



2024 ANNUAL REPORT

paws4people.org





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MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER



Dear Friends, Supporters, and Family,

As we reflect on this past year at paws4people®, I am filled with gratitude for the unwavering support that makes our mission possible. Each year, we witness the profound impact that our dogs have on the lives of those they serve—bringing comfort, independence, and hope to individuals and families across the country.

This year has been a testament to the power of partnership. Whether it's through training our extraordinary Assistance Dogs, supporting veterans and individuals with disabilities, or expanding our community outreach, none of this would be possible without you—our donors, volunteers, trainers, and advocates. Together, we are changing lives, one paw at a time.

In this report, you will find stories of transformation, milestones reached, and the incredible dedication of our team. From the moment a puppy begins its training journey to the day it becomes a life-changing partner, every step is made possible by our collective efforts.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to growing our programs, reaching more individuals in need, and ensuring that our mission continues to thrive for years to come. With your continued support, we will write even more success stories in the year ahead.

Thank you for being part of this journey with us.

Kyria Henry Whisenhunt
FOUNDER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

FINANCIAL REPORT

For the most recent financial data,
please visit our website at
www.paws4people.org



GRANTS

4 Others Foundation



For the fourth consecutive year, paws4people® is honored to have received a generous matching grant from the 4 Others Foundation. This year, the Foundation awarded a **\$30,000** grant to support our paws4vets™ placement program.

Thanks to the remarkable generosity of our individual donors, we successfully met the **\$30,000** match. These contributions are vital in empowering us to support our nation's heroes by providing customized Service Dogs. These incredible dogs deliver more than just physical assistance—they bring healing, hope, and peace of mind to those who have served.



GRANTS

Landfall Foundation



The Landfall Foundation awarded us **\$5,000** to support programming focused on enhancing the mental health and wellness of children and adults in crisis through K9-assisted activities and interventions.



In collaboration with local nonprofit organizations, we provide volunteer- and staff-led puppy-in-training visits designed to promote physical and emotional well-being, offering comfort and joy to those in need. These visits play a crucial role in enriching lives and providing vital support to individuals facing difficult challenges.



GRANTS

NC General Assembly Directed



paws4people® was honored to receive a **\$700,000** state-funded grant to support the development of the new BRADIE Training Center.

This versatile, dual-purpose facility will feature a large, climate-controlled space for year-round training with our Assistance Dogs. Additionally, it will serve as a venue for larger events and classrooms, enabling us to expand the reach and impact of ADDIE'S Way. We are incredibly grateful for this support as it will allow us to move towards becoming "shovel-ready."



ASSISTANCE DOG INTERNATIONAL



We are proud to announce that paws4people® Founder, and Executive Director Kyria Henry Whisenhunt has been elected to the Board of Directors for Assistance Dogs International (ADI).

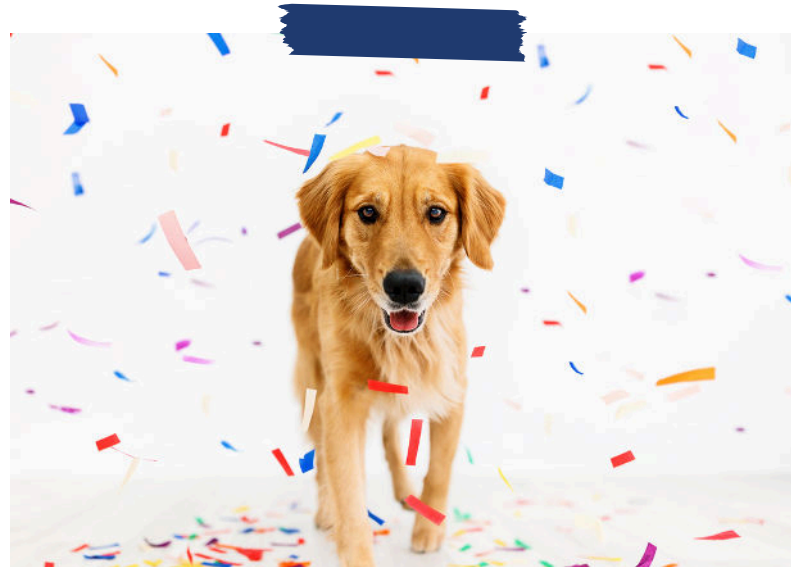
ADI is a worldwide coalition of not-for-profit organizations that train and place Assistance Dogs. Founded in 1986 from a group of seven small organizations, ADI has become the leading authority in the Assistance Dog industry. Members of ADI meet regularly to share ideas and conduct business regarding educating the public about Assistance Dogs, advocating for the legal rights of people with disabilities partnered with Assistance Dogs, and the setting of standards and establishing guidelines and ethics for the training of these dogs. We look forward to watching Kyria's collaborative work within ADI over the next four years.



DOG OF THE YEAR

TONY

In partnership with Wrightsville Beach Brewery, paws4people® launched the third annual 2025 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 33 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 TONY was the winner of the contest with over 4600 votes! TONY, a two-year-old Golden Retriever from Wilmington, NC, who loves going on boat rides, walks, and spending time with his family and friends. This virtual contest raised over **\$16,650** and directly benefited paws4people's mission. TONY received many fantastic prizes including his characterization on a limited run of Wrightsville Beach Brewery Pilsner! The Dog of the Year winners have now been represented on the Wrightsville Beach Brewery Pale can, Amber Ale can, and the Pilsner can!



TONY 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 label, & PNG files of artist Larry Bellamy's renderings of the winning dog and special recognition at a Brewery event. 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 2025!

MOOSE PARTNERSHIP



We are proud to continue our relationship with The Moose, in particular The Virginia Moose Association (VMA). Dedicated to supporting their local community, VMA Moose Lodge #1655 presented paws4people® with over **\$20,000** at this year's Reunion to help transform lives. Thanks to their incredible support over the past two years—raising over **\$300,000**—the Virginia Moose Association is proudly sponsoring the CHAENEY Dormitory for the next three years.

In August, paws4people® staff members Terry Henry and Danielle Cockerham, along with Randy Powers and Rob Maino, attended the 87th VMA Annual Convention to share our mission and partnership. In November, Terry Henry, Service Dog CAMPBELL, In-Training Service Dog DOLLY, Shannon Coyle, and STELLA joined the 14th Annual Moosehaven Chili Cook-Off, along with paws4vets™ clients CPO John Fleming, USN (ret.), with SHELBY, and COL Deborah Shea, USA (ret.), with CANNON.

We're grateful for this partnership and excited to continue growing together!



FOUNDATION EVENTS

Derby4Dogs



On Saturday, May 4th, the paws4people® foundation hosted our 10th Annual Derby4Dog's Charity Garden Party Fundraiser presented by Seacoast Wealth Management. 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 and a live viewing of The Kentucky Derby. This year was a record-breaking success, raising **over \$175,000** to support our mission. "Go for Gold" GIBSON, sponsored by Judy Girard & Cyndi Holding, won the Puppy Derby.

FOUNDATION EVENTS

Port City Highland Games



Our 3rd Annual Port City Highland Games, presented by Jeff Gordon Chevrolet, with Flying Machine Brewery as our Exclusive Beer Sponsor and special thanks to Allen Denning, was an incredible success! Athletes and spectators enjoyed a sunny day filled with games, food, vendors, and Scottish culture, thanks to the Scottish Society of Wilmington—all in support of our paws4vets™ program.



New for 2024 were the Tug of War and Tartan Parade, adding even more excitement. Nine athletes received custom prizes handmade by paws4people® Client Jeremy Buchholz, representing Klan Runda.

This year's event raised over **\$15,000!**



FOUNDATION EVENTS

Wine, Women, and Shoes



On October 10, 2024, we were thrilled to host our 2nd Annual Wine Women & Shoes fundraiser at the Warwick and Burney Centers at UNCW. The event was a complete sell-out, with 350 guests joining us for an unforgettable evening.

Attendees enjoyed a curated wine tasting, a shoppable designer marketplace, and a seated program featuring a live auction and a stylish fashion show. We are excited to share that we met our fundraising goal, raising over **\$200,000** to support our mission. Plans are already underway for Wine Women & Shoes 2025, with a new location and an expanded space to accommodate even more guests for this much-anticipated event.



FOUNDATION EVENTS



Annual Family Reunion

The weekend of October 25th, we celebrated **25 years of Assistance Dogs** transforming lives at ADDIE'S Way and UNCW with our 13th Annual Family Reunion.

Friday evening's Wine and Wags at ADDIE'S Way featured food trucks, music, and our annual rally competition, with winners Mollie & In-Training Dog HONEY, and Lily & her Service Dog DEAN. On Saturday, we graduated 23 Client/Dog teams and recognized UNCW Assistance Dog Training Program students. Speeches were given by HMCS Bryan Callahan, USN (ret.) with Service Dog VERA, and student Jaedyn Branderhorst-Sauceda. Saturday evening, we heard from keynote speaker Mike Scott, honored volunteers of the year, and announced ADDIE award winners.

Thank you to everyone who helped make paws4people's mission a success!



FOUNDATION EVENTS



Veterans Day Honor Walk

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who joined us—whether in person or virtually—to support our inaugural Veterans Day Honor Walk fundraiser. We were blessed with a gorgeous, sunny day for the 3.3-mile walk from O2 Fitness to Anne Bonny's Bar and Grill.

Special thanks to our presenting sponsor, Porters Neck Country Club, our top fundraising team, The Canine Cougars, and top individual fundraiser, Rob Maino. Thanks to their efforts and the incredible support of so many others, we raised over **\$25,000** to advance our mission of Assistance Dogs Transforming Lives.



THIRD PARTY EVENTS

NC Azalea Festival



We were thrilled to partner again with the North Carolina Azalea Festival, and new to this year, we launched our inaugural Pet Royalty Virtual Contest.



We also were invited to bring our Puppies to one of the most prestigious events, the Airline Luncheon Garden Party to mingle with guests. Our dedicated volunteers and staff had a busy weekend also participating in the Azalea Festival parade and in the street fair children's area with our In-Training Puppies and Dogs. This amazing partnership helped us raise over **\$7,000** towards our mission.



THIRD PARTY EVENTS

Heros First Foundation Golf Tournament



On May 13th, paws4people® staff members Terry Henry, Shannon Coyle, and Danielle Cockerham traveled to Braselton, Georgia, for the 15th Annual Heroes First Foundation Golf Tournament. They were joined by volunteer Rob Maino and paws4vets™ clients Jennifer Brier, USMC Veteran, with BONDI, and LTJG Emani Alston, USN (ret.), with WAYLON.



The event was a huge success, with 288 golfers and nearly **\$100,000** raised for paws4vets™. As our longest-standing sponsor, Heroes First Foundation continues to inspire us with their support.

This year, we proudly launched The Carol Mitchell Memorial Fund, providing annual scholarships for Veterans' tuition at our Immersion Client Training Program, honoring Carol's legacy.



THIRD PARTY EVENTS

Crab Fest



paws4people® supporter Lindsay Orem and her family hosted their 6th Annual Crab Fest on June 1st in Sneads Ferry, NC. This year's event drew over 100 attendees.

Guests enjoyed three bushels of crab and nearly 100 pounds of BBQ from Boss Jr's BBQ, all the way from West Virginia! The prize baskets were once again a crowd favorite, with The Preserve at Tidewater neighborhood helping to make this year's total donation an impressive **\$4,055.76**. In total, the event has raised **\$17,295** over the past six years, making a significant impact for paws4people®. Thank you to Lindsay, her family, and the entire community for their continued support and generosity!



THIRD PARTY EVENTS



Iron Bow Golf Tournament

The paws4people® team traveled to Maryland for the annual Iron Bow Technologies Golf Tournament. Relationship Development Officers Cathy Demeroto with CORNELIA and Rob Maino with LUCILLE, along with Client/Dog teams SGT Louis Romano, USARNG (ret.), with COLTON, and Maj Jim Hoover, USMC (ret.), with NOBLE, attended to raise awareness about our paws4vets™ program, which focuses on placements with Veterans and Military Dependents.



Golfers played alongside pros like Denny McCarthy while supporting our mission. This year, the tournament raised over **\$70,000** for paws4vets™. We are deeply grateful to Iron Bow Technologies for their ongoing support.



THIRD PARTY EVENTS



Warrior Salute

Randy Powers, USAF (ret.) alongside his Service Dog LAYLA, and TSgt Karen Cassey, USAF (ret.) with her Service Dog TITO attended the annual Warrior Salute Veteran Services charity event at the Lark Brewing Co in Aldie, Virginia benefitting paws4vets™. The event showcased music, a cornhole tournament, guest speakers. Warrior Salute's Vision is to grow within the community and fill the gaps of bridging people, industry and our military via services and funding while having fun.



They focus on giving back to organizations who support the veteran communities. In doing so they directly support the paws4vets™ programs that place Service Dogs with veterans, active-duty military, and military dependents. We are appreciative of Warrior Salute and their continued support of our paws4vets™ program.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHTS

Community Engagement Committee



In 2024, paws4people® launched our very first Community Engagement Committee, a step toward strengthening our existing volunteer programs and creating new avenues for deeper community engagement. Composed of 25 dedicated volunteers and clients, this Committee has been instrumental in helping us broaden our impact. Thanks to their efforts and commitment, we were able to participate in over 30+ events, totaling over 150 hours throughout the year, significantly increasing our visibility and fostering stronger relationships within the community. A big thank you to each and every member of the Community Engagement Committee for helping us turn this vision into a reality.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHTS

“Of the Year” Awards



Host of the Year:

Katie & Todd Moore

PDC Volunteer of the Year:

Angie Walters

PDC Outing Supervisor of the Year:

Shelby King

Big Dog Volunteer of the Year:

Dylan Crawford

Advanced K9 Trainer of the Year:

Sammi Kopec



We extend our deepest gratitude and congratulations to our Volunteer of the Year award winners! Your hard work, dedication, and unwavering commitment to our Assistance Dogs In-Training have made a tremendous impact. Your efforts help transform these incredible dogs into life-changing companions, and we are so grateful for everything you do. Thank you for being an essential part of our mission!

PROGRAM UPDATE

UNCW/paws4people® Assistance Dog Training Program (ADTP)



The Assistance Dog Training Program (ADTP) at UNCW continues to be a highlight of many students' college experience. This first-of-its-kind program focuses on teaching students how to train Assistance Dogs in public settings, the life-changing impact these dogs have on individuals with disabilities, and their use in professional environments.

Students gain hands-on experience training Service and Facility Dogs and have the option to take an in-depth course on Facility Dogs, preparing them for future careers as recreation therapists, social workers, mental health practitioners, healthcare providers, and teachers. This program continues to shape the next generation of professionals while making a meaningful difference in the lives of people with disabilities.



PROGRAM UPDATE

UNCW/paws4people® Assistance
Dog Training Program (ADTP)



1,772

students have taken at least
one ADTP course

408

students have completed
the ADTP

100

students have completed
the ADTP minor

28

program alumni have
received an Assistance
Dog from paws4people®

192,330

service learning and
training hours since the
program's inception



ADDIE AWARDS



Each year, we proudly present the ADDIE Awards to the paws4people® Dogs who embody the "BEST" in the following categories:

- paws4people® Service Dog of the Year (Under 18): **HONOR and Amos**
- paws4people® Service Dog of the Year (Over 18): **CLAUDE and Elizabeth**
- paws4vets™ Service Dog of the Year: **MERCER and CPO John Fleming, USN (ret.)**
- paws4people® Facility Dog of the Year: **ATKINS and Barb**
- People's Choice: **DEAN and Lily**



ADDIE'S WAY

K9-centric Post Traumatic Growth®
Campus/paws4people® National
Headquarters



In 2024, paws4people® had the privilege of hosting 20 clients at our ADDIE's Way campus, providing them with specialized training, support, and life-changing experiences alongside their future Assistance Dogs.

The time spent at ADDIE's Way was filled with moments of transformation, connection, and growth. Each client walked away not only with enhanced skills but also with a renewed sense of confidence in their journey toward independence. The bonds formed between these individuals and their future Assistance Dogs exemplify the heart of our mission at paws4people®—empowering lives through canine companionship.

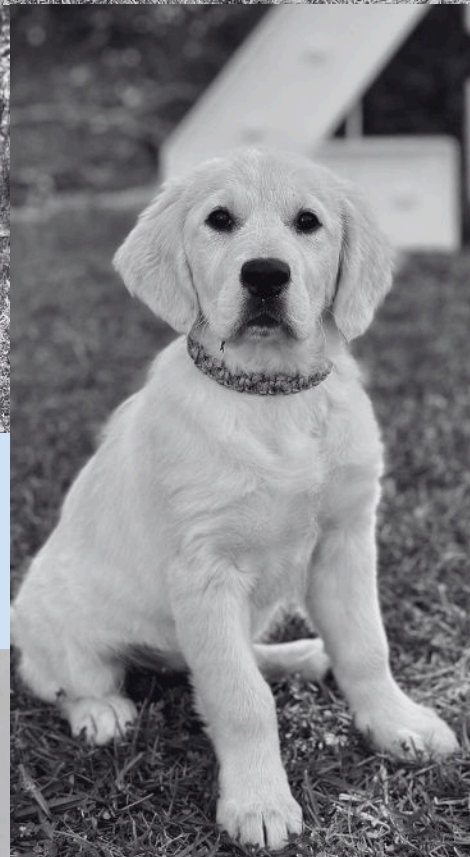
We are incredibly proud of the progress made by our clients and we look forward to continuing to support them on their paths to greater freedom and fulfillment.



Transformed



NEW ADDITIONS
&
AQUISITIONS





NEW ADDITIONS
&
AQUISITIONS



CORPORATE SPONSORS

Thank you to our amazing sponsors—your generosity makes our life-changing mission possible!



Top Dog



Wealth
Management



New Leash on Life



David &
Melissa Simmons

JUDY GIRARD

JOY SMITH



CORPORATE SPONSORS

Thank you to our amazing sponsors—your generosity makes our life-changing mission possible!



Leader of the Pack



RAYMOND JAMES



THE TULLEY
FAMILY

Brian & Donna Shiro

GEORGE & PAULETTE
ZIMMERMAN



JACK & MARY
CLARK

Sandra Wilkerson

Pawsitive Partner



K9 RESORTS
LUXURY PET HOTEL

Lindsay Drem & Family

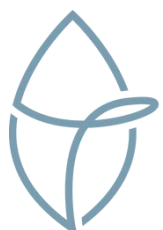


TRAINING VENUE SPONSORS

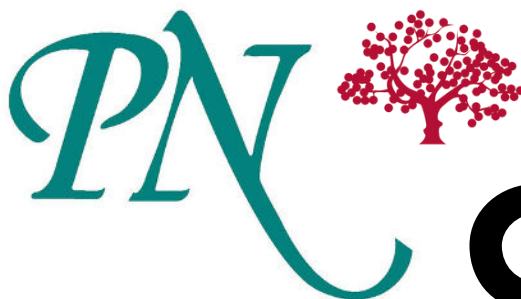


As a Training Venue, your partnership provides vital early socialization experiences for our future Assistance Dogs while helping spread awareness of our mission throughout the community.

Official Training Venues (OTV)



THRIVE FAMILY
DENTAL



LIVE OAK BANK®

CAPE FEAR
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE



FIRST BANK

O₂FITNESS



Elderhaus



Canterbury
Stables



J. McLaughlin

HEAD TO TOE
med + spa + salon



MegaCorp



THANK
YOU

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Full Member 2024

