



# Tails for You

a publication of Can Do Canines®

Celebrating 30 Years  
1989-2019

Thanks to you, Ridge  
doesn't feel isolated in  
his apartment anymore.

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straight. She's trained to stop and wait at curbs, signaling to Ridge that there's a step up or a step down.

And to help with his hearing loss, she alerts Ridge to sounds and shows him where they're coming from.

Bending over puts Ridge at risk of falling. Peggy is trained to pick up things he drops so he doesn't need to bend over to reach them. If he does fall, she retrieves his cane and acts as a brace so he can stand back up.

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**"I'm not isolated in my apartment."**

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"I'm not isolated in my apartment," Ridge explains of his life now with Peggy. "I was really, really depressed without a dog. And she just brings joy back into my life."

Peggy is a genuinely happy dog, with little quirks and a lot of personality. "When we come in from our walk, her tail doesn't just wag. It swings back and forth, like, 'Yes! We're home!'" Ridge grins as he imitates Peggy.

Because Can Do Canines places dogs at no cost, this life-changing gift is a possibility for more people. "I can't think of a better organization to give to," Ridge assures.

"Thank you," he says with a huge smile as he looks down at Peggy. "I really appreciate it. I really do. I really appreciate it."

## A LOT OF PERSONALITY

*When Ridge couldn't train his own assistance dog, you helped Can Do Canines train one for him.*

Ridge has trained four of his own assistance dogs since 1998. But when his disabilities progressed and it became too difficult for him to train his own dog, he came to Can Do Canines for help. Because of your efforts, Ridge was matched with Peggy, a Mobility and Hearing Assist Dog who also performs tasks to help Ridge with his vision loss.

In his early 20s, Ridge was hospitalized after contracting meningitis and encephalitis. This caused him to start losing his hearing and vision. He was also diagnosed

with multiple sclerosis and had trouble walking and random fatigue.

After the hospitalization, Ridge trained his first assistance dog, Logan, and then three more over the years.

In 2018, his vision had worsened, making it too difficult to train his next dog. So Ridge decided that a pre-trained dog from Can Do Canines was the right choice.

Now Ridge relies on Peggy instead of a guide cane. She alerts Ridge to changes in elevation, allowing him to feel more confident and stand up

**You can help train a dog like Peggy.**

You can give a dog like Peggy a great start on her journey to help someone with a disability. Visit [can-do-canines.org/volunteer](https://can-do-canines.org/volunteer) to learn more.



## LOVE IS IN THE AIR

After an injury, Michael developed severe back pain and neuropathy, putting him at risk of falling. He was matched with Mobility Assist Dog Zelda in 2017. At the time, Michael was dating Doreen.

A year-and-a-half later, the two tied the knot. Zelda played the vital role of ring bearer at their ceremony. “It was important for us to include Zelda in our marriage as we were making a commitment to her as well as each other,” explains Michael. “You might just say that we all got married,” he laughs.

Zelda has been a positive influence on both Michael and Doreen. “My relationship with Doreen was only made more positive by having Zelda in our lives. We both cherish our time with Zelda and the joy she brings to our life everyday.”

Join us in congratulating Michael, Doreen, and Zelda on their marriage!



## TRULY AMAZING

In 2016 when he was 10 years old, Nicholas was matched with Autism Assist Dog Truly. His family wanted a dog that would keep Nicholas from wandering, ease his anxiety, and comfort him at night.

Truly has been ... truly amazing. Recently, Nicholas asked his mom, Paula, “When can I go to Can Do Canines and tell them how much I love Truly and how much she helps me?”

“Being a mom of a child with autism and a pediatrician, this is huge,” explains Paula. “People with autism have a hard time expressing feelings, verbalizing feelings, and a tremendously hard time talking in front of people.” Truly has not only allowed Nicholas to do all of these things, but *want* to do them.

“As a mom, I cannot imagine my life or my son’s life without Truly,” Paula shares. “We love Truly and we love that she has helped our son so much and in so many different ways.”



## A DIFFERENT WORLD

*You helped Kyle gain independence after he was paralyzed in an accident.*

The summer before his senior year of high school, Kyle became paralyzed from the chest down after an ATV accident. He suddenly needed to rely on his family every day. Because of your support, Kyle was matched with Mobility Assist Dog Igor who has given Kyle back his independence.

“That flipped my world upside down,” Kyle says of the ATV accident. He was supposed to spend his senior year as the captain of his football team, preparing for life after high school. Instead, he finished school at home, going to and from rehabilitation, and had numerous surgeries. “That was pretty tough,” he says.

Life was suddenly very different for Kyle. He relied on his family for help every day. Seemingly simple tasks like

picking up his phone after dropping it or opening his dresser drawer weren’t simple anymore. “It’s definitely a different world,” he explains.

Originally, Kyle, a Duluth native, was going to apply to an organization in Ohio, but the long trip and group training would have been difficult for him. When his family learned about Can Do Canines, they hit the trifecta. They were much closer to the facility, Kyle could do one-on-one training, and he could continue training at home with a local trainer. The decision to apply was an easy one.

It is only because of your donations that Can Do Canines is able to provide this type of training process for clients.

Now in his second year of college, Kyle has Mobility Assist Dog Igor by his side. Kyle’s limited arm movement and finger dexterity cause him to drop things. He used to have to go find his grabber or call for someone in the house to help him. But now he just asks his four-legged friend to “get it” and they’re on to the next thing.

“The big trouble is when I run over blankets,” says Kyle. “They just get wound up in the wheels.” Although Igor can’t untangle blankets or other things from Kyle’s wheelchair, he

knows how to find someone who can and bring them back to Kyle.

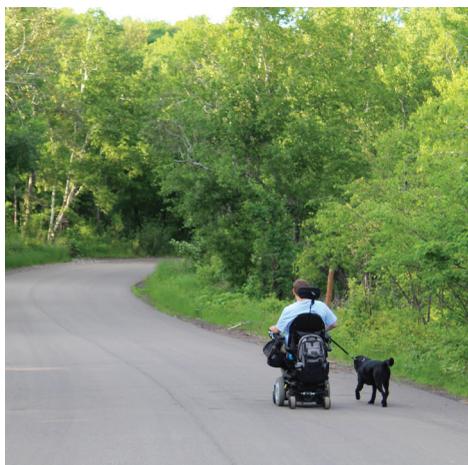
Igor knows that Kyle is his partner. “He rarely will be out of the room that I’m in. He’ll follow me everywhere I go,” Kyle smiles. “He’s definitely always got his eye on me.”

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**“He’ll follow me everywhere I go.”**

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Kyle is grateful to those who helped raise Igor. “I don’t know exactly what you did, but he’s greater than I could have ever imagined. Thank you to anyone who helped in the process of making him who he is—because he’s pretty great.”



**You can help more people like Kyle.**

Your donations make it possible for Can Do Canines to provide one-on-one training with clients. Visit [can-do-canines.org/donate](https://can-do-canines.org/donate) to help us continue this training.



## A CUSTOM APPROACH *How Can Do Canines makes their assistance dogs more accessible.*

Can Do Canines knows that each person with a disability has unique needs. Our philosophy is that their assistance dogs should be trained to meet their needs, and the client's training process should be tailored to their abilities. This is why Can Do Canines custom trains each dog for a particular client and offers individual training for every team.

### **Custom Training**

Many organizations train each dog the same way. For example, a future Mobility Assist Dog will learn countless tasks, but he will not end up needing all those tasks for his partner. This method is inefficient, as it trains unnecessary skills without personalizing the training for a specific client's needs.

Can Do Canines teaches dogs specific skills that will help their future partner. Clients have unique needs, whether that be a dog who only walks on their left side, a dog who can adjust the foot plates on their wheelchair, or a dog who responds to sign language. Can Do Canines trains dogs to fill those individual needs for clients.

*Bella uses a power wheelchair that she moves with a joystick. Sometimes her arm will get stuck, and because she has limited use of her shoulder,*

*she is unable to move it back into place. Mobility Assist Dog Blaine was trained to help with this particular need. Blaine nudges the back of Bella's arm to move it into place so Bella can reach her joystick.*

### **Individual Team Training**

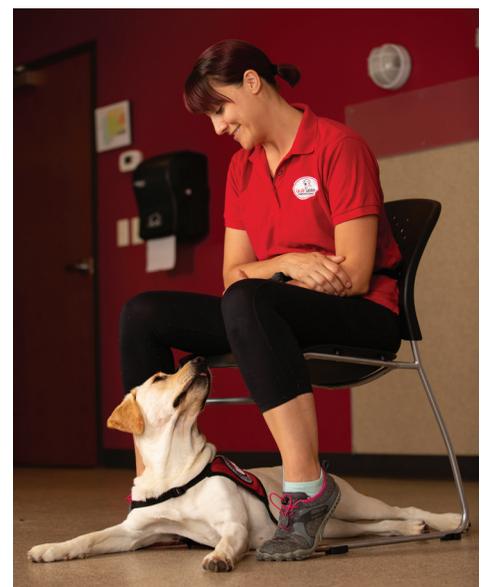
Other organizations conduct their team training as a group, meaning a number of newly-matched teams learn to work with their partner at the same time. This is typically two weeks of 8-hour days. For many people with disabilities, this isn't feasible. Some clients don't have the stamina to train all day and become fatigued more easily than others. Some clients aren't able to get up and begin training until they've gone through their morning therapies. A strict timeline is one more obstacle to getting an assistance dog.

Can Do Canines takes an individual team training approach. Clients work on an individual basis with a staff trainer at our facility on a schedule that works for them. After a few days, they go back to the comfort of their home and continue training for another eight weeks with regular check-ins from their trainer.

*The story on the previous page titled, A Different World, talks about how Kyle originally applied to another*

*organization that conducted group team training. This was an obstacle for Kyle. The travel and long days would have been too tiring for him, and he wouldn't have been able to get an assistance dog from that organization.*

People with disabilities experience barriers in their lives. We don't believe in adding more of them through cookie-cutter training methods and group team training. Because of your support, we're able to gear our training towards the needs of our clients, making our dogs more accessible to people with disabilities.



Photos by Dyan R. Larson Photography

# YOU HELPED

make the following possible in the summer of 2019.

New teams that have started working together in 2019



33

Dogs that are in for final training at the Can Do Canines facility



27

Dogs in for final training went on

2,130

walks with 38 volunteers



124

individuals donate monthly to support our programs



New households joined the Puppy Program



32

Active working teams who receive continuous follow-up and support from Can Do Canines

327



## Can Do Woofaroo

Thank you to the more than 500 donors who helped us raise more than \$85,000 at this year's Can Do Woofaroo! The day was a great celebration of Can Do Canines and all our supporters.

## Upcoming Events

**Fall Graduation Ceremony | October 26 at 1 p.m.**  
Where: 9440 Science Center Dr., New Hope, MN 55428

**The Fetching Ball Gala | February 8 at 6 p.m.**  
Where: DoubleTree Bloomington Hotel

Read full-length versions of these stories and more at [can-do-canines.org/blog](http://can-do-canines.org/blog)



### Our Mission

Can Do Canines is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for people with disabilities by creating mutually beneficial partnerships with specially trained dogs.

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