

SIDE SIDE

ISSUE 17

Alana and
Guide Dog Jenni



About Us

SIDE by SIDE is a publication of Dogs Inc.

Our dogs transform lives across the United States—at no cost to the recipients—thanks to the generosity of our supporters.

EXTRAORDINARY DOGS

Top-tier pedigrees, decades of research, and thousands of hours of training, care, and love prepare our dogs for life-changing destinies.

TRANSFORMING LIVES

Guide dogs light the way. Service dogs heal. Skilled companion dogs comfort. And facility therapy dogs uplift.

AT NO COST TO RECIPIENTS

We provide our clients with their loyal companions, expert training, and alumni support, completely free of charge.



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Hello

from Dogs Inc

Dear Supporter,

It starts with a perfect match. A door opens, and a life-changing partnership begins.

And over the following weeks, months, and years, the days fill with more moments to cherish. The first embrace, the first trip to the grocery store, the first adventure to an unfamiliar place.

Each “first” is another step of independence; every moment is one to be remembered.

Your kindness brings these partnerships to life, making the special moments possible. Thank you for your generosity. Thank you for making a lasting impact.

With gratitude,

Colleen Flaherty
Acting CEO



Our Dogs



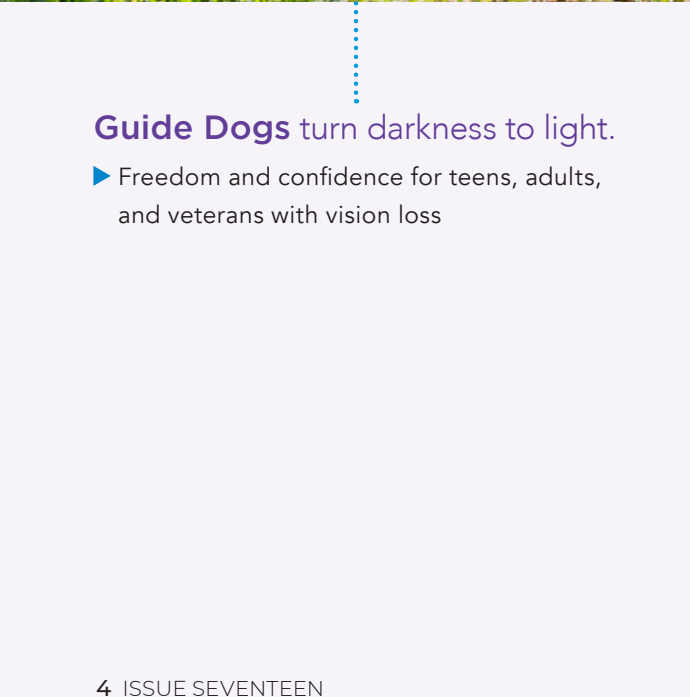
Service Dogs restore freedom.

- ▶ Hope for veterans healing from physical and invisible wounds
- ▶ Strength for Gold Star family members carrying the weight of sacrifice
- ▶ Lifesaving support for people living with diabetes



Facility Therapy Dogs bring healing.

- ▶ Peace to patients and healthcare workers at military facilities across the U.S.
- ▶ Comfort to first responders at facilities in Central and South Florida



Guide Dogs turn darkness to light.

- ▶ Freedom and confidence for teens, adults, and veterans with vision loss



Skilled Companion Dogs comfort in times of need.

- ▶ Friendship to children, teens, and adults with vision loss facing isolation
- ▶ Love to Gold Star families coping with grief



We provide our dogs and services at no cost.



Our Latest Graduates

New companions. New hope.

A moment that changes everything—that’s what our graduates experience when they first embrace their extraordinary dogs. And we know that this is only the beginning. Because every day, they’ll find peace in their companions’ presence, steadfast love in their eyes, and newfound freedom in their service.

Misty Phillips | Guide Dog Gunner

Naples, Florida

“Gunner has filled my heart with love. With him around, I always have a friend with me. Getting him was the best decision in the world.”

Gunner was raised by Brianna Leblanc-Simard.



Cassidy | Skilled Companion Dog Casey

Florida

“She just loves me. Casey makes me feel happy.”

Casey was raised by Janet Shloss.



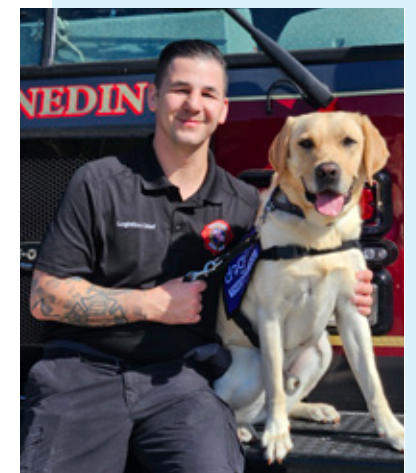
Sergej Vukota | Facility Therapy Dog Russet

U.S. Air Force Veteran 🇺🇸

City of Dunedin Fire Department
Dunedin, Florida

“Russet is making an impact not only at the station, but throughout our community. The fire chief has mentioned that Russet is the best addition to our department in a very long time. It’s been nothing but a tremendous experience.”

Russet was raised by Cheryl Miller.





Hope | Guide Dog Inspire

"Inspire is great. We work so well together. I can just trust her, and she makes me feel safer."

Inspire was raised by Kasani Anderson.

Latha Dawn Sullivan Scent Detection Service Dog Rita

Brandon, Florida

For most of her life, Latha Dawn lived by a sound—a sharp beep in the night, warning her blood sugar had dropped again. "With Rita, I can go out and be active," Latha Dawn says. "She's changed the whole concept of everything I do. Rita's amazing."

Rita was raised by Teresa Werner.



Kara Spurr | Guide Dog Barney

Arlington, Massachusetts

"Barney gives me confidence. I'm not hitting something every few feet. He takes a lot of pressure off me."

Barney was raised by Cianna & Kristin Cilenti.



Jeff | Service Dog Dixie

U.S. Army Veteran 🇺🇸
Bradenton, Florida

Above Jeff's yells for help, bullets raced across the Iraqi sky, piercing the desert air.

Eternity passed before Jeff felt his sergeant's hands pull him to relative safety. Shell fragments riddled his leg, shattering bone into a mosaic of agony and uncertainty. Eventually, the percussion of gunfire was exchanged for the gentle hum of rescue helicopters.

Then, blackness.

He'd survived the firefight. But when he came to a few days later, Jeff realized the battle for the rest of his life was just beginning.

Beyond the physical suffering, emotional scarring left him isolated and withdrawn from the world.

Enter Dixie.

Dixie's love offers Jeff a much-needed comfort. She's helped him get back to a routine and, most importantly, back out into the world. With her support, Jeff now goes out in public without feeling scared or overwhelmed.

"Dixie's so happy, I forget the negative feelings," Jeff says. "She comes and licks my face, and I don't know how it works, but it makes me smile right away. From the first time I saw Dixie, I knew I'd always have a buddy. I knew I was going to get better."

Dixie was raised by Ky Sullivan.



"Aurora is so wonderful. She's my best friend, and I love her so much."

Colleen Henderson | Guide Dog Aurora
Treasure Island, Florida
Aurora was raised by Nicole Balzano.

Skip LaBarre | Guide Dog Regis

Jupiter, Florida

"It felt like everything was being taken away from me, and now something has been given to me that actually helps. Regis and I are a powerful team, and I'm much more confident and independent. He's everything I could have asked for."

Regis was raised by Chris & Jill Dobson.



Roselyn Hoffman | Guide Dog Gracie

Cape Coral, Florida

"Even though I'd had a guide dog for 10 years, with Gracie, everything feels fresh again. I'm so excited to make new memories with her. My safety bubble feels much bigger now."

Gracie was raised by Skye & Tom Gaudette.



John Taylor | Skilled Companion Dog Larry

U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force Veteran 
Morrison, Tennessee

"I got everything in Larry. When he looks at me, I feel loved automatically. Larry is fantastic and I am so grateful I got him."

Larry was raised by Tiffani and Josh Idol.





Austin Majette | Skilled Companion Dog Myron

Active-Duty U.S. Marine Corps 🇺🇸
Odessa, Florida

"Myron's a new constant. He's the stability our family has wanted for quite some time now."

Myron was raised by Kai & Karly Gallops.

Kyra | Guide Dog Igor VII

Ormond Beach, Florida

As macular degeneration slowly narrowed Kyra's vision, familiar sidewalks and daily outings became harder to trust. Then came Igor. Little by little, he is helping her find confidence in the path ahead. "Igor is absolutely fantastic."

Igor VII was raised by Morgan & Leslie Humes.



Mark Riley | Skilled Companion Dog Major

U.S. Coast Guard Veteran 🇺🇸
Cocoa Beach, Florida

"Major brings back those feelings of when the kids were younger and vibrant and running around the house. It's like I'm a little kid again."

Major was raised by Robert & Mary Roby.



Peter Pinigis | Guide Dog Sergeant

Eustis, Florida

It started with letting go of the car keys. The world was too blurry to keep driving.

He had to let go of his wife's hand. Her elbow was better for guiding.

Then, Peter had to let go of his freedom. Little steps, a measured pace, tapping along with his cane.

"I felt like I was always poking at the ground in the dark, head down, just trying to feel my way around," Peter says.

Then came a single instruction that changed everything: look up.

With guide dog Sergeant leading the way, Peter lifted his head—and hasn't looked back since.

Their mornings begin with a three-mile walk taken at full stride, paws and sneakers hitting the sidewalk

with excitement. With every step, Peter moves with a confidence he hasn't felt in years. Sergeant is helping to make restaurant outings, concerts, and visiting family feel effortless again. And, no longer needing to hold onto his wife's arm to get around, he can go back to holding her hand.

Peter let go of a lot, but now he's taking hold of something else: a life filled with movement, partnership, and the freedom to move forward again.

"Sergeant is my best friend. He's opened up so many opportunities and made my life complete. Every morning, it's like here we go, we're going to have another great day together!"

Sergeant was raised by Laura Vetro.



Faith Perkins | Guide Dog Juno

Fort Myers, Florida

"Juno is what I've wanted for years. He gives me companionship. I always have somebody to talk to now. Juno has changed my life."

Juno was raised by Clara Boettinger and Tammy Barnes.



Anthony Lunsford | Skilled Companion Dog Lois

U.S. Navy Veteran 🇺🇸
Canfield, Ohio

"Lois senses when I'm feeling any kind of anxiety. She'll come over and put her head down on my chest or lay with me. She calms me down and makes me happier. I don't think I could have been matched with a better dog."

Lois was raised by Lori & Troy Antalek.

Shauna | Guide Dog Jag

Florida

"I couldn't ask for a better dog. Jag's enabled me to take walks with my little girl again and do things by myself like a regular parent would, which I wasn't able to do the last two years. We're a little team, and I am really happy with him."

Jag was raised by Katie Redmann.



Marshall | Service Dog Magic

U.S. Marine Corps Veteran 🇺🇸
Pennsburg, Pennsylvania

"It's been absolutely wonderful with Magic. The future is definitely bright."

Magic was raised by Maddie Callahan.

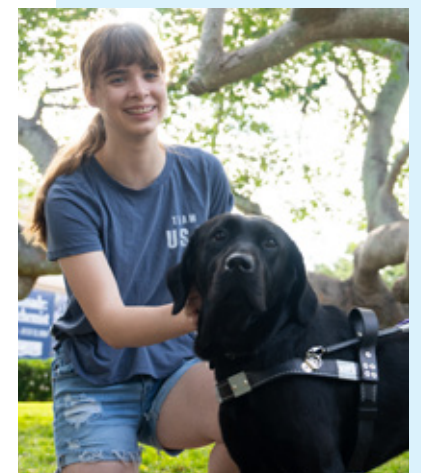


Brooklyn | Guide Dog Pepper

Nebraska

"I feel more confident going places now. Pepper's always there by my side, doing whatever I need her to do to help me out. Pepper is the dog for me."

Pepper was raised by Karen Vesey.





Chris Townsend | Service Dog Belle

U.S. Army Veteran 🇺🇸

Wellington, Florida

"Belle is always positive. She's always there to greet me. It's the coolest thing to have a ride-or-die companion that just wants to sit there with me and be part of my life. Belle is great."

Belle was raised by Mary McCune.



Cathleen | Guide Dog Leeny

Florida

"My husband told me, 'You're back to your normal self. You're happy again.' With Leeny, I'm moving faster, I'm more confident, and everything feels brand new."

Leeny was raised by Lindsey Davenport and Brion & Kim Hart.



Anonymous | Guide Dog Buckles

"Buckles is a real sweetheart. She pushes me to come out of my shell."

Buckles was raised by Ally Cagle.



Athena Jones | Service Dog Larkin

U.S. Air Force Veteran 🇺🇸

Tampa, Florida

"Taking even one in-person class was really hard. I had this mental barrier to get through the door. Now, I'm excited to have a reason to get out. With Larkin, I've been out of the house every day. We're partners, and I felt that connection with her right away."

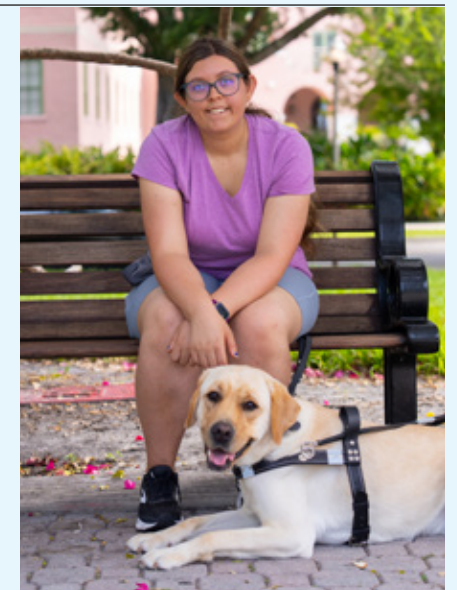
Larkin was raised by Dennis & Beverly Kramer.

Rabecca Zintak | Guide Dog Kenny

Lebanon, Pennsylvania

"Kenny is amazing. I feel more confident and more steady in my footing with him. He's always locked in on me and what I need. It's really nice that people don't have to worry about me as much. I know Kenny's got me."

Kenny was raised by Christopher & Manal Lee.





"For the first time, I have a companion who is truly aware of what I am experiencing. Having Banana by my side, sensing, smelling, alerting to changes and keeping me safe is a huge comfort. It's like he's saying, 'It's okay. Together, we got this.'"

Sharan Lombardo
Scent Detection Service Dog Banana
Port Charlotte, Florida

Banana was raised by Sierra McKinnis.

"CB gives me an additional purpose. My family can tell that I'm happier with him around. He brings a lot of joy into my life."

John Benjamin | Guide Dog CB Holden
Palm Harbor, Florida

CB Holden was raised by Kim & Blair McFarlane.



Alana | Guide Dog Jenni
South Carolina

"I knew right away we were going to be best friends. Jenni is my light. Even when I'm upset, she's always there, my light in the darkness."

Jenni was raised by Lauren & Jennifer Herrera.



Leah Jones | Guide Dog Destiny
Lakeland, Florida

"I feel so much safer with Destiny. It's nice knowing that I have a little friend to go with me on all my adventures. Destiny has unlocked more opportunities for me than I ever thought would be possible."

Destiny was raised by Loretta & Mike Holtkamp.



Christina Towery | Guide Dog Dove

Crouse, North Carolina

“With Dove, I’ve gotten my independence back. Guide dogs have saved my life, and Dove is a total blessing.”

Dove was raised by Amy Glisson.

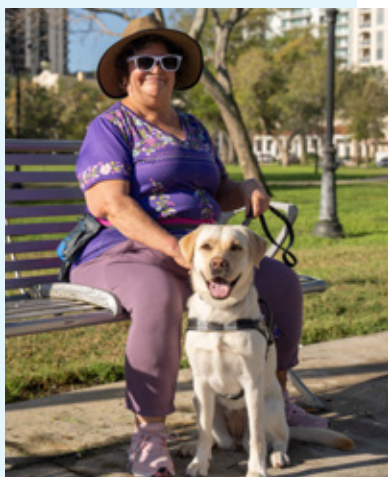


Michael Phillips | Skilled Companion Dog Peggy

U.S. Army Veteran 
Lithia, Florida

“Peggy’s great. She helps me get through the day. I just wish I’d met her sooner.”

Peggy was raised by Matthew & Michelle Stoltz and Debbie & Bob Stanley.



Kim Quintana | Guide Dog Luna

Enid, Oklahoma

“I’m so happy I got Luna. She’s happy to go wherever I go. My family is really impressed by her, and I’m excited to keep doing my thing.”

Luna was raised by Elyse Gregg.

Doug Wood | Service Dog Legend

U.S. National Guard and Navy Veteran 
Lakeland, Florida

They came out of nowhere.

Doug wasn’t originally assigned to be on this mission. But there he was, standing between the ambushing soldiers and his crew.

He had to make a decision. And then he had to live with it.

“That was the moment when things really snapped,” Doug says. “I was never 100% after that. Sometimes when depression would kick in, I would sit and wonder, ‘Why am I still here after the things I did?’”

The people closest to him saw he needed a change. That’s when Legend stepped up.

Right away, Legend’s presence eased Doug’s pain, literally healing a long-term neck injury. But his support doesn’t just help physical discomfort. One night, when Doug was having a nightmare, Legend woke him up, licking his face and calming his nerves. Normally, Doug’s anxiety keeps him awake after nightmares. That night, he gave Legend a hug, thanked him for his love, and went right back to sleep.

“In that moment, I knew Legend was going to save my life,” Doug says. “From the first time he ran and jumped on my lap, it was immediate relief. It’s like he drained all the bad out of me. I haven’t been depressed for one day with him by my side.”



Legend was raised by Danyett & Victoria Baxter.



Owen Hemrick | Guide Dog Mary

Knoxville, Tennessee

"I've always been scared of walking into new environments by myself, but Mary will make that experience easier for me. She makes me so happy, and I'm very excited for our future together."

Mary was raised by Kelly Cain.

Mike Harrell | Guide Dog Simba VI

Ooltewah, Tennessee

Mike has his fourth guide dog, Simba—a playful and energetic companion who reminds him how fun everyday life can be.

Simba VI was raised by Mazie Anderson and Kelly Cronan.



Anonymous | Service Dog Aggie

U.S. Army Veteran 🇺🇸

"Aggie has brought so much joy into my life. She is always calm and confident and knows just what I need."

Aggie was raised by Marisa Zamrock.



Jan DeGraw | Guide Dog Biggs

Seminole, Florida

"I have learned to become independent, but not by myself—with my extraordinary guide dog. Biggs is so smart. She is so sweet. And I love her with all of my heart."

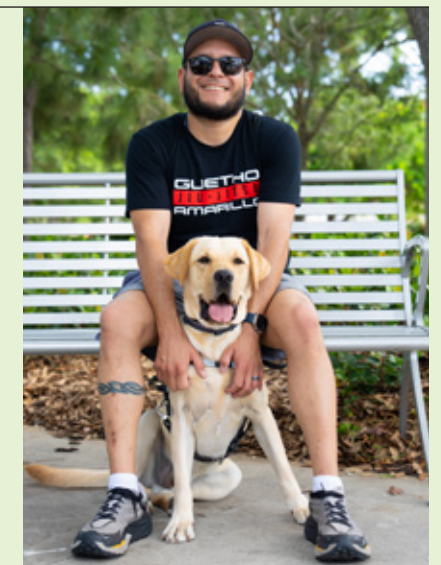
Biggs was raised by Katie Tyler.

Antonio Chavez | Guide Dog Scout

Amarillo, Texas

"Scout has given me the freedom and courage to get out and move. Having a companion like Scout to keep me company, keep me motivated, and keep me moving forward makes living with vision loss a lot easier."

Scout was raised by David & Korrene Powers and Dan Hester.



"Before I got Char, it's like I had been asleep for 25 years. Now, doors are opening for me. Char is a breath of new life."

Gil Higley | Guide Dog Char
Lumberton, North Carolina

Char was raised by Valerie & Jared Carter.



Mackenzie | Guide Dog Jen
North Carolina

By the time Mackenzie got home at the end of the day, she was tired in a way most teens wouldn't understand. Most teens don't think about how much energy it takes to see, but for Mackenzie, vision was never passive.

She was tired from concentrating, from forcing her eyes to keep pace with crowded sidewalks, from the constant effort of deciphering a too-bright world that seemed to move faster than her sight could follow.

"It's very strenuous and difficult," Mackenzie says. "My vision can't really process everything, and I didn't want to be limited to just a cane or sighted guide."

Still, the strain never stopped her from moving forward. After finishing high school early, she began working toward her AA degree online. But as she prepared to start in-person classes in the fall, Mackenzie realized she needed to find another way.

Then she got a call, and somewhere between nervous excitement and pounding heartbeats, guide dog Jen barreled into her lap—and changed everything.

At home, Jen sprawls across Mackenzie's arms during study sessions, and when anxiety rises, she's there at her side to cheer her up. But the greatest change happens once the harness goes on. Recently, she pulled Mackenzie out of harm's way when an electric car came dangerously close to hitting her. With Jen, the constant pressure of trying to process her surroundings alone begins to quiet. Jen gives Mackenzie more than just safety. She gives her rest.

"For the first time, I can just close my eyes because I don't need to see, I trust that Jen knows what she's doing. Now that I have her, I don't know what I'd do without her."

Jen was raised by Tracey & Scott Kaplan.



Thank You!

Your thoughtful and compassionate gift is making a difference and creating a lasting impact through meaningful giving.

SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORTERS

- | | |
|---|--|
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| American Legion Michael J. Cicero, Post 173 | The Polozker Fund |
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Enjoy exclusive events and other benefits.
Join at dogsinc.org/CS or call **941.729.5665**.



Alumni Update

Where are they now?

One dog can change a life—just ask our alumni. New adventures, days of hope, nights of peace—the change these exceptional dogs make doesn't end when they meet their soulmates. It grows. With every smile, act of love, and moment of freedom, these special bonds reach greater depths and soar to new heights.



Emma Hildebrand with @one_door_studio

Nola & Guide Dog Brizzy **Matched 2020**

"I matched with Brizzy when I was 18, right before I graduated high school. It has been very cool having her with me through high school all the way through earning my master's degree in architecture. I'm so blown away by what she can do. When she's on harness, she's like, "I'm ready to work, let's go," and I can depend on her. Then when she's off harness, she's a goof."



Brian Honett & Service Dog Dee **Matched 2024**

"Before Dee, I was isolated. She's given me back my freedom and allowed me to feel comfortable going out again. We recently traveled to Colorado together, and that was not something I would have done before I met her. Dee's always there for me. I know she's picking up on my feelings. And I know no matter where I am, as long as I have Dee, I'm not alone."



Paul & Service Dog Journey Matched 2022

"Journey has become my teammate. He's always there to remind me to slow down, take a breath, and remember that whatever's happening, we'll get through it together."

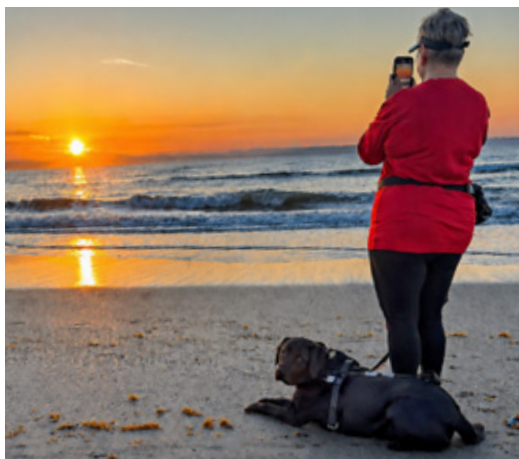
Luis Perez & Guide Dog Jerry Matched 2024

"I feel like he's an angel wrapped in fur. Recently, I had a really bad pain in my left leg, which turned out to be a serious blood clot. When I went to get up, I almost couldn't walk. Jerry got up, put his chin on my leg, and pressed down. If it weren't for his concern, I wouldn't have gone to the hospital and gotten checked out. He saved me."



Theresa & Guide Dog Ace Matched 2025

"The most memorable trip I have taken with Ace was to Cocoa Beach. The whole time, Ace was incredibly loyal and attentive, understanding my balance needs as I learned to walk on the soft, wobbly sand. It brought me so much joy to experience the beach in a way I never thought possible. That walk remains one of my favorite memories with him."



Adriane Reese & Service Dog Esther Matched 2024

"The truth is my service dog has changed my life. Somehow, Esther seems to know me better than I know myself. She's often at my side before I realize I need her, responding to changes in me that I haven't even noticed yet. Her intuition never ceases to amaze me. Esther is a trusted companion, a source of comfort, and a faithful friend who helps me navigate life. On the difficult days, she's there. On the good days, she's there too. I don't know what I did to deserve a dog this devoted, but I'm grateful for her every single day."



Sarah Leger & Guide Dog Allie Matched 2025

"Allie brings out the best in me, giving me confidence and independence. We spent a few days in Memphis, and Allie and I got around without an issue. Then off to our first NFBL convention. I got around independently without a doubt. She knew every route and shortcut possible. Woah! That's a new accomplishment for me."



Brittney Wright & Guide Dog Hayley Matched 2023

"Hayley has no idea how much she has changed my life in the last three years. From helping me regain my confidence, to getting my own place and a new sense of independence. She's helped motivate me to get out there and do things I've never done, and running a 5k is one of them. So far, we are up to six since starting last year. We also did our first sunset cruise together recently, and seeing the smile on her face and her nose just sniffing the ocean air was awesome."



Sharon Cribb & Guide Dog Gigi Matched 2024

"With Gigi, I am not afraid to go on walks or go to new places because I know she is guiding me. I recently took a trip with my daughter to St. Augustine. We walked all around town, rode the trolley, toured museums, and strolled around the old fort. I couldn't have done any of that without Gigi's help. She's the best girl ever!"



Richard Dykstra & Service Dog Penny Matched 2024

"Before Penny came into my life, there were many situations that felt overwhelming, but since being paired with her, those challenges have become much more manageable, and my confidence has grown. We have taken various trips together, to California, Texas, and Washington. Whether I am traveling through airports, navigating busy public spaces, or simply going about my daily routine, she is always there by my side."



no ordinary dog

I lead the way toward places that
were once out of reach.

I navigate through the darkness,
giving confidence.

I help someone go where they want
to go and live life on their own terms.

I'm no ordinary dog . . .
I'm a guide dog.

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