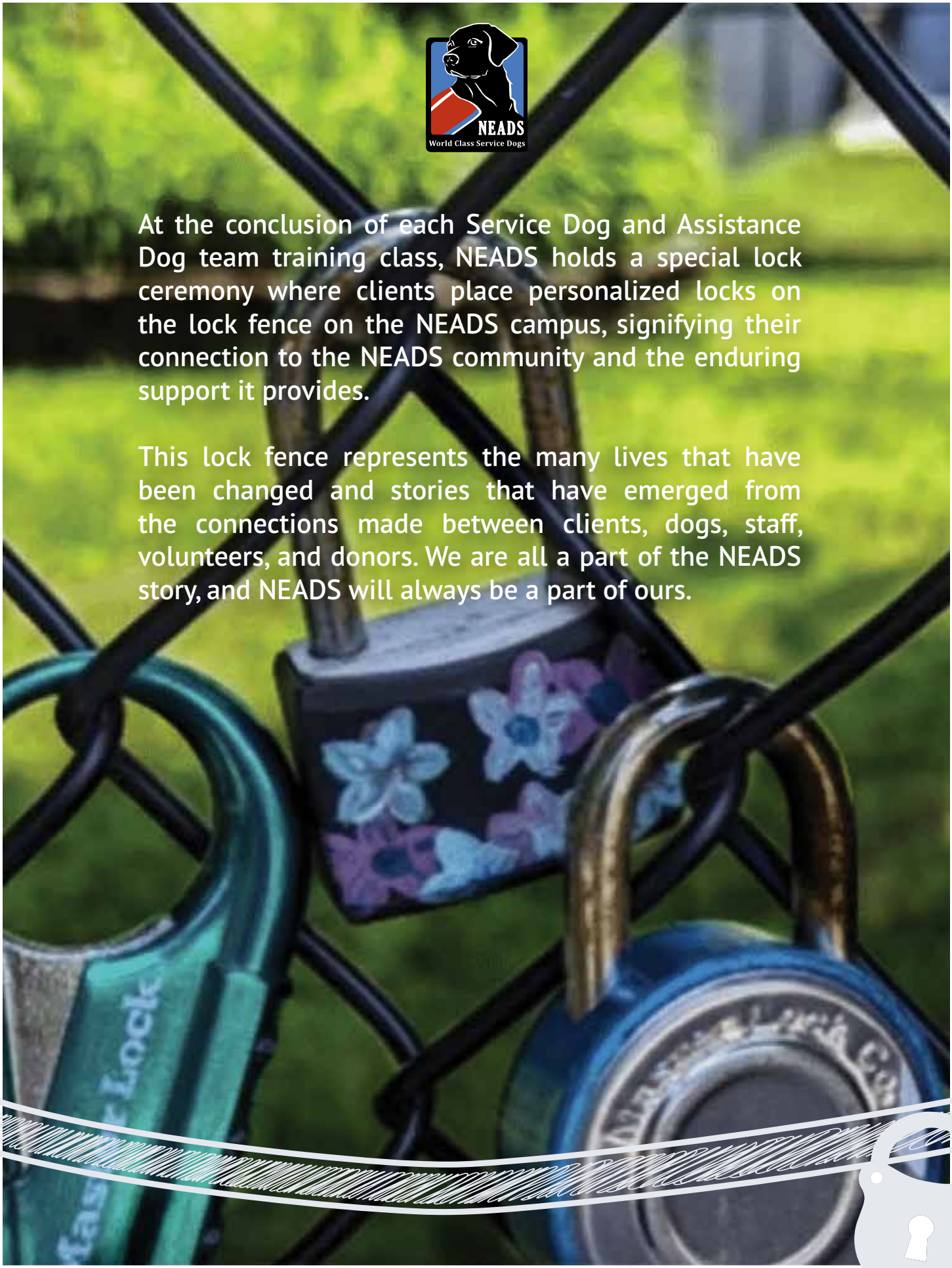


NEADS
World Class Service Dogs

2024
ANNUAL
REPORT

Life-Changing Connections



At the conclusion of each Service Dog and Assistance Dog team training class, NEADS holds a special lock ceremony where clients place personalized locks on the lock fence on the NEADS campus, signifying their connection to the NEADS community and the enduring support it provides.

This lock fence represents the many lives that have been changed and stories that have emerged from the connections made between clients, dogs, staff, volunteers, and donors. We are all a part of the NEADS story, and NEADS will always be a part of ours.

CONTENTS

4 Our Clients
14 Puppy Raisers
16 Prison PUP Program
18 Our Supporters
20 Events
21 Red Vest Accessible
22 2024 Financials
23 NEADS by the Numbers

World Class Service Dogs
fueled by world class food

Celebrating 14 Years of Leadership

Gerry DeRoche joined NEADS as CEO in 2010, bringing a wealth of experience and a vision that helped shape the organization. Under his guidance, NEADS has thrived, becoming a thought leader in the Service Dog industry and earning worldwide recognition for its high standards. On behalf of everyone at NEADS, we express our deepest gratitude to Gerry for his leadership, commitment, and contributions that shaped NEADS and changed countless lives. We wish him all the best in his well-deserved retirement.



This year's annual report, "Life-Changing Connections," aptly captures the essence of NEADS and its mission. However, the connections formed through NEADS extend far beyond the powerful bond between our clients and their Service Dogs; they encompass our many volunteers, including Puppy Raisers, those who help on campus, and so many others, as well as the incarcerated individuals in our Prison PUP Program, our generous donors, and the broader community.

NEADS has a proud history of innovation. Many programs offered at Assistance Dog International (ADI) organizations nationwide can be traced back to NEADS. In this annual report, you'll learn about another initiative: our Red Vest Accessible program. While it departs from our traditional focus on breeding, raising, and training Service Dogs, it offers invaluable support to our clients, Puppy Raisers, and the broader community, allowing us to forge new connections and expand our impact.

As I prepare for retirement, I'm reminded of my first annual report letter in 2011. My core message of NEADS' impact and dedication to our mission remains as true today as it did then. I am incredibly proud of all we have accomplished over the past 14 years, most notably placing over 500 World Class Service Dogs with clients across the country. Every day, I hear inspiring stories of the independence and companionship our clients have found through their partnership with NEADS dogs, and the profound ways their lives have changed.

It has been a true honor to lead this exceptional organization. I'm confident that our new CEO, Aubrey Henderson, and the entire NEADS team will continue to build on our successes and further advance our mission in the coming years.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to be part of an organization that truly changes lives through our extraordinary World Class Service Dogs.

Best wishes for continued success,

Gerry DeRoche
Chief Executive Officer



Two Veterans, Two Labs, and a Connection for Life

Jed Carter and Raffle
Trauma Assistance Dog

Named by: FOPA NRA
Doggy Dorm Supporter: Julie Wolf
Trainer: Erin Toomey
Weekend Raiser: Kathleen Foley

The story of Dave, Jed, and their Trauma Assistance Dogs Vegas and Raffle is a little unusual. You probably know how hard NEADS works to match the right dog to the right client, evaluating each dog's strengths and personality and each client's medical, emotional, and physical needs as well as their lifestyle, work, and family environment. That painstaking process is vital to the team's success. But with Dave and Jed, we managed to match not only the right dogs with the right US military veterans, but the right men and dogs with each other, too.

Dave and Jed met for the first time when they came to NEADS to train with their Service Dogs. Dave, a US Air Force chaplain (Lt. Col., retired) and member of the Massachusetts Air National Guard, was nervous. His PTSD made new situations challenging and new people off-putting, and exacerbated his perfectionism. What would this Trauma Assistance Dog training thing be, really? It was a lot of unknown for someone who tried to avoid the unknown with every breath. He arrived in the Kathy Foreman Client House parking lot 45 minutes early, trying to calm himself. Jed pulled up, almost as early himself. A former combat and surgical medic whose PTSD had forced him out of the medical field, and then out of the US Army entirely, Jed was just as uneasy. The two men began chatting through their open car windows.

"We hit it off immediately," recalls Dave. "And that made all the difference." They discovered they had a lot in common and saw the world similarly. Jed agrees, saying, "That initial conversation relaxed me. Now we were headed into the unknown together." Not only had NEADS paired Dave and Jed well with their dogs; they, too, were paired well. Together, the four became a tight-knit training team.

Dave and Jed both credit the NEADS staff with making a potentially difficult situation—so much to learn, new people to meet, an unfamiliar place to live—less stressful than they ever expected. "The NEADS people were incredibly knowledgeable, of course, but also so generous and tolerant," says Jed. "They made it easy."

Dave Berube and Vegas

Trauma Assistance Dog

Named by: Gladys Katen
Trainer: Magen Blake
Full-Time Raisers: Amanda Wasserman, Magen Blake, Salome Juethner





"Vegas and Raffle were so well trained and the trainers were so familiar with them that it felt like the trainers were just letting the dogs demonstrate their expertise and bringing us along. The dogs were already professionals. We had to learn what they already knew," says Dave.

Now that they've been partnered with their Service Dogs for well over three years, both men agree that Vegas and Raffle have made transformative impacts in their lives.

"Vegas has made such a difference for me in public; he's given me back parts of my life I'd given up. I couldn't even go to the post office by myself. I'd get anxious and hyperfocused; I'd get into arguments with random people. Vegas knows how to interrupt that. He picks up on my stress before I do," says Dave. "I feel more grounded all the time. I don't worry about being out, I don't spiral into a mental cycle of 'what if, what if'—I won't come ungrounded, because Vegas is there with me."

Their connection is so deep that Vegas has learned to recognize and respond to Dave's nightmares by providing deep pressure, something he wasn't trained to do.

"I've become creative and curious again since Vegas entered my life," Dave adds. "My wife and I travel the country in an RV, and I've started an Instagram for Vegas, documenting our trips through his eyes. That wouldn't have occurred to me before."

Jed says he didn't have as much difficulty with being in public spaces, but human interaction was difficult for him. "Now I am an ambassador for NEADS and for Service Dogs, so I can't be standoffish. I take pains to educate people about Service and Trauma Assistance Dogs, which helps me be more at ease and less easily frustrated. Raffle is incredibly attuned to me. I have chronic pain, and sometimes I fall. It's part of my PTSD that I don't always recognize my own physical pain—but Raffle does, and he'll give comfort and stay close to me, ready to help if I fall." Like Vegas, Raffle has learned this on his own. "That's not specific task training. That's the bond."

Jed says his wife noticed two things almost immediately when Raffle joined their lives. "I smile more. And I'm not as angry. It's hard to be angry when you look down at his puppy face."

Dave and Jed (and Vegas and Raffle) have remained closely connected after their training. The dogs adore each other, they say, and love to play. "They're hilarious together," says Dave. "They're brothers from another mother. It's hard to tell them apart when they're not working." One of Dave's RV trips included visiting Jed and Raffle in North Carolina, where they recently moved. It's a connection they are sure will endure.

"Our lives have a lot more dog hair and slobber in them," says Jed. "Lab glitter!" Dave chimes in. "But Raffle supports me in so many ways it's difficult to put into words." Dave agrees. "Living with PTSD, you need a team. You need relationships. Vegas makes that possible for me every day."



Exploring a New World Together

Hannah Gallivan and Gabby
Service Dog

Named by: Kathy Foreman
Trainer: Tyler Gribi
Raiser Instructor: Bailey Sullivan
Weekend Raiser: Andrea Sorgi
Prison: MCI Concord

Getting a Service Dog has been on Hannah Gallivan's bucket list since she was a little girl. With limited mobility due to cerebral palsy, Hannah uses a walker at home, and now that she is a freshman at the University of Illinois, a power wheelchair to navigate campus. Her hands and arms are affected as well, making it easy to drop things. She knew she wanted to wait until she was an adult before getting a Service Dog, as she wanted to be the primary handler, and she knew she'd need extra help when she went to college.

Hannah and Gabby were matched just before Hannah's senior year of high school—perfect timing, Hannah says, as Gabby learned to help her in the school environment. "She snores under my desk," says Hannah wryly. "Really loudly."

Gabby's new school environment is a big change from Hannah's small Vermont high school. She's helped Hannah transition to living far from her family, experiencing her first plane ride ("I was more nervous than she was"), and helping Hannah navigate a sprawling campus with aplomb. Their first Big 10 football game—"that's kind of a big deal here"—with its huge stadium, loud marching band, and screaming fans left Gabby completely unimpressed. "She put her head on her paws and ignored it all."

Around their dorm, Gabby nudges elevator and door buttons, brings Hannah things she's dropped or misplaced, and turns the lights off in their room at night. Because NEADS begins socializing and teaching puppies from birth, "her brain is hard-wired to learn," notes Hannah, who is currently training

"Since Hannah and Gabby left training at NEADS, they've gone on a lot of adventures—all new experiences for them both. To prepare before these events, Hannah reaches out to me for advice on what commands are appropriate and what expectations are realistic; essentially, how to manage uncertainty. Hannah is a wonderfully intelligent and resourceful person who takes all my advice in stride and uses it along with her own instincts for great success." – *Tyler Gribi, NEADS Graduate Services Representative*



Gabby to put away her own toys and pick up Hannah's laundry. "You can tell she's so excited to work. I feel so grateful to be helped by her."

When her vest comes off, Gabby's demeanor changes dramatically. "She's so poised when she's working that you almost can't tell she's the same dog when the clumsy puppy comes out. I like to take her on 'sniffaris' on a long leash when she's off duty. She loves a good sniffari in wet grass! But she's always ready to lock right back in when she knows she's working."



The biggest surprise for Hannah has been how attentive and responsive Gabby is at all times, on or off duty. She checks in with a nudge or eye contact just to see if Hannah needs her. "It's an invaluable partnership. The gravity, the intensity of the connection between us surprised me."

During her training, NEADS built a strong connection with Hannah and her family, which has strengthened as Hannah has made the transition to independence with Gabby by her side. Getting to know the trainers, staff, and volunteers who had contributed to Gabby's development made a strong impression on Hannah, particularly when she met the incarcerated individuals who had been Gabby's trainers at MCI-Concord. "I'm so grateful to them, and to everyone who helped raise and train my wonderful dog. I still have lovely conversations checking in with Gabby's trainer, Tyler.

"Gabby's an extraordinary gift in my life. Thank you, NEADS."

A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

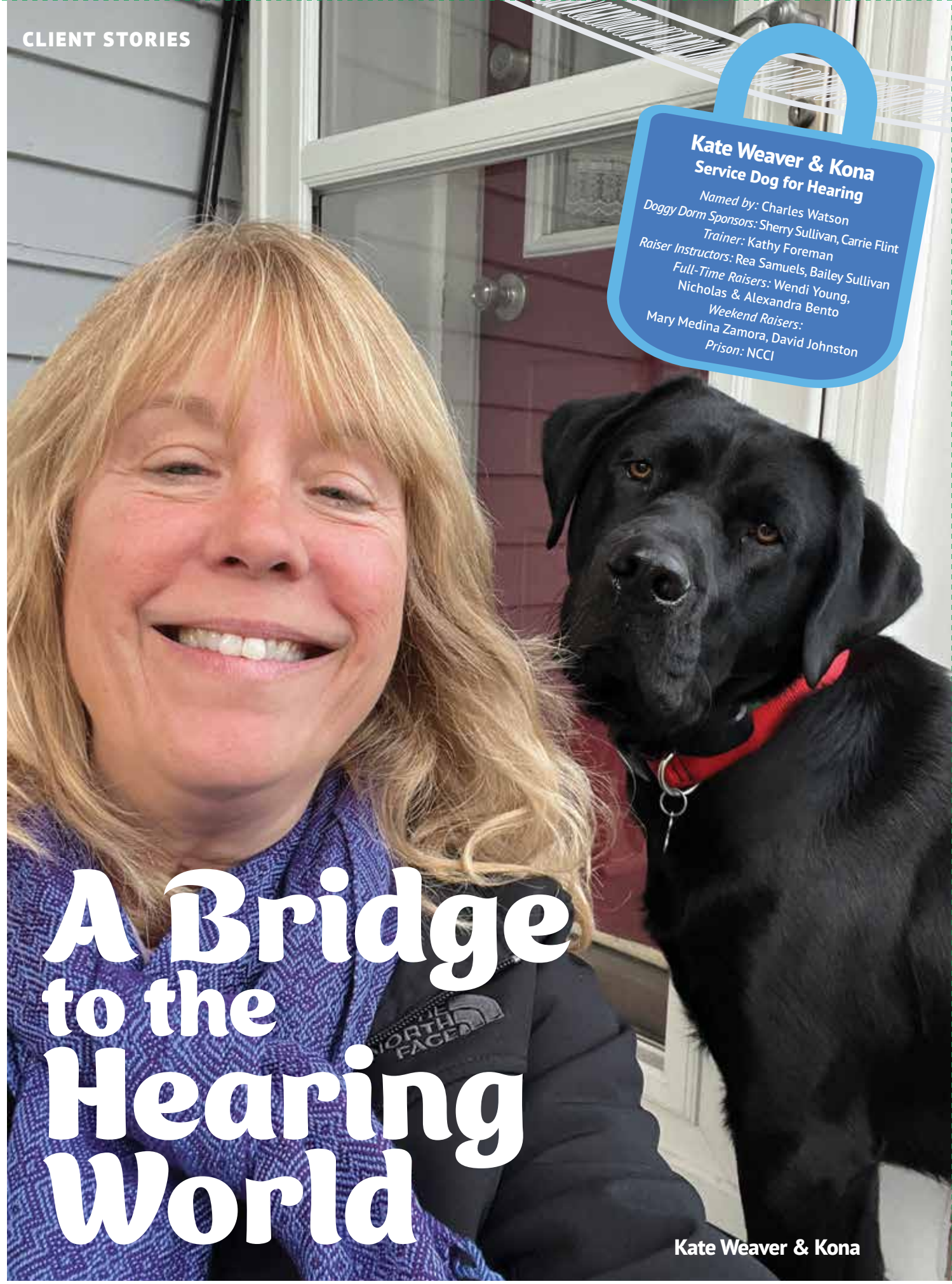
The Impact of Having a Service Dog:
Clients shared how their Service Dog, Service Dog for Hearing, or Service Dog for a Child with Autism brings them confidence, independence, and engagement.

- **90%** My quality of life has improved positively
- **82%** I am more confident
- **76%** I am more independent in public
- **68%** I am more independent at home
- **57%** I am more engaged in my community

A Bridge to the Hearing World

Kate Weaver & Kona
Service Dog for Hearing

Named by: Charles Watson
Doggy Dorm Sponsors: Sherry Sullivan, Carrie Flint
Trainer: Kathy Foreman
Raiser Instructors: Rea Samuels, Bailey Sullivan
Full-Time Raisers: Wendi Young, Nicholas & Alexandra Bento
Weekend Raisers: Mary Medina Zamora, David Johnston
Prison: NCCI



Kate Weaver & Kona

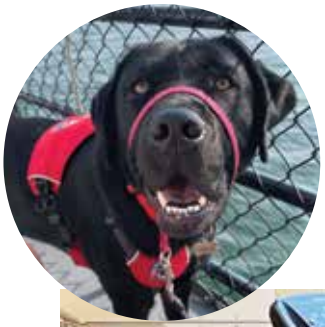
"Kona is my bridge to the hearing world," says Kate Weaver. Kate lost significant hearing to meningitis as an infant and used hearing aids most of her life. Then, very suddenly, she lost the majority of her remaining hearing.

"It was a major life change, it happened overnight, and it put me in a strange position," she explains. "I speak quite well, so people don't know I'm deaf. I'm between two worlds." Kona has helped her connect to others both physically and emotionally, making an invisible disability visible.

Kate still gets shivers when she remembers learning she'd be matched with Kona. She recalls her training at NEADS vividly. "Kona was trained, but I wasn't. It was amazing to see all the things he could do. You know, you get this dog, and it's your dog, but it's not really your dog. You think, oh my gosh, what do I do? You have to learn how to work together.

"NEADS did a great job easing me into this new relationship. Our trainer, Kathy Foreman, was really good at incrementally handing over responsibility to me as we built confidence as a team. She gave me lots of reassurance and confidence. I really enjoyed that training period. I went from feeling overwhelmed to confident and so excited to get started on my 'real life' with Kona."





"Kona is my bridge to the hearing world," says Kate Weaver. Kate lost significant hearing to meningitis as an infant and used hearing aids most of her life. Then, very suddenly, she lost the majority of her remaining hearing.



Kona and Kate have been together for two years. Kate calls him her "ears on the ground." "We're never apart. He alerts me to so many things and there are so many nuances to how he nudges me, or makes eye contact, or signals me by turning his head to let me know what's happening around me."

The most important thing to Kate is the feeling of security Kona has given her both at home and in public. "Without him, I'm vulnerable," Kate points out. With Kona, she knows she won't miss a fire alarm or a person behind her.

"And of course, he's a dog," she adds, petting him lovingly. "Off duty, he's goofy and playful and sweet. I take him on long walks and we have so much fun. I'm excited to grow my relationship with Kona for years to come."



One Dog, Many Connections

Kevin Fenlon & MK
Assistance Dog

Named by: Amy McClelland
Doggy Dorm Sponsor: Sherry Sullivan
Trainer: Erin Toomey
Full-Time Raisers: Cynthia & Emmanuel Orejol
Weekend Raiser: Jean Goguen
Prison: MCI Norfolk

"MK started out as a wish," says Kevin Fenlon, Assistant Dean and Director of Counseling Services at Worcester State University (WSU), "before I even knew what an Assistance Dog was. We are in the midst of a mental health crisis on college campuses. You can add endless counselors, but that may not fulfill what kids are needing, and colleges don't have the resources to support that anyway. My staff and I were trying to come up with new ways to reach out to kids and engage them in mental health services.

"I read the research on trained Assistance Dogs and the positive impact they can have on college counseling centers. Anxiety rates are at all-time highs and these dogs are at the forefront of therapeutic interventions. Also, we work with a significant number of trauma survivors. These dogs have proven abilities to relax the sympathetic nervous system and increase processing for those individuals." Having determined that WSU students could benefit greatly from an Assistance Dog, Kevin was thrilled to find that NEADS was right in his backyard.

Kevin met MK when he interviewed with NEADS and felt an immediate connection. He couldn't believe his luck when he learned they'd been matched together. MK is a fascinating dog, Kevin reports, highly trained, perfectly attuned to every environment, and able to form his own judgments about what will serve each person and situation best.

It took some time to learn how they were best going to work together with students. As they got to know each other, they met students at campus events and mental health training sessions for campus leaders, athletes, and faculty. The team did presentations on self-care. Kevin talks about how the right balance of diet, play, and sleep are vital to MK's well-being, just as they are to students.

When they worked together in individual sessions, all of Kevin's preconceptions turned out to be wrong, he says. MK meets each student where they are. "You never know what a student is going to bring into a session, or what they need

from MK," Kevin says. But MK knows. Some students cuddle on the floor with MK the whole time; some ignore him. With students who need nurturing, MK lays his head in their laps; with students who are stressed, he might bring them a toy. Even what Kevin calls his "disappearing act" is helpful as he melts into the background when that is what is needed.

As Kevin explored partnering with an Assistance Dog, he evaluated how the dog would fit into his family of wife and four sons, which he describes as active and boisterous. He's impressed by how well MK has integrated into both his work life and his home. "NEADS matched me with a unique dog," he says. Thoroughly professional at work, MK becomes a rambunctious, high-energy dog when his working vest comes off at the end of the day, perfect for the Fenlon family. "He has a different relationship with everyone in my family, including my cat-person wife. He's an incredible, beloved part of our lives."

The biggest surprise for Kevin in working with MK has been the amount of informal conversation he has now with students as he and MK walk across campus. A student may engage for just a minute or two, and that may be exactly what they need. "How do you connect with students who need mental health services and aren't seeking them out? I have a cheat code—MK."



"How do you connect with students who need mental health services and aren't seeking them out? I have a cheat code—MK." – *Kevin Fenlon*

A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

2024 Assistance Dog Client Survey

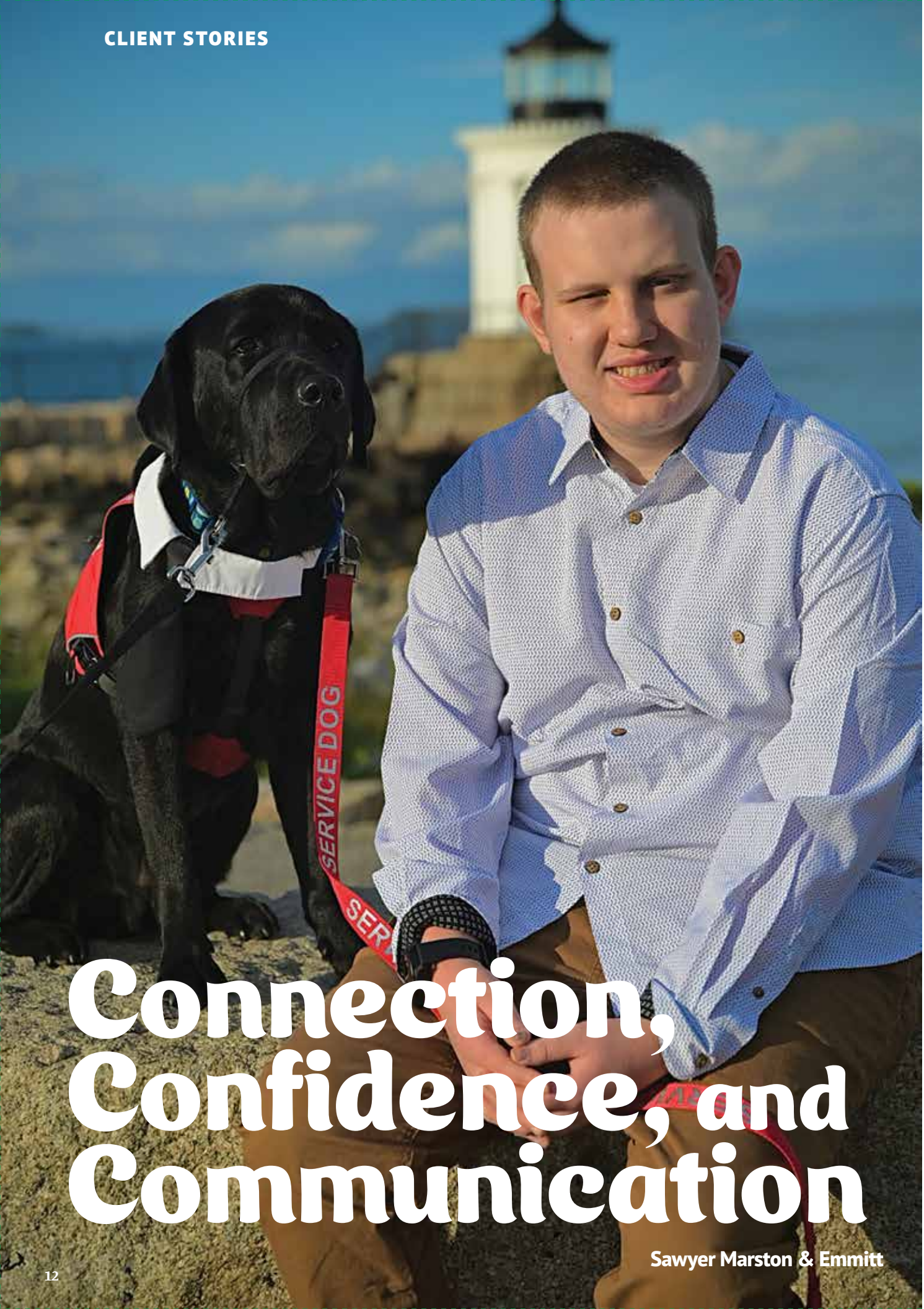
Clients told us how NEADS Assistance Dogs are integrated into their partners' work, providing invaluable, consistent support, whether in a classroom, hospital, courthouse, ministry, or therapeutic setting.

How Assistance Dogs Help:

- They have a calming effect (100%)
- They positively affect mental health (100%)
- They help build trust (96%)
- They help create a safe space (96%)
- They help motivate (86%)
- They increase confidence (82%)

How Assistance Dogs are incorporated into work:

- To greet people (96%)
- In one-on-one sessions (96%)
- In group sessions/activities (96%)
- To encourage engagement (92%)
- To work on social skills (71%)
- Through community outreach (65%)



Connection, Confidence, and Communication

Sawyer Marston & Emmitt

"Emmitt has brought our family together. Everyone's happy when Emmitt is happy—which is all the time."

– Melinda Marston





Sawyer Marston is a hard-working high school senior with a lot of interests. His favorite subject is English, he's taking animation classes, he plays baseball and basketball, and he plans a career in food service. His favorite person, though, isn't a person at all—it's his Service Dog, Emmitt.

In the four years since Sawyer and Emmitt have been together, Emmitt has had a profound impact on Sawyer himself and on the entire Marston family, says his mother, Melinda. "The joy he's added to our family just can't be measured," she says.

So, what changed so dramatically? Sawyer answers this himself. One major impact was immediate. Before Emmitt came to live with him when he was 14, Sawyer, who has autism, had never been able to sleep in his bedroom without one of his parents present. Emmitt gave him the confidence to sleep alone for the first time in his life.

Sawyer Marston & Emmitt
Service Dog for a Child

Named by: Julie Wolf
Trainers: Erin Wylie, Magen Blake
Full-Time and Weekend Raisers: Jennifer & Chris Cavallero
Weekend Raisers: Carrie Wood, Edward Nobrega
Prison: MCI Norfolk

"The connection between them is so deep," explains Melinda. "Sawyer, and our family, are able to do so much more now." Emmitt has helped Sawyer elevate his communication skills and navigate social situations in a way he was never able to before. Emmitt is the bridge in social interactions that gives Sawyer both the confidence and motivation to talk to people where previously he would have been non-verbal or avoided the situation entirely, Melina says. Everyone is curious about him and has questions about his role as a Service Dog, and talking about him takes the focus off of Sawyer himself.

Emmitt is trained to recognize when Sawyer needs calming and support. After school, he's waiting to snuggle on the couch with Sawyer; at the doctor's office, he lays his head in Sawyer's lap.

When Melinda began researching Service Dogs for Sawyer, she knew she wanted an organization that took the dogs' well-being and the client match very seriously. "I felt an immediate connection when I found NEADS," she recalls. None of the family had had a dog previously. "When we



came for training, I asked so many questions the trainers must have thought I'd never even seen a dog before," she laughs. She was impressed with how intimately the trainers, and the rest of the NEADS staff she met, knew Emmitt. By the time they left campus, she felt confident, and she knew she had a team that would stand behind her.

Four years into their partnership, the Marstons have stayed deeply involved with NEADS, from the initial check-ins with trainers that helped them get off to a great start together to donating to name a puppy after Melinda's father. NEADS fulfilled Melinda's hopes in providing an expertly trained dog who is a perfect match for Sawyer. It was a surprise, though, that the bond between boy and dog would so deeply impact the whole family.

"Emmitt has brought our family together. Everyone's happy when Emmitt is happy—which is all the time."

Connecting with Compassion:

The Power of the NEADS Puppy Raiser Community

DID YOU KNOW?

NEADS Raiser Instructors organize classes and one-on-one and small group instruction for the Puppy Raisers. In FY24, Instructors arranged visits to 130 venues and provided 728 hours of instruction.

The life-changing partnerships formed between NEADS dogs and their human partners are made possible in part by the dedication of our incredible Puppy Raisers. This year, the **Puppy Raiser program** has flourished, with many new raisers joining our community. More than just volunteers, our raisers are a family, celebrating successes, offering support, and sharing an unbreakable bond forged through their love for our dogs.

Recognizing that the demands of puppy raising can be significant, we've introduced innovative options to make the experience more accessible and rewarding, including:

Team Raising: Sharing the joys and responsibilities of puppy raising, individuals work together to care for and socialize these amazing dogs.

College Raising: Bringing the NEADS spirit to campus, College Raisers integrate their canine companions into their academic life, providing invaluable socialization opportunities while enriching the campus community.

Sitters: Offering a helping hand, our Sitters provide temporary dog care, allowing the primary raisers much-needed flexibility for travel, work commitments, or personal time.



Teammates Ralph and Heidi with Service Dog in Training Charley



College Raisers Anjica and Kathryn with Service Dog in Training Colby



Teammates Mike, Karen (also a Puppy Raiser Ambassador), Liz, and Bob with Service Dog in Training Robert

This diverse and dynamic community is further strengthened by our **Ambassadors**, who are out in the community to share their inspiring stories and the profound impact that raising a NEADS puppy has had on their own lives.

What did it take to support our 130 Service Dogs in Training this year?

Weekend Puppy Raisers: **59**
Full-Time Raisers: **76**
Team Raisers: **12** (6 teams)
College Raisers: **4**
Dog Sitters: **73**



Puppy Raiser Ambassadors Heather and Nancy (also Team Raisers) with Instructor Brooklyn (left) representing NEADS at Pridefest in Newburyport, MA

NEADS Ambassadors

Sue Feit
Linda Sargent
Kathleen Whalin
Sue Walsh
Nancy Bodwell
Doreen Rao
Karen Terry
Mariann Lackey
Colleeen Whelpley
Rick Ressijac
Heather Keith Lucas
Katelyn Putvinski

Rick & Cindy Ressijac

Sharing the Puppy Raising Journey



Rick and Cindy Ressijac have to date raised 5 puppies for NEADS, as Weekend Puppy Raisers for Hazel, Bobby, and Ricky, and as Full-Time Puppy Raisers for Dolly and Hattie. They have also been Dog Sitters for Michael. Rick is a NEADS Ambassador, and in that role, he regularly educates others about Service Dogs and puppy raising at NEADS.

Why We Became Puppy Raisers

Cindy: Losing our pet dog a few years back was just awful. We were heartbroken, and I knew I couldn't go through that again. But we loved having a dog in our lives, so we started looking at fostering. That's how we found NEADS. I filled out an application before I even talked to Rick about it.

Rick: I followed up with a lot of research, and then we just kind of jumped in with both feet. We even attended several field trips before we had a puppy!

Cindy: It was really about having a dog in our lives, but not having to go through the pain of losing them. We know so many NEADS Raisers who have similar stories. They love dogs but can't face losing another one.

Our Puppy Raiser Journey

Rick: We started as Weekend Raisers, with Hazel, and right from the start got a lot of support. Not having to worry about food or vet care, which NEADS provides, meant we could focus on the puppy and its socialization. We also felt a real sense of community with the other Weekend Raisers. And the Council Members are always there for questions and to share their experience.



Rick: We then decided to make the leap to full-time raising. Again, the support and encouragement from the NEADS team was incredible. Any time we reach out, NEADS is there to help.

Sharing Responsibilities

Cindy: Rick and I are equally enthusiastic about the program. We work together as a team, but we also divide and conquer. I'm really focused on the loose-leash walking, and Rick does a lot of the field trips, in-house training, and the classes with the Instructors.

Seeing the Results

Cindy: We learn so much with each dog. They all have their own personalities and challenges but seeing them grow and develop is so rewarding.

Rick: We've taken our current pup, Hattie, to five or six restaurants now. And she's fantastic. Recently we were out with friends for dinner, and she was in a down stay under the table for nearly three hours. People didn't even realize she was there! It's milestones like this that show you the dog is really getting it.

Saying Goodbye

Cindy: A lot of people ask us, "How can you give them up?" But we go into it knowing that these aren't our dogs. We are caregivers, raisers, for whatever period they need us. We love every single dog we've had, but when it comes time to say goodbye, you know you're doing the right thing. You know they're moving on to do what they were bred and raised for.

Rick: What really brings that point home is when you meet NEADS clients, and they tell you just how these dogs have changed their lives. I'll always remember the first client we met, who told how her Service Dog gave her back her independence. And then there was the mother whose son has autism, who told us how the dog totally changed not just her son's life, but the whole family's. It just reinforces what you're doing.



Since 1998, the **NEADS Prison PUP Program** has been changing lives—both with the dogs we train and for the incarcerated individuals who help train them. Today, nearly 90 handlers in six prisons in Massachusetts and Rhode Island work with approximately 50 dogs at any one time to help prepare them for their future roles as Service Dogs.

To truly understand the impact of the NEADS Prison PUP Program, we turn to the words of two incarcerated individuals raising NEADS dogs. Here's what they have to say about the positive relationships fostered by the program.

Connecting Behind the Walls

"My name is Michael. I've been in this program now for seven years. Coming from my background, being someone who has made many mistakes in my life that led me down the wrong path, this program is life changing. It helped me realize that I am more than just my mistakes. Being able to train these puppies and see first-hand the impact that it makes on the lives of the people and families they go to is a blessed feeling.

This program restored my sense of purpose. It gave me a way not only to better myself as a son, uncle, and brother, but also gave me a way to make my mother proud.

I truly am grateful to the NEADS program. It gave me a place where I could feel like I belonged. They took a chance on me and other individuals when no one else would.

They gave us a chance to be a part of the impact that these puppies are making in the world and at the same time giving us the tools we need to be better human beings in every aspect of life."







"My name is Brian. I have been in the NEADS program for a little over 2 years. When I was asked to talk about the program and what it means to me, I thought it would be nice to get a consensus from all of the guys in the program when asked, "what does the program mean to us?" Because, as Kathy [Foreman, NEADS Trainer] always says, 'There is no I in Team.' "



Here are some of the thoughts that come to mind:

- A better sense of responsibility
- Proved that hard work can pay off through the impact we have on the clients
- Improving as individuals by learning a new skill
- Taught me patience and improved my self-esteem by giving back
- Helped me grow as a person
- Showed me how to love animals and view them as more than pets
- Giving us options to make better life choices
- Enlightened my views towards life
- Taught me how to work with others as a team
- Showed us that there is always an opportunity to be better no matter what the past was like
- Allows us to give back to the community
- Teaches us accountability



What did it take to support our 130 Service Dogs in Training this year?

Prisons: **6**
Incarcerated individuals: **39** primary handlers and **48** backup handlers working with our dogs

We would like to thank the following organizations for their generosity:

Foundations

100+ Women who Care Greater Boston Fund
214 Philanthropic Foundation
365Z Foundation Inc
8/3 Foundation
Allegro Foundation
Amica Companies Foundation
Fred C. & Katherine B. Andersen Foundation
The Susan A. & Donald P. Babson Charitable Foundation
Frederick A. Bailey Trust
The Barker Foundation, Inc.
Barney Family Foundation
Stephen R. Baum Foundation
Eleanore Bennett Charitable Trust No. 2
Blue Star Mothers of Central MA Chapter 3
The Emma & Georgina Bloomberg Foundation
The Boston Bruins Foundation
Paul & Virginia Cabot Charitable Trust
CarMichael Foundation
The Collette Foundation
Concentric Energy Advisors
Audrey P. Connor Charitable Foundation
Copeland Family Foundation, Inc.
Crane Charitable Funds
Darman Family Charitable Trust
DAV Charitable Service Trust
Deupree Family Foundation
Robert & Eleanor Demple Family Foundation
Fehsenfeld Riley Foundation
The Doug Flutie, Jr. Foundation for Autism, Inc.
Frantzman Scott Charitable Foundation
Gardiner Howland Shaw Foundation
Grand Chapter of Massachusetts Order of the Eastern Star
Grimshaw-Gudewicz Charitable Foundation
The Hart Foundation
The Hebeler Foundation
Henderson Foundation
The Herman Foundation
Hoche-Scofield Foundation
The Ilsababy Foundation
Jolyn Foundation, Inc.
Ira C. Kaplan & Anita M. Migday Foundation
The Kopf Family Foundation
The Curtis I. Kossman Foundation
The Donna M. Kletjian 2014 Charitable Lead Trust
Daniel H. Lawlor Charitable Foundation
Lakeside Foundation
Laura J. Niles Foundation
Leclerc Charity Fund
Levey Family Fund
S & L Marx Foundation
The Doris W. McMillan Trust
Merck Foundation
Monty Tech MCJROTC
Curtis O'Hara Foundation
Bessie Pappas Charitable Foundation, Inc
Patterson Foundation
Marjorie M. Peloquin Foundation
The Prentice Foundation, Inc.
The Raffiani Family Foundation, Inc
Katharine Higgins Riley Fund of The Greater Worcester Community Foundation
Rockwell Foundation
S. Rubenstein Family Foundation, Inc.
Saint-Gobain Corporation Foundation
Jack Satter Foundation
Schiavi Family Foundation
The Scott Family RAWZ Fund
The TJX Foundation, Inc.
Tegna Foundation
Tower of Hope
Town Fair Tire Foundation
Van Sloun Foundation
VCA Charities
The Ed Walsh Foundation
Webster Family Foundation
Wenwach Foundation
Wilensky Foundation
Wilson Caruso Charitable Foundation
John J. Winkler & C. Sue Winkler Trust

Funding received from foundations in FY 2023 (September 1, 2023 through August 31, 2024)

Partner & Supporter Organizations

Abaris Financial Group
All One Credit Union (fka Leominster Credit Union)
Bennett Building Corp
Blue Buffalo Co.
Blue Pearl Specialty + Emergency Pet Hospital
Boston Duck Tours
Braley & Wellington Insurance Agency
D'Ambrosio Eye Care, Inc.
Embark
Enterprise Bank
Harbor Sweets
Idexx Laboratories
Kent Stetson
Park-9 Dog Bar
Patrick Motor Group
Payden & Rygel
Polar Beverages
Retrofit
The Black Dog Tavern Company
Worcester Fire Department/6K Memorial
Worcester Red Sox Baseball Club

Kendrick Legacy Fund

Donations received through the Kendrick Legacy Fund:

Janice A. Dingee Revocable Trust
Erika Edens Revocable Trust
The Rosemary Ann Fraser Revocable Living Trust
The Virginia A. Gaffey Jr. Revocable Trust
Thomas M. Harvey Trust
Estate of Melvin Levine
Melvin Family Trust
Sidney Michael Rich Revocable Trust
Dolores K. Sher Trust
Melvin H. Sher Trust
Anne R. Stanley Trust
Estate of Joseph A. Troiano
Mary Wick Administrative Trust

For information about how you can leave a legacy gift to NEADS, contact mbaern@neads.org

Breaking New Ground



NEADS continues to build a strong and healthy future. The Richard Murray Veterinary Clinic and Early Learning Center project is poised to break ground in 2025, with an anticipated grand opening in the summer of 2026—and a new era of consolidated, on-site veterinary care for our dogs.

Once again, NEADS donors have shared in our vision to make this ambitious, vital project possible. We are extremely grateful to each of you who have contributed to this fourth phase of the Foundations for the Future Capital Campaign, including our anonymous lead donors and the many in NEADS Nation who have consistently supported NEADS' goals to create an accessible, professional, state-of-the-art campus through each phase of Foundations for the Future.

Making a Joyful Impact



"Supporting NEADS is such a joyful part of our family's life," says Nanine Costa. Nanine and her husband, Larry, have been among the most supportive—and impactful—donors to a broad array of projects at NEADS. The lead sponsors of the NEADS Breeding Center, Larry and Nanine made it possible for us to enter a new era of purpose-breeding World Class Service Dogs. They have long been the presenting sponsors of Get Dressed. Give Back., and the arrival of the elegant Costa clan is always a highlight of that festive evening. Over the years, they've been staunch supporters of many vital initiatives at NEADS. "We bonded with



Gerry [CEO] and his wife, Kathie, over our love of labs, and that's how we learned about NEADS," says Nanine. "NEADS does incredible work training these marvelous animals to transform people's lives. It's a privilege to be a part of that work. Larry and I love knowing that we're able to help NEADS have such an important effect." We are so grateful for the Costas' steadfast generosity, and their many connections to NEADS throughout the years.

Twenty Years of Connection

NEADS is honored to celebrate 20 years of transformative grantmaking by the Patterson Foundation. Established by the founders and employees of the Patterson Companies, the Patterson Foundation invited NEADS to be one its first grantees in 2004 and has consistently supported us, particularly with significant contributions to capital projects, for its entire two decades. At the annual Patterson Animal Health sales conference, held in Dallas in July, client KateLynne Steinke and Service Dog Jones shared their story with a rapt audience, thanking the Foundation and its supporters for the life-changing role its generosity has played in their lives. KateLynne pointed out that Jones was cared for at the Hawkins Canine Center, they trained together at the Kathy Foreman Client House, and now that Jones is approaching retirement age, his successor will likely be born at the NEADS Breeding Center, all of which the Patterson Foundation supported. We join KateLynne in extending our gratitude to the Patterson Foundation and congratulating it on the important work it has done in communities across the country, including our own.

Connecting Beyond our Campus

Get Dressed. Give Back., September 2023

A fabulous event for a fabulous cause at The Exchange Center, Boston



Host Keith McGilvery, Client Speaker Patrick Cogan, and Service Dog Knight



Keynote Speaker Tiziana Dearing



Live music from Martin & Kelly

Pulling 4 Paws Truck Pull, April 2024

13 amazing teams competed in the 2024 Pulling 4 Paws Truck Pull at Polar Park, Worcester. We were delighted to see so many returning teams, their enthusiasm undeterred by last year's cold and wet conditions. Congrats to our 2024 Champs, Team NEMLEC-SWAT!









Boston Red Sox Service Dog of the Game, 2024 Season

10 NEADS Dogs were honored on the Field at Fenway Park in the Boston Red Sox Service Dog of the Game program during the 2024 season: Kate and Service Dog for Hearing Kona (below, left); Kristin and Assistance Dog for the Classroom Honey; Nicholas and Assistance Dog Bruce Wayne; Joanna and Service Dog Sully; Kitty and Service Dog for Hearing Kendal; Chris and Service Dog Carter; and Kate and Service Dog for Hearing Pally; and NEADS Assistant Manager of Raiser Operations Bailey and Service Dog in Training Summer (below, right).







A Special 30th Celebration, August 2024

In August, NEADS staff joined Boston Duck Tours and others to mark a double celebration: CEO Cindy Brown's 30th anniversary with the company and the Boston Duck Tour's 30th year in operation. Boston Duck Tours has been a NEADS supporter for more than a decade.

Connecting Through Advocacy



For individuals partnered with a NEADS Service Dog, navigating public spaces should be a seamless experience and allow them to live their lives to the fullest. Yet, encounters with uncontrolled dogs can create significant obstacles, disrupting their independence and well-being.

Our 2024 Client Survey revealed the alarming frequency of such incidents. Of the 212 clients who responded, 66% indicated encountering a poorly trained or out-of-control service dog while in public, and nearly half reported having had an uncontrolled dog snap at, bite, bark at, or interfere with their Service Dog.

These findings underscore the need for stricter standards and regulations surrounding Service Dogs. That's why NEADS has been a steadfast advocate for the passage of a Service Dog Fraud bill in Massachusetts, which aims to address the issue of people falsely indicating that their pet is a Service Dog to gain special status.

This past year, we've made significant strides in this effort, working closely with MA State Representative Kimberly Ferguson and others to establish a commission dedicated to studying the framework of this crucial legislation. This important step will pave the way for the bill's passage and ultimately create safer, more accessible public spaces for our clients and their Service Dogs.



A Growing Demand for Red Vest Accessible Training

Did you know that the global disability community has an estimated annual spending power of $13 trillion?* Yet, many businesses are missing out on this valuable market by failing to make their products, services, and spaces truly accessible. NEADS is working with organizations who are actively seeking to reach this community by enhancing their accessibility and inclusivity.

The Red Vest designation recognizes public venues that prioritize inclusive practices. These venues ensure accessible spaces, provide staff training, and communicate clearly to create a positive and welcoming experience for all. By participating in the program, venues demonstrate their commitment to social responsibility, gain a competitive edge, and tap into this significant market segment.

This past year, five Boston-area organizations—TD Garden, Boston



Symphony Orchestra, Boston Public Library, UMass Memorial Health - Harrington, and Tanglewood—partnered with NEADS to provide in-person Red Vest Accessible training to over 100 of their employees. NEADS looks forward to further developing the Red Vest Accessible program in the coming year as we work to reach and educate more businesses.

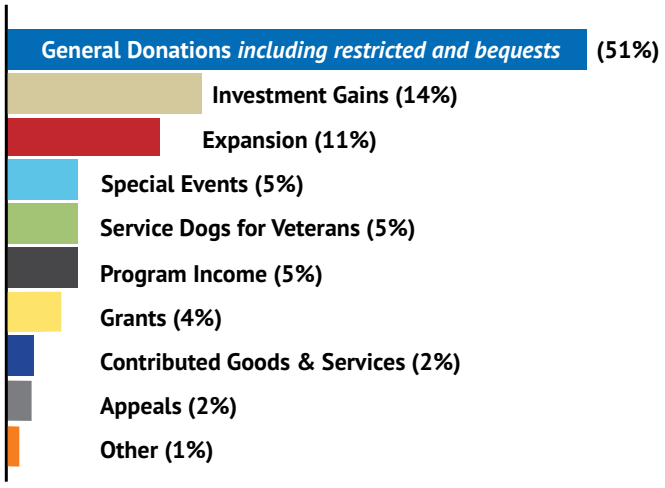
*Source: Valuable 500. (2024, January 17). Nothing about us without us: The path to sustained progress and accountability in inclusive disability representation. [White paper]. World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, Davos.

2024 Financial Highlights

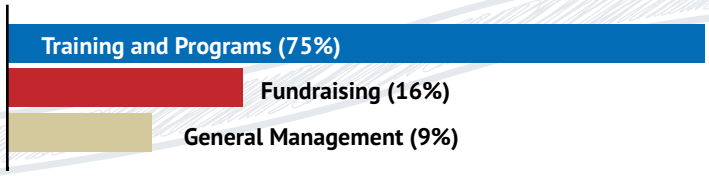
OPERATING REVENUE	2024*	2023
General fees and contributions	$3,656,282	$3,871,401
Contributed goods,services, and property	128,394	111,088
Grants and foundations	381,900	1,399,289
Interest income	1,405	2,490
Net investment return	732,852	280,837
Special events	247,068	236,859
Other income	9,561	42,219
Total support and revenue	**$5,157,462**	**$5,944,183**

OPERATING EXPENSES	2024	2023
Training and program	$3,375,891	$3,165,035
Management and general	420,985	375,784
Fundraising	733,647	626,124
Total expenses	**$4,530,523**	**$4,166,943**
Change in net assets	**$626,939**	**$1,777,240**
Net assets, beginning of year	**$15,246,916**	**$13,469,676**
Net assets, end of year	**$15,873,855**	**$15,246,916**

SUPPORT AND REVENUE BY CATEGORY



EXPENSES BY CATEGORY



**Audited financials have been reviewed by the Board of Directors Finance Committee. Their recommendation is for full Board approval at the January 15, 2025 Annual Meeting.*

NEADS® Board of Directors*

Chair: Geoff Worrell
Clerk: Sue Feit
Treasurer: Graham Chevry

Directors
Jill Mongeau Gaines
Harry Grey
James Hicks
Meghan Kelly
Carol Krauss
Shannon O'Brien
**Board members as of 8/31/24*

Contact Information

Mailing Address
P.O. Box 1100
Princeton, MA 01541

Street Address
305 Redemption Rock Trail South
Princeton, MA 01541
978-422-9064
info@neads.org; neads.org

Report Credits

Editors
Melissa Baern, Audrey Trieschman

Art Direction & Design
Mary-Lynne Bohn, Accent Design

Photography
Maggie Barger Photography (front cover); David Marshak; Richard Prager; Stephanie Sioras; and NEADS clients, staff, and volunteers

CHARITY NAVIGATOR 4-STAR RATINGS FOR MORE THAN TWO DECADES

Strong financial health and commitment to accountability and transparency consistently earn NEADS a 4-star rating from *Charity Navigator*, America's largest independent charity evaluator. NEADS is one of the longest-standing not-for-profits to hold this rating.

Charity Navigator
FOUR-STAR

Active NEADS Service Dog and Assistance Dog Teams

105 SERVICE DOGS*

24 ASSISTANCE DOGS

78 SERVICE DOGS FOR HEARING*

31 ASSISTANCE DOGS FOR THE CLASSROOM

325 ACTIVE CLIENTS

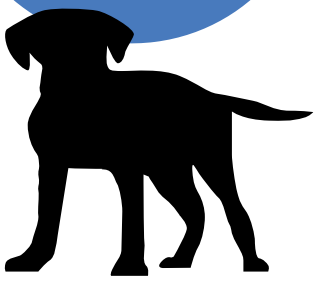
42 SERVICE DOGS FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

5 ASSISTANCE DOGS FOR THE COURTHOUSE

29 TRAUMA ASSISTANCE DOGS (TAD)*

2 ASSISTANCE DOGS FOR THE HOSPITAL

9 ASSISTANCE DOGS FOR THE MINISTRY



** Starred programs serve a total of 83 veterans.*

NEADS Staff

*Our talented, dedicated staff of 47 is extraordinarily committed to breeding, raising, training, and placing World Class Service Dogs.**



Kate Albertini
Tori Allen
Melissa Baern
Lori Barrett
Rachael Bell
Allie Benbenek
Sue Berry
Lisa Braley
Gregory Brown
Ashley Cary
Amanda Charbonneau
Jennifer Chauvin
Cathryn Cleveland
Gerry DeRoche
Maddie Dolan
Corinne Donohue
Megan Foley
Kathy Foreman
Emilie Gagne
Jen Girardin
Tyler Gribi
Sarah Heinrich
Leah Hooverpoel
Michelle Kati
Tracy Kelly
Kara Kittredge-Milotte
Megan Kropf
Hannah Kump
Megan Lupinski
Kylee Maston
Rachel May
Brooklyn McDonald
Peter Mula
Susan Nedelman
Meghan O'Brien
Julia Prime
Bec Reynolds
Hannah Ribeiro
Heather Romanoff
Doreen Sheridan
Bailey Sullivan
Anna Tepe
Audrey Trieschman
Sharon Turcotte
Julie Vautour
Richard Wood
Cathy Zemaitis

**Employed by NEADS as of 8/31/24*















LOCK CEREMONIES TO CELEBRATE 19 NEW PARTNERSHIPS IN 2024 • Gabriel Altland and Service Dog for a Child Breezy • David Axelrod and Service Dog Morris • Mary Bird and Service Dog for Hearing Cali • Christopher Cotreau and Service Dog Carter • Kristin Ford and Assistance Dog for the Classroom Honey • Helene Gleser and Service Dog for Hearing Lady • Tyler Hooton and Service Dog for Hearing Doc • Robert Kersbergen and Service Dog for Hearing Gerry • Lois Maroney and Service Dog for Hearing Dawson • Holeigh Morin and Assistance Dog for the Classroom Star • Meghan Rodier and Assistance Dog for the Classroom Casey • Rivka Schmidt and Service Dog for a Child Betty • Christine Schneider and Service Dog for Hearing Ronnie • Rose Seibold-Fasano and Assistance Dog Teddy • Steven Skinner and Service Dog for Hearing Otis • William Skyles and Service Dog for Hearing Walter • Ellen Smith and Service Dog Velma • Kate Thurman and Service Dog for Hearing Pally • Moriah Williams and Service Dog Summer

NEADS® World Class Service Dogs Change Lives
305 Redemption Rock Trail South
Princeton, MA 01541 | 978.422.9064
neads.org