

GETTING BACK ON HER FEET

DEBRA HEALY AND MOBILITY ASSIST DOG HOOVER

BY: BILL JOHNSON

When Debra Healy walks, she's very susceptible to falling, and getting up is no small task. Diagnosed with cerebral palsy from birth, she has fallen countless times due to her irregular gait. Some of the falls have resulted in significant injury.

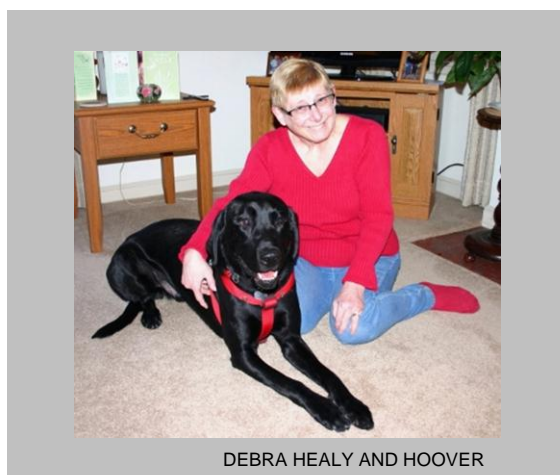
Today, the Bloomington, Minn. resident has Mobility Assist Dog Hoover to help her stay on her feet. The two-and-a-half-year-old black Labrador Retriever, and Can Do Canines graduate, serves as a counter-balance for Debra as she walks and, in case of a fall, helps her get upright.

"If I fall, he comes over to provide a brace. That's the most important thing he does for me," she states emphatically.

Debra credits her sister, Gretchen, for taking the first step toward an assistance dog. Gretchen saw an ad for Can Do Canines on a Twin Cities dog park map and suggested that Debra apply for a Mobility Assist Dog. The idea made sense to Debra, who had pet dogs during her childhood. In addition, she and her husband, Stephen, frequently dog-sat for family and friends so they were aware of the love and care a dog could add to a home.

Once approved for a Mobility Assist Dog, Debra and Hoover underwent the required training at Can Do Canines. "The training seemed to go on forever," she admits — but in the end was well worth the investment of her time.

Hoover's assistance means Debra enjoys greater confidence and peace of mind throughout all of her daily activities. Hoover accompanies Debra to her job at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), where she has worked for 36 years. "My coworkers are like my



DEBRA HEALY AND HOOVER

second family," she says. However, there's just one small issue, she adds with a laugh: "Hoover gets more attention than I do!"

Hoover is also a big hit on Metro Transit buses, which Debra rides to and from work. "He likes to take the bus and has made many friends." Hoover helps Debra up and down the steps on the bus.

Besides helping Debra maintain her mobility, Hoover performs other tasks, such as picking up items she has dropped.

Like other Can Do Canines dogs, Hoover brings significant intangibles to the relationship. "Aside from everything he does for me, there is this unconditional love we have for one another."

Debra's family also benefits from Hoover's assistance. "Our family was so concerned for Debra's safety and welfare," explains sister Gretchen. "Her falls had become so frequent that it was rare to see her without skinned knees and elbows. We were worried that she would have a serious fall and not be able to get medical help if injured." Now with Hoover at her side, they have more peace of mind.

In a short span, Hoover has made Debra and her loved ones big believers in Can Do Canines. Debra also offers this advice to anyone who's considering a financial contribution to Can Do Canines: "Come to Graduation Day at Can Do Canines and see what these dogs can do. It surprises me every day!"



CALEB JACOBS AND COOPER

A FAMILY AFFAIR

CALEB JACOBS AND AUTISM ASSIST DOG COOPER

BY: NATALIE BOIKE

After waiting nearly four years to receive an Autism Assist Dog, Amee Jacobs can't speak more highly of their new assistance dog, Cooper, a two-year-old chocolate Labrador Retriever. While Cooper's primary role is to assist her nine-year-old son, Caleb, she says the placement has impacted the entire family. "I don't think you can understand the difference this makes in our lives," she says. "It doesn't just change [the life of] the one the dog serves. It's the whole family."

Caleb, described as a sweet boy with a happy disposition, can become stressed and impulsive in public places and frequently bolts away from his caretakers—unaware of the danger that poses. Amee says she would get tense just thinking about taking him to the grocery store in the past. "Caleb thought tomatoes were balls to be thrown and wanted to see watermelons split open," she recalls. Now, Caleb and Cooper are attached via a belt and tethering system, so the two are always together when out in public, with Mom holding Cooper's leash. Caleb can stay focused by holding onto the handle on Coopers' vest, which helps him stay by his mother's side. "Now it's easy," Amee says. "He understands Cooper is his responsibility and he needs to walk next to him, and so he does."

Caleb's behavioral therapist says she's definitely noticed an improvement as she works with the family up to four times each week. She says Caleb is more attentive to instructions when Cooper is around and is learning self-control. "I feel like his Mom and I are more in control of what's happening," she reports.

Caleb's siblings are excited to have Cooper in their Woodbury, Minn. home. Twin sister, Ally, who coincidentally wants to be a veterinarian, loves to groom Cooper. Older brother Joshua enjoys playing with Cooper when he's "off duty." And the entire family now enjoys going to the dog park.

Amee advises any family considering a Can Do Canines placement to apply immediately. "It changes your life for the better. ... Cooper is perfect for Caleb. He motivates Caleb to do things that are hard for him. Cooper's been a great addition to our family."

To help more kids like Caleb receive special dogs like Cooper, visit our website at www.can-do-canines.org



CALEB AND COOPER AT GRADUATION

**A GUARDIAN ANGEL
BETH KANTOR AND MOBILITY ASSIST DOG
DAZZLE
BY: LINDSEY TRADER AND ASHLEY
WANCOWICZ**

Beth Kantor discovered Can Do Canines when she was driving down highway 169 and saw the big sign outside the training facility. She first looked into getting an assistance dog after being diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis in 2008. Two years later, she attended a “Tails to Tell” facility tour and decided it was time to apply.

Beth and her husband, Brad, live in Plymouth, Minn. with their four children, Hanna, Lily, Alex, and Logan. Beth was a nurse at the University of Minnesota until her MS made it too hard to keep working. Fatigue doesn’t even begin to describe how bad it gets some days. That’s all changing now, thanks to Dazzle.

The two-year-old Smooth Coat Collie was raised by staff member and fellow graduate, Shelly Hiemer and her husband, Al. She also spent time training at the Minnesota Correctional Facility at Faribault where they nicknamed her “Razzle Dazzle.” “She was a joy to train, a fast learner and easy to work with,” said one of the inmate trainers.

Dazzle helps Beth battle the fatigue and constraints of MS. There were days when Beth didn’t have the energy to get up to get water from the nightstand. Now, Dazzle brings the water right to her. “If I drop something, and I bend over to pick it up, I fall down,” says Beth. Now, Dazzle picks those dropped items up, preventing Beth from dangerous falls.



BETH KANTOR AND DAZZLE

Beth has a scooter that helps her get around, but it’s Dazzle who makes it possible for Beth to take her five-year-old son to the park. They go everyday. “Life is changing for me, more like I’m getting a life,” says Beth. “There’s hope, and I didn’t have that before. Who knew that my guardian angel had fur?” she says.

Beth is so thankful for Dazzle and Can Do Canines that she is giving back. “They have me as a volunteer for life,” Beth says.

www.website.com

She has a special message for other volunteers, the donors and the puppy raisers, especially the people who helped raise Dazzle. “There are no words to say thank you and there is no better cause in this world than to give someone this kind of freedom,” Beth says. “Thank you, beyond thank you.”

To make more dogs like Dazzle available for people on our waiting list, please visit www.can-do-canines.org. Thank you!



BETH KANTOR AND DAZZLE AT GRADUATION

**THE BEST PART
SHARON LEVITSKY AND DIABETES
ASSIST DOG MURRAY
BY: BRENT HOLLERUD**

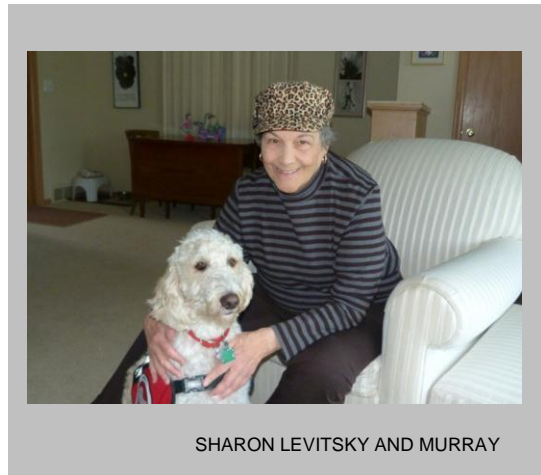
For the last 38 years of her life, Sharon Levitsky has lived in uncertainty. This uncertainty stems from her diabetes, which requires her to try and monitor her blood glucose levels at all times.

Sharon, who lives in St. Louis Park, Minn., was fortunate enough to have nearby family, including her daughter Amy, to serve as a support system in case Sharon is unable to properly watch her glucose level. Even with these precautions, Sharon has had several close calls with her diabetes, with her suffering severe lows and becoming unconscious before family or paramedics could help her.

These instances when Sharon has been in great danger because of her disease even with her family's surveillance incited Amy to suggest applying to Can Do Canines for a Diabetes Assistance Dog. Sharon realized that having a furry companion could go a long way toward helping her monitor her diabetes and could ease the minds of her friends and family.

After completing her application, Sharon was paired with Murray, a two-year-old Australian Labradoodle. Murray was a recent graduate of the Anything's Pawsible Puppy Program at the Minnesota Correctional Facility at Faribault. His inmate trainers initially were preparing him to become a Mobility Assist Dog. However, along the way it became evident that Murray had the "nose" for an entirely different line of work: "Diabetic work is his true calling," wrote his trainer.

Even though Sharon initially doubted her ability to work with an assistance dog, Murray quickly became comfortable with his job in Sharon's home. Along with instruction and guidance from Can Do Canines Client Services Coordinator Dora Schroeder, "Training became second nature to me," Sharon says. "The best part is that I am able to love Murray as a pet, and respect his work as an assistance dog."



SHARON LEVITSKY AND MURRAY

Now Murray and Sharon are inseparable, with Murray constantly keeping watch for any signs of a drop in his partner's blood glucose. Sharon brings Murray shopping, to plays, concerts at Orchestra Hall, and out with friends. "I love being able to talk about Murray and Can Do Canines when people ask." It is Sharon's way of saying thank you to the donors, volunteers and staff at Can Do Canines.

Murray even accompanies Sharon to the YMCA for her exercise classes! "He just sits on his mat and watches me the entire time," Sharon explains. One time during class Murray sat up on his mat, even though he knows he is to stay laying down. Sharon told him to lay down again but he remained sitting, staring intently at her. That was enough warning for Sharon. She checked her blood sugar and found she was indeed low. She was able to get the juice box in Murrays back pack and after a brief rest, was able to go back to class.

Although Murray gets to join Sharon in her daily activities and fun, he doesn't lose sight of his job. Murray has the uncanny ability of noticing, by scent, when Sharon's blood sugar drops to a dangerous level, and touches her with his paw to let her know she needs to check her blood sugar. He will also retrieve an emergency phone so she can call someone for help. Murray will even bring a juice bottle for her, allowing Sharon to return to a normal sugar level.

Besides her juice, another thing Murray has been able to give Sharon and her family and friends is confidence and greater peace of mind when it comes to Sharon's diabetes. "I've felt a lot safer since Murray came," Sharon says. She knows that even if she forgets to check her glucose level herself, Murray will notice a problem before it becomes a potentially dangerous one. It's incredible how much security one dog can provide.

Murray and assistance dogs like him are made possible by the generous donations of dog breeders, name a puppy participants, and donors just like you. Would you like to help create the next team?

Go to <http://can-do-canines.org/how-you-help/> to find out how!

THE MISSING PIECE PAUL LAUBE AND AUTISM ASSIST DOG DAWSON BY: BRENT HOLLERUD

In many ways Paul Laube and his family have what many people would call a typical Minnesota life. The Chaska natives enjoy taking yearly vacations, and going on walks and taking bike rides together. Paul, like many other kids loves to play baseball in the summer and attends karate class. The Laubes perfectly fit the mold for a suburban family; with dad, Jordan, mom, Cecilia, raising their two children: seven-year-old Paul and eight-year-old Taylor. However, this is challenged every day by Paul's autism spectrum disorder.

The complications of Paul's autism included his tendency to run off, restlessness, stressing in social settings and the need for constant repetitive motions and noises. These behaviors can transform situations that most families might not give a second thought to into challenging, even potentially dangerous, ones for the Laubes.

Finding what worked for Paul was a little like putting together a puzzle with some of the pieces missing. You might put one piece into place only to find there is still a hole in the picture – something that keeps the picture from being complete. As it turns out, the missing piece of the puzzle was a specially trained four-legged companion for Paul.

Enter Autism Assist Dog Dawson. Dawson and Paul were brought together after Jordan and Cecilia heard about Can Do Canines from a neighbor, and realized an assistance dog would be able to go a long way in improving Paul's quality of life. "We couldn't have done anything better than getting Dawson," Cecilia gleams.

Now Dawson's big frame is able to keep Paul anchored in place and out of danger, because when out in public, the two are always connected via a belt around his waist that is attached to Dawson's vest.



Dawson is a constant diversion for Paul's attention and energy, which used to be directed into repetitive noises that often made life difficult in public places. Instead, he can stroke Dawson's fur or rest quietly beside him when Paul feels overwhelmed. More importantly, it entices Paul, who suffers from delayed social and learning skills, to initiate contact with people more often than he did before. Additionally, Paul is beginning to feel a sense of responsibility from taking care of his friend. Paul now takes pride in his new-found duties of feeding and letting Dawson out of his crate when he gets home, which is a proud moment for his parents.

However, the greatest benefit of life with Dawson is Paul's sheer joy of having a new best friend. The pair have become inseparable. Cecilia says that it is not uncommon to walk into a room and find Dawson and Paul cuddling with each other, regardless of whose bed it is on. Paul's doctors, therapists, and teachers have noted that he simply seems happier since Dawson came into the picture.

"There is a smile on his face every time he comes home because the first thing he is going to do is find Dawson," Cecilia says, "Paul has never been happier than right now."

Dawson's presence in the Laube household not only represents a new friend for Paul, but the ability to go through everyday life with more peace of mind. All thanks to one goofy dog.

To make more dogs like Dawson available for people on our waiting list, please visit www.can-do-canines.org. Thank you!