

Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation, Inc.

103 Vision Way
Bloomfield, CT 06002

27 Cannon Road
Wilton, CT 06897

Fidelco.org

**Their success
starts with you.**

Help create partnerships
that transform lives.

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Spring 2022

FidelcoNews

Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation



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Profound appreciation for our volunteers

Earlier this month I was in the Pup House with Fidelco staff and volunteers, watching ten 7-week-old puppies running riot over the socialization room. It's filled with toys and distractions, different floor surfaces and levels—all meant to help the pups become comfortable in many environments. Two were almost asleep on a raised platform, overseeing the others who were chasing, chewing, and stalking toys and each other. All the staff and volunteers were focused on helping the pups to learn, socialize, and be very well prepared for their futures as guide dogs for our remarkable clients who are blind.

In another building, puppy testing was underway, to evaluate the abilities of each dog and to determine which would be best suited to each of our Volunteer Puppy Raisers. For example, one little girl pup was reluctant to climb stairs—young pups haven't quite developed their muscles yet—so she will be matched with a family whose house has stairs. She'll be climbing like a pro in no time. Another pup was not at all happy with the sound of a vacuum cleaner, so he'll be gently coached until he's confident with sudden, loud noises.

This is the level of care and evaluation that begins at birth for each Fidelco German Shepherd Dog. And each step of the way is helped by our dedicated volunteers who work with staff. Whether on-site or in the homes of our puppy raising families, we could not provide the dogs of Fidelco without our incredible volunteers.

We may be getting closer to a time when we can welcome all of our volunteers back to the Bloomfield campus. We have to be careful and vigilant and flexible, of course. To see people and dogs and all their energy together again at our headquarters is like imagining the best things in life.

We're preparing to have our Dog Days of Summer Children's Program in-person for the first time in over two years. We'll keep you informed as things in progress for on-site volunteer opportunities. Please visit our website to learn more about volunteering or to make a donation to ensure our mission continues.

Please stay well and safe!

Karen C. Tripp
Chief Executive Officer



Teamwork: Marién and "Keela"

Marién and "Keela"

Marién Hornyak warmly greets customers at her business, The Kitchenette. The Kitchenette is a vibrant shop located among the galleries, restaurants, and stores of downtown Frederick, Maryland. The cheerful storefront has a sign above the door in the shape of a cutting board, and inside, it offers a wide selection of cookware and bakeware, unique gadgets, and kitchen accessories. Marién opened her business in 2016, and it has become a well-loved destination for visitors and loyal customers. For the past year, working by Marién's side is her Fidelco guide dog, "Keela."

Keela is Marién's first guide dog. Marién was born with congenital glaucoma and has been legally blind since birth. She was a white-cane user for many years and has always been active, mobile, and independent. Marién and her husband, Tom, have a 17-year-old son and 21-year-old daughter. Marién is involved in her local community, serving on city advisory committees to advocate for accessibility and improved safety and quality of life for people with disabilities.

Marién holds a bachelor's degree in athletic training and a master's degree in sports management. Before becoming the owner and manager of The Kitchenette, she worked as a bilingual liaison at an area high school.

Marién had always wanted a guide dog but had a special needs dog as a pet at home and could not consider getting another dog during that time. More recently, Marién's husband's job responsibilities changed, requiring him to travel more frequently for work. At that point, she decided the time was right to apply for a Fidelco guide dog.

Marién knew she wanted a German Shepherd guide dog and the in-home training experience integral to Fidelco's In-Community Placement model.



**One of the reasons
I chose Fidelco is they
come to you and train you
in your own environment.**

When Fidelco placement specialist, Chris Eastwood, brought Keela to Marién's home on the first day of placement training, the new team went to work right away—developing trust and confidence together. Marién shares, "The weeks

of placement training were overwhelming, but life-changing. It was wonderful. We went to my church, grocery store, post office, and downtown. We visited the vet and pet store. We took the metro to Washington, DC. And it made all the difference."

Marién describes her appreciation for the long-term support Fidelco provides to all its clients. "Fidelco doesn't just give you a guide dog and say, 'Here you go.' They provide annual checkups, and they check in with you. Because things do come up, and you want their reassurance that you are doing the best for yourself and the dog."

In the year since Marién received Keela as her guide dog, the team has covered many miles together. They have traveled by plane, train, boat, bus, and car. Marién is an avid baseball fan, and she and Keela have attended games at Wrigley Field in Chicago and at Nationals Park in Washington, DC.

Marién is candid about the adjustments to her daily life and routine since receiving her guide dog. "You have to get up a little earlier in the day to make sure all her basic needs are taken care of so that she is ready to work. She works every single day." Marién and Keela walk the two and a half miles from Marién's house to the shop, and back home. On Mondays, when the shop is closed, Keela accompanies Marién on errands and to appointments. "She's a very busy dog."

"I have always been independent," Marién shares. "Having a guide dog for me brings a sense of security, stability, and reassurance. I know that when my husband travels,




Marién and "Keela"

“
Having a guide dog for me brings a sense of security, stability, and reassurance. I know that when my husband travels, I can get home safely, even when it's dark.”

I can get home safely, even when it's dark. We have a lot of construction in the area and sidewalks being upgraded, so Keela's been able to get me through. I can look straight ahead

and not have to worry as much about what's underfoot. I feel safe. Keela has guided me everywhere I have needed to go."

"I would like to acknowledge the Puppy Raisers and trainers who helped prepare Keela for placement. The amount of work and countless hours that went into training Keela to be such a perfect match for my lifestyle shows." 

The Shepherd Club: Join our pack!

When you become a monthly donor, you also become a member of Fidelco's Shepherd Club! Your support in any amount helps to ensure Fidelco's sustainability and grants you access to special member perks such as:

- Exclusive access to live footage of puppies in Fidelco's Pup House
- Quarterly updates detailing how your support makes difference
- Recognition in this widely distributed semiannual publication, *FidelcoNews*

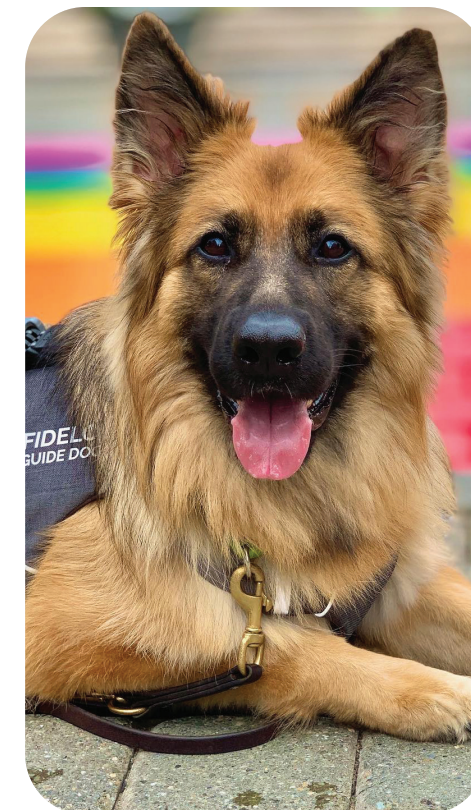
Whether it's \$10, \$100, or more, your monthly support makes incredible guide dog partnerships like those you've read about in this newsletter possible.

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.



A Volunteer Story: Adele and Ed Banas

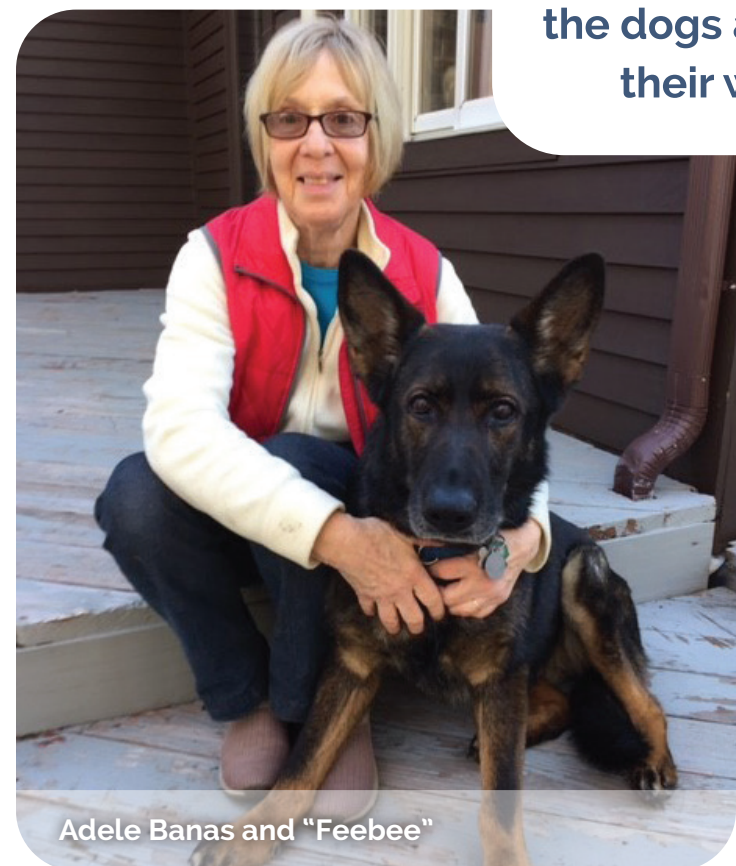
Ed and Adele Banas with "Vader"

Volunteer Puppy Raisers play a vital role in the development of Fidelco guide dogs. Puppy Raisers welcome 8-week-old puppies into their homes and spend over a year providing loving care, early training, and socialization. Puppy Raiser families expose the pups to diverse experiences and surroundings, so that when the pups are 16 to 18 months old, they are ready for formal training on their path to becoming guide dog partners for people who are blind.

Adele and Ed Banas have a 44-year history of dedicated involvement with Fidelco. In 1977, the Banas family was interested in getting a German Shepherd Dog as a pet. They had read about Fidelco Co-Founder Roberta Kaman's innovative and respected training techniques and thought a Fidelco German Shepherd would be a good fit for their family. Adele, Ed, and their son picked up their first German Shepherd Dog from Robbie and Charlie Kaman.

At that time, the Kamans were breeding German Shepherds in their home kennel, placing them with Puppy Raisers, and donating them to other guide dog schools for training. Adele remembers the Kamans' kitchen served as the "pup house" before Fidelco's breeding and training facility was built in Bloomfield.

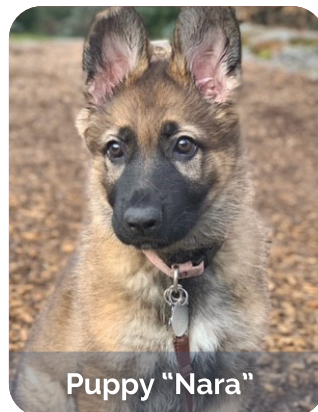
Since 2004, Adele and Ed have been raising puppies for Fidelco; and they have also adopted Fidelco career-change dogs as pets. "Robbie Kaman introduced us to the Volunteer Puppy Raiser program. She described the time commitment, the weekly classes, and Fidelco's philosophy and culture of community. We knew immediately it was something we wanted to be a part of. Ed and I are both teachers (now retired), and we love German Shepherd Dogs. As soon as we



Adele Banas and "Feebee"

retired, we became Volunteer Puppy Raisers—and we're still at it, eleven dogs later."


Adele and Ed have raised Fidelco German Shepherd puppies "Joy," "Lara," "Ivy," "Iggy," "Colin," "Spenser," "Gaia," "Feebee," "Wookie," and "Vader." They are currently raising "Nara." Adele says, "Each pup has a different personality and different quirks. We've developed a lot of patience."



Puppy "Nara"

Words can't describe how wonderful it's been to share stories, compare notes, and hear how serious the dogs are about their work."

When Adele and Ed take puppies out into local neighborhoods, stores, parks, and other settings, they experience a deep sense of community. "Going out and about with the pups once they have earned their red vests has given us an opportunity to meet a variety of people. We've even convinced some to become Puppy Raisers! We have made lifelong friends with other Puppy Raiser families, trainers, and many people we've met in the community."

"The most rewarding part of being a Puppy Raiser for us is to watch a couch-chewing, counter-surfing, yipping puppy grow into a self-assured and focused working dog," Adele shares. "The icing on the cake has been when we hear from Fidelco clients who have received guide dogs who were puppies we raised. Words can't describe how wonderful it's been to share stories, compare notes, and hear how serious the dogs are about their work." 

Client Stories: Snapshots

Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation celebrates the diversity of our clients from across North America. Despite varied life experiences, careers, and interests, all lead active and fulfilling lives with their guide dog partners.

Meet Esther, Paul, and Laura.



Esther and "Zion"

Born in Kyiv, Ukraine, Esther Berman, who is totally blind, emigrated to Canada with her family when she was six years old. She lives in downtown Ottawa with her successor Fidelco guide dog, "Zion," whom she describes as a "magnificent animal full of joy and life."

Esther graduated from the University of Ottawa in 2010. She worked at Health Canada (a federal department) as part of a co-op program while in college and was then employed there until 2017. She is now an Analyst for the Canadian Coast Guard researching, planning, and reporting on priorities for the Coast Guard based on government mandates. Esther also serves as Co-Chair of the Coast Guard's Accessibility Network and was recently honored as a 2021 Canadian Women in Defense "Emergent Leader."

Esther loves to be active, especially outdoors, and Zion is almost always right there by her side. She horseback rides weekly in an arena where Zion delights in seeing the horses, and in the

summer, she waterskis after Zion takes a swim. Zion is happiest when active, so Esther takes him on long walks along nearby canals, rivers, and trails she discovered while under Covid lockdown. She describes Zion as the perfect dog to have while quarantining, because he pushed her to be outdoors and explore the natural spaces within the city. She describes Zion as her "cool partner" who always takes his guide dog work confidently and seriously, but also shows his love for her in subtle ways when not working. Esther says, "He only has eyes for me and that makes me feel very loved!"

Paul Allen credits "Cozmo," his Fidelco guide dog partner since 2013, and his prior guides for enriching his life. Paul is originally from Connecticut and now lives in Baltimore with his wife, Lisa.



Paul and "Cozmo"

Paul has "worn many hats" during his working career. His career began as a clinical psychotherapist in the mid-1970s and continued until 1995. For the next five years, Paul was a stay-at-home dad caring for his teenaged children and writing fantasy and science-fiction short stories.

While he excelled in his second career as a published and award-winning writer, Paul recognized it was not financially sustainable to continue in that field. He changed careers and became a medical massage therapist in Massachusetts while Lisa worked in management positions at local hospitals. In 2014, Paul and Lisa moved to Baltimore when Lisa was hired at The Johns Hopkins Hospital, and Paul began his current career in finance.

Love Me More Dog Treats

- 2 cups of whole wheat flour
- 1 cup of unsweetened applesauce
- ½ cup of peanut butter*
- 2 tbsp. of beet powder
- 1 tbsp. chia seeds

Frosting

- Plain Greek yogurt
- Beet powder
- Bee pollen granules



Mix ingredients in a large bowl, flour surface and roll out the dough, cut out heart shapes using cookie cutter, bake at 350° for 15-20 minutes. Let cool, decorate with Greek yogurt sprinkled with beet powder and bee pollen granules.

*use dog-safe peanut butter that contains NO xylitol

Paul reads, hikes, and travels to visit family and places throughout the world. Cozmo often accompanies him and is an excellent traveler. Cozmo gives him the independence to walk up Baltimore's historic Federal Hill or meet with clients. Once Paul's clients witness the

interactions between him and Cozmo, any preconceived ideas they have about people who are blind fall away. "I am a totally capable, fully functional, prosperous individual," says Paul, "who just happens to be blind and living life to the fullest."



Laura and "Lyla"


Pennsylvania resident Laura Judy "always tries to focus on the positives." She is married with two children, a 14-year-old son and a 12-year-old daughter.

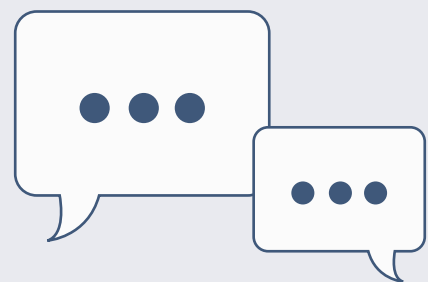
Laura graduated with a degree in biology, and her career has continued to reflect this interest. She partnered with "Lyla," her second Fidelco guide dog, in 2021 and describes her as "extremely dedicated and loyal."

Laura is a Quality Assurance Auditor for a biotech company that develops oncology drugs and is responsible for ensuring all company procedures adhere to FDA guidelines. She was previously employed at a biotech company for many years

as Principal Specialist Quality Compliance for drug and surgical device development and also helped train new employees.

While working from home during the pandemic, Laura is determined to keep Lyla active. The team goes for daily walks, and Lyla accompanies Laura to watch her children's frequent after-school activities. When taking the bus or Uber to appointments or the gym, Lyla is her devoted partner.

Because of the pandemic, Laura hasn't been able to do the volunteer work with Lyla that she loves—visiting schools, eldercare facilities, and nonprofit organizations and explaining and demonstrating the work of guide dogs. She reflects that when she needed help, people helped her, and it's now her turn to reciprocate through her volunteer work. Laura says that her Fidelco guide dog partnerships have "changed my life for the better." 



In Their Own Words: Fidelco Client Stories Podcast

Get to know Fidelco's remarkable clients by listening to our monthly podcast series, Client Stories. iHeart Radio's Renee DiNino speaks candidly with Fidelco guide dog users about everything from the ways having a guide dog has enhanced their lives to their varied interests, occupations, and dreams.




To listen to the current podcast and to hear inspiring past recordings, scan the QR code.

Robinson Foundation

"We are so glad to be able to be a part of helping people live more independently. Fidelco is changing lives, and we're very proud to support the mission," says Tiffany Robinson-Cousar, Executive Director of the Robinson Foundation.

The Robinson Foundation was established in 2016 with a singular but encompassing goal: to enrich communities by helping to create "profound good."

The Foundation's significant financial support over the last three years has powerfully transformed the lives of seven Fidelco clients. With the average partnership lasting a decade, the Foundation's gifts represent approximately 70 years of safety, confidence, and independence.


Support from the Robinson Foundation—along with that of other foundations—makes our work possible now and in the future, and we are deeply grateful. 

The Vision Society: Make a Lasting, Meaningful Difference

Pledging to make a legacy gift is one of the most significant ways you can help to guarantee Fidelco's long-term sustainability while providing measurable financial benefits to you and your loved ones.

Your legacy can become part of Fidelco's future when you name us in your will, create a charitable gift annuity or charitable remainder trust.

To make things 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, scan the QR code.

DOG DAYS OF SUMMER

Children's Program



EARLY
REGISTRATION

\$255

BEFORE
MAY 15TH

FIDELCO'S Dog Days of Summer

This popular summer program teaches children about Fidelco German Shepherd guide dogs & the training process from a puppy to a guide dog. They also learn about the experiences of people who are blind and the positive impact a guide dog has on their lives.



For ages 8-11

Weeklong, half-day sessions.



Educational

Children learn about blindness, guide dogs, and other working types of dogs.



Hands on dog experience

Children will interact with German Shepherd guide dogs and learn how to care for them.



REGISTER TODAY!

fidelco.org/dogdays2022



Pupdate: Alice!

It takes a village to raise a puppy! Adorable Fidelco pup "Alice" needed a little extra care as she began her journey.

At 8 weeks old, Alice underwent surgery to correct an anatomical issue that made it difficult for her to eat properly.

Alice must eat in an upright position for a period of time as she recovers. To solve this logistical challenge, a dedicated Fidelco volunteer made Alice a special, one-of-a-kind chair. This labor of love is yet another example of Fidelco volunteers and staff doing whatever it takes for Fidelco dogs at every stage of their lives! 🐾

SAVE THE DATE

OCTOBERFEST

OCTOBER 22, 2022
Join us in person for a day of family fun including food, puppies, guide dog demos, blindfold walks, and more!
fidelco.org/octoberfest22

Last minute news:

Guide dog users are being helped to cross the border from Ukraine by members of the International Guide Dog Federation. Fidelco is a proud member of this organization that sets the standard for excellence in all we do.