MEET FUTURE PAWS ASSISTANCE DOG, AYLA
She is training to help a client not only to live and work, but feel more secure.
In 2014, we partnered with the Michigan Reformatory to pilot PAWS Prison Partners. Eight Foster Puppies that were at-risk of dropping out of PAWS’ training program were paired with qualified inmates who helped with specialized training. When the Foster Puppies returned to PAWS six months later, it was clear the pilot program was a success for everyone involved.

PAWS IMPACT:
All of the dogs placed in prison found careers where they could flourish and fulfill their destiny of helping others. Five puppies became PAWS Assistance Dogs, one joined our breeding program, another became a PAWS demonstration dog and the last one became an arson detection dog. What does this mean for PAWS? PAWS Prison Partners will allow us to train more Assistance Dogs for waiting clients. Since dogs work on advanced obedience in prison, our trainers can begin custom-training sooner which means dogs will be placed more quickly with clients.

PRISON IMPACT:
A prison partner shared, “To get a chance to do something that benefits the people that have had it harder than we could ever imagine, is not anything short of amazing.” Psychiatrists have been able to reduce, or even stop, medications the participating inmates were taking prior to this program. Prison officers said this program increased cooperation among inmates and improved the prison’s atmosphere. Due to the pilot’s success, the Michigan Reformatory doubled the size of their program. Since then, we have partnered with three more correctional facilities and two more facilities plan to join by the end of 2016.

COMMUNITY IMPACT:
The benefits of this program go beyond PAWS and the walls of the prisons. By learning relational and vocational skills such as goal setting, accountability and self-discipline, inmates coming out of prison can break the cycle of poverty and unemployment, helping to reduce recidivism. Research shows 70-86% of inmates involved with programs like PAWS Prison Partners remain out of jail compared to 50% of those not involved with a similar dog program.
To people with a disability, an Assistance Dog is much more than a companion, more than someone to greet them at the door each night and cheer them up when they have had a bad day. Having an Assistance Dog creates a partnership, a unique bond that allows for independence and security which enhances the client’s quality of life to a level they didn’t realize was possible. As PAWS client Julie shares, “It wasn’t that I gave ABBY a good life. It was ABBY who taught me how to live.”

Julie was born with moderate hearing loss that continued to decline as she got older, but she did not let it slow her down. She was an active and determined athlete with a sense of humor and keen observational skills that compensated for her hearing loss. She learned to read lips in order to hold conversations. But she had to rely on her family for everyday tasks such as waking up, letting her know when someone was at the door, or alerting her when the smoke alarm was going off.

As college graduation approached, Julie decided she wanted to live on her own. This presented challenges and safety concerns that she wasn’t sure how to overcome. Julie explained, “Despite great technology and the impact [hearing aids] have on my speech and understanding, they do not replace natural hearing or ‘cure’ deafness like many people believe.”

One day she was talking to a family friend about her decision to live on her own. He introduced her to PAWS and encouraged her to look into the possibility of applying for a Hearing Dog. “I liked dogs, but never thought about having one to help me. I didn’t even realize that it was a possibility,” Julie shared.

Julie met ABBY, a spirited and intelligent Border Collie mix in 1994. ABBY was the first dog that Julie owned and they fell in love instantly. With ABBY, Julie felt safe and secure living on her own. ABBY got her up each morning for work, alerted her to the ringing phone or knocking at the door. ABBY was trained to alert her to the smoke alarm, a severe storm warning and intruders. With ABBY, Julie could relax in her home.

Julie says it is hard to explain the impact that an Assistance Dog has on its partner. When you are born with a disability like hearing loss, you don’t realize what you are missing because you have never had it. Having an Assistance Dog brings you closer to having the same life experience as people who have their hearing.

ABBY was Julie’s teammate for 11 years. When ABBY passed, Julie experienced what it was like to live without her teammate. She is now looking forward to getting another Assistance Dog to be her partner in life.
like to live without an Assistance Dog. Julie described it in two words: nerve wracking. A PAWS Field Rep compares it to this: “Think about what it’s like when you lose power at your house. You walk into a room and turn on the light switch out of habit. Of course, nothing happens, but you know the power will come back on again, usually in a short time. A person who loses their Assistance Dog doesn’t know when they will get another one. Their dog was a major part of their life, and they have lost the ability to live and work more easily and to feel more secure. For them, every day is one day too long waiting for a dog.”

Six months later Julie was paired with JADE, her Successor Dog, a goofy and playful black Labrador Retriever. When asked about the difference in her two partners, Julie said, “ABBY was the Queen and JADE was the joker, but both were a perfect match for me.”

PAWS custom-trains each dog for their client and matches are made based on the client’s personality, activity level and the dog’s strengths. Each time Julie applied for an Assistance Dog, she said “It was a long and intense process. PAWS asked a lot of questions about my personality and lifestyle and, at the time, I wondered if it was all really necessary. Once I got each dog and realized what a wonderful match they both were, I realized it was all necessary.”

This past winter, JADE passed away, once again leaving Julie without a partner. But Julie’s next potential match, AYLA, is training at PAWS, and she is eagerly anticipating the day that they will meet.

Julie is not alone. Over the next two years, we estimate that nearly 150 clients will request a Successor Dog. And we receive almost 2,000 new application requests for Assistance Dogs each year. With your continued support, you help to ensure successor clients don’t have to live life without an Assistance Dog and help new clients live a life they didn’t know was possible.
A PAWS TEAM JOURNEY

WE’RE A TEAM
Our Field Rep shows PAWS how Karen and ABEL are working together so we can certify them as a team. Once certified, ownership of ABEL transfers to Karen. We continue to provide the team with ongoing support and training for the working life of the dog.

WORKING TOGETHER
A PAWS Field Rep helps Karen and ABEL learn how to work together in their home, workplace, school and community.

IT’S A MATCH
We match Karen to ABEL since his strengths, temperament and physical structure align with the tasks and lifestyle she needs.

PUPPY LOVE
ABEL is specially bred with a temperament and structure that makes for an excellent Assistance Dog. Our Mama and Papa Dogs (and their young puppies like ABEL) live in the homes of PAWS volunteers.

RAISE A PUPPY
At 8 weeks old, ABEL goes to live in the home of a volunteer Foster Puppy Raiser who teaches him basic obedience. This volunteer also exposes ABEL to environments he may encounter with a client.

VET CARE
Our on-site Vet Team monitors the health and well-being of all PAWS Dogs. This team will see ABEL about 11 times from birth until placement.

COME SIT STAY
ABEL enters into advanced training at 12-16 months old. He is paired with 1-2 inmates who work on advanced obedience skills where repetition is needed.

CUSTOM TRAINING
ABEL learns the needs of his future partner. Trainers simulate the partner’s movements to custom-train ABEL for tasks. If a dog does not become an Assistance Dog, we try to find him another working career.
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.

PAWS + Me

“Being a Foster Puppy Raiser has taught me a lot about life and myself. It has taught me to put the needs of others above my own.” -Madeline

Madeline with Foster Puppy MONROE