

GOOD TIMES



“No human can give us what Dougie gives us.”

Albie is an energetic, engaging, chatty boy, who is constantly commenting on life. However, his autism can make a lot of things extremely challenging for him.

Dougie is a handsome black Labrador who, according to Albie's mum Emma, has broken down the day-to-day barriers that made accessing life so difficult.

From not wanting to go out at all, Albie now has a list of things he'd like to do with Dougie. "Treasure hunting on the beach, forest adventures and food at the pub, apparently!" laughs Emma. "Things we'd

never have been able to successfully achieve before Dougie."

Emma says that Albie also connects with Dougie in a way he can't with humans. "Sometimes, for Albie, only Dougie will do. He remedies things in a way that doesn't ask anything of Albie."

Dougie brings happiness to the whole family and Emma says: "No human can give us what Dougie gives us. He gives us life, opportunities, joy, laughter... I'm so proud to have him in our family. He's here for Albie but he works his magic on us all."

Albie sums everything up beautifully... "Dougie is my family, I love him!"



When I joined Dogs for Good last year, I was struck by the sense of a community of people with a shared, and strongly held, common goal. Over the last 12 months, I've had the pleasure of meeting many people (and dogs) up and down the country who are invested in the work we

do to make life possible.

As I reach the end of my first year here, I want to say a sincere thank you for your continued support. From success stories featuring some of our incredible dogs, to milestones including a decade of Dementia Dog and 2,000 Family Dog families, this year will take a lot to be beaten!

People are at the heart of Dogs for Good; not only in who we support, but also those who help us.

Over the past year we have also made that a priority as we develop a new strategy and consider the values we work to; something that I'm incredibly excited to share with you in coming months.

My first year at Dogs for Good has been one of discovery, excitement about the possibilities, and transformation; it's a sign of the even better things to come.



Ed Bracher
Chief Executive

Ed's Welcome

HIGHLIGHTS



Celebrating our volunteers

There's no doubt in our mind that our volunteers are pretty great! But we're not the only ones who think so; so much so that two of our incredible volunteers have been recognised for their dedication this last year.

Firstly, Jean Darlaston was recognised with a prestigious League of Mercy award. Fewer than 30 people are selected each year.

Later, in 2023, Anna Prosser was nominated as a King's Coronation Champion and was invited to attend the Coronation Concert. Both Jean and Anna have worked tirelessly over the years for Dogs for Good, raising happy and healthy dogs that have gone on to transform lives.

Sue's Super Swim

Informally known as the Lass and the Lab, super swimmer Sue tackled an open-water swim every day in 2022. Accompanied by black Labrador Truffle, she raised an incredible £5,849 for Dogs for Good. In recognition of Truffle's dedication, a recent puppy from Vista's litter has been named in her honour.



The Martha-thon

Client Martha took on the challenge of walking an entire marathon over the month of May. Of course, her assistance dog Greg was right by her side providing moral support and motivation! Having Greg has meant that Martha's stamina and strength has improved, and she raised enough to support a dog through their advance training. Well done Martha!

Rumba at the Palace

Assistance dog Rumba had the pleasure of attending the Royal Kennel Club's 150th Anniversary Garden Party at Buckingham Palace alongside her client Isabelle and Chief Executive Ed. She even had the pleasure of meeting the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, who chatted with Isabelle about how Dogs for Good change lives.



Southam College

As their Charity of the Year, Southam College raised an incredible £15,000 for us over the past school year. Hosting events including a netball tournament and the Masked Teacher, they smashed their target and raised enough to sponsor three puppies! PE teacher Mr Turton even ran the London Marathon in aid of Dogs for Good.

Clare Balding Book

Exciting news! Not only has the fabulous Clare Balding written a lovely new book called *Isle of Dogs*, but chapter three is all about Dogs for Good. The book is available to pre-order now ahead of its publication in October. Go fetch!



Sara's 50th Dog

This year saw Training Team Lead Sara train her 50th dog! Zenny, a sweet yellow Labrador, was the special pup in question - we don't blame Sara if she has a soft spot for him! Sara's been at the charity since 2018, transforming countless lives during her time here. Without our dedicated expert trainers, we couldn't possibly have the impact we do. Thank you Sara!



Dementia Dog Project Turns 10

This year marks a decade since our Dementia Dog project was launched in collaboration with Alzheimer Scotland. The pilot project supported people with a dementia diagnosis and their partners being supported by a specially-trained dog, providing physical support, improving inclusion and reducing social isolation.

Many people connected with the Dementia Dog project attended a celebration at the V&A Museum in

Dundee. Hearing first-hand from people we supported about the incredible difference that dogs had made to their loved ones made it a truly inspiring and emotional day.

Olivia, our Director of Income Generation, said: "It's difficult to put into words the emotional charge that ran through the tightly packed room that day. Pride in what had been achieved, remembering those who were no longer with us, but most of all an overwhelming sense of community

and commitment."

Our Dementia Dog service has developed to support even more people living with dementia. New initiatives include community dogs working with individuals to reduce social isolation, increase confidence and maintain independence. We're also training volunteers and their pet dogs to hold 'Dog Days' in dementia support community groups - sessions that raise a smile amongst everyone who attends. We look forward to seeing where the next 10 years takes us.

Community Dog: Style Acre

Our Community Dog service delivers support in a variety of ways using Animal Assisted Intervention (AAI) techniques. Our super-friendly dogs work with their handlers to help people with autism, dementia and learning disabilities improve their independence, wellbeing and skills.

One of the partners we work with is Style Acre in Banbury; a charity supporting people with learning disabilities and autism.

Dogs for Good's work with Style Acre spans some seven years and currently, the sessions take place once a week for a group of three people, typically over 10-12 weeks duration.

Style Acre's manager, Fiona Kearley says: "The Dogs for Good sessions are incredibly popular and hugely successful. The activities that the handlers create are great fun and create wonderful connections between individuals and groups that probably wouldn't otherwise have happened."

Assistant Manager, Stephanie says that the current group have all benefited hugely but the change for

a lady called Jackie has been 'stand out'. "Prior to being involved in the Dogs for Good sessions, Jackie wasn't that confident," she says. "But in the past 11 weeks, she's got a newfound confidence and is much more likely to be assertive and speak up. I think it's because the activities with the dogs have given her a safe and positive way to practice being more confident."

Andrew and Theresa are part of the same group as Jackie. When asked what they love about working with Dogs for Good Community dog, Ursa, Andrew says 'Dog fantastic!' and Theresa says 'It's fantastic!'

Theresa loves grooming Ursa as she finds it very relaxing and both Andrew and Jackie love taking it in turns to hold Ursa's lead for walks into town with Ursa's handler.

Fiona says "It's wonderful to be able to offer this service to the people we support and everyone looks forward to the dogs coming! The energy within the building changes, people light up and it's a real highlight of the week."



Success Story: Kelsi & Sherlock



Kelsi's condition gives her pain so all-consuming that every week, she'd have to spend days in bed. "Whole days, not part days," she explains. "Those days saw me at my lowest mentally and physically."

In March 2022, she was matched with 'utterly hilarious' black Labrador x Golden Retriever Sherlock and since then, she hasn't had one single bed day. "Not one!" she emphasises. "I still get the same pain and in fact, this past year has been the worst to date. But Sherlock brings me so much happiness, the pain doesn't take centre stage."

Sherlock also helps Kelsi by retrieving dropped items, removing her clothing, fetching shoes and phones, loading the washing machine and getting the post. "One of my favourite things is when I've got shampoo in my eyes, he'll pass me the towel!" she says.

With Sherlock, Kelsi says she's happier, calmer and more confident. "I have a progressive illness and the future is quite scary. But I know that Sherlock will stand beside me to face the challenges. He's everything to me and the changes he's made to my life are incredible. He's absolutely the best dog."

Family Dog celebrates 2,000 families

2023 saw the Family Dog help its 2,000th family. The service pairs our experts, Hannah and Cari, with families with an autistic child looking to get the most out of their relationship with a dog. We're no strangers to the impact a dog can have on someone's life, but for an autistic child, their new friend can be life-changing. The benefits extend beyond just the child as well, touching the lives of siblings and parents so that the entire family benefits from the dog's presence.

Samira, a parent who accessed the service says: "Dogs for Good were the only ones who listened and said 'yes, we can help'. The Family Dog service taught me so much and helped me nurture a fantastic relationship between my son and our companion dog."

"One of the benefits is you are part of a community of parents with similar challenges to you. It's a pretty unique place filled with so much support and kindness."



Sponsor A Puppy

By sponsoring a puppy for yourself or as a gift for a loved one, you can follow one of our playful pup's journeys to becoming a life-changing companion. You'll receive a free puppy pack which includes an adorable soft toy, regular pupdates, and heart-melting snapshots of your sweet puppy, as well as a fantastic magnetic frame in which to display them. Sign up today at www.dogsforgood.org/puppy or call 01295 759838.

Declan



COMMUNITY

Creating a Community

How we've put volunteers at the heart of our charity this year



Jamie Macdonald

Without doubt, our volunteer colleagues are essential to our work. A great many open their hearts and homes to help us raise happy, healthy dogs who go on to make life possible for the people we support. Others brave all weathers at fundraising events, bringing in vital funds which allow us to help more people. Some deliver talks to thousands of people and organisations about what we do and why we're needed and others help us with campaigns and projects, from fundraising to delivering our services. There are a number of individuals who get behind the wheel, travelling the country as volunteer drivers and those who support our governance as Trustees. While their roles are diverse, the one thing they have in

common is that they're all part of the Dogs for Good family and we couldn't do without them.

This year, we've made a renewed commitment to the way we're working with our volunteer colleagues, ensuring their voice and expertise is captured in all that we do. Their experience and understanding is essential to the delivery of our services and we want all our Dogs for Good family to feel connected, empowered and inspired.

We were delighted to welcome Jamie Macdonald as our new Head of Volunteering and Community Engagement. This is a brand-new role which we see as key to helping us amplify the positive impact that volunteering can bring

to Dogs for Good going forward. It's been great to see lots of exciting things happening so far this year, including a new 10-point plan of key priorities for supporting our volunteer colleagues, new volunteer-run 'Pop Up Cafes' as well as some really well-attended in-person volunteer updates. It's been so lovely welcoming people back to these events after the pandemic put things on hold.

Like so many other charities, our volunteer numbers have been severely affected by the pandemic. We'd love to welcome more people to the Dogs for Good family, so if you or someone you know would like to know, please contact us.

To find out more about volunteering, visit dogsforgood.org/get-involved

Success Story: Wesley

Handsome Wesley was happy to take on the task of starring in his own social media series, *Wesley Wednesdays*.

He was quickly noted to be super calm, steady, and friendly - all perfect traits for an autism assistance dog. Though the initial training doesn't vary much with the path the dog is on, later training becomes tailored for their future job. During his early training, Wesley bonded with trainer Sara and learnt his key skills - nudging, pushing and head rest. These are all physical skills that could in future help an autistic child.

As part of his training, Wesley was out and about in the big wide world most days! Exploring new environments and learning to be comfortable in a range of settings is essential for an assistance dog. Our superstar took it all in his stride! He also got lots of

downtime too, playing with his brothers at the training centre or going on a free run with Sara.

Eventually, Wesley was introduced to his brand new jacket. Again, Wesley was soon taking this all in his stride! Before long he was able to practice his road safety skills with two people, like he would be as a qualified assistance dog, and he rocked it!

Wesley passed his 16 week assessment with flying colours and is now settling into life as an autism assistance dog. We'll hopefully provide an update on his new role in the New Year. But for now, thanks for having us along for the ride, Wesley! You're a star.



Wesley

Corporate Partnerships

It's been a great year with our friends at MORE THAN and Škoda

We're incredibly proud to be partnering with MORE THAN insurance for a third year. Together we've been highlighting the wonderful things that dogs bring to people's lives, with two exciting media campaigns.

Firstly, 'Making Sport Possible', celebrated the positive impact that inclusive sport brings to disabled people. Dogs for Good assistance dog owner, Paul, told us how his dog Nita gave him the confidence to attend football matches again and be part of a sporting community. He's not alone; we heard from many others telling us how their dogs help make connections, reclaim independence and enable them to do the things they love. Released

just before the start of the school year, our 'Making Back to School Possible' campaign focused on how dogs can provide much-needed routine, helping children get ready to learn.

We also have another exciting new partnership with the lovely folks at Škoda who've generously given us two Kamiqs to transport our dogs in safety and style! We kicked things off by working together on three short videos showcasing our work, our dogs, volunteers, staff and some of the people we support. Beautifully bright, our Dogs for Good branded Kamiqs turned many heads at Crufts, too and we're so excited for what the future holds!



Registered charity number 1092960

Want to learn more or get involved?

Get in touch:

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