

paws4people®



# ANNUAL REPORT

JANUARY 1 - DECEMBER 31, 2023



paws4people®  
**25**  
YEARS  
OF ASSISTANCE DOGS  
TRANSFORMING LIVES

# WELCOME

During the calendar year of 2023, paws4people® continued to expand our national outreach. After 24 years in business, we surpassed over 1,300 Client/Dog teams, exceeded the \$1M revenue mark for the seventh consecutive year, and graduated 26 Assistance and Facility Dog teams, as well as two Emotional Support Dogs.

Throughout this year paws4people has also become a leader within the Assistance Dogs International (ADI) Industry, and I am proud to have become a Standards Committee Chair, alongside my role as an Accreditation Assessor. Our growth within ADI allows us to

globally collaborate with other like-minded organizations who are working tirelessly to produce the highest caliber of Assistance Dogs possible.

Every day I am humbled to experience the countless hours and dedication each member of the paws4people family puts into our organization to make it a success, and to transform the lives of the people around them.

We couldn't do it without you,

Kyrris

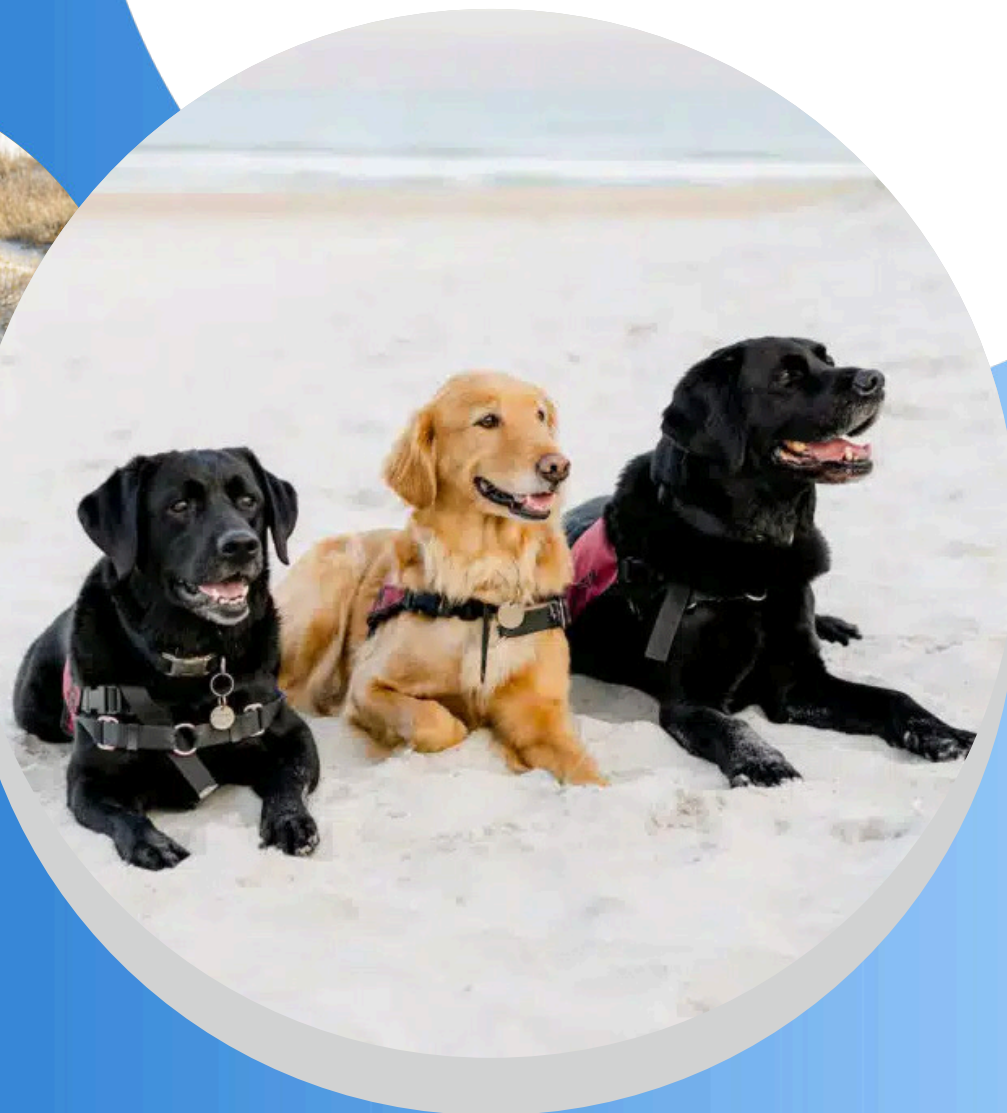


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# FINANCIAL REPORT

For the most recent financial data, please visit our website at [www.paws4people.org](http://www.paws4people.org)



# GRANTS

## 4 OTHERS FOUNDATION GRANT

For the third year in a row, paws4people was the recipient of a \$10,000 matching grant from the 4 Others Foundation. This support helped purchase 26 Fi Smart Dog Collars to ensure the safety and wellness of our in-training Assistance Dogs. These collars enable us to set and track daily health, exercise, and wellness goals for each in-training Assistance Dog, as well as securely track their location. An individual donor contributed \$10,000 to fulfill the match requirement. These gifts enable us to continue to provide the highest standard of care and safety for our in-training Assistance Dogs.

## LANDFALL FOUNDATION

The Landfall Foundation awarded \$5,000 towards our Crisis Response Facility Dog program with the Wilmington Fire Department. First responders face higher rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety issues related to the volume and severity of tragic incidents they respond to daily. To counteract this alarming trend, paws4people partnered with the WFD to provide specially trained Crisis Response Dogs (CRDs) to help support firefighters in times of crisis and make coping with trauma a bit easier. In addition, CRD's are trained to provide comfort and support for all involved at the scene of an emergency. We look forward to growing this needed and valuable program in 2024.

## NC GENERAL ASSEMBLY DIRECTED GRANT

paws4people was the recipient of a \$700,000 state funded grant toward the development of the new BRADIE Training Center. This dual-purpose facility will provide a large, climate-controlled space to train with the Dogs year-round. It will also serve as a space for larger events and classrooms. We are so grateful these funds will enable us to expand ADDIE'S Way.

## THE HUMAN-ANIMAL ALLIANCE

This year we were the proud recipient of a \$25,000 grant from The Human-Animal Alliance. This funding supported the training and placement of a third Crisis Response Dog, AXEL, with the Wilmington Fire Department. AXEL reports to work with his firefighter handler, Captain Eric Moon, to support a positive mental health initiative within the department. AXEL is trained to help reduce anxiety in the high-stress work environment, provide comfort and support to other firefighters who are processing the outcome of difficult calls, and help others in the community if they are affected by difficult or traumatic situations. With support from the Human-Animal Alliance, AXEL and Captain Moon, is making a difference in the Wilmington community.



# ADI ACCREDITATION

## We are pleased to announce

that we have achieved our 5-year reaccreditation by Assistance Dogs International (ADI). ADI is the leading authority in the Assistance Dogs industry. It establishes and promotes standards of excellence in all areas of Assistance Dog acquisition, training, and partnership. After training over 1,300 Assistance Dogs with one or more certifications, paws4people has walked alongside and supported Clients in their recovery toward a normal life. Over the past 23+ years, paws4people has developed specialized training designed to offer a

unique experience for every Client. Each Dog is brought through a highly qualified program that focuses on a holistic approach to working with Clients and their families. The organization provides certification, insurance, and support for the Client/Dog Teams for the duration of their career.

Once accredited, an Assistance Dog organization(s) becomes an official member of ADI. Member organizations must complete a rigorous reaccreditation process every 5 years to comply with ADI's Standards of Practice. ADI accreditation is a peer-review process conducted by a trained ADI assessor over a period of many days. Currently, there are 82 ADI-accredited Service Dog organizations in the United States and Canada.

**“We are proud to be recognized for adhering to the highest standards in all aspects of our operations,**

**including ethical treatment and training of Dogs, ethical treatment of Clients, solid Service Dog training and follow-up care”** said Kyria Henry Whisenhunt, Founder and Executive Director.



# DOG OF THE YEAR

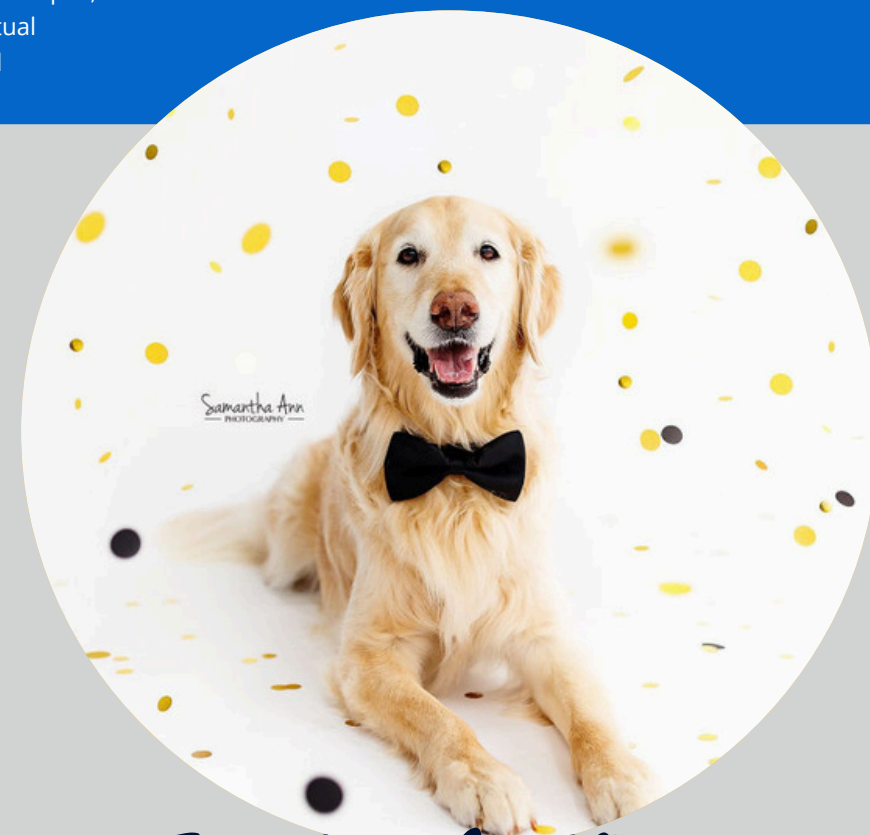
paws4people launched the second annual 2024 Dog of the Year Contest. The search was on yet again for the Dog of the Year! Beginning on December 1st and ending on midnight on New Year's Eve, over 60 participants entered their pups and told us why they should become the Dog of the Year.

At the contest end, the most pup-ular dog REMINGTON was the winner of the contest with over 14,346 votes! REMINGTON is a nine-year-old Golden Retriever from Chapel Hill, North Carolina who is a Rehabilitative Facility Dog working with the men's baseball team alongside his handler, Terri Jo who is the campus wide physical therapist, and the Head Athletic Trainer for baseball. This virtual contest raised over \$30,000 and directly benefitted paws4people's mission.

REMINGTON received many fantastic prizes including his characterization on a limited run of Wrightsville Beach Brewery Amber Ale. This is the first year that the Dog of the Year is featured on the Wrightsville Beach Brewery Amber Ale can! REMINGTON also received a \$500 cash prize, \$100 gift certificate to Wrightsville Beach Brewery, a mini photography session valued at \$400 by Samantha Ann Photography LLC, a framed commemorative artwork of beer can film, & PNG files of artist Emma Gay's renderings of the winning dog and special recognition at a Brewery event.

**“It is an honor to be affiliated with outstanding Service Dog organizations that recognize the life-changing impact Assistance Dogs provide.”**

*A special thanks to our wonderful contest sponsors Wrightsville Beach Brewery, Brunswick Beer & Cider, Samantha Ann Photography LLC, and WECT. We are so excited for the beer release in early 2024.*



## REMINGTON

# SPOTLIGHT

## WILMINGTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

Throughout 2023, we continued to grow our partnership with the Wilmington Fire Department (WFD) and the department's Crisis Response Facility Dog Program. The program already utilized Crisis Response Facility Dog RHYS at WFD Station 8 on C Shift, and Crisis Response Facility Dog HEART at Station 2 on A Shift. Building on the success of that program in 2023, a third dog, AXEL, and his primary handlers Captain Eric Moon & Master Firefighter Tyler Howell were added to the program. AXEL reports to work with his handler, Captain Moon, at Station 2 on B Shift. Similar to RHYS and HEART, AXEL works at the fire station on his shift and goes home with his Firefighter Handler when they are off duty. RHYS, HEART, and AXEL are part of a larger Mental Health and Wellness program the Wilmington Fire Department is pushing. The goal of the program is to aid in de-escalation of stress post-call, ease tension at the station, lower anxiety, reduce long-term effects of PTSD, and improve cardiovascular health. In addition, the Facility Dogs provide comfort in emergency situations, both at the department and at the scene of an emergency in the community to ease the distress of anyone affected by the trauma. In addition, our paws4people Staff & Volunteer Crisis Response Action Team aided and responded to more Crisis Response deployments since the program's beginning in 2021, a total of 16 responses in 2023.

The paws4people Crisis Response Staff & Volunteer Team is comprised of volunteer Puppy & Big Dog Handlers, Client Volunteers, and Staff Members who are all trained specifically to handle Dogs & Puppies to help provide support and comfort to First Responders after a stressful event. In 2023, we also continued our "Feel Good" Friday Trainings that take place twice monthly on a rotating basis throughout all Wilmington Fire Department Stations. Over the course of this year, students, volunteers, and Clients attended 25 trainings at the Wilmington Fire Department to practice confidence building skills and build a positive relationship with our local First Responders. Of course, it is also a chance for First Responders to get some Puppy love. We are so grateful for our partnership with Wilmington Fire Department and look forward to all that we accomplish together in the future.



# EVENTS & UPDATES



## RBC KANSAS

On March 4th, Cpl Seth Eure, USMC (ret.) & HARRIS traveled to the annual RBC Kansas City Division conference in Missouri. Thanks to the efforts of Mark Borcharding and Natalie Walsh, the RBC Kansas City Division has fundraised over \$6,000.00 for our paws4vets program, with a year-end goal of at least \$25,000.00.



## AZALEA FESTIVAL

On March 18th, The Azalea Festival partnered with paws4people to host Paws on Parade, the Official Dog Garden Paw-ty of the Azalea Festival. This is a doggy-fun day in the park, complete with live music, a Canine Court Pageant, a puppy kissing booth, professional dog portraits, doggone good vendors, and more. Congratulations to Sissy, who won the title of 2023 Azalea Festival Dog Queen! She won over the crowd with her tricks and her sassy attitude!" Sissy is a 3-year-old Yorkshire Terrier or as her Daddy likes to call her a "Yorkshire Terrorist"! She is the Queen of everything in her house and she has a unique language for complaining. She whines for 15-20 minutes until she gets her way. She loves her paws4people sister, SPENCER, a Medical Alert Service Dog for David Millush, USMC Veteran. Congratulations Sissy!



## HEROES FIRST FOUNDATION GOLF TOURNAMENT

On May 17th, paws4people staff Terry Henry, Danielle Cockerham, and Cpl Seth Eure, USMC (ret.) traveled to Georgia to engage in the 14th Annual Heroes First Foundation Golf Tournament. paws4people intern Shannon Coyle also joined the team with Assistance Dogs In-Training COSMO, JAMESON, and STELLA. This year's event was another great success with 288 golfers and \$90,000 raised for our paws4vets program. We are very grateful for Heroes First and their sponsorship of two more teams: MAJ Matt Nelson, USA (ret.) with ALPINE and SSgt Brendan VanDalinda, USMC (ret.) and ALLY.





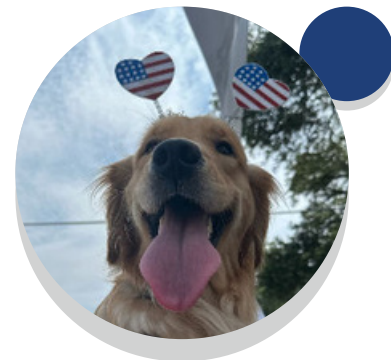
### DERBY4DOGS 2023

We hosted our 9th Annual Derby4Dog's Charity Garden Party Fundraiser presented by Kingoff's Jewelers. This sold-out event was held in the Cape Fear Community College's Union Station ballroom and featured a puppy derby, signature cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, live and silent auctions & big screen viewing of The Kentucky Derby. This year we offered a new event feature The Bourbon Lounge sponsored by Seacoast Wealth Management, which offered a VIP Bourbon tasting experience. This event was our most successful Derby4Dogs *grossing more than \$150,000*, with ELLA, sponsored by T.O.O. Construction, winning the Puppy Derby.



### CRAB FEST

paws4people supporter Lindsay Orem and Family hosted their 5th Annual O'Lundgren Crab Fest at their home in Sneads Ferry, NC. The event featured Blue Crabs, BBQ, a beer truck, and even a water slide. Through their efforts with this event, over *\$5,000* was raised for our mission. A huge thank you to Lindsay Orem and Family, as well as The Preserve at Tidewater community for their support.



### 4TH OF JULY PARADE

paws4people Assistance Dogs In-Training DOLLY, DEAN, and POPPINS alongside several dedicated volunteers and staff participated in the annual 4th of July Parade in Southport. We would like to give a special thank you to paws4people board member George Zimmerman for helping us to secure this excellent training and awareness opportunity.



### AMERICAN SOCIETY OF MILITARY COMPTROLLERS CONFERENCE

On May 31st, Cpl Seth Eure, USMC (ret.), Director, of Client Training, his Service Dog HARRIS, along with client SSGT Will Craig, USMC (ret.), and his Service Dog JETTY attended the ASMC Professional Development Institute Conference of 2023 in St. Louis, Missouri. ASMC (American Society of Military Comptrollers) is an organization comprised of active-duty service members, and civil service employees of the defense finance sector. Our organization was pleased to be the PDI dedicated charity of 2023. Together, the ASMC *raised over \$30,000*, and paws4vets was able to educate the comptroller community about the value-added impact of Service Dogs.



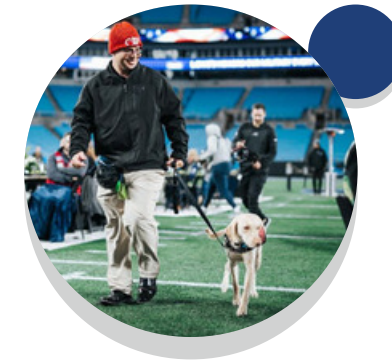
### WINE WOMEN & SHOES®

On September 21, 2023, we hosted our inaugural Wine Women & Shoes® fundraiser at the Lumina Resort on Wrightsville Beach. This sold-out event featured a wine tasting, a shoppable multi-designer marketplace, and a seated program that included a live auction and fashion show. We are proud to announce that we exceeded our fundraising goal and *grossed over \$130,000!* Planning is already underway for Wine Women & Shoes 2024 with a new location and larger space.



### NEW HANOVER COUNTY FIRST RESPONDER'S KICKBALL

paws4people Staff Cpl Seth Eure, USMC (ret.) and Danielle Cockerham alongside their Service Dogs HARRIS and WATSON went out to support the Second Annual New Hanover County First Responder's Kickball Tournament at Godwin Stadium. With over 100 participants from across the county, we are proud to say this event *raised over \$10,000* in support of our paws4vetsTM and paws4firstresponders programs. The day full of kickball also provided a great training opportunity for our In-Training Puppies and Dogs. We are very grateful to NHC and especially Kieran Schwarz for their involvement in making this event a success.



### CAROLINA PANTHERS SALUTE TO SERVICE

Lowe's Home Improvement and the Carolina Panthers honored 12 paws4people military veterans, their families, and service dogs during the annual Salute to Service event on the stadium field. The program had special significance for paws4people as it highlighted the *life-changing impact Service Dogs can have on veterans*. Panthers Legends and Lowe's executive leadership shared in the evening which was highlighted by a surprise concert by country music recording artist Chris Lane. paws4vets Clients and their Service Dogs were also treated to a special experience during the Salute to Service game on Sunday against the Indianapolis Colts. At the end of the 1st quarter, the Panthers invited the paws4vets team, SGT Louis Romano, USA (ret.) and COLTON, onto the field where they were congratulated for officially becoming a certified team the day before during the paws4people annual graduation.



### WARRIOR SALUTE GOLF TOURNAMENT

Randy Powers USAF Veteran with his Service Dog MORGAN, Christopher Twohig USMC veteran with his Service Dog MCLELLAN, and Seth Eure, Director, Client Training, along with his Service Dog HARRIS attended the Warrior Salute Charity Golf Tournament at the Reston National Golf Course in Reston, Virginia benefitting paws4vetsTM. The paws4vets teams were able to introduce many tournament attendees to Service Dogs and were able to educate the public on the benefits associated with ADI Accredited Service Dogs. We would like to thank Warrior Salute for their continued support and most recent *\$26,000 donation*.





## PORT CITY HIGHLAND GAMES

Our Third Annual Port City Highland Games, presented by Jeff Gordon Chevrolet was a huge success, *raising over \$12,000*. With over one thousand attendees, this was our most popular Highland Games event to date. This year's games featured heavy Scottish culture athletics, pipes and drums, traditional Scottish dance and music, clans, and vendors. New to 2023 and thanks to Flying Machine Brewery, we were thrilled to have our very own Port City Highland Games Loch Lomond brew.



## ANNUAL FAMILY REUNION & GRADUATION

This year's Annual Family Reunion and Graduation was our *most celebrated* yet.

In keeping with tradition, we showed our appreciation for our sponsors, volunteers, clients, and staff. New areas of recognition this year included our Crisis Response Volunteer team, PIF Paw Club, and our "Of The Year" Awards.

During our 12th Annual 2023 paws4people Graduation Ceremony, 27 Service Dog Teams, two Facility Dog Teams, 6 Assistance Dog II Teams, and we also recognized two Emotional Support Dog teams in Kenan Auditorium. We kicked off the graduation Ceremony with an Assistance Dog In-Training demo, which highlighted our Advanced K9 Training Team and their wonderful Assistance Dogs In-Training.

In addition, we were honored to have student speaker Katie Blackwell & Client speaker Hailey Eason & GEORGEANN share the impact of our paws4people in their life with attendees. Thank you to both of these ladies for their messages, it truly warmed our hearts and left us all with an impactful message. Congratulations to all Client & Student graduates! We are so proud of you.



## ASSISTANCE DOG TRAINING PROGRAM UPDATE

The Assistance Dog Training Minor at the University of North Carolina Wilmington continues to be such a success. This program, the first and only comprehensive one of its kind in the country, empowers students to add a unique and marketable skill set to their education. The most distinctive aspect of the education of Assistance Dogs provided in these courses is that they cover not only the most well-known types of Assistance Dogs, but also a variety of certified Facility Dogs that could enhance their own career paths. This year, over 150 students enrolled in the very first class of the Assistance Dog Training Program, where they learned all about service dogs, different organizations, rights and legislations, and much more. While only some of them moved on to continue in the program, all those students can now be great advocates and educators for service dogs out in the community. This year we also welcome almost 50 new student trainers, who all make such a big impact in our organization. Over the semester they learned how to handle our Assistance Dogs In-Training in different environments from department and grocery stores, to parks and arcades.

Upon completion of the ADTP, students receive their Assistance Dog- Public Access Training certificate. We are happy to report that 30 of our students successfully received their certificate this year. After completing the program, several of them stayed in Wilmington to volunteer or grow into a more advanced role. This year alone, three of the alumni of the ADTP joined the paws4people team as official staff members.





# ADDIE AWARD WINNERS

Each year we are honored to present the ADDIE Awards to the paws4people Dogs who exemplify the "BEST" in one of the following categories: paws4people Service Dog of the Year Under the Age of 18, paws4people Service Dog of the Year Over

the Age of 18, paws4vets Service Dog of the Year, and paws4people Facility Dog of the Year. This year we were excited to add on a new award for People's Choice, where supporters around the country were able to vote for the winner in this category.

p4p UNDER 18 CATEGORY

**WREN KELLER  
& PATTON**



SD-PND-STP

p4p OVER 18 CATEGORY

**MILLER CARE  
& TOBY**



SD-MED-PSY

paws4vets CATEGORY

**DAVID CRITCHLEY II,  
USMC VETERAN &  
YANCEY**



SD-MED-PSY

p4p FACILITY DOG CATEGORY

**EZRA BUCHDAHL,  
LCSW-C CRCCPA &  
CARMEN**



FD-RFD

# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHTS

Our volunteers play a critical role in the success of paws4people. Many students and community members engage in weekly activities to support both our Puppy Development Center and our UNCW Assistance Dog Training Program. This year we were thrilled to announce special recognition awards to the following people: Emily Bradford, Jaedyn Branderhorst, Sara Coppick, Kayla Thompson, and Madison Kimberlin.

**We could not do it without you!**



Click here  
to watch on  
YouTube.

## LEGACY TEAMS

paws4people remembers and honors all of our Dogs who have passed away throughout the year. Visit this link to watch a heartfelt video created by a staff member to honor their legacy.

**Or Visit Their Channel:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFdI3c6QhY4>





# ADDIE'S WAY

Our ADDIE'S Way campus is busier than ever. Our CHAENEY Dormitory is now in full use with its 12-bedroom capacity, hosting clients as a part of our Intervention Transfer Training® each month. We are also proud to utilize the space for volunteer and staff celebrations throughout the year. We even work with various community partnerships who need a space to host their event, in turn for their members learning more about the paws4people mission. The BRIELLE

Puppy Development Center (PDC) still holds first place for the favorite spot on campus, and we continue to be humbled by the hundreds of volunteers that come out each year to fill shifts, take the puppies on outings, and keep the PDC sparkling clean. We are looking forward to taking on new project endeavors in 2024 to continue the expansion of our K9-centric Post-Traumatic Growth® campus.

## NEW ADDITIONS & ACQUISITIONS

FEBRUARY



10 BRIGHTON puppies were born: CIDER, SHANDY, KILLIAN, TITO, REBEL, STELLA III, COSMO, ACE, PORTER II, JAMESON

SHELBY II purchased from Tolliver's Goldens in WV on February 17th.  
4 CINDER puppies were born: WINNIE, LEIA, ELLA III, DARL

2 puppies purchased from Beacham Goldens: WALT and SEBASTIAN



APRIL



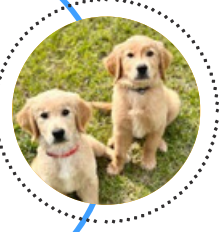
JANUARY

JUNE



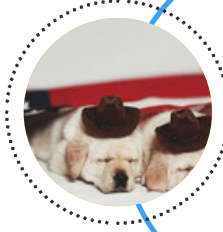
2 puppies purchased from Whiskey River Goldens (NC): JOHN and OLIVER III

2 puppies purchased from Cynazar Goldens in NJ: TULIP and LUCY IV  
1 NATTY puppy was born: VICTORY

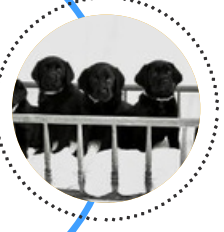


MAY

OCTOBER



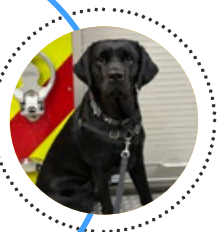
5 HOULIHAN puppies were born: CAROLYN, FRAN, DOTTIE II. Also 2 puppies went to ABC organizations.  
6 LIBERTY puppies were born: HONEY, STAR, LADY, KLITH, GENERAL and CARTER



JULY

5 JUNO puppies were born: VIRGINIA, ARLINGTON, ABE, JEFFERSON and WOODROW

MINNIE II was purchased from Occupaws



NOVEMBER

### TOTALS

31 P4P  
BRED PUPPIES

8 PUPPIES  
ACQUIRED FROM  
OTHER SOURCES

# SPONSORS

paws4people places each of our highly-trained, customized, life-changing Assistance Dogs at no cost to their client and we couldn't do it without the support of those listed below. From the bottom of hearts and with wagging tails, thank you!

## Top Dog and New Leash on Life Sponsors



CONTROLS | CONSTRUCTORS | ENGINEERING



Sandra Wilkerson

Judy Girard



## Leader of the Pack Sponsors



Brian & Donna Shiro

## Pawsitive Partner Sponsors



Anne Spychala  
Family Charitable Foundation

Joy Smith

The Smuck Foundation

## Official Service Providers



Samantha Ann  
PHOTOGRAPHY





## Official Training Venues



## Official Dog Food Sponsors



## Official Product Sponsors



## Official Hospitality Venues



Marietta, OH



Wrightsville Beach, NC



## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Terry Henry - Permanent Trustee Co-Founder, Chairman  
Kyria Henry Whisenhunt - Permanent Trustee, Founder, Vice-Chairman  
Lt. Col. Mark George, USMC (ret). - Regular Trustee  
George Zimmerman - Regular Trustee  
William Cameron II - Regular Trustee  
Donna Shiro - Regular Trustee  
Dr. Chris Lantz - Regular Trustee

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Kyria Henry Whisenhunt, MAHS  
Terry Henry  
Cece McConnell, D.Min  
Danielle Cockerham

FOLLOW ON  
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