

Can Do Canines

30 Years of Service



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.

Vision

We envision a future in which every person who needs and wants an assistance dog can have one.

Values

- Client Commitment
- Teamwork
- Integrity
- Respect for People
- Respect for Animals

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Can Do Canines

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*Freedom,
Independence,
and Peace of Mind*



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The Beginning

“Concerning all things of initiative and creation there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.”

—Goethe

When founder Al Peters first conceived of Can Do Canines, the concept wasn't what you see today.

With the hope that he could create a business that benefitted people and dogs, he founded The Companion Dog Connection, Inc.

In the spare bedroom of his home, ideas sprouted and flourished. With, as Al puts it, an “unacceptably low” number of dog parks in Minneapolis at the time,

would this company create dog parks across the city?

Or perhaps they would train therapy dogs to visit patients in hospitals and nursing homes.

In 1986, Al's wife, Penny, an audiologist, attended a conference in San Francisco. She saw a presentation on hearing dogs, a newer concept in the assisted hearing device industry. She went home and told Al, and the vision for the first



In 1988, before we ever trained a Hearing Assist Dog, we adopted Lucky from Minneapolis Animal Control. She was scheduled to be euthanized that day.

Lucky became the first in a long line of dogs that Can Do Canines adopted from shelters and humane societies. She served as our demonstration dog for 11 years and became symbolic of our commitment to saving homeless dogs while fulfilling our mission to serve people with disabilities.

Today, the above watercolor painting of Lucky hangs opposite the front door at Can Do Canines. It serves as a reminder of our humble beginnings and reminds us of our important mission.

project of The Companion Dog Connection was born: The Hearing Dog Program of Minnesota.

As Al learned about these types of service dogs, he learned more about the people they would serve. He discovered that most clients would not be able to pay for a fully trained dog.

His solution was to adapt his vision. He originally envisioned a for-profit business, but he decided to make The Hearing Dog

Program of Minnesota a nonprofit organization instead. Al decided that in order to make the dogs accessible to those who needed them, the organization wouldn't require clients to pay—the dogs would be placed free of charge. The question became, how could he make this work?

In 1988, Al and a small board of directors were struggling to get up and running. No one took a salary. The grants they'd applied

for had been denied. Their primary source of income was selling t-shirts and candy bars. Al was wondering if the idea wouldn't work and if he should go back to selling insurance.

But in the nick of time, a \$5,000 grant came in, and everything changed. The grant paid for work and meeting space for volunteers. Al got the press to cover their first open house, the community embraced the idea of assistance dogs, and momentum started to build.

Since our first placement in 1989, more than 700 Can Do Canines assistance dog teams have been placed.

Over the years, our services have expanded to train assistance dogs to help with hearing loss, mobility challenges, seizure disorders, type 1 diabetes, and childhood autism.

Founder Al Peters adopting Annie from the Minneapolis pound. She would go on to be the first dog trained by our program to be placed with a client.



Our first team, Annie and Marcy Bury. Annie's service allowed Marcy to enjoy life with new confidence, knowing she would not miss critical sounds. Annie lived to age 16 and worked right up until she lost her own hearing at age 15.

When necessary, our dogs can even be trained to meet a combination of these needs.



1987 - 1999

1987

Al Peters founded The Companion Dog Connection. It began as a very small organization housed in the spare bedroom of Al's house.

After conducting feasibility surveys, Al decided to proceed with his idea of training hearing dogs for people who were deaf or hard of hearing.

1988

Lucky, a Border Collie mix, was adopted by the program and served as a demonstration dog.

The program received its first grant from the MAHADH Foundation for \$5,000. This made it possible to start training dogs.

Al visited Paws with a Cause in Michigan to learn how their program worked.

1989

With a mission solidified, we became the Hearing Dog Program of Minnesota.

We rented our first facility in South Minneapolis.

Our first hearing dog, Annie, was adopted, trained, and placed with Marcy Bury.

We placed three teams by year's end.

1990-1991

After outgrowing our first office, we moved to a new office in South Minneapolis.

Our first team was placed outside the metro area in Owatonna, in 1990.

In 1991, we furthered our reach, placing a team in northern Minnesota (Hibbing). This dog was serendipitously named Snowball.

1992-1993

We received the Nonprofit Mission Award in the innovation category, as well as the Service Award from the Minnesota State Council on Disability.

We were approved to solicit all state Lions clubs.

Our first combination skills dog, Fridley, was placed as a Hearing and Mobility Assist Dog.

1994

We hosted our first Heel and Wheel fundraiser (later renamed Can Do Woofaroo) raising \$6,000.

Hearing Assist Team graduate Carol Johnson died of low blood sugar. Before she died, she'd asked if we could train her dog to detect her low blood sugar. At the time, we didn't know how to do that. Her passing fueled us to someday learn how to train Diabetes Assist Dogs.

1995

We hired our first full-time employee.

We changed our name to Hearing and Service Dogs of Minnesota.

Lions Clubs become significant annual supporters, raising \$48,000 this year.

1996

We trained our first Mobility Assist Dog team.

We held our first formal graduation with 14 graduates.

Graduate Frank Steuart passed away, leaving us our first legacy gift.

Our first out-of-state team was placed in Wisconsin.

1997

The Lions Constitution added us as a permanent project, meaning they increased their support for us each year.

Two of our hearing team graduates—David and Gloria—were married. The couple moved in with David's parents who were also deaf. Both David and Gloria's Hearing Assist Dogs would alert all four members of the house to sounds!

1998

This was the most challenging year. Staff changes caused significant disruption in the organization. Al was discouraged, but he gave the organization a fresh start.

That fresh start included hiring a new program director, adopting a new logo, and searching for a larger facility.

1998 continued

There were only four graduates this year—the lowest number of graduates since 1990.

1999

Despite the difficult previous year, we moved to a 7,000-square-foot facility in Minneapolis. We added a kennel area, which significantly increased our space.

Lucky passed away. Beau, a Golden Retriever, became our second demonstration dog.

Our numbers rose this year with 7 graduates.

2000 - 2009

2000

We merged with the Master Eye Foundation, the first guide dog training program in the United States, which added \$275,000 to our new building fund.

2001

Hazel and Hearing Assist Dog Maggie became our 100th graduate team.

2002

Donated dog Sadie gave birth to a litter of puppies in a volunteer's home—our first attempt at breeding. Three of the puppies went on to graduate.

We trained and graduated our first owner-provided assistance dog team.

After years of only placing Mobility Assist Dogs with adults, we placed Ben with Katie Nelson, an 11-year-old.

2003

Pet dog Riley learned to sense owner David Lundeen's low blood sugar. David had type 1 diabetes and came to us for help. We shaped Riley's behavior so he would consistently alert David to his low blood sugar. They were our first Diabetes Assist Dog team.

Jack became our first Facility-Based Assist Dog and worked at the the Mayo Clinic. There's even a children's book written about Jack!

2004

We placed the first Diabetes Assist Dog that we trained on our own (Ivan) with Linda Mosier.

The E.M. Pearson Foundation made a final contribution of \$150,000 as they close their doors, increasing our building fund.

2005

We rebranded to a red, black, and white color scheme.

Our first Seizure Assist Dog team graduated (Zona Grustans and assistance dog Jordan).

Fairbault Correctional Facility became our first prison program partner.

2005 continued

We received some negative publicity when we reclaimed a graduate dog for the dog's welfare.

2006

Our 200th team graduated.

We placed multiple teams in Missouri and Wisconsin.

2007

Sam Schuler and Reno became our first Autism Assist Dog team.

We placed our first team in Iowa.

We became a fully accredited member of our trade association, Assistance Dogs International (ADI).

2008

Our demonstration dog, Beau, passed away at age 11.

We produced our first stand-alone annual report for the year 2007.

2009

Our 300th team graduated.

In the midst of the financial crisis, we declared a \$4.4 million capital campaign to purchase and remodel the building we operate in today. This same year, we signed a purchase agreement on the building and began reconstruction with the help of many dedicated volunteers.

We celebrated 20 years of service to the community.

2009 continued

As part of our anniversary, we announced a new logo and name: Can Do Canines.

We held our first Fetching Ball Gala.

2010-2019

2010

We moved into our new, half-finished building.

Assistance Dogs International asked us to speak on Diabetes Assist Dogs at their Toronto conference.

We added a prison puppy program with the Federal Correctional Institution Sandstone.

We began our breeding program with the "B" litter.

2011

The Federal Correctional Institution Waseca became our third prison puppy program.

After months of additional construction, we finished our facility. We added a second wing to the regular kennel area, a new office area, a caretaker space, an overnight room, and our Second-Chance Kennels.

2012

Barbara Koch committed to donating \$250,000 per year, for four years, to help us pay off the mortgage.

Our 400th team graduated.

2013

We hosted a Diabetes Assist Dog seminar at our facility for Assistance Dog International members from around the world.

We added a prison puppy program with the Federal Prison Camp Duluth. They later became the first prison to wean litters of our puppies.

2013 continued

We completed a five-year strategic plan to help us prepare for growth.

We joined the ABC Breeding Cooperative to enhance the genetic quality of our dogs.

2014

We celebrated our 25th anniversary.

We dedicated our new building at the May graduation.

We added two new prisons to our training program.

2015

Our 500th team graduated.

We added a prison puppy program with Stanley Correctional Institution.

2016

Our partnership with Faribault Correctional Facility ended.

We installed a pet-friendly artificial turf for our outdoor kennel area.

We paid the final mortgage payment on our facility and became debt free!

KARE 11 produced a series on us.

2017

Our staff grew by 16% this year.

We added a prison puppy program with Jackson Correctional Institution in Wisconsin.

We partnered with a researcher at the University of Minnesota on a study on autism and Autism Assist Dogs.

Our 600th team graduated.

2018

We added two prison puppy programs with Federal Medical Center Rochester and Chippewa Correctional Facility.

We hosted the Assistance Dog International Conference with 300 attendees from around the world. The event was such a huge success that Assistance Dogs International decided to make it a yearly conference.

2018 continued

With our cooperation, Minnesota passed new legislation against Fake Service Dogs.

We placed Xerxes with the Orono Police Department. He is a Community Service Dog and is believed to be the first of his kind in Minnesota.

2019

Our 30th anniversary Fetching Ball Gala broke records with attendance and amount raised.

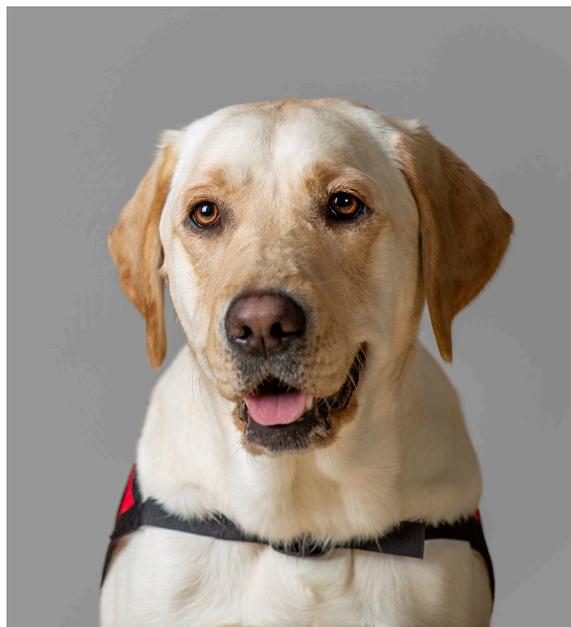
Our 700th team graduated.

We trained our first dog to respond to a computer talking board for Brea, a 12-year-old with cerebral palsy.

Our volunteer crew grew 63% in these past five years since our 25-year anniversary.

Hearing Assist Dogs

Hearing Assist Dogs alert a person who is deaf or hard of hearing to sounds by making physical contact with them and then leading them to the source of the sound.



Diabetes Assist Dogs

Diabetes Assist Dogs detect low blood sugar levels by sensing a change in their partner's breath odor. The dog alerts their partner by touching them in a significant way.



Autism Assist Dogs

Autism Assist Dogs work to keep children with autism safe in public settings and help them experience the world more fully by offering comfort and assurance. These special dogs also serve as a social bridge between the family and the public.



Mobility Assist Dogs

Mobility Assist Dogs work with people who have mobility challenges and other needs. They pick up and carry objects, pull wheelchairs, open doors, and help pay at tall counters.



Seizure Assist Dogs

Seizure Assist Dogs respond to a person having a seizure by licking their face, retrieving an emergency phone, alerting other family members, or pressing a life-alert button.



Overachievers

Some of our dogs take on more than one job. Most common are dogs that partner with a person who is deaf and also has a physical disability. However, other combinations have been custom-trained.

Hopeful Blessing Clients Community
 Volunteers Labrador Retrievers
Life-saving Dogs
Independence
 Puppies Collars **Can Do Canines** Cape Poodles
 Assistance dogs
Compassion
 Love Donors Teamwork
 Service dogs
Help Shelter dogs
 Peace of mind

What's in a Name?

An organization's name tells a story. Our story. And stories change—they twist and turn and grow like vines up a trellis.

As Can Do Canines has evolved over 30 years, we've seen our own twists and turns, bringing with them four organization name changes. The purpose of each new name was to better represent the growing organization and mission at that point in time.

The Companion Dog Connection

In 1986, after Al's wife, Penny, shared information with him about a hearing dog presentation she had attended, the vision for The Companion Dog Connection was born.

The Hearing Dog Program of Minnesota

In 1989, two years later, our organization had three hearing teams in the training process. We adopted the name Hearing Dog Program of Minnesota to better represent the work we were doing.

Hearing and Service Dogs of Minnesota

In 1995, we recommitted ourselves and began training Mobility Assist Dogs in addition to our Hearing Assist Dogs. Hearing and Service Dogs of Minnesota better represented the type of dogs we trained.

Can Do Canines

In 2009, after 301 teams graduated from our program, we became Can Do Canines. We were now also training dogs to assist with seizure

disorders, type 1 diabetes, and children with autism.

Through these name changes, and over the past 30 years, one can see how Can Do Canines has changed. When there were unmet needs in the community, we adapted to try and meet those needs.

As our community sees more changes in the next thirty years, you can be sure that Can Do Canines will be there.



We asked graduates, donors, and volunteers to tell us the first word that came to mind when thinking of Can Do Canines. The resulting words were arranged into a word cloud on the previous page.

A Brief History of Capes

**(Also known as a vest,
harness, or equipment)**

Just like with human fashion, the design of the assistance dog cape has evolved over the years. What traditionally began as bulky, fabric-heavy pieces now are sleek and more refined.

Different types of assistance dogs wear different types of capes or harnesses, which serve their own purposes. Not even all Mobility Assist Dogs wear the same type of cape. The cape is dependent both on the dog and their handler's needs.

When we started placing Hearing Assist Dogs in 1989, the law dictated that the dogs had to wear an orange collar and leash. When the ADA was enacted in 1990, the law no longer applied. Capes were slowly introduced—not because they were required, but because they served a functional purpose and told the public that the animal was an assistance dog.

Hearing

Hearing Assist Dog capes tend to have only one purpose: to identify the dog as an assistance dog.

Mobility

You'll see the most variation in cape style on this type of an assistance dog. Because mobility needs vary greatly between individuals, our standard red cape is the base. From there, if someone requires support while they walk, a hard-handle harness will be added. Sometimes these dogs wear a backpack.

Diabetes and Seizure

These capes are larger than our standard cape. With pockets on either side, handlers insert important medical information, identifying information, and medication.

Autism

When in public, Autism Assist Dogs function much differently than other assistance dogs. One of their primary jobs is to make sure their partner can't run away. The child with autism wears a special belt connected to the dog's harness by a 6' tether. The parent holds a leash connected to the dog's collar. This joins the three of them together.

1989-1995

Before capes, Hearing Assist Dogs were required by law to wear a "blaze orange" leash and collar for identification.



1995-2000

A backpack version of our cape from when we rebranded to Hearing and Service Dogs of Minnesota.



2000-2010

The standard version of our cape when we rebranded to Can Do Canines.



2010-Today

The standard version of our current cape.



Partnering With Prisons

Can Do Canines partners with prisons in Minnesota and Wisconsin to create prison puppy programs. Specially selected inmates raise puppies and dogs-in-training, allowing us to expand our program and serve more people in the community.

Faribault

We started our first prison puppy program with Faribault Correctional Facility in 2005. For eleven years, many of our dogs-in-training passed through this program, until its end in 2016.

Sandstone

In 2010, the Federal Correctional Institution Sandstone became home to our second prison puppy program. They took ten puppies initially and now provide finishing training too.

Waseca

In 2011, we added the Federal Correctional Institution Waseca to our list of puppy prison programs. This prison for females trains 12 or more dogs at a time.

Rochester

In 2018, we started a puppy prison program at Federal Medical Center Rochester. This prison houses inmates requiring specialized or long-term medical care. Inmates in our program also care for the infirm inmates at the facility.

Duluth

In 2013, we created our next puppy prison program at the Federal Prison Camp Duluth. Today, inmate handlers take over the second half of the whelping process and wean puppies from their mother.

Chippewa

Added in 2018, Chippewa Valley Correctional in Wisconsin will handle the second half of the whelping process, just like the Federal Prison Camp Duluth.

Jackson

In 2017, we began a puppy prison program at Jackson Correctional Facility. This was our second program in Wisconsin at the time.

Inmate handlers take their jobs very seriously—but they still like to have fun. Each prison teaches their dogs unique tricks on top of assistance dog skills and basic obedience. It's great for the dogs to keep learning, and the tricks put a smile on everyone's face.



Our Loyal Supporters

There is an African proverb that says, "It takes a village to raise a child." In the case of Can Do Canines assistance dogs, that same principle holds true. Along with our committed staff, thousands of passionate volunteers, generous donors and dedicated prison inmates have played a profound role in raising our assistance dogs over the last three decades. Without their loyalty, Can Do Canines would not be the organization it is today. What each of these individuals has contributed to our overall mission is difficult to quantify. And while we don't have exact records dating back to day one, these few statistics offer a glimpse at the personal sacrifices and the significance of the contributions made by our supporters.

Thanks to the generosity of others, a

total of **712** teams had graduated by the end of 2019.

When we began in 1989, **1** volunteer

assisted Al. At the end of 2019, we had **813** volunteers sharing their time and talents with us.

Over the years, **11,464** donors have made **67,752** gifts totaling **\$25,251,267**.



262,968 hours
10,957 days
360 months
30 years

**of community
impact**

(or 210* dog years)

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