Yes, Virginia
There is a huge food pantry in Virginia.

Ultracapable Club
Georgia Lions ease social woes.

LION

A Best Friend—Many Times Over

Service dogs do much more than help the blind

Lions Clubs International

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A BEST FRIEND—IN MULTIPLE WAYS

BY ANNE FORD

Say "service dog," and most people picture a guide dog for the blind. Truth is, service dogs can make life easier, bigger and brighter for people with many types of health conditions, from peanut allergies to post-traumatic stress disorder. And Lions are very much involved. Here are eight Lions-supported dogs that are making a difference.

Joint Base Andrews and Brad

When U.S. Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer Brad suspects that something's not right with a person under his command, he takes the appropriate military action—putting his head in their lap.

Brad, a facility therapy dog, is trained to detect emotions that humans might not notice. As he makes his rounds at the medical clinic of Joint Base Andrews in Maryland, he's on alert for any patient who seems especially sad or troubled. If he finds one, he rests his head in their lap and looks at his handler, Chief Petty Officer Bobby Long.

"Then I say to them privately, 'Maybe there's something you'd like to talk about,'" Long says. He'll then refer the person to a behavioral health care provider. Since the base has begun employing a facility dog, its suicide rate has dropped.

Brad was trained by Southeastern Guide Dogs, a Florida nonprofit that counts both the Lions Club International Foundation and many individual Lions clubs among its supporters. In addition to detecting emotions, Brad helps patients perform physical therapy exercises (by playing fetch or tug-of-war), helps them get in and out of wheelchairs (by standing firm like a crutch) and generally lowers blood pressure throughout the base (by wagging his tail and being petted).

"We have a psychiatrist who tells everybody that Brad does his job better than he does," Long says with a smile.

(Opposite) Brad is a soothing presence for Navy Captain Patrick Mcgroarty as he visits the dentist at the Naval Health Clinic Patuxent River's Dental Clinic in Maryland.
Photo by Bobby Long

Buddy Hayes and Andy

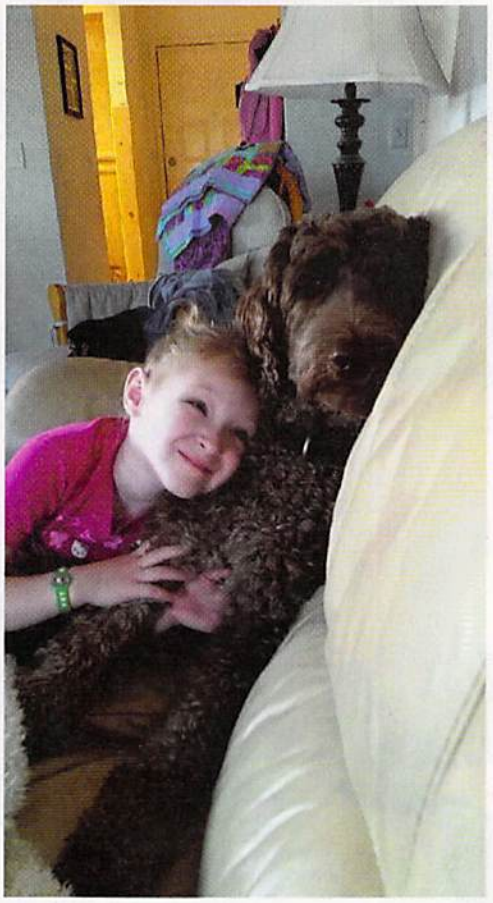
A decade ago, due to the effects of multiple sclerosis, Lion Buddy Hayes's body decided to, as she puts it, "sit down for the rest of its life."

Now a wheelchair user, Hayes, a member of the Santa Fe Capital City Lions Club in New Mexico, also works with a service dog, Andy. Provided by Canine Companions for Independence, Andy can do everything from help her get undressed and take the recycling bin to the curb to turn down her bed linens and vacuum. (If you're having a hard time picturing that last one, it's a stick vacuum he holds in his mouth.)

Andy's latest skill: fetching a tissue when Hayes sneezes. "Now he wants me to sneeze all the time," she says. "If he could learn something new every day, he would."

Without Andy, "I'd have to ask people to help me, which I absolutely detest," Hayes says. "Like dropping my car keys. If they go underneath my wheelchair, it's hard to back up, not run over them, get them and pull myself back up. To call someone for every little thing like that, I wouldn't feel right." With Andy at her side, she doesn't have to.

Buddy Hayes and Andy



Sage Bowles and Peppermint Patty

Sage Bowles and Peppermint Patty

To 3-year-old Sage Bowles of Auburn, California, the family dog is just a good-natured playmate. But to Sage's parents, Patricia and Luke Bowles, that sweet Labradoodle is what stands between their daughter and potential death.

The dog is Peppermint Patty, trained by the Colorado nonprofit Angel Service Dogs to check Sage's environment for traces of peanuts and tree nuts, to which the little girl is terribly allergic.

"Once my cousin was eating mixed nuts and kissed his mother. Then his mother kissed Sage, and that's how we ended up in the hospital," Patricia says. "Now that we have Peppermint Patty, she can check a person's hands and clothes and breath, and she can check environments like grocery stores and amusement parks. If she senses something, she'll sit and point with her snout to where it is."

The Bowles were able to raise the $20,000 needed to bring Peppermint Patty home with the help of the Foresthill Lions Club, which held a pancake breakfast and a raffle to raise funds.

"I am so grateful for all of the Lions' help," says Patricia. "This never would have happened without them."

Facility
Therapy Dog

Jason Corning and Niko

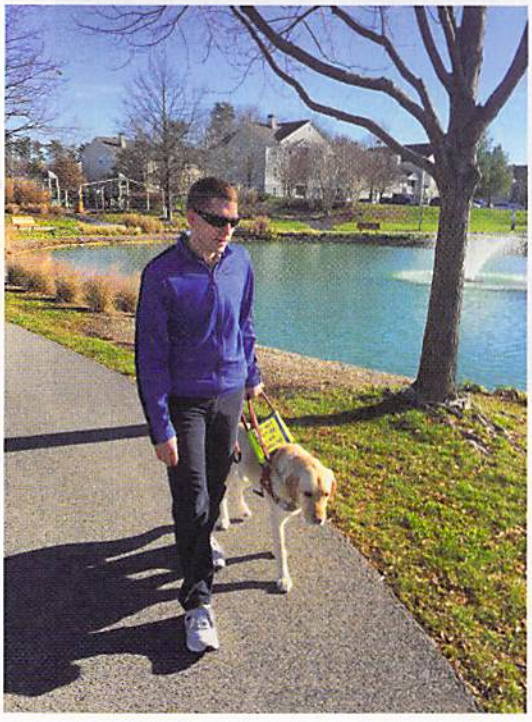
Both profoundly deaf and legally blind, Jason Corning of Baltimore works for the federal government, serves as president of the Metro Washington Association of the DeafBlind, will receive his master's in management information systems in May from Johns Hopkins University and has traveled overseas.

Corning's companion in all these adventures? His yellow Labrador guide dog, Niko, with whom he communicates using hand signals.

"Niko guides me around and makes sure I stop at curbs, avoid poles and am not surprised by skateboarders or bicycles passing by," Corning says. "Also, he's a great travel companion, since having a personal guide or a friend to travel with me can be expensive. Since getting a dog, I am more independent and have more confidence in traveling on my own." Indeed, Corning took Niko's predecessor, Spencer, with him on a trip to Ireland several years ago.

Spencer and Niko were given to Corning by Leader Dogs for the Blind, a Michigan nonprofit founded by three Detroit-area Lions in 1939. Since then, thanks to donations from thousands of Lions clubs and other organizations and individuals, it has provided more than 14,500 guide dogs to clients all over the world—free of charge.

Jason Corning and Niko



Christine Goodier and Raylene

Christine Goodier and Raylene

Many people with hearing loss isolate themselves. Christine Goodier of Cedar Point, North Carolina, can empathize.

"It's exhausting, struggling to hear all day," says Goodier, a semi-retired travel writer who lost nearly all of her hearing to auto-immune inner ear disease as an adult. "It becomes easier to just stay home."

Easier, that is, before 2014 when she got Raylene—a black Labrador trained by the Oregon-based, Lion-supported organization Dogs for the Deaf to alert Goodier to important noises such as door bells, microwave and smoke detector beeps, and ringing telephones.

Raylene also helps Goodier avoid hazards: "If the two of us are walking down a sidewalk and her head suddenly jerks to the right, I know I'd better stop walking too, and notice the garage door opening and the car about to back out in front of us."

Goodier has traveled with her husband, Bob, in their RV as she tackled writing assignments that took them from Yellowstone National Park and the Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta to the Florida Keys and the Maine coast. "Raylene is a good traveler and a great conversation magnet, which is always helpful for a writer," says Goodier.

Not only that, but Raylene's presence helps people realize that Goodier has a disability and may need additional assistance. Raylene and her service-dog vest serve as what Goodier calls "a visible symbol of an invisible disability." It's all part of why she is able to say: "I feel happier, safer, friendlier and more like my old self since she came into my life."

Abbi Roman and Palua

In the old days, the Roman family didn't go anywhere together—not to the store, not to a restaurant, not to church, not on vacations.

That was because Eric and Christine Roman's 18-year-old daughter, Abbi, has autism. Abbi is easily overwhelmed by things that most people tune out, such as the noise of a shopping cart or the hum of an air-conditioning system. "We could be in a store for maybe 10 minutes and then she would completely melt down," remembers Eric of Antioch, California.

In an effort to block out external stimuli, Abbi also often kept her head down and refused to engage in conversations. Then one day Eric noticed her chatting away to the family's pet dog—and got an idea.

Thanks to Canine Companions for Independence, the Roman family now includes Palua, a Lab-retriever mix whose presence helps Abbi stay calm in difficult situations, fall asleep at night, refrain from self-harming behaviors such as hair plucking and even engage in friendly conversations with others.

Abbi Roman and Palua

"She's not the kid with autism now. She's the kid with the dog," Eric says. "Palua acts as a social bridge. She lets people see Abbi as a person.

"Now the dog goes everywhere with us, and Abbi can go everywhere with us," he adds happily. "Service dogs are supposed to be liberating for the recipient, but really, Palua gave our whole family independence."

Photo courtesy of Andrew Zhou

Alette Coble-Temple, who was named Ms. Wheelchair America 2016, and Reddy

Alette Coble-Temple and Reddy

Cerebral palsy may keep Alette Coble-Temple in a wheelchair, but it doesn't keep her from much else, thanks in part to her service dog, Reddy. A professor of clinical psychology at John F. Kennedy University, Pleasant Hill, California, Coble-Temple has worked with service dogs since her own college days. All of them have been supplied free of charge by the nonprofit Canine Companions for Independence (CCI), which is funded in part by the Lions Project for CCI. That group has donated $3 million to CCI.

"It's been life-changing," she says. "Before I had a dog, I was eager to be social, but very self-conscious about my speech. [Like many people with cerebral palsy, Coble-

Temple has some speech impairment.] But when I got my first dog, he was all about making connections, and he really worked to invite people in. He loved to shake; if anyone walked by, he'd extend his paw."

Like her previous dogs, Reddy is more than just a sociable, furry face. Among his many jobs are retrieving items Coble-Temple drops, acting as a physical support to help her transfer in and out of her wheelchair, and occasionally even pulling her in the chair (via a vest with a handle).

"Being able to navigate airports with my dog pulling me feels so independent and exhilarating," says Coble-Temple, who is a frequent traveler. "Having a dog makes this a happier life."

Morgan Watt and Foley

Morgan Watt and Foley

As a Desert Storm veteran, a former bomb-dog handler for the Secret Service and an airline pilot, Morgan Watt was used to challenging situations. But in 2013, he began facing new, even more formidable enemies: post-traumatic stress disorder, migraines, vertigo, anxiety and depression.

"That's when I started having an existential crisis," Watt says. "Things got really dark for a while."

Enter Foley, a golden retriever-Labrador mix trained by Canine Companions for Independence to assist Watt in several ways. If Watt is experiencing vertigo, he can ask Foley to retrieve items, so that he doesn't risk falling. Foley often knows before Watt does when a migraine is coming on, and will lick Watt's head to cue him to take his medication. If Watt feels claustrophobic in a crowd, Foley will block people to keep them away.

And when Watt wakes up disoriented from a nightmare, "there's nothing more comforting than having a dog right there with you, snuggling and breathing real slowly right next to you to help ground you," he says. "I feel like I have a furry psychiatrist right here."

Anne Ford is a Chicago-based journalist and radio producer who makes her living asking a lot of perfectly nice people a lot of very nosy questions.

Digital LION

Learn how Lions have supported service dogs over the years at lionmagazine.org.

- "Two Blind Men Given Trained Dogs" (March 1935 LION)
- "Eyes in the Darkness" (March 1951 LION)
- Heavyweight champ Jack Dempsey supports Leader Dogs (November 1952 LION).

A Quick Service Dog Primer

Can any dog be a service dog? No. Service dog organizations typically breed their own dogs, so that they can select for crucial traits such as confidence, intelligence and work ethic. The most common breeds are Labrador retrievers, golden retrievers and German shepherds. Some organizations may source their dogs from shelters instead.

What sort of training does a service dog undergo? As puppies, potential service dogs are generally raised in the homes of volunteers, who socialize them and get them acquainted with different environments such as restaurants, sidewalks and parks. At about 15 months, the dogs return to the organization for several months of formal training. If they're found to have health or behavioral problems that disqualify them from working as service dogs, they may become therapy dogs, agility dogs, search-and-rescue dogs or simply happy household pets. If they do become service dogs, they are carefully matched with their users according to needs, strength, size and temperament. Each user then undergoes several weeks of training in tandem with his or her dog.

How can Lions help people who need service dogs? It can cost upward of $20,000 to train a single service dog. Lions clubs can raise funds for service-dog organizations such as Leader Dogs for the Blind, Canine Companions for Independence, Dogs for the Deaf, Southeastern Guide Dogs and many others. Some organizations also maintain "wish lists" to allow supporters to donate material goods such as dog food or dog toys. Lions can serve as volunteer puppy raisers or provide homes for breeding dogs. Lions also can help spread the word about service dogs by inviting guest speakers to their clubs, too.