



4 PAWS NEWS

4 Paws for Ability a 501(c)(3)

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4 Paws for Ability Launches \$5 Million Capital Campaign

Highlights

- Our website: www.4PawsforAbility.org
- New Capital Campaign Launches
- Meet Natalie Nuce & Dr. Suzanne Ellis
- Foster Dog Elmo Goes to School!

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Two-bedroom apartment at Camp Allyn where the idea for 4 Paws was conceived

Wow, 2008 continued to be a part of the rapid growth of 4 Paws. It is hard to believe we have been in our new building for almost three years! The building looks nothing like it did when we moved in.

How exciting to walk into the building in the morning and see the busy, cheerful atmosphere. Everything looks and goes on as if it always has been. To think that we've placed 350 dogs as of April 1, 2009.

I still remember a morning in 1998, waking up in my small apartment and walking the 15 feet to the 4 Paws office in the spare bedroom before heading out to the living room to let the puppies out for their morning romp! How small we were then, with our first two dogs in training!

Time passes so quickly. Before we knew it four years had passed and 4 Paws was up and running out of room! Taking advantage of the need for a new place to

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Hope saves Zachary from certain death

It was a cold February night when six-year-old Zachary slipped away from his house, unclothed and undetected. As his family realized he was missing, panic set in, but they had Hope on their side. Hope with fur and four legs. As this intrepid 4 Paws for Ability service dog led the way, Zach was located within minutes.

He'd wandered into a heavily wooded area behind a neighbor's house, and they found him huddled in freezing weather, his little body shivering. It's hard to imagine what a search without Hope would have yielded even 10 minutes later!



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operate, I moved 4 Paws to Xenia, Ohio, the town my family lives in, and we moved into the new house in January of 2003! So much space! It was like a dream come true! Behind the house we had two large outbuildings perfect for a training room!



In 2005 we were excited to have the Wilcon Corporation remodel the back buildings to provide kennels and a formal training area. Who would have

guessed that in less than a year we would outgrow what seemed to be all we thought we'd need for several years to come! Yet before the year was out we were looking for space to hold our training classes and renting the conference room at the Holiday Inn.

In 2006, we met our biggest challenge ever with the purchase of the two- acre, 6400 sq ft facility we now operate. Once a VFW hall, it needed lots of work before it resembled a training center. In May we were open for business.



Today we continue to expand and utilize every nook and cranny. All four offices are occupied and we have created several more offices in closets, small bar areas, and hallways!

The dogs' crates line the walls of the building's front half which houses three of the offices, two multi-person bathrooms, and the kitchen.

Separating the front space from the back is a large children's play area with tons of toys and sensory equipment, living room furniture, computers and an entertainment center. The trainer's office is also here. To the rear we have the training room, and in the works the new whelping room— and in a separate room— the dog wash.

Outside things have also changed. The privacy fence went up right away but so much more was needed. Last year brought six one-acre long dog runs, five puppy pens, a fenced-in field and a large fenced off play area for the kids...with loads of equipment to utilize!

It's so exciting that I can hardly wait to see what the rest of 2009 will bring!

Last year 4 Paws also bought the house I moved them into originally, and a new phase started. **Finally we have a formal quarantine area for the new dogs from shelters, away from the dogs ready to graduate.** Perhaps a staff lounge is in order!



So now here we are at the start of 2009 with all new dreams and ready to start a capital campaign to meet those Pawsibilities. – **Karen Shirk, Executive Director**



Wittenburg University

The students of Wittenburg University have a new opportunity available to them through a collaborative effort between 4 Paws and the University. Last semester four of our young dogs lived with the students in their dormitories. This semester that number increased to five!

As the day rolls along one might see Torch, one of our German retrievers attending Biology 101, or Dodger, a Golden Retriever, lapping up English Literature. In addition, Blush, a Golden Retriever; Fern, a Yellow Lab; and JR, a Yellow Lab also hang out on campus.

We are excited at the possibilities this new venue for raising service dog puppies brings. With our already successful prison program housing up to 50 dogs between four facilities, there is little room for growth, yet we have growing numbers of puppies needing care.

Extending our foster home base is good, but the possibility of adding new universities and the socialization that would occur on campus makes this an ideal placement. It is worthy of much consideration as we expand our puppy raising programs.

We hope that as this program succeeds we may use it as a model on other campuses in the area.



JR, one of our dogs

Rescue Highlights: Madison



It was the winter of 2007 during the worst snowstorms of the year that Madison came to 4 Paws for Ability. One of our staff had been watching over her, bringing her food and working with her owner to bring her in out of the cold. It had rained in the weeks before and flooded the area where her dog house stood.

Her owner had moved her by some bushes for cover and left her tied up and with no other shelter. Sandy brought Madison food and tried to reason with the owner.

It seems he was recently divorced and the dog had really been his wife's dog. When she left he tied her outside because he was never home. Though animal control had been called, Madison stayed tied to the tree in her yard day after day and night after night.

As news of the snowstorm hit the area, reporters urged people to prepare to stay inside. In desperation, one last attempt was made to save Madison and this time the owner let her go.

Madison is safe and warm at 4 Paws and has been for more than a year. She is a wonderful dog who needs an older couple whose children are grown. She is six years old and not used to rambunctious youngsters.

If you know someone who needs a companion as much as Madison needs one too, please help us find a home for Madison. **She has so much love to give.**



2009 Dreams Capital Campaign

As we move through 2009, we have our work cut out for us, but we know that to continue to meet the needs of our families it is an endeavor in which we must succeed. It is imperative for the future of 4 Paws that we expand our facility and our staff.



To continue with what we have in place now we will have to schedule classes two years or more out and operate on a waiting list. Our families can't wait for their dogs, they need them now. **Every year in the United States children with autism wander from their homes and die because they have no understanding of danger.**

Can you imagine being the one to take this call: "You can take us off your waiting list. Last night Johnny wandered from home and drowned in a nearby lake." Our families need their dogs as quickly as we can provide them. **At this time the process takes 12-18 months which is already too long to wait.**

We placed 52 dogs in 2006, 70 in 2007, and 93 in 2008. We have never turned anyone away. The challenge is that our scheduled classes are getting further and further away. We have filled every class in 2009 and have begun scheduling them for 2010.

Training quality dogs takes time, and this is a time delay that cannot be avoided. Each dog is specifically trained for the tasks they provide to their specific child. **Any amount of time after this is waiting time; we can't produce the numbers of dogs needed with the size of our facility and training staff.** We are all about quality and will not give that up to increase our numbers.

Beginning 4 Paws for Ability Campaign of Hope

With these thoughts in mind we begin our capital campaign. This is a campaign of hope. Hope for every child who comes to us needing a dog that we can get one to them as quickly as possible. Hope that no child goes without if we have it within our means to train a dog that can help them. It is the hope and dream that 4 Paws was founded on that keeps us working each day.

It is a hope that can be seen in the eyes of each child at graduation as they stand beside their dogs ready to begin their life as a team. It is the relief that can be seen in their families' eyes. It is stories like the one to follow that solidify the need and secure in our minds the fact that we can make this happen. **It is not a choice, it is a necessity.**

As you can see; this is not a campaign to improve a museum, or build a playground or gym at the local YMCA. **Though all of these are worthy causes, at the end of our campaign there is hope that the lives of innocent children may be saved.**

These children with Autism and similar disabilities need our help. They do not understand danger and children with seizures may die in the course of seizure activity. These helpless children need the

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Raising \$5 Million. We can do it!

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dogs trained at 4 Paws. Desperately. **And we must rise to this growing need to make it happen.**

Added to these great needs are the children whose hopes depend on their new partners for companionship and understanding in the face of frustration and independence in mobility issues.

The Existing Building

The space that now houses all aspects of 4 Paws will be remodeled so it exists solely for our families and their needs, as well as giving trainers space to work with the dogs in training for upcoming classes.



Dylan and Yoko

We envision a training area that is used for working with the dogs, and a training space used not only for working with the dogs but also working with the classes when they are in the facility. This way professional training can easily and more readily continue during the hours our families are in the building working with the dogs that are graduating.

It's not easy for our kids to travel away from their homes and spend two weeks in a new environment. And there are the stresses of the whole training process. We would like for them to be as comfortable as possible while they are here.

We want to remodel the area used by the kids to include a sensory area where kids can find many of the things they use at home to help them through the day: computer stations, several TV areas, game stations, and other neat areas for the kids to entertain themselves while their parents are learning how to handle their new service dogs.

The existing kitchen would be remodeled into a kitchen the clients can use while they are here. Many of the families in training do not have the funds to eat out every day. The families need a kitchen where they can store food for their lunches, and also an area where they can sit down and eat. **Many of the kids are on special diets and cannot eat the food that can be purchased at restaurants.** Right now we are not able to provide either.

Two family restrooms will be included which are also handicap accessible. These would have all the amenities of a typical family restroom with changing tables for the babies and toddlers and an appropriate set up for use by those who use wheelchairs or have balance issues.

So many children are depending on 4 Paws to fill their dreams, and so we start our campaign, knowing we can succeed!



Meet our new staff!

Natalie Nuce, our new Associate Director, originally from the Atlanta Georgia area, came to us after serving 18 years with the Christian ministry Athletes in Action. She's lived and worked in



**Natalie Nuce,
Associate Director**

many places (Colorado, UCLA, Athens, GA), but has called Ohio home for the last eight years. She has a bachelor's degree from the University of Georgia. (Go Dawgs!)

Her family still resides in Atlanta, but her brother lives in California where she visits often, especially during the winter months! She loves the outdoors (backpacking, kayaking, cycling, camping etc.) and spending time with her two golden retrievers, an 11-year-old male (Harley) and a one-year-old female (Callie), a breeding dog for 4 paws.

Natalie is excited to be a part of 4 Paws and the impact it is making in the lives of families. The big vision and future growth is compelling, and she can't wait to see all that happens in 2009 and beyond!

Dr. Suzanne M. Zanick-Ellis was born and raised in a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio. She has been working in the veterinary field

since 1994. She received her BS at Ohio University in 1996 and her DVM from the College of Veterinary Medicine at The Ohio State University in 2002; graduating with honors in both programs. Dr. Suzanne met her husband, Dr. Brett F. Ellis, during veterinary school, and they moved to Xenia in 2000. Drs. Brett and Suzanne live in Xenia with their children, Isabelle (6) and Isaac (3), as well as their furry family members: Henry (9 year-old Labrador Retriever), Riley (13 year-old Jack Russell Terrier), Monkey, and Mini-Me (both 10 year-old felines).



Suzanne M. Ellis, DVM

During and immediately after veterinary school, Dr. Suzanne worked with her mentor in Huron, Ohio, commuting to and from Xenia every 4 days. After the birth of Isabelle, Dr. Suzanne joined her husband's mixed-animal practice at Veterinary Associates, Inc. in Xenia. Being one of 7 veterinarians, Dr. Suzanne enjoyed the daily challenges of small animal general practice and surgery, as well as working on exotic pets, such as reptiles, ferrets, skunks, rabbits, rodents and birds.

Dr. Suzanne started providing veterinary services for 4 Paws for Ability in 2003. Over the years, Dr. Suzanne has enjoyed being an increasingly, more-active member of this wonderful organization. What started as the occasional exam of a 4 Paws pup for a little cold or minor injury, has evolved into a daily practice of ensuring the utmost of veterinary care and continued health for all of the 4 Paws for Ability animals. Dr. Suzanne permanently joined the *4 Paws Team* on February 3, 2009 as their full-time, resident veterinarian and is looking forward to caring for these wonderful dogs and helping them to “take the ‘dis’ out of disability.”



4 Paws for Vets

A Veterans Training Program 4 Paws for Ability plans to open with funds from the Capital Campaign

Our new vet program is designed to help those men and women who have served our country in defending independence at the expense of their own independence. A quick look at several government casualty charts shows between 30,000 and 35,000 soldiers injured in Iraq alone since the war's start. In a document titled "Compensation and Pension Benefit Activity Among Veterans of the Global War on terrorism" it was reported that as of July 20, 2006, 152,669 veterans filed disability claims after fighting in Iraq or Afghanistan.



News stories, movies, and articles have shown the faces of thousands of veterans missing limbs and having lost the ability to walk. These are the veterans our program will focus on. Similar programs have begun to work training dogs for those veterans with vision loss and PTSD. *Here at 4 Paws we choose to focus on those returning with a permanent loss of independence due to mobility issues.*

In our Warren Correction Institution Mission Pawsible Rover Rehab Program we have several inmates who excel at Mobility Assistance Dog Training who would love the opportunity to give of themselves to bring more independence to these veterans.

We hope to build relationships with the Department of Veterans Affairs, and other groups serving our veterans today to both identify those in need and to assist in the funding of these much-needed service dogs.

While 4 Paws for Ability is founded on a partnership in funding with our families, this program will be provided at no cost or effort on the part of the veteran in need or the veteran's family. By using inmates to provide a majority of the task training we will be able to keep costs to a minimum.

Mobility Assistance Dogs for veterans will be trained to help with each individual veteran's needs. After submitting an application and upon acceptance, a plan of action will be set to identify what services the veteran needs the dog to perform. These dogs can provide balance work for the veteran who can still walk with a helping paw or assist those using a wheelchair.

Some of the skills the dog might be trained to do include balance work, stand and brace, helping pulling a manual chair, turning lights on and off, opening household doors or pushing buttons to open doors in public, retrieving dropped items, retrieving the phone in an emergency or other specialty items on command, retrieving items from shelves and counters, paying the cashier, carrying items in a backpack and many other useful skills unique to the individual using the dog.

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FASD: It's not just a phrase

A Fresh Look at Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder by Donnie Kanter Winokur

It's going to last a lifetime. Everyone said "Don't worry, she will outgrow that." Your gut told you otherwise. Family members consoled you, "Oh, every boy acts like this at four!" That's not what you thought.

Friends offered, "That's nothing! You should see *my* son." While said with good intent, you are left feeling dismissed and unheard. Invalidated. Still worried and no diagnosis in sight! What's going on?



Babies exposed to alcohol while in their mother's womb may be born with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). Similar to the Autism Spectrum, FASDs range from mild to severe in their impact on an individual and family's life. The effects may include physical, mental, behavioral, and or learning disabilities. Ninety percent of fetal alcohol-affected kids look just like your neighbor's kids. Until you spend time with them.

FASDs are "hidden" disabilities. The prevalence of FASD is 1 out of 100 live births in the U.S. Yet this lifelong disability is greatly misdiagnosed and only rarely recognized for what it is. Accompanying organic brain damage from alcohol exposure means there are usually other disorders, such as:

- Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD)
- Sensory Integration Disorder (SID)
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD)

Average or above I.Q. disguises impaired intellectual disability, creating false impressions of *capability*. Because FASD is so unfamiliar, many kids go undiagnosed when early intervention can be so helpful!

The cultural stigma attached to alcohol prevents many doctors from informing their patients about the risks of drinking while pregnant. There is no known safe amount, time, or kind of alcohol that can be consumed during pregnancy. And this disability is 100% preventable.

As a mom of a child with FASD, I advocate for my son every day. Through him, every aspect of our life is shaped with unique questions. We struggle finding answers.

What helps? Some people think that labels signify worth or value, and don't want one attached to their children. In my mind, as with clothes, a label or diagnosis of FASD tells others that my child needs to be "handled with care." Without the appropriate label, our kids are given plenty of others, like lazy, defiant, dumb, and difficult.

Sharing the truth allows others to support my son and strengthen his self-esteem. You can only empower your children when you yourself are comfortable with your own reality. There is never any shame in telling the truth. And that...lasts a lifetime.

As a direct result of obtaining the first FASD Assistance Dog in North America for her son in early 2008, Donnie Kanter Winokur has begun to present to national experts on the unique benefits of providing service dogs for children with FASDs. She has contracted to speak internationally at disability-related conferences within 2009-2010. Donnie has been a unique presence in Atlanta's communications arena for over 25 years, as a speaker, producer, creative director, and writer. She has now turned her focus to helping raise awareness and prevention of the devastating disorder that affects her son, her family, and every community.



Meet Brady Hirsch & Thaine Wood

Meet **Brady Hirsch**, a sweet, loving, snuggly, happy-go-lucky, two-and-a-half-year-old little boy who desperately needs an Autism Service Dog. Please help Brady's dream come true.

Brady has been receiving Early Intervention Services (Speech, OT, PT, including Pool Therapy) since he was 19 months old. He was diagnosed with Autism at 21 months of age, and has just transitioned to a special school for children with Autism.



The daily struggles that Brady faces are sometimes overwhelming to his Dad and me, so we can only imagine how Brady feels. Brady is non-verbal and can become very frustrated at times due to his inability to communicate. **He is learning to sign and use the PECS system to communicate.**

Brady has made huge progress since he began Early Intervention: he can identify every letter, shape, color, number, and most recently is able to write his name! We are so proud of his accomplishments, but we still have the overwhelming desire to have him be like other little boys his age. We believe that Brady will someday be able to speak and tell us he loves us.

We can't wait for that day to hear him call out, "Mom!" or "Dad!" **Having an Autism Service Dog will give Brady a true friend that he will develop a special bond with...a bond like nothing else.** We will have a more reassurance that our little boy is happy and safe!



Thaine Aaron Wood. Thaine is a handsome boy of nine who has Autism. Although he is nonverbal and has his "quirky" moments, he is one of the most loving kids you will ever meet.

Thaine has never met a stranger, which is horrible, since he tries to grab everyone's hand, and you never know who is bad.

He has a tendency to run away; thinks it is a game to bolt out the door and he does not stop when called.

Daddy is a soldier in the US Army, Mommy stays at home and Gwyneth, Thaine's sister, is five going on twenty.

We are currently stationed at Ft Bragg, NC and reside in Hope Mills. This Autism Service Dog would not only make Thaine's life better but his whole family would get a sense of relief that is beyond all words.



Spunky Ehlena Needs Service Dog



I am **Ehlena**, a happy active 4.5-year old eager to do things for myself. I was born in Calcutta, India with a **congenital disorder called Polymicrogyria**. It is a big word for such a little lady, I know. Basically, it deals with my brain cell migration and ultimately causes me to have Cerebral Palsy. Mostly my movement is affected.

I was born in an orphanage but was blessed with my forever family a couple days before I turned one year old and was brought here to the United States. To look at me now you would never know that I was very sick and tiny when my family came to get me.

Okay, I am still tiny, but I grow stronger everyday from my family's love and lots of physical, occupational, and speech therapy. I have had major surgery to reduce my muscle tone. I have high muscle tone due to Cerebral Palsy, meaning that I am stiffer and that makes it hard for me to move. The surgery helped tremendously. With that hurdle out of the way I am moving forward toward the next step to the independence I need.

Frequently I ask my family for help but now I am asking for yours. I have been accepted by [4 Paws For Ability](#) to receive a missing piece to my puzzle for independence: A Mobility Dog. My family is giving me the chance to overcome my obstacles but they have some as well. We need your help raising the funds that it costs to train a dog like this for me. For every \$1 that we raise we earn a point. Once we earn 13,000 points a dog will be selected and trained especially for MY needs.

A Mobility Service Dog is specially trained to help me do many of the tasks that I struggle with daily. Some of these include:

- Pulling to stand & maintaining balance
- Getting in and out of my walker and wheelchair
- Retrieving dropped items
- Opening doors & turning on lights



I also get distracted, scared, and upset very easily and this dog will be trained in behavior disruption techniques to help keep me on task so that I do not fall and can calm quicker. I need a strong companion by my side, especially when my mom cannot be there. **I am a smart little lady with a desire to not have to rely on others so much.** I am learning to walk in a walker but I cannot do it alone. Please help me make this dream a reality.

P.S. I also have two older brothers that I so desperately want to keep up with. Maybe I can train my dog to slow them down. Just a thought. My mom says that angels watch over us and they come in all forms. This special dog would be an angel for me and your donating to our cause would be another for my family. Any support you can give is appreciated more than words can say.



Finally! Hailey & Anise bond!

February 3, 2009 - From the Meusch Family

I just wanted to write you and update you on Hailey and Anise... Things are going very well with the bonding. We were not sure how Hailey was going to do when we left Ohio. Things were very difficult while we were there. **We had to have Hailey on double medication just to get through the day.**

We usually had to be first during tracking because Hailey would have a fit after just a couple minutes of sitting in the car. When we went to the mall to do tracking and tethering, each time, Hailey had a meltdown and we ended up carrying her out to the car while people stared. We had never taken Hailey to a mall because of the tantrums.

Anise did great while we were there. I don't know if you remember but we ended up missing graduation because Hailey was unable to handle coming in the building, she was having meltdowns in the truck. So, we left early...



Since we have been home, things have been getting better. Hailey is bonding with Anise on her own terms. Anise is doing great at the behavior disruption without a command. Anise is wonderful at the doctor. Everyone just loves her.

Tracking is going great, we do practice tracks all the time and Anise finds Hailey all the time. Even when it is -30 and -40 degree wind chills. Hailey loves to play fetch with her and therapy is incorporating Anise into Hailey's therapy here at home. **We no longer have to worry about Hailey bolting in the store.** That is such a weight lifted, I'm sure you can imagine... Anise is adapting well to the farm life but she sure loves it when we go to town.

I don't know if you remember the first day of training in December, I was in tears because Hailey wanted nothing to do with Anise. She just screamed... ***Now we have gotten to a point where we could not do anything without Anise.*** She has been such a blessing in our lives!! **You create miracles for us families that most people just can't understand.**

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Once the dog has been fully trained each veteran will spend two weeks at our facility learning how to use his/her new partner.

Each day of intense training will build on the day before, with a final test at the end for certification to use the dog in all aspects of their life, at home, and in public. Low-cost housing will be available to the veterans and their entire family during their stay.



Elmo

One of 4 Paws Foster Dogs

Tammy Burton is a school teacher and she took Elmo, the family's current foster dog, to school with her. Here's a picture of Elmo with her class.

Last year the Burton family fostered Lovey, a Flat Coat Retriever who is now working as an Autism Assistance Dog.



So Many Pawsibilities

So Many Needs!

Can You Help?

When I first read about 4 Paws and what an autism assistance dog could do for Trevor, it seemed like such a **HUGE** amount of money. I imagined it taking years to raise that much! When we decided that this was what we were supposed to do for Trevor and were accepted into the program, I remember wishing that we knew a really rich guy who would just “cut us a check” for the \$11,000.

It's been such an amazing experience having so many people help us with raising this money that if I were to do it all over again, and I *did* find that rich guy, I honestly would tell him to just keep it. The experience of having a list of donors a mile long is priceless. **Each and every person who gave even a penny has become a part of this gift.** Somehow, it just seems like such a more spiritual, shared experience that will continue on as we keep those people updated with all of the things to come...**Kim Galka**



Photograph courtesy of
Focus Point Photography

4 Paws for Ability

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