

The Paw-sitivity

REPORT

Your Generosity at Work



Our alumni – meet Kesler and WyndSOR

Kesler and his family are enjoying peaceful nights ever since WyndSOR arrived in their lives.

WyndSOR is an Autism Assistance Dog Guide. These special Dog Guides help children between 3 and 12 years old who are on the autism spectrum.

They're a source of safety, companionship and unconditional love.

One of their special gifts is knowing how to provide calming relief for children in high anxiety situations.

For Kesler, night time used to be a time he was really anxious. His mom, Lana, remembers ...

"Kesler used to wake up multiple times a night, and he would come running out of his room screaming.

But this hasn't happened since WyndSOR has come to live with us. Now sleep for the entire family has improved!"



WyndSOR recently joined Kesler at the dentist, where he had always previously needed a general anesthetic. This time, with WyndSOR laying on the chair with him, Kesler was calm the entire time.

Lana speaks so eloquently of the impact on their family of having WyndSOR join them. Not just for Kesler – but for her as well.

"I never realized how isolated

I felt when dealing with the harder times until WyndSOR came along, and gave me a partner in comforting my son.

WyndSOR has the most kind and gentle spirit, and has improved our son's quality of life and mental health in so many ways. He gives Kesler safety, mental health... and has been his very first friend.

Having WyndSOR join our family has been life changing."

We are deeply grateful to all our donors, whose generosity helps bring these special dogs and families together.



This instructor's a Starr

18 years ago, Courtney Starr received her first foster puppy, and as she says she was “hooked.”

“Going to my first Open House and learning about the different programs that the dogs are trained in made me realize that this is where I wanted to work.”

Courtney has worked in the Dog Guides puppy program, then in Canine Vision for 12 years, training dogs for people who are blind or visually impaired. Now Courtney is Head Instructor in Autism Assistance.

“It’s so rewarding when I do a follow-up visit, and get to see the relationship that has been created between the client and the dog. In one example, a client became blind after a sudden medical episode, taking a profound toll on his life. After receiving his Dog Guide, his family all saw his light and joy come back. Just knowing that I played a small part in his story makes me love my job more and more every day.”



Courtney is also Head Instructor for the Facility Support Dog Program, when dogs support people in some really difficult situations.

“The dogs are there to support people in their darkest hours. They might assist an individual or family member after a traumatic situation. They may then support the police officer or the victim services team. They just give unconditional love and attention to people when they need it most.”

Courtney recently accompanied some special dogs to help support kids at a COVID-19 vaccine clinic.

“It was immensely positive for the dogs as well as the children. The dog would sit and snuggle the children and bring smiles to their faces. It helped them forget what was happening.”

“I would like to say a huge Thank You to our donors. Because of them, we are able to transform the way Canadians live by matching them with amazing dogs.”



“Since children and vulnerable adults are limited in terms of support and they can’t have friends and family in court due to COVID-19 protocol, Marielle is an absolutely critical source of support. Facility Support Dog Marielle provides calming companionship,” says Krista. “One child said ‘She really loves me, doesn’t she?!’ while Marielle gave her “hugs”, a command that she was trained in for her job as a Facility Support Dog. The same child then said ‘And she is going to be with me the entire day when I have to talk to adults about what happened? You promise? And she will meet me outside before I go in? I am so happy!’ -Handler Kristal LeBlanc

Rhonda and Nita – a link to the world of sound

Nita graduated with flying colours, but she still spends most of her days in school!

That's because Nita, a Hearing Dog Guide, is the companion of Rhonda, a teacher for the deaf and hard of hearing, who also has hearing loss.

Rhonda travels to several schools a day, with Nita by her side.

"Nita alerts me to fire alarm drills and school bells. In any environment I'm in, Nita makes me more confident. I'm more comfortable being out in public, as Nita's presence encourages people to look at me, improving face-to-face communication. She's perfect for me with my busy lifestyle."

Nita's also taken up volunteering at swim meets!

One of Rhonda's children is a competitive swimmer, and it's Rhonda's volunteer job to make sure all the swimmers are lined up in the right order before they approach the starting blocks.

"Nita has taught herself to alert me to the beginning of each heat."

Hearing Dog Guides work with people who are deaf or hard of hearing – distinguishing



sounds, making physical contact with their handlers, and leading them to whatever is making the noise – whether that's an alarm clock, a telephone or the front door.

Since 1988, the graduates of our Hearing Program have gained an increased sense of security knowing that they will always have a link to the world of sound through their Dog Guide.

"I thought I wouldn't like to feel dependent on a dog, but I actually feel more independent!"

With your support Lions Foundation of Canada trains Dog Guides to assist Canadians with a wide range of disabilities. With seven programs in place, Canadians with disabilities are offered the opportunity to find greater independence, mobility and safety through the help of a Dog Guide.

Our Dog Guide Programs:

-  Canine Vision for people who are blind or visually impaired
-  Hearing for people who are deaf or hard of hearing
-  Autism Assistance for children who have autism spectrum disorder
-  Service for people who have a physical or medical disability
-  Seizure Response for people who have epilepsy
-  Diabetic Alert for people who have diabetes with hypoglycemic unawareness
-  Facility Support for professional agencies assisting individuals in traumatic situations

Legacy Donor PROFILE

A legacy of love



Gwen Brooks' love of animals, and her personal experience of physical disabilities and challenges, has inspired her to make a very special gift to Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides program – a bequest in her Will.

Gwen fondly remembers her own dogs. Fiona, a Miniature Schnauzer. And Spanky, her highly energetic Jack Russell. "I loved them both to bits."

In 2000, Gwen's life changed overnight while travelling in Scotland. A sudden and devastating

stroke left Gwen having to relearn everything – how to walk, how to use her non-dominant hand, and eventually, how to paint again.

The experience left her with a profound understanding of how hard it is to overcome physical disabilities.

"It is my hope that my gift will help provide Dog Guides to those who need them. Animals mean so much in our lives and these wonderful trained dogs will help bring a sense of security and independence, as well as their unconditional love."

If you would like more information on leaving a gift in your Will please contact Julie Jelinek at 905.842.2891 ext. 223 or by email at jjlinek@dogguides.com. Thank you.

Foster Family PROFILE

Raising superheroes



After a traumatic brain injury led her into early retirement, Linda Kittmer's senior golden retriever gently persuaded her to take up a new passion – playing foster mom for Dog Guide puppies.

As a foster mom, Linda raises puppies from seven weeks of age, until they are ready to head off for their formal training at age one.

She provides the puppies basic training, socialization, many different experiences – and 24/7 love.

"I know several people who, if it weren't for their

Dog Guides, would not be able to live on their own," she says. "It's only because they have a working dog that they can have an apartment and have that independence."

To date, Linda has fostered nine puppies. In non-COVID times, she's a dedicated participant in our fundraising projects. And she's puppy-sat more than 50 future Dog Guide puppies.

It's always hard to say goodbye at the end of the year.

"But at the same time, you know they're superheroes that are going to change someone's life. It's all so incredibly rewarding."



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