

THE Companion

Issue
46





SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES

The new year is a time to reflect on accomplishments and successes from the year prior, and we have much to celebrate this spring – thanks to our dedicated Canine Companions community. We placed over 450 working dogs that are changing lives, hosted many successful events to support our mission and implemented innovative new programs. All of our achievements unfolded while keeping the health, integrity and success of our programs at the forefront of every decision-making process.

Over the last year, we have worked hard to develop programs that will allow us to serve and support more people, including clients, volunteers, donors and staff. We've taken time to reflect upon and strengthen the wonderful organization we've created over nearly 50 years by refining our existing programs, providing extra training and offering wellness initiatives for our community. As always, placing the highest quality service dogs in the industry is our guiding North Star.

- Our financial health is strong, even in a struggling economy. Our dedicated donors continue to support our operations, including many of you who are new to our mission. We are grateful!

- We expanded our number of research partners, implemented new systems and worked across the organization to understand our impact on the lives of our clients. Our client services department is providing extra support to our graduates to bolster confidence in our refreshed training techniques.
- We focused on improvements and enhanced support for our volunteer community. Working with our volunteer leaders, we created programs to increase engagement, provide a more positive volunteer experience, improve communication at all levels and create new ways for volunteers to engage with Canine Companions.
- Our therapy dog program continues to grow exponentially, expanding to a new set of communities and making an impact beyond our expectations. We are now active with the program in all regions.

We thank our dedicated staff and supporters for caring most about serving our clients and our community with the magical dogs who change all of our lives.

2024 is well on its way to becoming another phenomenal year for Canine Companions, and it wouldn't be possible without you. The heart, soul and integrity of the Canine Companions mission is strong. Thank you for being our partner in changing lives every day.

Warm wishes,

Paige Mazzoni
Chief Executive Officer

Bill White
Board Chair



OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEERISM

2023 Jack Warnock Award

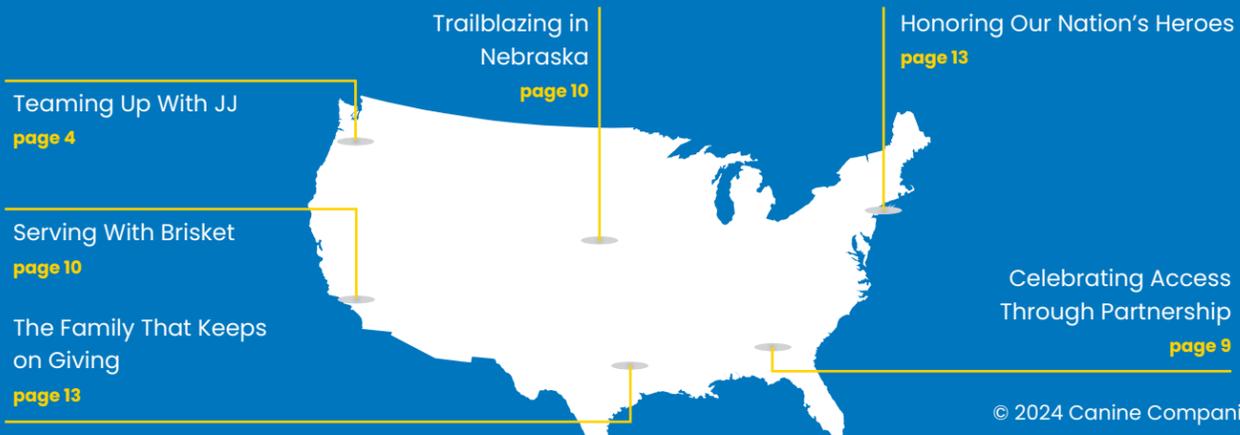
Nearly 25 years ago, our national board of directors established the Canine Companions Jack Warnock Award, named for longtime volunteer and graduate Jack Warnock.

This annual, prestigious award acknowledges outstanding volunteerism nationally and in each of our six regions. We are pleased to recognize the 2023 Jack Warnock Award winner, volunteer Jane Nagy, from New Jersey.

Jane joined the Canine Companions community 30 years ago and is an exemplary volunteer across our organization. Not only has she raised 27 puppies (and working on puppy number 28), she has founded two volunteer chapters and recruited many dedicated volunteers to our mission. Jane also volunteers as a Canine Companions therapy dog evaluator and handler.

"I am incredibly humbled to receive this award," Jane says. "I need to recognize the volunteer chapters - those are the people who helped me get here."

One of Jane's major accomplishments is her work with the New Jersey General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), resulting in hundreds of thousands of dollars raised to support our mission. Her steadfast volunteerism and dedication to our mission make her an outstanding volunteer.



We are pleased to congratulate our exceptional regional volunteer award winners:

Colleen Pars
North Central Region

Pam Durkin
Northwest Region

Mary Patterson
South Central Region

Marian Scopa
Southeast Region

Vanessa Graziano
Southwest Region

Read more at canine.org/warnock.



A sweet and happy service dog named JJ was matched as Sam David's new wingman, his tail wagging full speed when the pair met.

JJ is the perfect teammate, ready to help Sam David pick up hard-to-reach items throughout the day, assist with chores and open doors at home and in public. Sam David and JJ recently attended their first basketball tournament - a big step for the new team.

Teaming Up With JJ

Sam David is an active 16-year-old with a bustling family. He also lives with spina bifida and uses a manual wheelchair to get around. Sam David's days are packed with homeschooling and adaptive sports - especially basketball, at which he excels.

"I thought, 'a dog would really change Sam David's life,'" Rebecca recalls. "A service dog could help increase his physical independence and reduce his anxiety during doctors' appointments."

It was at a basketball tournament years ago that Sam David's mom, Rebecca, first encountered a Canine Companions service dog and the idea clicked!

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the enclosed envelope!



"JJ is another family member, like a sibling who loves to help."

Rebecca remarks, "It was an incredible chance for Sam David to show off his new service dog. It was everything I could have dreamed of for him and JJ as a team together."

JJ is even learning to push a basketball back to Sam David when it rolls away and has quickly taken on the role of his basketball team's mascot.

While Rebecca says JJ is lifechanging for Sam David, physically and emotionally, Sam David says it best: "JJ is another family member, like a sibling who loves to help."

National Puppy Day

Canine Companions puppies hold the key to unlocking newfound confidence and independence with every step of their transformative path – and that’s worth celebrating!

National Puppy Day is recognized annually on March 23, but at Canine Companions, we honor future service dogs all year long! During March, we’ll host an adorable live puppy cam, complete with puppy tails, antics and informative live guest spots.

There’s still time to get involved and celebrate the future of these furry heroes and the positive impact they make on the lives of people with disabilities!

- **Check Out the Highlights:** Enjoy the National Puppy Day celebration by visiting canine.org/puppy.
- **Raise a Future Service Dog:** Become a volunteer puppy raiser and contribute to the development of these extraordinary dogs. Visit canine.org/raise.
- **Sponsor a Puppy:** Support our mission through our puppy sponsorship program. You’ll receive a sponsorship kit with personalized memorabilia and regular updates throughout the puppy’s two-year journey to becoming a future service dog – complete with adorable photos! Visit canine.org/sponsorapuppy.
- **Care for a Breeder Dog:** If you live in California, become a volunteer breeder caretaker. Visit canine.org/breedercaretaker.



Support the puppies of today as they transform into the service dogs of tomorrow!

Sponsor a puppy today!



A Toast to Bread Financial

Our mission to enhance the lives of people with disabilities has taken a leap forward thanks to a new national partner, Bread Financial. Their generous \$200,000 donation supports our mission, including sponsorship of team training classes across all six regions, bringing joy and independence to our clients through the gift of a service dog.

Bread Financial’s commitment extends to their employees, who have been volunteering by providing lunches to team training classes, making service dog tug straps and participating in campus beautification efforts. Their enthusiasm and dedication bring new



Employees from Bread Financial visit the North Central Region Training Center

energy and perspectives to our organization. For all of their support, we are beyond grateful.

Learn more about partnerships at canine.org/partners.



UNLEASHING NEW ADVENTURES



Joel Steckler, VP, Commercial Operations, American Regent Animal Health, with Future Service Dog Weston

Canine Companions has proudly partnered with Adequan® Canine (polysulfated glycosaminoglycan), dedicated to improving the joint health of dogs. This partnership is a testament to our mutual commitment to enhancing the lives of both pets and people. Adequan Canine is a unique solution for dogs facing joint health challenges, allowing them to enjoy more active, happy lives.

“We’re honored to support an organization that raises and trains service dogs to help increase independence for people with disabilities, helping them to create more everyday adventures,” says Joel Steckler, American Regent Animal Health VP, Commercial Operations.

Our partnership is a natural fit, and we look forward to the incredible impact it will have on our community.





Lyena and her current service dog, Grant.

Reba's Last Gift

Twenty years ago, Lyena Strelkoff sustained a spinal cord injury on a hiking trip. The resulting paralysis made it nearly impossible for her to reach dropped items and complete daily chores. Her partnership with Service Dog Reba set Lyena on a path to independence that would shape her future.

"I knew from the moment I met Reba, we were meant for each other," Lyena says. "She made it possible to fulfill my purpose."

After years of partnership, Service Dog Reba passed away from cancer, shifting Lyena's purpose once again. "It had been my greatest privilege to accompany her through the last weeks of her life. I went back to school and got my certification in interspiritual counseling. It was Reba's last gift to me."

On the day she received her second service dog, Grant, Lyena offered her support to Canine Companions to help others who were grieving the loss of a Canine Companions dog. She hoped to provide a safe space within a community that understood the impact of such loss – one unique to our Canine Companions family.

We are grateful for Lyena's expertise, helping clients and volunteers in their time of need as part of our ongoing follow-up services.

"The weight of grief is always lessened when we hold it together," Lyena remarks. **"Every time I facilitate a group meeting, it's a tribute to Reba."**

For information on how to access grief resources, contact your client services or puppy program department.



Service Dog Reba

CLIENT SUPPORT SERVICES IN 2023

2,732
Active client teams

1,697
Client follow-up visits

62%
Clients seen

INVESTING IN Independence



When Katie and Thad Seymour first learned about service dogs from a neighbor, the desire to give others increased independence stuck with them.

In 2012, the family chose to volunteer their time and resources with Canine Companions because of the quality of our puppy raising program.

"I loved the support that Canine Companions provides for volunteer puppy raisers," Katie says. "The program is run so professionally, and the community has become our family."

The Seymours have raised seven puppies, pouring their love and patience into each future service dog. They've also given generously to support our mission.

"We know every dollar is put to good use to benefit those who ultimately receive these dogs," Thad remarks. "It's so gratifying to invest in a cause, and then to be able to see that investment help someone live more independently."

Our mission is made possible thanks to dedicated volunteers and supporters, like the Seymours. Help make greater independence possible at canine.org/give.

FOR THE LOVE OF
DOGS AND GREAT WINE
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BUY A BOTTLE,
GIVE \$1.00.



For every bottle of St. Francis wine purchased online and in stores through 2024, the winery will donate \$1.00 up to \$100,000.

Celebrating Access Through Partnership

Canine Companions was invited by the Georgia Aquarium, located in Atlanta, Georgia, to help celebrate their newest achievement of becoming the first Gold Certified Organization certified by the WheelChariot. WheelChariot is an organization that helps businesses improve their accessibility accommodations based on real user experiences.

This certification allows businesses to proudly promote their commitment to inclusivity, assuring visitors of their dedication to providing accessible experiences for all. We thank Georgia Aquarium for including us as part of this recognition and for their unwavering dedication to inclusivity and accessibility.





Serving With Brisket

The Glendale Police Department's latest addition, Brisket, a facility dog sponsored by the Los Angeles Chargers, is dedicated to helping those in need. Working alongside Civilian Police Service Officer Amy at community events, Brisket's role is to offer support to individuals in crisis and provide unconditional love. We deeply appreciate the Los Angeles Chargers' continued support and are excited to showcase the impactful work that Amy and Brisket will achieve together in the coming years.



Sue and her co-puppy raiser Tammy with puppy Fischer at the Nebraska State Capitol.

Trailblazing in Nebraska

Sue Marlatt understands what it means to be part of the Canine Companions community – her late husband Randy was a client and together they raised puppies for others in need. That's why Sue was inspired to spearhead the Nebraska Volunteer Chapter last year.

Building a new volunteer chapter is no easy task, and Sue understood that if she wanted to engage new followers, she would need to raise awareness for the mission about which she cares deeply. During September's National Service Dog Month, she jumped at the opportunity to advocate for Canine Companions.

Her hard work led to a statewide Service Dog Month proclamation in Nebraska, that Governor Jim Pillen presented to Sue and volunteer chapter members at the State Capitol.

Read Sue and Randy's full story at canine.org/trailblazing. We're grateful for Sue's multifaceted dedication to our mission!

Our Canine Companions community recently lost three valued members. We are grateful for the generosity of spirit and wisdom, commitment to our mission and the joy each brought to our extended family.



John Elliott Sr.

Our treasured long-time board member, Vice Chair and supporter, John Elliott, passed away in December 2023. John and his wife, Joann, joined Canine Companions over 30 years ago. During his tenure on the board, John helped advance our work in inclusion and diversity, chaired the audit, finance and governance committees, and was our vice chair of the board at the time of his passing. John was an invaluable advisor and mentor to many, and his experience, integrity and wisdom will continue to guide our work.



Jim Flint

Our beloved staff member and volunteer, Jim Flint, recently passed away. For over 14 years, Jim worked in a variety of roles, most recently as the facilities manager at our Jean and Charles Schulz Campus in Santa Rosa, California. In addition, he was also a volunteer breeder caretaker who was loved by many and will be remembered for his kind smile and his dedication to our mission.



Mel Gottlieb

Sadly, Mel Gottlieb, who joined the national board of directors in 2011, has passed away. Mel was a member of the development committee and served as a corporate ambassador for Canine Companions. He helped define and grow several strategic partnerships during his tenure. Mel's insights and contributions to our mission were invaluable.

MEMORIAM

UPCOMING EVENTS

DogFest Southeast/Orlando

April 20 – Winter Park, Florida

National Graduation Day

May 10

Putting for Pups Golf Tournament

May 31 – San Jose, California

Sit Stay Sparkle Southwest

June 8 – Newport Beach, CA

Sit Stay Sparkle North Central

June 13 – New Albany, Ohio

Sit Stay Sparkle Santa Rosa

June 15 – Santa Rosa, California

New Mexico Golf Tournament

June 24 – Albuquerque, New Mexico

National Graduation Day

August 9

Stay tuned for more
events in 2024!

canine.org/events

2023 DogFest Success

Because of friends like you, our 2023 DogFest season was a tail waggin' good time, raising over \$1,550,000 nationwide!

Each year, DogFest brings communities together, two-legged and four-legged alike, in a celebration that goes beyond fun – it changes lives. We've seen joy, independence and new beginnings, all thanks to you.

Thank You to Our DogFest 2023 Top Fundraisers

The Sabo Family, Pennsylvania

\$50,000

Mary Segall, California

\$36,035

Mitchell Private Holdings, LLC, Missouri

\$31,852

Jim Caprio, Pennsylvania

\$26,925

Marilyn White, Ohio

\$25,050

DOGFEST 2024

JOIN US AT DOGFEST 2024!

Get involved – volunteer, join an event committee, start a team and learn more now!

canine.org/dogfest



The Family That Keeps on Giving

In 2018, the Stanton Family was drawn to financially support the life-changing independence provided by our service dogs. The four Stanton kids, Alexandra, Luke, Eric and Caroline, fell in love with another kind of giving – the donation of their hearts and time as volunteer puppy raisers.

Starting in high school, Alexandra, the eldest Stanton sibling, took the lead with her family to raise four future service dogs. Recently, she had the opportunity to visit one of the puppies she raised, Karissa, who works as a facility dog in New Orleans to assist victims of crime.

“These dogs have changed my life so much, and it’s beautiful to see how they change the lives of others



as they grow into successful working dogs,” Alexandra says.

Alexandra plans to continue to raise puppies in college and encourage other students to join her in making greater independence possible for so many. We’re grateful for the Stantons’ ongoing support and commitment to independent futures.

Honoring Our Nation’s Heroes

U.S. Army Corporal David Marshall is a 99-year-old Bronze Star recipient who fought in the Battle of the Bulge during World War II. Proudly wearing his original uniform, Cpl. Marshall was one of five veterans honored at the Northeast Region’s annual Veterans Day event, Salute Independence. The event honors heroes who have continued to serve their local communities after retiring from the military.



Cpl. Marshall says that being at Salute Independence and seeing what Canine Companions does for veterans is “beyond the words” he can use. We’re forever grateful to the servicemen and servicewomen who support our mission.

Read more about veterans at canine.org/veterans.

YEARBOOK

NORTH CENTRAL

1. NOVEMBER Everett, Kristina & Susie with Sailor; Allie with Rowan; Wayne with Paco; Sarah with Elk; Megan with Laredo; Benjamin with Gino; Mila & Doug with Henry.

John with Laramie; Leah with Herky; Emily with Josiah.

2. DECEMBER Danny with DJ; Leslie with Rosa.

3. FEBRUARY Back Row – Liv with Oakland; Jaclyn with Only; David with Brisa; Tzipporah with Miguel; Taylor with Truman; Pearl with Finlay.

Front Row – Ben with Villa; Susanne with Praline; Kelly with Charlotte; Michelle & Katie with Hadley.



NORTHWEST

1. SEPTEMBER Jim & Barbara with Wynette; David with Syrah; Karl with Durkin; DJ with Paddington; Rachel with Rosalind; Beverly with Cole; Stella with Calgary.

2. OCTOBER Laura with Annika; Annika, Janeen & Paul with Abe; Jinyou, Shan & Dylan with Ripley; Caleb, Dan & Laura with Cheers; Zeke & Marni with Lupine; Amber with Elarra; Sam David & Rebecca with JJ.

Puget Sound Field Office – Laurie with Kit; Luca & Sarah with Atticus; Joel with Strong.

3. NOVEMBER Mary with Orchid; Mary with Sophie; Barbara with Seattle; Glen with Nadine.

Ken & Rani with Kapi; Janice with Dexter; Bethany with Gemma; Mackenzie with Bing; Hunter with Nashi.

Phil with Stearman; Dustin with Stewie.

4. DECEMBER Puget Sound Field Office – Britney with Alberta; Sparrow and Lauren with Tater.

5. JANUARY MaiRose, Erica & Marisa with Jujubee; Alejandra, Melissa & Gabriela with Janie; Harley, Jane & Perry with Nora; Kelly with Edgar; Emma & Patricia with Marcia; Sandy with Georgette; Dylan & Ashley with Kilo.

6. FEBRUARY Sheryl with Strawberry; Barbara with Ellis; Cat with Raya; Michelle with Ellery; Forrest with Richard; Joanie with Glee.



SOUTHEAST

1. SEPTEMBER Marcie with Pike; Tim with Panini; Steve with Larissa.

2. NOVEMBER Meady with Georgie; Jean & Ashley with Fitzgerald; Renee with Beta; Kay with Beamer; Ceara with Everest; Ryan with Bitzy; Bailey with Nestle.

Bob, Sarah & Les with Rollins; Ashlyn, Christy & Elyssa with Orabel; Julianna & Terri with Ramona; Jared & Phil with Niall; Madison & Jennifer with Foster; David, Tiffany & Tim with Ranger; Evan & Jessica with Loomis.

Edie with Whistle; Marianne with Valera; Sofia with Trooper; Mary with Weitzi.

3. FEBRUARY John with Banjo; Evan & Dielle with Charm; Morgan with Trusty; Miranda with Peace; Kellan & April with Keaton; LJ, Ruth & Larry Sr with Doppler.

Mike with Philo; Chuck with Navy; Robyn with Hutch; Jeff with Niles; Gerri with Felix.



NORTHEAST

1. SEPTEMBER Robert with Pace; Sean with Peabody.

Emily with Churro.

2. NOVEMBER Nancy with Samantha; Michelle with Domino; LJ & Jenn with Locke; Emma, Rob & Jenn with Wilber; Kevin, Peter & Eileen with Andrew; Sarah with Mandy; Christopher, Vicky & Daniel with Troy; Rachel & Ginny with Aesop; Annetta with Flint; Frank with Ajax.

Nicole with Mac; Chris with Tahoe.

3. FEBRUARY Owen & Joe with Lava; Amy with Gilroy; Katy with Polly; Michael with Fenton; Mike with Sasha; Erin with Lexi; Jared & Jana with Jose; Noah, Ron & Ilyssa with Milmo.



SOUTH CENTRAL

1. OCTOBER Kathryn & Angie with Engle; Sam & Sara with Roo; Shelby & Ashley with Crosby; Joseph & Marianne with Leroy.

2. NOVEMBER Zaina, Ali & Maryim with Birdie; Maryellen with Jansen; Jacque with Audrey; Faye with Torrey; Syllas & Cassi with Jam.

Caleb & Amanda with Whip.

3. JANUARY Bob with Calgary; Dallas with Becca; Willie with Sydney.

4. FEBRUARY Charlie, Kelle & Matt with Nobel; Lisa with Kelmar; Raymond with Jessica; Meghan with Tesla; Zoey, Rebekah & Calixtro with Henrietta; Pam and Meeghan with Evans; Tom with Tracker; Jonathan & Mindy with Vroom; Robbie & Shilo with Fia.



SOUTHWEST

1. NOVEMBER Drew (not pictured) & Taylor with Limerick; Melannie with Sandra; Avonlea with Raelyn; Amy with Brisket; Sharon with Cadbury; Amora (not pictured) & Angelica with Oxford; Emma & Diana with Greta; Amanda with Hazel.

2. DECEMBER Nikki with Faith; Sidney with Hoops.

Tony with Emilia; Rosane with Canoe; Tyler with Gully; Madeline with Sonic; Jeanne with Ondrea; Richard with Derby; Toni with Diana.

3. FEBRUARY Jennica with Kashi; Casey with Lindon; Amy with Sunflower; Kristen & Hannah with Lemon.

Austin & Stacie with Maurice; Gage & Lauren with Scrivener; Lincoln & Amanda with January; Pharrell & Juliette with Shadow; Anthony, Megan & Joey with Kai.

Jacquelyne with Jayden; Beth with Olympic; Pamela with Fleetwood.



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Facility Dog Brisket is helping people in crisis.

Read more on page 10.