

Pawsitive News

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RAISE A PUPPY

Ready to change a life. Apply to be a raiser today!



VOLUNTEER

Can't Raise a Puppy? Help support our mission by volunteering!

New Year, New Opportunities

Volunteers are the backbone of our organization and we couldn't do what we do with you. If you have any interest in getting more involved - just use one of the links on the right side of the page to find out more about becoming a puppy raiser, supporting through donations or volunteering to support any of our upcoming events.

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DONATE

Make a difference with a donation at www.occupaws.org

Paul & Tango

Paul Turinske lives in Pewaukee, WI with his wife and two sons Evan and Jared. Tango is a black standard poodle and is Paul's first guide dog. Their partnership began in April of 2015. This summer Paul and his family are looking forward to taking a two week tour of England, Scotland and Wales together.



How did you learn about OccuPaws?

While attending the Milwaukee VisionWalk in 2014 we stopped at the OccuPaws booth to see the puppies. My wife made the comment "Too bad they don't offer Poodles". (Since she is very allergic to pet dander). Barb responded, "Oh, but we do have Poodles". They were beginning the Poodle training program. Barb said I should submit an application and get on the waiting list because it could take a couple years to be matched with a Poodle. Amazingly, the next spring (2015) I received a call that they had a Poodle that might fit my requirements. I was so very excited and couldn't wait to meet my potential guide. I learned a lot about how the dogs are trained and matched with their users. Over the past almost 6 years, I have had great experiences with OccuPaws. I was asked to join the Board of Directors and have been conducting the monthly Guide Dog User Conference Calls as part of the Client Services aspect of OccuPaws.

**"The volunteers dedication & hard work, make miracles happen for users like me."
Paul Turinske**

How has your guide dog changed your life?

Prior to having Tango, I did not enjoy going out in public and avoided it. Tango has helped me regain independence and confidence while in public. People losing their eyesight often feel a sense of loneliness. Having a guide dog like Tango always by my side makes it nearly impossible to feel alone.

Thanks Paul for sharing your story!

Career Change Story

Jaxson - obedient, attentive, loving, smart - was universally loved by all his OccuPaws raisers and sitters. And yet ... as he grew, his raisers shared a common concern. He was a powerful dog. Perhaps too strong for a blind person to safely handle. OccuPaws staff are somehow always able to find each "career-changed" dog a good permanent home, and ideally that home still involves service.

For Jaxson's future home, Barb turned to Wisconsin K9 SOS Search and Rescue. They had previously taken an OccuPaws dog and successfully transitioned it to search and rescue operations, and Barb hoped Jaxson might be a fit.

Jaxson's new handler is Terry Schwantes. We asked Terry how he came to volunteer with Wisconsin K9, and he told us it all started with his remarkable daughter, Brienne. Brienne was born with a rare disease (OI) that caused her bones to be brittle. She had nine broken bones while still in the womb. From early childhood, she was not only a brave fighter of the disease, but also a compassionate human being who sought ways to help others. Her efforts were notable enough to be mentioned in Hillary Clinton's book *It Takes A Village*, and in Bill Clinton's book, *Giving*. She met with two presidents and a pope. She inspired and continues to inspire thousands of people, even after her unfortunate death in 2016.

At the age of 13, Brienne insisted her family help flood victims in Iowa in 1993. This inspired Terry to become a member of a CERT (Community Emergency Response Team), teams of volunteer emergency workers who receive specific training in basic disaster response skills, and who agree to supplement existing emergency responders in the event of a major disaster. And this is what more recently brought Terry to Wisconsin K9.

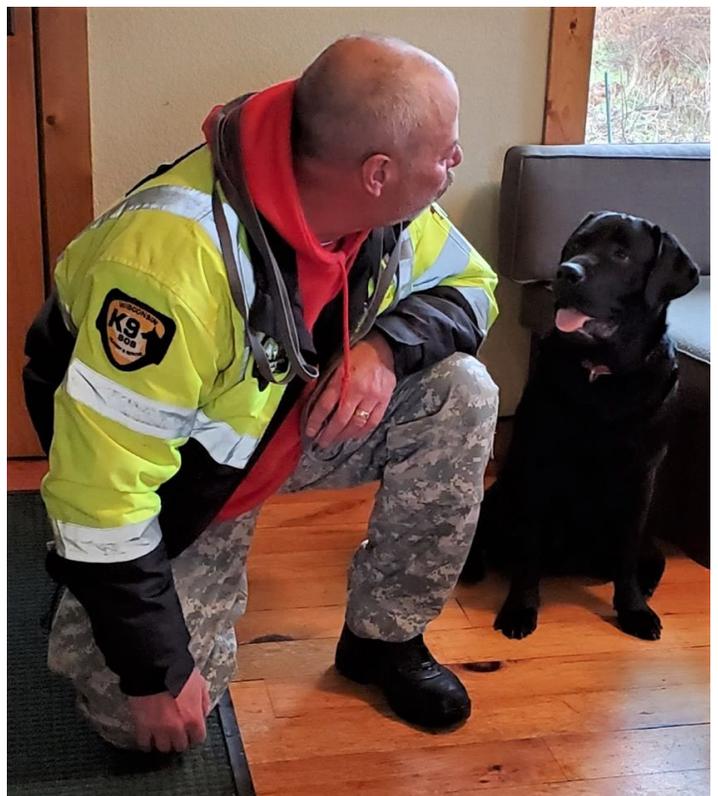
Terry has undergone 18 months of training in Human First Aid/CPR/AED, NIMS, and is augmenting his education with K9 First Aid/CPR, Crime Scene Preservation, Blood Borne Pathogens, lost person behavior as well as attaining his SAR Tech certification. All this, at his own expense, to become a VOLUNTEER member of Wisconsin K9.

There are three specialties of search and rescue dogs. A 'trailing' dog will follow a trail from a known beginning location to wherever an individual travelled. An 'air scent' dog will detect the scent of an individual in any environment, such as a field or in a neighborhood. An HRD (human remains dog) is trained to detect the scent of human remains. Jaxson is being trained as an HRD dog.

Terry says Jaxson is doing well in his training, which will have three stages. The first is simply bonding with Terry, so that no matter the circumstance, Terry can absolutely count on his ability to recall Jaxson and keep him safe. In the next phase, imprinting, Jaxson will be trained to detect the smell of human remains. A third phase will introduce Jaxson to the most difficult task of finding entire bodies or body parts.

Terry says Jaxson is a great house pet for his family, but he's also a tool, like GPS or radio, to aid emergency workers. No device has been invented that can do the work that search and rescue dogs can in helping to locate a lost person.

Wisconsin K9 volunteers are called to the scene of an emergency by local emergency personnel and operate under the command of those personnel. We are proud and pleased that our Jaxson is becoming a part of this critical team, and we wish him and Terry the best.



Volunteer Profile

Marlette Larsen lives in Madison, WI. She has been involved with Occupaws since she retired 10 years ago and also volunteers with the Olbrich Botanical Gardens. Marlette loves to travel across the globe and recently took her granddaughter on a trip to Ireland. She also spends a lot of time visiting family in Colorado and enjoying her cabin in Rhinelander, WI. Marlette also feels so privileged to have provided a home for OccuPaws Guide Dog, Promise for 6 years until she passed away. Marlette works as a sitter for Bling and other puppies when she is in Madison and not exploring the globe!

How did you learn about OccuPaws and why did you decide to get involved?

Two enthusiastic OccuPaws volunteers were at Mounds Pet Food Store and after talking to them I decided to sign up as a volunteer. A few days later I received Casey to raise and train. I have loved my participation ever since!

What do you enjoy most?

Besides loving each and every puppy and dog in our program, I have enjoyed getting to know all our enthusiastic volunteers who make our program possible, our Board members who give such wonderful guidance, and our CGDIs (Certified Guide Dog Instructors) who provide the final training and placement



of our dogs. OccuPaws is so unique among Guide Dog Schools for its home placement program, and I'm proud to be associated with it!

Any advice or comments for our newer volunteer raisers and sitters?

Do attend fundraisers and graduations! Puppies are so different in their behaviors and aptitude's, don't be discouraged by those dogs who don't graduate as guide dogs. They may be better suited for another kind of work. The more pups you raise, the more successful you'll be in helping provide a Guide Dog for a visually impaired person! And that is a wonderful feeling!

News from OccuPark

New Lisbon Correctional Institution, December 2, 2019

Eleven green-clad inmates sat in a wide circle in the middle of the prison visiting room, awaiting instructions, but mostly – awaiting an opportunity to meet for the first time the OccuPaws dogs that the trainers (Barb, Lois, John and Coleman) had brought with them: Maui, the poodle; Lava, the yellow lab; Netty, the black lab; and Dusty, Barb’s young service dog.

Before the training began, the dogs were handed over to the inmates. Introductions were made. And it was clear that like us when we began, they didn’t know how to hold a leash, how and when to offer a treat, or what voice to use when talking to an OccuPaws guide-dog-in-training. An hour-and-a-half later, some progress had been made.

At the next session the inmates were clearly more comfortable in their roles. And at the end of the session, two two-person inmate raiser teams took the dogs that would soon be theirs into their cellblock, which New Lisbon calls a unit. An OccuPaws volunteer trainer went with each team. It was the first time the dogs were to see their new homes, six-by-ten concrete and steel cells crowded with two bunks, two lockers and a standard dog crate. The inmates led the dogs into their cells, and like the good pups they are, they immediately went into their crates. I watched as one of the inmates sat on the floor beside the crate, wiping a tear from his face. Then it was time to show the dogs the two adjoining outdoor areas that the prison had prepared for them, one for play (OccuPark), the other a potty area (Business District).



UPDATE: January 30, 2020

There are now sixteen raisers with six OccuPaws dogs at the New Lisbon prison. These men have proven themselves to be quick learners and worthy raisers. Perhaps most notable is how they work together as eight two-man teams, and one larger team, in the training and caring for their dogs. One also must credit the prison staff, who have been active participants in the program and have been supportive every step of the way. One of the raisers has already served 21 years in prison; another has served 30 years. Imagine, if you can, what it might be like after 30 years in prison, to have an OccuPaws dog entrusted to you. Imagine that your dog lives with you in your cell. Imagine that you get to take on the responsibility of training a guide dog; that you get to help others while you are still behind bars.

What we do – this raising of guide dogs – is a good thing. When we combine it with providing prisoners this opportunity, it’s a great thing