Home" is a vital part of our breeding program. These people open their home to a breeding mom during her last days of pregnancy. After the puppies are born, she and the puppies live there for the first five to seven weeks.

We welcome all volunteers interested in being involved with the breeding program to contact our volunteer team at volunteer@can-do-canines.org for more information.

Una with her recent "U" litter pups

Breeding Program Benefits

There are definite benefits to having our own breeding program. We can offer consistent development and enrichment of puppies from the day of birth. Also, with selective breeding, we can breed away from health issues and undesirable traits and towards the traits we want in health, temperament, structure and work ethic. Overall, we can achieve a higher success rate of matching dogs with clients compared to donated puppies. This gives us the best possible opportunity to help provide freedom, independence and peace of mind for those who need it.

MEET OUR LATEST SUPERHEROES YOU ARE HELPING TO SUPPORT

Sasha**

Siku**

Simone**

Siren**

Strider**

Surley**

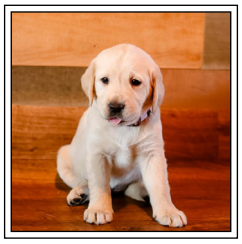
Titan*

Trixi*

Brecon*

Ugene*

Ugo*


Ulla*

Umber*

Utah*

*Photo Credit: Tiffany Hendrickson Photography
**Photo Credit: Kaity McGinn

UPCOMING VIRTUAL EVENTS

Tails of Independence - Tuesday, May 11, 7 p.m.
This fundraising event will allow you and your family members and friends to learn more about the inspiring ways specially trained assistance dogs are changing lives and bringing happiness.

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

Tails to Tell Presentations
Check out one of these to learn more about us.
can-do-canines.org/tailstotell

Thursday, May 13, 7 p.m.
Thursday, June 10, 7 p.m.

Can Do Canines®
ASSISTANCE DOGS

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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