Nathalia and Darla each faced an uncertain future.

But their partnership may have just saved them both.
Everybody loves a good comeback story and it doesn’t get much better than the story of Darla. Last year, the young whippet-mix was bouncing from animal shelter to animal shelter, homeless and needing a family to care for her. This year, she not only found a loving home, but she is helping care for someone else.

Much of Darla’s early life remains a mystery. In early 2014, she was surrendered to an animal shelter in Phoenix, Ariz. That shelter was running low on space, so they asked if the Animal Humane Society in Minnesota had room for her. Fortunately, they did.

Months later, Can Do Canines trainer Laura Waudby was working her way through the Animal Humane Society’s kennels. She was on the lookout for new recruits—any dogs she thought might have the potential to become good assistance dogs.

“The first thing I look for in any shelter dog is confidence,” Laura says. “I see how the dog reacts to being startled by a loud noise and how quickly they recover from exposure to different objects that might frighten them.”

As she made her rounds, Laura came across Darla. While sight hounds are not known for being the easiest to train, Laura noticed instantly that the whippet-mix showed potential. Darla was a confident and happy dog. Nothing seemed to bother her, she was easily motivated and was eager to please—good traits for a future Can Do Canine. So the organization adopted her and Darla joined the ranks as an assistance dog in training.

Around that time, Nathalia Torres Jimenez was studying for a final exam with a friend. The two were graduate students pursuing PhDs in neuroscience at the University of Minnesota. The friend mentioned the fact that Nathalia was missing phone calls and people knocking at the door. Hearing loss was nothing new for Nathalia. She wore hearing aids and had been profoundly deaf since birth. But what she hadn’t realized was that she was missing sounds.

“I’m grateful for all the time and dedication it took to get Darla to this point”

Can you help us raise shelter dogs like Darla?

Can Do Canines always needs Puppy Raisers, but more specifically, we need volunteers to help raise shelter dogs like Darla. Volunteers will not only teach basic obedience and help the dogs socialize, but will closely assess manners and temperament.

To get involved, contact Volunteer Coordinator, Laurie Carlson at 763-331-3000 x113 or lcarlson@can-do-canines.org.
Before college Nathalia lived with her family. Without her realizing it, family members were compensating for her deficiencies by clueing her to the sounds around her. But now, Nathalia was on her own. The thought that an intruder might be in her apartment and she wouldn’t even know it scared her. So Nathalia decided to apply to Can Do Canines for help.

Meanwhile, Darla had worked her way through Can Do Canines training program. When it was Nathalia’s turn to be paired with an assistance dog, Darla was ready. As Nathalia’s Hearing Assist Dog, Darla helps her by alerting to sounds such as the door knock, oven timer and someone calling her name. When a sound occurs Darla runs over, gives Nathalia a light touch with her paw and leads the way to the source of the sound. The most important sound Darla alerts for, Nathalia says, is her cell phone.

“It may not sound like that big of deal, but I have alarms for meetings and people calling to set up appointments. So if I if don’t know where my phone is, it actually causes conflict,” Nathalia explains.

Since Darla came into her life, Nathalia finds herself getting to class on time and is back in tune with the world around her. The fact that Darla is so happy to be around people and pleased to do her job, Nathalia believes, is a testament to the training and love she received since leaving the animal shelter.

“I’m a Neuroscientist so I’m aware of how long it takes to train an animal to perform certain tasks because learning and memory is a portion of what I study,” Nathalia says. “So, I’m grateful for all the time and dedication it took to get Darla to this point. Having her with me has been a life-changing experience.”
ASSISTANCE IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

How you helped someone with ALS live a progressively better life

Major changes don’t always happen overnight. Sometimes little differences add up each year until a major transformation has taken place. This was indeed the case for Clay Ahrens of Falcon Heights, Minn.

Clay, a father of two, worked in the health care field for more than 20 years. One day, nine years ago, he awoke and found himself weaker than usual. It was a challenge to get out of bed and begin his morning routine. These symptoms came and went through the years until he found himself having mobility issues. Falls became common. Then his hands started to weaken. Daily activities like getting dressed, buttoning his shirt, even brushing his teeth became a problem.

In February 2014, eight years after his symptoms began, the official diagnosis was confirmed. Clay had a slowly progressing form of ALS. Three months later, he retired. Clay attempted to cope by moving into a more mobility-accessible house. But as he would go about his day there were numerous times when he needed help. His hair dresser suggested an assistance dog—and more specifically, Can Do Canines—so Clay decided to apply.

Can Do Canines partnered Clay with a two year-old black Labrador retriever named Finnegan. As a Mobility Assist Dog, Finnegan has helped Clay regain some of the independence and freedom ALS has taken over the years.

Clay’s dexterity continues to fade, so Finnegan helps take off his socks and picks up almost anything that he drops. From his cane to his keys to his wallet, Finnegan is there to help. The Lab fetches the phone and does his best not to dial anyone with his tongue while he carries it. The latter part of the skill is still a work in progress!

“One of the best things Finnegan does is bring me breakfast in bed,” Clay says. “He’ll bring me a sealed yogurt and a spoon in his carrying bag. I take it out, give him a treat, and then he carries the bag back to the kitchen. What a great way to start the day!”

Despite having ALS, Clay makes an effort to do at least one social activity a day. He says having Finnegan with him in public has been a “night and day difference.” Not only does he feel safer knowing he has someone with him to help, but having an assistance dog has motivated him to stay active.

“I think Finnegan has challenged me to get outside more because he likes to walk,” Clay says. “So before I needed a reason to take my scooter outside—now I have a daily built-in routine.”

When Clay first applied for an assistance dog he was stunned to hear Finnegan would be partnered with him at no charge. He thought that with all the time and investment that goes into training it was a huge gift for a person with a disability.

“I’d like to say thank you to those who support this organization,” Clay says, “We feel like we’ve won the lottery and we hope Finnegan feels the same.”

“We feel like we’ve won the lottery and we hope Finnegan feels the same.”
A PASSION FOR POOCHES & PEOPLE

The fuel behind Kathy’s Legacy Club membership

Everyone in Kathy Kaiser’s life knows about her love for animals. The Roseville, Minn., resident has had a dog since she was 10 years old and is particularly passionate about senior dogs. Her most recent dog, Matty, was a golden retriever mix from a rescue organization.

“Everyone in Kathy Kaiser’s life knows about her love for animals. The Roseville, Minn., resident has had a dog since she was 10 years old and is particularly passionate about senior dogs. Her most recent dog, Matty, was a golden retriever mix from a rescue organization.”

An elementary school principal, Kathy also feels tremendous empathy for people, especially the elderly, who need a helping hand due to physical disabilities and other challenges.

By joining the Legacy Club and including Can Do Canines in her estate plans, Kathy has found a way to help bring dogs and people together into loving, mutually beneficial relationships.

“Over the years, I’ve gained a greater appreciation for the need and the tremendous difference service animals can make,” she says. “Can Do Canines has a beautiful newsletter that brings these stories to life while keeping stakeholders updated on the organization’s efforts.”

The need for assistance dogs has become increasingly personal for Kathy. One of her nieces has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair. Also, in her 26 years as an educator, Kathy has encountered many children who have autism and other disabilities, not to mention fellow employees with special needs.

“You never know who will benefit from a Legacy Club gift to Can Do Canines. It’s likely to be someone you don’t know. But it could be a family member—or possibly even you. In a perfect world, you would never require an assistance animal. But you might.”

Kathy is grateful to her siblings and other family members for supporting her desire to help Can Do Canines in such a substantial way.

“When you include animals and people you don’t know in your will, some family members may question that. But my family never has, because they know me and my passion for animals and people in need.”

Need a New Year’s resolution? Volunteer!

Can Do Canines understands how difficult New Year’s resolutions can be. But, we’ve got an easy one for you—volunteer with us! From raising our puppies to helping out at one of our great events, we’ve got a rewarding position for you.

To get started contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Laurie Carlson at 763-331-3000 x113 or lcarlson@can-do-canines.org or visit can-do-canines.org/volunteer.
YOU MADE THESE PARTNERSHIPS POSSIBLE

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

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 MISSION

Can Do Canines has been graduating so many teams (thanks to your support) that we had to add an extra ceremony!

Join us this winter in celebrating and congratulating our new assistance dog graduates.

April Biever & Diabetes Assist Dog Basia
Jessica Herbold & Mobility Assist Dog Kinda
Cole Johnson & Hearing Assist Dog Paisley
Terry Marshall & Hearing Assist Dog Carson
Voncille Martin & Mobility Assist Dog Doc
Bill Monson & Mobility Assist Dog Percy
Lindsay Moon & Hearing Assist Dog Cookie
Michael Pastier & Diabetes Assist Dog Paris
Jack Redding & Mobility Assist Dog Odin
Natalie Regenscheid & Hearing Assist Dog Nadia
Meg Schneider & Mobility Assist Dog Quest
Aloha Snock & Mobility Assist Dog Maverick
Karen Staats & Hearing Assist Dog Nash
Nick Stay & Mobility Assist Dog Remo
Daniel Stirewalt Jr. & Mobility Assist Dog Dory
Max Velton & Mobility Assist Dog Jaycee

Take a Tour—Meet Our Dogs

One of the best ways to see your support firsthand is to come to a Tails To Tell Tour. You’ll have a chance to meet a volunteer Puppy Raiser, one of our graduates and see the facility where our dogs learn their life-saving skills.

All tours take place at our facility located at the address below. Please call our office at 763-331-3000 or email tour@can-do-canines.org to reserve your spot!

• Saturday, February 27, 10 a.m.
• Saturday, March 12, 10 a.m.
• Thursday, April 14, 11 a.m.

Read these stories at can-do-canines.org.

Pictured from left to right

YOU MADE THESE PARTNERSHIPS POSSIBLE

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

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 MISSION

Can Do Canines has been graduating so many teams (thanks to your support) that we had to add an extra ceremony!

Join us this winter in celebrating and congratulating our new assistance dog graduates.

April Biever & Diabetes Assist Dog Basia
Jessica Herbold & Mobility Assist Dog Kinda
Cole Johnson & Hearing Assist Dog Paisley
Terry Marshall & Hearing Assist Dog Carson
Voncille Martin & Mobility Assist Dog Doc
Bill Monson & Mobility Assist Dog Percy
Lindsay Moon & Hearing Assist Dog Cookie
Michael Pastier & Diabetes Assist Dog Paris
Jack Redding & Mobility Assist Dog Odin
Natalie Regenscheid & Hearing Assist Dog Nadia
Meg Schneider & Mobility Assist Dog Quest
Aloha Snock & Mobility Assist Dog Maverick
Karen Staats & Hearing Assist Dog Nash
Nick Stay & Mobility Assist Dog Remo
Daniel Stirewalt Jr. & Mobility Assist Dog Dory
Max Velton & Mobility Assist Dog Jaycee

Take a Tour—Meet Our Dogs

One of the best ways to see your support firsthand is to come to a Tails To Tell Tour. You’ll have a chance to meet a volunteer Puppy Raiser, one of our graduates and see the facility where our dogs learn their life-saving skills.

All tours take place at our facility located at the address below. Please call our office at 763-331-3000 or email tour@can-do-canines.org to reserve your spot!

• Saturday, February 27, 10 a.m.
• Saturday, March 12, 10 a.m.
• Thursday, April 14, 11 a.m.

Read these stories at can-do-canines.org.

Pictured from left to right