

THE FREEDOM PRESS

News, Events & Heartwarming Stories



PUPPIES IN PRISON

TRAINING PROGRAM BENEFITS DOGS AND OFFENDERS

Offender handlers from the Prison Trained K-9 Companion Program with FSD puppies in training

It may be one of Colorado's best-kept secrets: The Colorado Correctional Industry's Prison Trained K-9 Companion Program (PTKCP) offers the state's most in-demand boarding facilities for dog owners who want 24/7 care and training for their pets.

It's no secret, however, that the PTKCP also plays a vital role in helping Freedom Service Dogs (FSD) provide basic obedience training and socialization to our littlest service dog candidates. Since 2002, hundreds of adult FSD dogs have gone through the program in order to build a strong foundation before returning to our facility for advanced training and placement with one of our clients in need.

Today, FSD's primary focus is puppies, due to the likelihood that very early training and socialization will increase their chances for becoming successful service dogs. To that end, the prison program continues to provide essential training to our young pups, who are carefully monitored by FSD staff members, as well as longtime PTKCP instructor Darlene McInnes.

FSD puppies enter the prison program at 9 to 14 weeks of age after undergoing the first of four behavior and temperament evaluations administered by FSD. The pups spend eight weeks at the Sterling Correctional Facility for men and then another eight weeks at the Denver Women's Correctional Facility. FSD Director of Dog Operations Laura Edwards says that during that time, the puppies "have the opportunity to build on the socialization and early neurological stimulation provided

by FSD staff in their early beginnings. The handlers at the PTKCP are able to continue that and build upon each puppy's ability to soak up knowledge at this age. Pups at the Denver facility go on socialization outings each week with our wonderful FSD volunteers, which provides varying exposures to stimuli that help them gain confidence, resilience, and skills needed to be a service dog one day."

According to PTKCP Supervisor Michele Wayland, the dog training program is so popular with offenders that there is a waiting list. "The PTKCP is an incentive program, which means that offenders have to be on their best behavior to even be considered," she says. "They need to meet certain behavioral criteria and have a GED, since they have to be able to read and comprehend our training manual and pass written and hands-on tests. Offenders who want to train FSD puppies must become master handlers, which takes a little over one year of progressively more advanced training. At that point, if the handler is selected for the program, Darlene assigns an FSD puppy to them, based on their skill set and the needs of the puppy. Then FSD trainers work with our handlers to fine-tune their training methods and teach them specific service dog protocols. Throughout the program, the handlers have total responsibility for their dog's care, including feeding, potty breaks, giving medication under supervision, following the training curriculum, attending group training sessions, and providing individualized training. And of course, there's always puppy playtime!"

In addition to providing 16 weeks of round-the-clock care, training, and socialization for dozens of FSD puppies, the prison program also prepares our pups for the next step in their development. Thanks to the PTKCP, our puppies are crate and house trained, and know basic obedience cues, before going home with an FSD volunteer puppy raiser for the next six to eight months.

The PTKCP brings exceptional value to both partners, says Wayland. "Training dogs benefits the handlers above and beyond learning new skills. The responsibility of training and caring for a dog puts them in

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 7)



About FSD



Freedom Service Dogs of America is a Denver-based nonprofit organization that unleashes the potential of 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 (PTS). Since being founded in 1987, Freedom Service Dogs has paired hundreds of client-dog teams at no cost to the client. For more information, visit freedom servicedogs.org.

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Freedom Service Dogs is a 4-star Charity Navigator-rated nonprofit organization. This highest rating means that FSD is considered accountable, transparent, and financially healthy.



Michelle Search with pup in training Foppa

New decade, renewed dedication

A MESSAGE FROM BOARD CHAIR MICHELLE SEARCH

While it is already March, this is my first letter of 2020, so Happy New Year to all!

We head into the new year, and new decade, coming off an exceptional 2019 for Freedom Service Dogs. Our 2019 events were all tremendously successful. The generosity of our volunteers and donors was nothing short of astounding. We launched new programs in 2019 in an effort to help better serve our clients and shorten our waiting list. Our graduation ceremonies for our most recent human-dog teams were incredibly inspirational. The hard work of the entire team at FSD has positioned the organization on solid ground for the new decade.

But there is little time to reflect, as we have a busy 2020 ahead of us! Our Faces of Freedom sporting clay tournaments are scheduled for June 26 in Denver and Sept. 18 in Midland, Texas. Our annual Doggie Plunge will take place on Sept. 7. Be sure to mark your calendars for our next Diamonds in the Ruff gala, with a Roaring Twenties theme, on Nov. 7. Our next graduation is scheduled for June as well. Be sure to check social media for community events throughout the year!

The entire team at FSD is working with laser focus to meet the needs of the 80-plus clients on our waiting list as quickly as possible, while ensuring that we are graduating exemplary service dogs. To that end, we have continued to expand our puppy programs. If you have visited our facility lately, you will see lots of changes to accommodate our tiny service dog candidates, and hopefully you've gotten your share of puppy kisses! We also have started a small-scale breeding program, and we were delighted to assist our first mama dog, Gigi, as she gave birth to a beautiful litter of Labrador retriever puppies.

We continue to need foster volunteers to join our Puppy-Raising Club, as well as to be on-site at FSD for puppy playtime and enrichment. If spending time with puppies sounds inviting to you, please contact us for more information on how you can help!

I would also like to highlight our programs for veterans. From Operation Full Circle to specific veteran outreach programs, we continue our work to serve the women and men who have given their service to our country. Our puppy and breeding programs will enable us to graduate more service dogs that meet the specific needs of our veteran clients and shorten time on the waiting list for these patriots.

I am excited for the year ahead and continue to be humbled by the incredible dedication of everyone involved in this organization. Thank you for the privilege of being part of FSD.

I wish you all health, happiness, and lots of wet noses and puppy kisses for 2020!



Michelle Search

WINTER 2019 GRADUATION

CEREMONY HONORS 12 TERRIFIC TEAMS

On an unforgettable night in December, our 12 newest client-dog teams graduated from Freedom Service Dogs, and our inspirational grads spoke from the heart about their challenges, accomplishments, and hopes for the future with their life-changing dogs by their side.

Please join us for our Summer 2020 Graduation in June. This event is free and open to the public. For more information, visit freedom servicedogs.org/events.



LORI & LONDON

Lori is a four-time stroke survivor and a four-time recipient of an FSD service dog through our lifetime support program for active clients. Successor dog London enhances Lori's independence and quality of life by performing tasks in the home and community.

SPONSORED BY HALLIBURTON



MISSY & GLACIER

Missy is a U.S. Army National Guard veteran who assisted with rescue and relief efforts at Ground Zero after the 9/11 attacks. Glacier helps alleviate Missy's post-traumatic stress by creating space around her in public, interrupting nightmares, and providing weighted pressure to calm her.

SPONSORED BY DECKERS DOGS



LUKAS & BRIZZO

Lukas is an active 16-year-old who sometimes finds that interactions with others can be challenging and anxiety provoking. Brizzo is Lukas' pride and joy, as well as his constant companion, helping this young man feel more confident on trips to town and walks in the woods.



ADAM & MISO

Adam lives with the effects of a serious spinal cord injury he sustained during a mountain bike training run. Ever ready to pick up dropped items, retrieve a water bottle, or tug off a jacket, Miso supports and assists Adam in his commitment to regaining full access to the active outdoor lifestyle he loves.

SPONSORED BY HALLIBURTON



SUNNY & QUEEN

Due to a spinal condition and multiple corrective back surgeries, Sunny has significant mobility impairment and limited strength and stamina. Queen, who is Sunny's second FSD service dog, retrieves dropped items, makes space in crowded lines, and serves as a grounding influence for Sunny.

SPONSORED BY DR. MARTY PETS



WYATT & AUSSIE

Wyatt, a 9-year-old boy who loves to learn and master new skills, has often felt anxious in crowded and unfamiliar places. Through FSD's Disco's Dogs program, Wyatt was matched with Aussie, who helps him feel more comfortable in social situations and is expanding Wyatt's self-confidence and horizons.

SPONSORED BY JOAN OUDERKIRK & MADDIE NG



KATRINA & SINATRA

Now 20 years old, Disco's Dogs graduate Katrina received her first FSD service dog, Dudley, in 2008. After 11 years of loyal service, Dudley retired, and successor dog Sinatra is continuing Dudley's legacy by providing neurological regulation, weighted pressure, and constant companionship in Katrina's busy life.

SPONSORED BY GILDA KAPLAN



SAM & NEWTON

Child and family therapist Sam and Newton are FSD's newest professional therapy dog team. Newton will work alongside Sam in providing mental health counseling to clients from various backgrounds in both a school setting and in private practice.



EDGAR & ALFREDO

U.S. Army veteran Edgar served four tours in Afghanistan and returned home with post-traumatic stress that causes nightmares and anxiety in crowds. Alfredo nudges Edgar awake from nightmares and creates a safe zone for his veteran in crowded places so that Edgar can attend his son's sporting events and other activities.

SPONSORED BY ANNIEMAC HOME MORTGAGE



ROBERT & SOOKIE

Robert is a U.S. Marine Corps veteran with post-traumatic stress triggered by large crowds and loud noises. Sookie awakens Robert from nightmares and creates a buffer zone around him in public places so he can enjoy spending time in the great outdoors and traveling with his wife.

SPONSORED BY VETS HELPING HEROES



GARY & BJORN

U.S. Navy veteran Gary has post-traumatic stress, as well as difficulties with mobility and balance caused by a prosthetic leg. Bjorn provides stability to Gary on their daily walks and also has been trained to awaken Gary from nightmares and create space around him in public.

SPONSORED BY THE GARY & LESLIE HOWARD FAMILY FOUNDATION



DANIEL & TATER

U.S. Army veteran Daniel has post-traumatic stress and uses a prosthetic due to the loss of his lower leg. Tater assists Daniel by providing stability when he walks and helping him feel more comfortable in public so that Daniel can do more with his wife and children.

SPONSORED BY THE DIXIE FOUNDATION



2019 EVENTS

For more information about all our events, visit freedom servicedogs.org/events.



FACES OF
SPORTING CLAYS TOURNAMENT
FREEDOM
MIDLAND

PRESENTED BY  **Core Lab**
RECOVERY OPTIMIZATION

 **EOG resources**

Faces of Freedom: Midland

NEARLY \$317,000 RAISED TO HELP VETERANS

On Sept. 21, 434 enthusiastic supporters participated in our fourth annual Faces of Freedom: Midland Sporting Clays Tournament, presented by Core Lab and EOG Resources. The popular event took place at Windwalker Farms Sporting Clays near Midland, Texas, and raised nearly \$317,000 to benefit Operation Freedom, a program of FSD that was developed to help veterans and military personnel with disabilities regain their independence.

Since 2013, Faces of Freedom tournaments in Midland and Denver have grossed more than \$2 million to benefit Operation Freedom.



The Bad Boy Blast cook team at Faces of Freedom: Midland

12th Annual Doggie Plunge

A DOGGONE GREAT DAY AT THE POOL

More than 645 happy dogs made a humongous splash at our 12th annual Doggie Plunge on Sept. 7, raising \$25,615 for Freedom Service Dogs. Held at Pirates Cove Water Park and presented by Baird, the event gave fun-loving pups (and their generous people) a wonderful way to end the summer while supporting our work providing custom-trained service dogs to veterans, children, and other adults with disabilities. Thanks to all our attendees and sponsors for a truly sensational event!



PRESENTED BY  **BAIRD**



A Magical Night at Diamonds in the Ruff

FALL FUNDRAISER RAKES IN MORE THAN \$419,000

On Oct. 12, 450 sparkling guests gathered at the Hyatt Regency Denver Tech Center for our eighth annual Diamonds in the Ruff, presented by Decorative Materials and The Kaplan Family in loving memory of Werner Kaplan. The magical evening raised a record amount of more than \$419,000 to support the life-changing work of Freedom Service Dogs.

Guests watched heartwarming videos showcasing the inspirational stories of four FSD clients, marveled at a demonstration featuring service dogs in training Sookie and Magic, bid on treasures at the fabulous silent and live auctions, and purchased flutes of champagne for the chance to win a custom three-stone, one-carat diamond pendant, donated by Larry Blauweiss of Fifth Avenue Designs.

Save these 2020 dates!

JUNE TBD
SUMMER GRADUATION

JUNE 26
FACES OF FREEDOM: DENVER
Presented by PowerShift

SEPT. 12
DOGGIE PLUNGE
Presented by Baird

SEPT. 18
FACES OF FREEDOM: MIDLAND
Presented by Core Lab and EOG Resources

NOV. 7
DIAMONDS IN THE RUFF

“A new life” for Joe & Ditto

SERVICE DOG EXPANDS VETERAN'S WORLD



Joe with daughter McKenna and Ditto

“My friend is at the end of the leash, and he’s going to help me anytime I need him.”

- JOE

When Joe retired from the U.S. Marine Corps in 2000, he brought home a sense of pride in the 20-plus years of military service he’d put in worldwide. But like so many other members of our Armed Forces, he also brought home invisible disabilities that haunted him: post-traumatic stress (PTS) and traumatic brain injury.

Toward the end of Joe’s service, he was having nightmares and trouble sleeping. As time went by, he became more anxious and hyper-alert, and he started having problems at work. “My symptoms became worse and worse,” says Joe. “I couldn’t go anywhere without being super paranoid. I hunkered down in my basement and isolated myself from my wife and two daughters—but I figured I was a tough Marine and could handle anything.” He eventually had a meltdown and sought help at the VA, where he received medication and attended group counseling. “But I knew in my heart that drugs and counseling weren’t going to solve all my issues,” says Joe. “I knew something was missing.”

That “something” came to him at 3 a.m. one night, when the idea of getting a service dog popped into Joe’s head. He researched service dog organizations, but says, “I became kind of depressed because all the places I found were in Florida or Ohio, and they wanted \$25,000 or \$30,000 for a dog.” He continued his search online until he discovered Freedom Service Dogs. “It was like a ray of sunshine hit me in the middle of the night,” recalls Joe. “I couldn’t believe this place was right down the street from me, and they would work with me and provide a service dog for free.”

After applying to FSD, in 2017 Joe was accepted into the first class of Operation Full Circle (OFC), an innovative program in which veterans with PTS and traumatic brain injury work alongside FSD trainers for four

months to train the dogs provided to them by FSD. “It was kind of stressful at first since I wasn’t used to being around other people,” says Joe. “But it helped to have four Army vets in my class, and we all bonded fairly quickly. We told war stories and talked over things we learned and helped each other out. It was a really good time.”

During the final month of OFC, Joe was matched with a mixed-breed dog named Ditto. “It was a great fit,” says Joe. “He has the same thoughtful personality as me, and he’s so smart and intuitive. I can train Ditto to do almost anything in a relatively short time.”

After nearly three years with his service dog, Joe says, “It’s a new life with Ditto. I can go places with him and it calms my anxiety, because I’m not by myself anymore. When we’re out, Ditto automatically puts himself between other people and me; I don’t even have to give him a cue. We’ve taken a lot of car trips and airplane trips, and he just curls up under my seat. And he wakes me up from nightmares, so I’m sleeping a great deal better.”

Ditto also has had a positive effect on Joe’s family life. “My girls and wife love him, but they know he serves a purpose for me. It used to be extremely difficult for me to go to my girls’ school, because everyone is moving around and having conversations, and it’s overwhelming. But now I can go to school conferences with Ditto, and he keeps me from focusing on everything around me. I can pet him if I get nervous, and just holding his leash in my hand is comforting.”

Joe says he wouldn’t have made the progress he has without Ditto, and he believes a service dog can make a big difference for other veterans. “Submit the paperwork to FSD, and don’t overthink it,” he recommends. “This is for your health and well-being, and you deserve to be considered.”

Read more stories about our teams at freedom servicedogs.org/success-stories

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT
OUR 2020 EVENTS

Contact **NADINE PACE**

EVENTS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS MANAGER
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Donor Spotlight: Gilda Kaplan

33-YEAR JOURNEY LEADS TO PERSONAL LEGACY

A passion for skiing brought Gilda and Werner Kaplan to Colorado in 1986, and one year later, a passion for philanthropy brought them to Freedom Service Dogs.

The Kaplans left New Jersey once their three daughters—Lori, Leslie, and Lani—were grown, and retired to Vail to fulfill Gilda’s number-one bucket-list item: to live somewhere she could ski. While reading *The Denver Post* one morning before heading to the slopes, Gilda spied an article about a Denver couple who had started a nonprofit that trained shelter dogs to become service dogs. She was moved by the story of Michael and PJ Roche, the founders of Freedom Service Dogs, and she and Werner decided they wanted to help. Thereafter, every three months when they received the FSD newsletter, they sent a check to the organization.

When the Kaplans moved to Denver in 2008, Gilda set out to find a “happy place” where she could become more deeply involved in her philanthropic work. Recalls Gilda, “I looked no further than Freedom. For 33 years, it’s been an awesome experience to be part of something so positive that contributes toward making the world a better place.”

The Kaplans’ financial and in-kind contributions to FSD have been exceedingly generous, as well as too numerous to list here. Prior to Werner’s passing in 2017, the couple made a significant gift to FSD’s capital campaign to help purchase and renovate our current training facility. Gilda has become an honored guest at FSD’s annual *Diamonds in the Ruff* gala, and in 2019, she and her family were co-presenting sponsors of the event, in loving memory of Werner. During the paddle-raising portion of the gala, it has become customary for Gilda to be the first to raise her paddle and sponsor a client-dog team. To date, Gilda and Werner have sponsored nine teams—something Gilda looks forward to because it gives her the chance to see the real-life impact of her gifts. She especially enjoys getting to know and spending time with her sponsored team and their family, as in the case of Shaun, a young man with mobility challenges who received his service dog, Velcro, in 2013.

Throughout her long relationship with FSD, Gilda has taken great pleasure and pride in working from home as a “virtual volunteer” for the organization. Combining her inquisitive nature with her computer skills, she researches and gathers information about nonprofit best practices and passes it along.



Gilda and Werner Kaplan with FSD client Shaun and his sister, Dayla



Gilda Kaplan with daughters Leslie Gifford, Lori Issner, and Lani Kessler and granddaughter Molly Pilch at 2019 Diamonds in the Ruff

Over the past 33 years, Gilda’s loyalty to and support for FSD and its mission has remained steadfast, even as the organization has moved away from shelter dogs in order to graduate more successful service dogs and assist more clients with disabilities in a timelier manner. Most recently, Gilda pledged an extraordinary planned gift to FSD in loving memory of Werner. Her generous gift will help build FSD’s new endowment and ensure that Gilda’s sponsorship of life-changing client-dog teams continues for many years to come. “I realized that I needed to do something now so that I can have the joy and gratitude of being fortunate enough to make a planned gift to Freedom during my lifetime. And besides, I’m still around for you to say thanks!” she adds with a laugh.

“It’s not often that one finds a nonprofit that combines social awareness, financial responsibility, professional leadership, great people, incredible volunteers, and the most adorable puppies and service dogs in training. I’m proud, and I know Werner would also feel pride, to see our daughter Lani—who serves on the FSD Board of Directors and as the gala chair—follow in our footsteps and the ‘paw-steps’ of the people we’ve helped and the dogs we’ve sponsored. And when I’m no longer here, a service dog will graduate each year because I cared enough to give.

After 33 years, I found my legacy.”



You can help ensure FSD’s long-term financial sustainability through “forever” gifts and bequests to our endowment.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT MAKING A PLANNED GIFT TO FSD, PLEASE CONTACT

DIRECTOR OF PHILANTHROPY KAREN AALUND

kaalund@freedom servicedogs.org

303-922-6231 x218

Puppies in Prison

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)



PTKCP offender handler with FSD puppy in training, Aspen

touch with their humanity and gives them a sense of normalcy, because if the offenders have been in prison for five, 10, or 20 years, they haven't seen a dog or cat in all that time. They have a feeling of giving back to the community and doing meaningful work, which gives them a sense of pride. Also, there's a very strong healing power in interacting with these dogs that brings our handlers out of their shell, and talking about the dogs can be a bridge to opening up dialogue with family they may be estranged from during their incarceration. We're so grateful to FSD for this longtime partnership that has become a huge component of our rehabilitation program."

Adds Edwards, "An organization of FSD's size could never provide the same level of attention, care, and training to so many puppies at one time as we can achieve through our partnership with the PTKCP. With nearly 60 puppies completing the prison program in 2019 and even more expected to do so this year, we have no doubt that we'll be sending puppies to prison on their way to changing lives for a long, long time."

Many thanks to Principle Business Enterprises, Inc. for their many years of generous support of this vital program.

"...WE HAVE NO DOUBT THAT WE'LL BE SENDING PUPPIES TO PRISON ON THEIR WAY TO CHANGING LIVES FOR A LONG, LONG TIME."



PAWS-ITIVELY impactful PARTNERSHIPS

We love Dr. Marty Pets and Quick-Tag

Freedom Service Dogs is extremely fortunate to partner with companies nationwide who believe in our mission and support our important work. We'd like to give a special shout-out to two FSD partners whose incredible generosity is making a huge difference for our dogs in training and our clients in need.

DR. MARTY PETS believes that all dogs deserve the opportunity to show their true potential. That's why they're dedicated to feeding dogs the right stuff, so no matter their age, size, or breed, they can enjoy life to the fullest. Dr. Marty Pets is a proud sponsor of Freedom Service Dogs, and since May 2018, they have generously donated more than \$130,000 to our organization. This funding has supported the general mission of FSD and has also sponsored two of our client-dog teams: Kim and Nimbus and Sunny and Queen.



QUICK-TAG wants all dogs and cats to have some form of visible identification so that every lost pet is returned to their owner. To that end, the company supplies solutions for retail partners that allow them to provide affordable, engraved I.D. tags instantly and easily. Quick-Tag began partnering with FSD in early 2019, when they generously donated a tag-etching machine that allows us to create custom tags for our dogs in training, graduated dogs, and career-change dogs. They are also placing "Good Dog" tag kiosks at select Wal-Mart stores, and in 2020 they will be in PetSmart and Petco stores around the country, with \$2 of every Good Dog tag sold going directly to FSD to help pair service dogs with people in need. To date, Quick-Tag has already donated more than \$56,000 to FSD.

Heartfelt thanks and hundreds of tail wags to both of these amazing partners!



LOVE SHOPPING FOR DOGS? Let us help you with that!

By donating much-needed items—like treats, toys, beds, leashes, and other supplies—to FSD, you directly support the dozens of hardworking dogs in training that we care for each year. We make it easy to donate through our Amazon Wish List, and your in-kind gifts may be tax deductible.

Start shopping today! freedom servicedogs.org/donate/#wishlist



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OUR PUPPIES NEED YOU!

FSD is urgently seeking volunteer puppy raisers to help raise and train a puppy—who is already crate and house trained—in their own home for six to eight months. You'll receive special training, free puppy supplies, and ongoing guidance and support from FSD puppy trainers and fellow puppy raisers. All puppy raisers must live in the Denver metro area.

Not local? Please share this opportunity with your Denver-dwelling family and friends!



*Learn more at
freedom servicedogs.org/volunteer.*

or contact

DAVID NEFF
☐ dneff@freedom servicedogs.org
☎ 303-922-6231 x212



"As puppy raisers, we are giving the best part of ourselves selflessly to someone who will absolutely treasure that sacrifice. It's the greatest gift you can ever give."



TWO-TIME PUPPY RAISER ELLY WITH BRAXTON



"Being an FSD puppy raiser is an honor and responsibility that comes with lots of pure puppy love and joy!"

PUPPY RAISER KIM AND FAMILY WITH MIDGE AT A DENVER BRONCOS GAME