



Tails for You

a publication of Can Do Canines®



**Ben and Jimi have
become a perfect pair,
thanks to you!**

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A homebody of a dog joins his forever home

Jimi is a Lab cross with a side of couch potato. He loves to lie around the house, snoozing or occasionally chasing a ball. But to Ben, who's recovering from a stroke, Jimi is a furry hero complete with superpowers and a cape. When Ben needs him, Jimi drops the laid-back persona like a hot potato to jump into action.

Ben's life looks a lot different now "post-stroke." His mobility has changed. He has no function in his right arm and hand. He tires easily. But none of that bothers Jimi in the least. In February, he snuggled into Ben's life and soon found his way into Ben's heart, as well.

Ben works as a gas station cashier. After a four- or five-hour shift, he feels exhausted. That's when Jimi helps the most. Oftentimes it's small tasks that make a difference. "He's awesome," Ben says. "He knows how to do everything. Jimi opens and closes doors, brings me the laundry, picks up after me, and even picks up after himself."

Plus, Ben says Jimi is something of a homebody. That's a perfect fit for Ben: "When I get tired and take naps during the day, he's happy to curl up and sleep with me."

Ben occasionally struggles with his speech. Luckily, one of Jimi's superpowers is listening. "Whenever I ask him to do something, Jimi waits to make sure I'm finished talking," Ben says. "He somehow understands that it takes me a little longer to do certain things. He's so patient."

When Ben took him home, Jimi had to adjust to a new environment. The tools were different from those in his training setting. Jimi had to get used to a different kind of laundry basket, for example, and a different basket for his own toys. "And sometimes," Ben says, "I forget the right word to use—the training commands I learned while practicing with Jimi—so I'll say a different word. He still seems to know what I need." Together, they've developed their own language, one that works just fine between them.

Ben learned about Can Do Canines online after a neighbor talked with him about assistance dogs. Since meeting Jimi, Ben's discovered much more. While he can walk alone, Ben said he much prefers Jimi's company. "He helps me get exercise, and when he needs exercise, Jimi loves to play fetch." This summer, Ben hopes to have a fence installed so Jimi can spend more time chasing balls outside.



Ben and his family (at left) with Jimi and Jimi's co-raisers, Dana and Pete Kittok and The Tiffany Hendrickson Family

"The best part is that I'm not alone anymore," Ben said. "Before, when my sons went to school, I used to feel a little lonely. Now it's me and Jimi. He's always right here, next to me."

Jimi has the unique distinction of being the first dog co-raised by two Can Do Canines volunteers by spending every other month for more than two years with each family. One of those volunteers, Tiffany, believes that a benefit of the arrangement was that "he transitioned very well into new homes."

Ben said he's thankful for the volunteers who helped raise and train Jimi to make him such a well-rounded dog. "But Jimi is home now. He's not going anywhere. Jimi is home for good."

 Story written by Jorae DuPont

Who is a typical mobility client?

While a client's diagnosis may be more straightforward when they qualify for an assistance dog for diabetes, hearing, seizures, or autism, the diagnoses that a Mobility Assist Dog can cover can be a bit harder to understand. Some people assume that all of our mobility clients use an assistive device, such as a wheelchair. That's not true. In some cases, a mobility client's disability or condition may be just as invisible as that of our other types of clients.

When working with potential mobility clients, our Client Services Department takes into account a wide range of diagnoses and limitations. While that list is extensive, the following are some of the most common diagnoses that these clients tend to have (in alphabetical order):

- Cerebral palsy
- Duchenne muscular dystrophy (in children)
- Ehlers-Danlos syndrome
- Multiple sclerosis
- Parkinson's disease
- Postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome (POTS)

Since this list is not exhaustive, we encourage people with other medical conditions to apply. If you know someone with one of these diagnoses, though, we may be a good option for them.



Jen Severud



Dyan Larson

Our two Prison Program Coordinators have one interesting career

We often share information about our Prison Puppy Program, which allows selected inmates in seven different prisons throughout Minnesota and Wisconsin to help raise and train our dogs. However, many people are not familiar with the staff members who visit these prisons on a weekly basis to train the inmates in this critical role.

Dyan Larson has been working as a Prison Program Coordinator for us for over seven years. Up until this year, she has lived in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and coordinated the programs at our three Wisconsin prisons.



Dyan leading a training class for the inmates

Dyan first moved to Wisconsin from New Hope as a sixth grader with her family, but at age 19, recrossed the border to attend the Twin Cities School of Dog Grooming. Upon graduating, she returned to Wisconsin. In the years that followed, she owned her own boarding kennel and dog grooming business and opened what were the first doggy daycare and first puppy kindergarten classes in the area. Now, with 35 years of total dog-related career experience, she says, “I’m one of the few fortunate people that have made my entire life’s living working with dogs.”

When people hear what she does for her current profession, they often respond with an introspective, “Cool. That must be so interesting!” Dyan couldn’t agree more. Yet, she is fueled not by what she receives, but by what she gives. “What drives me is helping make the world a better place.”

Dyan is not alone in her mission. A few months ago, we welcomed Jen Severud to our staff as another Prison Program Coordinator. Jen has been training dogs professionally since 2003. In addition to working in animal shelters and at the nation’s largest animal sanctuary, Jen started her own in-home dog training service. Then, from 2015–2021, she worked with inmates in a prison in Billings, Montana, to train dogs. Upon accepting that first position with a prison program, she wondered how the environment would affect her. She recalls suspecting, “I think I’m going to get really depressed in here.” Her concerns were unfounded. “It wasn’t like that at all. I was never scared.” Instead, she recognized the program experience for “how powerful it is as a medium for building self-confidence,” with everyone “working toward a common goal.”

Upon Jen’s hire, Dyan did another Minnesota rebound to begin officing out of our New Hope campus to work with our Minnesota prisons, while Jen will cover the Wisconsin ones.

It takes an assertive, confident person to be successful as a Prison Program Coordinator, and both Dyan and Jen exude not only these qualities but also are easily likable and knowledgeable instructors.

Jen sums up what seems to be true for these two best-of-friend employees, explaining that it’s easy to teach such curious and engaged learners. “There is such a sense of satisfaction, watching them succeed and be eager to learn.”

She often hears from friends and family, “It must be so rewarding.” Her reply? “It is.”



Achieving ADI accreditation means working like a dog

Can Do Canines was thrilled when initially accredited by Assistance Dogs International (ADI) in 2007. Since then, we have successfully renewed our accreditation in five-year increments.

Founded in 1986, ADI states on its website that it “accredits not-for-profit programs that train assistance dogs to ensure that they adhere to the highest standards in all aspects of their operations, including ethical treatment and training of dogs, ethical treatment of clients, and solid service dog training and follow-up.”

Can Do Canines is one of two ADI-accredited organizations in Minnesota. Worldwide, there are over 200 members, with more than half of those being in North America, either as accredited members or two-year candidates (a pre-requisite for accreditation). A vast majority of these organizations certify fewer than 25 assistance dog teams per year. This year, Can Do Canines is on track to certify over 50 teams.

with minimum standards, assessors will schedule a two-to-four-day on-site visit. The visit may include interviews with staff, clients, board members, puppy raisers, and other volunteers; observations of canine care and training; and thorough inspections of not only the facility but also a prison program location.



*Julianne interviewing a staff member**

With a lengthy checklist in hand, the assessor will rate the organization in multiple categories, including staff training, environmental safety, canine care and health, and more. For example, trainers may need to display their understanding of assistance dog laws, recognition of dog stress, and knowledge of canine anatomy. An assortment of written policies needs to be in place, such as those for spaying/neutering, “career-changing” the dogs, addressing emergencies for dogs in prison, and many more. Additionally, ADI-accredited organizations must certify dogs that are able “to perform at least three specified assistive tasks that will enhance the client’s independence, in accordance with the client’s individual needs,” defines the ADI website.



*Julianne watching a trainer demonstrate skills**

Becoming accredited is no small feat. Can Do Canines Director of Training Julianne Larsen says of the process, “It’s a lot of work. Every time is nerve-wracking.” Recently certified as an ADI assessor herself, Julianne knows that an organization cannot get by with the dog-ate-my-homework excuse. Programs must submit extensive paperwork in preparation for accreditation or re-accreditation. If those materials imply compliance

Julianne says, “Being part of ADI is a huge benefit for the networking opportunities with other organizations.” She adds, “The accreditation process is really good to make sure we are doing the best work possible in following best practices and meeting standards.”

Simply put, as an accredited ADI member, Can Do Canines is actively running with the big dogs!

**These photos of Julianne were taken for ADI’s photo files of assessors. She is not involved in assessing Can Do Canines.*

We're whelping a whelping center!

We're excited to announce that the Can Do Canines Board of Directors has passed a resolution for us to move forward with an expansion project. The most likely scenario will have us building on our property.



Billie's "A" Litter



A puppy from Gilly's "B" Litter



Salsa's "C" Litter

Plans will include a center for whelping purposes and will address other space needs. In order to grow (or even sustain what we currently do), we need to begin whelping on-site with the help of volunteers. Our whelping volunteers literally bring life to our mission, serving in an intense and crucial way. They turn their homes into "Puppy Central," putting a virtual stop to many other aspects of their life, while they help a mama dog deliver a litter of puppies and care for them during the first few weeks of life. Making the whelping process more of a shared experience can ease that burden.

Since a building project will take three to four years, we have signed a purchase agreement for a temporary site in New Germany, Minnesota, about 45 miles southwest of our main campus. We will use this location as a whelping center in the meantime. It was previously a dog training business, so it is ideal for our needs. Our New Hope campus will continue with its current purposes.

Join us for an open house of the new facility (8127 Yale Avenue, New Germany, MN 55367) on Tuesday, August 22, from 5-8 p.m. More details and photos are on our website.

UPCOMING EVENTS

More information on our website: candocanines.org/events

Open House, August 8

If you or someone you know might want to learn more about us, check out our open house being held at our New Hope campus on Tuesday, August 8, from 6-8 p.m.

Can Do Woofaroo, September 23

Bring your friends and well-behaved dogs and join us at the Can Do Woofaroo for a one-mile walk and festival that benefits Can Do Canines!



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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