



# Ability Dogs 4 Young People

**News Update, October 2015**

As Ability Dogs 4 Young People quickly approaches three and a half years, I have a lot to share with you in this newsletter. We now have five working Ability Dogs, a Therapy Ability Dog and a newly placed Companion Dog. We have a further twelve puppies in training. Here on the Island we are helping young people with cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and autism. Some of the relationships are blossoming whilst others are in their early stages, but all our ability dogs are already making a huge difference to the independence and self-confidence of their recipients. It is lovely to see and it has all been made possible by the dedication of our volunteers and the support of so many generous Island people. Thank you.

## **Our Ability Dogs:**

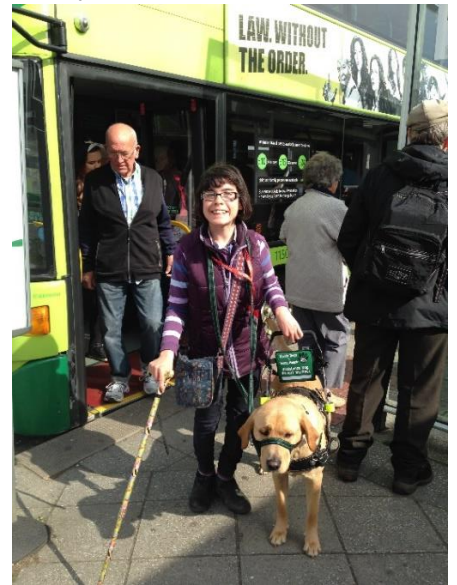
Georgie, our first Ability Dog, has matured wonderfully. He and Christina make an extraordinary team. Christina's confidence has grown and she has achieved some wonderful things this year with Georgie's help, of course. She has taken her first solo bus ride into Newport with Georgie by her side, and now she looks set to achieve one of her dreams. When we first started to train Georgie for her, she said, "I want to leave college at lunch-time and walk into Newport with my friends. After having a MacDonalld's, I want to catch the bus home." This dream will soon be a reality.

Georgie also helps Christina at Medina swimming pool. After helping her in the changing room, he walks her to the pool-side, where she puts down her stick and gets in the water. He picks up her stick, carries it to the edge and then waits for her to finish swimming. He keeps a close eye on her – he is very concerned if she dives under the water! When she's finished her swim, he carries her stick back to the pool-side and then walks her back to the changing room to help her get changed. Julie, Christina's mum, says "I can see the day when I drop Christina and Georgie off at the door and leave them to it. I could not have imagined this ever happening before Georgie came along."

Sheriff is one of our newly placed Ability Dogs, (since June 2015). He is helping Jon, who has just started at the Isle of Wight College, is 16 years old and has autism. Like many

people on the autism spectrum, Jon suffers with extreme anxiety and would rather stay in his bedroom than brave the outside world. However, with Sheriff by his side, Jon has been able to go into shops and buy things. He feels confident enough to talk to people about Sheriff and he is altogether much happier.

Recently Jon was standing in a shop waiting while his mum and brother were busy, the shop keeper came and spoke to Jon. She asked if she could say hello to Sheriff and then asked Jon if he minded telling her how Sheriff helps him. Jon proudly said, "I have autism, although you would not know it to look at me. Sheriff is my constant companion. Without him by my side I would probably not be able to come into this shop, let alone be able to speak to you." This really sums up the huge positive change Sheriff has brought about in just a few months.



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Patron: Danny Briggs

Phone: 01983 216246 Email: [info@abilitydogs4yp.org.uk](mailto:info@abilitydogs4yp.org.uk) Website: [www.abilitydogs4yp.org.uk](http://www.abilitydogs4yp.org.uk)

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**Training assistance dogs for disabled young people on the Isle of Wight**



# Ability Dogs

## 4 Young People

### Our Young Training Ability Dogs and Puppies:

We have already started training our next three young ability dogs, Yara, Magic and Bailey. We have matched Yara and Magic with two young people with cerebral palsy, and Bailey with a young lad with autism. For the next four to six months our Ability Dog Trainers, Sarah and Hester will be covering all their advanced training to include all the task work required (helping to get undressed, open doors, etc.)

We will also be working with the recipients and their families to show them how to work with their ability dogs. We have started meeting one day a week and will slowly increase this as time goes on. In a few months we will arrange their first 'sleep-over' so that when the trained ability dog moves in everyone is fully prepared, including the dogs. Even then, the trainers will continue to visit each week to cover and recover every aspect of their training. Finally the trainers start to visit less frequently, but continue to be there as needed and supporting them every step of the way.



Nellie and Radar are our latest puppies, which brings the total of puppies in training to nine; so we are now at full capacity. Other new puppies this year include Robin (our first Red Fox Labrador) who was born on the Island, and XJay and Tessa who are from the same mating as Magic. Magic is such a calm and bright little girl, we jumped at the chance when her breeder told us she was having a litter.

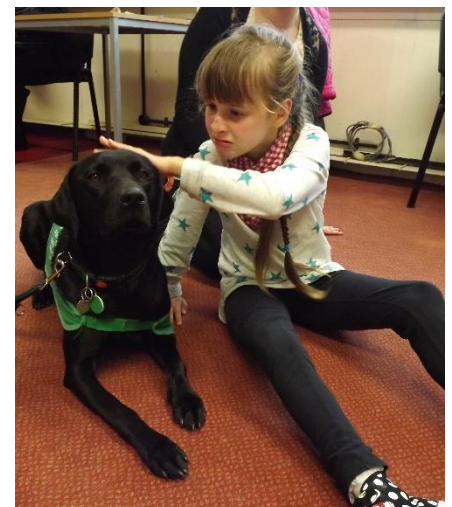


In June we took on a Puppy Training Supervisor to help with all the work coordinating the puppy parents. Jane works part-time and now runs the weekly puppy classes as well as trains and supports the puppy parents in and around their homes. With so many new puppy parents who have recently come on board, she certainly has her work cut out. However, she is bringing new experiences to the charity and the puppies are all moving forward in the right direction.

### 'Paws 4 U' Time

Our waiting list is growing fast and we are getting well-known around the Island. We have well over 40 young people and children on our waiting list each with their individual needs.

Our weekly 'Paws 4 U' Time are proving very popular and very successful. These are sessions where we invite small groups of recipients on our waiting list to come into our Training Centre to meet and interact with our young dogs and puppies. They enjoy playing with and are learning how to handle a dog. It is also providing us with the opportunity to get to know each of them better and chat with their parents and carers, which ultimately helps us to better match and train an Ability Dog for them.



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### Training Centre

The charity has moved forward in leaps and bounds since we moved into our Training Centre in September 2014, an old hangar at Sandown Airport. The additional and permanent space it provides is really helping us to train our puppies and our young Ability Dogs. It is proving to be very beneficial as we work with our new recipients when they start training with their ability dogs, and we are able to use the space to work much more closely with our recipients and their families. The office and the extra storage rooms are all helping us to be much more efficient.

However, being an old hangar (with offices) it has needed and still needs a 'makeover'. We have put in the required fire doors and are fitting self-closers which are compatible with wheelchair users. A fire detection and lighting system has been put in by one of our puppy parent's husband who is a qualified electrician, although it still needs additional lighting, in the training hall, for example. We are planning to resurface the muddy car park with a surface usable by wheelchairs and add ramps to each outside door for accessibility.

We still have plans to modify the current toilet configuration to provide an essential wheelchair accessible toilet for our disabled youngsters, and give more of it a coat of paint. We have gained some funding for this and offers of help, so it is all coming together (although we still need more).



### Charity Shops

We opened two charity shops in 2014, one in Sandown and the other in Shanklin. These are run by very dedicated teams of volunteers managed by Geoff and Rose, also volunteers. These are providing an important regular income from donated items, a form of recycling for charitable benefit. We are always amazed at the amount of kind donations we are offered, from mini house clearances to single items and everything in between. We are also fortunate to have Rob helping as he is able to PAT test all the donated electrical items, and his wife Jacqui who puts lots of items on Wightbay.

We are using part of the hangar to store donated items, especially furniture and clothes for recycling. We would like to open another charity shop in another town on the Island in 2016, but do need a dedicated volunteer manager to help us.

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### Fund Raising News

This year has been busier than ever with lots of fairs and collection days. At each event we both raise money, with games, merchandise and donations and raise awareness. It is a delight to tell people about the charity whilst they are giving one of our puppies a lovely stroke.

As we are now becoming more well-known around the Island, we are delighted that lots of groups are choosing to support us and are raising money for us with their events and activities. We were the Jaguar Enthusiasts' Club's selected charity for the second year and they raised a further £2,500 for us. We are the chosen charity for Sainsbury's in Newport and Sandown this year, following Freshwater last year. And we are now the chosen charity for White Stuff in Cowes. Lots of groups and

individuals have raised money for us including Rotary, Masons, WI's, scouting and guiding groups and many, many more. Thank you everyone.

### More about Ability Dogs 4 Young People:

Ability Dogs 4 Young People is a unique Island charity dedicated to improving the quality of life for young people and children on the Isle of Wight with physical disabilities and/or mental disabilities including cerebral palsy, autism and epilepsy.

The needs of the disabled young people and children addressed by Ability Dogs 4 Young People are broad ranging and depend on the nature of the individuals' disabilities. For example, children with cerebral palsy need practical help with tasks like picking up dropped items, help with getting dressed, opening doors, going to college and socialising with friends. Those with epilepsy need an ability dog to raise an alarm to summon help when they have a fit, and to provide comfort and reassurance. Those on the autistic spectrum benefit from the special companionship an ability dog provides which has an immediate effect on their well-being, confidence and their capability to form relationships.

Each Ability Dog is trained individually to meet the specific and varied needs of their recipients. As well as practical help, our dogs provide companionship and relieve stress. This includes keeping the recipient calm in public places and providing a positive 'flag' so people are aware that the recipient needs extra help and consideration. It may include helping with sleep problems such as night terrors.

Training a puppy to be an Ability Dog takes two years. Once fully trained each Ability Dog lives with a young recipient who we support. We fully fund the working Ability Dogs (paying for food, equipment and vet bills), so we can give all the benefits without an added financial burden. There are more than 700 disabled young people under the age of 24 years living on the Isle of Wight, and we currently have over 40 young people and children on our ever growing waiting list.

**THANK YOU.** Thank you to everyone who has supported the charity with donations of time and money.



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