

Puppy Raising Coordinator's report February 2012

Daisy and Bennett

Daisy was with me Oct-Nov 2011. She then went to Graham and Robyn Sheather and settled in well. When she was 18 weeks old she had her PennHIP scores done. The scoring showed she would have developed early hip dysplasia. Now 6 months old, Daisy has had her hips operated on in order to stabilise them. Thanks to Graham and Robyn her barking has reduced and she is a gorgeous puppy ready for her new home and life as a family pet, with limited exercise until she is fully grown.

Bennett similarly had a bad score on one hip and although not bad enough to need an operation, he unfortunately has had to leave the ASDOG program. Ku-ring-gai Vets have found us a wonderful couple who have given him a marvellous home, and he looks like the happiest dog on the planet!



Left: Bennett and Daisy
Above & Below: Daniel and Barnaby meet up with Bennett and Daisy



Above: Chelsea waiting patiently at the café

Chelsea and Charlie

I picked them both up from the breeder's on Nov. 27th. Charlie and Chelsea are now 5 months old and, thankfully, both had good PennHIP scores. Chelsea is with me and is a lovely, affectionate people dog. Charlie, after 3 weeks with Joan and Susan, is with Adam and Jaqui James and their 3 children, Alex, Eliza and Callum, who are giving him the best time a puppy could have. He is learning to fetch and tug (very important things for an assistance dog), and is getting loads of socialisation as well as getting to play with Chelsea regularly. Both are learning manners at Pauline's puppy classes - along with Daisy - and are about to start training in shops and shopping centres. Both puppies appear to have wonderfully calm temperaments. Let's hope they have inherited their mother's nature and will be like Barnaby!

Ann Barnacoat, Puppy Raising Coordinator



Above: Chelsea sleeping - or is it Charlie?!
Right: This one is definitely Chelsea... isn't it?



Training Coordinator's Report: January-February 2012

This year has started well with the newest members of our dog squad attending regular puppy training classes. All three of our dedicated puppy raisers are doing a super job with educating the pups in how to behave in and outside of the home environment. Ann with Chelsea seems to be coping extremely well, as always. Jacqui and her family are learning a lot about dogs and dog training through raising Charlie and attending the puppy classes. Graham is attending classes with Daisy, whose training appears to be progressing rapidly. We have also been lucky enough to have Joan and Sheree with Jade, her working assistance dog, attend one of the classes. It was great for the puppy raisers to see some of the things Jade does to make Sheree's life easier. Our next puppy class will be held at Chatswood shopping centre. The puppies and their puppy raisers will take a walk through the shopping centre culminating in a stop at a coffee shop for time to answer any questions and discuss any points of interest. The social aspect of these training sessions, for both the dogs and the people, is equally as important as training skills learned.

Graham and his wife Robyn have been lovingly caring for little Daisy through her rehabilitation programme following surgery. Unfortunately Daisy's results from her PennHIP evaluation were less than desirable. The outcome was that Daisy required surgery to fuse her pelvis in order to avoid the development of Hip Dysplasia as she grows. PennHIP is a scientific method of evaluating a dog for its susceptibility to develop Hip Dysplasia. This can now be reliably carried out as early as 4 months of age. All of the ASDOG puppies undergo this test as part of the physical assessment of their suitability for work as an assistance dog. Thanks to the advice and expertise of the specialists at the Ku-Ring-Gai Veterinary Hospital this test is undertaken at a young age, so as to allow for corrective surgery, should it be necessary. Although Daisy should be fully functional, she is to be removed from the program and placed in a pet home.

We are soon to get another puppy, and with three potential future assistance dogs in the wings the ASDOG management committee has recognised the need to expand the training crew. Graham Sheather has many years of experience in dog training and has graciously agreed to use that knowledge in taking on one of the pups for formal training, when it reaches suitable age. We also welcome Gayl O'Grady, who has expressed keen interest in filling the role of trainer and thank Ann Barnacoat who will yet again step up to mark as a trainer for the organisation.

It is exciting to witness the growing number of both dogs and personnel in the organisation and I look forward with pleasure to what unfolds in the remainder of the year.

Pauline Dickerson, Training Coordinator

Newsletter

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The Quarterly Newsletter of Australian Support Dogs, Inc.

Management Committee Report

Happy New Year to all our supporters! 2012 is the Chinese Year of the Dragon and is purported to be the luckiest year of the Chinese Zodiac so we wish you all good fortune for the coming year and we hope that 2012 will be a year of happiness and prosperity.

The Management Committee has continued to focus on the need for ASDOG to expand its presence and increase the number of dogs available for partnerships. We have concentrated much of the last quarter of 2011 and first part of 2012 in sourcing puppies.

Unfortunately, not all puppies are suited to be Assistance Dogs. Some of them will not make the grade behaviourally and we cannot know this for some time. Others, while their temperament may be close to perfect, may suffer from degenerative hip and knee problems that make them unsuitable for work.

An important part of our obligation is to ensure our dogs are healthy. As such, we have our puppies undertake early hip tests to ensure they are suitable for work and that working will not jeopardise their health in the future. Unfortunately, we have had to withdraw three puppies from the program over the past few months due to degenerative hip problems, including, as you will see as you read this newsletter, both Bennett and Daisy. You may also be interested in our article about PennHIP scoring.

The withdrawal of puppies from the program is not only disappointing for us but it also adds significantly to our costs as we effectively lose the money we have spent on the dogs up until the point of retirement from the program. It costs upwards of \$20,000 to raise and train an Assistance Dog. This cost is substantial and is increased when puppies fail.

It is estimated that around 50% of all puppies selected to be Assistance Dogs across all organisations will fail due to temperament or health concerns. Our experience reflects this average.

Once again, we thank you, our members, helpers and supporters, for your continued interest and support of ASDOG. We know that without your help we could not continue to support the partnerships we have nor could we provide Assistance Dogs to other people in need.

And we offer a big thank you to our wonderful puppy raisers for the work they do bringing our puppies so magnificently to maturity. It must be heartbreaking for you when a puppy has to be retired from the program, but rest assured your work is never in vain.

Danielle Press, President, ASDOG

Retired Assistance Dog Cassie had a wonderful swim with her friend, Guide Dog Tom, while new ASDOG puppy Chelsea watched the world go by on the beach



See us at the Spinal Cord Injuries Australia's Independence Expo:

Come and visit our stall at SCIA's Independence Expo at:

**The Sydney Showgrounds
Saturday 17th March.**

This is a great event for us to promote our organisation and services to people, and we would love to see you there.

Thank You...



We have received assistance and donations from the following people and organisations. Thank you for your generosity.

- Eurobodalla Canine Club Inc • Barbara Chappell
- Peter Tomasetti • John N. Almgren
- Anne Murray • Carol Randall
- Chi Travel Insurance • GC and JA Blackler
- Janet Tinkler • Lola M. Stow • Rita Cartwright
- Shirley Bellamy • Pam & Michael Hurley
- Ingrid Scharping • Jane Milliken • Anne Vickers
- Nancy Somerville

We are also grateful to the following businesses who have hosted our Collection Boxes:

- Post Café, Marrickville
- Aussie Pet Supplies, Haberfield
- Gladesville Veterinary Hospital
- Cakes and Creams, Dulwich Hill
- Ku-ring-gai Veterinary Hospital, Turramurra

As always, our special thanks to Moyna Smeaton, moynzart@skymesh.com.au, who designs and produces our newsletters.

And thanks of course to the Belrose Bowling Club, Jackie and all the staff there, for generously allowing us to use one of their rooms for our monthly meetings.

Welcome to our New Member:

- Mitchell Hilder, Alexandria NSW



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Update on Bennett

Sadly Bennett has been withdrawn from the ASDOG program following a routine veterinary check-up, which showed that he has defective hip joints.

Although he was very carefully selected from a reputable breeder this does not always guarantee a totally sound puppy. In spite of Bennett showing no visible evidence of any problem, it is always our policy that a potential working dog must be proven physically fit in order to sustain an active working life.

Bennett has been an exceptionally willing dog with a natural aptitude towards task work, always busy and very quick to learn. In his buoyant way he has once again wasted no time and has simply 'bounced off' with his lovely new family. Our beautiful, brainy, busy boy is now a very happy pet dog, still trying to earn brownie points by picking everything up!

ASDOG wishes to thank his puppy raiser, Ann, for all her love and care of him. (It must surely be so difficult and frustrating to see a dog with such potential being withdrawn.)

On a practical note, it may be of interest to all who support ASDOG's work to realise that when a puppy is withdrawn from the assistance dog program, it nevertheless will have cost a considerable amount of money. All of the money invested in these puppies must therefore be absorbed into the cost of producing another working assistance dog. So, whenever a puppy is suitably rehomed by ASDOG, we are most grateful to receive a donation to help.

Right: Ann and Bennett check out the Harbour Bridge, December 2011.

Below: Ann and Bennett demonstrated their skills at the Ability Morning Tea at Marrickville Library late last year. Sadly, this was one of Bennett's last public appearances for ASDOG.



Losing Bennett from the program is very sad. From time to time, genetics do present us with problems, which unfortunately cannot be foreseen. Please be assured that ASDOG recognises its responsibility to its supporters and always strives to spend prudently.

However, with your help, ASDOG's work of selecting, rearing and training suitable support dogs will continue to enhance the lives of people with physical disabilities and we look forward with confidence to future successes in 2012 and onwards.

Joan Minns



Our Benni

Due to ongoing and future potential hip problems Bennett (Benni) was put up for adoption in December 2011. We are pleased to say that we are the lucky family that has adopted him!

Benni has settled into his new home very well! He has in his subtle way become integrally part of our household – riding in the car, featuring in family photos, going to the beach and basically taking over our lives.

So here is one story of Benni... Benni loves our shoes and clothes. You might not think this is much of a problem, but putting on a slobbery shoe or shirt is no fun! Neither is finding them in the water bowl, the backyard or under the covers.

It's like he can't go anywhere without taking a part of us with him... and he can be pretty sneaky about it! His favourite play is the "walk by" whereby he shows us what he has secured. In a more energetic state he has two other modes. The first is the "run by", where he pinches the article on the fly and races around the house with it. And last but not least, we have "the sneaky". In this sloop, he uses the bait and switch method. He'll pick it up and wait until a treat is offered before he drops it! He hasn't caught on yet that he doesn't get the treat!

Benni tries to speak constantly and is most definitely the light of our lives! The picture shows him learning to use the Skamper Ramp: in case he ever falls in our pool and cannot find the steps it provides a safe exit for him.

Thank you for letting him be a part of our lives, *Andrea*

PennHIP

What is it?

PennHIP is a not-for-profit veterinary health service at the University of Pennsylvania whose primary objective is to reduce the frequency and severity of hip dysplasia in all breeds of dogs. The PennHIP radiographic screening method for hip evaluation predicts the onset of osteoarthritis, or degenerative joint disease, which is the hallmark of hip dysplasia. It is accurate in puppies as young as 16 weeks of age and has great potential to lower the frequency of canine hip dysplasia when used as a selection criterion.

Why does ASDOG use it?

Service dog organisations were the first to adopt PennHIP as the principal method for hip screening. The investment in raising and training service dogs is substantial, so having the ability to pre-screen a dog's genetic predisposition to hip dysplasia is invaluable. This ensures that each puppy entering into a service dog program has a long and healthy life in their working role.

What is the procedure?

Every 16 week old ASDOG puppy has X-rays taken by a local veterinarian who is trained and certified to perform the PennHIP procedure. The X-rays are submitted for expert assessment at the University of Pennsylvania. To meet its obligation of accrediting dogs with sound physical health, only those puppies with PennHIP scores in the accepted range are kept in ASDOG's puppy raising program.

How have ASDOG puppies scored?

Although ASDOG puppies are sourced from breeding stock with proven/acceptable PennHIP scores, this does not ensure the success of puppies' screening results. Unfortunately, ASDOG has recently had to withdraw two puppies-in-training, Bennett and Daisy, due to their PennHIP scores lying above the acceptable range. We are very grateful to the loving families who have adopted Bennett and Daisy into their homes. On a more positive note, our newest puppies-in-training, Charlie and Chelsea, do have sound PennHIP results and we look forward to advancing them through to full accreditation.

*Sheree Hurley,
ASDOG Management Committee*

*Information sourced from:
<http://research.vet.upenn.edu>*

Three weeks with Charlie the Charmer

Charlie and his sister Chelsea are the newest ASDOG recruits and Susan and I were very lucky to have had temporary care of Charlie until the new puppy-raisers were able to take him home with them. He is a gorgeous puppy, happy and very relaxed.

During his stay with us he has calmly accepted the many changes to his daily life, living sometimes with myself and at other times with Susan.

A "party in the park" was no big deal to him, as he managed to sleep through the whole event, which included live bands, Christmas carols, plus several hundred people picnicking and dancing! He even missed Santa's arrival and so, sadly, didn't get his present!

He spent a week at a friend's house helping me 'house-sit' and he made himself very much at home there. He found Christo; the resident Labrador, and the two cats to be the greatest of fun. The older cat, Monster - he just fell in love with him really! It was a bit much for the cat though: since he is now 15, blind and deaf, he was at a slight disadvantage really. But I think they had a mutual understanding as they were nearly always together!

He even met the chickens, 'Brownie' and 'Stripy': he was a little surprised by them but was quite polite nonetheless.

Having got on with the 'business' end of things pretty well, as well as learning to 'sit' for the important things in his life like dinner, he showed his smart side and his new puppy raisers are going to have a great time with him. It was my husband's birthday a few days after Charlie first arrived at our house, and Charlie trotted up to John with a birthday card in his mouth, so very pleased with himself!

Charlie is responsive, very loving and it has been a privilege to spend the time with him. Susan and I will so miss his cuddles!

His puppy-raisers, Adam and Jacqui and their children, are ASDOG's newest volunteers and are welcomed warmly by the ASDOG committee.

Joan Minns

Cakes and Creams

Cakes and Creams is a new patisserie in Dulwich Hill in the Inner Western suburbs of Sydney. Having been in business in Bondi for 13 years, Vagif, the owner, has now expanded into the wholesale business. Upon opening the business in Marrickville Road, Dulwich Hill, Vagif kindly agreed to support ASDOG by hosting one of our new collection boxes.

If you want to purchase really superb pies, pastries or cakes, then Cakes and Creams' really are some of the best you will ever have tasted! I promise you that your journey will not be in vain - his coffee-making skills are pretty good as well!

With 23 years' experience as a pastry chef, Vagif's pies have won multiple awards at the Great Aussie Meat Pie Competitions and the Sydney Morning Herald has nominated his Cheesecakes as one of the top 5 in Sydney. You can see Vagif's eastern European background reflected in many of the delectable cakes.

So, if you ever find yourself in Dulwich Hill or venture here with cakes and pies in mind, please do look up Vagif. And if you mention ASDOG and have with you either an ASDOG newsletter or information leaflet, you can enjoy great coffee and cake for only \$5.00.

You will definitely want to take home some of the delectable food products - and please remember to feed the ASDOG collection box as well! Every donation makes a difference to the work of ASDOG.

Joan Minns

Pictured above: Vagif with Charlie outside Cakes and Creams, 455 Marrickville Road, Dulwich Hill, Sydney.



*Above: Squeaky clean laundry dog
Right: 'Who's that looking at me?'
Left: Making friends with 'Monster' the cat*

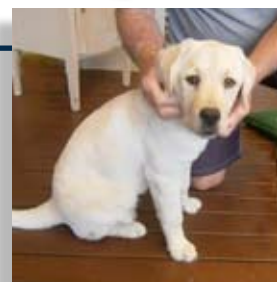
Chelsea, our cheeky girl, and Charlie, definitely the charmer

Introducing this delightful duo, a pair of black Labradors (brother and sister), who are both showing a lovely disposition, laidback, happy and calm... until they get together! ASDOG will be watching their progress with baited breath, wishing them both a quality working future as assistance dogs of the future.



Daisy

At 16 weeks old, Daisy was found to have significantly defective hip joints. The veterinary advice ASDOG received was that she would need an operation in order to give her the prospect of a reasonable standard of life, and then only as a pet dog.



Daisy at the beginning of February 2012

This procedure has been performed and she is recovering from the surgery (having no concept that she should not be doing everything that any self respecting Labrador worth its salt would be doing!) It is ASDOG's responsibility to ensure that Daisy is given the correct care during her next few months and she will be carefully monitored to ensure slow but steady growth.

At the time of writing she is being raised by her puppy-raisers, Graham and Robyn, who are bitterly disappointed at this turn of events; having fallen in love with her over the short time she has been with them. Daisy is a friendly and loving puppy who adores people and water play, often up-ending her water bowl, just for the fun of it!

But however well Daisy recovers, she will not of course be able to become an assistance dog. This is a very bitter blow, especially coming so soon after Bennett's untimely withdrawal from our program.

Joan Minns,