



The Brigadoon Barker

Volume 1, Issue 1– Jan. 2008

Newsletter of Brigadoon Youth and Service Dog Programs

Brigadoon Youth and Service Dog Programs provides service dogs for children and adults with physical and developmental disabilities. Our dogs provide years of emotional support and physical assistance resulting in better health, independence and enhanced lives. In training our service dogs, we engage youth focusing on those with special needs. Brigadoon Youth and Service Dog Programs is a 501c3 non-profit corporation.

"Offering a Helping Paw to Make Miracles Happen!"



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Brigadoon: The Story Behind the Organization

From Our Founder

By Denise CoStanten



Denise With
Int'l Am/Can Ch.Cassidae's Brigadoon,CGC

Hello, my name is Denise CoStanten. I founded Brigadoon Youth and Service Dog Programs in August of 2004. This newsletter was started several times, but never completed due to my time limitations. To bring you up to date I'll do an introduction of how Brigadoon came to be and then give a brief look at Brigadoon from 2005 to present.

My introduction:

I first thought of training dogs to help people with disabilities back in 1994 after attending a six week intensive training program to become a professional dog trainer. Ten years would pass before the time was right for me to pursue this endeavor. This time gave me the experience of working with hundreds of people helping them to train their dogs to have good manners; I also raised several litters of collie pups; I attended every dog behavior seminar I could go to and read every book I could get my hands on. After attending another six week study program at The Assistance Dog Institute in Santa Rosa, CA; I received my accreditation to train assistance dogs. When I returned home I applied for and received 501 C 3 corporation non profit status. Next, I closed the doors to my pet dog training business and opened Brigadoon Youth and Service Dog Programs; a facility to train assistance/service dogs to help people with disabilities. But the question was who did I want to serve and how large of an organization did I want this to become? After 18 months of trial and error, this is what became very clear to me:

There was a need to be filled that was not being met by other service dog agencies; I wanted to keep it small and personal; I wanted to build a lasting relationship with all the people who received a dog from us; I wanted to help children of all ages and the at-risk teens in high school by engaging them to learn about people with disabilities and how a well trained a service dog could change their lives; I wanted to help the people who did not qualify for a dog by other agencies guidelines. I wanted to help

children with autism; to help people who are hearing and/or sight impaired, and those who had seizures. The bottom was if we could train the dog to fill a need for someone with a disability, we would.

Our accomplishments:

In four short years we have seven working dog/client teams, established a youth program in the local high school for at-risk teens; we have opened our doors to several youth groups such as a camp for autistic children, the parks and recreation youth camp, girl scouts and home schooled kids. We participate in helping high school seniors with their culminating projects. We've trained dogs for children with seizures, young adults with hearing impairments, visual impairment, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis etc.

We currently have 15 dogs in training.

Although I have had to wear many different hats while building Brigadoon, knowing that we are making a difference in the lives of people with disabilities by giving them a dog to provide years of emotional support and physical assistance resulting in better health, independence and an enhanced life makes it all worth while (please read "What People are Saying" for testimonials).

I want to thank all of those who have made our first four years possible. Without the help of our fabulous volunteers and the financial support of individuals and businesses in our community, we would not be able to keep our mission moving forward (a list of our donors and sponsors will appear in our next newsletter). We truly want to "offer a helping paw" to as many folks as we can. Thanks to all of you for believing in Brigadoon Youth and Service Dog Programs!

If you would like to know more about Brigadoon, visit our website: www.brigadoondogs.org, or come to one of our tours and meet our clever canines. Dates and times of our tours are listed on the home page of our website: www.brigadoondogs.org.



Program Updates

Brigadoon Graduating Class 2006



Our graduating client-dog teams, with the volunteers who presented the dogs.

Pictured left to right: Judy Bowers and Cyrus, Alice Johnson, Thomas Townsend and Kasey, Jean Barnett, Barb Brownfield and Colin, and Denise CoStanten

New Additions to Brigadoon



Buttercup-and Chelsea: 9 Week Old Yellow Labs Donated to Brigadoon by John & Nancy Holcomb of Oak Harbor.

Brigadoon Graduating Class 2007



Pictured left to right 2007 graduates: Beth Hall and Denver; Reyna Cervantes and Ava, and Connie Young and Barkley with hubby Barry who shares in the honors.

Youth Programs



Sehome High School pilot program

The Paws Across Campus (PAC) program engages high school students to help in the training of assistance dogs. In the process the kids learn valuable life skills such as dependability, patience, positive motivation, consistency, anger management, and leadership.



Other youth activities include the following groups: Park and Recreation, F.A.C.E.S. (A summer camp for children with autism), students that are home schooled, the girl scouts, and young adults who are developmentally disabled.

What People are Saying

Barb Brownfield & Colin



Barb sent the following e-mail describing how having an assistance dog has impacted her life:

Having Colin by my side while walking gives me a sense of confidence and security that I haven't had in years. When I feel wobbly or unsteady, I take hold of the harness handle until I regain my equilibrium. Moreover, just hanging on to his leash seems to have a steadying effect and I am able to move more quickly in a straight line, reducing my tendency to stagger and fall. I am happy to feel my legs getting stronger as I increase our walking time. He loves to bring me things, my clothes, shoes, anything that falls to the floor he believes needs to be picked up.

Over the past month we have gone everywhere together, my yoga and exercise classes, swimming, medical appointments, restaurants, stores, visits with friends, and work. We take at least three walks daily to the park and around the neighborhood. He wakes me every morning by poking his long nose in my face. His eagerness and happiness to see me are infectious, making the transition from the oblivion of sleep to life in the real world much easier. He's the best anti-depressant I've ever had!

My favorite activity with him is spending time in my best-loved bookstore, browsing the shelves, sitting and reading and having coffee. Colin seems to enjoy this as well. There are many people to admire him and when he tires of being the center of attention, he can nap. I feel a debt of gratitude to Denise, not just for her work in training Colin, but for raising him as her personal dog with so much love and attention. I think this combination has resulted in the perfect balance of a skilled and reliable assistance dog with an affectionate and unique personality. He is so professional and well-behaved in public areas yet feels free to show his exuberant, silly side at home. I guess I am somewhat that way myself, so we are a perfect match!

Comments From Our Trainer



Trainer Kathleen Ball and Dogs Practice a Group Stay. Dogs From Left: Ozzie, Stryker, Janey, Nugget, Luke

Hi everyone. I'm Kathleen, the new trainer that Denise hired. I've done obedience training in the past as well as training my own dog for Search and Rescue. I liked SAR because I felt that I was contributing to the community. Believe me, it was nothing compared to how I feel about training Brigadoon dogs. Training dogs to help others gives me a real sense of purpose and meaning knowing that these dogs are going to have a positive impact on the quality of life to the people they partner with. The dogs here are very intelligent and a joy to work with and Denise is doing a great job of teaching me the things that service dogs need to know.

Denise:

Now that Kathleen has been here for a while, I cannot imagine how I ever got anything done before. She is such a help and the dogs absolutely love her. One of the greatest things about Kathleen is that she is open minded about suggestions in how to solve training problems. Kathleen is a real joy to work with and a great asset to Brigadoon.

From a Volunteer

Hi, my name is Miles Olszko. For the past year-and-a-half I've volunteered time to walk dogs and work on projects at Brigadoon (One such project had me helping whelp our newest litter of collie pups). During that time I've had the privilege of participating in the growth of an extraordinary organization. The dogs are a blessing twice over- once for the kids who work with them through the PAC program, and again for the folks with whom they are partnered. As a student, I lead a busy life besides, but my tight knit Brigadoon family always keeps me coming back!