

From Rescue to Hero - Hilton is Changing Lives!



Investor Report, Summer 2017



Program Assistance Dog, Hilton pictured above with students of the Transitional Program in Ashland, Oregon

On a Spring day in May of 2015, a young man remained outside of the classroom in his mother's car. Rebecca, Ashland School District Transitional Program Teacher, recalls that he would not come inside. "He experiences autism, severe anxiety, and depression, Rebecca explained, and has only averaged 1-2 days per week of class before coming to my class." His mother would take him to school each day and he would complain of illnesses, aches, and pains to avoid going to class.

Later that month, a beautiful brown, tan and black rescue dog named Hilton was at the door. Hilton had joined Rebecca's classroom as a [Program Assistance Dog](#), professionally trained by Jenny, a Dogs for the Deaf's trainer. On that day, the young man said: "I'm going in, mom."

From that day forward, he never missed a day of class.

Rebecca recalls the daily routine. "This student would enter the classroom and head directly to the couch, drop his backpack off of his shoulder with a thud to the floor, and flop onto the couch while saying "come on Hilton!" Hilton would jump up on his lap and the hugging, petting, and licking would begin. With tail wagging, Hilton would cover him with kisses all over his face. The student laughed and smiled with glee!

The student began to engage in the walking and exercise hour, suggesting that Hilton could use a walk too. During the early morning "check-in" process he not only joined the circle for the first time but eventually began making eye contact with other students.

Pictured right is Dogs for the Deaf trainer, Jenny with Hilton. Once a dog is brought to the 40 acre campus, they are separated in quarantine for observation and medical assessments. Once approved, a trainer is assigned and the team begins a period of assessment and then training until they are ready for placement with a client.



Rebecca's students range in age from 18 to 21 and need to learn basic life skills to help them integrate into society as independent contributors to their community.

But this beautiful outcome almost ended before it even began.

Hilton's first testing by DFD staff was jeopardized by a moment of uncertainty. CEO, Blake Matray, recalls that moment. "All of the DFD trainers were out training that day, so our Training Director, John Drach and I left for Klamath Falls where we have rescued dogs in the past." The Klamath Falls, Oregon shelter is one of the few shelters that will allow the dogs to be taken offsite to a shopping area to test how well they will do in public.

Blake remembers being hopeful for this alert young dog. Anticipating a smooth session, Blake and Hilton exited the van and progressed through the automatic sliding doors of the store. Joyful and with tail wagging, Hilton performed wonderfully as they passed the register area. Each step was a reassurance that this little guy would be on his way back into the DFD van and then on to the DFD headquarters in Central Point, Oregon.

But as Blake and Hilton went further into the store and a transition from the linoleum to the cement occurred, Hilton froze. Blake immediately looked down to see Hilton completely still; he would not move! The polished cement was a different surface texture and Hilton did not like it. "Oh no." Blake thought to himself. He knew that a dog with any uncertainty during the evaluation process would most likely have difficulty completing assistance dog training. As he glanced over to see what the director of training was thinking Blake's thoughts were confirmed. John's expression showed disappointment.

"This is it, Blake thought. I can't believe we got this far and I will have to return this beautiful dog to the shelter."

But all of a sudden, everything changed; Blake said, "Let's go Hilton." and Hilton resumed walking. The entire transition lasted seconds, but it seemed like hours. The three walked the rest of the way through the store and Hilton passed with flying colors!



From the uncertain future of a shelter to the classroom. Program assistance dog, Hilton is trained to recognize anxiety and apprehension and provide comfort and reassurance to students in the classroom.

We see miracles like this every day at Dogs for the Deaf and it's your support that helps make it happen. Your support, whether large or small, current or future is the bridge that connects Dogs for the Deaf to beautiful heroes like Hilton. You make the difference - and we Thank You.

If you would like to learn how [legacy gifts](#) have helped to make sure dogs like Hilton continue to impact others, contact Wanda Cockey at 541-826-9220 or by email at wanda@dogsforthedeaf.org to learn about our Guardian Society program.

SAME COMPASSIONATE MISSION – NEW NAME AND LOGO!

Changes coming to Dogs for the Deaf; be sure to watch for our big announcement in the Fall 2017 Canine Listener Magazine!

Our [mission](#) at Dogs for the Deaf is to professionally train dogs to help people and enhance lives while maintaining a lifelong commitment to all dogs we rescue or breed and the people we serve.

The Investor's Report is a quarterly eNewsletter that goes to those who have been making a significant investment in the important work we do to save the lives of dogs and enrich the lives of people.



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