



HELPING PAWS

HELPING PAWS IMPACT NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2022

LEARN HOW OUR FOSTER HOME TRAINERS SAY GOODBYE

WHAT QUESTIONS DO OUR FOSTER HOME TRAINERS GET ASKED THE MOST?

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WHY ARE THEY WEARING
THAT BLUE JACKET?

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CAN I PET YOUR DOG? 25

DO THEY GET TO PLAY
AFTER WORKING?

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IS THAT A SERVICE DOG? 16

CAN I GIVE THEM A
TREAT?



“HOW CAN YOU GIVE UP YOUR DOG AFTER 2½ YEARS?”

We asked our Foster Home Trainers, “What questions do you get asked the most when you’re out in the community?” And the survey says...

Our Foster Home Trainers are volunteers who take a puppy into their home for 2½ years, during which time they oversee the dog’s training and development. The volunteers and dogs attend weekly service dog training classes and further enhance that training with daily practice in both their home and public settings. When service dog training has been successfully completed, each dog meets and works with a number of prospective recipients.

Then a match is made and Trainers say goodbye. As you would expect, it’s not easy. For this Helping Paws Impact Newsletter, we interviewed three Foster Home Trainers about the joys and challenges of seeing the dog they trained become a service or facility dog. Their answers may surprise you.



JANET & BOSLEY



Janet H.’s passion for animal assisted therapies spans decades; surprisingly though, her experience with training a Helping Paws service dog is relatively new. When she was enrolled at the University of Minnesota, she was introduced to Helping Paws, as it was a pilot program through CENSHARE (The Center to Study Human-Animal Relationships and Environment), a joint program between the School of Public Health and the Veterinary College. When Janet became a part-time vet tech, Helping Paws dogs would visit the clinic. As Janet’s path continued to cross with Helping Paws, our Program Director, Eileen Bohn, and our service dogs, she knew one day, she’d become a Foster Home Trainer. What was seeded in academics would bloom years later when Janet retired. In 2019, she became a Helping Paws Foster Home Trainer to Bosley.



The Belle Litter began class right when COVID engulfed our public settings, affecting how Helping Paws held training classes. While this put a damper on the in-person community of Helping Paws, it did not deter the excitement of watching her dog grow and learn. When Team Training (three-week period of training the future Helping Paws Graduate and service dog complete) was brought up in class, it only added to the excitement Janet felt. But 2 years later, Team Training grew closer and so did the trepidation. Throughout the process of Team Training and the eventual hand off to Facility Dog Handler Emily L., Janet remained grounded and supported by her friends and classmates. At Helping Paws, you come for the dogs, but stay for the people.

“On the day I would say goodbye and hand off Bosley, I tried to remain positive. Unfortunately, that’s a lot easier said than done. But what happened next surprised me though...

When I got to the Helping Paws training facility, I was greeted outside the door by my classmate Lorrie and her husband. She had trained several Helping Paws Service Dogs and knew what I was feeling. They gave me a hug, thanked me, and told me it would be okay. Inside, I was greeted by our class instructor and other HP staff we had worked with over the past 2 ½ years.

After our goodbyes, a group of repeat Foster Home Trainers organized a lunch and invited all FHT’s who were handing off their dogs to join them. It was a gift to be surrounded by their kindness and understanding...they had all been there before and knew how it felt. That community was very generous with their support and has been there for me in many ways during this 2½-year journey. I made lasting friendships and those friends helped me through this emotional day.”

DIANNE & JAY

As a first time Foster Home Trainer, the hardest part is the hand off. However, does it get any better with the more dogs you've trained and placed? We spoke with Dianne and Jay H. about their experience training nine service dogs.

Dianne and Jay started out as Helping Paws volunteers when a chance encounter at a veterinarian office led them to become Foster Home Trainers. More than 25 years ago, Helping Paws founder and Director of Programs, Eileen Bohn was sitting in the waiting room of the University of Minnesota Veterinary Medical Center and noticed a familiar face. Both Eileen and the Heaths independently scheduled dog visits and by the end of the conversation, the Heaths agreed to be Foster Home Trainers for the first time. Weeks later, they were introduced to their first Helping Paws dog, Jordan. A few decades and eight Helping Paws service dogs later, you can find them at service dog training class with Hayden. By now, they understand what to expect when training and reaching your goal of training a service dog.



"When you first meet your new family member, you tell yourself that this isn't your dog and that someday you'll give this dog to someone who needs them. In my experience, that only lasts about a week and you become deeply emotionally connected to them. But that's what you sign up for. After eight dogs, you don't worry about it."

For Dianne and Jay, training a service dog is a worthwhile, rewarding and fun experience. From getting a puppy, watching them grow, be goofy, then mature all while becoming a service dog is a surreal beautiful experience. However, similar to Janet's experience, it's the week leading up to Team Training that's the hardest. Every parent wants their child to do well in school, just like every Foster Home Trainer wants their dog to be placed. The family's brief melancholy disposition is replaced with excitement when Team Training starts. It's a new chapter for the dog and new challenges they've prepared for.

"There are tears when you say goodbye for the last time. You know they will help their new "person". You know it will bring joy to their Graduate's life. The dog is moving on to a higher purpose. Paying it forward is why we come back. We've seen the impact and it's our responsibility to make the world a better place... one service dog at a time."





KAREN & TOM

Another first time Foster Home Trainer, Tom Q., recently experienced the “hand off” of service dog in training, Tofte. The goodbye was hard but the final exchange was bittersweet and rewarding. When Tom began training Tofte, it was a mutually beneficial relationship. Tofte was raised in a loving house while Tom was able to connect with a dog-loving community and make friends with his Foster Home Trainer classmates.

Karen S., a Foster Home Trainer of four dogs, always knew she wanted to work with dogs. The tangible act of raising and training a service dog was the perfect fit for her personality, experience and compassion. During a Helping Paws event, Tom met Karen. As Tofte grew, so did Karen and Tom’s relationship and in 2021, they wed.

When Tofte began working with a number of recipients during the pre-matching process, Karen was able to comfort Tom’s feelings of unease. This support was vital in reminding Tom what the goal was: raising and training a service dog for someone to increase their independence. The best source of comfort presented itself when Tom was able to meet the person Tofte was partnered with.

“Helping Paws allows you to participate in parts of the matching process. When you meet the Graduate, you see the excitement in their eyes. You’re just as excited and want to provide them with as much information about their future service dog as possible. You understand that your dog is going to a great home. You know that your dog picked that person to work with. You’re changing someone’s life. The Graduate and service dog become a team.

I remember the day we said goodbye and handed off Tofte. Nick (Graduate) pulled into the Helping Paws parking lot and Tofte perked up when she heard him arrive. Before Karen or I even knew he was there, Tofte knew her forever family was there. We joke that the best way to ease the heartbreak is to start training another service dog! On to the next service dog...”



ABOUT US

Helping Paws is a Minnesota volunteer-based non-profit 501(c)(3) organization with 34 years of experience training and placing service dogs with individuals with physical disabilities or veterans and first responders with PTSD as well as facility dogs. Our mission is to further people's independence and quality of life through the use of Assistance Dogs. Since 1988, we have placed over 250 people with a service dog, giving individuals the gifts of dignity, independence, peace of mind and companionship.

Helping Paws is an accredited member of Assistance Dogs International. We train and place Golden Retrievers and Labrador Retrievers as hard-working partners and companions. Foster Home Trainers take a puppy into their home for approximately 2½ years, during which time they oversee the dog's training and development. Foster Home Trainers and dogs attend weekly service dog training classes led by our professional staff and develop the dogs' repertoire of more than 80 cues.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **UNMAPPED BREWING CO. FUNDRAISER**

Wednesday, July 20, 2022

Patio and brewery season is here! We are thrilled to be going back to see our good friends at Unmapped Brewing Co.! As in the past, \$1 from each beer sold will be donated back to us.

- **DAVANNI'S DAY - HELPING PAWS**

Tuesday, August 2, 2022

Join us Tuesday, August 2 by stopping by one of Davanni's 21 locations. All day, Davanni's will be donating 10% of orders placed for dine-in or carry-out back to Helping Paws.

- **HOLIDAY GAS STATION BBQ FUNDRAISER - PLYMOUTH**

Tuesday, August 16, 2022

BBQ, Carwashes and Helping Paws Service Dogs? Count me in! 100% of the sales are donated to Helping Paws.

- **TAIL WAGGIN' DINNER 2022**

Saturday, September 10, 2022

We will celebrate the ripple effect of a service dog as well as honor Pam Anderson and her 18 years of dedication to Helping Paws.



Assistance Dogs
INTERNATIONAL
ACCREDITED MEMBER

Photo Credit: Laura Gentry
& Jonathan Kramer

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