

2023 ANNUAL REPORT





2023 IN REVIEW

121

service dog
placements
in 2023

1900 +

service dogs
placed since
1998

18,000+

onsite hours
volunteered

337

volunteer trainer
homes raising
puppies

299

puppies born
at 4 Paws

12

sponsored
litters



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From the Desk of Jennifer Lutes

Dear 4 Paws for Ability Supporters,

Reflecting on the past year's milestones and achievements, I am honored to share our annual report with you. In commemorating 25 years of enriching lives through the placement of life-changing service dogs, we extend our deepest gratitude to each supporter who has played a vital role in advancing our mission.



Our commitment to innovation and collaboration was evident in the addition of Blackburn Correctional Facility to our prison programs. This partnership not only supported our puppies' development but also contributed to the rehabilitation of individuals within the correctional system, demonstrating a positive impact on both ends of the leash.

Embracing strategic partnerships with fellow service dog organizations, we fortified our breeding program, ensuring the health, trainability, and adaptability of our service dogs. Despite challenging times, careful stewardship of your generous donations enabled us to remain under budget, demonstrating resilience and ensuring our continued impact.

As we look forward, the 25 years behind us inspire optimism for the future. Your integral role in shaping the success of 4 Paws for Ability fuels our determination for greater achievements in the years to come. Thank you for your unwavering support. May the gratitude of the lives you've deeply impacted warm your heart in 2024 and beyond.

With deepest gratitude,

Jennifer Lutes
Executive Director
4 Paws for Ability

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Scan this QR Code
to continue our mission

Mission

Enriching the lives of people with disabilities by placing life changing service dogs.

Vision

4 Paws envisions a world where people with disabilities can realize their full potential one service dog at a time.

Values

The 4 Paws family (donors, volunteers, clients, staff and dogs) displays the 4 Paws PACT while fulfilling the mission and vision.

- Passion- refers to a strong and intense enthusiasm or drive for the work or the field of expertise related to your position at 4 Paws
- Ability- refers to the skills, knowledge, and competencies that an individual possesses to perform effectively in your specific position at 4 Paws
- Commitment- relates to an individual's dedication, loyalty, and sense of responsibility towards their position and this organization as a whole.
- Teamwork- refers to the ability to collaborate and work effectively with others towards a common goal within 4 Paws

Drew & Vivi



As Drew grew and became more independent, his mom, Linda decided it was time to try something new that just might change his life for the better: a 4 Paws service dog.

“We decided to look into service dogs and applied to several places but we were by far the most impressed with 4 Paws,” she says. “They had quick communication and a clear process, timeline, and supports every step of the process.”

In June 2023, Drew, and his family, found the help he had been seeking in Vivi. “It was immediately a game changer. The second night I woke up to her barking and alerting me that Drew was having a nightmare,” Linda remembers. “I’ve been able to sleep through the night since then,” and Drew “sleeps better with her there than he ever has before.”

In just a couple of months, Linda says her son “is much more relaxed in general. He’s made huge strides in his physical recovery from his last stroke with Vivi here and has regained a level of independence he had lost since the strokes started. She helps him regulate his sensory needs through overwhelming moments and our family as a whole is less anxious.”

“I see joy in my son again. He is healing emotionally and physically much faster,” says Linda. “Vivi gives an unconditional love to him that is helping Drew be more open to the world.”



Blake & Barnett



Owen & Rio

Eli & Jackson

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Eli, a veteran, found himself continually struggling and knew something important was missing. “Before Jackson, life was very hard to cope with. I wouldn’t leave the house for months at a time because of fear of something going wrong or getting hurt. I tried to drink my problems away and found out it was just emptying me.”

Aware of other veterans finding solace in service animals, Eli discovered 4 Paws for Ability during a search for local service animal organizations. Upon reaching out, his application was approved, marking the beginning of a transformative journey.

Meeting Jackson was a turning point for Eli, though he was unaware of the impending change in his life. “I didn’t know how quickly I would become emotionally connected to him. When his trainer Bethany brought him in I just didn’t know what to do. I had to contain the happiness I felt.”

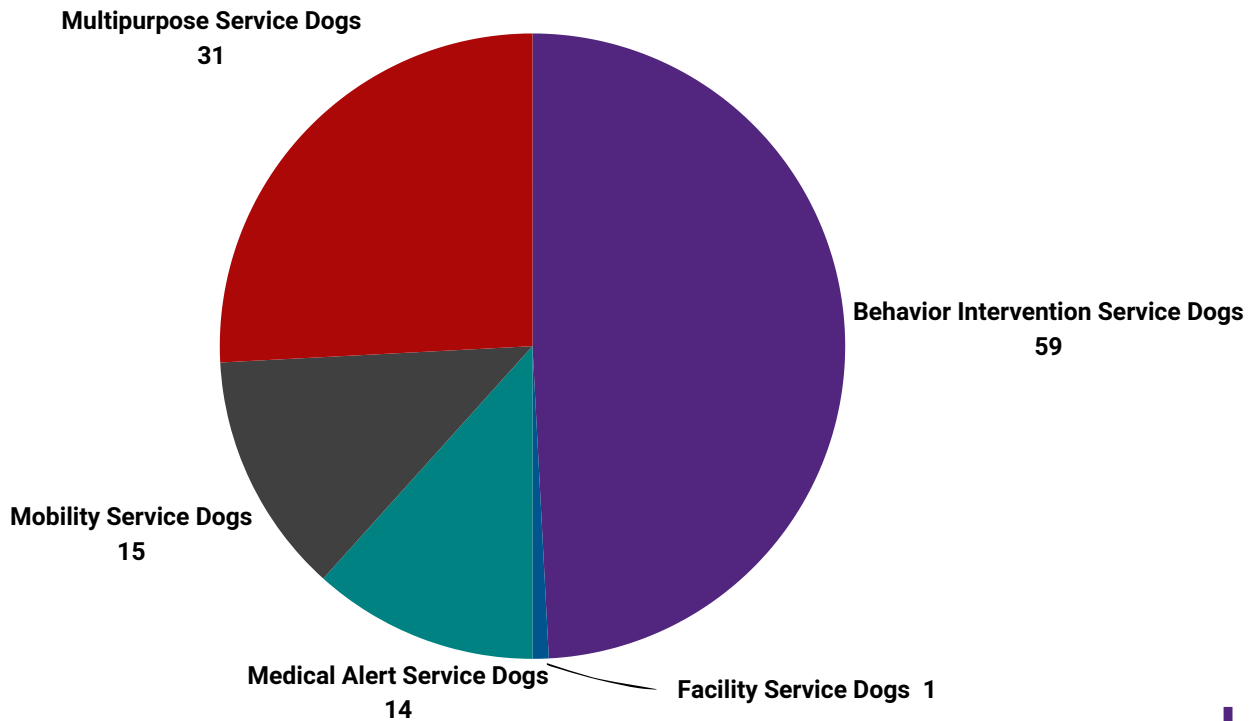
During one of their first nights together, Jackson woke Eli up by licking away tears shed in his sleep. It became a recurring act, providing comfort during terrible nightmares. The impact of having Jackson by his side is life-changing for Eli. He has found himself leaving the house more frequently, and engaging in a more active lifestyle. Jackson's exceptional training, especially in public conduct, played a crucial role in this positive transformation.

Reflecting on his experience with 4 Paws, Eli shared glowing reviews for the care he received throughout his entire healing journey. “The 4 Paws organization sets the bar far above any other facility. Their staff are the most caring people that I have ever met, the trainers are second to none, and the wait is well worth it.”

ENRICH THEIR LIVES

4 Paws Placements

Service Dogs Placed by Task



120 Service Dogs Placed in 2023

4 Paws specializes in training service dogs case-specific for children and veterans who need them. Clients submit an application, health form, and letters of reference and take part in a phone interview to determine what tasks the service dog should provide. The majority of placements are multipurpose, and our dogs primarily provide seizure assistance and autism assistance. 4 Paws was founded on the principle that all individuals should have access to a service dog and we specialize in placements that are less served. Challenges are welcome!



SCAN THIS QR CODE TO HELP US TRAIN AND PLACE
LIFE-CHANGING SERVICE DOGS

TRAIN AND PLACE

The Right Dog for the Job



The first time Trena Panko visited the 4 Paws campus, she was accompanied by her class. Trena aimed to showcase the responsibilities and care involved in training service dogs and encouraged her students to volunteer. In their school district, which comprised eight elementary buildings, a junior high, high school, and an alternative school, each building had its own dog and they were about to add another.

Encountering Ladybird proved to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience for Trena. She recalls, “Her eyes and her friendly demeanor and personality made me very excited to bring her to Milford as her forever home and she did not disappoint. She has been a complete game changer.”

The culture of their classroom transformed into a more comforting and welcoming environment with Ladybird's presence. Trena found that using a dog as a learning tool had a powerful impact.

Ladybird seemed attuned to the unspoken struggles, and was able to sense the challenges of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, such as overstimulation, friendship, and communication difficulties. “There is a student who came back to school this year and contends with considerable physical and emotional struggle every day as a result of his disabilities and injuries. Ladybird parks herself near the student and gives nudges and kisses. When the student has struggles during physical therapy, Ladybird snugs right up next to their body in support. All these actions are almost always independent, unprompted actions. The dog notices.

I don't think many people take the time to really notice how helpful service animals are. The tasks they are trained to do are so valuable, but the value of the service dog is so much more, if you care to see it.”

Miriam & Almond



Megan & Grizzled

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Growing up as a child with a condition causing continuous muscle strength loss was a challenging experience for Megan. As she grew weaker, reliance on others became a necessity, transitioning from walking with a walker to using a wheelchair full-time, significantly impacting her independence and mobility. Simple tasks that most people take for granted became much more difficult.

Approaching her teenage years, Megan was determined to enhance her independence and self-sufficiency. Reflecting on her first service dog from 4 Paws (Monkey), a partnership that endured for over 11 years, Megan knew she wanted her second service dog to also come from them.

Upon meeting Grizz at 4 Paws, Megan expressed excitement about getting her second dog but also experienced mixed emotions. “I was so excited but I didn’t know if I would have that same special connection with him as I had with my first service dog. By the second day of training though, all my worries went away and by the end of our 10 days of training, I knew Grizz was the dog for me and I couldn’t be happier! All the little things I was worried about started to drift away.”

Grizz’s comprehensive training significantly increased Megan’s confidence and ability to perform various tasks independently. With Grizz by her side, Megan regained the ability to do more things on her own, reducing her dependence on others. She found herself stepping out of her comfort zone, meeting new people, and trying new things, marking a positive shift in her life.

“I want to thank Grizz’s puppy raisers, his AT trainer, and everyone involved with 4 Paws. Grizz has been such a blessing to me and I can’t wait to see where our journey takes us next!”

INCREASE INDEPENDENCE

Lewis & Tahoe



Donor Spotlight

Night of Celebration: 4 Paws for Ability's 25th Anniversary Gala

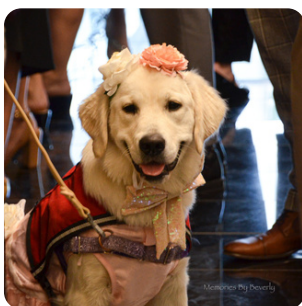
SHARE 4 PAWS WITH OTHERS



In commemorating our 25th anniversary, 4 Paws for Ability welcomed 200 attendees, including some of our service dogs and service dogs in training, to an evening of celebration and purpose. The event featured delightful food, engaging activities, and an exciting silent auction. Gabrielle Enright from WHIO guided us through the festivities.



We extend our sincere gratitude to our event sponsors Eisai, Freshpet, and James Investment for their generous support, reflecting their commitment to our mission.



Speakers took the stage to share personal experiences and stories that underscored the profound impact of 4 Paws. Jennifer Lutes, Chuck Bushnell, Ed and Diana Searls, the Manning family with their service dog Kustard, and KaLynn Clark all contributed to the heartfelt narratives.



The evening proved to be not only a celebration of our past 25 years but also a forward-looking moment, with \$75,000 raised to fuel our ongoing mission. This substantial contribution will empower us to continue our impactful work.

This gala was a pivotal event in our quarter-century journey, offering a reflection on past achievements and igniting enthusiasm for the promising future ahead. We express our heartfelt thanks to all who played a role in making this night a resounding success.

Corporate Partners

ROAD iD Brands

ROAD iD and DOG iD partner with 4 Paws to create an impact with every purchase. They take pride in helping their partners, like 4 Paws, with their missions as 4 Paws falls in line with their mission to save lives, provide peace of mind, and fuel adventure.



Freshpet

Freshpet's mission is to nourish Pets, People, and Planet. 4 Paws service dogs in training benefit from the fresh and healthy food provided by Freshpet during their task training.



The Gorilla Glue Company

Gorilla Glue believes that it is important to be invested in and connected to our community. Through their Gorillas Give Back program, they support the mission of 4 Paws for Ability and sponsor our Puppy Enrichment Program training space.



Thank You 2023 Corporate Partners

4 Paws for Ability extends our heartfelt gratitude to our corporate partners for their unwavering support and generous contributions. The commitment these companies make to our mission has played a pivotal role in empowering us to make a lasting impact in the lives of those we serve. Nonprofits like ours rely on the dedication and partnership of organizations like these to fulfill our mission and create positive change. As we reflect on the accomplishments of 2023 in our annual report, we celebrate these partnerships with companies showing an ongoing commitment to making a difference, and we look forward to continuing this incredible journey together.



Sponsor a Litter

Volunteers

Doing the heart work



Ed and Diana's journey with 4 Paws began in 2021, a heartwarming adventure that started, as many do, with playful puppies. As time unfolded, they delved deeper into the world of volunteering by working with adult dogs in advanced training. Their dedication to the cause led them to embrace the role of weekend fosters, a chapter marked by the care and love extended to seventeen foster dogs to date.

Over the years, their volunteer role evolved. While they continued fostering dogs on weekends, the past two years saw them taking on a special responsibility—volunteering at The Ability Center, walking mama dogs.

In July of 2023, their journey came full circle as they became puppy raisers. Delilah, a potential breeder mom, entered their lives, bringing an exciting new chapter. If she is chosen as a 4 Paws breeder, they will become her guardian home, a prospect that fills their hearts with anticipation and joy.

Diana reminisces, "How joyful it has been to be a part of the entire process of the 4 Paws magic! We have served the pregnant moms, occasionally seen their puppies being born, watched the puppies as they grew and went through their training, then to advanced training. It is a fulfilling experience to observe 'our' puppies as they meet their families and graduate as service dogs. To be a part of life change for the recipients is a privilege and an honor. We have always wanted to have a direct role in life changes for people; volunteering at 4 Paws has been the fulfillment of a dream for us."

VOLUNTEER

Onsite Volunteers

18,000+ Hours Served
316 New Volunteers
44 Educational Visits

Volunteer Trainers

337 Volunteer Trainers Paired
with a Service Dog in Training
15 College Campuses

Guardian Homes

110 Guardian Homes Paired with
a Male or Female Breeder Dog



"I volunteer knowing the impact of all my effort I put into my fosters will pay off when they get placed with their forever person. I have also built so many meaningful relationships within the 4 Paws community, it truly is a great organization!"

-Abby Thomas



"I have volunteered with 4 Paws for a little over a year and wonder why I didn't do it earlier! Although it is so hard to watch them go, I realize what a huge impact I have been in the dog's life and the family that the dog is going to spend their forever home with!"

-Natasha Mapp-Grimsley



Volunteer



"I love volunteering with 4 Paws because there is no better feeling than seeing a dog you raised go on and help their forever person. Just knowing that I was part of that process makes the struggles and the givebacks worth it."

-Megan Smith

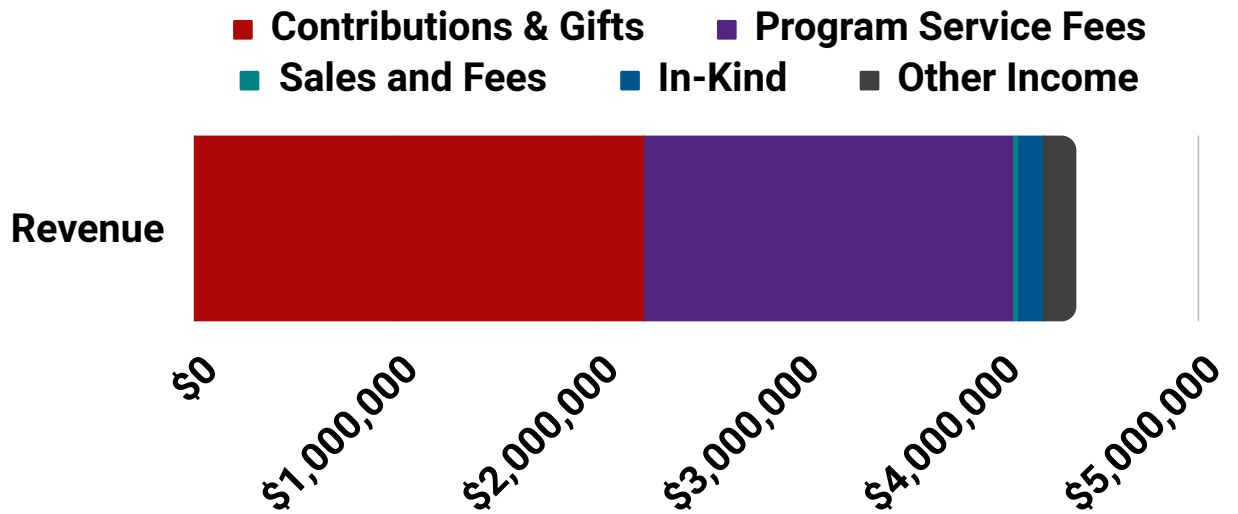


"Volunteering through 4 Paws for Ability gave me the opportunity to do something I truly enjoy. Being able to raise a dog and watch them go change someone's life is the most rewarding experience ever. Our mission is what inspires me to keep volunteering and learn more about how these dogs make the world a better place!"

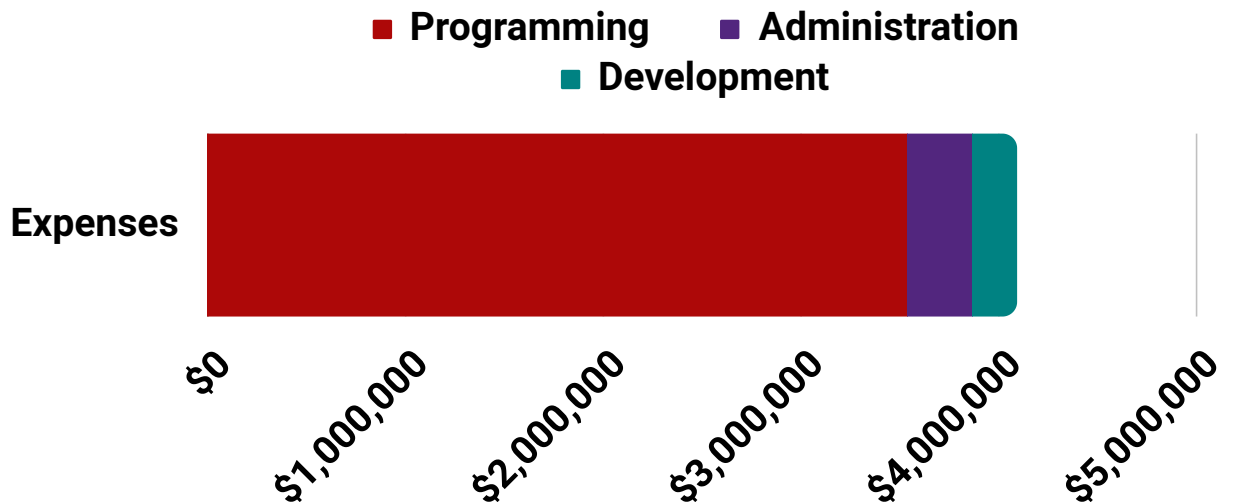
-Park Griffin

*Audited Financials will be available in summer of 2024. Audited financials can be found on our website at [4 Paws financials](#)

2023 Revenue Graph



2023 Expenses Graph



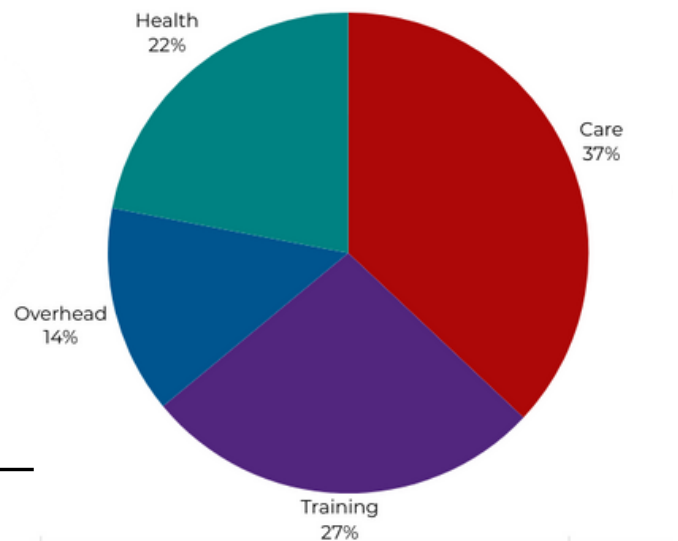
Cost of Raising a Service Dog

In 2023, our cost per placed dog reached a 5-year low at just over \$34,000 with 86% allocated to programming expenses. This success is attributed to the invaluable support of over \$100,000 in-kind donations from corporate sponsors and the dedication of our 2000+ volunteers who contribute countless hours annually.

Total Cost Breakdown

Dog Care	\$1,520,110	37%
Training	\$1,126,034	27%
Health	\$890,077	22%
Overhead	\$556,288	14%

Total Cost	\$ 4,092,509	100%
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Cost Per Dog

Dog Care	\$12,668
Training	\$9,384
Health	\$7,417
Overhead	\$4,635

Total Cost	\$34,104
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From the Desk of Julie George

Cherished 4 Paws Community,

As I reflect upon the completion of my first year as the Board Chair of 4 Paws for Ability, I am filled with gratitude and a genuine feeling of celebration. The past year has been a journey marked by milestones, resilience, and the collective spirit that defines our remarkable community. I would be remised to not acknowledge the amazing work of those that came before me and this board under the leadership of Helena Brooks, Thank You!



In a year where 4 Paws for Ability marked its 25th anniversary, our commitment to celebrating the lives of individuals with disabilities through life-changing service dogs has grown even stronger. Guided by the exceptional leadership of our Executive Director, Jennifer Lutes, and the dedicated 4 Paws team, we have continued to build on the legacy of transforming lives.

This year, our joyous celebrations included the graduation of 120 new service dog teams— a testament to the collaborative efforts of our community. From the early stages of breeding and puppy-raising to the specialized training that ensures our service dogs meet the unique needs of their future companions, each step is a celebration of hope, dedication, and the transformative power of the human-canine bond.

To our dedicated staff, your passion for our mission is the “cornerstone” of our success. Volunteers and donors, your unwavering support is the melody that propels us forward. Looking ahead into the future, I am confident that the continued support from this remarkable community will magnify the significance of our celebrations even more.

This year, we not only celebrated the accomplishments of the past 12 months but also the remarkable 25-year journey of 4 Paws for Ability. The impact we make extends far beyond statistics – it’s in the countless celebrations of newfound independence, shared joy, and the lasting connections forged between our service dogs and their companions. Thank you for entrusting me with the honor of leading 4 Paws for Ability. Together, let’s continue the celebration of changing lives and creating moments of joy for those who need it most.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Julie George
Board Chair 2023 - Present

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Board Chair

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Treasurer

Helena Brooks
Secretary & Board Chair Emeritus

Beth Cesta
Vice Chair

Chuck Bushnell

Hannah Carver

Linda Davis

Madeline Hutchinson

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Executive Director

Erin Bittner
Associate Director

Jessa Kenworthy
Training Director

Makayla Keys
Facility Director

KaLynn Clark
Development Director

Lynn Williams
Service Dog in Training Director

Ruth Keller
Veterinary Medical Director



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PEOPLE OF 4 PAWS