YOU RAISE ME UP
For the first time, Stephanie could walk with her head up.
Lying in the snow, Stephanie wondered what she was going to do. She lived alone, her phone was inside, she was in pain and could not get up. She looked over at the PAWS Assistance Dog, a black Labrador retriever named KEEPER, standing nearby gazing back at her and thought, “It has only been seven days, will this dog be able to do what she was trained to do? What if she can’t hold my weight?” It was now or never. Stephanie called KEEPER over and told her to brace. “It wasn’t pretty, there was still a lot of ice on the ground,” Stephanie shared, but with KEEPER’s help Stephanie was able to get up off the ground and go inside. “Things could have gone really badly,” she continued, but KEEPER was there to help.

Stephanie was born with a neurological form of Muscular Dystrophy called Charcot-Marie-Tooth. It causes her to have poor balance, low endurance, and when she falls she is not able to get back up without assistance. From a young age she has worn leg braces to assist her.

Stephanie grew up with the support of her family. With her determined spirit and their help she was able to attend college. But as supportive as her friends and family were, Stephanie knew that when
she got into the workplace she did not want to depend on co-workers to help her. She also knew that she did not want to continue to live with her parents, so she started to research Assistance Dog organizations and found Paws With A Cause®.

"I was the epitome of mom and dad’s baby girl moving out on her own and when you add in the disability part, it [an Assistance Dog] gave them a lot of peace of mind." KEEPER and Stephanie’s partnership was put to the test early on when Stephanie fell and once she got back inside her first phone call was to her parents letting them know what she and KEEPER had been able to accomplish together. "It is awesome, it makes you independent. Once I got a taste of the freedom of not having to depend on another person, that was a very cool feeling."

Stephanie started a job at the Department of Corrections after graduation. Her job was physically demanding and being on her feet for eight hours a day tested Stephanie’s limited endurance. With KEEPER, Stephanie saw an immediate improvement. She was able to walk longer distances, partially because she did not have to concentrate so hard on keeping her balance. "For the first time I could walk with my head up, not really having to look at my feet," Stephanie said. She continued, "There was no more fear or panic if I was in the middle of the room and dropped my keys or something else."

In addition to bracing and helping Stephanie get up if she fell, KEEPER was also trained to retrieve the house phone in case of an emergency, open doors and turn the lights on and off.

Two years ago Stephanie, her husband and child drove to meet with a doctor in California who was able to fit her with new leg braces. "Working with new leg braces, my balance is 250 percent better," Stephanie shared. Her balance was so much better that when KEEPER started to get close to retirement Stephanie debated on whether or not she really needed another Assistance Dog, but she decided that there was still a need. When Stephanie met HUNTER in the fall of 2015 it wasn’t long before Stephanie knew she had made the right decision.

One evening Stephanie went out to the garage to grab something. She was alone with the kids, because her husband was working the second shift and as she leaned over she lost her balance and fell. She could feel the panic rise; she didn’t have her phone, her kids were in the house and there was nothing in the vicinity that could bear her weight. She called out, her son came to the door and sent HUNTER out to assist her. "It is those moments when you realize what could happen if you can’t get back into the house." While the new leg braces had made a huge impact they still did not take the place of having an Assistance Dog.

Thanks to you, Stephanie can continue to hold her head up and taste the freedom that an Assistance Dog provides. With your continued support, future clients can feel that same freedom.
T
ere are some people who exemplify what it means to be of service. People who are kind, attentive and encouraging. People who devote their life to improving the lives of others. Ellen Herlache-Pretzer, PAWS Volunteer and Field Representative, is one of those people.

Ellen’s desire to work with dogs started at a young age. She attended obedience classes with her family dog, competed in 4-H and worked at local kennels. As she got older she became more interested in how an animal could enhance someone’s independence and improve their quality of life.

In college, Ellen raised her first Foster Puppy and learned how a dog is trained to be a future Assistance Dog. Since that first puppy she has not looked back. In addition to being a Foster Puppy Raiser, Ellen is also a PAWS Field Representative, Foster Puppy and PAWS Prison Partners trainer, a presenter and a consultant for PAWS.

With a background in Occupational Therapy, PAWS seemed like a perfect fit. “As an Occupational Therapist I was always trained to work with a client in the real environment, the real context, their own home, their own community, their own places where they live, work and play. And that’s what PAWS does.”

Ellen’s enthusiasm and love for what she does is easy to see and no one can share the impact that she makes better than her PAWS Clients. “Ellen exemplifies what it means to be of service to others,” was the immediate response when we asked a PAWS Client to describe Ellen. The client continued, “Many ‘what ifs’ ran through my head with NEMO. What if I didn’t do this or that right? What if NEMO and I didn’t bond? What if we didn’t pass our final test of certification? Ellen put all those ‘what ifs’ aside. Our success is due to the fact that Ellen and I worked well together and she provided me with the knowledge and tools I needed on this new journey to independence.”

Once a PAWS Team is certified, clients rarely go anywhere without their Assistance Dog. “It’s their safety net, it’s their companion and it’s their bridge to the outside world. Together they are so much more than they were before,” Ellen shared.

Just like an Assistance Dog is a bridge for PAWS Clients, Ellen is a bridge between the client and their Assistance Dog. She helps makes independence possible.

“ELLEN EXEMPLIFIES WHAT IT MEANS TO BE OF SERVICE TO OTHERS.”
You may be looking for a way to make a big difference to help further our mission. If you are 70½ or older, you may also be interested in a way to lower the income and taxes from your IRA withdrawals. An IRA charitable rollover is a way you can benefit this year while helping to continue our work. If you have any questions about an IRA charitable rollover gift, please contact Special Gifts Officer Colette Beighley at (800) 253-7297 ext. 213.

**SAVE THE DATE**

**PAWS to celebrate™**

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2016 @ 6 PM
FREDERIK MEIJER GARDENS AND SCULPTURE PARK

**now taking reservations**
800-253-7297

**Help further our mission with the**

IRA Charitable Rollover

**ACT NOW!**

If you are 70½ or older, avoid taxes on transfers of up to $100,000 from your IRA

© 2016 Crescendo Interactive, Inc. Used by permission
Paws With A Cause®
4646 South Division
Wayland, MI 49348
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.

Tax ID #38-2370342
MICS #7506

"ARTY gives me a sense of security and peace of mind."

Love story
There are over 70 people, like Marie, waiting for their love story to begin and you can make it possible.