TOP DOG, INC
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BOARD OF DIRECTORS
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NEWSLETTER
Bette Rose Immel Editor

MISSION STATEMENT
TOP DOG’s mission is to teach people with physical disabilities to train their own service dogs. TOP DOG also educates the public about the diversity and ability of all people.

TOP DOG is a nonprofit public charity founded in 1987. All training is humanely and lovingly performed. TOP DOG also offers educational presentations to schools, service groups, churches, service groups, clubs, and businesses. If you’d like to have TOP DOG speak to your organization, please call the TOP DOG office.

Message From The President

Our previous newsletter announced the two generous grants we had received from Petco and Sundt. Well, TOP DOG is making splendid use of our grant monies; the Petco grant is helping dogs needing medical care and, as necessary, x-rays on mobility dogs. The Sundt Construction grant has been used to assist students with expenses, enabling them to take advantage of training their dogs through the TOP DOG program. Without this grant there are prospective teams who might otherwise not be able to take advantage of our program. Again, we thank both of these companies for embracing our vital efforts in support of the disabled community.

On that note, TOP DOG is proud to announce that we currently have certified 154 teams. We are accepting new applications for our latest beginner’s class, which is scheduled to start this year in September.

TD is looking for program volunteers who would like to have an occasional role in the program. We also need people to do certification testing, and teams willing to be ‘distractions’ for certifications, along with teams for demonstrations and e-caps (e-caps are events put on by government agencies, allowing their employees a choice of organizations who they may donate to through payroll deduction and the United Way). Anyone interested in these volunteer opportunities, please contact Helen at the office at 323-6677 for additional information.

This seems like an appropriate place to welcome our new volunteer, Tom, an experienced dog trainer who has his own service dog.

Jim Click automotive company is having another raffle this year. If you are interested in purchasing or selling tickets, please contact Helen. All of the funds from ticket sales go directly to TOP DOG. This year’s prizes are: First Prize is a 2017 Ford Explorer Platinum, Second Prize is 2 round trip airline tickets to anywhere in the world, and Third Prize is $5000 cash. Tickets are $25 each or 5 for $100.

It is with great sadness I announce the passing of my faithful service dog, Hope, who provided me with many years of dependable and conscientious service.

Just a reminder: It has been extremely hot this summer, please remember to always take water for your dog, try not to go out at the hottest part of the day, and use boots for your dog’s feet. Carry a towel in your car you can use to cool your dog down and watch for signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke in your dog. They include; rapid panting, bright red tongue, vomiting, dizziness, red or pale gums, thick saliva, weakness, diarrhea, shock, or coma.
TOP DOG is delighted to welcome our latest board members, a current board member filling a new position on the board, and one new spectacular trainer. Each TOP DOG board member brings their own unique abilities and talent to their board position. The specific proficiencies and experience each new board member brings with them magnifies the advantages TOP DOG provides for their human and canine clients.

Let’s welcome and learn a little about recent additions.

**Introducing Jazlyn Ivy**

Jazz is a native Arizonan whose passion for animals began at a tender age. At only 13 years old, the young woman began her volunteer career. Jazz has worked with the Foundation for Animals in Risk (FAIR), TROT (Therapeutic Riding of Tucson), and others. At 17 years old she began working with a professional horse trainer, absorbing what she saw and learned along the way.

Jazz graduated Palo Verde High School in 2007. Again her craving to be around animals and help them led Jazz to enroll in a Veterinary Assistant program; she graduated at the top of her class.

Her volunteerism, education, and animal related employment has provided Jazz hands-on ability to train dogs in obedience. Aspiring to augment her ability, Jazz came to TD as an apprentice, working beside trainer’s Andrew and Rory, and soaking up the particulars of service dog training.

Beyond her fervor for dog training, Miss Jazz has agreed to accept the board position of Secretary.

**Introducing Pastor Keith Hardy**

Pastor Hardy’s occupation in itself demonstrates his desire to lend his training and experience to advise, guide, support, and assist both his congregation and the various organizations for which he volunteers his time and efforts.

Keith has served on a Synod Council and as Conference Dean. He initiated an after-school tutoring program for primarily African refugee children living in Tucson. The program ran successfully for eight years. Keith currently serves on a local neighborhood association and an elementary site council.

**Introducing Thomas Young**

Starting in January, Thomas will teach a diabetic alert training class. Once that class is onboard, TD and Tom will consider adding other new areas to our training program. Eventually, we anticipate working with veterans suffering from PTSD.

Thomas comes to us from the Handi-Dog training program.

Meet Bette Immel — again

Many of you already know Board Member, Bette Immel, who trained her dog, Max, with TD. With Max’s training fait accompli, Bette was so enamored with TD’s volunteers, she didn’t want to leave. She started by taking over writing/designing the newsletter, later became a Board Member, and has volunteered to assist Helen by accepting the position of Vice President.
I needed a service dog so I began searching the Internet for training programs. Happily, I found TOP DOG. They are awesome people, teaching and assisting me on how to train Lucky according to my needs. The assistant trainers are truly the greatest, full of helpful ideas, and always willing to help and patiently answer any questions. My training assistant, Lori, managed helping me with Lucky’s training, while serving our country in the Air Force, and raising her children, too. Wow! Without Lori’s help I could not have accomplished the required tasks. The training for a Service Dog goes way beyond basic obedience. I cannot thank both Lori and the entire TOP DOG team enough. TOP DOG makes it "fun" training with your best friend. Thank you Helen in accepting me and Lucky into your group. Thank you Frosty for great advice and your friendship, and to all in my classmates.

Introducing: April & Ripley Team # 151

April and Ripley achieved their certification, and are happily savoring the outcome of their hard work.

Introducing: Jim & Speedo Team #153

TOP DOG is a great organization! Without them I would never have possessed the skills that allowed me to complete the training in order to certify Speedo (aka Spiro)! TOP DOG is the best organization to train just about any dog to be service dog. I learned 100% of what I needed to know to train my own service dog. Again, they are the very BEST. I plan to go through training again, when the time comes. I’d like to thank the staff for the effort which they put into helping me and Speedo. I can now say he has a new leash on life! Speedo and I certified as Team # 153 on May 11th. We passed the exam and actually did very well. Following certification, Speedo began attending school with me. I think he enjoyed it, but boy was he tired at night. Speedo certified on May 11th, and I graduated high school on May 26th. It was a big, important month! Now both of us can enjoy the lazy days of summer. And Mom, well, she's enjoying her Saturday mornings again.

Introducing: Desi & O’Malley Team # 152

Desi & her team mate, O’Malley completed their certification and are enjoying the result of their training.

Introducing: Jane & Lucky Team # 150

Introducing: April & Ripley Team # 151

Introducing: Jim & Speedo Team #153

Introducing: Desi & O’Malley Team # 152

Introducing: Jane & Lucky Team # 150
Over the many years, TOP DOG has garnered a number of returning clients, who’ve reappeared to train their next service dog. Blake and his service dogs are a case in point. Blake trained both Savannah and later on Banjo. Blake’s canines brought him some unique experiences over their years. These stories are a case in point reflection of Blake’s teams, or maybe his accomplices.

From the file of Savannah — TOP DOG team #24.

I got my first TOP DOG, Savannah, during the Tucson winter of 1992. I had a health club membership at a major resort in town. Upon my request, the resort just put in some really nice wheelchair assessable showers with all of the nice shampoos and conditioners mounted on the wall.

After I arrived one day, I decided that Savannah needed a bath. Since it was a bit too cold outside to wash her on my patio, I decided to bring her into the shower with me. It didn’t have been more convenient. A really nice hand held shower, and all those really nice shampoos and conditioners. I pulled the shower curtain closed and proceeded to hose her off. I put the really nice shampoo on and started talking to her. “Boy what a hairy butt you have. Look at all that hair between your toes. How did you get your nose dirty? No more stinky butt for you. I hope all of your hair does not clog up the drain!”

When I finished, I opened the shower curtain, and standing right there with a very confused look on his face was the locker room attendant. He said, “Boy, I was wondering what was going on in there,” and handed me two warm terrycloth towels.

I paused, and he said, “Well, dry your dog. We wash the towels.”

On the way out through the lobby, even though my girl was mostly dry, the woman behind the counter noticed that Savannah was a bit wet. She said, “Blake, why is your dog wet?”

I told her that it was a bit warm in the locker room and Savannah sweats a lot. She said, “Oh, all right.” Just as I got to the front door she called out across the lobby, “Blake, she sweats a lot???”

Rory and I might have started off like everyone else, but somewhere along the way, we decided to jump out of the mold and do things differently. I started to get Rory certified as a service dog with a different organization. They did help with a few of Rory’s quirks, however, their program seemed unable to address Rory’s frenzied excitement whenever she saw another dog. They told me Rory would never certify and we should start looking into getting another dog if certification was the goal. This was after we had been together and training for two years. Nevertheless, in spite of their negativity I knew, without a shadow of doubt, that Rory and I were meant to go places together.

I then contacted TOP DOG. The first time we met was next to a dog park and Helen and Frosty both brought a dog. Rory was barking and lunging towards their dogs. They were able to see past this to see a dog who just wanted to greet their dogs and play. They really understand all kinds of dogs. Once Rory calmed down and lay down next to their dogs, they said she would be able to certify, which was music to my ears. We were matched with an amazing training assistant (TA) who was perfect for helping Rory and me with our problem. Our TA suggested we meet as many dogs as possible. With a lot of work, and a lot of dogs, I’m now able to get Rory to calm down quickly whenever she sees another dog. TOP DOG took the strengths we had and was flexible enough to help us achieve our goal of certification. Rory now goes with me most everywhere I go.

Introducing: Andrew & Rory Team # 154

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My name is Banjo. I am a service dog trained to assist my partner, Blake. He is disabled due to an accident many years ago that caused a spinal injury. I am trained to pull his wheelchair, help him off the floor by balancing him, pick up anything he drops, and much more. For only being three years old, I am a very mature golden retriever. This photo was taken on Southwest Airlines, Flight #150 from Albany to New York, then to Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The crew is always concerned about my safety — we’re frequent flyers — and they tell Blake they’ll take care of us in the event of any trouble. The Flight Attendant even mentioned something about a water landing. Hey, I like to swim! They even let me board the flight first to get the very, best seat in the house. If it is not a full flight, they keep the seats next to me open so I can stretch out a bit. But honestly, don’t mind curling up at Blake’s feet, either.

The photo below was taken a few years ago before Blake met me. He had a service dog named Bridgette. They were the best of friends and flew together many times. Once, they landed in Denver about 30 minutes early. When they realized they were going to have a lengthy layover, Blake knew he’d have to take her outside for a walk so she could do her business. Much to their delight, a Southwest Gate Agent offered to take Bridgette for a walk himself, so Blake and Bridgette did not have to exit and re-enter security. Blake says Southwest always treated him and Bridgette extra special!

Alternate Correspondent Max
(Filling in for Roving Reporter Charlie on vacation)

I don’t know about the rest of you, but clapping thunder scares the dickens out of me. I can smell the coming rain and hear the rumbling cracks much sooner than my Mom can. Although she is quite a bit quicker than my Dad. She’ll tell him it’s coming and he’ll say, “I don’t hear anything.” Not only can Mom hear it sooner, but Mom is also real good at ‘reading’ the signals I give her.

When I’m really, really scared I start panting very heavy, I follow Mom wherever she goes, oh and I also talk (howl). It’s the Husky in me, Mom says. I also shake. Mom says for such a big dog, I shake like a frightened Chihuahua. I don’t know for sure what made me so scared of thunder, lightning, and hard rain. It could be when I lived out in the desert by myself — before Mom adopted me. I’m sure glad she and Dad took me home six years ago.

Anyway, when I get like this Mom has medicine, from the vet, she gives me. It helps calm me down, and sometimes I even fall asleep next to Mom and Dad in our special place. I have a couple of special places. One is outside in the big hole I dug next to the block wall. I feel safe there.

Only outdoors I’m by myself and in the rain and then when I want to come in the house, I’m a muddy mess Mom says. Being she’s disabled it’s hard for her to dry me off.

My other really excellent place is in Mom and Dad’s bedroom. I cuddle up right close between them with my head on their pillows. Mom has some ‘Calming Dog music’ on her iPad and she brings it up for me, laying that contraption fairly close to my head. But, it’s okay. She wants to make sure I hear it, but she does keeps it low.

Mom knows better than to coo me with baby sounds and words. Actually, to be truthful, Mom knows a lot more than Dad about dogs — and cats; even though he grew up on a farm in Germany. What she does is pet me slowly on the crease in my head between my ears. She will also stroke my ears so, so gently. I loooove it!

It takes some time for me to calm down. But I do. Eventually. Mom and Dad don’t mind as the TV usually isn’t working in a storm anyway. I’m really grateful to Mom and Dad for their patience and understanding!
Reminders

2017 Jim Click Raffle — Interested in purchasing or selling tickets? Please contact Helen. Tickets are $25 each or 5 for $100. All funds from ticket sales go directly to TD. You can win .... 1st prize: 2017 Platinum Ford Explorer, 2nd prize 2 round trip airline tickets to anywhere in the world, and 3rd prize $5000 cash.

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