

Paw Print


Winter 2015



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

NEWSHOUND'S INTRO

AUGUST 2015

Welcome to the Winter edition of Paw  Print! This month Gayl takes us behind the scenes of what's involved in team training, Michelle reflects on training her first assistance dog, and we invite you to have fun following the trail of our adventurous assistance pups and dogs around town. Thank you to all who contributed. If you have something you'd like to be included in our next issue, please email it to us at information@asdog.org.au.

ASSISTANCE DOGS-IN-THE-MAKING FIND THEIR SEA LEGS

Thank you Puppy Raisers, Trainers and extraordinary Assistance Dogs! It was FUN.

Jenna, Heidi, Ivy, Lucy and Kara eagerly boarded the Sydney Ferry to Manly to catch up with ASDOG's new recipient, Declan. This is an exciting time for Jenna as her hopes and dreams of becoming an assistance dog are about to become a reality. *Follow her story on page 3.*



Trainer Ann with Heidi, Puppy Raiser Geoff with Lucy and Trainer Michelle with Jenna



SEEING / HEARING / SENSING / SUPPORTING
There's a dog for that!

Aug. 2-8
2015

RESPECT & APPRECIATION

Every year in the month of August we celebrate International Assistance Dog Week and honour our hard working and devoted assistance dogs who are aiding so many people in our community. We unreservedly applaud and thank our puppy raisers, trainers, volunteers, supporters and donors, without whom this could not happen.

WHAT'S NEXT?



You'll find us at the upcoming **StreetFair** in **Chatswood's** CBD on Saturday 5th September 2015 from 10am.

And also at the **Dogs Big Day Out** at **Frenchs Forest** Showground on Sunday 13th September 2015 from 10:30am to 2:30pm.

Please come and shake a paw with one of our wonderful puppies and assistance dogs at the ASDOG stall.



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PUPPY RAISING

Millie, a pup with aspirations

She is bright, she is cute and she aspires to become an amazing assistance dog. So far, Millie is showing great promise in achieving her goal!

Snippets from a new Puppy Raiser:

Since the beginning of May, I have been lucky enough to have received the opportunity of joining Australian Support Dogs (ASDOG), as a Puppy Raiser volunteer. For me, getting involved means I get to spend 8-9 months with incredibly cute Millie - our now 19 week old Golden Labrador Puppy and newest puppy dog mascot in the AVA office. Of course I'm fully aware it won't be easy giving her up when the time comes, but there'll always be the satisfaction of knowing that I contributed to our main goal: she will go on to provide a very lucky person the increased safety, companionship and independence only made possible by an assistance dog.

Fran Diogo, Volunteer Puppy Raiser



PennHIP: A novel way to assess, measure and interpret hip joint laxity

At 17 weeks, ASDOG puppy, Millie, had X-rays taken by a local veterinarian who is trained and certified to perform the PennHIP procedure. The X-rays were submitted for expert assessment at the University of Pennsylvania. 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. To meet ASDOG's obligation to accredit dogs with sound physical health, only those puppies with PennHIP scores in the accepted range are kept in our puppy raising program. 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. We are most pleased to report that Millie passed the test with flying colours!

LEARNING EXPERIENCES: TRAVEL TRAINING



All our assistance-dogs-in-the-making enjoy regular travel training. Kara, Heidi and Ivy tick all the right boxes when out & about:

- ✓ wearing an identifying vest and accompanied by a certified trainer
- ✓ demonstrating basic obedience skills
- ✓ non barking behaviour
- ✓ appropriate hygiene, including toileting on command
- ✓ walking calmly in confined and congested spaces
- ✓ quiet, controlled response to noise, crowds and stressful situations



The training of an assistance dog is not confined to the time set aside for intensive training each day. Every interaction with the dog is a learning opportunity. Although the dog needs to be comfortable being left alone at times, it is important that it spends the majority of its time with the trainer and that the trainer be aware of what the dog may be learning from each experience it encounters.



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STEPPING STONES TO SUCCESS

TRAINING JENNA

by Michelle O'Brien

When ASDOG approached me to train Jenna, a bouncy one-year-old black Labrador Retriever, to become an assistance dog, I was excited and nervous at the same time. Excited about the amazing training opportunity, but nervous about whether or not we would be successful after the 12-month journey, and how I would feel about giving her up at the end.

The first couple of months involved getting Jenna settled into her new home and working on some basic cues. All that had been familiar to her for the past 10 months - her puppy raiser, Andrea, and her family - had suddenly changed, so lots of patience and bonding with her was required during this adjustment period. Once she had settled in there was no holding back with asking Jenna to learn.

She was definitely the most enthusiastically food-motivated dog that I have ever trained! We use positive reinforcement training methods to train ASDOGs, and food rewards were by far Jenna's greatest motivation to perform her tasks. She also had a passion for playing fetch and so this was used as a reward for training too.

Her ability to pick up on training tasks and to know when she 'had her working hat on' amazed me every single day. Jenna is one of the most beautiful dogs that I have worked with. She honestly gives her heart and soul to every person she meets.



She has the ability to make people smile, and wags her tail with such enthusiasm when she greets people that it looks as if she is salsa dancing from her hips to her tail! We made so many new friends during our time together. At Westfield Eastgardens, the Centre Management and security staff, who rented the motorised scooters to us for free, were always excited to see her when we went into the Centre to do our regular public access training. We also made friends with the local café staff and local residents who passed us on the streets.

It's amazing how a dog that is being trained to make a significant difference to the life of another human being encourages complete strangers to strike up a conversation with us: they wanted to learn more about Jenna and the amazing work that ASDOG does. Jenna is definitely missed around this neck of the woods!

Once I had met Declan, my anxiety at giving Jenna up turned into relief. I knew straight away that they were perfect for one another, that he would love and care for Jenna unconditionally, and that she would do the same in return. Not a day goes by that I don't think about her, but I have no doubt that she is very spoilt, so very happy, and adored by the locals in her new hometown.

TEAM TRAINING: Insights by Gayl O'Grady, ASDOG Training Coordinator

When an assistance dog-in-training is paired up with a recipient, a lot of preparation is done to make sure it is a good fit. An initial meeting is arranged with other ASDOG people and dogs present, and for Declan, the ASDOG team caught the ferry to Manly to spend a few hours with him (see pictures on p.1).

After that initial meeting, the trainer then organises day visits for the dog, moving on to sleep-overs. It is a gradual getting to know each other until we finally reach the official handover. During the handover, the recipient is given the dog's history folder with medical, diet and vaccination details. The trainer then gives some detailed training support so the recipient is familiar with what the dog can do and the correct cues to use. It is also a time of allowing the dog to feel comfortable and safe in their new environment.

Michelle did Jenna's training but due to work commitments could not do the intense team training needed, so I stepped in to do this. Two days after the handover I spent two full days with Declan making sure they were both comfortable and happy. Each day was 6 hours of going everywhere with Declan and Jenna. This proved to be very valuable on many levels.

Declan now has the tools to manage situations where Jenna is still not entirely confident. We caught buses, went into public toilets, went shopping, had coffee and lunch. The first evening we went through taking clothes off, pulling the bed covers on and off, and nudging the food bowl away under the table after eating.

The next day we went to the 'off lead' park. Declan threw a plastic stick for her repeatedly which Jenna excitedly brought back each time. We practised taking it to Declan. We made it a fun game and I showed him how to continue reinforcing it.

This week we met for coffee at Circular Quay, and discussed the ups and downs.

Declan, Jenna and I caught a train to Town Hall. The railway staff were great: they helped us on board and radioed ahead so there was a guard with a ramp at the other end. We eventually caught a bus back to Circular Quay and Declan was confident enough to catch the ferry back to Manly with Jenna. They are well on their way to a long working life together. **BON VOYAGE!**



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CONNECTING WITH THE WORLD AROUND US

CUSTOMS HOUSE, CIRCULAR QUAY

A big thank you to the City of Sydney and to all our kind hearted and generous supporters! Our Customs House Fundraiser was a great success. Not only did Heidi and Kara attract a lot of welcome attention, but we also managed to raise considerable and much needed funds.



DOUGHERTY APARTMENTS RETIREMENT VILLAGE

ASDOG is committed to raising public awareness of assistance dogs. We enjoy engaging with the broader community around us, sharing our latest puppies and holding assistance dog demonstrations. At the Dougherty Apartments in Chatswood, *Happy Hour* on Fridays is a fine time for our gorgeous assistance pups and dogs to show off their newly acquired skills with flourish and aplomb, offering a floppy ear to listen and a paw to shake. Thank you to all the lovely and caring residents for your ongoing interest and support.

LEICHHARDT CHILDREN'S CENTRE

Over a year ago, we'd asked the bright children at Leichhardt Council Children's Centre to help us name our newest puppy. And they enthusiastically did! Kara has been a regular visitor ever since; entertaining the children with her newly acquired skills and delighting in all the glorious cuddles coming her way. This month's visit was extra special, as Kara eagerly collected her (belated) birthday hugs and demonstrated the enormous progress she has made in just over a year! Assistance dog-in-training Heidi, anticipating a party, came along too...



K-2 ASPECT VERN BARNETT

Teachers Holly and Amanda kindly invited assistance dogs-in-the-making, Heidi and Millie, to visit their K-2 Aspect Vern Barnett satellite class located at St Kevin's Catholic Primary School in Eastwood. Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) is Australia's leading service provider for autism and other disabilities. We're not sure who enjoyed the visit more - the delightful children or their amiable four-legged visitors!

YOUNG STUDENTS GIVE THEIR SHARE TO SHOW THEY CARE

We salute and thank Matthew, Swaratwa and Walton, three spirited Year 5 boys from Knox Grammar Prep School who showed 'Compassion in Action'. They share their amazing fundraising adventure with us:

"This year at school we were asked to help support a charitable organisation as part of a 'Compassion in Action' project. We researched various companies on the internet and chose to support ASDOG. None of us had heard of ASDOG before but we thought it sounded like a good charity to support as we all love animals and like the idea of animals helping people. When we contacted ASDOG Andrea gave us (toy) puppies, pens and chocolates to sell as well as buckets for donations and information flyers. On Sunday the 21st of June we spent about 2 hours knocking on doors around our neighbourhood to raise awareness for ASDOG. We managed to raise \$154.90. We all felt really good about what we had done and learnt a lot about how dogs can help people with disabilities to do all sorts of amazing things like opening doors and taking cards and cash from ATM's. We hope the money we raised will help train more dogs!"

HOW YOU CAN HELP



DONATE via our secure online payment facility **Paypal** at www.asdog.org.au

DONATE by **cheque** or **money order** made payable to Australian Support Dogs Inc. (ASDOG) and posted to **PO Box 5492, West Chatswood NSW 1515**

DONATE via **Direct Deposit** to National Bank Australia, A/c Name: Australian Support Dogs Inc. BSB: 082-201 Account No: 571 238 135



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