

# PAWS FOR THOUGHT

The Dog A.I.D. Magazine

WINTER 2018

Workshop Feedback  
Access All Areas with Lillie Abbott  
Remembering Harvey

Training pet dogs to assist ability



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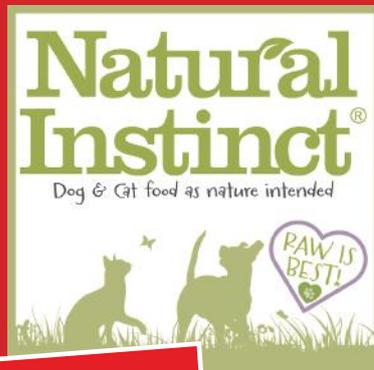
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Kindly supported by our friends at:



## DID YOU KNOW?

Your unwanted Jewellery could be used to raise funds for Dog A.I.D.? Just package it up, send it to the office and we'll do the rest!!

# KEEP IN TOUCH!



## Get Social @DogAid

Please remember to keep your details up to date



[admin@dogaid.org.uk](mailto:admin@dogaid.org.uk)



01743 588469



[dogaid.org.uk](http://dogaid.org.uk)



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with Registered Number 1178719

Please contact [mike@dogaid.org.uk](mailto:mike@dogaid.org.uk) with suggestions for future Newsletters!



# PAWS FOR COFFEE



## with Chair Sandra Fraser

As winter draws on I have a warm feeling inside, the sort that you get from knowing that the future is safe, at least in terms of the charity!

As I look back I realise what a year it has been for the charity – we are going from strength to strength and here I want to consider some of the highlights:

Dog A.I.D. have employed the first full time employee as our Manager of Operations. Some of you have already met Mike McDonald at the AGM, other have seen his profile on Facebook where he has made

a huge increase in the charity's profile and social media following. Mike comes with a wealth of knowledge having worked in the Third Sector at many levels for a number of years. His presence has made an enormous difference to the charity and to my peace of mind! When retirement comes, as it must eventually, I know that the future of the charity will be secure.

Security has also been gained by our move to becoming a CIO that has now been completed, thanks to Margaret Russell who did a lot of the ground work.

The AGM was another successful event; it was good to see so many people in attendance. Thank you to Lesley Smith for her really interesting sessions about Zoopharmacognosy (yes, that was what it was called, it was about the effects of herbs and oils and the benefit for dogs).

We have quite a few new trainers to welcome into the fold, for those who are not yet on the trainers Facebook page do get in touch with Caroline (caroline@dogaid.org.uk) or Mike (mike@dogaid.org.uk) who will send you an 'invite' this will help you keep in touch with other trainers. Thank you, and all those other trainers who donate so much of

their time to help our clients. We still need more trainers so if any of you have friends who might consider joining us do encourage them to get in touch.

Thank you to all our fundraisers and for all the events you attend, there are so many that space is running low to acknowledge all contributions, so it may be that we are only able to highlight a few in each newsletter, but don't let that deter you, we still appreciate all that you do to help keep us going.

Our current Business Plan has one year left to run. When I put it together 4 years ago I felt it seemed rather ambitious, however, I have to say that all but one objective has been reached, the final one should be completed in early 2019. A new plan for the next 5 years is already under construction, so watch this space! We are continuing to grow!!

It seems rather early to wish you 'Seasons Greeting' in October, but by the time this lands on your door mat it will be November and the end of the year in sight, Here's to a very successful 2019.



# SPRING 2019 WORKSHOPS

## CLIENTS & TRAINERS

**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> & Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

### Raising expectations!

Following on the success of the last workshop we shall once again be working in small groups to maximise the training time for clients and dogs.

The workshop will be based on and around platform training and basic skills work.

There will be the opportunity for 1.2.1 support on any particular task or skill which individuals feel they need help with.

The weekend is for clients and trainers. The venue has 50 fully accessible hotel rooms. Dog A.I.D. will subsidise 1 night bed and breakfast, you must be able to fund any additional requirements.

All applications to [admin@dogaid.org.uk](mailto:admin@dogaid.org.uk) in the first instance. Please do not contact Stoke Mandeville Stadium direct.

### Saturday

**Platform training to assist with positions around the wheelchair or walking aid**

**Proofing stays with platforms**

**Basic skills required for task work**

**Recall**

The day will be divided into 4 sessions around comfort breaks and lunch, giving each client the opportunity to try, or improve each behaviour.

### Sunday

A chance to put all that you have learned into practice, through a course constructed by the tutors and have additional work on Food Refusal.

The morning will be divided into two with both groups taking it in turn to, attempt the course and attend a food refusal session.



# SAVE THE DATE

**5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> October 2019!**

**THE FIRST EVER Dog A.I.D. National Conference featuring Michele Pouliot**

More details to be announced

# DOGS AT STOKE MANDEVILLE

## TRAINERS

**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> &  
Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2019**

For new and existing trainers and their own dogs, limited places for those bringing dogs. Trainers without dogs are also welcome.

So that you can try to fulfil your commitment with Dog A.I.D. to attend at least one workshop over a two year period, the charity is now in a position to subsidise the accommodation, breakfast and lunch and as a gesture of goodwill we also offer travelling at 20p per mile to go towards fuel.

Each trainer workshop format remains the same with small additions after trainer feedback. These workshops are invaluable as we rely on input from trainers with experience, so attending more than one is possible.

Book now so you do not miss this event, contact Sam at [admin@dogaid.org.uk](mailto:admin@dogaid.org.uk)

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### Saturday

**In their shoes:** Practical session with dogs and props

**Initial Assessment:** Getting it right from the start

**Assessment process:** When is the team ready?

**A closer look at task work:** Practical session

**Level 2, the hardest assessment!**

A look at what makes this difficult for teams and trainers and exploring exercises that help

### Sunday

**Client wellbeing and trainer coping strategies:**

Led by a health professional

**Conflict resolution:** How teams/trainers can work better together using case studies



**Other Workshop dates  
2019 for your diary:**

**Clients & Trainers  
7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> September**

**Trainers  
12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> October**

## DID YOU KNOW?

Been on holiday and have left over currency? We can use this to convert it to vital funds to help us to continue our work! Please send your unwanted notes and coins into the office and it will be put to good use rather than in the back of a drawer!



# NEW FOCUS AT TRAINERS' WORKSHOPS

The weekend of 6th and 7th October saw another hugely successful Trainers' Workshop at Stoke Mandeville Stadium in Aylesbury.

In a departure from our 'usual' programme we introduced a new session devoted to "Client Wellbeing and Trainer Coping Strategies" looking at Mental Health Issues. This session is something we have been working on for sometime in a collaborative partnership with Keele University.

The session was delivered by Keele PhD researcher and Mental Health Lead, Sinikiwe Simbani (pictured) and our very own Mike McDonald, who is also a PhD colleague of Niki's at Keele.

The session was very well received and we are committed to developing this approach to holistic service delivery with more sessions planned for future workshops.



We are hugely grateful to Keele University for their support – in particular Professor Sue Read and, of course, Niki.

## DOGS TODAY

Exciting News!

We have agreed a long-term promotional deal with "Dogs Today" Magazine ... this will see our advert in every issue of the magazine throughout 2019 and a special feature in the August Issue to coincide with International Assistance Dog Week!



# AUTUMN TRAINERS' WORKSHOP FEEDBACK



***“On 6th and 7th October 2018, I attended my first Dog A.I.D. Trainers' workshop at Stoke Mandeville. I am a new Trainer member of Dog A.I.D. and this was a great opportunity for me to learn more about the organisation and the Trainer workshops.***

***From the start, I experienced friendly fellow trainers and all other personnel involved with the workshop. We were all looked after, fed and watered well during the weekend. Some trainers also had their dogs with them, of all ages, they were great to see and were very well behaved.***

*The workshop was a mix of talks, practical sessions, discussions and presentations. All the presenters encouraged involvement and discussions from the attendees, and I felt that all our comments and opinions were appreciated and valued.*

The content included:

(1) Client Assessments and why some levels may be more difficult to achieve. The emphasis was that clients and their dogs do not 'fail' any part of their assessments, it is just that they are not yet ready, and will receive further training and support to help them reach the required level. Though also, to appreciate that not all dogs may ultimately be suitable for Assistant Dog status.

(2) Disability equipment and appreciation of how these may affect learning by the client and dog. We were encouraged to try out a variety of aids that a client may need to use, from a 'boomerang' board to help the client enter and exit a vehicle, to an electric wheelchair. (Which Dog A.I.D. client Jill, very kindly allowed me to have a test drive, from which I certainly appreciated the difficulties faced going through heavy fire doors in such a chair, let alone with a dog as well!)

(3) How we would teach our dog's favourite 'trick' or behaviour. This encouraged useful discussion of various methods that individuals may use, which was great to hear how, if one method may not be as effective as hoped, there is always another approach that can be used.

(4) A client's perspective on their condition/s and how this may cause people to interact with them (or sadly, not) and how it also affects the training of their dogs. Plus why some days, training may be more achievable for them than others. This was a really useful and insightful presentation.

(5) A presentation by Niki, a mental health nursing lecturer at Keele University, on understanding mental health. On how we may perceive or make certain assumptions on mental health conditions, how the different types may present themselves outwardly, how medication may affect the client and ultimately their changing ability at any one time, to train their dog or participate in training sessions. Dog A.I.D.

Mike McDonald was joint presenter and additionally highlighted trainer welfare and the support 'the office' are there to provide, for trainers and staff.

*I found the workshop enlightening, inclusive, educational, practical and fun. The biggest recurring themes that I got from the workshop were: 'Empathy, Support and Care' in that how we can learn to empathise with our clients, how we can support them in their training and how trainers can support each other and essentially how the staff at the Dog A.I.D. office are there to support trainers. Finally, how much all involved with Dog A.I.D. care about clients and their dogs, trainers, and staff. I am certainly looking forward to my next workshop."*

**Carole Tindall**





# RHIANNON & ROB ATTEND THEIR FIRST WORKSHOP

Rhiannon Moore attended her first "Client and Trainer Workshop" with husband Rob at Stoke Mandeville Stadium on 8th and 9th September. Once again it was an extremely well attended event and it was great fun for everyone involved.

It's always thrilling to see our Dog A.I.D. partnerships develop. The workshops give a great opportunity to create special bonds with others on the same journey as you – if you haven't attended a workshop yet, please check out this Newsletter for our 2019 dates.

Here, 'first timer' Rhiannon gives us her feedback on the event:

*This was my first training workshop and I was extremely nervous. I don't cope well with new situations but I shouldn't have worried. From the minute we arrived I felt welcome and at ease with everyone.*

*I loved how the workshop was split into sections and how we rotated around the groups. It was great to have plenty of breaks to take in the information given in each one.*

*The trainers were amazing, so knowledgeable and adapted things to suit each individual dog. They have so much patience! I loved how everything was at the dog's pace and there was no pressure. I didn't feel as if any question was silly or not valid.*

*I have learned so much in the workshops. I panicked about taking everything in and remembering all the information, but I shouldn't have worried - each session came with a wonderful handout sheet. You wouldn't believe how many times I have referred to these sheets since!*

*I feel so much more confident about training now. It was great to meet new friends and chat with people who are in the same situation. It was so reassuring to discover that the worries you have are shared by many and very common!*

*I can't wait until the next one! Thank you so much to everyone involved in the organisation of this fantastic event.*

*Not to be outdone, husband Rob, who undertook a little 'wheelchair maintenance over the weekend, added:*

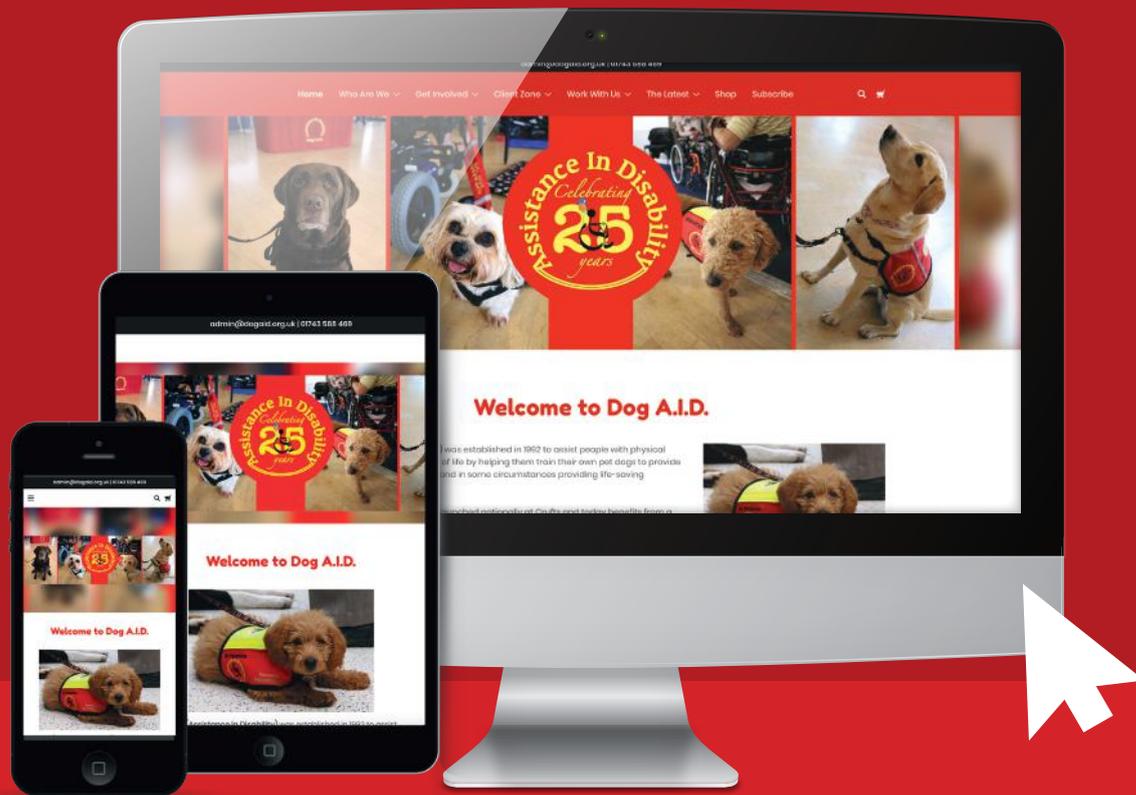
*I came along to the training workshop with my wife, Rhiannon, for the first time. It was a really well organised, fun and informative weekend. It was lovely to watch Rhiannon and Beanie working together as normally I step back and leave her to his training. I even managed to pick up some tips for training our other dog!*

*We both made lots of new friends and thoroughly enjoyed every minute of it. I even managed to repair a couple of wheel chairs/ scooters. We are already looking forward to the next one and I have already promised to bring more tools etc. with me so I can fix more demanding faults with people's wheelchairs etc. if needs be!*



Rhiannon is pictured far left

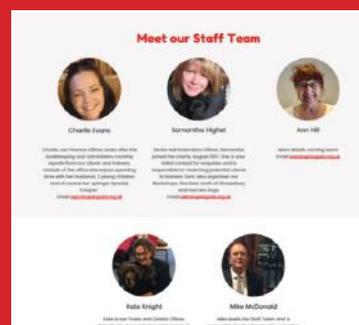
# KEEPING YOU UP TO DATE ONLINE



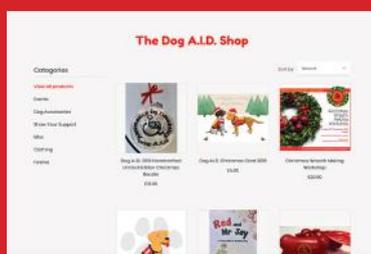
## dogaid.org.uk



Our new website continues to go from strength to strength and we have recently added an "Event Calendar" so you can see where and when you can attend events to support us!



We've also added more details about the 'office' team, which will allow you to get to know everyone a little better and who best to contact with specific queries etc.



As well as now being able to browse by 'category' and add your own product reviews, in 2019, we are looking to expand our 'shop' area ... so if you have any suggestions (dog or 'human' goods), please let us know!



# WE KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER!

#TeamDogAID has had a particularly busy and successful Summer ... here's just a selection of your pictures – keep posting them on Facebook and Twitter, we love to see them and shout about our successes!

# #TEAMDOGAID SUMMER GALLERY



# THANK YOU!

**As we continue to grow, we are running out of space to thank everyone in the newsletter for their individual donations ... this can only be a good thing!**

So to all of you who have contributed to a fantastic Summer of Fundraising, a massive THANK YOU!

Going forward, we will be acknowledging your efforts through Social Media (Facebook and Twitter @dogaid) – this will reach a larger audience than the Newsletter and allow you to share the posts to shout about the work that we are doing, your own fundraising and, hopefully, attract more supporters!

## GRANTS

This Summer we have been fortunate to receive financial support from Grant Making Trusts - Walter Lees Foundation (£6,000.00), John Wood from the Childwick Trust (£3,000.00) and help from National Lottery for a project we will be launching early in the New Year (more news on that one to come!).

We also continue to be so grateful for the continuing support from our good friends at Natural Instinct – and the Newsletter you are reading is thanks to their generosity!

As we launch our 'Corporate Heroes' scheme (see elsewhere in this Newsletter) we hope to be able to share more success stories soon!

## CORPORATE HEROES

**We have recently launched a new 'Corporate Support' scheme – the "League of Corporate Heroes".**

This is a way of attracting fundraising income from corporate partners and can include anything from Payroll Giving to "Charity of the Year" support ...

The scheme is designed to develop fun and mutually beneficial partnerships with Dog A.I.D., tailored to individual businesses and encourages them to reach coveted "Hall of Fame" status!!

If you know a company that would like to get involved (maybe even your own employer) – then please let them know about it ... or simply give us some contact details and we will do the rest!

You will find more details on the dedicated "Corporate Heroes" area on our website!

**[dogaid.org.uk/corporate-heroes](http://dogaid.org.uk/corporate-heroes)**





# HAVE YOURSELF A PET SAFE CHRISTMAS

Don't forget that chocolate is toxic for dogs – it's easy to overlook the chocolate coins dangling from the Christmas Tree branches or wrapped beneath the Tree.

Tinsel can be eaten like spaghetti... Unlike spaghetti, however, tinsel bunches and twists within intestines, requiring immediate attention from your vet.

Non-chocolate tree decorations can also be tempting to our furry friends! As well as presenting a choking hazard, baubles can shatter and cut.

Remember, some other foods (including Christmas treats) can be hazardous, even toxic to your pet – Onions (in stuffing and gravy), Christmas Cake, Alcohol, Artificial Sweeteners, Christmas pudding and Mince Pies, Grapes and Raisins, Nuts (Macadamias in particular) and Turkey bones to name but a few.

It's also worth remembering not to 'over-indulge' your pets... it can lead to stomach upsets.



## Wear a **Christmas Knit** And do your bit!

**Who's getting excited for the 'big day'!?  
Wear a "Christmas Knit" and do your  
bit! It couldn't be easier ...!**

**Just pull on a Christmas jumper, encourage  
friends and colleagues to do the same and  
collect a £2 donation for Dog A.I.D. from  
everyone taking part.**

**We've chosen Friday 14th December as our official "Christmas Jumper" day, but you can do your bit on any day you choose – and every penny will go to help people with disabilities throughout the UK!**

**Christmas Jumper Day - Friday 14<sup>th</sup> December**

Please keep an eye on our Facebook and Twitter feed for Christmas Knit pictures throughout the day... and make sure you post your pictures with the hashtag #dachristmasknit to spread the word!

# CHRISTMAS QUIZ

Can you name these popular Christmas food and drink items by filling in the missing letters?

\_U\_K\_Y

\_I\_S \_N \_L\_N\_E\_S

\_R\_N\_E\_R \_A\_C

\_O\_S \_O\_A\_O\_S

\_L\_M \_U\_D\_N\_

\_R\_Z\_L \_U\_S

\_I\_C \_I\_S

\_E\_L

\_R\_N\_Y \_A\_C\_

\_U\_L\_D\_I\_E

\_I\_K\_E \_N\_O\_S

\_R\_S\_E\_S \_P\_O\_T

\_H\_R\_Y

\_A\_G\_R\_N\_S

\_H\_R\_Y \_R\_N\_Y

\_O\_B\_E \_R\_A

\_T\_L\_O \_H\_E\_E

\_U\_B\_E\_N \_Q\_E\_K

\_R\_A \_A\_C

\_H\_I\_T\_A \_A\_E

For answers, go to page 16!



# A FOND FAIRWELL

**Elaine has recently retired from training with Dog A.I.D.**

Trainers come and go and we are always grateful for the time they devote to the charity. But we feel that Elaine deserves a special mention as she has been with the charity for almost 10 years!

In that time she has trained 10 teams to fully qualified level, and helped others gain confidence in training their dog.

**What an achievement! Thank you Elaine from the charity and all those you have helped.**



Elaine (2nd from right) looking suitably festive with some of her clients she has helped in almost a decade of Dog A.I.D. dedication

# REMEMBERING HARVEY

**14th December 2004 to 27th June 2018**

Harvey, the chocolate coloured Labrador and I first met when he was just four weeks old. We were then together from eight weeks old until he died at almost 14 years of age. For most of that time he was my assistance dog – but that title comes nowhere near describing what Harvey did for me, nor what he meant to me and my family.

In the time we shared Harvey and I explored and tested the boundaries of my disability together. He helped me with the daily tasks of living until he became so attuned to me that he was able to predict what I needed. He was my constant companion, and he became my friend. He listened as I shared my thoughts. He never judged me. He trusted me to care for him as he cared for me. He gave me the incentive to go on. He changed my life and he taught me as much as I taught him.



I learned, for instance, that Harvey was very smart and that he had a good sense of humour. I also learned that he truly loved to be in the water and would grab any opportunity to get a swim when he wasn't working. I remember a holiday at Malmesbury with my wife. It was a lovely sunny morning and we decided to pop into town. On the way we stopped at a park with a fairly, good-sized stream running through the lower end, behind a fence. Seeing the fence, I thought I would let Harvey have a run, so we got the ball out. Well I threw the ball into the field, but he must have had one eye on the fence as well. On his return he headed straight for a gap I hadn't noticed.

I just knew what he wanted to do. I called him - he stopped - turned to look at me - then proceeded to drop the ball in the river. He clearly wanted me to think it was a mistake and gave me that "shall I get it?" look. Well what could I say but "go on Harv" and off he went to play in the water. It was so amusing I laughed aloud. When he eventually came out with the ball he clearly wanted another go, so I threw the ball some more and each time he played the same game. But hey, once your wet you're wet right?

Working dogs need to have fun too; it was good to let him get one over on me now and again. One regret I have is that I never got into the water with him; he would just love to leap in and swim and swim. Sometimes I think if we didn't call him out he would have carried on until he drowned. Don't know how I would have fared then.

On another holiday we flew to Florida. Harvey wasn't fazed by anything and just took the flight in his stride. We got one of the flight attendants to take a picture of the three of us all seated with Harvey looking out the window at 37,000 feet. I think he was disgusted, after all those miles over the sea and lakes, that he wasn't allowed in the water when we landed, but we were concerned for his wellbeing, what

with alligators and all. At the hotel the manager was impressed with Harvey, amazed to see him standing to attention when I put his jacket on. I never had the heart to disillusion him as Harvey always took a while to settle once his jacket was put on, but once he got moving it was fine.

One of my fondest memories of our time in Florida was when Harvey tried to help me play air hockey. The disk was just hovering on the air and he just couldn't quite get hold of it, but he never gave up trying. You could see in his eyes he was thoroughly enjoying himself. Me too, I was having a great time. What a delight. Though I did have to be careful not to hit him with the paddle.

Despite that we didn't let him swim I like to think Harvey enjoyed his time in Florida with us. He developed a particular liking for Hershey's French vanilla ice cream - and pastries from Starbucks.

Watching Harvey grow up has given me such a lot of fond memories and so much pleasure. Over the years, I've watched him for hours on end and being a witness when he saw something for the first time was a particularly amusing. I think his obvious amazement at new things was only a precursor to wanting to know next, "what does it taste like?".

For instance, we were both watching some ants - and I was watching Harvey as well. His stare was intense. After a while he couldn't resist any more. Next thing, his tongue was on the ground and he was looking perplexed - they'd disappeared. He would watch birds fly, almost open mouthed with wonder. If you had a parcel, or anything to open, he would be right in there, eager to see what would emerge.

It came home to me only recently what a strong bond dogs like Harvey form with their trainers. He certainly had a soft spot for our trainer Midge and he was always delighted to see her. I recall I'd arranged to meet her at the Bluewater Shopping Centre once, but Harvey and I arrived a little early. We were browsing in John Lewis when Harvey started to get excited. His eyes were fixed on something. I followed his line of sight and saw Midge's absolute double heading straight towards us. Harvey's disappointment was obvious when he realised it wasn't her, although when we eventually met up you could see he was delighted to see her once again.

Wandering through my memories, like browsing through my photo album, has been a mixture of joy and sadness, but well worth the trip, though I've needed a box of tissues on hand for the journey.

I once watched a movie called Dean Spanley. In it this concept was mentioned.

"At any given time, there are only seven great dogs in the world."

Well if that is true I know, right now, there is a vacancy, as Harvey was certainly one of those seven.

Brian Holland



# PARTNERSHIP PROGRESS

Well done to the Clients-Dog Partnerships and their Trainers who have achieved success since our Spring 2018 Newsletter!

## LEVEL 1

Anna Heelas & Myrtle  
 Ashlee Ankers & Tia  
 Catelyn Wright & Maisey  
 Claire McDonald & Bowser  
 Claire Walling & Bert  
 Debbie Miles & Teddy  
 Donna Waring & Kizzy  
 Elizabeth Lightowler & River  
 Gina Ayling & Paddy  
 Helen Petley & Elma  
 Hollie Mills & Albie  
 Janet Benham & Delilah  
 Jessica Donohoe & Presley  
 Jill Doran & Paddy  
 Julia Winter & Maya  
 Lillie Abbott & Zeke  
 Margaret Russell & Barney  
 Paul Horbury & Alice  
 Paul Valentine & Bonnie  
 Rachel Lane & Finty  
 Rhiannon Moore & Beanie  
 Sandra Cole & Kelsie  
 Sarah Parker & Nuka  
 Talya Hambling & Coby  
 Vanessa Abraham & Delilah  
 Victoria Parkin & Cookie

## LEVEL 2

Alex Marsh & Daisy  
 Ann Slide & Tilly  
 Cathy Smith & Pip  
 Chantelle Rea-Bradley & Oreo  
 Danielle Duller & Willow  
 Helen Aston & Bella  
 Janet Moule & Tilly  
 Kelly Astley & Poppy  
 Lisa Hardy & Marlowe  
 Maureen Wakeman & Breeze  
 Michele Lightfoot & Cocoa  
 Natalie Collins & Jazz  
 Pamela Dharling & Harley  
 Phil Packer & Popp  
 Ruth Spurr & Willow  
 Victoria Richmond & Skye

## LEVEL 3

Alex Marsh & Daisy  
 Danielle Duller & Willow  
 Deborah Tripconey & Buddy  
 Kate Ring-Holmes & Elsa  
 Kathryn Holmes & Sammy  
 Lisa Hardy & Marlowe  
 Liz Cutler & Tilly  
 Michele Lightfoot & Cocoa  
 Pamela Dharling & Harley  
 Patricia Hoad & Teddy  
 Phillip Hughes & Red  
 Ruth Spurr & Willow  
 Victoria Richmond & Skye  
 Jeanette O'Callaghan & Beinn

**Well done  
everyone!**



ANSWERS: TURKEY, CRANBERRY SAUCE, PLUM PUDDING, MINGE PIES, BRANDY SAUCE, PICKLED ONIONS, SHERRY, CHERRY BRANDY, STILTON CHEESE, BREAD SAUCE, PIGS IN BLANKETS, ROAST POTATOES, BRAZIL NUTS, JELLY, MULLTED WINE, BRUSSELS SPROUTS, TANGERINES, DOUBLE CREAM, BUBBLE AND SQUEAK, CHRISTMAS CAKE

# Access all Areas - with Lillie Abbott

**At July's Annual General Meeting we were fortunate to welcome Lillie Abbott to the Board of Trustees; the charity will no doubt benefit from her years of experience dealing with Disability Rights and access issues.**

**In this issue, we launch our new feature "Access All Areas" looking at the challenges everyday life presents to people with disabilities throughout the UK and hopefully gives some insight into how the law can help. If you have any issues, including access, please let us know and we'll help directly or feature in future Newsletters!**

I never quite know how to start when introducing myself, so here goes.

I have worked over the years in many different arenas but always with the same theme running through them, improving services for those of us that have a disability. It all started when two members of my close family were diagnosed with late stage MS, caring for them from the age of 11 I became VERY aware of the access issues that are out there, I am glad to say that things have vastly improved over the years but there is still a very long way to go.

Access is something we very much take for granted until the moment you can no longer access a service as everyone else would, suddenly a day out takes planning and thought it's not just a case of lets go were off! In my experience until you have had to take into account just how precious access is you don't realise the affect

it can have on you and your family and friends. A simple day out or popping to the shops can become a mission in itself.

I have found myself over the years questioning myself before I go out, do I really need to use my chair today or can I just pop out without it? Do I really need to take my sticks? What if the lift isn't working? What if the company I am going to visit or the restaurant I want to go to doesn't understand that I might need a bit more time to settle and read the menu? On top of all of this I now ask myself what I would do without my dog! What if I get there and they won't let me in? Do I feel strong enough today to have that conversation with the company that under the Equality Act 2010 they have a legal obligation to let us both in, after all my dog is an extension of me, he is my hands to pick items up for me, he is my balance to help me walk, he is my companion to help me feel strong enough to get out of the house in the first place and so much more.

Should you come across any access issues with your dog (or in general) I am here to help. My ethos is always to look to educate and raise awareness in the first place but I can also advise you on how to take things further should it be needed. I have spent many years educating organisations and companies on reasonable adjustments and access for all. Most of the time I tend to find that it is not in particular the organisation or company that is refusing access but it is more due to a lack of staff training and understanding that may cause access to be refused.



One of the most important things I can advise you to do if you are refused access is to ask for written confirmation that they are refusing you access.

Ask for the staff members name, note the time and date and also ask to speak to a manager and for them to sign to say you have been refused access. This then helps in the future should this be taken further to not only prove you were refused access but also gives a starting point for informing the company of where they went wrong!!

Above all remember to stay calm, don't get into an argument with them as this will only make the situation more stressful for both you and your dog, if access is refused make sure it is reported (if it is a taxi make sure you get their badge number, and registration number of the car and if possible their base name and phone number – these can then be used to report it to the taxi licensing agency).

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me I am here to help.

# Information on Assessments

Sandra Fraser

## I thought it would be helpful to clarify how the assessments work to reduce anxiety for all involved.

Please remember it is an ASSESSMENT NOT A TEST!

Level 1. This is carried out by the trainer.

Once all the criteria has been completed in the workbook it is possible to either mark it as complete or cover the criteria on a one off session. The trainer can then hand the client the certificate.

Level 2. This is carried out by an assessor from Dog A.I.D.

This is probably the hardest level for our clients as it is the first time they have met the assessor.

This assessment starts in the home. This gives time for the team to meet the assessor and become more relaxed. The assessor will look at the paperwork and check ID tag, Insurance and current inoculations. Stay at open door can be seen at this time. There is an opportunity to show the assessor what tasks are being worked on, but they do not form part of the assessment. The assessor may be able to offer some guidance on the tasks should client require any. It will also give an opportunity for the 'stay on own' either in the house or in the car whilst under supervision. It is not necessary for this to take the full 15 minutes but the trainer, if in attendance can confirm the length of time or it can be seen marked off in the workbook.

The assessment will then move to the local park where training has taken place for the recall and stop to be assessed. Then move on to the local Retail Park, Garden Centre or local shops where dogs are allowed. This is an opportunity for the assessor to see the 'stays with distractions', 'food refusal from the ground' as the team walk by. The long stay down whilst having coffee can complete the assessment where hopefully the assessor will be able to confirm that the team are ready to move on to the next level!

Level 3. This is carried out by an assessor from Dog A.I.D.

Hopefully the same assessor will be available. This should be a much more relaxed affair. The venue should be a fairly new environment. This is so the assessor can see that the dog can work with the distractions of a new environment. All the work is the same and the assessor will need to see the dog perform a couple of tasks such as pick up an item or help with clothing.

Finally the long stay down with coffee. The assessor can then give the good news to the client that they have passed!

All assessors will be different in their approach and possibly in the sequence of assessing, but all assessors are trainers first so are aware of the limitations of some clients and will make allowances for nerves and anxiety. Just relax they are there to Assess, not Test!

## Jackets

For clarity, here is an outline of the Jackets and other items, in relation to each assessment stage:

**Working towards Level 1** - No jacket (though you may use the appropriate lead sleeves).

**Working towards Level 2** - Your Trainer will provide the "In Training" jacket for use in Trainer-accompanied sessions (again, you may also use lead sleeves, including those with the Dog A.I.D. logo).

**Working towards Level 3** - Your trainer may leave the "In Training" jacket for use when out on your own during practise.

**Qualified / Level 3+** - Once qualified you are able to use the "Assistance Dog" jacket.

# WAYS TO GIVE

You will find more details of these and other ways you can help us on our website.

You shop, Amazon gives – search for **Dog Assistance in Disability** at [smile.amazon.uk](http://smile.amazon.uk) and it doesn't cost you a penny!



## LUCKY PAWS LOTTERY

50p in every £1 you spend is donated to us! Win up to £25,000 supporting the cause you care about.

[unitylottery.co.uk/charity/display/dog-AID](http://unitylottery.co.uk/charity/display/dog-AID)

Operated by Unity Lottery on behalf of Dog A.I.D.

[globaladventurechallenges.com](http://globaladventurechallenges.com)

## DID YOU KNOW?

Do you still receive letters with stamps on? We can take used stamps and sell them to raise funds for Dog A.I.D. The office can turn used stamps into money! Please don't throw them in the bin, send them to us!

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