

Life

CHANGING TIMES

2021

News and updates
about the positive
impact Dogs for Good
has made over the
last year.




LIFE CHANGING
DEVOTION

INSIDE
THIS
ISSUE

- Making a difference with More Than
- Supporting Young People with Dementia
- Amazing volunteers
- Good Advice Tips





Labradoodle Iris joined the Huffadine family earlier this year as an assistance dog to 14 year-old George.

George has Duchenne muscular dystrophy and recently has had to deal with lots of pain. One of the things he really loves about Iris is the physical affection she gives him. "At bedtime, she'll come and lie over me on the bed and she also gives me lots of licks which is really nice," he says. "She also helps me by picking things up and helping me off with clothes like my socks and gloves."

Iris attracts lots of attention when she's out and about with George. "People always want to come and talk to us about how she helps," says George's dad, Jason. "We never get anywhere quickly as there's so much to say!"

Iris was part of our 'Sponsor A Puppy' programme and is proof pawstive that a small regular gift can make the world of difference!



WELCOME

Peter Goring Chief Executive

When we went into lockdown in March 2020, I don't think any of us expected to still be dealing with this crisis 17 months later. The pandemic has had a profound effect on the whole world and Dogs for Good, like every other organisation, has had to adapt to new ways of working.

As much of our work is 'hands on', there have been many challenges. We haven't been able to place as many assistance dogs as we planned, so we have people who have been waiting a long time to train with their dog and an ever-growing waiting list of applicants.

With very few events being held, our fundraising has been hit incredibly hard. We are hugely grateful to everyone who has donated during the past year and we

hope to earn continued support as we need funds now more than ever.

We have learnt a huge amount and much of this will stand us in good stead as we look to the future. We will continue to deliver elements of all our services virtually, enabling us to support more people and increase our efficiency, while at the same time lowering our carbon footprint.

The unfailing support of our wonderful staff, volunteers and supporters over the past year gives us huge confidence that we have a great future.

**Thank you all for
everything you do
for Dogs for Good.**

HIGHLIGHTS



Volunteers' Week

Volunteers' Week gave us a fabulous opportunity to celebrate our wonderful volunteers.

Having not seen many of them in person for such a long time, staff created a special thank you film; and stories we put together about The Warwickshire Supporters Group, Temporary Boarder, Gerry Bernardo, and Puppy Socialisers, Andy and Judy Muchall all helped gain us some tremendous media coverage.

We are incredibly grateful to all our volunteers who support us in so many different ways. We will continue to work together safely and look forward to our volunteering activities resuming full strength in the coming months.

There are lots of ways you can volunteer for us and help us make life-changing differences. For more information, visit our website.

Continued Trust Support

Our sincere thanks to all charitable trusts and foundations that have supported us during these difficult times. They include The Charles Irving Charitable Trust, Petplan Charitable Trust, Provincial Grand Lodge of Warwickshire and The James Tudor Foundation. If you have any connections with trustees of a trust or foundation that could be interested in funding our work, please get in touch with us to find out more about how a grant can support our services.



Puppy Power!

Our puppy mums have been busy this year bringing lots of gorgeous puppies into the world. Our lovely girls have already had six litters comprising 49 puppies and we're ready to welcome another two or three litters before year end. Well done to Adele who had a sizeable second brood of 11 (pew!) and a big thank you to Nina who produced her final litter of six and will now put her paws up for a well-earned retirement.



Business Partnerships Update

We've been so fortunate to have some great businesses support us this year.

WeatherBeeta UK are Puppy Partner to Chloe and also supply competition prizes and gift our newly-qualified partnerships with a fabulous dog bed and bowls! In recognition of our long relationship, Pets at Home celebrated their 30th anniversary this year by donating £30,000 to us. Celebrating our relationship with dogs, boutique mother and baby brand, Jojo Maman Bébé, will support us during their autumn/winter range launch.



AFC Fylde Fundraising

Our lovely friends at AFC Fylde offered up their stadium as a vaccination centre recently and generously donated the proceeds – a whopping £19,390 – to us! A real shot in the arm for all at Dogs for Good.

The partnership between our organisations has gone from strength to strength over the last few years and we're so grateful for their continued support. Freya, their most recent sponsored puppy, is pictured here.



Training Update

While the extended lockdowns have presented many challenges for our training team, we're still incredibly proud of the progress our people and dogs have achieved. Since the start of 2020, 32 dogs have been matched with clients and we're delighted to now be working with more people on our waiting list. We also welcomed two new puppy coordinators; Jasmine and Nicola will support volunteers and puppies from our South West region and from our Banbury centre.



Media Success

In the past year, we've had some great success in the media. We've secured over 300 pieces of coverage including print, broadcast and online across national, regional and industry titles and we're currently working on a breakfast TV feature. As ever, our fabulous client stories have proved very successful and in addition, our timely Good Advice tips including how to prevent dog theft and managing separation anxiety in dogs have also been popular.



HIGHLIGHTS

MORE THAN doing more to make a difference



We're delighted to be working with pet insurer, **MORE THAN** as they celebrate their 20th anniversary and as part of their commitment to do more for their customers, colleagues and community.



Throughout 2021, MORE THAN colleagues will be learning all about Dogs for Good and raising awareness of our work, sponsoring puppies and donating to support our work. With so much of our fundraising still impacted by the pandemic, their help is needed more than ever.

MORE THAN are supporting the training and lifetime costs of five fabulous puppies; Delta, Deedee, Damson, Darcy and Ernie who were all named by their own staff. The pups are in the care of our puppy socialisers as they head towards their future as potential life-changing assistance dogs.

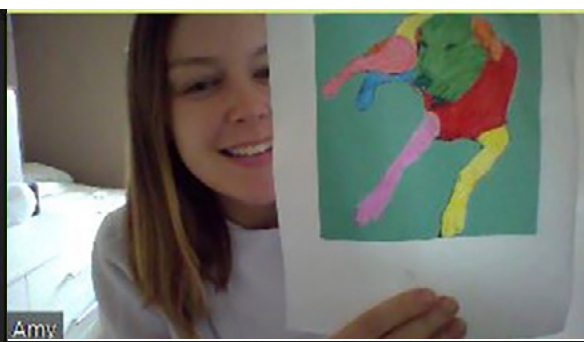
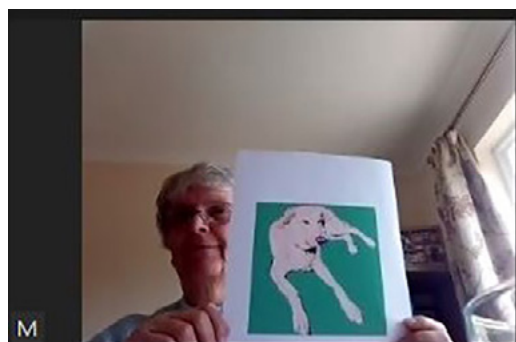
The partnership with MORE THAN was launched in March with a campaign to highlight the impact of the pandemic on learning and reading outcomes of children. A survey of 2,000 parents was carried out, to understand more about children's learning and reading experiences during lockdown. Around half (49%) noticed their children found it harder to focus when reading, while 40% revealed their children had become increasingly stressed or anxious when attempting to read. The numbers were even higher among children with autism; 64% of parents of autistic children had concerns that their child's reading skills didn't improve during lockdown.

Part of the campaign focused on helping families learn about the benefits of reading to dogs and we teamed up Radio DJ and presenter Jo Whiley to get the message across. Jo read "The Story of Doctor Dolittle" accompanied by our lovely Community Dog Fleck, who works alongside a specialist handler to help people develop independence, wellbeing and skills. Jo's video read-along showed viewers that reading to your dog is a great way to encourage reading in children.

Jo said: "It was a real experience reading with Fleck. It's really calming, very soothing and that's why I think it's really important to read with your dog. It actually helps!"

For more info, visit www.dogsforgood.org/reading-with-your-dog

IMPACT



Younger People With Dementia

Dogs for Good's dementia community dog team has recently worked with a charity called Younger People With Dementia Berkshire, running online dog-themed engagement sessions tailored to YPWD's attendees.

These sessions set out to bring joy and entertainment as well as an opportunity for participants to engage online.

Younger People With Dementia (also known as YPWD) was set up in 2012 to assist in filling the gap in provision for those with young onset dementia and their family and carers, providing meaningful respite that works with current provision over the working week.

The team set up five online sessions for participants comprising a range of games and activities led by Community Dog Handler, Amy and Community Dog, Rita. Games included:

Scavenger Hunt – Rita picks plastic eggs out of a basket. Contained within the eggs are pieces of paper describing an item that participants will have at home. Participants go and 'hunt' for the item, bringing it back to camera for a chat about what they have found.

Cats and Dogs - a twist on the traditional Snakes and Ladders game whereby two teams of participants work their way around a 'Cats and Dogs' games board. The amount of moves made is determined by Rita, nose-nudging a giant inflatable dice!

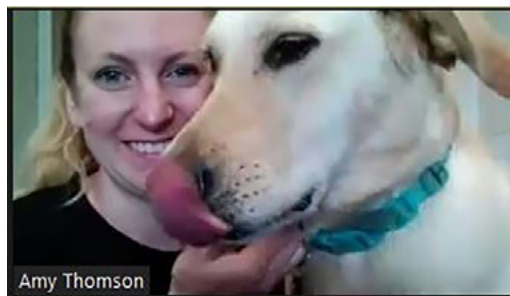
Dog Bingo - participants are sent a bingo card ahead of the session showing photos instead of numbers. Rita 'chooses'

photos which match to the participant's cards and the first one to a full house wins.

Colouring a dog - participants are sent a piece of paper showing the outline of a dog, sectioned up into six different areas. Rita picks a ball (numbered 1-6) out of a basket and participants then colour in the corresponding area on their dog drawing.

Feedback from the staff at YPWD showed that the sessions provided a meaningful activity and were an opportunity for fun and conversation and helped engagement with others. The sessions were so successful that Dogs for Good ran a further session in August.

A spokesperson from YPWD said: "There's nothing quite like the presence of a dog to get people smiling and engaged. The sessions brought real joy and fun to everyone who participated and sparked some lovely conversations about dogs past and present."



Family Dog support goes online

Labrador Willow has become a best friend to Hudson who is autistic, has limited social skills and struggles to make friends.

“Imagine your worst fear being something you’ve got to face every day,” explains Hudson’s mum, Donna. “Hudson’s autism challenges make school a place of fear and he struggles mentally every day to work up the courage to go. Every time there’s a break in the school routine – like the lockdowns – we go back to square one. But I know we’d have a far harder time if we didn’t have Willow.

“When he comes home from school, he goes and talks to Willow. She’s all he wants. She listens to him and slowly, the day melts away and he can breathe.”

Donna was one of our first parents to access our online workshops during lockdown. “I especially loved learning about a dog’s body language as I think this is incredibly important for any family with a vulnerable person and a dog,” says Donna. “You want to know your child is safe but also that your dog is happy, relaxed and not stressed.”



Leave a
legacy of
independence



Over half the work we do is funded by people who leave a gift in their will. Will you join them and become a life-changer for someone with a disability?

Your legacy gift could fund the next generation of life-changers.

Visit our website or call 01295 759838 for information.



UPDATE

SUSAN DAGGETT

You may remember the incredibly moving story of ‘The Amazing Mr Miller’ we shared in the last issue. It was a story of the extraordinary courage and selflessness of one of our clients, Susan, who had to say goodbye to her beloved dog, Miller, just before lockdown.

We’re pleased to let you know that Susan, has now qualified with her successor dog, Hudson.

“The Amazing Mr Miller was so special. He’ll hold a special place in my heart forever and I miss him very much,” says Susan. “‘The Handsome Hudson’ is totally different but no less wonderful. He’s doing a fantastic job caring for me and bringing joy back into my life.

“I can’t thank Dogs for Good enough for the empathy and care that they have shown to me. I sincerely hope I have many more happy years with this wonderful boy who has found my ‘get up and go’ and brought it back to me. I have a reason to get up every day now.”



PUPPY LOVE

Puppy Winter

One of the things our volunteer puppy socialisers frequently hear is ‘I could never do what you do. I’d get too attached and couldn’t let them go!’ So, we thought you might like to hear how they manage it.

“There are always a few tears,” admits Fliss who is currently socialising her second puppy, Louis. “But, we know the puppy we’ve loved and nurtured is going on to be absolutely life-changing to someone who really needs their help. So, while you are obviously sad, the sadness turns into a special kind of pride. Plus, you’re never lonely for long because the next pup comes along and the fun starts all over again!”

Sometimes, our socialisers meet up with the puppy they looked after with the client they were matched with and that, they say, is priceless. Here’s a few words from another of our socialisers, Chris.

“This morning I got to meet up with my first puppy, Kenny, for the first time since he qualified two years ago. Seeing him working and his relationship with his partner reminded me why we do what we do.”

Fully qualified Winter with partner, Alice





Gerry Bernardo – volunteer temporary boarder

Retired engineer, Gerry Bernardo, is one of our many fabulous volunteer temporary boarders. Over the past ten years, he has looked after 50 of our clever dogs!

The role of a temporary boarder involves providing a loving home for our dogs for about four months while they go through their training and learn the skills that they'll need for their future work as life-changing assistance dogs. Our dogs go to their boarders at around 14-20 months of age and currently, Gerry is looking after a very beautiful 20-month-old golden cocker spaniel called Esther.

Gerry says that volunteering for Dogs for Good has helped him to cope with the grief of losing his wife to Alzheimer's Disease nearly two years ago and also, more recently, living alone through the pandemic. "Losing Heather, my wife, was very difficult; she passed four days after our 50th wedding anniversary and three days before her 75th birthday. It was a really bad time for me emotionally. But the dogs don't have any views on things like that. They are always the same, so it is great to have them, and they really help me. I don't think I could cope without a dog," he says.

Gerry has two grown up children and four grandchildren but hasn't been able to see them for the past year, because of Covid restrictions. "Having the dogs has also been particularly good during the Covid lockdowns, when I had little contact with people. Dogs are brilliant companions."

Gerry says: "Esther's a lovely dog and like all the dogs I care for she has a lovely personality. Like many spaniels she is quite interested in the birds and the squirrels that we meet in the park at the moment!"

Gerry says that temporary boarding is a great way to help Dogs for Good and have the pleasure of a dog's companionship without committing to one full-time. "All the people I've known over the years at Dogs for Good have such a lovely way with both the dogs and the volunteers and I really feel part of the bigger Dogs for Good family. They have a brilliant attitude, you never feel forced into anything and that's why I like working with them."

"I feel privileged to be playing a part in helping these dogs go on to transform people's lives."

Good Advice Tips



We all know that dogs are amazing. But building a bond with your dog takes time and effort. Our Operations Manager, Chris Muldoon, shares some tips here.



The human-dog bond doesn't happen by magic. It's a relationship like any other which requires thinking about, shaping, consideration, compromise and above all, respect. Remember, you chose your dog, they didn't choose you!



Find out as much as you can about the breed you're interested in and whether it's right for you and your lifestyle. For example, if you know you'd like a high energy dog, ask yourself if you have time for that every day. If your favourite activity is relaxing on the sofa, a greyhound might be your perfect match because that's exactly what they love doing!



Socialising a puppy is a gradual process and you want to build up your pup's experiences in a really positive way. Don't rush things, watch your pup's body language and always have plenty of treats or a favourite toy to hand. If your pup shows signs of stress, stop what you're doing and go back a stage. You can always try again another day.

For more information on all things dog, visit www.dogsforgood.org/good-advice

We hope you enjoy supporting Dogs for Good and reading here about how we're navigating these challenging times. Do you know someone who might also like to support us? If so, please pass on this copy of Changing Times and let them read about the life-changing work we do.

Thank you!

If you'd like find out about other ways you can get involved with our work, we would love to hear from you.

Get in touch

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