

Support Dogs' charity magazine

# AURA

Issue 35

Autumn 2019 / Winter 2020

**“Digby makes me more independent, and I’m so grateful to Support Dogs for training him so brilliantly.”**

**Katie, disability assistance client**

AURA FEATURE STORY ON PAGE 4-5

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How dual hero-hound Wolfy is working hard for seizure alert client Toni

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Autism assistance dog Chester - making a difference to eight-year-old Alex

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**supportdogs**

For Autism. For Epilepsy. For Disability



# Could you volunteer with Support Dogs?

## Volunteering with our trainee dogs and puppies

We are looking for volunteers living within an hour of our centre in Sheffield to help us with our trainee dogs and puppies. Roles include:

- **Puppy socialisers** looking after a pup full time from you home for their first 14 months.
- **Bed and Breakfast foster carers** providing a loving home in evenings and at weekends for a trainee support dog.
- **Doggy drivers**—helping transport our dogs to and from our training centre.
- **Adult dog socialisers** —providing full time care from home for an older dog before their training begins.

## Volunteer to raise funds and awareness

We are looking for volunteers throughout the UK to raise greater awareness, understanding and funds for our charity. Roles include:

- **Ambassadors** We are a small growing charity, with an amazing story to tell. We need your help to tell it and help us reach more people by giving talks to local groups, distributing collection tins and information.
- **Event volunteers** to help us at a large number of community events and shows across the country.
- **Collection Tin coordinators** to place and look after collection tins for our charity across the UK.



**Please find out more at  
[www.supportdogs.org.uk](http://www.supportdogs.org.uk)  
phone 0114 261 7800**

**Once you have finished enjoying this magazine please put it somewhere where others maybe able to read and learn about our charity.**

MESSAGE FROM RITA...

# A legacy worth leaving

The demand for our work is unrelenting. Over four and a half thousand individuals and families contact us each year wanting our life-saving and life-changing support for them and their loved ones.

As a charity, we desperately want to help more of these families. We are limited in our ability to do this because of our financial resources and the physical space at our national training centre to fit in more dogs, trainers, staff and clients. However, this situation is slowly changing and improving; in no small part thanks to the enormous contribution that donations left to our charity by kind supporters in their wills have made over the past two years.

Thanks to these gifts left to our charity in individuals wills, we have been able to raise enough money to begin to actively seek an appropriate site to develop a much larger training centre. One that will mean that we can both immediately increase the number of families we help and dogs we train each year, but also have scope to further increase this in later years if resources allow.

Support Dogs rely entirely, 100% on voluntary donations. We have to fundraise for every penny. Our latest accounts show that 40% of this last year came from donations left to the charity in wills – a big increase from just 20% of our income two years ago. This has put us in a position where we are able to start planning to make a much bigger impact on the lives of those so urgently in need of our help.

In this magazine you will read why our client Kym Stretton has decided to leave a donation to us in her will. Her story with her current support dog Marley highlights the



Rita is pictured with TV and radio presenter Jamie Theakston, during Global Radio's Make Some Noise appeal in aid of Support Dogs and other small charities.

impact of having a support dog – keeping people safe, giving back independence, and reducing carer needs from family member. Marley of course came to us as an unwanted pet. 1 in 4 of our support dogs come to us from rescue centres or as unwanted pets, so our work ensures they have a much better life too.

If you can help us in any way to grow and help more people living with truly challenging conditions, then I can assure you the legacy you leave will be hugely appreciated.

Rita Howson  
Chief executive

*Rita Howson*

## About Support Dogs

It's Support Dogs' passion and commitment to ensure that people affected by autism, epilepsy and physical disability can enjoy a greater level of independence. We aim to do this by providing, training and supporting registered assistance dogs.

### We provide:

Autism assistance dogs for children aged three to ten years with autism. The dogs are trained to provide safety for the child and reduce stress in social environments.

Seizure alert dogs for people with epilepsy. The dogs are trained to provide a hundred per cent reliable, 10-55 minute warning prior to the onset of an epileptic seizure, which enables them to get to a place of their choosing and take control of the situation.

In some instances it has been reported that seizure alert dogs have also been shown to reduce seizure frequency.

Disability assistance dogs for people with physical disabilities. The client's own pet dog is trained to perform tasks which are specifically tailored to their individual needs; examples of these tasks include:

- Opening and closing doors
- Raising the alarm
- Fetching the post
- Loading and unloading the washing machine
- Assisting with dressing and undressing

Support Dogs is a registered charity and does not charge for its services. However we rely entirely on voluntary donations and receive no government funding.

Chief Executive: Rita Howson

Chair: Barry Brackner

Honorary President: Angela Rippon CBE

Patrons: The Earl & Countess of Scarborough  
Elaine Paige OBE

## Contact

Support Dogs  
21 Jessops Riverside  
Brightside Lane  
Sheffield S9 2RX  
Registered Charity Number: 1088281

[info@supportdogs.org.uk](mailto:info@supportdogs.org.uk)

[www.supportdogs.org.uk](http://www.supportdogs.org.uk)

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To sponsor a dog today call Support Dogs on

**0114 261 7800**

to donate visit

[www.supportdogs.org.uk](http://www.supportdogs.org.uk)

# Spot the unusual support dog - *how Dalmatian Digby is helping Katie back to work*

Digby the Dalmatian has the kind of head-turning good looks that make him stand out from the pack.

But there's more to Digby than just his spots. He's the first dog of his breed to qualify as an assistance dog with Support Dogs and is busy transforming the life of owner/client Katie Baldock.

Katie, aged 20, got Digby as a pet when he was a six-month-old pup, with no plans for him to be a working dog.

Katie has had a rare genetic muscle disorder called nemaline myopathy since birth, which causes muscle weakness throughout the body, and fatigue. Her joints - particularly her shoulder, hips and knees - dislocate with the slightest exertion. Katie's condition is so rare she was ten before it was diagnosed.

Although she can walk short distances indoors Katie uses a wheelchair outside the home in Nottingham she shares with her mum and five sisters, two of whom have milder forms of the same condition.

Because she was different from her peers Katie often struggled to cope at school.

*"I became quite depressed after leaving school because I was just sitting at home doing nothing," says Katie. "I'd done a year of A' levels but dropped out because I wasn't dealing with everything very well. We got Digby as a pet to help me to socialise."*

Katie's mum Alison suggested applying

to Support Dogs for them to train Digby as a disability assistance dog. They came to the information day and the pair started training when Digby was 18 months old.

*"I really enjoyed the training although it was very tiring - mentally and physically - for both of us, but it was worth it,"*

says Katie. Digby now performs many household tasks for Katie such as unloading the washing machine, picking up items from the floor and opening and closing doors.

Just as importantly, he has helped her get out and about more - and of course is always the centre of attention.

*"Digby makes me more independent than I was and I'm very grateful to Support Dogs for training him so brilliantly. I can go out and not have to rely on anyone, whereas before I always had to rely on my parents, but as they work it wasn't always possible,"* explains Katie, who has completed a foundation degree in



healthcare science and now has been able to start her career working in the public sector - accompanied of course by Digby.

*"With him I can do so much more. Being involved with Support Dogs has been a hugely positive experience."*

He also the perfect canine companion. *"Digby isn't your usual Dalmatian,"* she adds. *"He's quite laid back and would sleep all day if he could. He's got a lovely nature and loves everyone and everybody. I walk him for an hour every day and he bombs around and children often come up and ask if he's Pongo from 101 Dalmatians!"*

Adds Katie: *"Since Digby became a working dog rather than a pet, I feel more appreciative of him, more grateful, and it makes me love him a bit more. He is just the best."*



Disability assistance dogs are for people with physical disabilities or conditions such as MS, cerebral palsy and fibromyalgia. The client's own pet dog is trained to perform tasks that are tailored to their individual needs, such as opening and closing doors, raising the alarm, loading and unloading the washing machine, assisting with dressing and undressing, and fetching the post.

For more information about Support Dogs' disability assistance programme go to:  
[www.supportdogs.org.uk](http://www.supportdogs.org.uk)

AURA FEATURE  
DISABILITY



Digby enables Katie to get out and about

# YOU can be amazing in 2020

Help us change the lives of those with autism, epilepsy and disability by taking part in these brilliant challenges. For more details please email [fundraising@supportdogs.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@supportdogs.org.uk) or ring 0114 261 7800.



## Great North Run

Sunday 13 September 2020



Have you ever wanted to run the iconic Great North Run or want to set yourself the challenge of completing the 13.1 mile course? We have places available in this world-famous race. We ask our runners to raise a minimum of £325 with a £25 registration fee (only payable when we offer the place). We will be with you every step to the finish line with help and advice, a Support Dogs' running vest and unrivalled cheering on the day!

## Ride London 100

Sunday 16 August 2020



One hundred traffic-free miles through central London and the Surrey Hills this epic event is not to be missed! Following in the tyre tracks of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic cyclists, taking on the famous Box Hill, you will finish on the Mall in central London. We ask for a minimum fundraising target of £500 plus registration fee.

## Great Wall of China 2020

Various



Fancy trekking along the Great Wall of China, and raising money for Support Dogs? Trekking along this iconic Wonder of the World, you'll cross ancient watch towers and battlement stations to witness magnificent panoramas of luscious, rolling green hills as far as the eye can see.

At the end of your adventure there will be time to explore Beijing, China's capital where ancient and modern meet.

## What else can I do?

Whether you are looking for a fun run, obstacle course, cycle race or mountain to climb, there are a whole host of events to choose from on our website [www.supportdogs.org.uk](http://www.supportdogs.org.uk)

Planning your own challenge? We can help! We can arrange for an indoor bike to come to your workplace, for t-shirts for the team or help with planning your event - get in touch with us on [fundraising@supportdogs.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@supportdogs.org.uk) We also have dog mascot outfits available for those of you brave enough to take on a run wearing one and make a real show of your fundraising efforts.

**Support Dogs relies 100 per cent on voluntary donations. We are privileged to have some amazing supporters who give up their time, skills and energy to raise funds to enable our charity to continue with our work. We wish we could list everyone, but there is sadly just not enough room. But here is just a flavour of some of the ways some very kind people have helped.**

**Everyone at CaniX events** who have supported us throughout the year as well as donating all entry fees from a special Support Dogs' event **raising a massive £2,440.**

The residents at **Roman Ridge sheltered accommodation** in Sheffield who organised a table top sale, **donating a wonderful £174 to our work.**

**Steph Jeavons** who walked not only the national Three Peaks' Challenge but also walked between them, **raising a whopping £2,679!**

Nine members of **University of Sheffield Rowing Club** who took part in the Sheffield 10km, **raising a fabulous £650.**

**The Friends of Rectory Park Gala in Dewsbury** who **donated £100** to us following their successful summer gala.

**Steve Edge** who cycled 100 miles from Manchester to Sheffield and back again all before lunch!

The **Autism Champions at Forge Valley School in Sheffield** who ran a bake sale at break time in the last week of term **raising**



Cyclist Steve Edge with seizure alert client Lynn Ratcliffe and Simba

**£184.50!**

**Monica, Camila, Alison and Rachael and their four-legged friends** who all took part in Dog Jog events across the country **raising an amazing £486.**

The team from **Fresh Perspective** who took on a very muddy Tough Mudder, **raising a fantastic £510!**

**Davie Brown** who cycled 1,738km through the Pyrenees **raising a massive £1,345.**

**Dan Whelan**, who completed the 5km Big Fun Run, smashing his target and **raising £340.**

**Sutton Coldfield and District Dog Training Club** for **donating £300** from their Novelty Dog Show.

**Gladys Flanagan at the Greyhound Trust** who **donated £150** from her annual garden party.

**Eastleigh community nurses** who took on the Romsey Relay Marathon, **raising a brilliant £705.**

The **Campbell family** who bounced and climbed their way to a **£315 donation** by taking part in the Gung Ho Challenge.

The 13-strong team from **Russell Richardson** who took on the Obstacle Colour Rush **raising a brilliant £330.**

**Charlie, Herbie and friends**, who washed cars over the summer holidays **raising a brilliant £76!**

# A BIG THANK YOU to all you fantastic fundraisers



Eastleigh community nurses

If you are inspired to help our charity please email [fundraising@supportdogs.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@supportdogs.org.uk) or phone 0114 261 7800

# Dual-hero hound Wolfy is working wonders

All Support Dogs are special, but Wolfy's dual role as a seizure alert and guide dog makes him even more of a hero hound.

Black Labrador Wolfy acts as owner Toni Brown-Griffin's eyes, helping her to navigate routes and avoid everyday obstacles and hazards.

But he also has the added responsibility of making sure she has a guaranteed alert of an oncoming seizure.

These two roles combined can be extremely demanding - on both dog and owner.

Wolfy and his owner Toni are a unique partnership, as Toni's health needs are complex. She has had severe epilepsy for 27 years, and prior to having her first seizure alert dog, Rupert, trained by Support Dogs in 1995, was having 12 major and 40 minor seizures a week.

Toni has been registered blind since the birth of her second child 13 years ago, after suffering from retinal bleeding during labour.

Ajay, her seizure alert dog at that time, received some training from Guide

Dogs to help with Toni's decreasing vision, but when he needed to retire early, the search began for the right dog to become the world's first-ever dual-trained seizure alert/guide dog.

Hetty a Golden Retriever Labrador cross, continued the good work of Toni's previous three dogs. She was an extremely diligent and resilient dog, always up for anything that life threw at them, and enabled the mother-of-two to continue with an active and fulfilling life.

Hetty worked for seven years and with retirement looming, the search was on for a successor. Toni feared she would never find another dog who had the special qualities to fulfil two such demanding roles. That was until she was introduced to Wolfy. The gentle giant bounded into Hetty's harness with a strong, reassuring presence, and he and Toni have already formed a strong bond.



*"It's obvious that a dual assistance dog has to be very special," says Toni, aged 50. "I am very physically active and walk 10-15 miles every day so needed a dog above and beyond. It also needed to be the kind of driven, diligent dog that could also detect seizures any time, day or night."*

*"To do the two jobs together can be very mentally demanding. The dog is not just looking out for obstacles but also for signs of seizures - it has to be at the top of its game."*



Toni and Wolfy with Support Dogs' Natalie Wroe and Ian Armstrong from Guide Dogs



**“I was too scared to use the cooker or kettle. I existed but didn’t have a life”**



Toni and Wolfy at Meadowhall shopping centre with trainer Natalie Wroe

Happily, although Toni describes her new canine carer as a ‘scallywag, a fruit loop, and a bit of a loony with a sock fetish’, Wolfy has proven himself to be the ultimate professional pooch. He alerts Toni exactly 41 minutes before a major seizure by wiping his nose on her right hand, and also gives a 15 minute warning of a minor seizure.

Importantly he also gets on well with her previous dogs: Hetty, Ajay, now blind and deaf and aged 14, but still part of the family and acknowledged leader of the pack, and Merlin, her daughter’s retired autism assistance dog.

Wolfy was a bit of a handful as a youngster, but the intensive work the training teams put into him, has paid off and Toni thinks the world of him and the reassurance he provides.

She says: “Last New Year when I hadn’t had Wolfy very long, I was ill in bed for two days. Despite the fact that he is a very energetic mischievous dog and there were three dogs downstairs for him to play with, he stayed with me the

*whole time, draped on top of me like a blanket. I found that really reassuring. Even though I can’t see him I am always aware of where he is.”*

As a woman who is both blind and has epilepsy and who also leads a busy life, that reassurance is what she needs.

Despite still having two to three major seizures a week, Toni also regularly goes to London to give talks on behalf of Guide Dogs and Support Dogs, walks regularly in the countryside around her home near Tunbridge Wells, and goes horse-riding. Both of Toni’s daughters, Mimi 13, and 19-year-old Grace have autism, and Toni also works as an office manager.

Thanks to her very special dogs, Toni’s family are reassured that she is in safe paws and they can go about their everyday lives without worrying about her.

“Wolfy and I have an amazing relationship, and we all love him - he is a real family dog,” says Toni. “He’s

*very cuddly and is always aware if someone needs a head rest and a hug. Most importantly, the specialist training that Wolfy has received enables me to be independent and be the wife and mother that I want and need to be.”*

Toni has been involved with Support Dogs for more than half her life, and was a trustee of the charity for 12 years. She remembers only too clearly what life was like before her assistance dogs.

*“I didn’t go out because I was scared that I would have seizure. I didn’t go up or downstairs without help, and I was too scared to use the cooker or kettle. I existed but didn’t have a life,” she says.*

*“All that changed when I found Support Dogs. Over the past 25 years life without my assistance dogs would have been intolerable. I’m massively grateful for all my dogs, including my lovely Wolfy.”*

Support Dogs is appealing to people with epilepsy who have 10 seizures a month or more to apply for a seizure alert dog, as these are the people who benefit most. More details on [www.supportdogs.org.uk](http://www.supportdogs.org.uk)

# Bringing a sense of calm to every situation

Autism assistance dog Chester is transforming the world for eight-year-old Alex, from near Leeds. Mum Anna explains the enormous impact the black Labrador is having on her son's life. Boy and dog qualified as a partnership last year.

"I am mum to a little boy named Alex who is now just eight years old. Alex is lively, funny, sweet, cheeky and clever and also happens to have been diagnosed with autism at the age of two.

Most people will have heard of autism but may not know exactly what that means (I certainly didn't until Alex was diagnosed, and still continue to learn on a daily basis). Autism affects people in lots of different ways but one thing for sure is that those on the spectrum see the world in a very unique and innocent way.

For Alex, autism means that he is deemed non-verbal, he suffers with extreme anxiety, development delay and sensory processing disorder. In short, it means that Alex can struggle extensively with everyday situations which most of us would think nothing of... things like going to the supermarket, going to the park, a party, the cinema or a restaurant can be terrifying ordeals. It also means he simply



cannot make sense of social interactions; he can't read a facial expression or take a cue from a tone of voice. These aspects of autism can make life lonely for the person affected and for those who care for them, as making friends is incredibly difficult. As a parent, you deal with the looks and the comments from strangers commenting on what a terrible parent you must be and what a badly behaved child you have.

Alex also has NO sense of danger. He doesn't understand the reason why he can't run in to a road with moving traffic, jump in to a fast moving river or lay down and look over the edge of a railway platform...in fact movement of any kind is highly motivational for Alex and so he is actually drawn to such dangers. As a two year old it was easily resolved, and we could simply swoop him up, pop him in to his pushchair, in the seat of a shopping trolley etc but as Alex was growing in to a very fit and very strong boy, it became increasingly difficult for me to keep him

safe and so life became scary, reclusive and lonely.

Enter Support Dogs... We came across Support Dogs about four years ago and we were lucky enough to be invited on an information day to find out more. I completed an application form, an assessment, we had home visits (including some adorable dogs) and we could quickly see that Alex was going to respond well to having a furry companion. We waited for a match. When it came it was with the beautifully double-barrelled-named Chester-Thor, although we stick to Chester most days. Chester, Alex and I.

Since Chester was placed with us in September 2017, he has helped Alex, and our family, in two distinct ways.

Firstly he is, of course, an assistance dog specifically and incredibly trained to help Alex when he is out of the house, in familiar and unfamiliar places. Chester comforts Alex, keeps him safe, gives Alex a sense





Mum Anna with Alex and Chester

of security and an undeniable sense of confidence. Alex doesn't just tolerate being tethered to Chester, he loves it. When the harness goes on, we see an instant change in Alex's body language as if to say: 'we've got this'. Chester brings a sense of calm to every situation which in turn gives us all, but especially Alex, an opportunity to enjoy the moment, knowing that Chester will keep him safe from harm.

Chester has opened up our world and of course, most importantly, Alex's world. Places that had previously 'spooked' Alex are now accessible. A perfect example of this was Thomas Land. Alex is Thomas the Tank Engine mad but after numerous, successful visits to Thomas Land, we made a visit to see Santa during Christmas 2015. Alex ran in, so excited, then stopped, the blood drained from his face, his hands went over his ears, he cried out and he ran to the exit in an inconsolable state... We attempted to go subsequently with no joy, Alex simply couldn't get through the

gate however much he wanted to, and so we gave our tickets away and went home. Fast forward to Christmas 2017, with Alex tethered to Chester, Alex stopped at the gate, took hold of Chester's handle, and slowly moved forward... he was back in one of his favourite places with his buddy to keep him safe. We had the most perfect day. That was the first time that we had really clear evidence that Chester was making a difference.

Another example is A&E following an accident where Alex bolted at school and ran into a door. We were at the hospital with a potential broken nose for nearly three hours. In other circumstances, Alex would have gone in to meltdown. It's in these moments when we can see the huge difference Chester makes by simply being Chester.

We are no longer subjected to those negative comments. People look at us and smile and on occasions ask if they can say hello and ask about what Chester does for

Alex and our family. He has turned social interaction around for us all... he draws such positive attention and has opened a narrative for Support Dogs and for autism.

Chester is more than a service dog however; he is a friend and a member of our family, with his own beautiful personality that doesn't differ hugely from Alex. They both love treats, being outdoors, cuddles, tickles and sitting in the most inappropriate places they can find. His very presence helps to de-stress difficult situations and he's always there to provide a welcome distraction when he hears Alex becoming distressed or frustrated due to his difficulty with communication.

Chester has literally changed our lives for the better.

We will be forever grateful to Support Dogs for providing and training these life-changing animals."

# Support dog Casper - the perfect match for former soldier John

Former soldier John Newcombe is not the sort of man to sit around feeling sorry for himself.

John was injured in a bomb blast during a tour of duty in Northern Ireland in the early 1980s, and has since developed multiple sclerosis which has left him needing a wheelchair.

But despite the inevitable restrictions imposed by his condition, John has refused to lead a sedentary lifestyle, and happily has found the ideal support dog to keep him active and able to get out and about - Casper the energetic golden Labrador.

*"I'm the sort of person who doesn't want to be sitting around doing nothing, and Casper is a very lively dog - we kind of egg each other on," says John. "I had an instant bond with Casper - it was just one of those moments when I knew he was the dog for me."*

John, aged 56, who lives with his partner Clare in Preston, spent 22 years with the Devon and Dorset Infantry regiment, and later enlisted in the Territorial Army as a member of the Royal Engineers' bomb disposal squad. Now medically discharged and unable to work, he has thrown himself into his new life with his much-loved canine companion.

Casper is John's second dog to be trained by Support Dogs. His first, black Labrador Blue had to retire early on health grounds. John then bought another dog, Teddy, also a golden Labrador, whom he hoped would become his second disability assistance dog, but a diagnosis of arthritis put paid to that, and Teddy remained as John's pet dog.

*"I taught him the basic toolkit of what I learned from working with Blue, but Teddy's now happy to sit back and let Casper do all the work," explains John. "Both dogs get on really well - you'd think they'd been together all their lives."*



John attended a 'meet and greet' session at Support Dogs' training centre in Sheffield met Casper, was matched with him. The rest is history, with the pair qualifying as a partnership earlier this year.

*"And the social aspect - he encourages me to go out and socialise. When you're in a wheelchair people tend to ignore you to talk to the person you're with. With Casper people come up to him and we start chatting."*



John as a soldier

John and Casper spend a lot of time fishing, and going for walks. *"Casper allows me to be independent, and that's very important," says John. "I'm very dependent on other people but I don't want to be. I've got a friend in Teddy, but Support Dogs have given me the ability to go out and do things. I wouldn't go out as much if I didn't have Casper - he gets me out. I wouldn't be without him."*

Support Dogs' instructor Kate Breen adds: *"John never stops smiling, no matter how bad a day he's had. He's been on a tough journey but now he and Casper are a great partnership. They're like peas in a pod!"*

As well as offering invaluable practical help around the house, picking up dropped items and pulling of socks and jackets, John says the best thing about Casper is his company.

For more information about Support Dogs' disability assistance programme go to [www.supportdogs.org.uk](http://www.supportdogs.org.uk)

# Big Dave takes over the 'heavy lifting' from pint-sized pooch Baby

**Black Labrador Dave is reaching the parts that owner Kathy Wylde's previous dog was literally unable to reach.**

Big Dave is providing invaluable help for Kathy, who has been in a wheelchair since having both legs amputated above the knee almost 30 years ago, and has a number of related health problems.

For many years after the accident that led to the amputation, Kathy, who had previously led an active lifestyle, struggled to care for herself and her two young children.

In 2008, with her children grown up and moved away, she decided to get a dog as a companion. That dog was Baby, a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, and for more than a decade Kathy, with tiny support dog Baby perched on her lap in her wheelchair, was a popular sight at the Support Dogs' stand at Crufts and dozens of fundraising events. Baby was trained to sit tight on Kathy's knee as the warmth and pressure of her small body relieved the phantom limb pain. But time catches up with the best assistance dogs and now Baby has retired Kathy has exchanged her small pooch for a more traditional support dog.

"Baby was slowing down and I really appreciated that Support Dogs realised that," says Kathy, from Liverpool. "I always wanted another dog after she retired but it was strange having a new dog, and at first I had reservations about trying to build a relationship with a dog I hadn't had any contact with.

"Now of course it's like I've never not had him! I've had Dave since November last year and to be honest at first he was a bit of a pain; he wasn't in tune with me properly. We'd go for walks and he'd be running off

and not coming back. Since then he's come on in leaps and bounds and is a completely different dog."

Kathy and Dave qualified as a disability assistance dog partnership in May this year, after six months of training.

Partly due to his size, Dave is more able than Baby to carry out practical tasks for Kathy. "Baby was good for what she was trained to do, but Dave is bigger and has more strength and can do more than what Baby did," adds Kathy.

"It's a progression. If I need heavier jobs doing - such as picking up bags of food - he can do that. He's better at opening doors, taking off clothes in seconds and emptying the washing machine. Baby could do those things but it took longer. So that makes life easier for me."

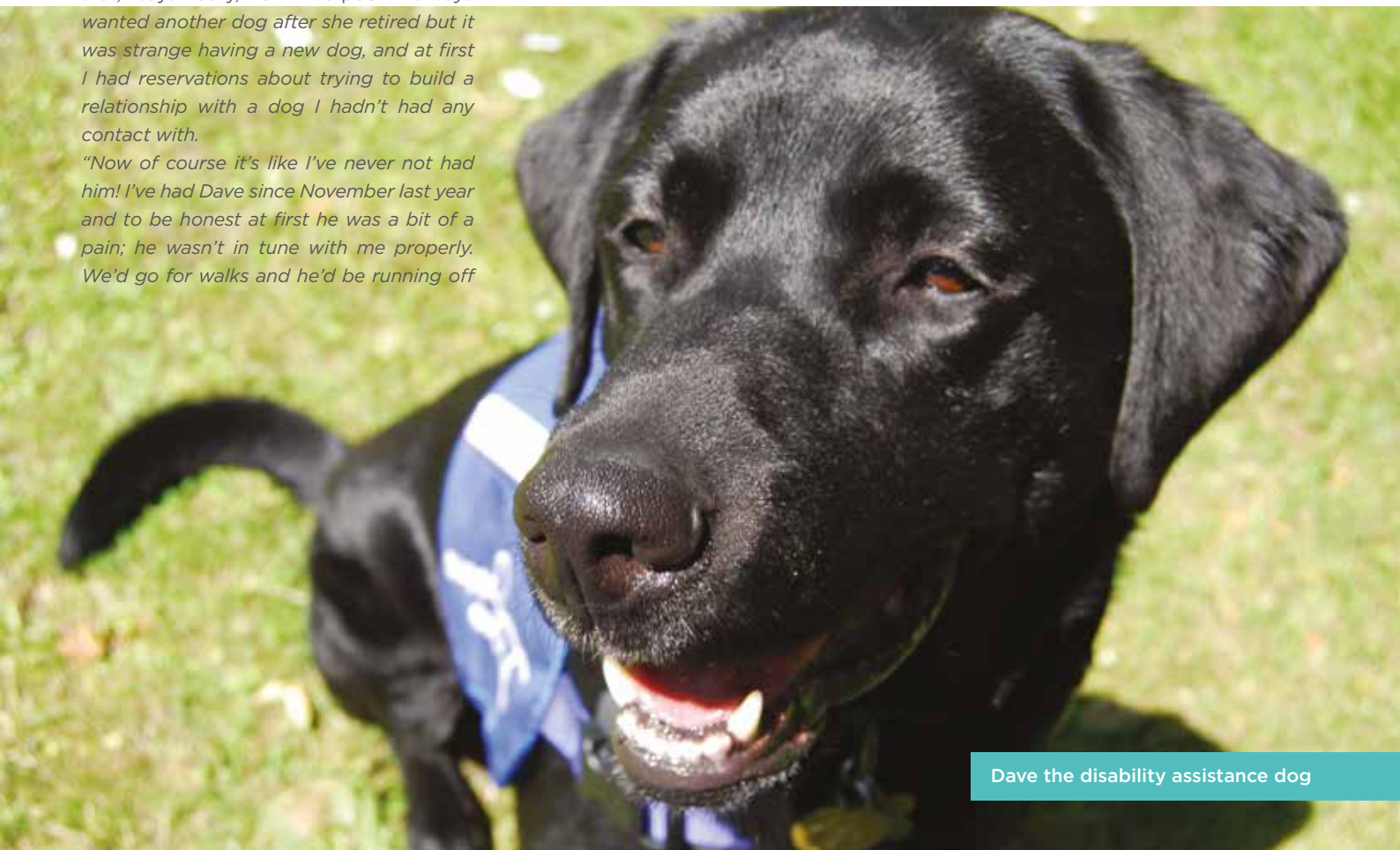
Not that Baby has gone anywhere. Kathy says that previous and current support dogs are as thick as thieves.

"She doesn't try and do things for me now, and she's happy that Dave's here. They always snuggle up together and he misses her when we're away.



"Baby still sits on my lap when we're at home. Dave gets on the sofa and Baby climbs over him and gets onto my lap and they sit there with their heads together."

Kathy has always been active in attending fundraising and awareness raising events for Support Dogs - happy to put something back to a charity that has given her so much. "The service they give is invaluable, especially to disabled people, because it gives them a better quality of life and the confidence to do things they didn't or couldn't before," she says. "I can't praise Support Dogs enough."



# Our pride in donating our dog to become a life-saver

**A family of dog lovers who gave up their beloved Labrador because of the ill-health of their youngest daughter are sharing in his success as a fully-qualified support dog.**

Fox-red Labrador Wadsley has transformed the life of Brogan Evans, a young woman with severe epilepsy, by giving her a 100 per cent 48-minute advance warning of an oncoming seizure, enabling her to lead a safer, more independent life.

The pair recently qualified as a partnership after being trained by charity Support Dogs. And no-one is prouder of Wadsley's success than the Wright family from Nottingham, with whom he spent the first two years of his life.

*"We got Wadsley when he was just eight weeks old," says Vicky Wright. "We had three young children, who all adored him.*

*"Unfortunately our youngest child became ill and by the time she was two and starting to walk, she was connected to feeding tubes and oxygen, and Wadsley was a big dog. We had to leave him in the kitchen a lot, and it wasn't fair to him, so we decided we would have to let him go.*

*"It was a massive wrench because he was a perfect dog."*

The Wrights advertised Wadsley on the Preloved website, determined that as he was one of the family they had to find the right place for him in a loving new home. It took a while – one company got in touch with the idea he might become a security dog, but the family didn't want to risk Wadsley coming to harm.

Eventually they found the perfect solution when Support Dogs responded to their ad and got in touch. *"They came and did a home visit and we thought it sounded perfect for him,"* says Vicky.

*"We wanted to keep in touch with Wadsley*

*and his progress so we visited the training centre, and that helped us with the children because they could still see him and follow how he was doing."*

Vicky was overwhelmed when Wadsley was selected to be a seizure alert dog, given her young daughter's condition. *"We just felt it was meant to be,"* she says. *"We learnt about it and followed Brogan's progress on Instagram and it had us tears knowing how much he has done."*

Since Brogan and Wadsley qualified as a partnership in August, they have been in regular touch with his old family.

Adds Vicky: *"Brogan brought him to see us and I warned the children that he might not know them as he'd had other foster carers since he'd lived with us, but he did – Brogan said she's never seen him be like that with anyone else!"*

*"Knowing what he can do is incredible. I have no regrets about giving him to Support Dogs. We saw Brogan and Wadsley last week and we're going to their graduation in November. It will be a very emotional moment."*

Says Brogan: *"Wadsley was lucky that for the first two years of his life he lived with and*

*loved this beautiful family. He was so happy to see them all again, and I'm so grateful to them for their gift of this wonderful dog."*

Brogan and Wadsley were featured on BBC's The One Show in October

Do you have a dog that could be suitable as a support dog? We consider most breeds of dog under the age of three. Contact us on **0114 2617800** or via [info@supportdogs.org.uk](mailto:info@supportdogs.org.uk)



Wadsley is pictured with his original owners Tyler, Amelia and Bella

# More than just a name

The life of a young woman who died from an epileptic seizure at the age of just 22 is being honoured by Support Dogs, who have named a support dog puppy in her memory.

Following the death of her daughter Maisie in January this year of sudden unexpected death in epilepsy (SUDEP), Nicky Patrick set up the Maisie Tothill Foundation, which along with other fundraisers has already raised in excess of £35,000 in aid of Support Dogs and other epilepsy charities. Last summer Nicky, the head teacher of a primary school in Harwich, Suffolk, held a *Dress Like A Dog Day* with 1,500 pupils from six local primary schools taking part and learning about the life-changing work of seizure alert dogs. This event alone raised £2,000 for Support Dogs.

Nicky said: *"Maisie was a remarkable young lady who wanted to make a difference, and through The Maisie Tothill Foundation, her family is determined to make a difference to the lives of young people and their families by continuing to promote the causes that were so important to Maisie."*

Support Dogs has named one of its new sprocker spaniel puppies, Maisie, in her memory.

Danny Anderson, fundraising manager of Support Dogs said: *"Gifts made in memory of loved ones makes such a vital*



*contribution to our work. We're very grateful to Nicky for her work in memory of her daughter in both raising awareness of epilepsy and fundraising for us. It will help us train more wonderful seizure alert dogs, who help our clients with epilepsy lead safer, more independent lives."*



Sprocker puppy Maisie

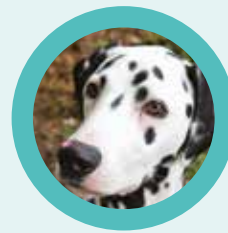
## HOW YOU CAN HELP

Support Dog relies 100% on voluntary donations; we would love your support



### Charitable trusts and community organisations

Donations from trusts or community groups can be allocated to specific programmes of interest; for example, autism, epilepsy or disability, support our work in specific geographical locations, our work with rescue centres, or our work in general.



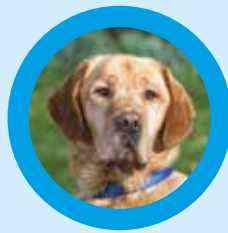
### Leave a gift in your will or in memory of a loved one

One in three every support dogs only exist because somebody left a donation to our charity in their will. These donations save lives will last far beyond the eight-year working life of a support dog.



### Corporate giving

We are small charity, where your support will makes a real difference in the lives of people in your community. Whether charity of year, sponsorship for an area of our work, or fundraising for a charity that will engage staff and customers Support Dogs has a number of innovative, fun and unique ways your company can get involved.



### Volunteers

Our volunteers are essential to us – providing foster care for our dogs and puppies prior to and during training, giving talks, helping with our admin, and running events and collections. Please help change lives by becoming a volunteer.



### Fundraising

From sponsor a support dog from £5 a month, putting on a doggy-themed fundraiser, taking part in one of our many sporty or adventure challenges or even just collecting stamps or having a collection tin in our aid – your support can make a difference.

## You can make a difference

Please contact us on **0114 261 7800**  
email [fundraising@supportdogs.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@supportdogs.org.uk)  
or visit [www.supportdogs.org.uk](http://www.supportdogs.org.uk)



# Could you leave a legacy to Support Dogs?

A donation left in your will can make a lasting difference in so many ways.



**CONFIDENCE TO LEAVE THE HOUSE**

Left by:  
E Longney  
29 April 2018

**SAFETY**

Left by:  
Vincent Mckissock  
30 March 2019

**TRAINED AUTISM ASSISTANCE DOG**

Left by:  
Dorothy Bloxham  
7 July 2019

**PLAY TIME**

Left by:  
Ann Richardson  
15 August 2019

1 in every 3 support dogs only exists thanks to the wonderful kindness of donations left to our charity in Wills

For 30 years our charity has been transforming the lives of children and adults affected by autism, epilepsy and disability. If the time is ever right for you to remember a charity in your Will please remember Support Dogs.

Did you know that even a gift of 1% in your Will can make a huge difference, so those closest to you receive 99%.

Do you know that ALL you need is to give to your Will writer is our registered charity number 1088281?

## Kym helps to promote the importance of gifts in wills to Support Dogs

Kym Stretton knows only too well the enormous benefits of a support dog in transforming her life - after all she's had four of them. Red Labrador Retriever Marley helps Kym, who has a severe genetic form of rickets that has left her in a wheelchair, to get up and down stairs, as well as providing essential assistance around the home.

Marley came to the charity after being donated from a home who were unable to look after him. The charity trained him up to become Kym's support dog and provide day-to-day care and support. He gives Kim the independence she needs to be able to live an active life and also reduces her

dependence on her husband in having to be her carer.



Kym is now fronting a Support Dogs' campaign to boost the amount of money the charity receives from legacies and gifts in wills by appearing in a promotional video. "I've gained so much from my long association with Support Dogs and from my four fantastic disability assistance dogs, and I know there is huge demand for their services, so it makes complete sense to put something back by leaving a legacy in my will," she says.

Every gift, however large or small, makes a difference. Even just 1% of your will. Please visit [www.supportdogs.org.uk/legacy](http://www.supportdogs.org.uk/legacy) to find out more about leaving a gift to support dogs in your will.



# Support Dogs' merchandise

## CUDDLY DOGS IN SUPPORT DOG JACKETS



**Yellow Labrador**  
£14.99



**Cockerpoo**  
£14.99



**Collie**  
£14.99

## SUPPORT DOG PIN BADGES



**Collie**  
£2.00



**Black Labrador**  
£2.00



**Yellow puppy Labrador**  
£2.00

## CHRISTMAS GOODIES

Xmas cards  
£2.00



**Sitting dalmatian decoration**  
£3.99



**Fox terrier on skis decoration**  
£6.99



**Reindeer sausage dog decoration**  
£6.99

# Order Form

Item	Price	Qty	Total
<b>Dog in support dog jacket</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yellow Labrador <input type="checkbox"/> Cockerpoo <input type="checkbox"/> Collie	£14.99		
<b>Support dog pin badge</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Collie <input type="checkbox"/> Black Lab <input type="checkbox"/> Yellow Lab	£2.00		
<b>Christmas cards</b>	£2.00		
<b>Fox terrier on skis decoration</b>	£6.99		
<b>Sitting dalmatian decoration</b>	£6.99		
<b>Reindeer sausage dog decoration</b>	£3.99		
<b>Postage</b>	<b>£2.99</b>	N/A	<b>£2.99</b>
<b>Total:</b>			

Name

Address

Postcode

Tel

Email

Payment method   Cash    Cheque   
(Please tick)

Please complete the form and return with cash or a cheque payable to Support Dogs to:

**Support Dogs**  
21 Jessops Riverside, Brightside Lane  
Sheffield, S9 2RX

Or order online here:  
[supportdogs.org.uk/shop](http://supportdogs.org.uk/shop)

# Sponsor a support dog

From Christmas to birthdays, sponsoring a support dog makes the perfect gift for someone special or a treat for yourself. You will not only bring a smile to their face but you are helping us to transform the lives of adults and children with autism, epilepsy and disability.

From **£5 a month** or a one-off year payment, you can sponsor any of the dogs below or visit our website [www.supportdogs.org.uk/sponsor-a-dog](http://www.supportdogs.org.uk/sponsor-a-dog) for other dogs you can sponsor.



DAVE

**Breed:** Labrador  
**Job:** Disability assistance  
**Home:** Merseyside  
**Birthday:** 16 September



KEVIN

**Breed:** Labrador  
**Job:** Disability assistance  
**Home:** West Midlands  
**Birthday:** 19 September



STANLEY

**Breed:** Labrador Retriever cross  
**Job:** Seizure alert  
**Home:** Gloucester  
**Birthday:** 3 April



IGGY

**Breed:** Labrador  
**Job:** Autism assistance  
**Home:** Hull  
**Birthday:** 6 April



USHKA

**Breed:** Labrador  
**Job:** Seizure alert  
**Home:** North Wales  
**Birthday:** 10 December



PUPPIES

Meet our heroes in training!  
These amazing pups are currently in their first stage of training to become a support dog.



When you decide to sponsor a dog you'll receive three updates a year, a sponsorship pack including a special photo certificate of your new pal.

PLUS to say a massive thank you, you'll receive a free cuddly support dog toy!

# I WOULD LIKE TO SPONSOR A SUPPORT DOG

DAVE  KEVIN  STANLEY  IGGY  USHKA  PUPPIES

For Myself  As a Gift  Giftee Name and Address

Name   
Address   
  
  
Postcode  Tel   
Email

Monthly Amount:  
 £5  £10  £15  Other

Bank Name & Address

Acc No.  Sort Code   
Starting on

## Make a Difference with a One-Off Donation

£5  £10  £20  Other

I'd like to donate by:  Debit/Credit Card  Cheque (Payable to Support Dogs)

Card No.

Card Holder Name

Valid From  Exp. Date  CV2 No. (3 digits)

Payable to: Lloyds, 14 Church Street, Sheffield, S1 1HP.  
The account of Support Dogs Ltd A/c No. 03938225 Sort Code: 30-97-51 or please send a cheque payable to Support Dogs to the address below.

Signature:

*giftaid it*

## Make your donations worth more at no extra cost to you!

Simply fill out the declaration below and we can claim the tax back on your subscriptions and donations.

YES - Please claim Gift Aid on all donations I have made in the last four calendar years, and until further notice.

Signature

Date

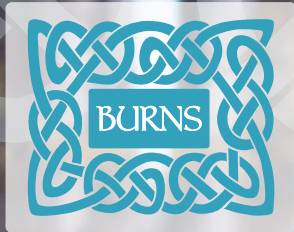
To qualify for Gift Aid, what you pay in income tax or capital gains tax must at least equal the amount we will claim in the tax year (currently 25p for every £1 donated). Please notify Support Dogs if you wish to cancel this declaration.

Please send completed forms to:

Support Dogs, 800 Brightside Ln, Sheffield, S9 2RX



Thank you for your support



Proud sponsors of Support Dogs



## Real Food Real Pets

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1800 83 66 96 (ROI)



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BVMS MRCVS

[www.burnspet.co.uk](http://www.burnspet.co.uk)   