



# The FREEDOMPRESS

{ NEWS FROM FREEDOM SERVICE DOGS OF AMERICA }

[www.freedom servicedogs.org](http://www.freedom servicedogs.org)



**FREEDOM  
SERVICE DOGS  
OF AMERICA**

FALL 2017  
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## Freedom Service Dogs of America + Disco's Dogs

### HELPING MORE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

**F**reedom Service Dogs of America (FSD) is thrilled to announce that, through an acquisition merger, we have combined forces with Disco's Dogs, an amazing Denver-based nonprofit. Disco's Dogs was founded in 2013 by Laura Edwards with the mission to adopt dogs from shelters and train each one individually alongside families for six months. The result: skilled service dogs for children challenged by disabilities, primarily autism spectrum disorder and developmental disabilities.

As Laura explains, she and her family had a very personal reason for starting Disco's Dogs: "In 2009, we heard that a service dog could help our son with challenges he faced at the time with sensory processing



Ian and Disco, the first Disco's Dogs team

integration and ADHD. We quickly learned that many organizations are doing amazing things across the country, but there were waitlists of two or more years and price tags ranging between \$16,000 and \$25,000. Many organizations would not place a dog with a child under 15 years old, and our son was only five at the time. After a lot of thought and research we decided that two to five years was a long time to a young life and the price tag was unobtainable considering the amount other therapies cost our family. But we didn't give up and our continued research brought us to the Prison Trained K9 Companion Program, who at the time, trained special skilled companion dogs for children with autism-related challenges. We were thrilled to find this amazing resource right in our own back yard and shortly thereafter our son had additional support from his new fur-friend, Disco. The first night Disco was home with us, our son was able to stay asleep for the first time—all night!"

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**DID YOU  
KNOW?**

**1 in 68 (14.6 per 1,000) school-aged children in the United States is on the autism spectrum.**

This includes 1 in 42 boys and 1 in 189 girls.  
(2016 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

**Autism is one of the fastest-growing developmental disorders in the United States.**

(Autism Speaks).





Tom with his Australian Shepherd, Kodi

# View From the Tall End of the Leash

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR: TOM SCANLAN, RETIRED, BRIGADIER GENERAL U.S. AIR FORCE

As I reflect on my first year serving as the board chair for Freedom Service Dogs of America (FSD), I am in awe of the generous community support, dedicated volunteers, visionary board members, and passionate staff. Collectively, this group has transformed the lives of so many individuals with disabilities by providing custom-trained, life-changing service dogs. As one of our clients stated, “When I come to FSD, I feel like I’m with family.”

FSD has accomplished so much this past year. We moved into our new home—2.4 acres with more than 22,000 sq. feet of training space—allowing us to expand the number of dogs in training. We implemented a pilot project called Operation Full Circle, which works with veterans to teach them to train their service dogs. This program allows the veterans to bond with each other over shared experiences, take their dogs home while training continues, and learn dog training as a job skill. Our first class of five veterans graduated in June. The spouse of one of the participants shared, “I have seen a difference in my husband, specifically, his sleep schedule. He hasn’t really slept well in a very long time and it is kind of hit or miss. However, since his service dog has joined our household, he has slept really well!”

FSD celebrated 30 years of service to the community in June with 450 of our closest supporters. I’m proud of my fellow board members who collectively gave a \$30,000 matching grant in honor of our 30 years of service. FSD was able to leverage this matching donation to raise an additional \$37,000 to support our programs.

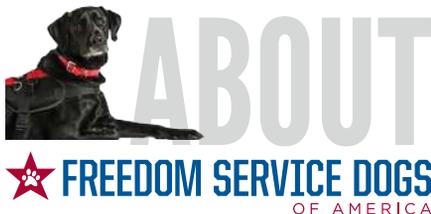
In August, we finalized an acquisition merger with Disco’s Dogs, allowing us to expand our services to younger children on the autism spectrum. With the expertise of Disco’s

Dogs staff, FSD will be able to serve children as young as five, providing much-needed assistance for the families.

The 5th Annual Denver Faces of Freedom Sporting Clay Tournament was held in July with great success, raising a net of \$70,000! Forty-two teams participated to raise money to help match veterans with service dogs. It’s not too late to join our Midland, Texas Faces of Freedom on September 22. If galas are more your style, you won’t want to miss Diamonds in the Ruff on October 14th.

FSD has had an amazing year because of you—our donors, volunteers and community supporters—who believe in our mission.

Thank you for your support! 🐾



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Freedom Service Dogs of America is a Denver-based nonprofit organization that unleashes the potential of shelter dogs by transforming them into custom-trained, life-changing assistance dogs for people in need. Clients include children, veterans and active duty military, and other adults. Their disabilities include autism, traumatic brain injury, cerebral palsy, spinal cord injuries, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Since being founded in 1987, Freedom Service Dogs of America has paired hundreds of client-dog teams at no cost to the client. For more information, visit [freedomsvicedogs.org](http://freedomsvicedogs.org).

**PRESIDENT & CEO: MICHELE OSTRANDER**

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**SPECIAL THANKS:** [pattyspetphotography.com](http://pattyspetphotography.com) and [momentsinfocusphotography.com](http://momentsinfocusphotography.com).

# Disco's Dogs

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Prior to the merger, FSD served clients with autism spectrum disorder in a limited capacity, working with young adults, age 12 and older. By partnering with Disco's Dogs and relying on their expertise and training model, we will be able to improve the services we provide and expand our reach—especially in the area of helping children on the autism spectrum and with other neurocognitive disabilities. The Disco's Dogs program at FSD will continue to serve the Colorado community through this innovative program that focuses on support, education, inclusion, and life-changing canine friends. The addition of the Disco's Dogs program to the FSD family is inspiring and we are looking forward to what the future will bring. 🐾



## HOW CAN SERVICE DOGS HELP CHILDREN WITH AUTISM OR OTHER NEUROCOGNITIVE DISABILITIES?

### Dogs can be calming

- They can provide a sense of security by being a constant in the children's daily activities at home and beyond.
- They calm children with autism by placing their heads on the children's laps or by leaning into them.
- They can reduce emotional outbursts by redirecting the children's attention.
- They can nudge the children during repetitive or stimming (self-soothing) behaviors to interrupt the behavior.

### They can bridge social gaps

- Dogs can help improve social skills by creating a link between children with autism and the community.
- They can improve communication skills and behavior.

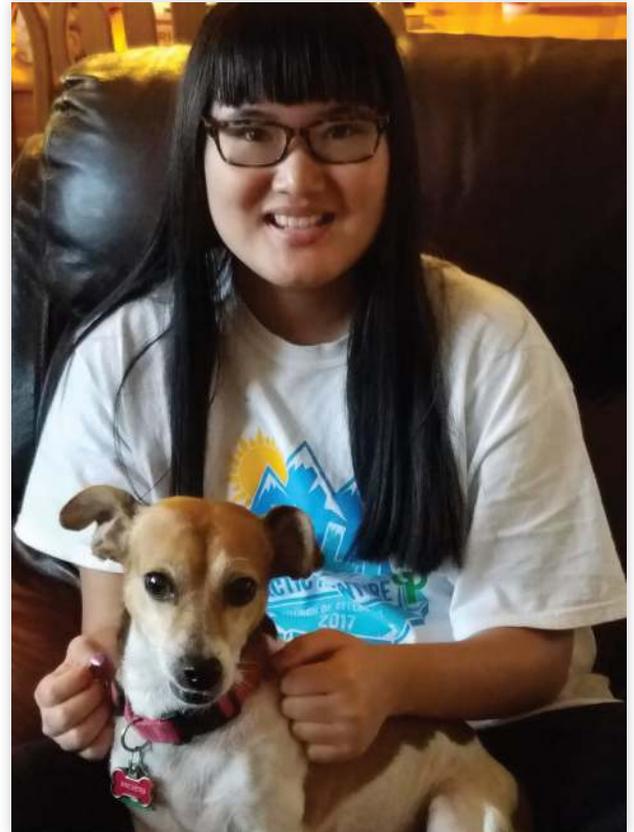
### They can help children focus

- Dogs can increase focus on homework, projects, and social tasks.

### They can help with therapy

- Dogs can be used during therapy to help increase speech production, fine motor skills, and gross motor skills.

## THANK YOU, DISCO'S DOGS



Samantha and Snickers, a shining Disco's Dogs team

"We got a dog from Disco's Dog for our daughter who is on the autism spectrum. Snickers has been a huge blessing to our family as our daughter is moderate to severe. Snickers helps in many ways to make our life more manageable. Snickers provides [sensory input] by lying across her to act like a weighted blanket. When she is exhibiting her stimming [self-soothing] behavior, Snickers is trained to interrupt the behavior by taking his nose and moving her hand on him so she can redirect her energy to Snickers. Disco's Dogs has been such a great group to work with."

~Michele V.



For more information about the Disco's Dogs program, visit

[FREEDOMSERVICEDOGS.ORG/DISCOS-DOGS](https://FREEDOMSERVICEDOGS.ORG/DISCOS-DOGS)



These teams are in the current Disco's Dogs class and will graduate in December 2017.



Zipper's first day at FSD



Zipper getting his weekly measurement to chart his growth

# Meet Zipper

## OUR YOUNGEST SERVICE DOG HOPEFUL

Zipper is a chocolate Labrador, born on November 27, 2016 in West Richland, Washington. At 12 weeks old, he made the trip to Colorado to join the FSD family as our youngest service dog in training. Zipper was donated to FSD by a private breeder who believes in the mission of FSD and wanted to give back. As many of you know, Freedom Service Dogs has found great success in transforming rescue dogs into assistance dogs. That is the foundation upon which we were built, and we are proud to continue to partner with shelters and rescues to identify potential candidates for our training program. From time-to-time, puppies are donated to FSD and partnered with volunteer puppy raisers until they are about one year old. Service dog training doesn't usually begin until the dog has gone through the full range of medical tests necessary to ensure that he or she will live a long and healthy life—tests which can only be done when the dog is one year of age.

Zipper's story is unfolding a little differently than the average dog at FSD. At thirteen weeks old, Zipper made his first appearance on FOX31 Denver. For the next two years, we're teaming up with FOX31 Denver "Problem Solvers: Serving Those Who Serve" to document what it takes to raise a puppy to become a service dog—the kind that is invaluable to veterans in need. Zipper will continue to make weekly TV appearances, and he even has his own Twitter following @ZipperTweets. Although he isn't in intensive

training yet, he has already passed his milestone tests with flying colors and is continuously learning about the world around him, all while being mentored by the talented training team at FSD! Our hope is that he will grow up to be a shining service dog for a deserving veteran on our waiting list. [Visit KDVR.COM](http://KDVR.COM) to see Zipper's past TV appearances.

As if being a TV star wasn't a big enough deal, this little puppy with a purpose even has his own beer! Breckenridge Brewery, through its longstanding partnership with FSD, created a new IPA (India Pale Ale) called "ZIPA" to raise awareness and funds to help offset the cost of Zipper's care and training. From May of 2017 to May of 2018, Breckenridge Brewery is donating \$1 to FSD for every ZIPA pour at the Farm House restaurant at its Littleton brewery, and at its brewpub in Breckenridge. These dollars will help supplement the cost of training Zipper and other service dogs in training. [Learn more at BRECKBREW.COM](http://BRECKBREW.COM).

## STAY TUNED TO FOLLOW ZIPPER'S JOURNEY

JOIN OUR EMAIL LIST: [FREEDOMSERVICEDOGS.ORG](http://FREEDOMSERVICEDOGS.ORG)

FACEBOOK: [@FREEDOMSERVICEDOGS](https://www.facebook.com/FREEDOMSERVICEDOGS)

TWITTER: [@ZIPPERTWEETS](https://twitter.com/ZIPPERTWEETS)

INSTAGRAM: [@FSDOFAMERICA](https://www.instagram.com/FSDOFAMERICA)

To donate directly to Zipper's scholarship fund, visit [FREEDOMSERVICEDOGS.ORG/MEDIA/ZIPPER](http://FREEDOMSERVICEDOGS.ORG/MEDIA/ZIPPER). Your generous donations allow us to train dogs like Zipper and his classmates!



Zipper with FOX31 Denver's Good Day Colorado team



Zipper showing off his handsome smile after a day of training



Zipper and his namesake ale, ZIPA



## Faces of Freedom Sporting Clays Tournament Denver

On July 28, 164 supporters participated in Faces of Freedom Sporting Clay Tournament at Kiowa Creek Sporting Club in Bennett, Colorado. In its fifth year, the event raised a net of \$70,000 to support Operation Freedom, a program of FSD that places service dogs with veterans. In 2016, the event expanded to a second location in Midland, Texas. Join us for Faces of Freedom Midland on September 22!



Paul (far right), a veteran who received his service dog Harmony from FSD, and his son Riley participated in Faces of Freedom on Team QEP Resource

For more information, visit [FREEDOMSERVICEDOGS.ORG/FACES](http://FREEDOMSERVICEDOGS.ORG/FACES).

## Our Caring Community

THE ENVISION FOUNDATION SHARES THEIR PERSPECTIVE ON PARTNERING WITH FSD



Envision staff with service dog ambassador, Cargo

Envision Business Consulting is a Denver-based national consultancy firm that has been enacting positive change since 2009. Envision transforms, grows and enriches people and organizations...and now dogs! Our Foundation is the heart of Envision and allows us to reach into the community and work with people in a meaningful way. It is paramount for us to be able to not only write a check, but to really get involved, in a hands-on way with organizations that are providing valuable services to people at risk.

We are so honored to partner with Freedom Service Dogs to help further their mission of providing valuable support for both dogs and people. Being able to financially support FSD warms our heart because we have seen first-hand how the funds are spent. This year we chose to sponsor the in-home training program, and seeing graduation and witnessing the bonds between the dogs and their clients was inspiring beyond belief. I was so humbled when I heard how these special animals would be helping kids, people with disabilities, and our brave veterans. I was so glad that our Envision Foundation could help make even a little of that possible.

In late June, we had our first volunteer team service morning at FSD. It truly was a rewarding experience. Knowing that we could help out in a hands-on way means a lot to us. Plus, it was amazing to play with the dogs when we were all done with our work. It was so nice for us to see how the staff and the volunteers work so well together. Everyone at FSD has been wonderful—dogs and people! We can't wait to come back.

~Karen Sackler Novick, Foundation Director, Envision Foundation

To learn how your company can make a difference for FSD, call **NADINE PACE: (303) 922-6231**

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS

OCTOBER 14



#### DIAMONDS IN THE RUFF

presented by VISA  
Infinity Park Event Center

Join us for the sixth annual Diamonds in the Ruff! The night is spent honoring our service dogs and their human partners, mingling with friends, eating delicious food, and bidding on our many wonderful silent and live auction items. The funds raised on this special evening will help Freedom Service Dogs provide even more service dogs for people in need, forever changing their lives. Sponsorship opportunities are available. Contact **Nadine Pace at 303-922-6231** to learn more.

# Wanted: Volunteer Foster Homes

## DO YOU HAVE ROOM FOR A FOUR-LEGGED HOUSE GUEST?

We are in search of volunteers who are willing to open their hearts and homes to four-legged house guests over the weekends and holidays. Since our new facility allows us to accommodate up to 70 dogs, we have more furry friends than ever looking for a weekend slumber party host.



Ollie Collie (left) and his family loved sharing their home with Dak (right) on the weekends. Dak recently graduated from FSD as a professional therapy dog.

### There are a number of reasons that weekend breaks are so incredibly important for our dogs:

- It reduces the stress that can result from living in a kennel environment.
- Gives the dogs a chance to experience new environments, people, and pets (yes, you can still foster if you have other pets!). Plus, it helps reinforce the training the dogs get during the week.
- Dogs get a weekend of snuggles and love—they are former shelter dogs, so many of them haven't experienced as much of this connection as they deserve!
- Since our dogs are in school all week, they love getting a fun break over the weekend with only a little bit of homework to reinforce their training.
- Having a weekend foster home allows our dogs to become the best, most successful service dogs they can be!

### Fostering can also be a wonderful experience for the sleepover party hosts because:

- It's on your own schedule, and it's a great way to get your "doggy fix" without committing full-time.
- It can be a great experience for your children, teaching them about compassion and generosity.
- You'll get unlimited doggy kisses and a walking or hiking buddy for the weekend—also great if you have a dog at home who could use a buddy.
- Arguably best of all, you will get to see the dogs mature and have a hand in unleashing their potential to become amazing service dogs. Many proud foster parents have attended the graduation ceremony of the dogs they have fostered!
- Who knows—if the dog doesn't quite make the cut as a service dog and decides to pursue a different career path, you could be a "foster failure" and adopt the dog! 🐾



Magic Allen shows his foster sister Chloe how to snuggle.

To learn more about becoming a foster or other volunteer opportunities, visit

[FREEDOMSERVICEDOGS.ORG/VOLUNTEER](http://FREEDOMSERVICEDOGS.ORG/VOLUNTEER) or call 303.922.6231.

# Operation Full Circle

## NEW FSD PROGRAM, A SUCCESS

We are pleased to announce that the first class of Operation Full Circle (OFC) participants graduated in June. In February, Freedom Service Dogs launched Operation Full Circle, a program focused on increasing the benefits that service dogs provide to veterans. This program is unique in that it uses a new model to train and place service dogs with veterans sooner. Over the course of the year, two groups of five veterans will participate in learning how to train service dogs, and how to use these new skills to help other veterans in need. The second class of OFC started in mid-August and will graduate in December.



OFC graduates, Joe and Ditto

*"Ditto is always around me, supporting me through my times of need. He has helped me find my way out of a dark place."*

—JOE, OFC GRADUATE

To learn more about Operation Full Circle, visit

[FREEDOMSERVICEDOGS.ORG/OFC](http://FREEDOMSERVICEDOGS.ORG/OFC)

## Riding for Good

### STURGEON ELECTRIC POKER RUN



The Sturgeon Electric crew with service dog ambassador, Cargo

The second annual Sturgeon Electric Poker Run took place on July 8th and brought in more than \$25,000 for Freedom Service Dogs of America! The event featured a winding motorcycle ride through the Denver-Boulder metro area, with several stops at local breweries and restaurants. At the last stop, participants enjoyed music, a prize raffle, and silent auction. We are so grateful to Sturgeon Electric for selecting FSD as the beneficiary of their ever-growing, successful event for the second year in a row.

## Tail Wagging at FSD is on the Rise

### THANKS TO BENTLEY'S PET STUFF



Service dog hopeful Dumplin' with training treats donated by Bentley's Pet Stuff

Because of Bentley's Pet Stuff, we have noticed our dogs wagging their tails more than usual. As you can imagine, training service dogs takes tons (literally) of treats each year. We were continuously finding ourselves in critical treat-shortage situations, and that's when our friends at Bentley's Pet Stuff stepped in. Not only are they donating healthy training treats and other goodies to keep up with the ever-increasing demand of our four-legged trainees, but they have also come on board as sponsors for FSD events, including the Doggie Plunge and bi-annual graduations. Thank you, Bentley's Pet Stuff!



Linus with his human brothers

## Linus Needed a Home

### SAYING GOODBYE TO A LIFELONG FRIEND ADOPTED FROM FSD

What can we say about Linus? Quite a lot. We had put our golden retriever down just a month earlier and we really were not "ready" for another dog yet, but a good friend who had fostered Linus for a couple of weekends texted us his photo in the Freedom Service Dogs vest with the caption "Linus needs a home," and we were hooked.

We were told that Linus had almost made the cut to become an FSD service dog but didn't pass the last stage because of a short attention span. Yep Linus had some attention span issues, but that only added to his charm. The training he received was amazing—way beyond anything I could've done on my own. He was exceptionally smart and made himself at home the moment we opened the front door. Even the first night, I pointed at the dog bed in our room and I said "place." He climbed in and eight hours later when I woke up, he was still there smiling and wagging his tail.

For nine years we woke up to that wagging tail. He was the sweetest, most loving, intelligent and well-trained dog I had ever had. I never had to take him to the vet for being sick in all that time. One day last June, he was having trouble breathing, and we found out he had a tumor on his heart and had to say goodbye. We miss Linus horribly but feel so fortunate to have had him, and I sure am glad I listened to my friend when he texted "Linus needs a home." ~Marc S.

Interested in adopting a new furry family member from FSD? Browse adoptable dogs at [FREEDOMSERVICEDOGS.ORG](http://FREEDOMSERVICEDOGS.ORG) or call 303-922-6231 for more information.

If you have adopted a dog from FSD, we would love to hear updates and see photos! Please send them to [econley@freedom servicedogs.org](mailto:econley@freedom servicedogs.org) or post and tag on Facebook @FreedomServiceDogs or Instagram @FSDofAmerica.



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**DONATE:**

Freedom Service Dogs of America is one of the few organizations in the United States to transform shelter dogs into custom-trained service dogs and provide them to clients at no cost. Your tax-deductible donation helps us continue our work of giving dogs a new purpose and changing the lives of individuals with disabilities. Visit [freedom servicedogs.org/donate](https://freedom servicedogs.org/donate) or call **303-922-6231** to make a donation.

# Join the Kibbles Club

**MONTHLY GIVING THAT MAKES AN IMPACT**

➤ Becoming a member of the Kibbles Club is easy! Visit [FREEDOMSERVICEDOGS.ORG/DONATE/KIBBLES](https://FREEDOMSERVICEDOGS.ORG/DONATE/KIBBLES) or contact **TAYLOR SIMON AT 303-922-6231 X215 OR [TSIMON@FREEDOMSERVICEDOGS.ORG](mailto:TSIMON@FREEDOMSERVICEDOGS.ORG)**.

### Did you know?

By donating to FSD on a monthly basis you:

- ✓ Help fund the most urgent needs of our mission, such as emergency veterinary care for a dog in training, supplements and supplies, or training and support needed by our clients.
- ✓ Make the most efficient donation to our programs by reducing the costs associated with postage and mailing.
- ✓ Provide consistent, ongoing support that we can count on.

