

# DOGS FOR DIGNITY®

Stories of the Journey to Independence

FALL 2015 NEWSLETTER




## MORE THAN AN ASSISTANCE DOG

Samuel confides, loves, learns and grows with his SDA Dog, FLASH

# YOU ARE MY FRIEND





**L**IKE SO MANY CHILDREN with disabilities, it took time for Samuel to get the right diagnosis.

“Sometimes the signs are hard to read,” explains Samuel’s mom, Suzanna. “I’m sad to say that for a long time I thought Samuel was just being defiant when he struggled to control himself or wouldn’t meet my eyes when I talked to him. I didn’t know better then.”

Initially, doctors said Samuel had Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. But that diagnosis didn’t explain his sensitivity to loud noises or lack of awareness of others around him. Samuel was six before Suzanna and her husband Mike learned their son also had an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

At that time, Mike was on active military duty, so Suzanna took responsibility for getting Samuel the therapeutic interventions he needed head on. They moved to be closer to family and to an area abundant with services for children with autism.

Even though Samuel was enrolled in school and several therapy programs, something was still missing. He remained prone to meltdowns. While Samuel had good verbal ability, his social skills lagged. He got stuck in his own head, not paying attention or fully engaging with those around him. His parents believed they could do more to help Samuel flourish.

And that’s where PAWS® came in.

Suzanna applied for a PAWS Dog while our Service Dogs for Children with Autism (SDA) program was still in its infancy. Samuel was accepted into our pilot group and he received PAWS Dog NUGGET in 2011.

The whole family loved NUGGET and for several months, all was well. Unfortunately, as sometimes happens, NUGGET developed significant allergies that required ongoing treatment. Suzanna and Mike talked with Samuel and together they made the gut-wrenching decision to return NUGGET to PAWS and wait to be matched with another SDA Dog.

“I will always be grateful to NUGGET,” Suzanna notes. “Before her, Samuel didn’t show emotions the same way other children did. I think learning to take care of her, having to think about her needs — they bonded so quickly — shifted something in him. When we decided to send her back, I noticed Samuel making a funny face and asked him what was wrong. He said that he knew he was supposed to be sad and was trying to cry. It was the first time I’d seen him show empathy. It may sound odd, but I consider that a real gift.”

Thankfully, it wasn’t long before we were able to place PAWS Dog FLASH with Samuel. The two have been a team for three years now. In that time, his parents have watched the bond between Samuel and FLASH grow.

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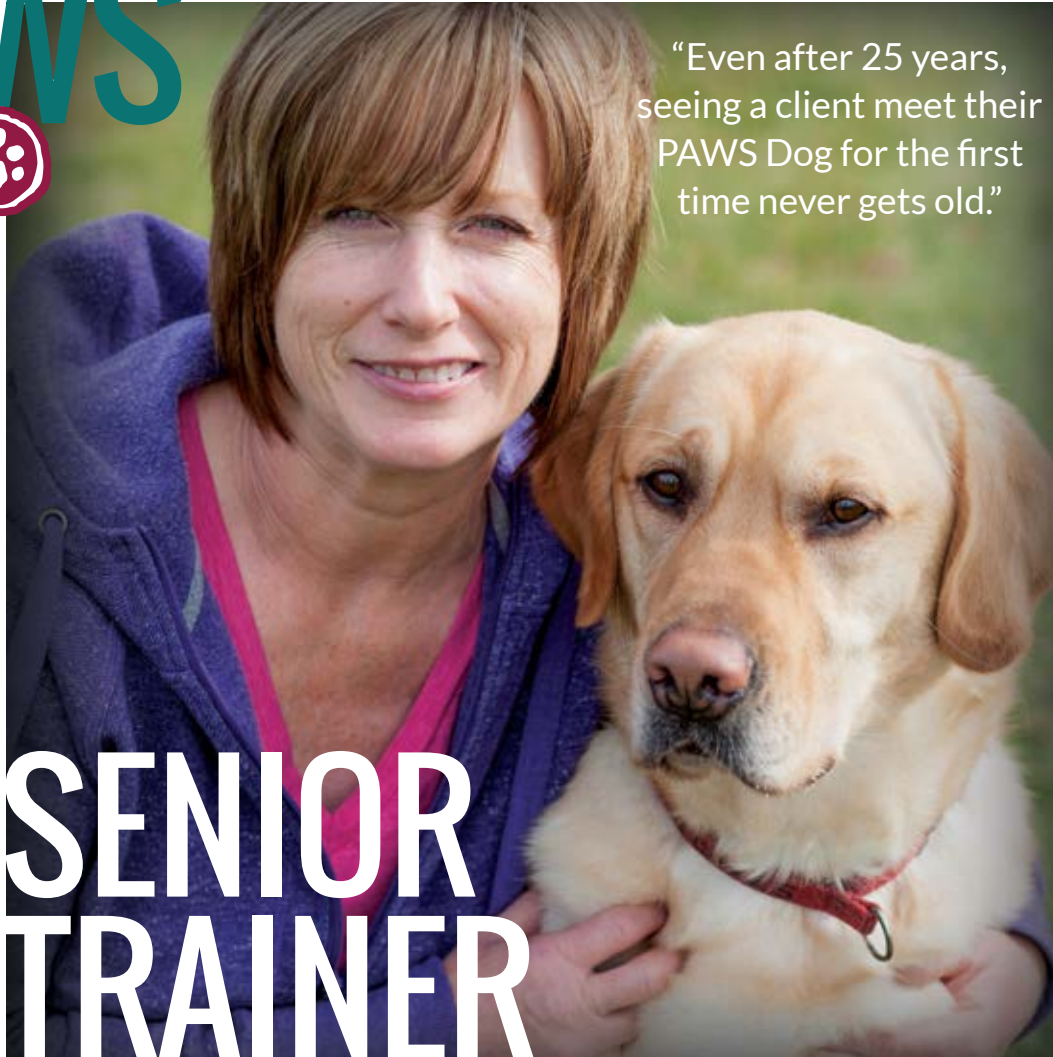
**“WE CAN’T THANK YOU ENOUGH FOR GIVING  
FLASH TO SAMUEL TO LOVE, LEARN FROM AND  
GROW WITH. YOU’VE CHANGED OUR LIVES.”**

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“As Samuel has gotten older, his autism expresses differently. Samuel is more anxious than he used to be, and FLASH helps with that tremendously. Often Samuel will just want FLASH nearby while he plays a videogame or reads in his room — that companionship and being able to reach over and pet FLASH are comforting. Now that Samuel is in middle school, FLASH is becoming his confidante. I sometimes overhear snippets of conversation,” Suzanna admits. “I think Samuel knows he can tell FLASH anything without being judged.”

To everyone who helps make PAWS Teams like Samuel and FLASH possible, thank you! Suzanna shares, “We can’t thank you enough for giving FLASH to Samuel to love, learn from and grow with. You’ve changed our lives.” It’s because of you that people with disabilities are increasing their independence and families are growing stronger.

# discover PAWS



“Even after 25 years, seeing a client meet their PAWS Dog for the first time never gets old.”

## SENIOR TRAINER

**W**hen you hear “YES!” at PAWS Headquarters, you know Senior Trainer Barb is working with a dog nearby. Something about her tone when she praises a task done right captures the attention of dog and human alike. You want to hear her say it again.

Amazingly, Barb has been saying “yes” around here for 25 years now! She was introduced to PAWS by her husband, Bob. He uses a wheelchair due to paraplegia, and we trained his first Assistance Dog TUFFY for him. TUFFY went home, but we kept Barb on — first as a volunteer, and then as a full time trainer.

“I still love training dogs,” Barb says. “I love knowing I had a part in enhancing somebody’s life. After being here so long, I am privileged to say I have trained some clients’ second or third dog for them. What an honor!”

Barb has accumulated plenty of wonderful memories in her years at PAWS. “One of my favorites is the first time I witnessed a dog I’d trained perform a difficult task for his client. They’d just met, and I watched the dog carefully place his muzzle under his new partner’s arm and lift it back onto the armrest of his power wheelchair. To say I was proud is an understatement.”

“I would say my job is addicting,” Barb continues. “When you’re having a bad day, you get a thank you letter from a client or a picture of them snuggling with their dog. I feel so fortunate to be able to say I love what I do for a living.”

We feel so fortunate to have Barb and her expertise on Team PAWS. Our congratulations to her on 25 incredible years!

# PAWS *best* FRIENDS

## MONTHLY GIVING PROGRAM

Did you know that PAWS has an automatic monthly giving program called *PAWS Best Friends*?

Members of this dedicated group combine to make a difference beyond what any of them could do on their own. Over the course of one year, our Best Friends contribute about enough to sponsor two PAWS Dogs!

We're grateful to our Best Friends for their loyal support. Month by month, their generosity is changing lives!

## BECOME PAWS' BEST FRIEND

We can't have too many Best Friends! If you'd like to join our monthly giving program, you can sign up (or just learn more) at our website: [pawswithacause.org/bestfriends](http://pawswithacause.org/bestfriends) or contact Paula at [ppasma@pawswithacause.org](mailto:ppasma@pawswithacause.org) or 800-253-7297.

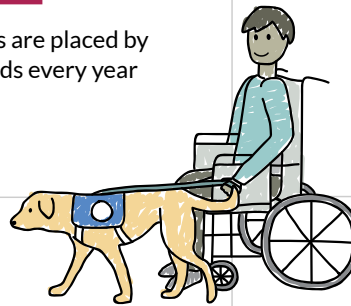
## PAWS FACTS

2

PAWS Dogs are placed by Best Friends every year

\$28

is the average monthly gift



166

Best Friends give monthly

\$4,667

is raised each month by PAWS' Best Friends



**T** IS THE SEASON to PAWS *To Be Thankful*! You can give back by raising funds to provide the gift of independence to a future PAWS Client. In just 15 days – from November 18 to December 2 – we aim to raise \$40,000 online!

### WANT TO HELP?

1. Customize your own *PAWS To Be Thankful* campaign page
2. Set your fundraising goal
3. Choose 6-10 people (friends, family, coworkers)
4. Email each person, inviting them to donate
5. Share your page on Facebook and let friends know your current fundraising status
6. Watch your fundraising thermometer grow

Can't create a page? You can always make a gift via the *PAWS To Be Thankful* webpage to help us reach our \$40,000 goal!

FOR MORE INFORMATION, please visit [pawswithacause.donordrive.com/event/ptbt2015/](http://pawswithacause.donordrive.com/event/ptbt2015/) or contact Kelsey at [khaldane@pawswithacause.org](mailto:khaldane@pawswithacause.org) or 800-253-7297.



Paws With A Cause®  
4646 South Division  
Wayland, MI 49348  
www.pawswithacause.org

## OUR MISSION

Paws With A Cause® enhances the independence and quality of life for people with disabilities nationally through custom-trained Assistance Dogs. PAWS® increases awareness of the rights and roles of Assistance Dog Teams through education and advocacy.



## GO GREEN



To receive PAWS communications electronically, email your request and name to:  
[gogreen@pawswithacause.org](mailto:gogreen@pawswithacause.org)

"NEMO gives me confidence that the

*future*

will be ok, no matter what.  
I know he has my back."

*You give hope*

If you're looking for inspiration this holiday season, you won't want to miss reading about PAWS Client Team Jenny and NEMO in our year end appeal. With it, you'll have the opportunity to support PAWS and help clients like Jenny who are waiting for PAWS Dogs. Watch for this special letter in your mailbox — or find it online at [pawswithacause.org/givehope](http://pawswithacause.org/givehope) — and thank you in advance for giving generously!

