NAVIGATING THROUGH LIFE WITH PILOT

“Not only has PILOT helped alert me to sounds, he has helped me deal with many of life’s struggles.”
Some children are afraid of the dark, but darkness in complete silence is especially frightening. Just ask Annie. When she was a child, Annie would often sleep on the floor just to feel the vibrations of footsteps, or the opening and closing of windows and doors. Annie would wake up sore from the hard floor, but it made her feel safe.

Annie received her first set of hearing aids at 18 months old. “I received a diagnosis of Usher Syndrome from my eye doctor. This means I was born with a severe to profound hearing loss, and I am gradually losing my peripheral vision,” explained Annie.

Still Annie dreamed of going to college and living on her own. Although excited
Today, Annie teaches Special Education at Blue Angels Elementary. When she first brought PILOT to work, they were thrilled by how appropriate his name was for the school. They created a special welcome sign for him, featured him on the school news, and printed his image on their Science Olympiad team shirt.

PILOT IS BRINGING JOY AND COMFORT TO SO MANY MORE PEOPLE THAN JUST ANNIE.

What’s so amazing is that PILOT is bringing joy and comfort to so many more people than just Annie. One of Annie’s students with epilepsy had a seizure in class. After it concluded the student asked for PILOT who rarely leaves Annie’s side. But, PILOT went right to her and rested his head on the student’s lap while she recovered from her experience.

Annie has a long-standing relationship with PAWS and is so grateful for the Hearing Dogs she has had to help her navigate through life. Her dream of independence was certainly achieved many years ago when she longed to go away to school. Now she has the privilege of teaching young people who have dreams of their own; and, while doing so, she has PILOT by her side.

When Annie was accepted to the University of West Florida, her mother was concerned for Annie’s safety. To be honest, Annie was a little scared too. “I was ready to be on my own, and I didn’t want to depend on my parents anymore,” said Annie. “But, I had hope that I could live an independent life.” Then a trip to the bookstore changed her life forever. A representative from Paws With A Cause® was doing an Assistance Dog presentation. Annie applied for a PAWS® Hearing Dog and was accepted into the program in 1998.

Since then, Annie has had three Hearing Dogs from PAWS. Her first was KIP, a terrier mix that was rescued from a shelter in Chicago. Her second was a black Lab named BUBBLES that served her beautifully for almost 15 years. Her current dog is PILOT, a black Golden/Lab mix.

Annie shared, “PILOT alerts me to the doorbell, door knock, cell phone, alarm clock, microwave timer, oven timer, carbon monoxide detector, fire alarms, an intruder, and when someone calls my name. This is important because if someone is behind me and needs to get my attention, I rarely hear them.” PILOT alerts her to these sounds at home and in public by nudging Annie with his nose. She asks him, “What?” orally or in sign language, and he brings her to the sound. With an intruder and fire alarm, he has learned to take her to the nearest exit. PILOT also knows his basic commands in sign language.

HE HAS HELPED ME DEAL WITH MANY OF LIFE’S STRUGGLES.

“When PILOT and I are out in public, I often hear that my Service Dog is better behaved than some children,” said Annie. “I have been in situations in which people were completely unaware that PILOT was under the table until I get up to leave with him. They are amazed at how quiet and well-behaved he is when he’s with me.” But PILOT does so much more. “Not only has PILOT helped alert me to sounds, he has helped me deal with many of life’s struggles,” explained Annie. “PILOT came when I really needed him.” He was there to support Annie after the deaths of her mother and BUBBLES. “PILOT was in mourning with me,” said Annie.
A FURRY EMPLOYEE ON A MISSION

He goes to the office every day. He attends meetings and conference calls. He observes pre-work gym visits at the office exercise facilities. And he lights up any room he walks into. Meet Masco Corporation’s furriest employee: QUARK.

QUARK is a one-year-old black Labrador and future Assistance Dog for Paws With A Cause. QUARK’s foster mom, Sara, is the Environmental, Health & Safety Manager at Masco. QUARK goes everywhere Sara goes, which includes work. And it turns out there are unique benefits to having an Assistance Dog in training in the office (besides a daily dose of cuteness).

QUARK HELPING MASCO, AND MASCO HELPING QUARK

Diversity and inclusion are important to Masco, and they wanted to up their game in that space. One category of diversity that employees hadn’t previously experienced was an Assistance Dog. If Masco hired an employee with an Assistance Dog, how would they manage that? What if an employee had allergies or was afraid of dogs? Are there any other challenges that come along with having an animal in the office? The addition of QUARK to the Masco team has allowed the company to prepare for any future employees who have Assistance Dogs.

ADJUSTING TO LIFE AT MASCO

One goal of fostering future Assistance Dogs is to try to expose them to as many environments as possible, which may include a workplace. Sara asked to bring QUARK with her to work at the Masco headquarters to start preparing him for his future life as an Assistance Dog.

Sara’s colleagues love QUARK and get excited anytime he walks into a room, but they had to get used to treating him like a service animal instead of a pet. “It took everyone a while to get used to ignoring him because he is so darn cute,” said Sara. “But he has been around enough now, so things go back to business as usual.”

THE FUTURE

QUARK has a bright future ahead of him. This fall, he will enter the PAWS Prison Partners program where he will be partnered with an inmate for advanced obedience and retrieval work for about four months. After that, PAWS will decide what type of work is the best fit for QUARK, and he will complete his training customized to a client in need.

Sara is sad to say goodbye to QUARK this fall, but she is already signed up to foster a second puppy through PAWS. Masco is onboard for round two, so the company will still have a pup in the office. If all goes well, QUARK will lead a life of service. However, on the off-chance that he is released from the training program, there are talks of making QUARK a permanent Masco “employee.”

We are so grateful to our PAWS Dog Volunteers and organizations that support them — like Masco — for making a life-changing impact in the community, one Assistance Dog at a time!
After 40 years of enhancing the lives of people with disabilities through custom-trained Assistance Dogs, Michael D. Sapp, Sr. has decided to retire. Paws With A Cause wants to honor him and the work he and his wife, Antoinette (Candye) Sapp, contributed to the Assistance Dog industry. PAWS started simply with Mike and Candye helping a friend and has grown into a national organization impacting the lives of thousands of people.

The 40th Anniversary Founder’s Fund will provide current and ongoing support for our facilities. This stewardship is vital to PAWS’ continued growth and service to our current and future clients.

Mike and Candye invested so much of themselves in PAWS. We hope you will honor their vision and legacy by contributing to the 40th Anniversary Founders’ Fund in appreciation of the life-enhancing work of our Assistance Dogs!

Both your ongoing support for our day-to-day operations — and this special support for our facilities — are so greatly appreciated by all who benefit from the work of Paws With A Cause. Please take a moment and consider making a gift to the 40th Anniversary Founders’ Fund.
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.

Our Mission:

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WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

JOIN US FOR PAWS FOR LUNCH
Take a special behind-the-scenes tour of Paws With A Cause

HOST A PARTY WITH A CAUSE
Share your passion for PAWS with your friends and family

HOST A PAWS MAMA OR PAPA DOG
Provide a loving home for one of our breeding stock dogs

MAKE A PLANNED GIFT
Ensure your values by creating a legacy for the future of PAWS

RAISE A FOSTER PUPPY
Raise a puppy, change a life

BECOME A PAWS BEST FRIEND
Sign up to give a monthly gift

VOLUNTEER ONSITE
Use your skills to help fulfill our mission

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