



Hearing Dogs
for Deaf People

Favour

Issue 66
AUTUMN
2022
£1.75 when sold

The magazine from Hearing Dogs for Deaf People

A special appeal

Jackie needs a new hearing dog to stop her feeling alone and afraid

A lifetime of help

How we support our hearing dog partnerships



“Hearing Dogs is my second family”

Amelia's special bond with everyone who brought up her hearing dog Scamp

40th
Anniversary
Issue

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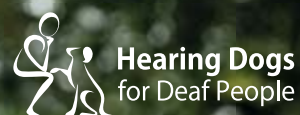
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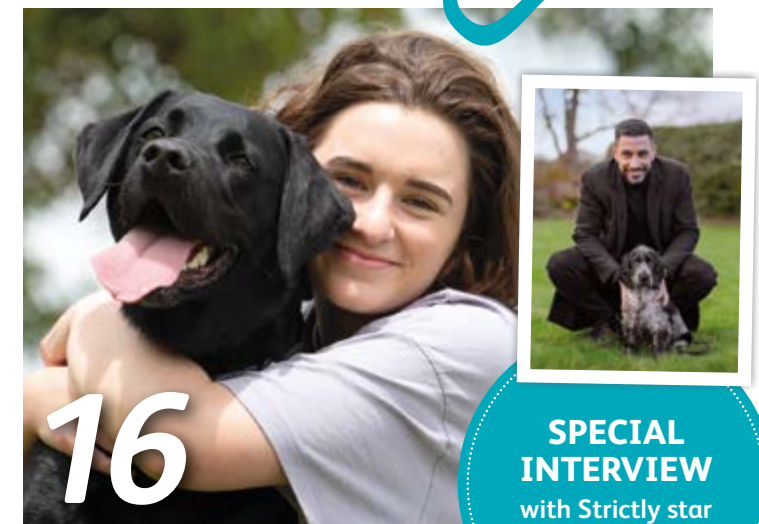
Find out more at
hearingdogs.org.uk/london



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**SPECIAL
INTERVIEW**
with Strictly star
Giovanni Pernice,
page 30

Welcome!

When you support Hearing Dogs, you change deaf people's
lives forever.

Thanks to you, we can offer people a lifetime of support.
For some, the support of one hearing dog gives them the
confidence to live the rest of their life without the need for
another dog. In these cases, we can continue supporting
them through our range of personalised
services, such as our Helpdesk and
LinkUps. For those who need another
dog, we have 'successor' dogs. Jackie's
story (p8) proves just how important
your long-term support is.

Thank you again and we hope
you enjoy this issue.



Favour

magazine is named after Hearing Dogs' very first dog, Favour.

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Cover photo by Paul Wilkinson

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Newshound

Updates from our latest appeals and news about our favourite dogs – we sniff out the stories that matter to you...



SUPPORT

BBC Lifeline Appeal

We were fortunate enough to be featured on a national BBC television broadcast in February, which you may have seen. We were chosen for the BBC Lifeline Appeal – a monthly television appeal that highlights the work of a charity. It was a fantastic opportunity for viewers to learn more about Hearing Dogs and find out how the practical and emotional support a hearing dog provides can transform a deaf person's life.

and helped her leave loneliness behind. The film also featured Chalky who constantly worried about missing sounds and about her daughter's safety until friendly Labrador Eddison bounded into her world. James also shared his story about how his hearing dog Cracker makes everyone aware of his deafness, which is particularly important during his journey to work and in the office.



For so many deaf people, a hearing dog is their lifeline and the kind people who donated raised a total of £22,000 to help train more life-changing dogs! Thank you to all of you who watched and donated to our Lifeline Appeal. If you didn't get the chance to watch it, you can catch up on the 10-minute film on our YouTube channel.



HEARING DOGS 'PASSES GO'

Hearing Dogs has been chosen to feature on a special High Wycombe edition of the Monopoly board game! High Wycombe is the nearest town to our Southern training centre and we were delighted to find out that we had been voted as the top charity to feature on one of the board's Community Chest spaces.

We are grateful to the amazing residents of High Wycombe who not only voted for us, but who have always been so supportive of Hearing Dogs since our training centre, The Grange, opened in 1999.

It's a great opportunity to raise more awareness of our Charity and recognises the incredible volunteers, partnerships and staff in High Wycombe and the local establishments who warmly welcome us into their premises to train our puppies.

The game will be out in October and will be available to purchase at all major toy and book stores in High Wycombe and widely online.



LEADERSHIP

Michele Jennings: Over ten years of helping people with hearing loss

After 10 and a half years as Chief Executive of Hearing Dogs, Michele Jennings stepped down from her role in July. Here we take a look at Michele's time with the Charity and some of the ways Hearing Dogs developed under her leadership.



Michele joined Hearing Dogs after a successful career spanning over two decades in the commercial sector. Over the last 10 years, Hearing Dogs has grown considerably under Michele's leadership and now helps thousands more deaf adults and children, and people with hearing loss.

Through our merger with Hearing Link in 2017, we increased our range of personalised hearing loss services beyond the provision of assistance dogs, to help more people. Through the expansion of our UK-wide presence, our dog training centres in Yorkshire and Buckinghamshire, an increase in the number of highly-skilled hearing dogs being trained every year, and the creation of our 180 seater dog-friendly, deaf-friendly restaurant in Saunderton, Buckinghamshire, the Charity grew steadily and effectively during Michele's tenure. The Charity now has thousands of kind supporters and a family of over 3,000 amazing volunteers, who share Michele's passion for changing the lives of people with hearing loss.

In recent times, Michele led Hearing Dogs safely and successfully through the severe challenges of the prolonged Covid pandemic and the Charity emerged stronger than ever thanks to her leadership. She leaves the Charity in a strong position with a widely respected operational and reputational basis on which to move forward.

Michele's warm, engaging personality and her dedication to helping as many deaf people and people with hearing loss as possible, as well as her life-long love of dogs, inspired staff and volunteers alike. She fully recognised how vital each member of the Hearing Dogs family is, and built great relationships with volunteers, donors and beneficiaries, as well as staff.

Michele says: "I am full of gratitude for everything I have learned over the last decade from our wonderful supporters, our kind and engaged volunteers, our super staff, and the many deaf children and adults and people with hearing loss, it's been my honour to get to know. I hope to volunteer for Hearing Dogs in the future after I have recharged my batteries, and in

the meantime, I will be cheering for even greater success for Hearing Dogs." At the time of writing, two of the Charity's executive team, Cliff Hedley and Jo Gray, were appointed as interim Chief Financial Officer and interim Chief Operations Officer respectively, acting as joint heads of the Charity until Michele's successor as Chief Executive has been appointed.



STAY IN TOUCH:  twitter.com/hearingdogs  facebook.com/hearingdogs  hearingdogs.org.uk



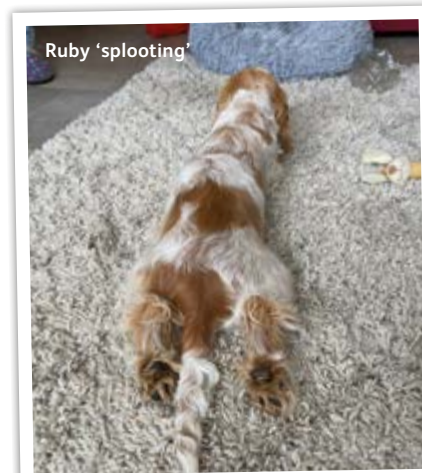
APPEAL UPDATE

Ruby: A prized gem

In the last issue of Favour, we introduced you to little Ruby – a very special Cocker Spaniel puppy whom we'd named to celebrate our 40th anniversary, and whose training is being paid for by kind donors. So, how is she doing?

Like all our puppies in training, Ruby is spending her first year in a volunteer's loving home. Dawn is her Volunteer Puppy Trainer, and she's been bringing up Ruby to be a happy, healthy, well-behaved little girl. So, we dropped in to ask how things are going.

Over to Dawn: "The first night, I think I was the apprehensive one! I was so worried that she would miss her mum and siblings once the light was turned off.



"THANKS TO RUBY, I HAVE A NEW WORD IN MY VOCABULARY: 'SPLOOT'."

"So, I made sure the piece of fluffy blanket that had come from Mum was beside her, with the fleece I had been wearing, and a soft toy to cuddle. Then I added a couple of little soft, fleecy blankets, to make sure she was comfortable. Then I added another toy, in case she didn't like the first one.

"I needn't have worried. She was fine, and now she sleeps right the way through until about 7am."

First nights can always be a bit worrisome for all concerned, but it seems Dawn did exactly the right thing with blankets, fleeces, more blankets, toys... and more toys! So, how have things been since then?

"It took hardly any time at all for Ruby to make herself completely at home. We already have a nice routine of walking and training. Ruby is fairly traditional as far as sleeping location is concerned. Her bed is in a quiet spot in the kitchen."

Of course, as well as lots of love from Dawn, Ruby is well into her training now, led by trainer Darcy.

"She is a clever girl, who picks up her training quickly," Darcy tells us. "She's already learned all her basic cues such as 'sit' and 'wait', and can play nicely with other dogs and people.

"She's just starting to learn to settle, and we're also about to start visiting public spaces like garden centres and dog-friendly cafés, so that Ruby can build her confidence in busier places. Then we'll build up to noisier environments such as the high street."

Back to Dawn: "She's already developed funny unique little habits. When she thinks it should be dinner time, she emits a grumbling whine which sounds exactly like a Siamese cat I once had. Of course, I'll be gently training her not to do that – but, for the time being, it makes me smile."

It makes Darcy smile too! "It's just a little grumble. She's a feisty little madam! We're working on this by practising our puppy patience."

So, it's all about public places and practising puppy patience. Quite the tongue-twister! And talking of words, here's what else Dawn tells us: "Thanks to Ruby, I have a new word in my vocabulary: 'sploot'."

"The first time I saw Ruby stretch out, leaving both hind legs flat on the ground, I worried that there was something wrong with her. I had never seen any dog do this before, and it looked rather odd to me.

"So, I asked Darcy. She told me it was called 'splooting'. I honestly thought she had made this word up, but after Googling it, I found it does exist! Who knew?

"Now I just think she looks really cute when she sploots!"

THANK YOU

Thanks to your support, so far we have raised £21,913.50 for Ruby. Training, equipment, food, toys, vet fees, it all adds up. It's through your kindness that she's come this far already. To find out more, visit hearingdogs.org.uk/ruby



VIP GUEST

Giovanni Pernice meets our puppies

Strictly star, Giovanni Pernice, who won the latest series of *Strictly Come Dancing* with deaf actress, Rose Ayling-Ellis, visited our Southern training centre recently for the Channel 4 show, *Steph's Packed Lunch*.

Giovanni and Rose have shone the light on deaf awareness, notably winning the Must-See Moment BAFTA for their silent dance that paid tribute to the deaf community, so it was wonderful to welcome Giovanni to The Grange to find out how deaf people can be helped by a hearing dog. Giovanni was keen to speak to someone about their experience with hearing loss and find out how their hearing dog helps them. The fantastic team at *Steph's Packed Lunch* filmed Giovanni chatting to Nadine, who revealed how her

hearing dog Elvis alerts her to important sounds and helps her feel more confident.

Giovanni also got the chance to see how our clever canines alert their deaf partners to the sound of an incoming Skype call as well as a smoke alarm. He also put his expert teaching skills to the test and helped hearing-dog-in-training Mitchell take on Temptation Alley – a test to see how our hearing dogs deal with distractions. Giovanni even met our very own Rose – an 18-week-old puppy training to become a life-changing hearing dog.

If you missed it, you can catch up on the action on our website hearingdogs.org.uk/blog/StephsPackedLunch

Giovanni chats more about *Strictly* and his visit to Hearing Dogs in our Paws for Coffee interview on page 30.

AFTERNOON TEA AT THE GRANGE RESTAURANT

An experience makes such an enjoyable and memorable gift, so why not make someone's day with a gift card for Afternoon Tea at The Grange, set in the heart of the Chiltern Hills? Our elegant 'Classic', 'Sparkling' and 'G&Tea' Afternoon Teas include a perfect selection of sweet and savoury treats served with your favourite tea, a small bottle of chilled prosecco or a gin & tonic twist. With 98% of our customers recommending us, the reviews speak for themselves: "Afternoon Tea was delicious. We will be back!", reads one. Another review, "Our Afternoon Tea was the best I've ever had. I couldn't have asked for more!". Visit our Shop to purchase an Afternoon Tea Gift Card, hearingdogs.org.uk/shop, or pop by and treat yourself if you live in the area!



Wycombe Wanderers visit The Grange

We were delighted to welcome three members of the Wycombe Wanderers football team to our Southern training centre in April.

Dominic Gape, David Wheeler and Tyla Dickinson came to meet some pups in training and see first-hand how our dogs transform the lives of deaf people.

We pitted the players against our pups in a series of drills. The boys went head-to-head with hearing dog Pip, testing their ball balancing skills whilst Pip practised her

'wait' cue, in a challenge of patience – we'll let you guess who came out on top!

Dominic, David and Tyla also had a go at being alerted to sounds by demonstration dog, Vogue (see photo).

Wycombe Wanderers have kindly supported us for several years, holding collections at their matches and visiting us too. We are very appreciative of their continued support (and our puppies were grateful for all the fuss and cuddles too)! Thank you Wycombe Wanderers!



STAY IN TOUCH: twitter.com/hearingdogs facebook.com/hearingdogs hearingdogs.org.uk

“WITHOUT QUATTRO, I FACE THE DAY ALONE AGAIN”



With hearing dog Quattro, Jackie felt part of the world around her. Since Quattro passed away, that world has shrunk, and she feels terribly lonely. But you can help Jackie get back what she has lost...

I was so proud to start a family, but that's when my deafness raised its head. As a new mum, I was terrified because I couldn't hear my babies crying. I was always anxious.

Later, I depended on my children to tell me when the phone was ringing, or someone was at the door. I felt it should have been the other way around. Mums shouldn't depend on their children.

I also couldn't chat with other mums at school – parenting tips, local news, jokes, that sort of thing. I started to struggle, looking after a family in my silent world.

Eventually, having lost all my confidence to interact with life around me, I retreated from it.

Quattro: Gentle as a feather

My mother and auntie had hearing dogs, and they were amazing. So, feeling increasingly hopeless because of my deafness, I approached Hearing Dogs for help.

Then Quattro came into my life. We bonded immediately, and I changed overnight.

For the first time ever, I didn't have to rely on someone waking me up! Quattro was there, wagging her tail.

She nudged me with her nose to alert me to the phone, doorbell, cooker timer, my children crying – all those things going on around me that I didn't know about, which had made me feel so insecure.

Just two months later, I joined a mother and baby group and made friends. Quattro let the toddlers stroke her lovely soft fur. She was as gentle as a feather.

Quattro made life with deafness actually 'liveable', with my faithful companion by my side. Life even became fun again, with happy mornings, helpful nose nudges, and new friends.



Jackie with hearing dog Quattro

Grieving alone

I had Quattro for many beautiful years. When she passed away, all that stopped.

No more happy mornings. No more nose nudges. No new friends.

Now, without Quattro, I feel so lonely. I'm living on my own because my children have grown up and left home. Each daunting, dreaded day brings a new challenge which I face alone.

I hate not knowing what's going on around me. For example, if I'm expecting a delivery, I watch and wait for it all day, because I can't hear the doorbell or knock. If I miss it, I get very upset.

I spend most of my time alone and isolated. I don't feel safe in public, because I can't hear things such as cars, alarms and announcements. Since I don't go out, I'm unable to maintain good relationships with people, and I feel cut off from the world.



Without a nose nudge for the doorbell it can be easy to miss visitors and deliveries

Photos by Paul Wilkinson



“I FEEL SO LONELY WITHOUT QUATTRO BY MY SIDE”

I feel like I don't have a social life anymore, so my self-esteem has plummeted, and I feel lonely all the time. I need another hearing dog to pull me out of these dark times.

I also worry a lot at night, on my own. After trying everything else, I now know that only a hearing dog can reliably wake me up at a specific time, when the alarm clock goes. I work at a supermarket, and when I have an early shift, I worry so much about missing the alarm that I simply do not sleep. It's exhausting.

I so very much want to embrace life, but I can't because I don't have my beautiful, gentle Quattro to look after me. She helped me become more involved with the world around me. Now, all that has gone.

I need a new hearing dog – what they call a 'successor dog'. I need a new friend, who will take over where Quattro left me. I need the profound trust that will help me to stop feeling afraid, lost and alone. 🐾

HELP JACKIE TODAY

🐾 Please consider donating to Hearing Dogs to help us train another hearing dog for Jackie and others like her. Thank you.

How to donate

🐾 If this magazine has been mailed to you, please use the donation form enclosed

🐾 Write a cheque to Hearing Dogs for Deaf People and post to: **Freepost RSGX-LSRG-UCGH, Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, The Grange, Wycombe Road, Saunderton, Princes Risborough, HP27 9NS**

🐾 Donate online at hearingdogs.org.uk/jackie



A lifetime of support

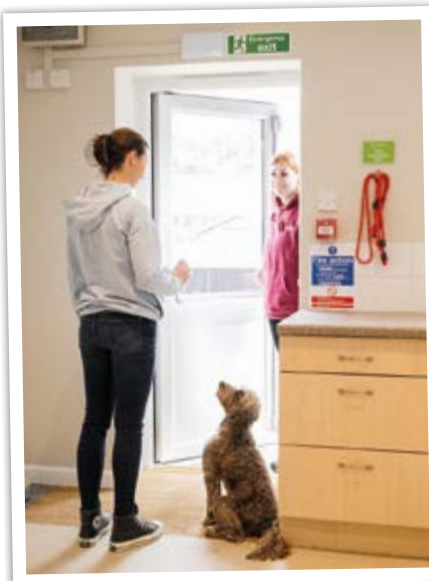
We train our hearing dogs to alert deaf people to a variety of sounds, but it doesn't stop there. Our support of a hearing dog partnership never ends

A lot can change during the life of a hearing dog partnership, such as moving house or a change of job. Our Partnership Instructors (PIs) support every hearing dog partnership and are on hand to help with any new or continued training that is needed. Depending on the area of need, PIs can offer this support either remotely, in the community at events, or in the home.

Someone's at the door

Can you imagine the frustration of waiting at home for a delivery, only not to hear the doorbell and miss it? Or expecting a visitor, and looking anxiously out of the window waiting? This is why we train our dogs to alert to the doorbell.

All doorbells and house layouts differ, so we help the hearing dog get used to working in their specific home environment. Naturally people move house over time. A new house means a new way of working and perhaps a new doorbell sound.



Our PIs will help the partnership practise the alert in all areas of the house and garden. The dog needs to learn to alert their deaf partner whatever they are doing, whether that be washing up, watching TV, hoovering, or doing the gardening.

Our dogs love working to the doorbell because there is a new person to greet. However, it is not always appropriate to allow the hearing dog to greet the visitor. In this case, our PIs will help the partnership to find a suitable area near the door where the dog can wait safely on a mat whilst their deaf partner opens the door.

Our children's hearing dogs don't alert to the doorbell for safety reasons, but children grow up! At the age of 18, our PIs can train their dog to recognise the sound of the doorbell.



Reliable recall

So that our deaf partners can reconnect with people and the world around them, they need to feel confident that their dog will always come back when called. However, some dogs can become distracted by interesting smells, sights and sounds when off lead on a walk.

In these cases, our PIs are there to help! They have plenty of tips and suggestions to help improve recall behaviour and make sure the dog comes back safely.

They might suggest using different

value treats as rewards, for example an extra tasty treat for a really good recall. They can also teach our deaf partners some games they can play with their hearing dog, that satisfy their instincts to explore and sniff. Then next time, their dog is more likely to return because they have had an outlet for their natural instincts, and because their deaf partner is really fun to be around.



All aboard

Many of our deaf partners use public transport. Seeing friends and family or getting to work, or just having a fun day out is all part of leading a full life.

As with moving houses however, circumstances change from time to time. Perhaps a new job means getting the bus or a new route means a busier train. These changes might mean our hearing dogs need some extra help.

Like any new experience, we take lots of care. Before they travel on public transport, our PIs will accompany the partnership to the platform or bus stop at first. After building up their confidence, the deaf partner can gradually increase the journey time and help their dog learn to settle. This means the partnership can enjoy getting out and about together.



Partnership Instructor



CARISSA WADEY

Being a PI is a very rewarding and enjoyable job. It is also very varied; every day is different. My role is to support the hearing dog partnerships in my area. I might give advice for working to sounds in the home, or dog training and behaviour advice on walks, or while the hearing dog is in uniform in public places. I also run lots of events in the community which are so valuable for social connections for our partnerships. For example, I run community days and group dog walks, and our partnerships really love to get together and share experiences at these social events. It is not always easy, as I support our partnerships through many of life's challenges, but I am very lucky to have a job that makes such a positive difference to the lives of deaf people. Our hearing dog partners know that they can always contact us for help, whatever their circumstances, and we'll always be there to support them.

Danger sounds

We train our dogs to indoor danger sounds such as the smoke alarm, intruder alarm or carbon monoxide alarm. We also train our dogs to the fire siren at the workplace and in public places.

These are the most important sounds but are the least frequently heard. This means our deaf partners need to practise the alert with their dog to ensure they can act as lifesavers if necessary.

Our PIs can help when a new danger sound is introduced. For example, if a deaf person starts a new job, the office alarms might be different. Our PIs can help identify whether new training is needed and again, have novel ways of doing this, for example recording the sound so it can be practised at home. Plenty of fusses, treats and lots of love later, the hearing dog is confident to work to that new danger sound. Another problem solved, thanks to the innovation and dedication of our PIs.



LIFE SCARED ME MORE THAN DEATH DID

First, Ian lost his hearing aids. Then, he faced losing his hearing dog. Find out how he addressed these challenges, and his advice for those facing similar, sudden, profound changes in their hearing loss journey...

Today, Ian is inseparable from beloved hearing dog Vectra. “He’s a very sweet and sensitive soul,” he tells us quietly. “He makes me laugh by his general clowning about.”

But life wasn’t always like this. Indeed, for Ian, life was overwhelmingly challenging before his first hearing dog Hettie – and then when Hettie neared retirement, he faced these challenges again, as the prospect of life without a canine companion loomed large.

Ian explains: “I was a premature baby, which caused my deafness.



Main photos by Tom Powell

“Growing up in the 1970s, the technology wasn’t very sophisticated. I carried a box receiver around my neck, connected to hearing aids. Whoever wanted to speak to me would have a smaller box and a microphone.

“Those hearing aids weren’t ideal, but I managed to learn at school.

“However, the hearing aids started to cause me real problems. I kept getting terrible ear infections. Then, I got a really nasty infection that hospitalised me. After this I was told no more hearing aids.”

A sudden, silent shock

So, Ian’s hearing aids, which were a solution of sorts, had been taken away. What impact did this have on him?

“It was a sudden, silent shock. The aids were a backup, even if I could only wear them for a short while. I’d lost the ability to communicate.

“I withdrew into myself and away from the world. I was left alone with my thoughts, and it was scary how dark they became.

“I ended up with really severe mental health problems – isolation, depression and paranoia.

“Life was basically pills and visits to healthcare professionals, who became my only contact with the outside world. I never left the house because I was scared of communicating.”

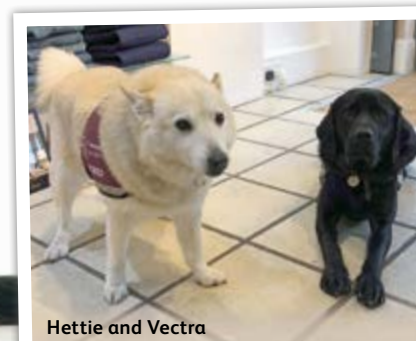
Hearing dog Hettie – the bright, shining light

“One morning, while waiting for my social worker, I noticed a leaflet for Hearing Dogs. On applying, while I did feel nervous, I felt more positive as life seemed to have a goal.

“Hettie came to live with me on 25 June 2005. From that date onwards, instead of tears, there was much laughter.

“Yes, she enabled me to be aware of sounds such as the doorbell, alarm clock and so on, but the relationship ran deep. She gave me trust and took away my fear.

“Before Hettie, I couldn’t go out as I was fearful of people talking to me, fearful of not being understood or of being misunderstood.



Hettie and Vectra



“I’M A DIFFERENT PERSON NOW, WITH A MORE POSITIVE OUTLOOK”

“With Hettie, I felt ten feet tall. I started to look forward to the things I couldn’t do before, simple things like go for a cup of coffee and feel relaxed. I made new friends and found new interests.

“When she woke me up in the morning I could see the love in her eyes. It filled me with joy. She was my bright shining light.”

A new journey

Clearly Hettie was exactly what Ian needed – a faithful friend, a light in what had become a dark world. However, as Hettie came to the end of her working life, Ian started to become fearful all over again, as he couldn’t imagine how another dog could take on this role.

He continues: “Then I realised, I had changed so much as a person. Hettie helped me to address my mental health challenges. Vectra is a different dog, but I’m also a different person now, with a more positive outlook and a family around me.

“So, Vectra is much more about practically helping me with sounds, and flagging to other people that I’m deaf. Hettie was my saviour that gave me life; Vectra has taken me on a new journey to a more normal and settled family life. I love him dearly.”

After Hettie retired, she continued to live with Ian and his family as a beloved pet. Sadly, she died in 2018.

When Ian talks about a ‘more normal and settled family life’, this is a major achievement. He tells us, with all seriousness: “Simply put, I wouldn’t be here if it weren’t for my hearing dogs. Life scared me more than death did.”


With the help of his hearing dogs, he’s managed to face his fears, not just once, but twice. 🐾


Ian’s tips

When you hit a bump in the road, and a service or product you once relied on has gone, it can be extremely worrying. Here’s Ian’s advice for those experiencing a similar situation:

DON’T SUFFER ALONE.

In particular, don’t resort to alcohol or drugs because when you’re sober again, you’re still deaf.

 **REACH OUT TO SUPPORT SERVICES.** Both medical and social. They are often staffed by people with lived experience of what you’re going through, and can genuinely help.

 **CONSIDER CONTACTING HEARING DOGS.** They are life-saving as well as life-changing.



"I would love to thank all the people who sponsored Arya"

How sponsoring a puppy can transform a life



Arya was once a cute little cuddly puppy – strong-willed, smart, and sleepy. Today she's totally transformed Peter's life, thanks to the kindness of people who sponsored her...



It's hard to believe how dark Arya's fur was when she was just a puppy, she looks like a different dog now!

Peter's deafness was not diagnosed until he was 50. He explains: "I believe I started going deaf at an early age, as people asked me why I often said 'Pardon?'. Eventually a doctor told me I was profoundly deaf, and that my hearing will continue to deteriorate. Nobody knows why."

"I studied very hard to pass all my exams, and then I worked for the fire service. I was a full-time firefighter for 18 years."

"It was a very fulfilling career, and I don't believe my deafness had any impact on my ability. Eventually, after breaking my arm and having problems during rescues, I was medically discharged."



Becoming more isolated

Even though Peter made a life for himself, got married, started a family and held a very responsible job, his deafness made things increasingly difficult.

"It became very frustrating," he says. "I would just agree with people although I didn't know what they were saying, because it was easier. I couldn't hear the doorbell, so I'd miss visitors. I couldn't hear the TV."

"When my wife passed away 14 years ago, I felt very lonely. Plus, after my time in the fire service, I became very worried about not responding to the smoke or fire alarm."

"As the years passed, I became more isolated. I decided to work on my own, renovating houses. It was easier being by myself, but I became very lonely and

depressed – it was a difficult time for me. "When I found out about Hearing Dogs, I donated to the Charity. Then I realised it might be a good idea to have a dog myself!"

And then...Arya!

Peter adores Arya.

"She's cheeky, and loves playing. I often set the portable timer to remind me about appointments and cooking. Arya's always there, ready with those nose nudges."

"She woke me up recently when the fire alarm went off in the early morning. She jumped on me, then lay down to give me the danger signal. I gave her the biggest hug ever."

"Arya has opened a whole new world. I like getting out in my camper van, and I can do that more now she's by my side. I sleep better in the van, knowing she's there."

"I can also spend more time with my grandchildren. When we watched Peter Rabbit, I was worried that Arya might bark at the screen, but she just watched it all, moving her head side to side."

"I also find that people now want to talk to me. When I'm out walking with Arya, I meet people and talk to other dog walkers in particular. I've made new friends, which is wonderful. I feel much better in myself."

A new family

Arya helped Peter to feel less lonely and reconnect with life. What Peter didn't expect was that he would become part of the Hearing Dogs family – a network of supportive staff, volunteers and hearing dog partners. Peter has made new friends and has started volunteering for Hearing Dogs.

"I love meeting up with other deaf people and their dogs, the meetings we have are fantastic."

"I've even become more involved with the Charity, giving presentations to explain to people the impact Arya has made."

Indeed, Laura Amos, the charity's Major Giving Senior Officer, has been bowled over



Peter and his family

by Peter's involvement and enthusiasm.

She explains: "Peter and Arya came along to one of our corporate events to help talk to attendees about how Arya helps him."

"Peter engaged so many people, answering all their questions and explaining how important hearing dogs are. He was so keen to chat with everyone and encouraged lots of people to consider supporting the Charity."

"It's wonderful to have him as part of the Hearing Dogs family, raising awareness about how hearing dogs can change lives. They're such a brilliant partnership and you would have never known that it was their first event volunteering!"

Thank you for your kindness

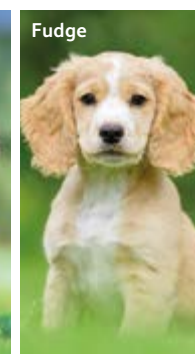
Arya is perfect for Peter, and vice versa. Whether helping him with sounds on a daily basis, or enabling him to build confidence and live a full life, she's exactly what Peter needed.

"I would love to thank all the people who sponsored Arya," Peter tells us. "Without them, my life would have been totally different – very negative, lonely and sad."

"I love Arya so much, she is not only my soul mate but my best friend too." 🐾



Archie



Fudge



Lola

SPONSOR A PUPPY TODAY

You can follow the journey of one of our adorable pups who will one day help a deaf person to stop feeling isolated and alone – just like Arya helps Peter today.

From just £3 a month you could sponsor happy chappy Archie, cheeky Fudge or gorgeous Lola.

When you sponsor a puppy, you'll receive a fabulous welcome pack and regular updates on their progress including cute photos plus access to their online Puppy Pen.

hearingdogs.org.uk/sponsor

Ana and Valley: A great team

When Ana went to university, a lot changed in her life. Her amazing hearing dog Valley, alongside our ongoing support, helped Ana with this transition

Ana had hearing dog Valley as a child. She explains: “I used to be really anxious about going out in public. I always had to ask someone to be with me in case I’d have to talk to someone.”

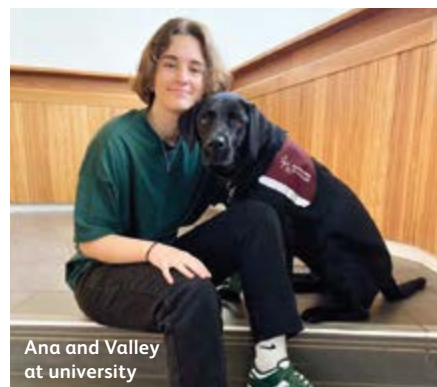
So, Ana decided to take matters into her own hands. She contacted Hearing Dogs, and when she found out she was eligible, convinced her mother that it would be a great idea to have one. She was right!

“Having Valley with me helps people understand that they need to talk more clearly and that I need to lipread. People are a lot more patient and considerate, especially at the height of the pandemic when people were wearing face masks.”

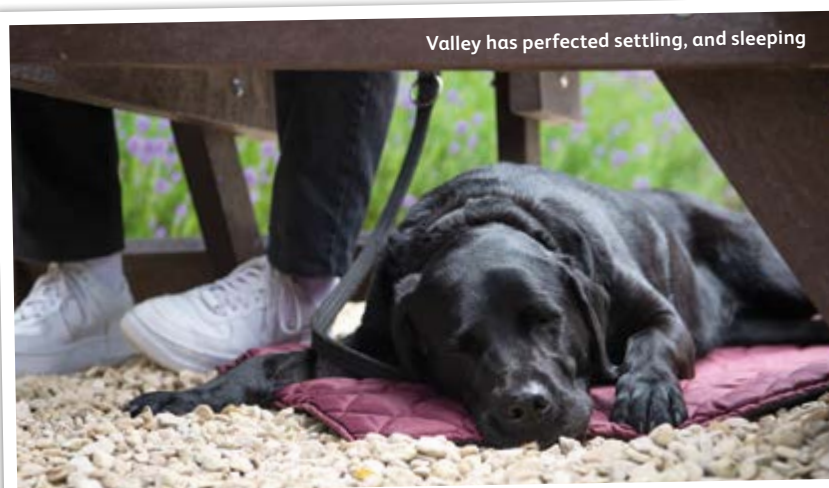
New life, new skills

Valley helped Ana through the society-wide challenges of the pandemic. Ana’s next big step came when she went to university to study Sport and Exercise Science.

Starting university is a huge change for anyone but as a deaf student with a hearing dog, there were some extra things Ana had to think about, including some additional training for Valley.



Ana and Valley at university



Valley has perfected settling, and sleeping



Back to Ana: “There are three major areas where Valley’s training has been supplemented: being around more people in lecture rooms; settling patiently during long lectures; and learning new alarms.”

“Firstly, we had to get her more comfortable in larger rooms with lots of people to prepare her for big lecture theatres.

“So, with the help of a Hearing Dogs trainer, I started teaching her to tuck under a chair so that she’d be able to do this in the theatres. Then, whenever I went to a café or restaurant, I’d get her to settle under my chair again. To do this, I gave her a treat whenever she did it right. She does love her treats!

“Before the semester began, we also visited the lecture theatres and labs. So, she was already used to the rooms and knew what to do.”

This is an object lesson in how we train our hearing dogs. It is always gently, at the dog’s pace, and involves lots of love, fusses, patience, and treats.

Back to Ana: “For the settles, we started with short café visits and built up to longer restaurant settles. When we moved to university she was pretty much ready – she just needed a chewable rubber toy to keep her occupied at first, but now she rarely uses it and snoozes quietly beside me.

“Finally, the smoke and fire alarms are different at university, so she’s been taught the new sounds. This is such an important alert, where she lies down to tell me about the alarm but doesn’t lead me to it. I know that she’ll get it right if the time comes.”

“There are also many smaller ways in which she supports me. She alerts me to my phone, which gives me independence.

Ana and Valley photos by Derek Pelling

“EVERYONE
ON THE TEAM
LOVES VALLEY”



She wakes me up in time for lectures too and having a dog in accommodation also helped my flatmates and I bond, especially at the beginning of the year.

“One alert in particular has helped with this. My parents used to do ‘the call’, in which they’d ask Valley to find me in the house. She’d trot off, give me a nose nudge, and then lead me back to them. Now, my student friends use it!”

Raising the game

Indeed, Ana hasn’t just coped with university – she’s excelled in sport, having been invited to train with the England Deaf Women’s football team!

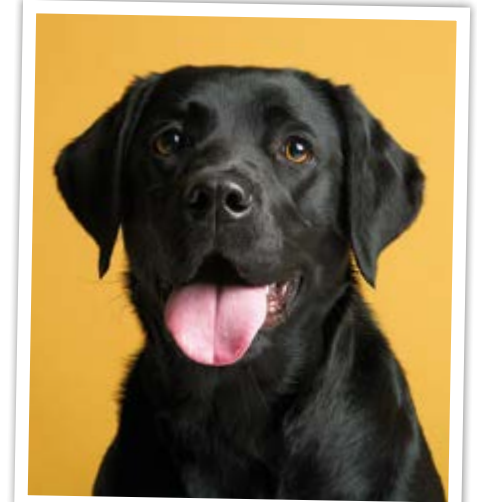
“Valley comes to camp with me. She

wakes me up because it’s very important not to be late for morning training sessions. When I’m training she gets looked after by staff on the sideline but during recovery, she comes and lies down beside me.”

And how do the other team members feel about Valley? Ana laughs: “Everyone on the team loves her! She has definitely helped me bond with my teammates and staff too. She’s a very sociable dog so loves all the attention she gets. 🐾

➡ More real-life stories

To read more inspiring stories about the differences our dogs make to the lives of deaf people, visit our website hearingdogs.org.uk/stories





ONE MAN'S LASTING LEGACY TO DEAF PEOPLE

The passing of Tony Blunt MBE, a key figure in the creation of Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, saddened everyone at the Charity. But his legacy lives on in the many aspects of our work that Tony introduced over the years which still exist today to change deaf people's lives...

As we celebrate 40 years of Hearing Dogs, we look back on our first 21 years under the leadership of Tony Blunt, who sadly passed away in January this year.

Hearing Dogs is the charity it is today because of the wonderful start that Tony gave it. Tony had been a police officer for many years and was one of the first four officers chosen to pioneer the Oxford City Police dog section. It was his experience in training highly skilled dogs that led him to become our very first dog trainer in 1982. There's no doubt he had little idea that he would be responsible for creating the professional and ethical foundation of what is now the world's largest organisation that trains dogs to support deaf children and adults.

There were many things Tony introduced to the Charity that are still in place today, and here we reflect on just some of them.

Our volunteer family

With his wonderful 'demonstration dog' Favour by his side, Tony inspired a loyal following of people offering their support. A young girl named Andrena

was just 16 when she became Hearing Dogs' first volunteer after meeting Tony and Favour. Andrena explains: "I remember Tony telling me all about Hearing Dogs. He spoke so passionately about it, I immediately wanted to join them in making a difference to deaf people's lives. I offered to help Tony walk the dogs. Every

day we would walk them from the boarding kennels on Chinnor Hill, down to Gill Lacey's home in the village. Tony would train them one at a time, assisted by Gill, who to this day still works for the Charity, while I played with the others in the garden. When Gill was away interviewing applicants, I'd help Tony with the soundwork by ringing



Andrena, Tony, Gill and Kieran in 1983 and inset Andrena today



the doorbell or setting off the smoke alarm, just helping out in any way I could."

When a dog breeder from Berkshire, called Jacqui, made a small donation to Hearing Dogs at the Charity's launch in 1982 she remembers feeling she was supporting something very special. Jacqui says: "I was exhibiting my Norwegian Buhunds at Crufts when an announcement over the tannoy encouraged us to go to the Hearing Dogs stand where, for the princely sum of £1, we could sign the supporters' book. I paid my £1, signed the book, and added a note saying I'd like to become more involved as my mother was deaf and my son hard of hearing."

"I began raising funds and got more involved when Tony asked me to go along to represent Hearing Dogs at a few local cheque presentations and I was invited to give talks about the Charity. Then in 1986 Tony was offered an eight-week-old rescue puppy named Bonnie. He phoned to ask if I'd be willing to foster her until she was old enough to go into training."

The outcome of Jacqui's wonderful care and early training of Bonnie was so positive that Tony invited her to foster another pup, and then another.

Tony knew the Charity had so much to gain from involving volunteers, and it was then that Hearing Dogs launched an appeal to recruit more dog-loving volunteers, and in 1987 began our first dedicated puppy socialising scheme.



From Tony's first two volunteer recruits, Hearing Dogs now has a family of over 3,000 kind volunteers across the UK who are helping to change the lives of deaf people.

The fundraising family

By the time Tony retired in 2003, our volunteer network had grown to include 242 puppy training and welfare volunteers, well over 100 volunteer speakers and 58 fundraising branches all helping to raise awareness, funds and community support for the Charity throughout the UK.

Kym established one of our first fundraising groups after coming across our Hearing Dogs stand during a visit to Crufts Dog Show in 1987. She explains: "I got talking to Tony Blunt with his gorgeous demo dog Favour. I left thinking this would be a brilliant cause to promote through my annual dog show and raise some funds at the same time. After sending Tony our first donation I wanted to do more. Not long after that I devoted my spare time to setting up the Newcastle-Upon-Tyne Fundraising Group with some friends and became a volunteer speaker for the Charity." Kym is one of many kind-hearted people who continue to offer the Charity their loyal support. She says: "I'm now what we call a microvolunteer – happy to offer my time to the Charity as and when I can if I'm invited to give talks locally, or to run a fundraising stall at local shows."

Today we have a network of nearly 60 fundraising groups and branches across the country, as well as many more kind individuals who regularly support us through microvolunteering, puppy sponsorship and donating to our appeals.

High standards of dog training

In 1988 Tony was invited to join the board of directors of an umbrella organisation called Assistance Dogs International (ADI), which had been set up to coordinate standards and methods of training across all the assistance dog movements worldwide. Tony was a board member of ADI for 10 years – three of which he served as president. In 1993 he established a

Tony, with Favour, after whom this magazine was named – another of his legacies



similar voluntary coalition of assistance dog charities in the UK – Assistance Dogs UK (ADUK). The aim of ADUK was to share the same high standards of training, form a joint code of practice and to campaign for access for all assistance dog partnerships. ADUK is now made up of ten assistance dog organisations, including Hearing Dogs.

After 21 years at the helm, Tony retired in March 2003, leaving the Charity with two operational training centres training 125 dogs a year, and supporting over 900 hearing dog partnerships.



Zach and his hearing dog Echo are just one of the partnerships we support now

It is thanks to the foundations Tony built that Hearing Dogs can provide its life-changing services to thousands of people with hearing loss every year. Truly a lasting legacy. 🐾

Fundraising partners



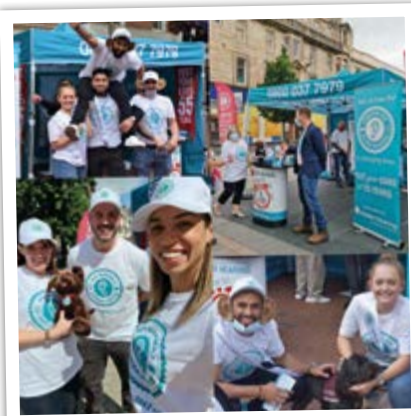
A huge thank you goes out to our corporate supporters who have helped us to continue training our amazing dogs and changing the lives of deaf people

HIDDEN HEARING

Through their own work, Hidden Hearing aim to make life-changing differences for people with hearing loss, and on top of that, they are also continuing to support Hearing Dogs!

Hidden Hearing are sponsoring one of our hearing dogs, Luna, in her training and have been able to follow her progress to become a fully qualified hearing dog. The staff at Hidden Hearing ran a competition to name the gorgeous Cocker Spaniel pup, who is now one year old, and the team are enjoying reading her updates.

Throughout summer, Hidden Hearing have once again been touring the UK with their National Campaign for Better Hearing, helping to spread awareness of our work and raise funds.



WRENDALE DESIGNS

The team at Wendale Designs have created four new amazing cards, which represent the four breeds that are trained to become hearing dogs. For each card sold, a donation will also be made towards our work and we are so very grateful to Wendale Designs for this kind support.

The cards are printed on sustainably sourced, textured board and come with a kraft envelope – you can purchase the cards from the Hearing Dogs shop either online or at The Grange.



SPECSAVERS

With events being able to go ahead this year, we are so delighted that Specsavers are once again supporting our Great British Dog Walks – they are now in full swing, so make sure you check out the dates for your local walk!



BARRETT & COE

The SuperDog of the Month competition, run by Barrett & Coe and selected independent studios, celebrates much loved pet dogs whilst raising money for Hearing Dogs. They recently presented us with a cheque for £1,330! Visit superdogofthemonth.co.uk to find out more information.



THANK YOU ALSO TO...

- 🐾 Window Film Company
- 🐾 iLECSYS
- 🐾 Omlet
- 🐾 Amazon Smile
- 🐾 Hedsor House
- 🐾 Lakeshore Leisure
- 🐾 Arden Grange
- 🐾 Agria Pet Insurance
- 🐾 Hypnos

Do you know an organisation that wants to support Hearing Dogs?
Please get in touch by emailing corporate support@hearingdogs.org.uk or call 01844 340740

Pets at Home raises a whopping £630,000 for Hearing Dogs!



Pets at Home has raised £629,335 for Hearing Dogs after choosing the Charity as the beneficiary of their new Summer 2022 Fundraiser. Throughout the month of July, Pets at Home stores across the UK were busy raising awareness of our work, as well as raising vital funds.

A huge thank you to all the Pets at Home colleagues who went above and beyond throughout the fundraising appeal, and to all the customers who kindly donated. The Pets at Home team have been taking

part in cycle challenges, wearing branded t-shirts, selling Hearing Dogs merchandise in stores and encouraging customers to make donations. We've also had colleagues from head office, the distribution centres, vet practices and groom rooms all taking part too.

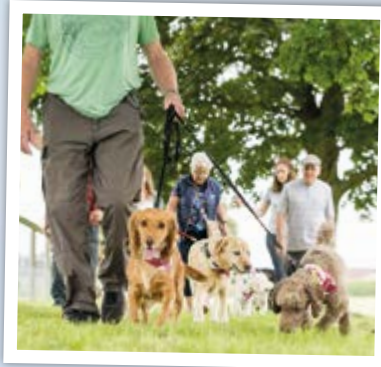
Steve Heyes, Director of Fundraising and Communications at Hearing Dogs said: "Just wow! The Pets at Home colleagues and customers have been so generous supporting Hearing Dogs this

summer. Raising this fantastic amount will support over a third of all our hearing dog partnerships for an entire year. Thank you!"

Being partnered with Pets at Home has also created huge awareness of our work to their customers, as well as helping to raise deaf awareness in their stores. Finally, we wanted to say a massive thank you to everyone who got involved in the Pets at Home Summer Fundraising Appeal – your support will make such a difference to our hearing dog partnerships.



Fun events and challenges



If you have taken part in one of our fundraisers this year – we say a big thank you. You are helping to change the lives of deaf people. If you haven't had the chance to get involved in one of our fun events or virtual challenges yet, don't worry, we have lots of exciting fundraising days coming up!

Great British Dog Walk

The Great British Dog Walk is back for another year. Running at 14 beautiful venues across the UK, you will be able to take part in a fun-filled sponsored walk that transforms the lives of deaf people.

Our Great British Dog Walks, kindly supported by Specsavers, are a great way to explore a stunning location with your friends and family (with or without a dog!) and help deaf people to leave loneliness behind.

Hundreds of walkers of all ages, and dogs of all shapes and sizes, will be taking

part. Tickets for the event are £12 per adult (£10 online), and children under 16 go free. Each adult ticket purchased receives a free limited-edition dog bandana. With pre-booked starting slots, you can choose whether to walk with a larger group or in your own family/friend group. The decision is yours!

There's also a free virtual option too, running through September and October, which you can choose to do anywhere you like. Virtual walkers raising £10 in sponsorship receive an exclusive dog bandana.

All walkers, whether taking part at one of the venues listed or virtually, will receive a free activity pack, filled with lots of fun things to do during the walk, plus a Great British Dog Walk certificate.

Anyone raising £50 or more will receive a free gift as a thank you.

If you would like to join one of our in-person dog walks, we have several walks to choose from:

Saturday 27 August:
The Kelpies, Falkirk, FK2 7ZT

Saturday 3 September:
Carsington Water, Ashbourne, DE6 1ST

Sunday 11 September:
Blickling Estate, Norwich, NR11 6NF

Sunday 18 September:
Heaton Park, Manchester, M25 0DL

Saturday 24 September:
Ickworth Park, Bury St Edmunds, IP29 5QE

Saturday 24 September:
Weston Park, Shifnal, TF11 8LE

Sunday 2 October:
Raby Castle, Darlington, DL2 3AH

Sunday 2 October:
Waddesdon Manor, Aylesbury, HP18 0JH

Sunday 9 October:
Beale Park, Reading, RG8 9NW

Sunday 9 October:
Temple Newsam, Leeds, LS15 0AE

Sunday 16 October:
Bodiam Castle, Robertsbridge, TN32 5UA

Saturday 22 October:
Mottisfont, Near Romsey, Hampshire, SO51 0LP

Sunday 23 October:
Margam Park, Port Talbot, SA13 2TJ

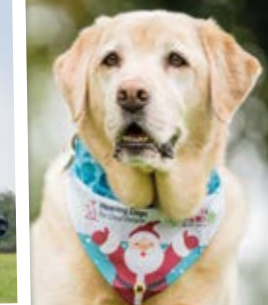
To book tickets, visit hearingdogs.org.uk/gbdw

Great British Dog Walk photos by Paul Wilkinson, Santa Paws photos by Paul Wilkinson and Alexandra Agass, Barking Bake Off photo of Sarah and Albert by Sarah Bond

Festive fun

Fancy getting Christmassy, all whilst raising money to help people with hearing loss? Come and join one of our festive events taking place later this year

SANTA PAWS



The 12 Jogs of Christmas

Get into the festive spirit by taking part in our virtual Santa Paws event. Take on the '12 Jogs of Christmas' challenge this December. Run, jog or walk 12 times throughout the month – with or without your dog – and get sponsored to raise vital funds to help deaf people leave loneliness behind.

It's free to sign up and you will receive a downloadable certificate

and tracker card so you can tick off your 12 jogs on the run-up (or walk-up) to Christmas.

Every penny raised will go towards transforming deaf people's lives.

Everyone who registers and sets up a fundraiser will receive an exclusive Santa Paws bandana and downloadable card to track your runs.

If you would like to sign up, please visit hearingdogs.org.uk/jog

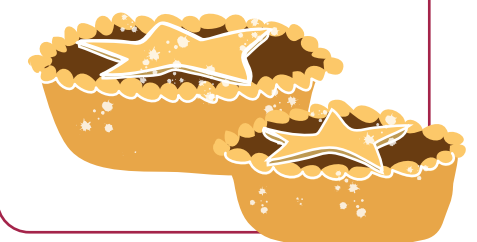
Christmas Market

Our Christmas Market weekend, at our training centre in Buckinghamshire, is the perfect opportunity to get ahead of your Christmas shopping list and change the lives of deaf people in the process.

We have a large variety of stalls for you to pick up some gifts for your family and friends (and maybe one or two treats for yourself!)

Join us on the 26 – 27 November where you can expect gift and craft stalls, Christmas chalets, Santa's Grotto, mince pies, mulled punch and lots more!

hearingdogs.org.uk/market



Barking Bake Off

Do you love baking? Would you like to bake for a good cause? Why not take part in our Barking Bake Off challenge to raise money to help deaf people leave loneliness behind and reconnect with life.

The Barking Bake Off is a virtual baking event where bakers take on one baking challenge a week for four weeks, throughout October. It includes a Sweet Treats round, a Savoury Supper week, a chance to make a pet-themed bake, plus the famous Showstopper bake where you can show off your skills.

You can also sell your bakes to friends and family...or you can enjoy

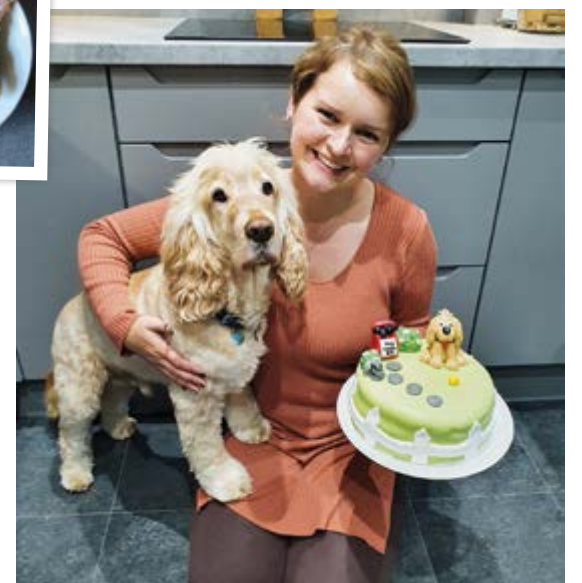
your tasty creations yourself!

Anyone that raises over £50 will be entered into a prize draw to win a baking hamper! And if you think you can excel at one of the weekly bakes, then you may just be in with the chance of being star baker!

If you are interested or know a baking-mad person in your life, sign up today on our website – it's a piece of cake!

All fundraisers receive an Alex Clark tea towel!

hearingdogs.org.uk/bake





IT TAKES A VILLAGE

There is a lovely proverb: it takes a village to raise a child. Well, it takes an entire community of staff and volunteers to raise and train a hearing dog!

The total cost, from breeding to retirement, is £40,000 for each and every hearing dog. It's much more than a toy here, or a training session there. It's the coming together of an entire, extended team of staff and volunteers who are dedicated to helping deaf people.

Let's take the example of hearing dog Scamp. Today, Scamp helps Amelia on a daily basis to achieve what she wants from life. But to get to this point has taken commitment and care right throughout the Charity, with everyone working closely to help Scamp on his journey.

Carol, Jon, Caroline and Darcy

So what's it like being part of a team that brings up a Hearing Dogs puppy? We asked four members of this close-knit group: Volunteer Puppy Trainers Carol and Jon, Short-Term Care Volunteer Caroline, and Dog Trainer Darcy.

First up, Carol: "We looked upon raising Scamp as we do with every puppy – it's like having a child. You bring them up to know right from wrong, wave them off to university and then they go out into the world to work. Having said that, they always take a part of your heart with them!"

Jon agrees. "We take the puppy on knowing that the partner's need is far greater than ours. It's wonderful to know how Scamp is now looking after Amelia." Indeed, Amelia, Jon and Carol have grown close. Carol continues: "We message each other at least weekly, and see Scamp a couple of times a year. He always gives us a special welcome."

Trainer Darcy agrees about the closeness of everyone involved. "I am very fortunate

in that I get to see Scamp at least once a year, if not more! Usually we meet up at Hearing Dogs events like the Late Summer Show, the Christmas Market, or the immensely popular plant and bake sales.

"It is amazing to see Amelia and Scamp together first-hand. They have such a special bond and I feel grateful to have been a part of it."

Volunteer Caroline stepped in to look after Scamp when Jon and Carol went on



Photos by Paul Wilkinson



"SCAMP HAS CHANGED MY WHOLE LIFE" – AMELIA

holiday. She smiles: "When Scamp was with us, I was always laughing!

"When Carol showed me an email from Amelia's mum, Jo, saying how much Scamp had changed Amelia's life, I could have cried with happiness. Then, when we watched Amelia and Scamp meeting HRH Princess Anne in the documentary marking her 70th birthday, I did actually cry, with joy and pride.

"It is a privilege to help these dogs achieve their working role. Moreover, having had a profoundly deaf mother, I know how isolated and lonely she felt."

Anything is achievable

While Scamp has been trained throughout this entire process, Amelia has also learned so much. Here's what her father, Mark, has to say about this:

"Scamp completely changed Amelia's life but so did some of the staff.

"When Amelia was introduced to Scamp, Darcy taught her about his training, and Bekah in the dog welfare team showed her how to take care of him, such as healthcare and grooming.

"She really admired them. As a young girl, Amelia had these two great role models to look up to. Still to this day, Amelia will say to me: 'No, that's not how Darcy and Bekah taught us!'"

Let's leave the final words to Amelia, who is after all Scamp's deaf partner.

"I have achieved so much since the day I brought Scamp home. With Scamp by my side, anything is possible.

"I've attained two Jack Petchey awards, which recognise outstanding young people aged 11-25 across London and Essex. I'm working on my Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award, have passed my Young Leader Qualification in Girlguiding, have completed level 1 in British Sign Language (BSL) and am halfway through my Queen's Guide Award.

"I'm also a volunteer in a charity shop on a Sunday, I've started to learn how to drive, I'm in sixth form, and I'm hoping to continue my education in college in September 2023.

"I feel like Hearing Dogs is my second family. I've been supported from day one, and given a sense of belonging.

"I'm so grateful to everyone involved in helping Scamp to become the super dog he is now. Without all of their help, I would not have him by my side now." 🐾

THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

BREEDING

Our team knows a good puppy when they see one! Charlotte could see that Scamp stood out straight away.



VOLUNTEER PUPPY TRAINERS

These amazing people give a huge amount of their time to train our puppies from their own homes. Scamp's volunteers were Carol and Jon, who trained and cared for Scamp for nearly a year and a half.

DOG TRAINERS

Karin, Mandy, Marc and Darcy worked very closely with Carol and Jon, to oversee how Scamp was getting along and offering guidance along the way.



LOGISTICS

Throughout Scamp's training, this well-organised team provided packs of information, dog kit and updates for staff and volunteers.

CENTRAL SUPPORT TEAM

This highly specialised group supported Amelia and her family during the application process and guided them right up until the start of Amelia and Scamp's working partnership.



WELFARE

Bekah provided support and advice on Scamp's health throughout.

SHORT-TERM CARE VOLUNTEERS

We simply couldn't function without volunteers. Caroline provided cover when Carol and Jon went on holiday.



PARTNERSHIP INSTRUCTORS

Today, Cathryn gives Amelia ongoing support, making sure everything is running smoothly for partner and dog alike.





Helping more people with hearing loss than ever before



Five years ago, Hearing Dogs for Deaf People and hearing loss charity Hearing Link merged to become a single charity

The aim was to become one leading hearing loss charity offering people with any level of hearing loss a broader range of services and support, and for these services to be more accessible.



Ronnie Bourne, long-standing Hearing Link volunteer, Trustee and latterly Honorary Vice President, reflects on the merger and how it enables more people with hearing loss to be helped:

“For many years, a number of applicants and recipients of Hearing Dogs for Deaf People’s services have also used Hearing Link’s services, and vice versa, but we knew a merger would not be without its challenges.

Personalised support

“Hearing Link was no stranger to a merger. LINK Centre for Deafened People pioneered support groups that we now know as our LinkUps. The Charity’s founder, Rosemary McCall OBE, brought small groups of people together consisting of severely or profoundly deafened people and wherever possible, their friends and family, to meet, share experiences and support one another.

“Over the years, LINK expanded, introducing its Helpdesk and website so they could help people nationwide. Meanwhile, another charity, Hearing Concern, operational since 1947, was

similarly creating hearing groups and clubs. Recognising that they could be stronger together, the charities merged in 2008, naming themselves Hearing Link in 2011. Providing services and support for people with mild and moderate hearing loss as well as severe and profound loss became the broader focus of our work.

“Increasingly we found many people who were accessing our services had hearing dogs, so we started to enjoy a happy and productive partnership with Hearing Dogs. We were also fortunate that HRH The Princess Royal was Royal Patron of both organisations.

“Hearing Link wanted to add to its



already wide range of services and continue helping more people with hearing loss, but the Charity couldn’t do this on its own. Similarly, Hearing Dogs recognised that their service was highly specialised, and they could use their platform to help even more deaf people and people with hearing loss.

“The charities’ shared desire to serve, in greater depth and breadth, the needs of people with hearing loss and their existing warm relationship meant the prospect of a merger felt natural. We merged in 2017 and have been helping more people with hearing loss since.



“As well as helping the thousands of people who visit its website every year, Hearing Link Services, as it is now called, supports those who have enquired about a hearing dog but whose needs cannot be met through one of our dogs. It also helps hearing dog applicants whilst they wait for a dog. People like Stephen.

“Stephen is waiting for a sound support dog, which he says would enable his wife to have a life instead of worrying about



Stephen meeting client support dog Tilly



Meg and her hearing dog Sparky

Did you know...

- 🐾 Last year, we supported **3,263** deaf individuals and their family members
- 🐾 Over **500,000** people visit Hearing Link Services website every year for information and advice
- 🐾 We support over **1,100** hearing dog partnerships
- 🐾 We help people via our Helpdesk, which receives **2,000** enquiries every year

how he is doing at home, giving them both peace of mind.

“Stephen’s Central Support Advisor, Victoria, said Stephen was struggling with all aspects of his hearing loss, so she asked him if he would be interested in joining a LinkUp Online.

“Stephen’s confidence was low before the LinkUp. Upon listening to James’ story – another participant who had a similar hearing loss experience – and then having a 1-2-1 with him, Stephen’s confidence started to improve. Every time he feels like he can’t do something, Stephen says to himself, “how would James manage this”.

“Hearing Link Services also assists those already matched with a hearing dog, like Meg. Meg is partnered with hearing dog Sparky and was easily able to seek additional support for her hearing loss as a result of the merger. Over to Meg to explain how we could continue supporting her.”

“Of course, there are some things Sparky can’t help me with, which is what led me to contact Hearing Link Services. I was aware that Hearing Dogs and Hearing Link had merged but I didn’t appreciate how much additional support is made available by the Charity.

“I first contacted Hearing Link Services because I was dismayed to learn that a speech-to-text app for my iPhone would cost me £10 per week.

“On emailing their Helpdesk, my enquiry went to James, one of the excellent team of Hearing Link Services volunteer responders, who replied very quickly with a free alternative to download. I followed the instructions, and the problem was resolved!

“Following on from our initial contact, I was offered a one-to-one session to talk through how I was managing my hearing, and other services that may help. It was a really helpful session, and I was invited to join the next LinkUp Online group – this was a real turning point. I had the opportunity to share my feelings with others who understand what it’s like living with hearing loss. It was also enlightening to hear their stories and to share ideas.”

Back to Ronnie now

“As Meg has found, our LinkUps are so important and valued by Deaf people and those with hearing loss, as are our other personalised hearing support services. It is because of the merger that these could continue and become more established, and we now offer them online, as well as in the community, so we can support anyone who needs it. We have more ways to help people than ever before and thousands of people every year now feel they have somewhere to turn when they need help, which is truly a wonderful thing.”

A special note from our longest-standing staff member, Gill Lacey

My name is Gill, and this year is also my Ruby Anniversary. Forty years ago, I helped to start Hearing Dogs with Tony Blunt and his lovely rescue dog, Favour. This wonderful charity, that we nurtured from the seedling planted by Dr Bruce Fogle and Lady (Beatrice) Wright, has grown beyond our wildest dreams, and this is thanks to our kind supporters.



Photos by Paul Wilkinson

I first heard about the concept of training hearing dogs in 1981. Dr Bruce Fogle, a veterinarian, had appeared on TV appealing for funds to set up a UK scheme to train dogs for deaf people.

It immediately struck a chord with me. Five years working in audiology had shown me how hearing loss sapped people's confidence and robbed them of social interaction, leaving them lonely and isolated. I'd grown up with dogs. The idea of having a canine companion trained to give their deaf partner an awareness of important sounds made perfect sense to me. I wanted to find out more. I managed to contact Bruce, explained my background and asked how I could help.

When Bruce invited me to consider taking one of two key roles in this exciting new venture, the offer was quite unexpected, and I was unsure. However, to be in at the very start of something and make it a success was the opportunity of a lifetime and I couldn't let that go.

There were many times in our first three years when progress was painfully slow, and one step forward would be followed by two steps back. But just when we felt most alone in our efforts something wonderful would happen. A heartfelt letter would arrive from someone who believed in us and everything we were trying to do. Just those few kind words of encouragement made all the difference and reminded us of why we had to make Hearing Dogs a success.

It was just such a letter that inspired my lifelong commitment to Hearing

Dogs. I spent the first month of my new job opening a sack full of mail addressed to 'Hearing Dogs London'. Among the kind offers of support and donations were heartfelt letters from deaf people, sharing their feelings of loneliness and isolation, hopeful of being considered for a hearing dog. One letter caught my eye: **"Thank you for bringing your wonderful organisation to deaf people..."** it began:

"I'm deaf and I cannot describe the emptiness I feel having just lost my dog. How far will technology have to advance before it can replace that very chewed dog lead in my cupboard, or dry my tears, or make me go out, or let me sleep properly knowing no harm can come to me because of that warm, furry body."

Man-made gadgets develop faults, I cannot cuddle or play with gadgets, and they don't give me a welcome when I come in. My home will still be silent, and I have at present all the silence in deafness that I can cope with. Gadgets only show me how deaf I am, but with my dog I did not feel deaf, and that is what is so very important." Her words touched me deeply. They seemed to sum up everything that Hearing Dogs sought to overcome for deaf people. I committed them to memory, so I'd never lose sight of this goal.

In April 1983, a lovely lady named Eileen, from Essex, became the recipient of our first hearing dog, a former stray named Lady. Their partnership was funded by an anonymous gift. How precious that gift was. We so wanted to be able to say thank you. We consoled ourselves knowing that the gift was

made by someone who had gained all the thanks they needed from knowing they were paying it forward and making a real difference to someone else.

The difference their gift made was life-changing for Eileen. Eileen's transformation from a person who kept her deafness hidden for fear of ridicule, to someone so proud of her hearing dog that her deafness was no longer a big barrier in her life, was entirely down to Lady – we have yet to discover an assistive hearing device that can do the same!

Time and again stories like Eileen's, and gifts and donations, kept us going. Including the most kind and personal of gifts – legacies left to the Charity in people's Wills. These gifts now fund over half of all hearing dogs' training and change deaf people's lives forever. To the people who decide to leave these gifts, I, and the many deaf people they help, will be forever grateful.

Thank you.

Gill

Gill Lacey

If you are thinking about remembering Hearing Dogs in your Will, or have any questions about how your gift could transform the life of a deaf person, please contact Zoe Cox on 01844 348130 or email zoe.cox@hearingdogs.org.uk

The gift that can change someone's life forever

"When I learned that Ted had been funded by a gift in a Will I was completely stunned." – Claire and hearing dog Ted



Paws for coffee...



Strictly Come Dancing star **Giovanni Pernice** chats about his time dancing with deaf actress Rose Ayling-Ellis, his recent visit to our Southern training centre and much more

Do you prefer tea or coffee? Coffee, of course! I am Italian and so there is no competition.

What inspired you to become a dancer? I realised at a young age I had a passion for dancing, it brought my family together and on the weekend we would go to the town square for the local dances. The more I did it, the more I loved it!

What's your proudest achievement? This past year has been incredible, to not only win *Strictly*, but to be in the most inclusive final the BBC has ever seen on the show. Winning the BAFTA with Rose is high up there as well, the cherry on top of the cake.

What was it like to have such a positive response to what you did to raise deaf awareness on *Strictly*? It was incredible! We didn't start the competition with any idea this would happen, it was purely to make Rose a great dancer, and the response was overwhelming.

You visited our Southern training centre recently. What were your first impressions of the work our dogs do? It is absolutely amazing. I was really impressed with how clever the dogs are, and seeing how hard everyone works to achieve the great results. I got to see dogs in action, and puppies learning new skills and putting them into action.

How has dancing with Rose changed your life? Rose was not only an incredible dancer, but an incredible person, and has become a friend for life. I had to adapt and learn new ways of teaching and it made our bond even stronger.

Are there any precautions you take to protect your hearing? Obviously we work in very loud theatre spaces, and on the TV studio floor. I do try to minimise my time with loud sound systems, it is something I am aware of.

What do you think society can do to make deaf people feel included? I think what Rose achieved was a great platform, and brought awareness to the audience. Having patience and spending time and being willing to learn (even a few words in British Sign Language) makes all the difference.

What are your favourite things about dogs? I love dogs. I cannot believe how clever they can be and how much of a support they are. I was blown away meeting your dogs. The love and care in training and throughout their adult/working life really is incredible.

Are you learning British Sign Language? I learnt a little bit with Rose and have even incorporated some into my solo UK tour show. We have also included signed shows on the tour, so I am always watching and learning from our amazing team.

Did you learn anything about yourself through the latest series of *Strictly Come Dancing*? I had to learn a whole new way of teaching and communicating. Dancing is obviously very physical and we take for granted how much we feel the movements and hear the sound around us. It will be a series I will never forget, and that is mainly down to Rose.

What were the challenges you faced when dancing/choreographing for Rose

and how was it different to dancing with previous partners? I wanted to have a sense of how Rose was feeling, and how she understood the dance moves. We had to find a way to communicate and understand each other. Luckily, we became very good friends and shared a similar sense of humour, to help us through the *Strictly* challenge and long hours.

Tell us about what you're up to at the moment. I have just finished my 'Him and Me' tour with Anton Du Beke around the UK and my solo show 'This is Me'. Then we are back on to *Strictly* for the next series. This year has been a whirlwind and one I will never forget. Next year, I have my solo show 'Made In Italy', which also comes to the London Palladium, so I am very excited for that. 🐾

Close-up with...

➔ GIOVANNI PERNICE

Giovanni Pernice is a professional dancer from Italy and is best known for being a dancer on *Strictly Come Dancing*, which he joined in 2015. He won the latest series of the show with deaf actress Rose Ayling-Ellis. During their time on the show, the pair shone a light on deaf awareness, winning a BAFTA for their silent dance that paid tribute to the deaf community. Off air, Giovanni goes on tour, dancing up and down the country. He also holds two Guinness World Records in dance.

Photos by Alexandra Agass



Giovanni with hearing dog in training Rose



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for Deaf People

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