

Inventor of the Modern Service Dog Celebrates 50 Years Since First Life-Changing Dog Was Trained

8,200 dogs and 58,000 volunteers later, Canine Companions® is still teaching dogs new tricks to help humans thrive independently

SANTA ROSA, CA, UNITED STATES, June 26, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- This Independence Day, national nonprofit [Canine Companions](#) will celebrate 50 years of empowering people with disabilities by providing expertly trained service dogs free of charge. Since 1975, the organization has placed more than 8,200 service dogs to improve the lives of children, adults and veterans with disabilities and provide specialized support to professionals working in healthcare, education and criminal justice.



Canine Companions service dogs are professionally trained to complete more than 45 different tasks ranging from picking up dropped items and opening doors to applying calming, deep pressure or alerting their handler to important sounds.

“Canine Companions created the concept of the modern service dog that is professionally trained to help people with disabilities live more independently,” says Paige Mazzoni, CEO of Canine Companions. “We now have [seven facilities across America](#) and graduate more than 500 working dogs each year. Every dog is placed 100% free of charge thanks to the generosity of our donors and the dedication of our [volunteers](#).”

The first life-changing Canine Companions service dog, Abdul, was trained in Santa Rosa, Calif. in 1975. Since then:

□ 34,000 volunteers have raised adorable service dog puppies.

Canine Companions volunteers raise and train service dog puppies for the first 18 months of their lives, laying a foundation of love and socialization on which professional trainers build skills. Many puppies are raised in family homes, but Canine Companions also recruits college

students and partners with prisons to raise future service dogs. Incarcerated puppy raisers have a recidivism rate of less than 5% and a 10% higher success rate in raising puppies that ultimately graduate as service dogs.

□ 7,100 service dog and handler teams have graduated.

Canine Companions service dogs are professionally trained to complete more than 45 different tasks ranging from picking up dropped items and opening doors to applying calming, deep pressure or alerting their handler to important sounds. When the required tasks are mastered, a service dog is ready to be matched with a person who needs them, always free of charge.



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□ 1,150 facility dogs have gone to work.

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Canine Companions facility dogs work alongside their handlers in professional settings such as hospitals, schools and courts. These dogs use their special skills to enhance therapies, promote participation and reduce anxiety during medical procedures or court appearances.

□ 550 veterans have been matched.

Canine Companions service dogs help veterans regain independence and hope. To serve veterans with PTSD, dogs are trained in tasks including nightmare interruption and supporting their handler in crowded, public situations

that might cause anxiety.

“In our next 50 years, we will continue to innovate and lead the service dog industry, setting the standard for how canines and humans can become so much more by working together. Our goals are to open more field offices to reach more communities, strengthen our strategic partnership programs to both recruit and defray costs for our volunteers and puppy raisers, and, ultimately, to make more life-changing service dogs available to help more people.” added Mazzoni.

Donate, volunteer and learn more at canine.org.

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