



Tails for You

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**The warmth of your
support has given
Michelle peace of mind.**

Zeta brings 'spark of life' to Michelle

Michelle jokes that she collects "ologists": neurologists, a cardiologist, a rheumatologist, etc. This type of collection is no laughing matter, though.

Michelle was diagnosed with lupus nearly a decade ago. She explains, "The results of the lupus strain on my body brought about seizures, migraines, and a heart condition called Supraventricular tachycardia." Experiencing seizures multiple times per week, Michelle couldn't be left alone and says, "A typical day was kind of scary. It made me feel like I was trapped inside a body and trapped inside a house." She adds, "My independence was being taken away from me, and I had no control."

As 2022 got underway, Michelle applied for a Seizure Assist Dog with Can Do Canines and was soon introduced to her new partner, a black Lab named Zeta (through the Name-A-Puppy donation program). Michelle recalls, "I thought it a bit of an unusual name, but OK. After all, it's just a name. Except it's not. I looked up the word 'Zeta' and discovered it's the ninth letter of the Greek alphabet. OK. But then I read further. The word 'Zeta' means 'spark of life.' Spark of life!!!! What a name. For someone who always had a flame of life and was watching it slowly die, here I was being given a gift that would bring that spark back again."

Zeta has ignited a new peace of mind for Michelle by performing essential skills, even without warning. Michelle says, "I have no aura or anything [before] I'm having [seizures]. So if I have one, I go down wherever I am." Zeta jumps into action by retrieving either Michelle's medical bag or her helmet for a family member or someone else to place on Michelle's head. Next, as Michelle explains, Zeta will "try to lie right there to protect me so that I'm not banging."

Apart from offering her talents during seizure episodes, Zeta can retrieve items, tug open doors and cupboards, get a phone, and

more. Michelle notes that Zeta "is trained to do all the tasks that I require to give me back my independence. Well, maybe not driving!"

The two of them plan to get out and explore the world together more. Michelle feels confident to start riding a recumbent bike with Zeta as her co-pilot. She is also considering going on a cruise sometime soon. This is something Michelle couldn't imagine a few years ago. She admits, "I just was clueless coming into this. All I knew is I desperately needed help, and I didn't even know what that would look like. It has been exciting and interesting to see [what] has morphed out of this."

Believing that this process happened the way it did for a reason, she shares her heartfelt appreciation for Zeta. "From each family and volunteer to those who worked with her in the prison system, it is with the utmost gratitude and respect I have for what you have done and what you have given me. You didn't just help raise and train a dog. You gave me a spark of life, and I cannot say 'thank you' enough. I am truly blessed."



Volunteer Marilyn Lingard finds joy in the many ways to be involved

The saying “Time flies when you’re having fun,” aptly describes Can Do Canines Volunteer Marilyn Lingard’s 10-year experience with us. In 2013, she attended a presentation at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum. There, a speaker shared some research about dogs and referenced some work in Washington, D.C. she was doing with service dogs.

Her curiosity piqued, Marilyn researched similar organizations in the Twin Cities and stumbled upon Can Do Canines. Since then, she has helped at nearly every type of event we offer, hosted dogs of various ages and for varying amounts of time in her home, made phone calls to donors, walked dogs, and staffed information tables for us at community events. As Outreach Coordinator Laurie Carlson says of Marilyn, “She does it all!”



Although Marilyn had a dog of her own when she began volunteering with us, she no longer has a pet dog and is now retired. She enjoys the freedom to travel without having the full responsibility of a dog. Her home is rarely without one, though. Over the years, she has taken care of over 15 Can Do Canines. She says, “I think the thing that most excites me now is working with the Prison Program, bringing dogs

from Waseca to my home for break.” She recalls a stereotypical jailbreak scene when she offered to transport a pair of Lab sisters back from Waseca for herself and another volunteer. “They started dancing around like they were escaping from prison and they were going to have a party in the back seat.”

Marilyn has equal enthusiasm for the Prison Program and shares, “It’s an outstanding example of how Can Do Canines serves the whole community.” She includes notes back to the inmates, encouraging them and reminding them, “We’re part of a team.”

She also relishes her weekly dog-walking shifts. This winter, one of the dogs she had as a young puppy a couple of years ago, Lulu, entered final training at our kennel. “Lulu is teaching me how to come full circle with the organization, since she was my Great Start, and now as a dog walker, I get to see how she has developed.”

Marilyn is thrilled to see the volunteer program continuing to develop as well, noticing the quality and quantity of new volunteers helping out. She believes the way staff engages with volunteers is a critical piece of that puzzle. “We get very good feedback and supervision from the staff. I think that’s important. They are wonderful in helping all volunteers in improving their skills and work with the dogs so everybody steps up and does the best they can.”

As for her own thoughts on encouraging others to volunteer, Marilyn says, “There are so many ways to get involved with Can Do Canines. That’s what makes it such a great organization. There’s something for everyone.”

We currently need many volunteers to help care for our dogs. Puppy Program volunteer experiences can be tailored to meet various commitment levels, from a few days to a year or more, with everything in between.

As a volunteer, you can select dogs that will fit best into your home based on the age, breed, and gender of the dog, as well as the location and dates for pickup and drop-off. Plus, for every Puppy Program volunteer, Can Do Canines covers dog food, monthly preventatives, and basic vet care for the dog.

Find more information about dog-hosting opportunities at candocanines.org/volunteer.

Litter sponsorship gives corporate partnership a personal touch

When Affinity Plus Federal Credit Union approached us in Spring 2022 with a generous donation and a desire to engage their employees with our mission, we put on our thinking caps to create the best experience to meet their goal. As Affinity Plus Chief Talent Officer Julie Cosgrove states, their company wanted to “partner together to impact the lives of people and families in communities across the state of Minnesota.”

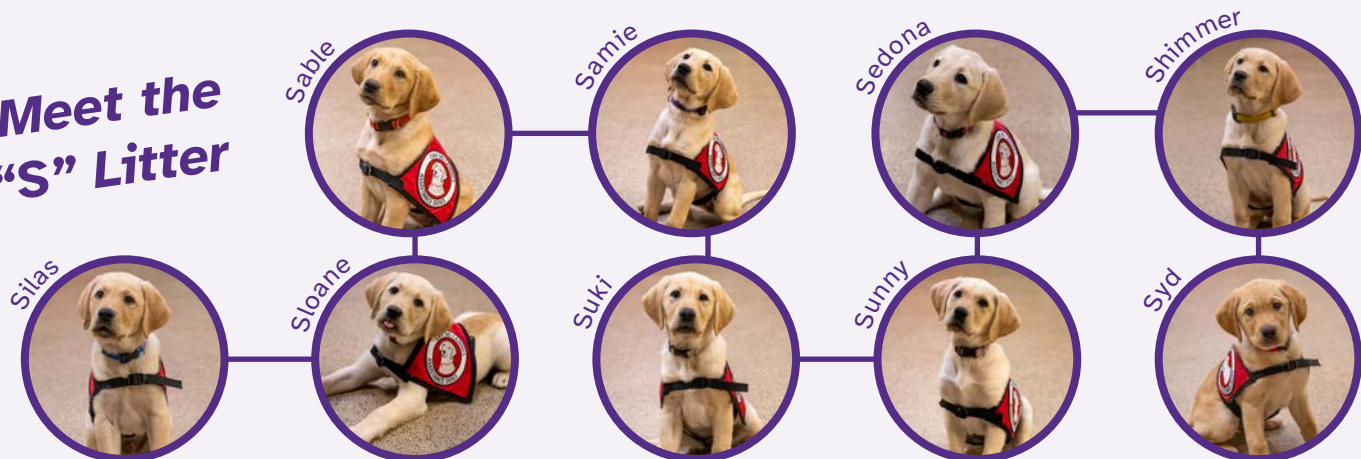


So, in response to a donation of \$30,000 over the course of three years, Can Do Canines came up with the concept of allowing Affinity Plus to sponsor an entire litter of puppies from birth through client placement. Can Do Canines Development Manager Sheila Ross explains, “We created a sponsorship level to make it feel more relational than transactional and to give all the Affinity Plus employees the ability to experience the impact of their gift.”

In August, when the “S” litter of nine, yellow, Labrador Retriever puppies was born, the employees began “experiencing that gift” by receiving pictures of nine fluffy, pudgy, little lives. Throughout the three-year commitment, Can Do Canines is providing an inside view and special opportunities to the Affinity Plus group. Monthly updates to Affinity Plus include current photos of at least one of the puppies, a description of skills they are working on, and notable personality traits that are emerging. Julie says, “From ‘meeting’ the litter of puppies when they were born, to being a part of naming each of the dogs, to arranging on-site visits [at Affinity Plus branches] to connect and learn about the dogs, to following their journey as they head to prison, each milestone has been celebrated with both the team at Can Do Canines and Affinity Plus! We’re excited to follow each of the dogs toward graduation, and while some may have a different career path, each of their journeys will be celebrated by 600 employees cheering them on from afar!”

Whether through a litter sponsorship or other “win-win” initiatives, Sheila stresses, “Our hope is to create multiple ways for corporate partners to come alongside us to make their philanthropy programs meaningful and engaging. It’s a way to help them realize that their dollars matter and partnering with a local nonprofit changes the lives of people with disabilities.”

Meet the “S” Litter



Other employers interested in considering a corporate sponsorship can contact Sheila at sross@candocanines.org.

Comments from those involved in our Prison Puppy Program

A reporter recently asked for written responses from some of the men who serve in one of our Prison Puppy Programs. Here's what a few of them had to say about what they have gained from being a part of the program.



"It still seems unreal at times. The relationship reminds me of my humanness and the goodness in me. It helped me soften my heart and makes me smile more than I had in the many years prior."

"It has given me strength and courage that anything can be achieved if you try your very best. It has also given me confidence in myself."

"Some of the many things I have gained from this program include knowledge, patience, how to express myself, and work as a group. Also, how to take instructions and apply skills being learned and how to put others before myself."

"I've been applying a lot of what I've been learning to many facets of my life – how I talk with my kids, siblings, family and friends."



"It takes dedication and commitment to be successful in training the dogs and that it actually changes you to become a better person."

"I've learned compassion and empathy in dealing with others. I've learned I'm capable of more than I believed I was."



Meet some puppies who recently joined our program



Trooper

Always in the middle of the fun



Tyrone

Loves to have his tummy blow-dried with a hair dryer



Valor

Climbs to the highest snow pile possible to deposit his "poo" at the peak



Velvet

Has fur as soft as her name implies



Victory

Sleeps with one paw in his food bowl



Walker

"Professional," gives a nice, solid "business" shake when asked



Winter

Prefers to sit on her haunches while she eats



NEXT OPEN HOUSE: MAY 20

More information on our website: candocanines.org/events

If you or someone you know might want to learn more about us, check out our open house being held at our campus on Saturday, May 20, from Noon-2 p.m.

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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