

THE FREEDOM PRESS

Quarterly Newsletter of Freedom Service Dogs, Inc.



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Graduation Proves that Every Person, Every Penny, Makes a Difference **SUMMER GRADUATION TOASTS 18 TEAMS!**

“This dog has released me from the prison my body became. I’m looking forward to a wonderful parole with Pan.” So says Maryanne, one of 18 people who graduated with a new Freedom Service Dogs companion on July 23, 2011, at the Englewood Civic Center’s Hampden Hall. Maryanne’s dog, Pan, came to FSD through the Colorado Prison Trained K-9 Companion Program, making her words especially fitting.

Heading into the organization’s 25th year, graduation was, once again, a packed house with approximately 175 people—families, friends, trainers and members of the press—in attendance. **The Denver Post was on hand to help tell FSD’s story,** highlighting graduate Alex, an Iraq war vet, and Mansfield, aka Manny, a boxer–American mastiff mix and Alex’s new best friend. In addition to flashing photographs taken by teary-eyed family members, **cameras manned by two documentary film crews were rolling.**

The stirring keynote speech was given by Molly Pilch, a poised and well-spoken young lady who chose FSD as her mitzvah project preceding her 13th birthday celebration earlier this year. Molly worked with Dallas and his trainer and raised \$5,000 for FSD. Dallas visited her synagogue and



Alex came back from his tour as a gunner in Iraq with a debilitating brain injury and suffering from depression, night terrors, and flashbacks. Manny, his new Freedom Service Dog, keeps him calm and, in his mother’s words, “is helping him find his old self.” Alex says, “It’s like he’s a gift from God.”

even attended her bat mitzvah. Her words at the graduation ceremony brought home the point of how **even one person can make a difference** in the lives of people and dogs.

Attendees also got to see the results of **VCA Charities Pennies for Pets “round up” campaign.** The 13 VCA Animal Hospitals in Colorado asked customers at checkout if they would like to round up their bill to the next dollar and donate the change to FSD. **VCA Charities then matched the funds and were proud to present a check for \$12,297 at the graduation ceremony.** The money will go toward funding a client-dog team this fall.

Overall, the summer graduation was a wonderful event. Everyone was thrilled to see the following client-dog teams heading home to start their new lives:

Alex and Mansfield • Amanda and Dallas
• Andrea and Wesson • Andrew and Doppler • Cedar Springs Hospital and Daisy • Curtis and Basil • Haley and Corbin • Jaclyn and Schroeder • Jon and Limbo • Katherine and Rumba • Kathy and Airy • Kendra and Jonas • Maryanne and Pan • Michael and Bug • Natalie and Tritan • Steve and Sneaks • Travis and Stryker • Tyler and Cooper

Congratulations to all—and thanks to all of you, our wonderful supporters, who help make it happen!

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The Tall End of the Leash

Dear Friends,
As you know, here at Freedom Service Dogs we are devoted to

improving the lives of both people and dogs. It is part of our mission to match the right dog with the right client and then give the dog custom training to meet the client's precise needs. Our team pairs a person living with a disability ranging from multiple sclerosis or cerebral palsy to spinal cord injury or PTSD with a service dog that is trained to assist with opening doors, operating lights, waking from nightmares and a variety of other specialized—and critically important—tasks.

Most of this is commonly understood by regular readers of our newsletter. However, we don't talk enough about the ongoing support we offer, which includes aid and hands-on assistance throughout the life of the dog. We regularly communicate with our clients and receive updates on the relationship and the health of both the person and the dog. We are then able to offer our clients advice on the care of the dog and help them through any life changes that may occur. We also want to know about any public access issues the teams may run into as service dogs are guaranteed full access under the law.

The well-being of humans and dogs is our highest priority. Not only are our deepest resources poured into creating a symbiotic relationship between a person in need and a rescued dog, we also protect the dogs that are ultimately not trained as service dogs. Every dog that comes to us is given a new home—they are never returned to shelters. The fee we charge to adopt a dog certainly goes toward helping offset the cost of what we do, but it also ensures that each adopted dog is wanted and will be loved and well cared for. (Don't forget to visit our website to browse adoptable dogs!)

I believe so deeply in the work that we do here, and it is vitally important that we know both the people and the dogs are continuing to benefit from the relationships we foster. FSD is funded entirely by your wonderful generosity, corporate donations, grants, etc.—which means no person in need of our assistance ever has to pay for a dog. But it also means we are responsible for stewarding those donor dollars and making sure that every penny is used in the way it was intended—to make lives better every day.

Thank you for your ongoing support! I hope to see each and every one of you—with your beloved dogs—at our Festival of the Bastardino, Sept. 10, at Pirates Cove!

Sharan Wilson
Sharan Wilson, Executive Director

ABOUT FREEDOM SERVICE DOGS

Freedom Service Dogs, Inc. is a non-profit, tax exempt 501 (c)(3) organization founded in 1987. FSD rescues dogs from shelters and trains them to assist people with disabilities, enabling them to lead more independent lives.

FSD donates trained service dogs to clients, teaches clients to work with their dogs, and provides lifetime support for the team. FSD educates the public about the legal rights and etiquette for all assistance dogs.

The Freedom Press is the newsletter of Freedom Service Dogs, Inc. It is distributed free of charge to all supporters.

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CHAMPIONING THE SELFLESS ACTS OF ANIMALS

If you attended our summer graduation ceremony, you may have noticed a documentary film crew capturing the event. Turns out, they are part of **Dog Bless You, one aspect of the private Annenberg Foundation's Explore.org**. Charles Annenberg Weingarten is a filmmaker and philanthropist who began Explore.org as a way to improve the quality of our lives via emerging communication technologies, preserving the environment, improving education and embracing spirituality.



The Dog Bless USA Campaign will help fund a dog such as Bug, recently placed with a veteran with PTSD.

This summer, from Memorial Day to Independence Day, Dog Bless You's Facebook page was devoted to the Dog Bless USA Campaign. For every 5,000 "likes" the page received, Explore.org donated a companion or service dog to a veteran in need. At last count, the number was over 270,000—and **one of the five valuable dogs funded by the foundation was a Freedom Service Dog**.

The film crew is following the client-dog team for several months to show the value of services such as these in a film to be featured at Explore.org. **This generous donation is worth approximately \$25,000**, the amount it ultimately costs FSD to find, train and match a dog with a person who could benefit from the animal's companionship.

Local film company Wright Bros. Films was also present at the graduation ceremony. The company is working on a documentary project that includes both FSD and the Prison Trained K-9 Companion Program. We appreciate all this national and local recognition that not only helps us with our mission, but brings attention to the benefits of the human-animal connection.



Rockies Root for FSD! Alanna Rizzo of Root Sports' "Rockies All Access" recently highlighted FSD—and brought along Colorado Rockies' pitcher Jason Hammel and his wife, Elissa. They all got the chance to meet some of the dogs and learn more about the training program at our headquarters.

Pawsitive Connection Expands! Pawsitive Connection, a collaboration between Freedom Service Dogs and Colorado Boys Ranch Youth Connect, is expanding to offer more classes and reach out to more kids. This innovative therapeutic program, which targets high-risk youth in the Denver area, combines therapeutic discussions with dog training to help kids develop empathy and increase positive social behavior. Through helping our dogs, kids learn to manage frustration, work in teams and experience the satisfaction of knowing their work will contribute to a fully trained service dog. A program with a proven record of success, Pawsitive Connection will team up with schools, residential treatment facilities and other programs in Denver, Englewood and Golden. We welcome Jane Boone (left), the new Pawsitive Connection Program Manager.



FESTIVAL OF THE BASTARDINO

Saturday, Sept. 10, Pirates Cove

The Freedom Service Dogs annual Festival of the Bastardino: A Celebration of Mixed Heritage Dogs—dubbed a “Gotta Go” summer destination in *Dog Fancy* magazine—is doggone fun! The day features a doggie plunge for dogs of all sizes, a doggie ice cream-eating contest, doggie vendors and much more! Don’t miss it!

Saturday, Sept. 10, 10 a.m.–4 p.m.
1225 W. Belleview Ave., Englewood
Free Festival Admission, \$10 Per Dog for the Plunge



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