

Fall 2022

FidelcoNews

Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation



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Happy Autumn to all. It's been a good summer with new puppies and many more placements of guide dogs with their life partners. The training staff started the days much earlier to avoid the worst of the heat, and the dogs spent a lot of time playing in children's wading pools (which is hilarious to watch!).

With this edition, we're telling the story of "Evrest," a Fidelco guide dog, raised by the Furey family and now placed with her life partner near Boston. Evrest was born on March 2, 2020, along with seven brothers and sisters. Staff was there 24/7 to ensure she was nurtured and able to thrive. At three weeks old, she was playing in the Pup House being introduced to lights, sounds, and textures and stairs and hills. Over the next five weeks, Evrest grew to 12 pounds, chasing the other pups, and learning every day. The Furey family took her home at eight weeks. After puppy classes and much love and training, she came back to Fidelco at 16 months to complete her formal training as a guide dog for a person who is blind. And now, she is guiding Lillian, providing safety and independence along with incredible love and companionship.

Fidelco guide dogs are cared for by hundreds of people throughout their lives. Long before they are born, special care is being taken to ensure their health and well-being. During their working lives, Fidelco staff is always available and when they retire, loving homes are always provided if needed.

Like friends, we all remember each Fidelco German Shepherd Dog we've met. They're all individuals, surrounded by people who recognize their unique gifts.

Enjoy the Evrest story and please help us to continue our mission.

Warm regards,

Karen C. Tripp
Chief Executive Officer



Volunteer Puppy Raisers: The Furey Family

The Furey family with "Evrest"

Fidelco's incredible community of Volunteer Puppy Raisers provide a loving environment, early training, and socialization to our pups. When puppies return to Fidelco's campus for formal guide training at about 16 months old, they have a strong foundation of skills and socialization.

Evie and Mike Furey say puppy raising has worked for their family, in large part because of Fidelco staff and volunteers ready to lend a helping hand. "Fidelco's trainers have been so accommodating. When there have been any special questions or issues, they have come to our house. If we need to take time away to visit family or friends, there are volunteer puppy sitters available to look after the pup," Evie shares.

Evie is a Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) and a Certified Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Specialist. She works with children and young

adults, from birth to age 22, and teaches children who plan to have a guide dog when they are older. In 2020, the Fureys decided the time was right to become Puppy Raisers for Fidelco.

The Fureys received Fidelco pup, "Evrest," in May 2020. Fourteen months later, Evrest was ready for her formal guide training. Without skipping a beat, a few days later the Fureys received pup "Scooby." Throughout their time as Puppy Raisers, Mike and Evie have shared the experience in ways that benefit others.

As a TVI with the Children's Services Program of the State of Connecticut Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind, Evie travels to students' homes and classrooms. In 2020, when schools shifted to remote learning, one of her students was struggling with distance learning. Evie recalls introducing her student to Evrest. "At first, she didn't really like dogs. But Evrest was so sweet and Fidelco dogs are so special, the student really connected with the pup and Evrest helped calm her. She still asks about Evrest and says she would like to have a guide dog when she is older."



Scooby's supportive of students. If a student is in my office and upset about something, Scooby lies at their feet. It tends to do the trick to help them feel better."


Mike is a Counselor at Canton High School in Connecticut. He has brought puppy raising into his school community—creating valuable socialization and training opportunities for Evrest and Scooby and building positive connections for students and staff. "During morning greetings," Mike says, "Scooby and I say 'hi' to everyone who walks into school. It's been awesome. His presence helps both students and staff. They love starting their day greeting Scooby, walking him during study hall, or just hanging out with him."

Mike cites the mental health benefits of having a pup in the high school halls and in his office.

"Scooby's supportive of students. If a student is in my office and upset about something, Scooby lies at their feet. It tends to do the trick to help them feel better."

Two of Evrest and Scooby's biggest fans are the Fureys' children: Max, age 7, and Millie, age 5. "They love hanging out with the dogs," shares Evie. Max and Millie came up with the names of both dogs. Evrest is named after canine character Everest from the children's animated series PAW Patrol, and Scooby is named after Scooby-Doo. The pups have been part of family activities—from neighborhood walks and bike rides, to hiking and canoeing, to times spent relaxing or playing with friends.

The attention and activities Evrest and Scooby received at home and out in the world—and their experiences with Evie's and Mike's educational communities—have helped the pups learn to be calm and focused around different people, places, and distractions.

Fidelco is so grateful to the Fureys and our Puppy Raiser community for providing exceptional love and care and exposing pups to the many things they will encounter as trusted guide dogs for people who are blind. 



Millie and Max with "Scooby"

Client Profile: Lillian Johnson

Massachusetts native Lillian Johnson has been a valued member of the Fidelco Family for over 30 years: as a client since 1988 and member of Fidelco's Board of Directors beginning in 2008. She has had five Fidelco guide dogs, calling each of them one of her "daughters." The most recent member of her Fidelco canine family is "Evrest"—raised by the Fureys—who joined Lillian just a few months ago. Lillian describes their meeting as "love at first sight" and Evrest as a "wonderful guide dog" whose tail is forever wagging and who loves to cuddle when not working.



I am very grateful for what life has given me, and I couldn't picture my life without a Fidelco guide dog."

Lillian attended the Perkins School for the Blind from kindergarten through high school and retained usable vision until age 18. She learned white cane mobility in her 40's but says she really never felt comfortable using a cane and often managed to get around without one. It wasn't until she was working as an administrative assistant at the Massachusetts Department of Revenue that her boss, a dog lover, suggested she get a guide dog.

Lillian learned about Fidelco's services from friends and did her own extensive research. She was drawn to Fidelco because she loves German Shepherd Dogs and was attracted to Fidelco's In-Community Placement training model—where she would receive training in her home community rather than at a residential training facility. Lillian's boss offered to write a letter of recommendation to Fidelco on her behalf, and she was placed with her first Fidelco guide dog in 1988.

Lillian's work career also included positions at an area hospital, a local HMO, and a women's health organization—always with her Fidelco guide dog by her side. Beginning in 2003, she devoted many years volunteering as a consultant for Eye Opener for the Sighted, an organization in Arlington, Massachusetts. In that role, Lillian educated sighted people about blindness through presentations and educational sessions. Clients included schools and businesses in Greater Boston. She also provided training to Tufts University third- and fourth-year medical students to help ensure positive outcomes when interacting with visually impaired individuals and others with disabilities.

Over the years, Lillian has enjoyed cross-country skiing, hiking, and canoeing. She was a member of Ski for Light, an international nonprofit organization founded in Norway with chapters across the U.S. Ski for Light teaches cross-country skiing to individuals who are blind,


visually impaired, and mobility impaired using sighted cross-country skiers as instructors and guides. Lillian attended many of the organization's



Lillian Johnson with "Evrest"

events and was a leader in the New England Regional Chapter.

Lillian's love for the outdoors continues with daily walks with Evrest. Every time she meets a new person on her walks—which happens frequently—Lillian has an opportunity to educate them about people who are blind and the benefits of guide dog partnership. For Lillian, these include greater independence, an enhanced feeling of safety, increased socialization opportunities, and the extraordinary bond she shares with her guide dogs.

"I am very grateful for what life has given me, and I couldn't picture my life without a Fidelco guide dog," says Lillian. She adds that Fidelco has been like another family to her, and she has enjoyed her work on the Board of Directors. During her decades-long relationship with Fidelco, Lillian has appreciated opportunities to interact with Fidelco's devoted staff and Puppy Raisers. She hopes to continue to share her story with others so they may learn about Fidelco's extraordinary guide dogs. 



"Evrest"



Birth to 8 Weeks

At three days old, pups begin early enrichment, gradually exposed to different sights, sounds, textures, and toys as they explore their world.

For their socialization, pups are introduced to many situations—to see, hear, and smell new people, animals, places and objects.



6 to 9 Months



8 Weeks to 3 Months

At 8 weeks old, puppies are welcomed into the homes of Volunteer Puppy Raisers, who provide pups with all the essentials.



3 to 6 Months

Pups are learning basic commands and early guide skills including walking properly on their human partners' left side.



The Journey of a Guide Dog





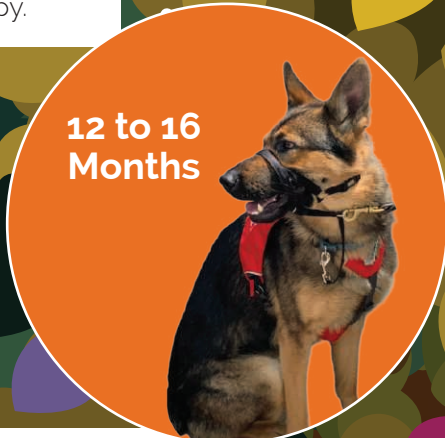
9 to 12 Months

The highest quality of veterinary care and nutrition ensures the health and well-being of each puppy.

What was once a tiny pup from a new litter is now a confident and skilled guide dog. After placement, Fidelco will provide 24/7 support and annual in-home visits for the lifetime of the partnership.



24 Months to Placement



12 to 16 Months

Before young dogs return to Fidelco's campus for formal training, Puppy Raisers help pups gain comfort and confidence.



18 to 24 Months

Young guide dogs-in-training go out each day with their trainers, traveling and walking in local towns and larger cities.



16 to 18 Months

Young dogs begin their intensive training with expert guide dog trainers. Pups now have a strong foundation of basic commands and good manners, enabling guide dog trainers to focus on advanced guide skills.



Donor Spotlight: Stephanie Economu and Kathy Clark

"It's a long-term relationship," says Fidelco supporter Stephanie Economu who, along with her partner, Kathy Clark, is one of Fidelco's most dedicated supporters and ambassadors. Stephanie's love for German Shepherd Dogs began in childhood and has evolved into more than 20 years of unwavering support of Fidelco's mission.

Stephanie and Kathy participated in their first Fidelco event in the late 90s and were equally moved by the people and dogs they encountered. Fast forward two decades, and "Fidelco is tattooed on our hearts," Kathy says. Collectively, they have walked, run, and rode motorcycles on behalf of Fidelco, along with making regular financial contributions. "Our holiday gifts for friends and family are all from the Fidelco store! Special occasions are toasted in our home with Fidelco-branded champagne glasses," Stephanie laughs.


Stephanie is a recently retired IT professional who loves anything having to do with cars and travel. Kathy is a real estate asset manager who loves all

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.




We know so much goes into creating these amazing guide dog partnerships, beginning with adorable puppies."

things sports. Beyond their personal support which has come in many forms, Stephanie and Kathy are ardent ambassadors. They have leveraged their network of family, friends, and colleagues throughout the years, most recently to purchase Fidelco's much-loved "Puppy Cam" which offers a glimpse, in real-time, into the lives of Fidelco's youngest pups.

"We know so much goes into creating these amazing guide dog partnerships, beginning with adorable puppies. Putting clients front and center

to talk about their own experiences really brings it full circle," says Stephanie.

There's no telling how many people Stephanie and Kathy have brought into the Fidelco family. Their passion and dedication are contagious, and we are extremely grateful they believe in our mission as much as we do. 



Kathy Clark and Stephanie Economu

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 the "Kennel Cam." Watch puppies and dogs as they play, train, learn, and grow in Fidelco's Pup House, Kennel, and enrichment areas.
- Quarterly updates detailing how your donations are making a difference.
- Recognition in FidelcoNews, our widely distributed newsletter.
- Shepherd Club members will also receive fun Shepherd Club stickers featuring Fidelco pups and dogs—for you to show or share.

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.



Pupdate: Denise!

Alan addresses a local kindergarten class with his guide dog, "Denise"

Fidelco puppy "Denise"—named in honor of beloved WFSB anchor Denise D'Ascenzo who passed away in 2019—is now Fidelco guide dog Denise!

Denise was placed with client Alan Gunzburg, a Fairfield County, CT resident, in April 2022.

She joins Alan's family which includes his wife, Jennifer, two daughters, and recently retired Fidelco guide dog, "Kili."

Denise is Alan's third Fidelco guide dog and according to him, "She is a goofball out of harness, but incredibly focused when working."

Alan is involved in many organizations as an advocate for people with disabilities. He and Denise frequently participate in meetings and events to raise awareness within the community.

"I'm so fortunate to be a three-time recipient of fabulous guide dog partners," Alan says. "Even with orientation and mobility training and my trusty cane, I was never a confident independent traveler. After being paired with my first Fidelco guide dog, 'Fia,' my confidence in my ability to travel increased. Now with life-changer number three, 'Denise,' I can continue thriving independently despite my sight loss." 

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.



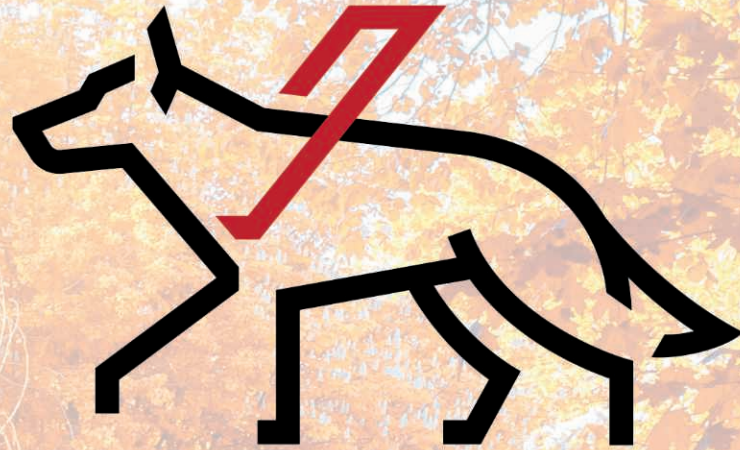
"She is like my left leg. She is a part of me. She's just an amazing dog."



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



Amanda Williams with "Ulli"



OCTOBERFEST

FALL FESTIVAL & OPEN HOUSE



FOOD TRUCKS



CAR SHOW



PUPPY OLYMPICS

Saturday, October 22 | 10AM

GUIDE DOG DEMOS, BLINDFOLD WALKS, PUPPY PLAYTIME, RAFFLES, FOOD, KIDS CORNER, TOURS, CAR SHOW, PUPPY OLYMPICS & MORE!

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