

## Investor's Report



Spring 2017

## Same Compassionate Mission

### *New Name & Logo*

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Dogs for the Deaf, Inc, will soon present a new name and logo that will represent the expanded services the organization has grown to offer since our inception in 1977.

Stay tuned for more information on the unveiling of the new name and logo in the next Canine Listener and on the website this fall!

## Meet The Real Dog Rescuer

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### ***An Inside Look at Professional Training:***

*This quarter's Investor Report will offer our most committed philanthropic friends the chance to see inside the world of our Training through a Q & A time with John Drach, Dogs for the Deaf Director of Training.*



**Q: John, how long have you been a certified assistance dog trainer, and where did you receive your internship or first year of employment in this field?**

**A:** When I came into this field they didn't have apprenticeships. I was called a "Trainer-Trainee". I still have some of my old business cards. I started this journey at Dogs for the Deaf on April 15, 1990. I was so excited to train dogs to help people. My dad was hearing impaired for many years. It was my way to give back and use my abilities to help others. I was never happier than that first year learning how to impact lives for the better. I have gone on to train many different types of Assistance Dogs and meet some of the best people. Dogs have a way of building people up and bridging the gap in their lives.

**Q: What made you want to be a Professional Trainer? Was there a person and/or past action of someone else that inspired you?**

**A:** When I was 10 years old I went on a trip with my parents to see my brother, who was teaching in South Dakota. During our stay, we went to one of his neighbors for dinner. They lived on a big ranch and had a great little Cattle Dog mix that worked the farm for them. As my parents sat talking before dinner I sat with the dog, scratching his ears and petting him calmly. Just before dinner, the dog started to beg for a piece of sausage from the snack table. The man stood up and started giving commands to the dog. This dog knew every trick in the book. All the usual; sit up, roll over and shake were in his bag of tricks. Then the man said, "*best for last*". He told the dog to speak and the dog barked loudly. At that point, he reached for a big piece of sausage and said, "*Whisper*". The dog got very quiet and let out a very faint, "*woof*". That was the coolest thing I had ever seen in my ten years of life and I knew I wanted to train dogs from that point on.

Not long after that, I learned about Guide Dogs and how people can use dog training to help others. It wasn't until I went to school and got a degree that I realized I wanted to train full time. It was difficult for my parents to understand at the time, but it was — and still is — one of the best decisions I have ever made.

**Q: When did you first learn about Dogs for the Deaf and what made you choose this organization?**

**A:** I had finished college and was working in the computer industry. Every day when I got home I took my dogs out and did some training. At that point, I had worked mostly in the obedience and hunting retriever world. I did not like my job and was looking to move from my home state of Wisconsin to find a training job. Not to date myself, but the internet wasn't invented yet so it



took a little more time to find what I was looking for. One of the training magazines I subscribed to had an ad for Dogs for the Deaf and Guide Dogs for the Blind. I had always wanted to see Oregon so I called to see if Dogs for the Deaf had any job openings. They did not have an opening and I saw the door closing quickly. I asked if I flew to Oregon for a visit if they would interview me in case an opening became available in the future. They agreed and the rest is history.

**Q: When you have a training position open at Dogs for the Deaf and you are recruiting a new trainer, what are a few key characteristics you look for?**

**A:** We are not just training dogs. We are training dogs for people in need. They have to have the skill to train but they also have to have a love for people and the willingness to help them. This is a very small industry and finding qualified trainers can be difficult. The staff I have now are fantastic and I am very proud of how far they have come. If someone is looking at getting into the field, they not only have to know how to train, they must be able to train 8 to 10 dogs at a time. They have to be just as up at 4 o'clock in the afternoon as they were at 8 o'clock in the morning. They have to be experts at time management and getting every minute out of every hour to prepare the dogs for the journey ahead.

**Q: We see that there are methods that professionals use in various industries. Are there various methods in dog training? If so, which one does Dogs for the Deaf adhere to and why was it chosen for our training purposes?**

**A:** Dogs for the Deaf uses a positive reinforcement method of training. Most of what we do is based on B.F. Skinner's Operant Conditioning. We use clickers as behavior markers and treats for reinforcement. We use a positive method because the dogs must want to do the work. Unlike some other Assistance Dog work, Hearing Dogs are not

prompted or commanded to alert to sounds. The sound becomes the prompt to work the sequence of behaviors. In a nut shell, when the sound goes off the dog works the sound sequence and gets rewarded for doing so. It is a strong method and works well for many different type of dogs.

**Q: What rescue effort most sticks in your memory of the many years you have been rescuing, training and placing dogs?**

**A:** I have rescued hundreds of dogs over the years but the one that sticks out is easy. His name was Corky. Corky was the third dog ever on my training string. He was a medium-sized terrier mix, with one ear up and one ear down. I tested him at the shelter and went back and forth on whether to take him or not. In the end, I did and was glad I took that chance on the little, dirty terrier mix. He turned out to be a very smart dog. I would often joke back then that I was going to steal him and run off to Hollywood to be in the movies. Look out Lassie, here we come!

The one story about Corky that stands out is a day in the airport. We were practicing walking through the snake line doing obedience. Suddenly, Corky started pulling on the leash and wanted to run down the airport. I was very disappointed, as he was approaching the end of his training. I finally realized that a pay phone was ringing on the other side of the building. I let him make contact with me, and he led me right to the phone about 100 feet away.

Corky went on to be a great Hearing Dog for many years. I often wonder what would have happened if I had said "no" on that day in the shelter.

**Q: John, if you could convey one thought about why you are thankful to those who support Dogs for the Deaf with their time and/or talent, what would that be?**

**A:** At Dogs for the Deaf we change people's lives for the better on a daily basis. Without the support from generous donors, we would not be able to do so. To watch the dogs alert to a sound for the first time or see an Autism Dog keep a child from bolting into traffic is an amazing experience. If you had the chance to see some of these firsts, it would change your life forever. Saying "*thank you*" just doesn't convey what I truly feel. I appreciate everything you do for Dogs for the Deaf and our clients. It means the world to our clients and our dogs. We change lives one dog at a time, and we can't do it without you.

***John Drach has served as the Training Director at Dogs for the Deaf for six years and has been a Certified Dog Trainer for 27 years. He is a respected member of Assistance Dogs International and is loved by all of the staff, board, and dogs in training at Dogs for the Deaf.***

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