

# Newsletter

March 2014

The Quarterly Newsletter of Australian Support Dogs, Inc. (ASDOG)

## A WARM WELCOME TO 2014 FROM THE ASDOG MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

As ASDOG embarks on its 18th year of operation, we are proud to continue our tradition of raising and training assistance dogs in the homes of loving families. The ASDOG volunteer base is as strong as ever and ensures your gracious support goes directly to the health, welfare and training of our fabulous dogs. We are extremely pleased to announce that assistance dogs, Charlie and Ebony, have just been successfully placed with their new recipients. Puppy Heidi, new assistance-dog-in-the-making, has joined the team, and, with another puppy soon on the way, we have much to look forward to!

## PUPPY PROGRESS

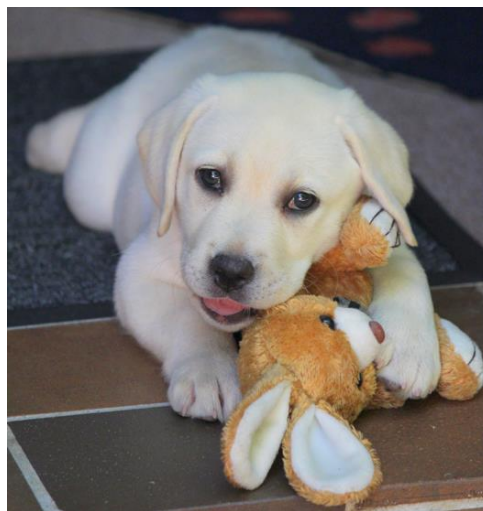
### Introducing Heidi!

New recruit, Heidi, has an exciting role as an accredited assistance dog ahead of her.

A big thanks to Ann Barnacoat, dedicated ASDOG volunteer, for raising Heidi through her first twelve months. Ann tells of her puppy raising experiences and Heidi's shining potential.



*Continued next column.*



### Raising Heidi *continued...*

"I started nearly 20 years ago puppy raising for Guide Dogs then for ASDOG, so I've seen a lot of pups come and go.

"I've also trained two assistance dogs that are now out working and found that challenging but very rewarding. I love taking on new puppies and watching them change and grow and develop into their very different personalities.

"Heidi is from a marvellous breeder and she is already showing great promise. She enjoys meeting everyone in the shopping centres we go to, especially the children, and loves interacting with my two little grandsons. She is learning to fetch objects and to tug. It's still a game but it's useful! Lead walking is very hard for Heidi, with so many distractions! She loves to come in the car, on the train, and out anywhere. Her calm nature is a great asset and her focus on a task is excellent, even if it is disembowelling one of her soft toys!"

**Ann Barnacoat**, ASDOG Puppy Raiser

### Jenna's Dilemma!

11 month-old ASDOG puppy, Jenna, had the recent misfortune to break her toe, which resulted in 5 weeks of enforced rest with her back paw in plaster. Needless to say this was not pleasing to either Jenna or me and my family. Patience is a virtue that puppies generally have very little of!

Luckily we had wonderful vets to care for Jenna.

Dr Susan K. Armstrong and Dr John Wilcox of VETMED Northbridge and Randwick gave their time and expertise freely and generously.

The plaster is now off, the toe has healed, and Jenna is very happy to be back to her usual lively puppy ways.

**Andrea Blackford**, ASDOG Puppy Raiser



**Thank you to everyone at VETMED.**

[www.vetmed.com.au](http://www.vetmed.com.au)

## CELEBRATING CHARLIE'S JOURNEY

Dan and Charlie's partnership (*right*) marks the successful completion of a two-year puppy raising, advanced training and recipient training program. We celebrate the beginning of a newly accredited assistance dog team and share some glimpses of Charlie's story.



### Jacqui, Charlie's puppy raiser, from the beginning...

I would like to say I was driven by a desire to do something community minded but the truth is, the kids wanted a dog and I didn't! I saw an ASDOG brochure in a coffee shop and phoned up to inquire and before you know it we become puppy raisers! It really was a spur of the moment decision but we are so glad we did it and will do it again sometime.

Charlie was adorable and friendly. He kept us entertained just watching him walk and run around.



He was a bit uncoordinated with the stairs in our house, and his oversized paws. He was so funny! He loved people and interacting with us; he fitted in to our family of 5 so easily.

Going out in public was always great because he received a lot of attention. People were always coming up to me asking about him, and of course wanting to pat him, which he loved.

Finally getting Charlie to master the down escalators and open stairs was a highlight. It took a lot of time, especially the escalators, and it was such a sense of achievement when he did it. He often would put just a paw on and go no further.

Charlie came out with me as much as possible. I took him to meet the kids after school, on walks, to dog parks and the usual kids sports. I tried to socialise him as much as possible with kids and other dogs. He was never a problem; everyone just loved him wherever he went. Once we were refused entry to a coffee shop, otherwise most establishments seemed to welcome a dog in training.



I found Charlie to be clever (but I had nothing to compare him to!); he learned to open our sliding door without being taught. He seemed to learn things quickly, and he also was smart enough to work out what he could get away with, with different members of our family! Charlie is a dog with lots of personality and he was always overjoyed to see us, whether we'd been gone 5 minutes or 5 hours. To be greeted by the waggy tail and the look of delight when I come home made my heart melt every time.



**"Charlie has made impossible tasks possible for me. In so many ways he has already made a huge difference to my independence, I'm excited to see what the future holds and to see if there really is much he can't help me with!" Dan.**

I taught Charlie lots of good house manners and basic obedience cues, and we did lots of socialising and public transport. Graham, his trainer, then took him for advanced skills training.

It's very satisfying to know Charlie is now a working assistance dog and helping someone, and to know that Charlie and Dan are forming a special bond too.

### Graham reflects on Charlie's advanced training program...

I was attracted by the prospect of training a dog that could enhance the life of a person in a practical way beyond the enjoyment that a companion or pet dog brings. I also saw an opportunity to "put my money where my mouth was" insofar as I would have to prove to my friends, to whom I gave unsolicited advice on how to train their dogs, that maybe some of what I told them had merit!

My initial involvement in training an assistance dog ended in disappointment when Daisy, a yellow Labrador that I had accepted to puppy raise and train, had to be withdrawn from the ASDOG program due to hip problems.

Meanwhile another family was raising a black Labrador pup until he was old enough to undertake the next stage of his training.



His name was Charlie and he was earmarked for me. In October 2012 at one-year-old Charlie moved in with my wife and I and our Miniature Schnauzer, leaving behind a family who loved him and had given him a great start in his journey towards becoming an assistance dog.

Charlie is an alert, biddable and food motivated dog which means he responds well to training. My aim as his trainer was to teach him a number of tasks that would be of practicable use to a person in a wheelchair and to expose him to a diverse number of experiences so he could more readily adapt to whatever he encountered in future.

Among the tasks that Charlie can perform are opening doors and drawers by tugging on a rope, closing drawers and doors by pushing with his nose, retrieving objects such as a mobile phone, remote controls, items of clothing, bottles of soft drink or water, keys, books, lead and dog jacket from the floor or furniture.

During my time with Charlie we had numerous trips to shopping centres to experience moving amongst different people, travelling on travelators and in lifts, learning to ignore food when walking past meat displays and pet food aisles, sitting or lying quietly



*ASDOG sends a huge thank you to Jacqui (left) & Graham (above) for guiding Charlie through to his new role as Dan's assistance dog (top left)*

while people moved past him. We also travelled on a train, had some trips on ferry cats on the Parramatta River, attended my grandchildren's sports matches and my community college Italian class.

The highlight for me as a dog trainer occurred one night during a training session of getting Charlie to close a cupboard door. We had been working on this for a week or so without success when I tried a different technique I had not previously attempted. We both learnt something that night!

I was fortunate that I met Dan, Charlie's new recipient, some months before I was due to complete my time with Charlie as this enabled me to tailor his training to Dan's needs and not spend time training tasks that wouldn't be required. It also served as a good introductory period in which they could get to know each other. On 28 January this year I left Charlie with Dan for a sleepover. He is still there!

It was a privilege for me to have been Charlie's custodian for some 15 months; we had great times together. I have a great sense of satisfaction and achievement knowing he is serving a useful purpose for Dan and that Dan values him as a partner and helper.

The successful placement of Charlie would not have been possible without the groundwork put in by Jacqui, his puppy raiser, and her family before he came to me, nor without the support and encouragement of ASDOG members.

**Graham Sheather, Charlie's Trainer**

## TRAINING COORDINATOR UPDATE

We extend our most sincere thanks to outgoing Training Coordinator Pauline Dickerson (*right*) and a very warm welcome to Gayl O'Grady (*left*), who steps into the position.



*Keep an eye out for Gayl's guest appearance with Dr Harry on Better Homes and Gardens later this year - on 5/9/2014 – save the date!*

Pauline's contribution to ASDOG is enormous. She established puppy training classes, formalised the advanced skills training program, trained assistance dog Sara, supported all puppy raisers, trainers and recipient teams and volunteered countless hours to public education and operational development. We are very fortunate to have Pauline's ongoing assistance on the Management Committee.

Meanwhile, Gayl has hit the ground running! She's overseen recipient training programs, conducted several public access tests and commenced advanced skills training with puppy Freya. Welcome aboard!



## CORPORATE SUPPORTERS

**In-kind specialist services are instrumental in helping ASDOG to develop and achieve its fundraising, operational and marketing goals. We pay tribute to corporate supporters Nina Beilby Photography and Deloitte Australia, and sincerely thank them for their generosity in providing professional services.**



Nina Beilby, professional portrait and commercial photographer ([www.ninabeilby.com](http://www.ninabeilby.com)), has generously volunteered her professional services to produce a stock of high quality photographs for ASDOG. Assistance dog Jade happily demonstrated a repertoire of tasks for Nina, *including those shown below*, and was not short of proud poses for the camera!

Sheree has been partnered with Jade for several years now and truly appreciates the benefits of an assistance dog.

"These shots may be set up, but it really is all in a day's work for Jade. I'm not able to pick up anything that I drop, and when that something is my phone or my purse, Jade is worth her weight in gold! It's important for potential recipients to see these 'task' photographs in order to understand the true value and impact an assistance dog can have on their ability to lead a more independent lifestyle."

ASDOG sincerely thanks Nina for donating her time and expertise to photograph Jade, and will feature the photographs on promotional and educational materials.

***ASDOG welcomes enquiries from corporate supporters 1300 788 721.***



### **Deloitte Australia Leads ASDOG Development Day**

Representatives from Deloitte Australia met with ASDOG recently to review our current operational practices and assist in our service development potential.

It was a most valuable experience for ASDOG, and the Management Committee is now working on the expansion of several program and fundraising ideas. A very special thanks to the Deloitte Australia representatives who undertook in-house and field research, as well as the full day joint workshop.

It was inspiring for ASDOG to work with people from various parts of a Big 4 professional services firm who volunteer their time to make a difference for their local community and not-for-profit organisations.

ASDOG gratefully acknowledges the Deloitte Foundation for establishing their community service initiatives.

*Deloitte Australia provides a broad range of audit, tax, consulting, and financial advisory services to public and private clients.*

[www.deloitte.com.au](http://www.deloitte.com.au)



**Visit our website**  
[www.asdog.org.au](http://www.asdog.org.au)



**Like us on Facebook**  
[www.facebook.com/AustralianSupportDogsInc.ASDOG](http://www.facebook.com/AustralianSupportDogsInc.ASDOG)



**Follow us on Twitter**  
[https://twitter.com/asdog\\_inc](https://twitter.com/asdog_inc)



**ASDOG AUSTRALIAN SUPPORT DOGS, INC.** P.O. Box 5492, West Chatswood, NSW 1515  
Tel: 1300 788 721 Email: [information@asdog.org.au](mailto:information@asdog.org.au) Web: [www.asdog.org.au](http://www.asdog.org.au)