



# Tails for You

a publication of Can Do Canines®

**Our 700th Team!  
See how Abbot brings  
perfect balance to  
Aidan.**

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## A PERFECT BALANCE

*When Aidan's frequent falls started to become a problem a call to Can Do Canines led him to Abbot; and to becoming our 700th Certified Team.*

Hearing 12-year-old Aidan speak, you'd never guess he is only in the sixth grade. He is thoughtful, articulate and unusually self-possessed for a middle schooler. Yet these aren't the only qualities that make this North Branch, Minnesota kid unique. He also happens to suffer from a rare form of muscular dystrophy called Charcot-Marie-Tooth (CMT), and the even rarer subset of the disorder, Type 4-C.

CMT4 is a neurological disorder that causes damage to the peripheral nerves—tracts of nerve cells that connect the brain and spinal cord to muscles and sensory organs. It causes muscle weakness, mainly in Aidan's hands and lower extremities.

That means doing simple things that most people take for granted—like walking down a flight of stairs or navigating a crowded school hallway—are extremely difficult and potentially dangerous for Aidan.

"He just doesn't have the same muscle strength as the rest of us to be

able to walk, open doors, you know, open a bottle of water," explains Aidan's mother, Adrienne. "Things like that."

That's where Mobility Assist Dog, Abbot comes in.

Living with Abbot, Adrienne said, has helped Aidan tremendously—especially when it comes to his balance.

"Abbot is able to steady him when he walks, and he helps him open doors and drawers," she says. "It really helps us out when we're getting him ready in the morning, Abbot can help him get his shoes."

I knew a dog would be able to help Aidan," she says. "I wasn't sure everything they would be able to do, though. The depth and breadth of Abbot's skills are amazing and far surpassed my expectations. He is so smart."

And what does Aidan think of Abbot? "My first thought was that he was adorable," he admits.

"But I was pretty nervous when I started training because I thought I was going to fall a lot. I thought he would be like my other dog, Remy, that he would jump on me or trip me when we're walking."

Of course, Abbot does neither of those things. He does, however, like to play with his new buddy, Remy, when he's not assisting. Like all Can Do Canine dogs, he gets along well with his peers.

Aidan and Abbot have only been living together for a few months, but they're already best friends. And now that the pair have bonded, Aidan is excited to have Abbot join him at school.

"Kids can be wild," Aidan says. "The best part of having Abbot at school is that he's going to keep me from getting knocked over! It's been good having him in my life. I love him. He fits in with the family."

**"The depth and breadth of Abbot's skills are amazing"**

Aidan and his Mobility Assist Dog, Abbot, are the 700th team brought together through Can Do Canines—a huge milestone, not only for Aidan and Abbot, but for our 30-year-old organization.

With your help, we can reach even more clients and even greater milestones. Your donations make it possible for Can Do Canines to provide one-on-one training with clients like Aidan, free of charge.

**You can help train a dog like Abbot**

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



## A CAREER CHANGE TO HEROINE

*How you helped Annika live an active college life.*

Stunning yellow Labrador Retriever, Tory, joined Can Do Canines as a breeding female. Her wonderful temperament and remarkable good health were excellent traits to pass along to future service dogs. It was her incredible work ethic that led staff members to continue her training as a service dog candidate. Through her training, Tory showed true talent as a Diabetes Assist Dog; all she needed was the perfect person who needed her just as much.

Annika is a full-time student at St. Olaf College, an artist, and is living without a pancreas as an insulin-dependent diabetic. In 2016, she had her pancreas removed, leading to a diagnosis of Type 3 C diabetes. Type 3 C diabetes is nearly identical to Type 1 except with more severe medical effects. Because of this, Annika doesn't feel her blood sugar lows until her glucose level is life-threatening.

As Annika remembers what led her to contact Can Do Canines, "I would get into the 30s or low 40s and start shaking and I would need assistance in fixing it; my mom would have to get the juice and help me drink it. I've been hospitalized only once, thankfully, because of a hypoglycemic incident. They're scary."

When a friend's diabetic alert dog picked up and responded to Annika's low blood sugar, it inspired her to research how she could have a dog of her own.

The Fetching Ball

*Celebrating Can Do Canines*

February 8, 2020  
Begins at 6 p.m.

DoubleTree Bloomington  
7800 Normandale Blvd, Minneapolis, MN

Get your tickets at [Fetchingball.com](http://Fetchingball.com)

She applied to Can Do Canines and was matched with Tory. Tory is loving the college life with younger classmates; she's thrilled for the chance to continue learning.

Despite Annika monitoring her glucose levels with blood glucose meters and a continuous glucose monitor, Tory beats all the equipment when it comes to letting her know about an oncoming hypoglycemic episode. "In my experience, Tory's actually a lot faster and a lot more accurate than my Dexcom (CGM)... Tory can tell if my blood glucose is rising or falling faster," Annika says. Tory has been reliably and preemptively alerting which means Annika can correct or even prevent hypoglycemia. "I trust her judgment a lot more than I trust the technology sometimes," she laughed.

Tory has taken on the responsibility of watching Annika intently as she consumes fruit or sugar to correct a low, only relaxing when she is done and the sugar is working. If Annika isn't able to safely get food or juice for herself, Tory has been trained to retrieve them for Annika.

**"I trust her judgment a lot more than I trust the technology."**

Annika still has to watch her energy levels as any form of exercise drops her glucose levels dramatically. However, she feels more confident being active on campus because she knows Tory will alert her to an issue before it becomes a serious problem.

While she's keeping a nose on her partner, Tory is also able to provide some light pressure therapy. When Annika is feeling anxious she will tap her foot, which Tory has learned as a cue to perform a firm headrest on her knee. Since stress can affect blood glucose levels, this behavior not only alleviates anxiety but also aids in stabilizing blood sugar.



Having Tory with Annika has relieved a lot of concern among her family and friends, too. Her mother absolutely loves Tory; she thanks her for taking care of Annika. It has been a tremendous difference for her to not be alone and for Tory to bring her the life-saving sugar.

**Worth the wait.**

Diabetes Assist Dogs require very specific innate traits and an intense amount of training. Not many service dogs follow that career path. If you're considering applying for an assistance dog, but worried the wait will be too long, Annika would like you to know, "Any wait is worth it. She's an incredible asset. She's amazing to have... she makes every day better."

**Thank You**

Annika wants everyone who made Tory possible to know, "Their gifts, their generosity and ability to foster her and give her so much

love has been incredible. They've helped make a very wonderful and amazing dog... What they were able to share helped make her who she is and I'm very grateful for that. Thank you."

**In Memory.**

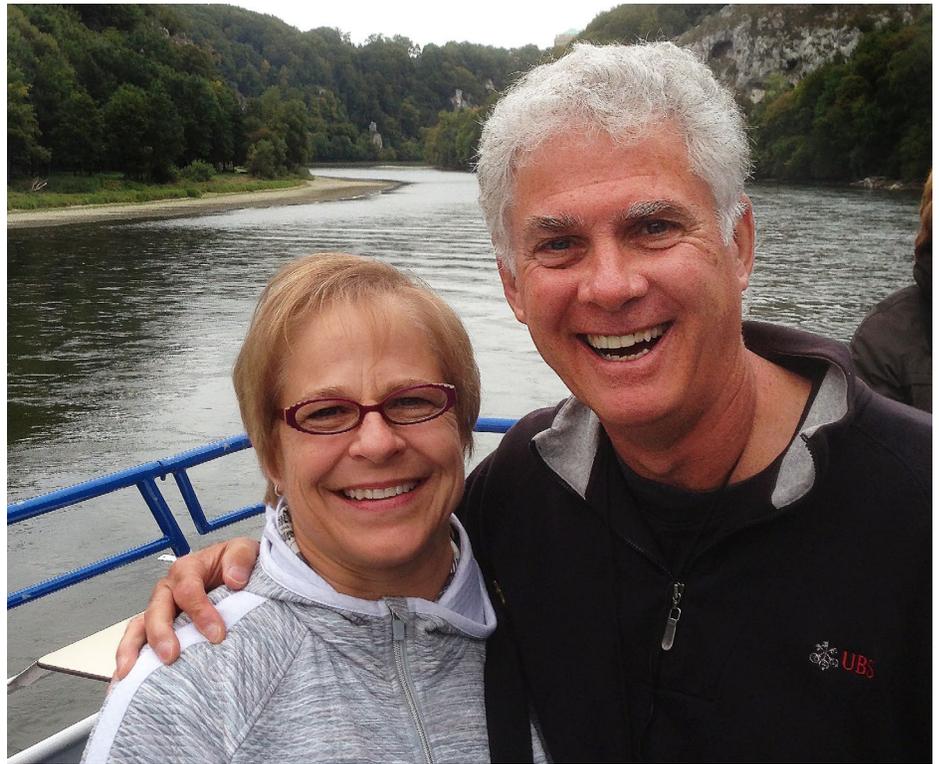
Sadly, after this article was written, Tory was diagnosed with an advanced and aggressive cancer. She was given the best possible care and passed away shortly after. Tory was loved beyond words every moment she was here. She knew an amazing life and saved Annika on multiple occasions. When the diagnosis came, Can Do Canines staff were there to help Annika through this sad time. At her request, Annika will be placed at the top of the waiting list for a successor Diabetes Assist Dog.

# A LASTING LEGACY

*Leaving a legacy that changes lives for generations to come.*

Greg and Cat Stevens have a long history with Can Do Canines. Greg and Cat both attended St. Mary's University with founder Alan Peters. They started work with Can Do Canines as Puppy Raisers over 10 years ago, intending to raise and train a puppy who would grow to be a hero to someone living with disabilities. As it turned out, that dog was better suited to life as a pet and was career changed into home life with Greg and Cat permanently. "It was a great experience, every step of the way."

Since then, they've continued to be involved with Can Do Canines as Puppy Program volunteers, board members, event attendees, and as generous donors, naming three puppies with the Name-a-Puppy program.



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*"There's no doubt about it that Can Do Canines can change the life of the person who gets the dog and all the people around them."*

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Because of their involvement with Can Do Canines, they've seen firsthand the impact their commitment has. Through a winning auction bid at one of the Fetching Ball Galas, they were able to visit one of the prisons. "We met with inmates, had lunch with them and saw how emotionally involved they are in this project and in their responsibility to train that dog and then give it to someone that they don't know. It has a huge impact on their lives." Greg recalls from their visit.

If you ask why they are so committed to Can Do Canines, Greg says, "What we appreciate is that it's a well-run organization. The people who work there really care about the mission and what they do and it shows." He continues that "You can see the direct impact of your work. There's no doubt about it that Can Do Canines

can change the life of the person who gets the dog and all the people around them."

Their commitment doesn't end at volunteering. "We believe that, from those people that have received much, much is expected. We've been blessed and we want to ensure that Can Do Canines continues for generations to come."

Greg and Cat have made it part of their life story to give generously and support our mission to enhance the quality of life for people living with disabilities by creating mutually beneficial partnerships with specially trained dogs. They've taken the extra step to ensure that their legacy, their commitment to Can Do Canines, lives on for generations by choosing to join our Legacy Club and by making a bequest through their will.

Can Do Canines is very thankful for all the support people like Greg and Cat Stevens have offered over the years! There are many ways individuals can express their wishes and plan their estates to continue to make an incredible impact on the organizations that have touched their lives. Dedicating a bequest in your will is just one of the many ways to leave a lasting legacy.

Can Do Canines has partnered with Free Will to provide a free, tool that can make planning your estate easy.

Learn more at

[Can-Do-Canines.org](http://Can-Do-Canines.org)  
or start writing your will today at  
[freewill.com/candocanines](http://freewill.com/candocanines)

# YOU HELPED

make the following possible in 2019.

New teams that have started working together in 2019

51



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

22



54 volunteers took

6,585

walks with future service dogs.



3,794

individuals donated to support our programs



New Puppy Program Volunteers

134



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

333



## Upcoming Events

**The Fetching Ball Gala | February 8 at 6 p.m.**

Where: DoubleTree Bloomington Hotel  
Get your tickets at [fetchingball.com](http://fetchingball.com)

**Winter Graduation Ceremony | February 29 at 1 p.m.**

Where: 9440 Science Center Dr., New Hope, MN 55428

### Tails to Tell Presentation

Where: 9440 Science Center Dr., New Hope, MN 55428

**February 22 at 11 a.m.**

**March 19 at 7 p.m.**

Please reserve your spot at one of our upcoming Tails to Tell presentations at [tailstotell.can-do-canines.org](http://tailstotell.can-do-canines.org)

**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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