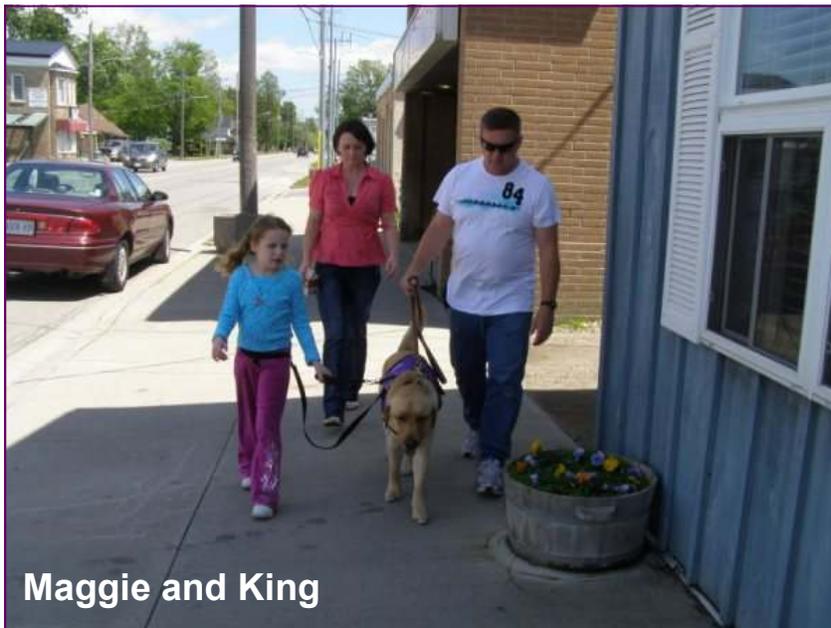


National Service Dog Training Centre Inc. Annual Report 2009



Maggie and King

“National Service Dog Training Centre Inc. enriches the quality of life and enhances the independence of children and families living with autism and special needs.”

A Message from the President

A Bright Future

If 2008 was a pivotal year for National Service Dogs, then 2009 was the “make it or break it” year. In the spring of 2009, we placed seven Autism Service Dogs with children across Canada. In the fall, we placed 14, more than we’ve ever done in one session, giving us a total of 21 teams in 2009! We’re already up to 12 teams in 2010 with another 12 to 14 teams expected to go out this fall. With our expenses down and our team placements up, I am happy to say we’ve pivoted in the right direction and the future is looking bright.

In the fall of 2009, we were proud to officially welcome Brodie and Shadow to the NSD Team. As the first child to ever receive an Autism Service Dog, Brodie brings a unique and very important perspective to our day-to-day activities and now as NSD’s Ambassador, he is sharing his experiences and the importance of our dogs with community groups across the province. The depths of information that he and his mom are able to share with schools, school boards and community leaders is not only helping to move NSD’s mission forward, but is furthering the cause for children with autism across Canada.

The hard work and dedication of National Service Dogs’ staff is one of our greatest assets and we appreciate their support, patience and perseverance as the organization went through the restructuring process in 2009.

The C.H. Ivey Foundation and the Bickell Foundation supported a Feasibility Study conducted late in 2009 by Inspire. This study focused on the organization’s readiness to embark on a five million dollar building campaign for NSD’s new kennel and training centre. The feedback received from study participants and the Inspire Team was very encouraging and the recommendations provided to us will help the NSD Team map out an effective multi-year plan for building and improving on NSD’s brand recognition, profile and awareness across Ontario and Canada; thereby, helping us reach our goal of placing 40 new autism service dogs per year. Look for a new National Service Dog logo to be unveiled in 2010.

I wish to thank all of our stakeholders for their continued support of National Service Dogs’ Autism Service Dog Program. Your assistance is critical to our continued success and the success of the 200 families we service.

National Service Dogs continues to rely on a legion of hard working volunteers who assist with everything from raising puppies, walking dogs, running fundraising events, participating on the Board, helping in the office and maintaining the property. Without the thousands of hours and expertise these people donate we would not be able to assist children and families living with autism across Canada.

In closing, on behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank our partners and donors who put their confidence in us and whose support enables us to continue to “enrich the quality of life and enhance the independence of children and families living with autism and special needs.”

Together we will achieve our goal of placing 40 new Autism Service Dogs annually – **one child, one dog, one life at a time.**

Gina McDonnell
President, Board of Directors



A Message from the Executive Director

National Service Dogs is dedicated to enriching the quality of life and enhancing the independence of children and families living with autism and special needs.

Throughout 2009, staff and volunteers worked tirelessly to help children and families across Canada. In addition to placing 21 autism service dogs and 6 companion dogs with children, National Service Dogs:

- Welcomed 49 new puppies into the program
- Provided follow up support to over 100 past graduates
- Raised a record breaking \$94,000 at the annual Easter Egg Hunt for Dogs
- Launched an exciting and highly successful “Mantracking” event
- Hosted 2 successful Motorcycle Rides for our Autism Service Dog Program
- Strengthened on-going partnerships and formed new relationships with Milk-Bone, Purina, TD Employee’s, Petland, Screenco, President’s Choice Children’s Charity, Kiwanis, Optimists, Masons, Knights of Columbus and The Order of the Eastern Star
- Had the opportunity to work with a very special co-op student

Board of Directors June 2009 - June 2010

President - Gina McDonnell	Julie Stoddart Karen Geoffrey
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In the fall of 1996, National Service Dogs matched the first Autism Service Dog, Shade, with a then four year old Brodie. At the time, we didn’t know if this “Autism Service Dog experiment” was going to work, nor did we know what impact Shade would have on Brodie. The incredible success of our founding team paved the way for the over 200 children NSD has assisted.

Over the years, Brodie has had many adventures with Shade and his current Service Dog Shadow. The latest adventure began in February 2009 when Brodie came to work for NSD as a co-op student. Over the course of the term, Brodie assisted the trainers in the kennel, participated in Team Training classes, helped at fundraising events, assisted with data entry and administrative duties and honed his public speaking skills. To see a young man who doctors said would likely never speak more than a few words doing presentations in front of dozens, and in some cases hundreds of people, never fails to inspire me and everyone who has had the good fortune to meet him. Brodie’s wicked sense of humour was a welcome addition to our daily routine and we were thrilled when he not only asked to come back for another co-op term, but accepted the role as National Service Dogs’ official Ambassador. In 2010, he started learning how to train dogs and has added puppy training to his daily task list. I speak for everyone at NSD when I express how proud we are of him and the man he has become.



So we have come full circle. The child we started National Service Dogs to help is now helping other children with autism lead more enriched and independent lives. Mission Accomplished!

Danielle Forbes
Executive Director/Co-Founder

Autism Service Dog Program

Servicing the autism community has been National Service Dogs' specialty since 1996. Over the past 14 years, National Service Dogs has enriched the quality of life and enhanced the independence of over 200 children and families living with autism. NSD breeds, trains and matches Labrador and Golden Retrievers with children who have autism. NSD provides two weeks of intensive training for parents whose children are receiving the service dog, facilitates school placements and provides follow up support and re-certification testing throughout the dog's working life. Autism Service Dogs are valued at \$30,000 and are provided to approved clients at no charge.



"For the first time during a 'bolting incident', I could just stand there and laugh instead of panicking. It was quite funny to see Alex trying with all his might to run and take Bogart with him." **Alex's Mom**

National Service Dogs (NSD) has proven that properly trained and certified Autism Service Dogs can:

- Increase safety levels and alleviate the bolting behaviours common in children with autism by acting as an anchor when tethered to the child
- Improve a child's socialization and behaviour skills
- Create freedoms for the child and family members to go out of the house safely and confidently
- Expand a child's capabilities to experience more of life and to grow
- Reduce behavioural outbursts in children thereby giving them an increased attention span and a greater aptitude for learning

In September 2009, the Centre for Disease Control announced that the incidence of autism had risen from 1 in 150 children to 1 in 100 children. Today, the demand for Autism Service Dogs continues to grow. Over the past year, National Service Dogs has received 150 application requests, has 100 families actively going through the application process and has approved 12 new clients. As with everything in the world of autism, sooner is always better. Children need to receive life altering therapies at a young age in order for them to reach their full potential. The same holds true with our dogs. In 2009, wait times were running at approximately three years, but with an increase in the number of dogs being placed in 2010, wait times will be reduced to just over two years by the spring of 2011.



"As parents, it was incredibly reassuring to know that we have an extra set of eyes and ears watching over Gilly, helping to keep her safe." **Gillian's Mom**

Volunteer Update

Kennel volunteers were kept busy in 2009 making sure the dogs in advanced training were getting some essential one-on-one time. Our volunteer base was expanded through a partnership with the John Howard Society of Waterloo-Wellington. NSD is also implementing a program matching youth who are currently in the care of Waterloo Region Family & Children's Services with students of Conestoga College Police and Social Work Programs to volunteer in the evenings.

With 96 dogs currently in the program, 2009 has been another busy year for the Puppy Program. National Service Dogs has puppies in K-W/Cambridge, London, Stratford and Calgary. Puppy classes are run weekly in various locations; including rented halls, public parks and local malls. Puppy raisers also periodically participate in organized social outings to restaurants and movies. For service dogs in training, socialization is key to their success.

In 2008, Puppy Program goals and ambitions were:

- To increase the level of knowledge of canine learning and development for puppy program staff/volunteers and assistants
- To give greater support to our valuable volunteers
- To increase the number of puppy sitters and create a level of programming that grades their capabilities to ensure consistency while the puppy is temporarily away from its puppy raiser



"The world is hugged by the faithful arms of volunteers." **Terri Guillemets**

In 2009, NSD initiated one-on-one follow ups with puppy raisers and implemented a training regime for the puppies that combined positive clicker style methods of training with meaningful, instructional reprimands. Each level of obedience training is designed to build upon the previous level with the long-term goal of reducing the amount of time the dog will need to go through the advanced training program; thereby, allowing us to place more Autism Service Dog Teams annually.

2009 Volunteer Awards

In August, we recognized the outstanding dedication of all of NSD's volunteers and paid special tribute to the 2009 winners of our volunteer awards; Mirjam LaGro won the Shade Volunteer of the Year Award, Steve McCormick won the Heather Fowler Award, Milk Bone won the Danielle Forbes Award, Linda Zettel won the Chris Fowler Award, and Taylor McLeod won the Brodie Morin Youth Award.

Active Volunteers	
Key Volunteers	11
General Kennel Volunteers	89
Weekend Sitters	42
Sitters for Puppy Raisers	18
Puppy Raisers	96
Fundraising	100
Total Volunteers	356