



formerly **Dogs for the Deaf**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Harvey Potts, harvey@dogsforbetterlives.org, (541) 826-9220, x341
Anjanette Wright, anjanette@dogsforbetterlives.org, (541) 826-9220, x328

Dogs for Better Lives Expands Autism Assistance Dog Program Into Portland, Oregon Metro Area

CENTRAL POINT, OR – [Dogs for Better Lives](#) (DBL), formerly Dogs for the Deaf, is expanding its [Autism Assistance Dog](#) program into the metro areas of Portland and Salem, Oregon. This coming Sunday, April 22, DBL's Anjanette Wright will help to promote this by tabling a booth during [Autism Society – Oregon's 16th Annual Walk](#) at Portland's Oaks Park.

DBL launched its autism program in 2016 in southern Oregon and expanded it to families in central Oregon in 2017. "We're now ready to extend the program into the state's largest population region where there are significant resources available to support children on the autism spectrum," said John Drach, DBL Training Director.

DBL has successfully placed four Autism Assistance Dogs in Oregon since 2016, taking a careful and deliberate approach to building a strong program foundation. "We want to be sure we can provide our Assistance Dogs to deserving children and families without any long delays," added Drach.

While the majority of the dogs trained by DBL are rescued from shelters, Autism Assistance Dogs navigate through a more in-depth process. Due to the need to know the complete temperament of a dog, rescue dogs are not ideal for the autism program. Therefore, DBL has started a small breeding program, primarily with Golden Retrievers and Labradors, in support of the growing Autism Assistance Dog program.

"We're nearing completion of our 18,900 sq. ft., 40-kennel [Second Training Facility](#), making this an ideal time to expand our autism program up the I-5 corridor, before branching out along the West Coast and eventually nationally. This continues our 40-year commitment to bettering the lives of our clients, one child, one family at a time," said Ron Holzkamp, DBL Board Chair.

At eight weeks old, puppies in the Autism Assistance Program are paired with [foster families](#) near the national nonprofit's headquarters in southern Oregon. During their first year, the puppies are periodically brought back together for classes and light training. At one year of age, the prospective Autism Assistance Dog is then assigned to a Certified Assistance Dog Trainer at DBL and spends the next four-to-six months undergoing extensive training. It can take two years from birth for the Autism Assistance Dog to be placed with a client, and not all will graduate.

DBL also specializes in [Hearing Assistance Dogs](#) trained to alert people who are deaf or hard of hearing to household sounds and [Program Assistance Dogs](#) that go to work with and assist full-time professionals such as teachers, counselors and other licensed therapists in the treatment of and work with their clients and students with special needs. DBL has been rescuing dogs from shelters and training them to become Assistance Dogs with qualified clients throughout the United States for more than 40 years.

DBL places dogs at nominal charge beyond a \$50 nonrefundable application fee and a \$500 Good Faith Deposit. The deposit is returned after the client has successfully completed all paperwork and the team has been together for one year.



Dogs for Better Lives is a national award-winning 501(c)3 nonprofit organization focusing on the training and placing of Hearing Assistance Dogs, Program Assistance Dogs, and Autism Assistance Dogs. Accredited by [Assistance Dogs International](#) (ADI) and recognized by [Charity Navigator](#) as a 4-star nonprofit, Dogs for Better Lives has been rescuing dogs, bettering lives, and providing Assistance Dogs since 1977.

10175 Wheeler Road, Central Point, Oregon 97502 • (541) 826-9220 • www.dogsforbetterlives.org • info@dogsforbetterlives.org