It’s summertime at Paws With A Cause®. And just like kids and dogs, or kids and summer, kids and PAWS® go hand-in-hand (or hand-in-paw)! In tribute to the season, we decided to turn this issue of Dogs for Dignity over to some of the remarkable young people - like Brady here - we’re proud to have as friends.
Last summer, four families from across the country came to PAWS Headquarters for a week of team training with their Service Dogs for Children with Autism (SDA). (We had a film crew on hand that week, too, and caught some remarkable scenes and family interviews on video. You can check them out under our News & Events menu at pawswithacause.org!) Afterward, each family went home with their PAWS Dog, continued in-home training with a PAWS Field Rep and became a certified Assistance Dog Team. Needless to say, it’s been quite a year for each family, and each mom wanted to share with you the impact their PAWS Dog has had in their lives so far.

**BRADY & ROCKY**

New Hampshire

“We’ve had a great year since Team Training! Logan and TYCO have really bonded, and are amazing together. They both love bubbles, the park and just playing outside. Before TYCO, Logan often had meltdowns, which could last for a long time. Now, TYCO helps redirect and calm Logan. In fact, Logan’s doctor asked about this issue at our recent well-child visit, and it was incredible to realize I could not think of a major meltdown since TYCO’s been with us! We’re looking forward to having TYCO come with us on our first family vacation since Team Training. He makes it easier in many ways for us to go out in public as a family. I value that TYCO brings a silent understanding to community members. I don’t have to be constantly ready to explain autism anymore.

TYCO’s presence has been life-changing for our family, and especially for Logan. We’re so very grateful to PAWS and everyone who was involved in bringing him into our lives!”

– Mama Jenn

“Brady and ROCKY have had a wonderful first year together! ROCKY’s sweet, soothing disposition fits in with our family beautifully.

On the autism spectrum, Brady is considered high-functioning. He has great verbal and cognitive skills. But he’s prone to outbursts when his senses get overloaded. Brady also has a visual impairment. So certain situations – like being outside or in a crowd of people – are doubly stressful for him.

With ROCKY, Brady’s episodes are fewer and less intense. ROCKY seems to know when Brady starts getting anxious and needs comforting. Brady rubs a favorite spot behind ROCKY’s ears which calms him right down. I say ROCKY keeps Brady grounded. Brady says, ‘ROCKY just makes me feel good.’ I’ve noticed that going out as a family is actually easy now. ROCKY has helped people in our community understand Brady and his disabilities better. It’s gentle awareness raising. Brady explains it best, ‘When ROCKY’s cape is off, he’s a regular dog. But when his cape is on, he’s a superhero!’ And he is. Absolutely.”

– Mama Heather

**LOGAN & TYCO**

New Hampshire
“Zachary actually came to Team Training last year afraid of dogs on some level. He wouldn’t talk with anyone he didn’t know either.

In the last year, TITUS has made such a positive impact in Zachary’s life! Zachary doesn’t have true conversations yet, but his language skills have grown tremendously! He takes great pride in handling TITUS’ leash and giving him commands.

TITUS is an outgoing, loving dog who just captures people’s attention. Many stop and ask us questions whenever we’re out and about. So Zachary is getting lots of practice interacting socially with others. He can tell people his dog’s name and is starting to answer some of their basic questions.

It’s encouraging to see TITUS helping Zachary in other ways, too. He’s taking more responsibility for basic life skills, like brushing his own teeth and hair. We’re excited to think about how much more they’ll grow together.

We’re confident Zachary’s relationships and abilities will only continue to get stronger!”
– Mama Norma

“Wilder has matured so much over this past year — having THOR has changed our life! Wilder is super responsible for his best buddy. He plays with, cares for and loves on THOR daily. We’ve noticed lots of little successes along the way since last year.

We’ve also experienced one big miracle. Wilder was always powerfully obsessed with balloons, even as an infant. Before Team Training, one of PAWS’ trainers, Mike, asked me what my goal, my dream for this union was. I replied, ‘That Wilder’s balloon obsession would disappear.’ Honestly, that possibility seemed as miraculous to me as winning the lottery.

Well, shortly after THOR came home with us, we went to the grocery store (which is filled with balloons). On the way back to our house, Wilder boldly declared he didn’t like balloons anymore!

You know what? My son did win the lottery with THOR. We will forever be grateful to PAWS! Thank you, thank you, thank you.”
– Mama Amanda

“Wilder & THOR
Tennessee

What a PAWS SDA Dog Does

From the viewpoint of a child with autism, an SDA Dog is a non-judgmental, safe presence. The dog’s responses are more understandable to him because they’re much closer to his developmental level. By encouraging the child to take responsibility for his SDA Dog, he learns how to care for himself. By grooming his dog, he learns to manage his own hygiene. Verbal skills progress by giving commands or talking to his dog. Redirecting a child’s focus to the dog helps to short-circuit anxiety, tantrums, or compulsive activities. A specially-designed harness and leash helps prevent a child from bolting. And, by acting as an icebreaker, an SDA Dog can help a child form social connections with others.

Since PAWS launched its SDA Program in 2009, these PAWS Dogs have helped children with autism:

- Bolt less frequently: 64%
- Lessen verbal outbursts: 57%
- Initiate play with peers more often: 71%
- Improve ability to focus: 100%
- Increase family travel: 64%
We have some extraordinary kids who work with PAWS all year round. One of them is our volunteer, Miah. At just 17 years old, she’s already a seasoned Foster Puppy Raiser, and takes the job very seriously. While other teens relax by the pool or at the mall, Miah spends her summer vacation days putting in the effort on her own to become an exceptional trainer to the pups in her care. When Miah started raising her 3rd PAWS Foster Puppy, REGAL, she joined a local K9 4-H Club and entered the Club’s competitions. Last summer, they participated in the Barry County (Michigan) Fair. The pair advanced to the 2013 State Dog Show, where Miah and REGAL won three 1st and two 2nd place medals!

Clearly, her love of animals is part of the reason she gives her time to PAWS, but Miah never forgets it’s others who ultimately benefit from her hard work. “I just really want to help people,” says Miah. “I love when clients come in to PAWS and talk about how much their Assistance Dog has enhanced their life.”

We love that Miah is able to combine her desire to help others with her natural ability to work with animals for us. Miah just turned in Foster Puppy number 4, PEARL, in June. And we expect we’ll have another PAWS Puppy for her as soon as she’s ready to take her leash back up. We know we’re fortunate to have such an amazing volunteer!

As you might imagine, volunteering for us often becomes a family affair. It certainly has for Ryan and April and their kids!

April and Ryan first got involved with PAWS in 2011, as Foster Puppy Raisers for TATER, a red Standard Poodle, who they also bred and donated. A year later, they started raising yellow Lab NEKA, who was recently chosen to be a Mama Dog in PAWS’ breeding program. They’ll continue to host NEKA, and are also raising Foster Puppy TIKI (another Poodle they donated).

Ryan and April are passionate about PAWS, so it’s only natural that their kids – James, Sally and Matthew – have caught their parents’ enthusiasm for giving back, though each for their own reasons:

James says he likes knowing that he is helping others, and even though giving each Foster Puppy back to PAWS is hard, he knows it’s worth it. Sally echoes that and says she likes having a chance to give back and help others in need. And Matthew enjoys helping to train each puppy to help other kids, but especially loves taking care of the wee baby pups!

“We’ve all learned so much from our volunteer work for PAWS,” April explains. “We thank God for our independence every day, and just pray we can continue helping others increase their independence through these amazing dogs!” We have no doubt they will!
Once upon a time,
in a land far, far away (New York), there lived a little boy named David. Just before his second birthday, doctors told David’s mom and dad that they had diagnosed him with an autism spectrum disorder.

Now David’s parents were very wise. They did everything in their power to get their son the help he needed to grow up big and strong like any other boy or girl.

And so he did. David went to school, made friends and lived life fully. Just like other boys, he loved music, Cub Scouts, karate and video games. But, just like many boys, what David wanted most in the world was a dog to love and call his own.

David’s parents knew a dog is a big responsibility for a boy. So they waited until they thought he was ready, and at Christmastime in his eighth year, they gave David a dog he named Ike. They became the best of friends.

One day, David, now nine years old, came home from school with a special bracelet. He told his parents that all the kids were making and selling them to each other for 50 cents apiece. He wanted to make and sell bracelets, too, and use the money he earned to buy Legos®.

David's mom and dad had a better idea. They knew David had Legos® plenty, and wanted him to learn that it is even better to give than to receive. They wanted him to practice caring for others. So they made David a deal: they would get him the materials he needed to make these special bracelets to sell, but only if he agreed to give away all the money he earned from them.

David agreed to their terms, and decided he'd give any money he made to a charity that worked with dogs because he loved dogs so much.

With his mom’s help, David made 211 bracelets. He earned more than $800 selling them to his family, friends and neighbors. His parents decided to match his hard work with some money of their own, and David ended up with $1,200 to give away.

Then David went online to find the place he thought needed this money the most. After searching near and far, he found Paws With A Cause in Michigan. At PAWS® website, he read about a little boy with autism who lived in Tennessee and was wishing and waiting for a special helper dog to call his own. Thinking about how much he loved Ike, David decided he wanted to help this boy to get a best friend helper dog, too.

So David wrote a letter and sent it to PAWS, along with all the money he raised, and asked that they use it to help this other boy. He even included a note to that boy and the stuffed toy dog that used to keep David company before he got his real dog.

He asked PAWS to send his note and toy dog to the other boy, and to let David know when the boy got his forever friend from PAWS.

And so PAWS did. Today they are looking for just the right dog for this other boy, and expect to find him soon. When they do, PAWS will tell both boys the good news. And they will all rejoice together for lessons well-learned, good deeds done, and the special bonds between dogs and little boys.

Almost – but not quite –
The End.
What PAWS does wouldn’t be possible without help from hundreds of volunteers who love and raise PAWS Dogs before they begin formal Assistance Dog training. And right now, WE NEED PAWS DOG VOLUNTEERS!

All you need to get started is a willingness to love a PAWS Puppy, Mama or Papa Dog in your home and a willingness to learn. We don’t require any prior training or breeding experience – we’ll teach you exactly what you need to know to raise a PAWS Puppy or care for a Mama or Papa Dog!

For more information about raising a PAWS Puppy or hosting a PAWS Mama or Papa Dog in your home, please visit pawswithacause.org /I-Can-Help or contact Julie at jthorington@pawswithacause.org or 800-253-7297.