

FidelcoNews

Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation

Fall 2018

IN THIS ISSUE

No Slowing Down

Breaking Through
Barriers

Honoring Character
and Resolve

Driving the
Mission Forward

Volunteer Spirit

Stepping Up



In this issue

1. No Slowing Down
2. Breaking Through Barriers
4. Honoring Character and Resolve
5. Driving the Mission Forward
6. Volunteer Spirit
7. Stepping Up
8. Six Years Running
9. Holiday Gifts That Give Back

Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation, Inc.

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Fidelco.org



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Bring Your Passion

Generous donors support our life-changing work with life-affirming passion. Loyal volunteers pour thousands of hours and boundless amounts of love and patience into raising puppies and supporting operations and events with heartfelt passion.



Dedicated guide dog training staff spend countless hours in the blistering heat and bitter cold preparing eager young dogs for their important destinies with unwavering passion.

Helen Keller's assertion that, "True happiness is not attained through self-gratification, but through fidelity to a worthy purpose," resonates deeply when we witness the boundless freedom our clients attain with their Fidelco German Shepherd guide dogs leading the way.

"True happiness is not attained through self-gratification, but through fidelity to a worthy purpose."

This issue of FidelcoNews explores several exceptional partnerships driven by the passion many people bring to Fidelco Guide Dogs, especially our clients who entrust their very lives to us — and to you. We hope you enjoy reading these stories of achievement and are inspired to bring your passions to Fidelco Guide Dogs.

Please *donate* today; blindness doesn't take a day off and demand for Fidelco German Shepherd guide dogs increases each year. Please *volunteer*; we're a 24/7 operation every day of the year. Please *apply* to join our team that makes a real difference in people's lives.

Eliot D. Russman
President & Chief Executive Officer

No Slowing Down

When Winnifred Judge, 93, first noticed a Fidelco guide dog team working together in downtown Branford, CT, nearly 50 years ago, she never believed she would be holding that harness.

Winnifred remembers, "I was convinced you had to be completely blind, with absolutely no vision, to get a guide dog. So when I applied, I had little hope it would work out. But sure enough, just a short time later, I received my first Fidelco German Shepherd guide dog, 'Happy.' Her name was perfect; I was elated. I remember my first day with my trainer. We began in the middle of Branford and I felt as though I was on a cloud. I couldn't believe I had my own guide dog."

As childhood glaucoma deteriorated Winnifred's usable sight over time, she remained undeterred. A lifelong athlete, Winnifred played competitive field hockey, basketball and lacrosse, later channeling this passion into a decades-long career as a physical education teacher.

But when Winnifred's vision became so limited she found herself routinely coming into contact with errant basketballs and tennis balls in her gym class, she was forced to retire.

Always committed to giving back to her community, Winnifred was the first archivist for her church and she still retains the title. She also became involved with her local garden club, making flower arrangements to brighten the days of patients in hospice care.

Partnered with her fourth Fidelco guide dog in 2010, "Mona" — raised by Fidelco employee Kris Seller — Winnifred still lives independently and reflects on the powerful ways her Fidelco guide dogs have shaped her life. "I was able to walk all over Indian Neck," she said. "Someone would take



Winnifred at home with "Mona"

me downtown and leave me to do errands and I could move around wherever I wanted to go. I would never have been able to accomplish all that I have without Fidelco Guide Dogs. My white cane merely used to help me identify objects to avoid."

"Fidelco guide dogs 'Happy,' 'Yarah,' 'Maya' and 'Mona' have brought so many people into my life. They have allowed others to get to know me."

On a recent visit to Winnifred's home near the Long Island Sound, Mona, now ten years old, attentively gazed at Winnifred as she spoke. As she got up from her chair, Mona came to her side — a well-worn invisible path to Winnifred quite perceptible. A moment later, they were ready and Mona led her partner out the front door and through the garden gate so Winnifred could tend to her beautiful roses. 🌹🐕

Breaking Through Barriers

As a 14-year veteran of both the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy, and an Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Team Leader, Aaron Hale has experienced more split-second, life-or-death moments than most.

The 2011 explosion that severely wounded him and claimed his vision during his second deployment to Afghanistan would not be the last fateful twist in Aaron's awe-inspiring journey toward reclaiming a life of independence and purpose.

Four years later, and just prior to confirming a placement date with Fidelco Guide Dogs, Aaron faced another significant challenge when a sudden and severe case of bacterial meningitis caused him to permanently lose his hearing. Aaron's world was suddenly dark and silent and he was spiraling. He remembers, "I felt trapped in my own body. The coping skills I'd learned no longer worked for me."

Only with the tenacity and grit of an experienced warrior, Aaron rallied against painful injury, blindness and deafness to not only live, but to live fully. His partnership with Fidelco German Shepherd guide dog "Eyla" — made possible by the support of the American Council of Life Insurers — began in 2017 and has opened the door to new possibilities. For someone who was already running marathons, kayaking and climbing mountains after vision loss, this new standard for independence is quite extraordinary.

Extraordinary, too, is Aaron's ability to turn the most challenging time in his life into an

opportunity to gain strength by bringing together family and friends for a Thanksgiving feast.

"Cooking gave me that distraction to help take the focus off the pain that was going on, physical and otherwise. I had something to look forward to."

It was the Thanksgiving dessert that launched another career. Aaron's delicious handcrafted fudge became quite the buzz among his guests and he received requests for more. Not long after, E.O.D. Fudge was born — the brand name acronym standing for Extra Ordinary Delights and a nod to Aaron's service as an EOD technician.



Aaron's life today is anything but ordinary. With his wife and business partner, McKayla, E.O.D. Fudge is quickly surpassing Aaron's expectations for success. He is running a business, traveling to raise awareness for wounded veterans and imparting his passion for life with Eyla by his side. And, most importantly to Aaron, he is demonstrating a life of purpose for his young son, Cameron. 🐾



Aaron and his sighted guide participate in the 2018 ACLI Challenge 5K race in Washington, D.C. in May



Honoring Character and Resolve

Steve Matheson will be remembered with loving admiration for his passionate commitment to Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation and his endearing sense of humor.

Steve was Fidelco Guide Dogs' first non-founder Chairman and Director Emeritus. He, along with his wife Karen, were initially drawn to the organization as puppy raisers. This experience sparked a fondness for Fidelco Guide Dogs.

Steve's list of accomplishments belies his great humility. After graduation from the U.S. Naval Academy, Steve served aboard the aircraft carrier, USS Yorktown, and was honored in 1968 when the ship's crew picked up the returning Apollo 8 spacecraft, meeting astronauts Borman, Lovell and Anders. Steve later graduated from Harvard Business School and built a successful career in the Hartford insurance community. But none of these accomplishments surpassed the overwhelming pride he had for his family; his grandchildren were his greatest joy and he reveled in cheering them on,



Steve addresses the audience at Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation's Donor Appreciation event

both literally on the sports field and figuratively in life.

Fidelco Guide Dogs is indebted and forever grateful to Steve for his leadership, commitment and grace, from which we continue to draw inspiration. With support from Steve's family — his wife Karen and daughters Amy

and Julie — Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation established the Stephen H. Matheson Memorial Fund. Please donate today to further the charitable mission that captured Steve's heart. www.fidelco.org/pages/donation-form-steve-matheson



Driving the Mission Forward



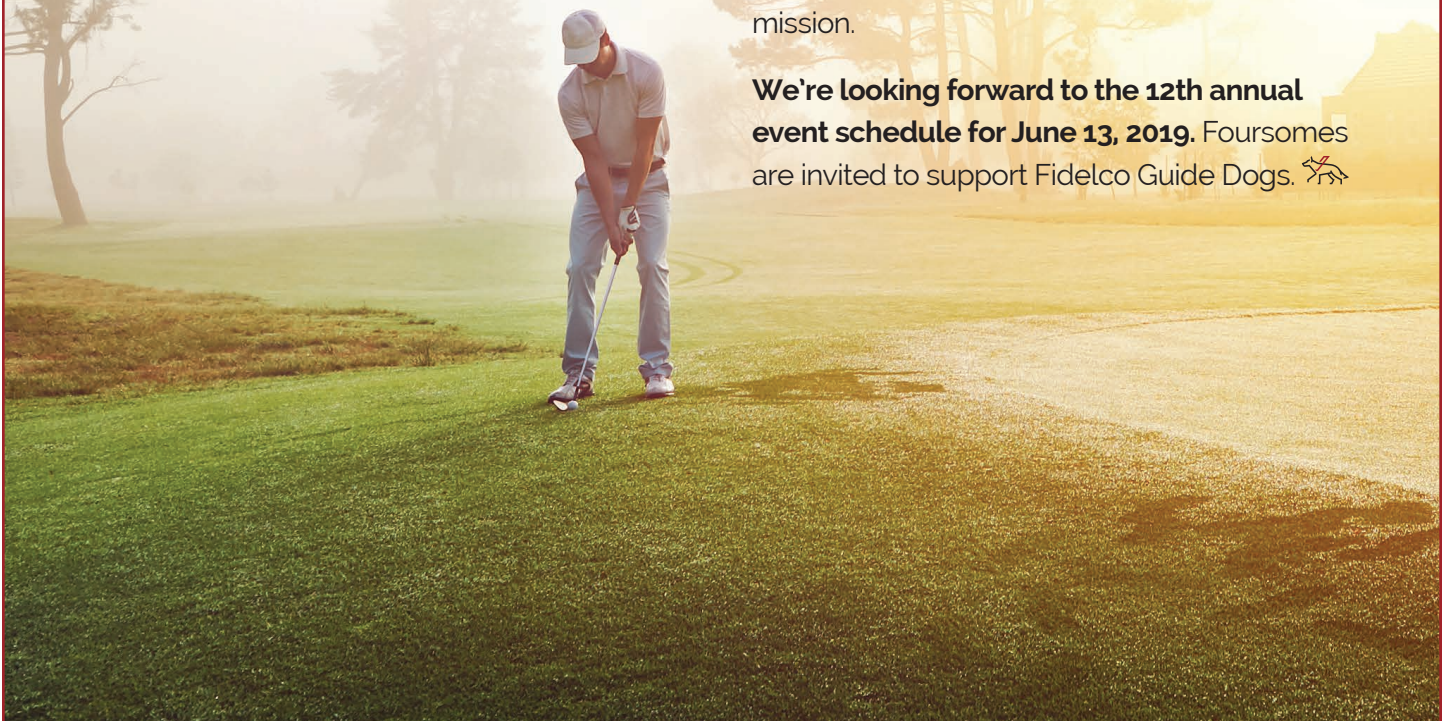
Steve takes a moment to cuddle with a future Fidelco German Shepherd guide dog

The exceptional partnership between Allied Printing Services Charitable Foundation and Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation — two organizations created and thriving in Connecticut — began more than a decade ago and continues to change the lives of our clients and many others.

Since 2008, Fidelco Guide Dogs has benefited from the Allied Charitable Foundation's annual golf tournament, which raises significant funding to ensure our clients achieve limitless potential.

This past June, the Foundation hosted its 11th Annual Golf Tournament at Tunxis Plantation Country Club. Fidelco Guide Dogs' foursome placed second in the tournament and were given the forum to again express our deep appreciation to Allied Printing's owners, the Sommers family, and all of their staff for their loyal support of our charitable guide dog mission.

We're looking forward to the 12th annual event schedule for June 13, 2019. Foursomes are invited to support Fidelco Guide Dogs. 



Volunteer Spirit

Clair was born prematurely at 25 weeks, weighing just one and a half pounds. Her tenacious spirit prevailed and today she is supporting Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation's mission as one of 350 passionate volunteers who make our work possible. By providing early training for our exceptional dogs and taking on administrative and event support, Clair is making a measurable, lasting difference.


Clair, who is visually impaired, first learned about Fidelco Guide Dogs last year while researching different nonprofits for volunteer opportunities. She was intrigued by our mission and soon found herself working with other volunteers, at the Eversource Hartford Marathon — one of the event's official, premier charities.

That early experience as part of our Fidelco Guide Dogs family prompted her to do even more. Clair is now a familiar face at the Bloomfield campus and kennel, greeting visitors with a warm and welcoming smile. Staff and visitors alike are charmed by Clair's magnetic personality, which permeates everything she does.



Clair poses with Fidelco guide dog puppy "Xeus"

"My favorite thing about Fidelco Guide Dogs is seeing the loving partnerships between clients and their guide dogs. I'm happy to be able to help."

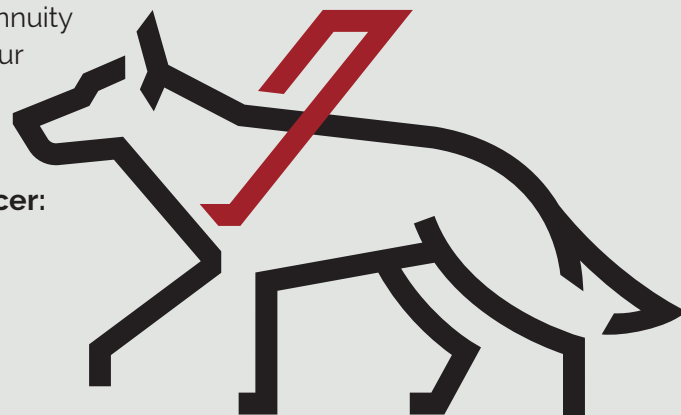
Clair and our other incredible volunteers strengthen our work in countless ways, but it is their sincere passion for helping others that makes them the heart and soul of Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation. 

Partners for Life — Estate and Charitable Gift Planning

A gift through your will or living trust will allow us to continue providing programs and services of unsurpassed quality to our clients who are blind. We offer additional charitable gift planning opportunities — from naming Fidelco Guide Dogs in your will to creating a charitable gift annuity or charitable remainder trust — that may help you to meet your financial goals while securing our future.

For more information about naming Fidelco in your will or estate plans, please contact our Major Gifts Officer:

Corianne Gagliardi at cgagliardi@fidelco.org or call 860.243.4045.



Stepping Up

When Doug Fuchs transitioned to a leadership role at Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation as Chief Operating Officer and Chief of Staff, he already carried with him a passion for our dogs and their important destinies. Doug shares,

"From the experience of pouring energy and love into raising 'Kato,' I've developed a deep appreciation for just how many people, and how much loving time and devotion, go into each and every future guide dog."

"My grandmother instilled in her entire family many virtues. The one that resonates most is the concept of 'paying it forward.' "

The first guide dog puppy Doug raised, Kato, is now partnered with a remarkable client. Doug is currently raising "Xeus," who is just a few months away from changing another life.

"My grandmother believed the best gift of all is the one you bestow upon another. By providing our clients with life-changing Fidelco guide dogs, our team does this every day." Prior to joining our organization, Doug recently retired after 30 years in



Doug and "Kato"

Law Enforcement, retiring as the Chief of Police for Redding, CT.

He began in the Housing Projects in Boston, MA, followed by time in four Connecticut police departments: Ridgefield,

Newtown, Farmington and Redding. Doug has served as an Adjunct Instructor of Criminal Justice for the past nine years at Western Connecticut State


(continued next page)

Doug Fuchs (continued from page 7)

University (WCSU) and has also served as President of the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association.

Doug received many awards for distinguished service in law enforcement, including: Exceptional Service Award, Police

Commissioner's Association of Connecticut's Distinguished Chief of the Year, The United States' Attorney Community Policing Award, Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence First One Hundred Men Award, Ribbon from the New York City Police

Department following 9/11 Response, Ribbon from the Newtown Police Department following the Sandy Hook Response, and Letter of Recognition from the President of the United States. 

Six Years Running

Following another hugely successful "Share the Love, Share the Vision" event last year, Suburban Subaru of Vernon, CT, again presented a check to Fidelco Guide Dogs for more than \$75,000.

We are honored to have been selected — for the sixth consecutive year — as Suburban Subaru's hometown charity for the 2018 Subaru of America's "Share the Love" event. This year, Suburban Subaru received the Love Promise Customer Commitment Award, which nationally recognizes Subaru retailers who demonstrate excellence in all areas of customer-focused performance.

From November 15, 2018 – January 2, 2019, when you buy or lease a new vehicle from Suburban Subaru, please designate Fidelco Guide Dogs to receive a \$250 donation from Subaru of America, Inc.

Peter Krause, President of Suburban Subaru comments, "The work this great organization does is epitomized by the experience of one of their military clients who shared that, because of his Fidelco guide dog, he can now take his daughter to the school bus stop and feel safe. 'Little things' like this make all the difference."

Subaru of America and Suburban Subaru's compassionate commitment to Fidelco Guide Dogs over the years is transforming lives, and we are deeply grateful for this exceptional partnership.



Holiday Gifts That Give Back

Visit Fidelco Guide Dogs' Bloomfield Campus store to purchase the perfect gifts! Shop our clothing, jewelry, calendars, cards, dog toys and more!

- A. Fidelco Guide Dogs candles
- B. Fidelco Guide Dogs wines
- C. Fidelco Guide Dogs special interest license plate



A

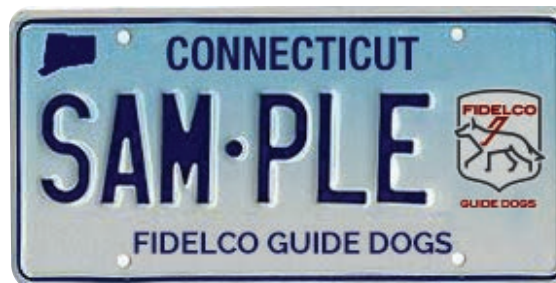


C



B

All items can be ordered at Fidelco.org



Honor your favorite dog, puppy or organization with a brick for Fidelco Guide Dogs' walkway or a garden stone to be displayed. Call 860.243.5200 to order yours.



Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation, Inc.

103 Vision Way
Bloomfield, CT 06002

Fidelco.org

Partners in ExceptionalSM

Please donate to the
Kazzi Fund for Puppy Care
today to support the almost
200 puppies born during
the past two years.



GUIDE DOGS



To donate, please visit:
fidelco.org/pages/donation-form-kazzi-fund-landing-page