Together, a New Team

We had a great year in 2018. A total of 337 dogs were placed free of charge, over 3,000 volunteers gave their time, and we hit a milestone by matching our 6,000th team.

As we kick off 2019 together, our goals are aligned but with a slightly different emphasis. John, our new chair of the national board of directors, will engage the board across the organization, working with the team to increase the impact of donors, volunteers, staff and graduates. Paige and the executive team are excited to continue to increase our effectiveness overall. We will scale the organization’s ability to place life-changing service dogs; innovate to better support our volunteers, employees and programs; gain new insight on loyal donors; and raise the important funds needed for our mission.

We’re excited to share that we are expanding our services to veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) to include our Northwest, Northeast and South Central Regions and will finish building the PTSD training facility on our Northwest Region’s Jean and Charles Schulz Campus in early summer. We’re breaking ground on a new campus in our North Central Region in April. We’re also continuing our cutting-edge research, allowing us to better predict dog success traits in order to improve our placements and make more efficient use of our resources.

Our board and leadership have been working to develop a long-term strategic plan that incorporates feedback from all members of our community. We are looking at some exciting adjustments to our infrastructure, so our operations can be more responsive while enabling overall integration and collaboration across all facets of our organization.

This is going to be an exciting year. Because of supporters like you, more doors will be opened, more items will be retrieved and more lives will be changed. We sincerely appreciate all you do.
“Walking through the hospital, now all I hear is ‘Hey Orbit!’” says Caitlin, an occupational therapist at Baylor Scott & White Institute for Rehabilitation — Dallas.

Facility Dog Orbit is the third Canine Companions assistance dog to be placed at a Baylor Scott & White Health facility. He works with handlers Caitlin and Lance, a recreational therapist, as they assist patients with a variety of disabilities. From spinal cord injuries to traumatic brain injuries or strokes, each patient’s story is different, but they all have one thing in common: they love Orbit.

“This is likely the most difficult thing our patients have ever gone through, so having Orbit here makes a huge difference,” says Lance. “People are intrinsically motivated when a dog is around.”

Caitlin says that Orbit is a huge motivator for patients and many of his commands are incorporated into therapies. Having Orbit around also helps with cognitive skills for many patients, such as remembering his name and his commands.

“It makes it feel like home to have a dog around,” says Caitlin’s patient Ed. “It’s so much better than the metal machines and doctors.”

Ed has greatly improved in his therapy sessions by working with Orbit. One of his exercises is leaning forward and reaching down. Recently, he was able to reach all the way past his ankles to pet Orbit, something he never thought he would be able to do again.

Orbit also serves as an ambassador for Canine Companions, showing patients what an assistance dog can do to enhance independence. Learn more about facility dogs at cci.org/facilitydogs.

Help Make a New Canine Companions Campus a Reality

Make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities by supporting our capital campaign for the new campus in our North Central Region. The updated facilities will provide enhanced support for graduate teams, puppy raisers, volunteers and donors.

For information on the new campus, visit cci.org/invest.
Kristi Is My Best Friend

Nu Ja was born with limb differences in her arms and legs, meaning they are either absent or incomplete; however, this rarely slows her down. “Kristi, get!” 9-year-old Nu Ja excitedly tells her new assistance dog. With a wagging tail, assistance dog Kristi retrieves Nu Ja’s lunchbox from the kitchen counter and then carries it down the hall so Nu Ja can put her lunch in her book bag. As an expertly-trained assistance dog, Kristi performs commands that help Nu Ja be more independent every day.

Over the years, Nu Ja’s parents had discussed getting an assistance dog. They learned that costs could be high and wait times lengthy. After moving to Northern California, Nu Ja’s mom, Jessica, met a gentleman and his Canine Companions service dog at a park. After talking with him and learning more about Canine Companions, they applied for a dog. Nu Ja was matched with Skilled Companion Kristi in September 2018. Skilled Companion teams are three-part teams: the recipient, the canine and an adult, typically a parent or guardian, who facilitates the handling process, manages team safety and ensures the dog’s daily needs are met.

Kristi is a perfect match for Nu Ja’s independent disposition and outgoing personality. She helps Nu Ja conserve energy and enables her to do more things on her own, without relying on her parents or siblings for help. Everyday after school, Kristi pulls Nu Ja’s book bag into the house using the “tug” command. Then Nu Ja gives Kristi her empty lunchbox to put back onto the kitchen counter for the following morning. Since being matched last fall, Kristi has adapted incredibly well to Nu Ja’s specific needs. Kristi has learned to deliver dropped items to Nu Ja’s shoulder, instead of to a hand or lap, like Canine Companions assistance dogs are typically taught. Nu Ja says, “Kristi is my best friend.”

Whether helping her get ready for school, accompanying her to physical therapy or attending Girl Scout troop outings, Kristi provides Nu Ja a helping paw. “Kristi is Nu Ja’s helper and companion,” says Jessica, “but even more than that, she’s an ally — a reminder that none of us are in it alone.”

For more stories like Nu Ja and Kristi’s visit cci.org/stories.
In October 2018, we proudly placed expertly-trained assistance dogs with our first class of veterans who have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Four new teams were matched in a ceremony held on our Jean and Charles Schulz Campus. Marine Corps veteran Bruce, who was matched with Service Dog Wembley, says, “I have been given a canine partner who will allow me to move more comfortably through daily life at home and in public places. His presence reduces my stress and anxiety which closed me out of normal life experience.”

These Canine Companions service dogs are trained to perform commands that have been specifically identified to help mitigate the symptoms of PTSD, including positional commands “front” and “behind,” turning on lights, distance retrieve and anxiety and nightmare interruption.

Soon after matching these new teams, a press conference was held at our Northwest Region Training Center, inviting media and legislators to learn more about this important new program. As a result, media stories have reached over 70,000 people, including a feature on FOX News shown nationally on Veterans Day.

Since our founding, Canine Companions has placed close to 300 assistance dogs with veterans. A new training building specifically designed to support veterans with PTSD is currently under construction at the Schulz Campus, and we’re expanding the program to our Northeast and South Central Training Centers later this year. Visit cci.org/veterans for information.

“Because Wembley has been trained in specific commands, my PTSD symptoms no longer control my life.”

— Bruce, Marine Corps veteran

Steven with Major V; Steven with Suzy; Bruce with Wembley II; David with Sesame II
Amazing Erin!

Long-time puppy raiser and former Capital Chapter president, Erin Scranton, co-chaired another successful DogFest Washington DC last year. Erin has worked tirelessly for the past five years on this event. Each year she makes an heirloom-quality, full-size quilt, using a Canine Companions theme, and raffles it to raise money for the mission. Since DogFest came to DC in 2014, Erin has also been one of the top individual fundraisers. This year, she outdid herself by engaging her mother to make two special quilts, including one for the guest speaker Army Major Vincent Cerchione and his service dog Taco. Erin started raising puppies in the Northwest Region in 2012, raising Luna, now a hearing dog living in New Jersey. While Luna was still a puppy, Erin moved to the Washington DC area and joined the Capital Chapter. It wasn’t long before Erin was raising more puppies and taking leadership roles with the Northeast Region’s largest chapter. In addition to organizing fundraising events, Erin recruits and mentors new puppy raisers, routinely attends outreach and educational events, and has helped the chapter grow exponentially. Erin is truly a creative force behind the Capital Chapter. Thank you Erin for your dedication and commitment to Canine Companions. To learn more about volunteer opportunities, visit cci.org/volunteer.

Celebrating 6,000

Shawn is no stranger to the life-changing impact an expertly-trained assistance dog can provide. He grew up with a Canine Companions dog by his side.

At age 6, Shawn was diagnosed with Duchenne muscular dystrophy, a progressive muscle disease. After meeting a Canine Companions assistance dog team, Shawn’s family knew they needed to apply for a dog and were later matched with assistance dog Eli. After Eli’s retirement, Shawn, now 20, knew he would benefit from the specialized skills that a Canine Companions service dog would provide as his disease progresses.

“Having a service dog makes me more independent,” Shawn explains. “Canine Companions for Independence has changed my life from feeling out of place to feeling normal and free.”

In 2018, Shawn and Service Dog Melissa graduated with 54 other Canine Companions assistance dog teams. This new match was Canine Companions’ 6,000th graduate team.

Melissa was trained by Canine Companions in over 40 commands to enhance Shawn’s independence, including retrieving dropped items, opening doors, turning on lights and much more. Being matched with Melissa was a major milestone for Shawn and for Canine Companions.
Canine Companions’ campuses are places where kids with disabilities can play, feel safe and are able to express themselves. With the recent addition of a sensory room at the Southeast Region Training Center, children now have a place to withdraw from sensory overload, while creating endless possibilities for learning. The sensory room has equipment that lights up, makes sounds, and has sensory-friendly places that children can touch or lie on. Kids are free to choose which equipment they would like to use and how they would like to use it.

Sensory rooms are specially-designed environments created to give an immersive sensory experience for people with various disabilities. Some benefits of a sensory room include:

- Sensory stimulation
- Increased learning and play
- Improved balance, movement and spatial orientation
- Decreased behavioral problems

“This is exciting because it gives children who are here for Team Training an opportunity to step away for a few minutes and have their sensory needs met,” says Melinda Sowers, the Southeast Region’s program director. “Sometimes students feel the pressures of training, and this room gives them an opportunity to take a break.”

“We are extremely grateful to the Central Florida Women’s League who provided a grant to fund the creation of this room,” shares Cathy Gooden, the Southeast Region’s executive director. “This sensory room opens up a whole new world for our Team Training students, and we can’t wait to witness its positive effects.”

Canine Companions Wins Award

Canine Companions was recently awarded a prestigious Maxwell Medallion by the Dog Writers Association of America. We received this recognition for our blog, Help is a Four-Legged Word. The DWAA was established in 1935 and writers across the country compete in the annual competition. Visit blog.cci.org.

Apply | Donate | Volunteer cci.org

Canine Companions for Independence provides expertly-trained assistance dogs free of charge to children, veterans and adults with disabilities.
At the Jean and Charles Schulz Campus in Santa Rosa, California, Thursday is also known as “Ruth Day.” Staff and dogs alike listen for the sounds of Canine Companions volunteer Ruth, her voice rising over the buzz of a Dremel tool as she travels from office to office throughout the morning giving puppies and dogs their weekly nail care.

Ruth Schomaker began volunteering at the Schulz Campus when it was built in 1996, though she had been generously giving her time to support our mission for nearly a decade prior. Over the past 32 years, Ruth has worn many hats: breeder caretaker, puppy raiser and office volunteer. She has been a mainstay in the National Veterinary Clinic for over 20 years, initially helping the office run smoothly with administrative tasks like filing and making copies. However, it wasn’t long before she offered to take on the role of trimming dogs’ nails for graduates coming into the clinic.

Canine Companions graduates and breeder caretakers know they can make appointments to come see Ruth every Thursday. “All the dogs love her and can hardly wait for her to arrive with her Dremel and tiny pieces of dog biscuits,” shares Dr. Philip Lin, national veterinarian.

Between appointments, she pops into offices to trim the nails of all the graduate dogs, puppies and pet dogs who spend their days on campus with staff. The dogs wait patiently, knowing Ruth will soon be down on the floor, cradling them and offering them “halfway treats” after two manicured paws and lots of enthusiastic praise.

Ruth is generous with her time and her financial support, quietly making gifts to not only the Northwest Region, but also to capital needs across the country. In 2017, she and her husband, Bruce, sponsored the Northwest Region’s signature gala, Sit Stay Sparkle, and purchased six new climbing structures for the kennel play yards. Along the way, Ruth has earned the respect and friendship of countless people in the Canine Companions community. We are so grateful for her years of dedication and support.

We’re Just Mad About Ruth
It takes a special person to spend 36 years on call day and night, 365 days a year, even if it’s for the sake of very important puppies. For Dr. Ruth Daniels, breeding veterinarian for Canine Companions, every specially-bred puppy born in the home of a volunteer breeder caretaker was celebrated as a potential future assistance dog that could change the life of a person with a disability. With such a powerful motivator, the phone calls in the wee hours of the morning were more than worth it.

Dr. Ruth, as she is affectionately known, earned her veterinary medicine degree from UC Davis, later adding a master’s degree in genetics. She joined Canine Companions’ veterinary department in 1982.

In the late 1980s, Canine Companions established an internal breeding program after careful deliberation and recognition of its benefits. Dr. Ruth worked with training staff to select dogs with the most desirable health and temperaments to become breeder dogs. Her expertise allowed the organization to continually improve the selection and breeding decisions to provide the healthiest and most sound assistance dogs.

After a long and fruitful career, Dr. Ruth is handing the ultrasound wand to Dr. Julie Wetherell to carry on the breeding program at Canine Companions.

“We could not have accomplished 6,000 life-changing placements without Dr. Ruth’s conception of the breeding program so many years ago,” says Dr. Brenda Kennedy, director of canine health and research. “Ruth’s legacy leaves Canine Companions with a foundation of dedicated care and exemplary canine health and genetics as a model of veterinary excellence.”
Veterinarian Health Services Award

The Canine Companions national board of directors has chosen veterinarians from each region to receive the first annual Health Services Award. We congratulate these eight outstanding veterinarians and thank them for all they do for Canine Companions.

Welcome Dr. Julie Wetherell

We are pleased to announce Dr. Julie Wetherell is joining the Canine Companions national veterinary clinic team. Dr. Wetherell received her veterinary medicine degree at UC Davis in 2009. After school, she completed an internship at Loomis Basin Veterinary Clinic where she became skilled in medicine, surgery and emergency care. Recently, Dr. Wetherell served as the hospital medical director for Windsor Animal Hospital in California and is certified in veterinary medical acupuncture. Her strong medical skills combined with a commitment to service and compassion will be great assets to the entire organization as she provides care not only to our breeders and puppies, but also to dogs in professional training and those placed with graduates.

Welcome Charmaine Stainbrook

Canine Companions is happy to introduce Charmaine Stainbrook, our new national director of planned giving. A native of Sonoma County, CA and a Canine Companions volunteer puppy raiser, Charmaine succeeds Dave Bonfilio, who recently retired. As an attorney with a background in estate planning, Charmaine brings experience, expertise and a diverse background to her new role, and we’re thrilled to have her on our team. If you find yourself on the Jean and Charles Schulz Campus, be sure to stop by and introduce yourself to Charmaine and Canine Companions puppy Odelia. To learn more about planned gifts and/or our Heritage Society, visit cci.org/plannedgiving or email cstainbrook@cci.org.
Not every Canine Companions puppy becomes an assistance dog. Sometimes due to temperament, environmental factors, sensitivities or health reasons, a dog is transferred to another agency or nonprofit. While considered “pre-released” from our program, these dogs go on to work in other capacities that serve their communities. MSA Security is an organization that utilizes transferred Canine Companions dogs to work in their explosive detection canine units. Their strong dedication to training with a single-purpose/single-handler guarantees that the bomb dog teams meet the highest level of performance standards. A leader and expert in their field, MSA has determined canine units are the most efficient and productive way to search for explosives in active environments.

Canine Companions puppy Tarth was transferred to MSA and is now working as an explosive detection canine. The work he is doing with his MSA handler is more useful than other methods of explosive detection and can be a good deterrent for attacks.

“It is very rewarding to know that Tarth is able to use his high energy and continues as a working dog in a different career.”

— Jan, volunteer puppy raiser

Every Canine Companions puppy starts out with the purpose of becoming an assistance dog to a person with a disability. The volunteer puppy raiser trains, loves and dedicates approximately 18 months to this mission. When the puppy doesn’t make it in our program, we look for other placement opportunities. Matching dogs with organizations like MSA Security ensures the efforts of the puppy raiser are not lost, and the work they put in can be utilized for the benefit of others.
Canine Companions for Independence honored Florida resident Cathy Fischer with the 2018 Jack Warnock Volunteer Award for her outstanding volunteer service assisting people with disabilities. The Jack Warnock Award was created in honor of an amazing supporter who embodied the spirit of volunteerism for Canine Companions. It is the organization’s highest honor and is bestowed annually to a volunteer who exhibits extraordinary dedication to our mission.

Cathy started her volunteer service to Canine Companions more than 14 years ago, and the scope of her influence has impacted almost every facet of the organization. Cathy, a nine-time volunteer puppy raiser, also served as the board president for the Southeast Region of Canine Companions and has been a long-time member of the planning committee for the Tales & Tails Gala event.

“It was an honor to receive this award, but knowing the impact I am making for someone else is the best possible reward I can receive,” shares Cathy. “I am fortunate to be a small part of what this amazing organization can do for others. I can’t think of a better or more rewarding way to give back.”

Cathy is the senior vice president of global merchandise for Universal Parks & Resorts. She also offers her skills and knowledge in the retail industry to help develop new retail items and coordinates retail sales at Canine Companions special events. She has been instrumental in fostering partnerships for Canine Companions with the Universal Orlando Foundation and with other vendors to save more than $100,000 in Canine Companions’ program costs.

What Cathy gives back to our organization is priceless. Because of Cathy, more people with disabilities are experiencing life-changing partnerships with their Canine Companions assistance dogs. Learn how you can volunteer at cci.org/volunteer.

Left to right: Cathy Gooden, Southeast Region executive director, Cathy Fischer, puppy raiser and former Southeast Region board president and Ashley Bacot, Southeast Region board of directors president.
Canine Companions’ national event, DogFest Walk ‘n Roll,™ wrapped up its sixth year in 2018, grossing $1 million to support our mission. DogFest, a dog- and family-friendly, accessible event, is switching it up in 2019 with a new brand and a renewed focus on all dogs, expertly-trained assistance dogs or pets. DogFest celebrates the human-canine bond in an exciting festival at 18 or more locations around the country.

DogFest has always been a huge hit with our supporters and especially with those people who are introduced to Canine Companions for the very first time. Since 2013, first-time donors have contributed $2 million through DogFest. That’s 40 life-changing assistance dog teams or 200 Team Training classes!

In 2019, we hope to reach an even wider audience who love dogs as much as we do and help introduce more supporters to the amazing jobs our assistance dogs do for people with disabilities. We’re looking for volunteers to help kick off DogFest’s new look and feel, from event committees to event day helpers. Learn how you can be a part of the excitement at cci.org/dogfest.

Events Happening Around the Country

**Northwest Region**
- **Canine Companions Golf Classic**
  - May 31  San Jose, CA
- **Sit Stay Sparkle**
  - June 15  Santa Rosa, CA
- **DogFest North Idaho**
  - June 22  Sandpoint, ID
- **DogFest Reno**
  - September 21  Reno, NV
- **DogFest Bay Area**
  - October 26  Oakland, CA
- **Dawgs in the Ruff Golf**
  - October 14  Sacramento, CA
- **Sit Stay Sparkle**
  - October 26  Seattle, WA

**Southeast Region**
- **Hitting for Independence**
  - June 21, 22, 23  Monroe, LA
- **Chip in for Canines Golf Outing**
  - October 14  Atlanta, GA
- **23rd Annual Tales & Tails Gala**
  - October 26  Orlando, FL

**Northeast Region**
- **NYC Auto Show**
  - April 19-28  New York, NY
- **Annual Hearts & Heroes**
  - June 13  New York, NY
- **DogFest Long Island**
  - September 21  Deer Park, NY
- **DogFest Washington DC**
  - September 22  Reston, VA
- **DogFest Philly-NJ**
  - September 28  TBD

**Southwest Region**
- **DogFest Orange County**
  - April 13  Costa Mesa, CA
- **Imagine Independence**
  - April 18  Ogden, UT
- **Canines & Comedy**
  - June 27  Oxnard, CA

**South Central Region**
- **Nacho Ordinary Dogs**
  - April 11  Fort Worth, TX
- **Clays for Canines**
  - May 18  Houston, TX
- **DogFest DFW**
  - October 5  Irving, TX

**North Central Region**
- **Fairway to Independence Golf Outing**
  - August 19  Akron, OH
- **HAUTE DOG | CHICAGO**
  - September 19  Chicago, IL
- **DogFest Cleveland**
  - September 22  Cleveland, OH
- **DogFest Chicago**
  - TBD  Chicago, IL
- **DogFest Columbus**
  - TBD  Columbus, OH
Volunteering Comes Full Circle

When Laura began volunteering for Canine Companions 17 years ago, she never imagined a member of her own family would be matched with one of our expertly-trained assistance dogs. A few months ago, that’s exactly what happened.

An active and engaged volunteer, Laura has held many roles for our mission: 12-time puppy raiser, breeder caretaker, event chair and chapter president for our Sacramento-area Gold Rush Champions volunteer chapter. To honor Laura’s years of dedication, a Canine Companions puppy was named after her.

Over the past decade, Laura’s mom, Sandy, realized she was losing her hearing and decided to apply for a Canine Companions hearing dog. In August, she was invited to Team Training at our Northwest Region Training Center and was matched with Hearing Dog Laura — the very dog named after her daughter! Laura shares, “It’s incredible to know the organization that I have volunteered with for nearly two decades is now helping to enhance my mom’s independence. It feels like everything has come full circle.”

Northwest Region Staff Updates

**Kim Mizia, Program Director**

After working as an instructor, Kim Mizia most recently served as our participant program manager, assisting Canine Companions graduates and applicants. Kim is also a volunteer breeder caretaker. Now, Kim is excited to take on the position of program director and looks forward to helping advance our mission.

**Christina Ward**

**Community Events Coordinator**

Christina Ward recently joined Canine Companions as our community events coordinator. With years of corporate and non-profit event experience and a calm but enthusiastic demeanor, Christina is a welcome addition to the Northwest Region team.

ATTEND | DONATE | SPONSOR

Join us for Sit Stay Sparkle this year in Santa Rosa, California or Seattle, Washington!

Santa Rosa – June 15  
cci.org/SitStaySparkle

Seattle – October 26  
cci.org/SitStaySparkleSeattle
Making a Big Impression at the Fiesta Bowl Parade

With 100 people in bright yellow t-shirts, two pickup trucks with giant inflatable Canine Companions dogs, and banners on the outside of Gollie the Trolley, Arizona volunteers caught a lot of attention at the Fiesta Bowl Parade during the holidays. The Fiesta Bowl Parade is a two-mile route and takes place in Phoenix. The parade is attended by thousands and watched on TV or a livestream by thousands more. The Fiesta Bowl Parade has been a tradition for Arizonans since 1971.

Our dedicated group of Canine Companions volunteers prepped for the parade by following the parade route on multiple Sundays leading up to the event! Now those are professionals!

2018 Southwest Volunteer of the Year

Daniel was first introduced to Canine Companions for Independence 10 years ago by a volunteer puppy raiser who worked at the school he attended. Daniel applied for his first service dog shortly after and was matched with Service Dog Cinnamon.

“Cinnamon pulled me out of a deep depression in 2008. I saw firsthand how amazing these dogs are and from then on, I wanted to volunteer my time to help this organization grow. My greatest joy is inspiring others to help this organization in any way possible.”

Daniel has been working with his second dog, Narha, for the past six years.

Daniel and Narha are the ultimate volunteers. They represent Canine Companions at community events, speaking about our mission to audiences large and small. They lead demonstrations for Southwest Region campus tours and help with events such as DogFest and Team Training. Daniel never says “no,” and we truly appreciate the pair.

When it came time to nominate a volunteer for the North County Philanthropy Council’s Volunteer of the Year 2018, Daniel was the clear choice, as the Southwest Region knew he deserved the recognition for his work. Daniel accepted his award on November 8 at a luncheon in North County San Diego.
Corporate Spotlight

World of Beer partners Paul and Mary Jacobs are using beer as a vehicle for good things. They know that it goes beyond donating beverages or a portion of beer sales to a charity from time to time. World of Beer is using craft beer’s popularity to benefit Canine Companions. As the presenting sponsor of the 2018 Tales & Tails Gala, World of Beer played an integral part in the huge success of the event.

“Part of our mission statement from the get-go was to benefit our community,” Paul explains. “Supporting Canine Companions and the Tales & Tails Gala enhances our commitment to better the communities that we serve.”

Passionate people often have a passion for supporting causes close to their hearts, and World of Beer is full of passionate people. So, the next time you visit World of Beer, know that your drink may do more than just quench your thirst. It’s also helping provide independence to adults, children and veterans with disabilities. Cheers to that!

Learn more about sponsoring the 23rd annual Tales & Tails Gala by contacting Jeanne Cooley at jcooley@cci.org or at 407-522-3349.

Mission Accomplished!

There are new areas on the Southeast Region campus that put dogs and people through their paces — literally.

An agility course, featuring exercise stations and a sidewalk that connects our kennels to a dog play yard and playground, were dedicated at ceremonies honoring the individuals responsible for making this a reality — high school students and brothers, Nelson and Ethan.

The brothers qualified for their Eagle Scout rank by raising over $6,000 to fund the two campus projects, as well as coordinating their construction. Both brothers organized neighborhood fundraisers. Ethan also worked a summer job and donated his earnings to the agility course project while Nelson spent hours learning about the county permitting process.

“I’m so proud of my sons,” says their mom, Stephanie. “They learned about Canine Companions many years ago and knew they wanted to do something with animals.”

Their efforts to lend a helping hand to Canine Companions also helped them gain life lessons while practicing the Boy Scout values.
As one of the first participants in the Department of Veterans Affairs study on service dogs for veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), Marine Corps veteran Caleb never met his Canine Companions service dog Velvet’s volunteer puppy raiser. He also didn’t experience the magical moment of graduation. But, that all changed on November 10, during Diamonds in the Ruff, the 10th anniversary celebration of the Northeast Region’s Miller Family Campus. Velvet’s volunteer puppy raiser Susan surprised Caleb and brought down the house during an emotional passing of the leash that puppy raisers and graduate teams uniquely understand.

Diamonds in the Ruff featured standup comedy performances by members of the Armed Services Arts Partnership, live and silent auctions, food stations from local businesses and a $50,000 check presentation by new corporate partner PenFed Credit Union. Long Island broadcast journalist Lea Tyrrell served as master of ceremonies, and attendees were thrilled to meet Fox News Channel’s “The Daily Briefing” host, Dana Perino, along with her executive producer Jennifer Williams, who is raising Canine Companions puppy Spike!

Many thanks to our supporters for making our Diamonds in the Ruff celebration an amazing success ... and here’s to another 10 years!

Hi — Service Dog Miller here! I look good in Canine Companions blue, don’t I? I want to thank everyone for helping me become the assistance dog I was always meant to be! I’ve been matched with Air Force veteran Ken of Long Island, New York. And I couldn’t be prouder to work with someone who has served his country and local community.

Two years ago, I was given the job of official “spokesdog” for Canine Companions Northeast Region as they counted down to the 10th anniversary celebration of the Miller Family Campus. My volunteer puppy raisers Saxon and Laura prepared me well for my future, teaching me all the basic commands and socialization skills I needed for professional training. I also spent time with my namesake, immediate past-board chair John Miller and his family. After six months of working with professional instructor Kim, I was ready to be matched with Ken.

Ken served in the Air Force for six years before becoming a Port Authority police officer in 2008. After an accident, he needed to retire. Ken and I were matched because I can help him live a more independent and active life. Ken enjoys adaptive sports competitions with other wounded veterans, and I’m right there to take in all the action! Here’s what Ken had to say about our match. “I am just in awe of what Miller is capable of. Just getting around is difficult, and I need help when I am home alone. Miller is always there for me!”

Thanks for following my journey, friends. My dreams have come true!

Sincerely,
Canine Companions Service Dog Miller
Helping Paws, Wagging Tail and a Big Impact

“The response from our patients has been almost magical to see just how well they’ve taken to her,” shares Lisa, Facility Dog Luna’s handler. Luna began her journey with the Mayo Clinic in November and has had a huge impact in just a short time. “Luna adds a depth to our care we can’t otherwise provide on a physical or emotional level — it’s a sixth dimension of care.”

Luna is lending a helping paw around the Mayo Clinic however she can and wherever she is needed. She helps patients work on puzzles by handing them pieces. Her presence reduces stress during therapies. “We’ve been making regular rounds through our cardiac rehab department where Luna will go on walks with patients, and she has participated in exercise programs by bringing lightweight dumbbells to patients while they do their exercises,” Lisa explains. “We also do rounds over in the cancer center where Luna carries a basket of treats for patients. She has been with some end-of-life patients, too.”

“It has been incredible so far,” says Lisa. Luna’s work with the Mayo Clinic and Lisa has just begun, and her impact will only continue to grow as she helps patients on their path to recovery with loving eyes, helping paws and a wagging tail. “We’re just getting started.”

Journey to the Rose Bowl

The path to become a Canine Companions assistance dog is full of love, hard work, dedication and adventures. Canine Companions puppy Buckeye experienced all of this on his most exciting adventure yet, a trip to the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California. While spending the holidays vacationing with his volunteer puppy raiser, Buckeye had a backstage experience at the Rose Bowl Parade. During the game he cheered on his home team, the Ohio State Buckeyes. Full of new sights, sounds and smells, Buckeye had a great time practicing his commands and showing everyone what learning to be an assistance dog is all about. You can follow his journey to becoming an assistance dog on social media with the handle @BuckeyeNBC4.

Thank You for Investing in Independence

We would like to thank everyone who invested in Canine Companions’ future by helping make the new North Central Region Training Center in New Albany, Ohio a reality. We received support from across the country with donations coming from every region of the organization. Thank you for helping us grow our mission! Learn more about the new campus at cci.org/invest.
Federal Correctional Institution (FCI) Bastrop is the newest correctional facility in Texas to raise puppies for Canine Companions. The program kicked off in September 2018, and the men’s minimum-security prison is currently raising four puppies — Chancy, Cabo, Checkers and Freddy.

Prison puppy raising programs are an important piece of the Canine Companions community. These programs allow for a structured training and socialization schedule for the puppies. At FCI Bastrop, puppy raising is considered a full-time job for the inmates, and more than just the puppies benefit from the program.

Inmates participating in these programs across the country say that it gives them meaning while serving time and allows them to give back to the community. In the Texas facilities, there is a zero percent recidivism rate for those involved in the program.

The community has been supportive of the program as well, hosting a “puppy shower” at a local winery, collecting an impressive donation of toys and supplies to get the program started. These four puppies are well on their way to becoming future assistance dogs thanks to the inmates of FCI Bastrop.

Meet the Puppies of Texas’ Newest Prison Program

Raising More Than Funds

In 2001, Dr. Bill Cunningham met a fellow University of Texas employee and longtime puppy raiser. He couldn’t help making friends with the pair and soon was putting his fundraising skills to work for Canine Companions, starting an annual BBQ event that has since brought in over $1 million.

It wasn’t long before his entire family got involved. His son John, daughter-in-law Jessica and their three children joined the Canine Companions community as generous supporters. Recently, they have taken their support to the next level by bringing Canine Companions puppy Paige, named after Canine Companions’ new chief executive officer, into the family to raise for the next 18 months.

“Jessica and I work to find opportunities to model giving and charity to our kids, and this is one of the biggest things you can do to help someone,” says John. “It’s much bigger than a financial gift — it’s a year and a half of your heart and soul.”

For his family, John says the biggest draw is seeing the impact that Canine Companions assistance dogs have on graduates of the program. Attending graduation convinced them to become puppy raisers.

“Having worked with Canine Companions for over a decade, we have been able to watch some graduates from the day they got their assistance dogs to the time that their dogs retired. The impact is truly awe-inspiring,” shares John.

The family knows that saying goodbye to Paige will not be easy, but they hope their puppy’s future will change a life, just like the dogs they’ve watched graduate.

“In the end, this isn’t our dog. It never was,” explains John. “We’re performing a service for someone else, but I’ll cry all the same.”
A Labor of Love

Over 20 years ago, while Patty was working for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), a Combined Federal Campaign magazine landed on her desk. This was a guide to charitable giving that would end up enriching Patty’s life beyond her wildest dreams. Scanning the pages, Patty decided to make a donation to Canine Companions. Soon, she was reading the stories of independence, going to graduations and applying to become a breeder caretaker.

In a twist of fate, Canine Companions didn’t have an available female breeder for Patty. Undeterred, she offered to raise a puppy while waiting for a breeder to enter her life. For a year and a half, Patty poured her heart into her puppy, Fallon. In 2000, Patty returned Fallon to Canine Companions for professional training and picked up Piniella, her first of four specially-selected female breeders.

While raising 11 puppies and caring for four breeders, Patty continued to excel in the office, rising to a management position overseeing air traffic control for the FAA. Even after bringing more than 160 (and counting) Canine Companions puppies into the world, Patty never felt that she was biting off more than she could chew.

“As a working parent or puppy raiser, you juggle all these different activities,” Patty says. “If you can manage working, getting kids or puppies to classes, activities or appointments, you can manage being a Canine Companions breeder caretaker. Sometimes it takes a village, and the support of other volunteers is amazing. Many of my best friends are fellow breeder caretakers.”

Her work/puppy balance was built on a foundation of community and family. “I worked from 6 a.m. until 2 p.m. and relied on my husband, growing kids and other Canine Companions volunteers to help out when we had litters in the house,” states Patty. “At 8 weeks old, there’s a little heartbreak when the puppies go out to their puppy raisers, but I know each one is ready. It’s a labor of love.”

Patty welcomed breeder Sunshine, a Golden Retriever, into the family in 2018 to follow in the footsteps of Piniella, Halor and Malia. Now retired, the juggling act between work and volunteerism has lessened for Patty, but she still has her village to help with puppies and a new way of spreading and receiving joy through social media.

“When I started, there was no way to connect with my puppies. Volunteers and graduates didn’t know where their dogs came from. Now I can show how much work and love goes into each incredible puppy in my care. It adds to the journey to be able to share my puppies with supporters and grow my village from coast to coast.”

To learn more about Canine Companions’ breeding program and how to get involved, visit cci.org/breeding.
Count on Ember

Eukanuba has been an important national partner for Canine Companions for over 15 years. Support comes in many forms, including kibble, financial support and awareness of our mission.

Two years ago, Eukanuba asked the public to help name a special Canine Companions puppy who would go on to change the life of a person with a disability. That puppy was Ember. Eukanuba followed Ember’s journey to become an assistance dog and were delighted to hear that this gentle giant recently found his calling as a service dog for Shakti, who has multiple sclerosis. “I can count on Ember to help me and be by my side wherever I go,” Shakti says. “This is such an amazing thing to happen for me.”

Generous support from our corporate partners like Eukanuba help provide life-changing assistance dogs like Ember.

For nearly twenty years, Canine Companions and Eukanuba have been dedicated to our mutual commitment to provide the very best nutrition to our dogs through all stages of life. Together we’ve developed an understanding of the relationship between nutrition, cognition and longevity in Canine Companions puppies and assistance dogs. We’ve partnered to increase awareness of volunteer puppy raising and our mission to provide assistance dogs for people with disabilities, free of charge. In 2017, Eukanuba increased their commitment to Canine Companions by partnering with us. We are so grateful. Learn more at cci.org/giveadogajob.

“I can count on Ember to help me and be by my side wherever I go. This is such an amazing thing to happen for me.”

—Shakti

Give Independence Monthly

Give a dog a job, receive a tote!* For a limited time, with your monthly gift of $25 or more, you’ll receive a Canine Companions Give a Dog a Job tote bag as a token of our gratitude.

*Tote only, other products not included.
Northwest Region

October: Raymond & Susan with Bordeaux III; Randi with Panini; Leslie with Vista V

November: Ma’ayan with Buffy IV; Parisa with Diva IV; Jonathan with Delaney III; Shakti with Ember V; Tara with Nella IV; Brad with Mahoney

December: Michael with Orlando III

January: Bill & Lillian with October II; Ashley, Taylor & Tammy with Georgina III; Mike, Jennifer & Patty with Tibbi; Courtney, Elias & Michael with Skylar; Chrissy with Norman VI; Heidi with Razzle II; Casey with Patrick VI; Marko & LuLu with Zuke

February: Claudia with Metcalf; Charlotte with Ramona V; Brian with Coppola; Shahid with Maeve II; Lizzy with Candrin; Luke with Glynda II; Star with Gertrude III; Justin with Fannie II; Mad with Luxe

Northeast Region

November: David & Samuel with Nadav; Cindy with Bruno IV; Annette & Nick with Genesee; Kenneth with Miller VI; Michael with Tron III; Nancy & Greg with Caboose; David with Duchess II; John, Shelley & Aiden with Jeremy V; Jeanine & Max with Fenmore; Eric with Mozart II; John, Nancy & Grace with Justin V; Amy with Fidette; Karen & Elizabeth with Rufus IV

January: Josh with Yanni; Matthew & Robin with Lydia V; Ashley with Keltie; Brittany, Robert & Gail with Emerson III; Kristen with Hereiss; Lizzy with Fidette; Karen & Elizabeth with Rufus IV

February: Donovan & Norman with Yoda IV, Sarah & Erin with Bean II; Jessica with Nicholas VI; Tori with Granger V; Bobby with Summit III; Greta, Kate & Lyn with Midas III; Jessica with Mahler II; Josh & Kim with Totem; ZiZu with Cadilliac; Mary with Fifl II; Max with Fielding II; Maddie & Sarah with Novak IV; Amy with Emelia III; Ella & Maggie with Hyde III

South Central Region

November: Margaret with Rivers II; Janie with Leena II; Lance & Caitlyn with Orbit IV; Samuel, Jason & Keri with Raive III; Patricia & Heather with Ritter III; Xavier with Kali II; Massimo & Erin with Francine VI; Cody, Shelley & Brad (not pictured) with Jude VI

February: Pete with Gozon, Calan & Jody with Jala, Lucas & Britanni with Corkie II, Paul with Freedom VI, Ava with Zenna, Christy with Dexter III, Joe with McCovey II, Anthony & Michael with Frontier II

Each team is matched free of charge, thanks to your donations. Visit cci.org/donate or return the enclosed envelope to give the gift of independence and give a dog a job.
Southeast Region

1 October: Pat with Firenze; Dianne with Marlene IV; Jacob with Pliny

2 November: Jadon & Ammie with Giovanni; Jasmine with Mort; Bob & Cindi with Fio; Andrea & Ed with Nuna; Angelica & Bonnie with Garth IV; Karlin & Karla with Harbin; Annada, Evangeline & Marc with Norbert II

3 February: John, Sheri & Hammy; Michael, Terri & Jolene II; Maranee, Clyde & Tamale; Ashlee, Gloria & Francie IV; Adriana, Arnoldo & Felton; Andrew, Caroline & Nyssa III; Andrea & Reardon II; Tristan, Joanna, Travis & Dobby III; Joyce & Freemont, Tommy, Chris & Fernley II; Kelly, Connie & Expresso

North Central Region

4 November: Vanessa & Selena with Radcliff II; Miranda with Otico; Jim with Elsa V; Kara with Glider II; Amanda with Chad III; Ericka & Chad with Risa V; Clarissa & Cindy with Caitlin II; Gavin & Amanda with Elmer III

5 November: DG with Oreo IV; Robyn with Gaza II; Lisa with Lunar II

6 February: Ashley with Randy; Elaina Grace & Mary with Jom; Karen with Negan; Michael & Kevin with Dee III; Michaeal with Sarek; Bill with Keto; Ed with Flanagan V; Alina with Nectar IV; Danielle with Schuman II; Stryder & Rebecca with Fonz; Melissa with Parma

Southwest Region

7 November: Michelle & Catherine with Zeta V; Erin with Pine; Cari with Rita VI; Shawn with Melissa III; Lydia with Waffle II; Justin with Rolo; Zachary & Sherry with Zender; Peyton & Elizabeth with Lino II; Jason with Ryan

8 December: Megan with Sir

9 February: Jay with Flurry II, Caroline with Tracy V

10 February: Knightly, Drexelle & David with Cadbury; Molly with Boomer V; Brooke & Nicole with Zara IV; Nancy with Florentine; Billy with Gabe IV; Carly & Ashley with Benicia IV; Caitlin & Clare with Marty VI; Andrew & Natalie with Davin II; Ramiro & Claudia with Yuma IV; Nikita & Cathay with Lariat II; Jim with Calle; Steve with Saida; Peter with Laredo V; Pam with Hibiscus II; Glenna with Yalinda
“Gregson assists me with pulling my wheelchair, retrieving dropped objects, turning on light switches and opening doors. Receiving Gregson has been one of the most rewarding experiences in my life.”

— Pedro and Service Dog Gregson