

Paw Print

Autumn 2016



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

NEWSHOUND'S INTRO

MARCH 2016

Welcome to the first Paw Print for 2016! In this issue, professional dog trainer, Pauline, shares her thoughts on taking on the job of training an Assistance Dog — not just once, but twice! ASDOG recipient, Dan, gives us an insight into his life with Charlie, and we are excited to see four of our Assistance Dogs-in-training striding proudly towards graduation. **Happy reading!**

WE WANT YOU – FOR LOTS OF REASONS...

Would you like to support the ASDOG Management Committee with its puppy raising, training and assistance dog services? Here's how to:

- **Become a committee member**

The ASDOG Management Committee meets 6-weekly, on Saturday afternoons, at Belrose Bowling Club and welcomes new members to join their range of community, dog, client and event related activities.

- **Donate your services or expertise**

We welcome in-kind support from businesses and individuals who would like to donate their services in areas including dog training, puppy-raising, graphic design, veterinary, marketing, PR and fundraising...

- **Host an assistance dog demonstration**

ASDOG guest speakers with their puppies or assistance dogs frequently attend events in the Sydney metropolitan area. Whether you simply want to know more about the work of Assistance Dogs or you wish to raise funds for ASDOG, our dogs and puppies will demonstrate all their skills with great enthusiasm!

- **Send a monetary donation**

We sincerely thank our donors for enabling us to continue our vital work in the community of raising, training and placing Assistance Dogs.

ASDOG welcomes enquiries from potential volunteers. Phone 1300 788 721 today!

A WALK IN THE PARK

It is our responsibility and also our pleasure to monitor and support all ASDOG recipients and their Assistance Dogs for the life of the partnered teams.

The ASDOG Management Committee is available to assist with training and/or public access advocacy issues at any time following graduation. Annually the teams participate in a Partnership Evaluation and ADI (Assistance Dogs International) Public Access Test. These meetings provide the opportunity for recipients to discuss any concerns with the trainer, and for ASDOG to ensure the teams maintain a happy and effective working relationship.



ASDOG Trainer, Ann, raised and trained Assistance Dog Barnaby, and is always thrilled to see the wonderful bond and the extraordinary working relationship Team Dan & Barnaby (see photo above) have developed and maintained over the past four years. We all enjoyed a recent catch-up at Sydney



Park with Dan, his partner Maryanne, and of course Barnaby!

Photo left shows Trainer, Ann, with Assistance Dog in training, Heidi, who couldn't wait to buy her ticket for the train trip...

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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TEAM TRAINING AND IMPENDING GRADUATION

LUCY'S EXCITING JOURNEY

Golden Retriever, Lucy, had the best possible start to her career as an Assistance Dog. When Ben suffered a spinal cord injury that left him a C6 quadriplegic, he knew an assistance Dog was the way to move forward. Ben's father, Geoff (pictured with Lucy below) volunteered as a



puppy raiser for Lucy, providing a loving home with lots of socialisation and teaching her basic obedience. As Lucy approached her first birthday, she went to

live with experienced ASDOG Trainer, Pauline, and started on her formal training program, which will soon see Lucy graduate as an accredited Assistance Dog for Ben.

MY YEAR WITH LUCY

by Trainer Pauline Dickerson

Lucy will soon complete the final stage of her journey and leave our home to begin her role as a working assistance dog. When Lucy came to us she was only 10 months old and she appeared a little anxious and hesitant in public, which was perhaps due to a combination of her youth and soft nature. Yet it quickly became apparent how adaptable and keen to learn she was.

The requirements and expectations of an assistance dog are quite demanding and not all dogs are suited to the task. Although a dog may have great potential for the role, each dog presents its own challenges. Intensive training can accomplish much and overcome many problems, but the dog's basic temperament cannot be altered. With gentle handling and training, at home and in public venues, Lucy managed to overcome her apprehension and gain confidence in her work.

For Lucy the biggest challenge was dealing with unfamiliar people approaching and patting her, particularly very young children. Lack of public awareness of the importance of not interfering with a working service dog, or dog in training, led to an incident early on in Lucy's training, which took several months to overcome. As Lucy and I were exiting the pet store a toddler approached, stopped in front of Lucy and screamed. Lucy generalised this frightening event to both toddlers and pet stores, but in overcoming the resultant fear of young children and pet shops, Lucy demonstrated her great capacity to adapt to any situation, given enough time and guidance.

I am often asked how hard it is to let the dog go at the end of the training period. A trainer spends hundreds of hours working with the dog and building a close relationship, so letting the dog move on at the end of this period can be

difficult. In Lucy's case the transition will be easier, as Lucy was puppy-raised by the family to which she will return at the end of her training.



A few months into Lucy's training my husband Warren and I took a trip up to the Central Coast with Lucy to watch Ben, who is the recipient of Lucy, play wheelchair rugby. After witnessing Lucy's absolute joy at seeing Ben and his

family, we came away feeling much happier about her ultimate departure from our home.

The success of an assistance dog in its working role relies not only on the dog's temperament and training, but also on the ability of the recipient and dog to work as a team. Throughout Lucy's training there have been frequent meetings with Ben to educate him on how to handle Lucy. Ben was always keen to learn and quick to understand what was required of him, and watching Ben and Lucy develop a good working relationship gave me a great sense of achievement.

One of the biggest challenges has been teaching Lucy to walk on a loose lead when accompanying Ben in the wheelchair. As Ben uses a manual wheelchair, it is vital that Lucy does not put pressure on the lead, which would pull the chair off course. Having successfully taught Lucy to walk on a loose lead, the next step was to educate Ben in how to maintain this behaviour, which due to Ben's determination to achieve success and consistent practice, led to quick results.

In less than a month from my writing this article, Lucy will be part of a working assistance dog team. Throughout Lucy's life, ASDOG will continue to support Ben and to carry out annual assessments on both the team relationship and Lucy's suitability to work in the public domain. She will be very much missed by our family, but the pleasure we gain in knowing how Lucy will enhance Ben's life will be more than suitable compensation.



Above: Team Ben + Lucy

Right: Ben, Lucy and ASDOG Trainer, Pauline with husband, Warren



PARTNERS IN TRAINING: DEVELOPING A LASTING RELATIONSHIP

TEAM DAN & CHARLIE

After a fall down a flight of stairs in 2008 in a ski resort in Canada, Dan was left with an injury at the C5/6 vertebrae, leaving him a quadriplegic. Since that time Dan has slowly but surely returned to normal life with the help of family and friends, and also intense rehab through Spinal Cord Injuries Australia's (SCIA) Walk On program. Dan has not only returned to work but also returned to sport. He is a passionate member of the NSW GIO Gladiators Wheelchair Rugby Team and an inspiring Peer Support Officer for SCIA. Spinal Cord Injuries Australia's Peer Support service provides information, support and education following a spinal cord injury to both the client and their family through the rehabilitation process; and ongoing support once a person with a spinal cord injury returns home. In 2013 Dan was paired with Charlie, ASDOG's handsome Assistance Dog (*see photo below*). Here's what Dan thought at the 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!"

Fast forward to 2016 and Dan Holt updates us on their progress:

Time sure does fly when you are having this much fun! I can't believe that 'Chucky' and I have been together for over 2 years now. He truly has changed my life for the better in so many ways; his extension to my independence grows stronger each and every day.

Charlie has built quite the name for himself not only around my neighbourhood in Concord, or at my wheelchair rugby games, but also at each of the 3 Spinal Units around Sydney. Clients can't seem to get enough time with Charlie and his love for attention and neck scratches. Charlie seems to light up everyone's day he comes into contact with.



Admittedly it hasn't all been smooth sailing for us. There was more than one occasion in the beginning I thought I had bitten off more than I could handle with this little guy, but with fantastic guidance from ASDOG Training Co-ordinator, Gayl, and enough kangaroo sausage to sink the QE2, 'Chucky' and I are now working extremely well together 99.9% of the time – because, let's be honest, dogs will still be dogs...

I really can't thank ASDOG enough for pairing me up with such an amazing best mate. I'm definitely looking forward to what adventures and mischief are in our future.

Here's to you, Charlie boy!

You can catch Dan and Charlie at the upcoming SCIA Independence Expo, 15th – 16th April 2016. The ASDOG Team is proud to be a not-for-profit partner of this free event showcasing lifestyle and disability products and services to empower people with physical disabilities to lead independent lives.



independenceexpo Spinal Cord Injuries Australia
April 15-16, 2016 | Australian Technology Park, Sydney

register at scia.org.au/expo or phone 1800 819 775 ▶

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TRAINING UPDATES AND OUTREACH PARTNERSHIPS

Striding confidently towards graduation – one paw at a time...



How they grew! Gorgeous and cuddly puppies one day, confident and skilled Assistance Dogs the very next. Heidi, Ivy, Lucy and Kara (*left to right, above and below*) are nearing the end of their formal training programs and their respective trainers are very pleased with their progress.



Our dogs are fully trained to international standards using positive motivational training for the specialised tasks they will be required to perform and the public areas they may have to access. An Assistance Dog learns over 50 cues at their own individual pace, in a range of different environments. Dogs are prepared for Team Training and are placed with a recipient upon reaching adequate emotional maturity, most commonly by the time they turn two. This is a highly rewarding time for us and we look forward to establish many enduring partnerships in the months ahead.

Joining forces with Royal Rehab



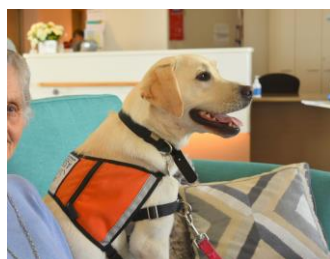
Every week one of our Assistance Dogs-in-training visits the Spinal Injury Gym and, guided by Royal Rehab's Occupational Therapists, helps individuals with their exercises. This is a wonderful training and learning opportunity for our dogs and we hope that the patients enjoy the interaction just as much. The Project was started to honour the memory of Sheree Hurley and her Assistance Dog Jade, who worked passionately for both ASDOG and Royal Rehab. Royal Rehab's overall goal is to help individuals adapt to their changed abilities and promote their independence.

A monthly community trip is part of this program. Earlier this month, Kara with her trainer, Andrea, joined Recreational Therapists and patients on such a trip to the city. Navigating public transport as a new wheelchair user is challenging, weaving your way through a busy lunch time crowd is equally tough. ASDOG trainer, Andrea summed up the experience: "A day well spent and many lessons learned, for both Kara and me."



Community Visits

The ASDOG team enjoys raising awareness for Assistance Dogs and sharing our dogs in training with the community. We make regular social visits to the Dougherty Apartments - Aged Care Facility in Chatswood and to Mark Moran, Little Bay. Heidi and Kara are bringing the joys of animal companionship to those who miss it most.



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