

Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation, Inc.

103 Vision Way
Bloomfield, CT 06002

27 Cannon Road
Wilton, CT 06897

Fidelco.org

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Fidelco News

Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation

Fall 2021



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Over the past couple of months, Fidelco celebrated its 25th placement of a German Shepherd guide dog with a veteran. It is humbling as well as joyous to be able to provide a beautiful, highly intelligent, and hard-working partner for a person who has served.

My family includes many veterans. Their experiences and strength have helped all of us to better understand the meaning of "to serve" and to respect those who give so much to our country.

There are new puppies at Fidelco. Along with dogs in training, they're growing and rapidly becoming more curious and active. In a few weeks, they'll take all that energy to their Puppy Raiser families, and the cycle of socialization will begin again. We could not accomplish all we do without our incredible volunteers.

The third quarter of 2021 will see us focusing on increasing the number of dogs we place. Also, our aging facility will take a great deal of attention as repairs and updating are now critical requirements. I'm sure you're finding shortages and long lead times for equipment just as we are. I'm thankful for our resilient and determined staff; they always find a way to keep the dogs safe and thriving.

Please consider supporting Fidelco through volunteerism or financial contributions. Our new "Puppy Cam" is up and running for those who become monthly donors and there are many easy ways to help us on our website. Each Fidelco guide dog is provided free of charge to our clients and despite the challenges of the pandemic, we are determined to continue to fulfill our mission.

Take care and be safe and healthy,

Karen C. Tripp

Chief Executive Officer



Jamie,
Haddie,
and family

"Just because I'm blind doesn't mean I can't do everything I want to do." Fidelco client Jamie Larson lives by these words every day.

In 2018, through a generous grant from the Newman's Own Foundation, Fidelco placed guide dog "Haddie" with Jamie, and the two have been inseparable ever since.

Jamie's connection to the military runs deep. Her father served in the Army in World War II, and six of Jamie's siblings and many in-laws, nieces and nephews served or are currently serving. She says, "The military is a way of life for my family, and we do everything we can to support our service men and women."

More than sixty years of placing guide dogs with our clients at Fidelco has taught us that blindness affects not only the individual, but also entire families and communities. We've heard countless stories from clients' family members describing

how their loved one's partnership with their Fidelco guide dog provides, above all, peace of mind. A client recently recounted that her parents allowed her to travel to Italy for a semester only because she was working well with her new Fidelco guide dog.

Jamie's path to Fidelco was five decades in the making; she grew up with and loved German Shepherd Dogs. When she began to lose her vision due to a series of health issues, she hoped she would one day have a German Shepherd guide dog. But it took some time for Jamie to admit she needed help. "For the first five years I was blind, I lived in denial," she remembers. "I found myself at home more and more." When Jamie was introduced to Lighthouse for the Blind — an organization that provides rehabilitation services for people with vision loss — she began imagining a life beyond blindness. It was also there that Jamie learned about the different guide dog programs around the country.

A meticulous person by nature, Jamie researched the accredited U.S. guide dog organizations extensively and knew she wanted to apply to Fidelco. However, due to timing and other logistics, Jamie's first guide dog came to her from another guide dog organization. With newfound confidence as a guide dog handler, she began working toward earning her college degree.


“The model Fidelco uses is so perfect. It's not only easier for the individual, but it makes the partnership more successful.”

Fidelco Trainer/Instructor Peter Nowicki traveled to Jamie's home in Texas in July of 2018. "I was nervous about training in the Texas heat, but Pete was so accommodating. We worked around the heat and my busy schedule and trained mostly at the college I was attending. Being able to work with Haddie on my actual college campus with Pete made it as smooth a transition as possible. This was another big draw when I applied to Fidelco — not having to take weeks out of my life to train. The model Fidelco uses is so perfect. It's not only easier for the individual, but it makes the partnership more successful."

Today, Jamie and Haddie are a familiar sight in their community. "On the rare occasion I'm out alone, everyone asks, 'Where is Haddie?' The companionship I have with her is as important as her keeping me safe."

With the help of charitable organizations like the Newman's Own Foundation, Fidelco places guide dogs with many family members



of military personnel and veterans, just like Jamie. Serving those who serve will always be a very important part of the work we do. 



Join The Shepherd Club

When you join The Shepherd Club by becoming a monthly donor, you are helping to ensure the mission of Fidelco continues. Your commitment today means that the cycle of breeding, training, and placing Fidelco guide dogs never stops.

As a Shepherd Club member, you'll enjoy:

- Exclusive access to live footage of puppies in Fidelco's Pup House via the "Puppy Cam."
- Quarterly updates detailing how you are making a difference.
- Recognition in *FidelcoNews*, our widely distributed newsletter.

To learn more about how you can become part of The Shepherd Club "pack," contact:
Mark McGrath, Philanthropic Relationship Director
e: mmcgrath@fidelco.org | t: 959.282.2181



Scan to visit
The Shepherd Club's
Wall of Monthly Donors.




Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation and the AKC Museum of the Dog have teamed up to showcase the German Shepherd Dog and how this special breed changes the lives of people who are blind.

During the past several months, the training staff at Fidelco started thinking about art and music as training tools for our future guide dogs. Music, specifically jazz, which seems to be the favorite genre of Fidelco dogs, is played in the kennels each evening. Observing how the dogs play in sprinklers and wading pools gave us the idea to give them non-toxic paint to play with.

And so, "Art of the Dog" — an inaugural event at the AKC Museum of the Dog — was born! We challenged staff to teach young dogs who had just joined the training program to paint with paws and brushes. We set up the puppies to roll in paint and shake it off onto a canvas on the floor. We rolled out a floor keyboard and had the dogs prance and run across it. The "Art of

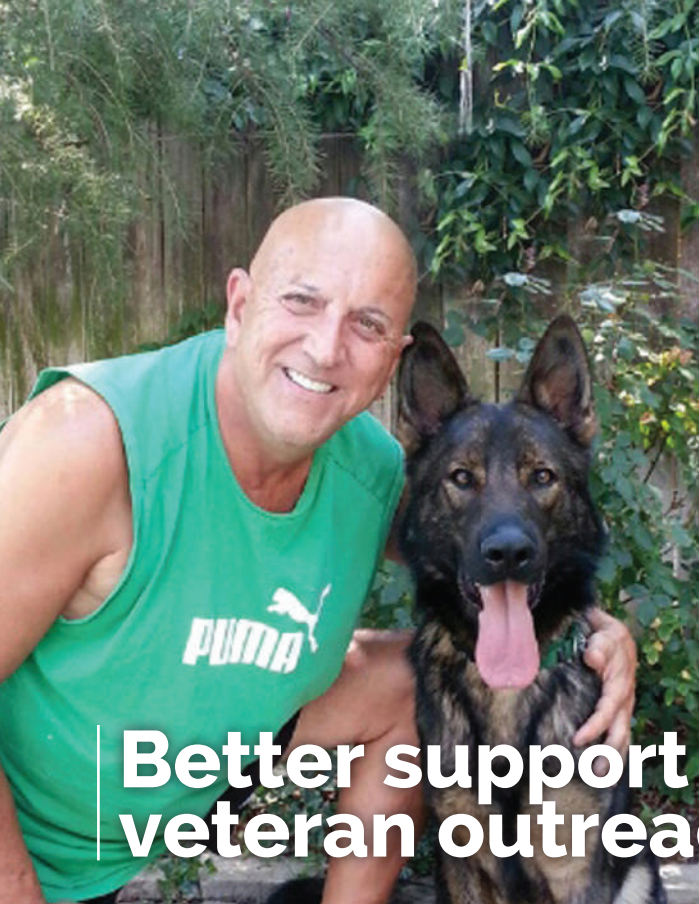
the Dog" event featured a live auction of original pieces "painted" by Fidelco guide dogs under the guidance of Fidelco trainers.

We now have a great set of training tools and a great source of laughter and enjoyment for everyone. The videos of the dogs creating art and music can be hilarious, and what we're seeing is highly intelligent, hard-working dogs adapt to new experiences and give their full attention to succeed.

All proceeds from the event supported Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation and AKC Museum of the Dog, both 501 (c)(3) non-profit organizations. 



Scan to learn more about
the Fidelco/AKC Museum of
the Dog Collaboration.



Better support through veteran outreach

Since its establishment as a guide dog breeding and training organization, Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation has been placing extraordinary guide dogs with veterans. These life-changing guide dog partnerships have provided greater independence, self-confidence, and mobility. Clients include those sustaining vision loss from their service and veterans experiencing vision loss from other conditions.

Fidelco has always been committed to strengthening relationships with veterans, but we are now ramping up our efforts. We are implementing outreach that focuses on working with our current veteran clients and connecting with potential veteran clients in a true partnership. This exchange of information and relationship building will strengthen our services and raise awareness now and in the future.

Spearheading the veterans outreach initiative is Gretchen Fisher Orr, Supervisor of Admission Services and Client Services, and a longtime member of the Fidelco team. With dual

certification as a Guide Dog Instructor and an Orientation and Mobility Instructor, Gretchen is uniquely qualified to lead the effort. Being the spouse of a veteran also enhances her insight into veterans' general needs and ways to access the country's complex veterans' service resources.

The initiative to enhance and increase veteran outreach includes three major activities:

- Obtaining existing veteran client feedback
- Connecting with Visual Impairment Services Team (VIST) Coordinators at Veterans' Administration facilities throughout the country
- Attending conferences for vision services professionals and those for and by the blind and visually impaired community


All our veteran clients are in the process of being surveyed for feedback about the services provided to them and if they have suggestions for

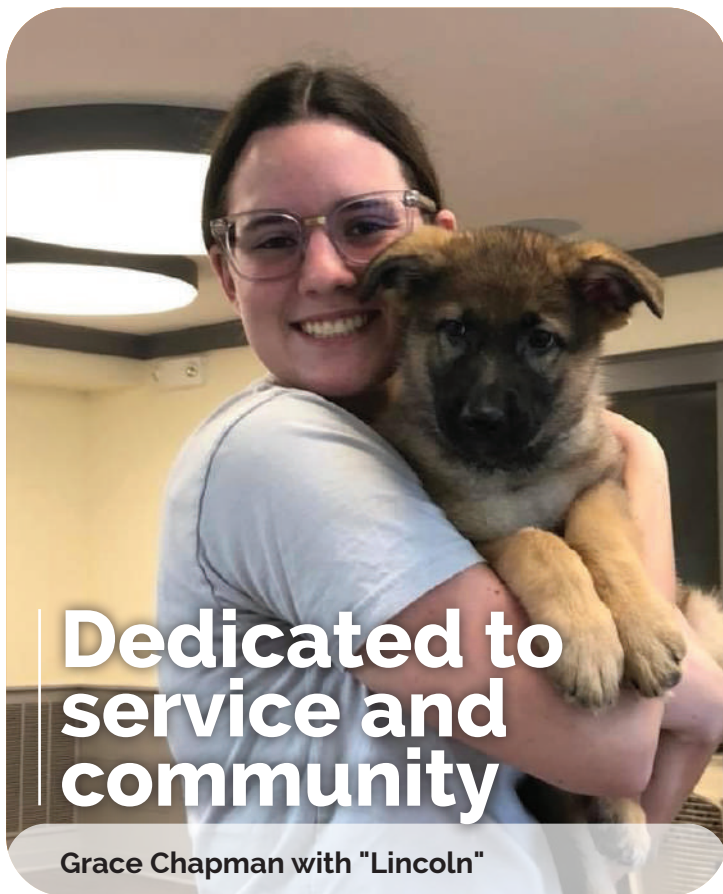
“ The veterans outreach initiative demonstrates Fidelco’s continued commitment to seek out and match blinded veterans with our outstanding Fidelco guide dogs. ”

enhancing these services. Clients will also be asked how they connect with other blind veterans and the general veteran community. Suggestions on how we can access these networks will also be requested. Because the blind veterans' community has its own unique resource network which may vary geographically, the information gleaned from our veteran clients will be extremely helpful to our efforts.

VIST Coordinators in federal Veterans' Administration facilities (there are multiple facilities in larger states) will initially be contacted by phone, to be followed up with in-person visits when safe to do so. In the past, Gretchen organized the effort to reach out to the coordinators, initially by phone and email. After the initial contact, information packets were provided to the coordinators; these packets are again being updated to reflect the most recent information about Fidelco. We are hopeful that re-establishing our relationship with the coordinators will yield potential veteran client candidates.

Because of her dual instructor certifications, Gretchen will attend conferences for vision services professionals. These conferences will provide additional opportunities to network and access information about potential clients. Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AERBVI) is one of the prominent professional organizations providing support, networking, and professional development opportunities to individuals working with the blind and visually impaired. AERBVI is an international organization with regional and state chapters in the U.S.

When asked about the long-term impact of the outreach initiative, Gretchen enthusiastically replied, "The benefit of this outreach effort is to learn, from the veterans' perspective, more about current opportunities to connect with veterans who may benefit from a guide dog. It also provides Fidelco with the opportunity to learn how to better serve our veteran guide dog users." The veterans outreach initiative demonstrates Fidelco's continued commitment to seek out and match blinded veterans with our outstanding Fidelco guide dogs. 



Dedicated to service and community

Grace Chapman with "Lincoln"

Volunteer Puppy Raisers generously give their time, patience, and care to provide young pups with the socialization and essential skills that prepare them for the next phase of their guide dog journey. Puppy Raiser families open their homes and hearts to raise a puppy that will one day be a trusted guide dog partner for a person who is blind.

For Susan and Ken Chapman, dedication to service and community is woven into the fabric of their lives. The Chapmans have raised two puppies for Fidelco, "Lincoln" and "Etta." Susan has a long record of service to her community. She is a former First Selectman (Mayor) of New Fairfield, Connecticut, and her years of community involvement include advocating for land conservation and preservation, and volunteering with the local public schools and food pantry.

Ken Chapman is a financial professional and U.S. Army veteran. A graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, Ken served as

a Captain in the U.S. Army. In addition to Ken's volunteer work as a Puppy Raiser, he also served as Vice Chairman of the New Fairfield Board of Education and as a Colonel, pilot, and former Connecticut Wing Commander for the Civil Air Patrol. The Chapmans raised their three children in Connecticut. Susan and Ken recently relocated to North Carolina, where their son is a U.S. Army Captain stationed at Fort Bragg.

Susan first learned about Fidelco while attending a community event in Fairfield County, Connecticut. When she noticed a German Shepherd puppy curled up at its Puppy Raiser's feet, Susan was intrigued. The Chapman family previously had two pet German Shepherd Dogs. Their beloved pets had passed away, and the family was not ready for the long-term commitment of getting another dog. After learning more about the Fidelco mission, Susan thought, "I would love to raise a puppy for Fidelco; what a great thing to do." The following summer while attending a local street fair, the Chapmans saw a Fidelco tent and knew the time was right to apply to become Puppy Raisers.

One of the reasons Susan and Ken made the decision to become Puppy Raisers was that they were able — and encouraged — to take the puppy they were raising wherever they went as part of their work, volunteer, and family responsibilities and activities. Each puppy became a popular member of the Chapmans' community, accompanying them to many events

“ You know you have raised a puppy that will go on to do great things. When you see how much a guide dog can change someone's life for the better, it is worth it. ”

and activities and serving as ambassadors helping to spread awareness. Through these real-world settings and experiences, the pups were exposed to a variety of places, people, animals, sights, and sounds — receiving important enrichment and socialization training.

The Chapmans recently reflected on the experience of watching a puppy grow and learn, followed by the mix of emotions when it is time for the young dog to leave the Puppy Raiser's home to begin formal guide training. Susan and Ken had the opportunity to observe Lincoln successfully complete his "Hartford Walk" — navigating a route in Hartford, Connecticut as the final test of a future guide dog's ability to safely lead a person who is blind. At the end of the walk, the Chapmans were united with Lincoln one more time before he moved on to complete his advanced training and ultimately be placed with a person who is blind. Susan shared that people say to her that it must be sad to say goodbye to a puppy you have raised; and she acknowledged, "We miss them so much." She added, "But it is ok, because you know you have raised a puppy that

will go on to do great things. When you see how much a guide dog can change someone's life for the better, it is worth it."

Volunteers like the Chapmans are integral and invaluable members of the Fidelco family. From raising and providing socialization to future guide dogs, to assisting with community outreach and events, and in countless other ways, volunteers make a lasting difference to ensure there will always be Fidelco guide dog partners leading the way. 



Client Stories Podcast

Through "Client Stories" — our monthly podcast series in partnership with iHeart Radio — listeners learn about the profound impact guide dogs have on the lives of their human partners. Hear Fidelco clients talk about a wide range of topics including their families, professions, the challenges of COVID, and daily life with their guide dogs.



“ With a Fidelco guide dog, you just seamlessly breeze through crowds of people with your shoulders back and your head held high. ”

- Lynn M.



Vision Society — Planned Giving

When you join Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation's **Vision Society** by pledging to make a legacy gift, you are ensuring our life-changing mission continues. Your gift can also provide measurable financial benefits to you and your loved ones.

There are many ways to become part of our future by naming Fidelco in your will or creating a charitable gift annuity or charitable remainder trust.

To make the process easier, we've partnered with FreeWill, an online tool to help you write your legal will in 20 minutes, for free. Creating a will is one of the most impactful ways to care for the people and causes you love. If you choose, you can include a gift to Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation. Visit freewill.com to get started today.

Legacy gifts may reduce estate tax and can be a percentage of your estate or a particular dollar amount. Please be sure to speak with your tax professional. To learn more about how your legacy gift can make a lasting impact, please visit: <https://fidelco.org/ways-to-give/planned-giving/>



Brad Snyder Update

Hear an update from Fidelco client Brad Snyder as he talks about the past year. Brad is a retired U.S. Navy Lieutenant and a U.S. Paralympic Athlete who most recently won a gold medal in the men's triathlon in the 2021 Paralympic Games in Tokyo. He is currently pursuing his Ph.D. degree at Princeton University.



Scan to watch
Brad's Video.



OCTOBERFEST

FIDELCO'S MONTH OF GIVING

Virtual Walk-Run-Ride • Maple Grove Motorcycle Ride
Allied Golf Tournament • Westport Dog Festival
Lions Bowling Tournament

<https://fidelco.org/octoberfest/>