



# 2010 Annual Report

## National Service Dog Training Centre Inc.

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# A Message from the President

Throughout the past year, National Service Dogs (NSD) has experienced many positive changes. These changes are largely a result of the growing experience and leadership of our Executive Director. The achievements and skills exhibited have meant that the Board has been able to gradually become less involved in the operational side of NSD. In the next 12 to 18 months, the Board will be returning to a full governance role, creating a structure that will enable the Executive Director to lead and manage while providing the Board with sufficient control to satisfy its due diligence requirements and give NSD's stakeholders competent servant-leaders.

The Board of Directors is currently comprised of 11 volunteer members, and an honorary member, all of whom are united in their commitment to National Service Dogs' mission to enrich the quality of life and enhance the independence of children and families living with autism and special needs. The Board shares the passion for the work done by the Executive Director, staff and many volunteers at NSD.

The Board of Directors met seven times in 2010. Accomplishments included updating and approving new By-Laws with the assistance of outside legal advice, preparing NSD for the new legislation and Articles of Continuance of Federal Incorporation. The Board assisted the Executive Director in preparing a strategic plan as per the recommendations of the feasibility study result presentation done early in 2010 by Imagine on the proposed five million dollar building campaign.

Individual Board members offered their expertise within the organization in such things as preparing a new Human Resource Manual and the spearheading of our return to Board Governance. Board members continue to support and attend NSD events and third party events where NSD is represented.

National Service Dogs relies on the continued dedication and commitment of its staff, the thousands of generously donated hours by its volunteers, and the confidence from its partners and donors. In closing, I would like to thank our stakeholders whose support allows us to continue to strive to reach for our goal of placing 40 new Service Dogs for Autism, and to grow our newest initiative, the Skilled Companion Dog for Veterans Program.

Gina McDonnell  
President, Board of Directors

## Board of Directors

- Gina McDonnell, *President*
- Chris McArthur, *Treasurer*
- Joyce Barlow, *Secretary*

### **Directors:**

- Julie Warren
- Ron Cribbs
- Keri Beu
- Ernie Putman
- John Kearsley
- Alison Archambault
- Keith Lewis
- George Harper
- Maureen Butler-Morin,  
*Honorary Member*

# 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 2010, staff and volunteers worked tirelessly to help children and families across Canada. In addition to placing 23 Service Dogs for Autism and seven Companion Dogs with children, National Service Dogs:

- Welcomed 54 new puppies into the program
- Provided follow-up support to over 120 past graduates
- Raised a record breaking \$100,000 at the annual Easter Egg Hunt for Dogs
- Researched and developed a Skilled Companion Dog Program to assist Veterans with long-term Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Continued to strengthen on-going partnerships with Milk-Bone, Purina, TD Employee's, Petland, Screenco, President's Choice Children's Charity, and service clubs such as Kiwanis, Optimists, Masons, Knights of Columbus and The Order of the Eastern Star



Grace, anxiously awaiting the arrival of her new service dog, Quinn.

2010 was also a team building year for NSD. The addition of two new Apprentice Trainers and a new Fundraising and Communications Co-ordinator brought much needed support to the programming and administrative side of the organization.

One of the goals in 2010 was to enhance and formalize how NSD communicates with stakeholders. As part of this re-vamped communications structure, NSD launched its Facebook page and re-vamped and re-launched the monthly newsletter, The Scoop. With daily and monthly updates now available on-line, everyone has the opportunity to get involved, stay informed and follow the organization's successes throughout the year.

Not only did we enhance communications in 2010, we also began tracking website visits in an effort to evaluate how best to reach stakeholders. The following table is a break down of Google Analytics statistics since August of last year when the program was initiated.

	August 23 to December 31, 2010	January 1 to June 13, 2011
Site Visits	10,601	20,153
Page Views	30,392	54,200
Pages per Visit	2.9	2.7

On behalf of the entire organization, I wish to thank our donors and volunteers for their hard work and generosity. Your continued support is changing the lives of children and families across Canada every single day.

A very special thank you goes out to our staff. Their extraordinary efforts and dedication to our dogs and our kids is greatly appreciated by all who have had the opportunity to work with them.

**Danielle Forbes**  
Executive Director & Co-Founder

# Service Dog for Autism Program

Servicing the autism community has been National Service Dogs' (NSD) specialty since 1996. Over the past 14 years, National Service Dogs has enriched the quality of life and enhanced the independence of over 230 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 a service dog, facilitates school placements and provides follow-up support and re-certification testing throughout the dog's working life.

Service Dogs for Autism are valued at \$30,000 over their eight to ten year working life and are provided to approved clients at no charge.

National Service Dogs has proven that properly trained and certified Service Dogs for Autism 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
- Suppress behavioural outbursts in children thereby giving them an increased attention span and a greater aptitude for learning



*"We went to the mall for Jeremy's first time hook up with Gussie. Jeremy was so amazed by the brand new experience and new found freedom that he looked around at everything in the mall like it was a whole new world." Jeremy's Mom*

The demand for Service Dogs for Autism continues to be strong as NSD received 105 application requests from families in Ontario, Alberta and Manitoba in 2010. In the Fall of 2008 and 2009, NSD restricted the areas that new applications were being sent to for budgetary reasons; however, as of January 2011, NSD is once again accepting application requests from across Canada and anticipates that wait times will be reduced to 18 to 24 months by the end of 2011. The incidence of autism in Canada continues to grow and National Service Dogs has the experience and capacity to meet the needs of the children and families they service, now and in the future.

For more information on the Service Dog for Autism Program, visit [www.nsd.on.ca](http://www.nsd.on.ca).



*"I cannot emphasize enough all the benefits that we have witnessed Whitby bestowing upon our son. More than any speech therapist, she motivates him to use his*

*voice; he speaks to her and reads to her for hours. More than any psychologist, she bolsters his self-esteem and confidence; he knows that he is completely responsible for someone other than himself and he feels safe and loved in her presence. More than any occupational therapist, she motivates him to use his fine motor and gross motor skills; he is required to get her in and out of her jacket, collar and leash and to independently handle and exercise her. More than any adult she facilitates his interactions with peers; children will approach Rowan and ask questions about his dog and talk with him about her. Rowan says he and Whitby are best friends." Rowan's Mom*

# Skilled Companion Dogs for Veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

In 1996 National Service Dogs (NSD) introduced a unique type of service dog for children with autism. Fourteen years later, the model that was created by NSD is being used by other service providers around the world.

In 2010, National Service Dogs expanded its services to include Skilled Companion Dogs for Canadian Soldiers diagnosed with long-term Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

## What is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?

PTSD is a psychological response to the experience of intense traumatic events, particularly those that threaten life. For military Veterans, the trauma may relate to direct combat duties, the experience of being in a dangerous war zone, or taking part in peacekeeping missions under difficult and stressful conditions.



PTSD is characterized by three main groups of symptoms. They can be classified under the headings of intrusive, avoidance and arousal symptoms.

## Intrusive Symptoms of PTSD:

- Distressing memories or images of the incident
- Nightmares and flashbacks
- Physical symptoms, such as sweating, increased heart rate, or muscle tension

Skilled Companion Dogs are trained to “visit” and “nudge” the individual and provide a tactile distraction from symptoms and have proven to be quite useful in emotional overload situations. In addition, for those experiencing nightmares or flashbacks, tactile stimulation can provide a vitally important reality affirmation. Physical



symptoms such as sweating, increased heart rate or muscle tension can also be reduced by massaging the dog.

## Avoidance/Numbing Symptoms of PTSD:

- Trying to avoid any reminders of the trauma
- Gaps in memory
- Losing interest in normal activities of daily living
- Feeling cut-off or detached from loved ones
- Feeling flat or numb
- Difficulty imagining a future

Skilled Companion Dogs are non-judgmental and provide calm, consistent companionship to the Veteran. The dogs are active and require daily care and training to maintain their skills. Taking care of the dog's daily needs brings routine back into the Veteran's life, and gives them a reason to get out of the house and engage in activities of daily living.

## Arousal Symptoms of PTSD:

- Anger and irritability
- Concentration problems
- Constantly on the look-out for signs of danger
- Jumpy, easily startled

Skilled Companion Dogs provide important feedback to individuals suffering from these types of symptoms by helping them gauge the safety of their surroundings. The dogs are trained to make the individual feel more secure in their environment. For example, the dogs are trained to

“block”. This means the dog will stand perpendicularly in front or behind the veteran to keep other people at a distance, giving them the additional personal space they need to feel secure. The dogs are also taught “cover”. This means the dog will sit or lay facing backward by the veteran's side and be able to alert them to people approaching from behind.

## Benefits:

The new Skilled Companion Dog for Veterans Program will provide mental health care professionals with access to more diverse forms of treatment for their patients. Additionally, Veterans will be provided with:

- Access to a new form of therapy to help recover from the symptoms of PTSD
- Greater independence
- The reduction or elimination of the need for medications with lasting side effects
- An increased ability and desire to participate in social and leisure activities
- New skills, increasing their confidence and giving them something positive and consistent to focus on in order to reduce anxiety
- Reduced stress and frustration for the entire family



For more information on the Skilled Companion Dog for Veterans program, visit [www.nsd.on.ca](http://www.nsd.on.ca).

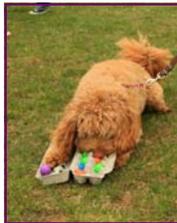
# Fundraising Update

National Service Dogs receives no government funding and relies entirely on funding from the general public, community service clubs, corporate sponsors and community based foundations and fundraising events. With the generous support of community members and volunteers, NSD is able to place over 20 service dogs annually, while also placing Skilled Companion and Companion Dogs with families in need.

## Annual Fundraising Events

NSD hosts three annual events, which include:

- **The Easter Egg Hunt for Dogs:** Raised a record breaking \$100,000 in 2010
- **The Ride for Autism:** Raised over \$7,000 in 2010
- **Mantracking:** Raised over \$20,000 in 2010



## Third-Party Fundraising Events

Various companies, service clubs and clients continued to show their support through fundraising events for NSD.

## Corporate Sponsors

NSD continued to strengthen on-going partnerships with Milk-Bone, Purina, TD Employee's, Petland, Screenco and President's Choice Children's Charity in 2010.

The above corporations supported NSD through general and gift in kind donations, sponsorships, payroll deductions, and volunteer time. Purina, continued as NSD's official food sponsor, and Milk-Bone signed on as their official treat sponsor while also sponsoring four service dog teams.



## Community Service Clubs

NSD continued to strengthen on-going partnerships with service clubs, such as Kiwanis, Optimists, Masons, Knights of Columbus and The Order of the Eastern Star.

Service Clubs support NSD by selecting the organization as their charity of choice and donating their proceeds from designated events to the charity.

## Support from the General Public

In 2010, individuals continued to support NSD through general and gift in kind donations, Commemorative Giving and Planned Gifts, donations In Memoriam to honour a recently departed loved one, donations in lieu of gifts for birthdays and anniversaries, and various sponsorships.



## Sponsorship Opportunities

NSD has various sponsorship levels which are supported by corporate sponsors, service clubs and the general public. These sponsorship opportunities include:

- **Puppy Sponsorship:** \$1,000
- **Kennel Sponsorship:** \$2,000
- **Companion Dog Team Sponsorship:** \$5,000
- **Litter Sponsorship:** \$6,000 to \$10,000
- **Team Training Class Sponsorship:** \$10,000
- **Skilled Companion Dog Team Sponsorship:** \$10,000
- **Service Dogs for Autism Team Sponsorship:** \$30,000



"A CTV News investigation shows that Cambridge-based National Service Dogs is among the best fundraisers in the area. The organization spent \$19,608 on fundraising in 2008 and turned it into \$520,670 in donations."

*CTV News Special Report, Chequing out Charities Pt. 2, aired June 9, 2010*

Official Food Sponsor:  **PRO PLAN**

Official Treat Sponsor:



# Volunteer Update

With only eight full-time staff members, NSD relies heavily on their volunteer base to keep the organization running. Volunteers assist in all areas of the organization so there are numerous opportunities for individuals to get involved.

## Volunteer Opportunities

Some areas in which support is required include:

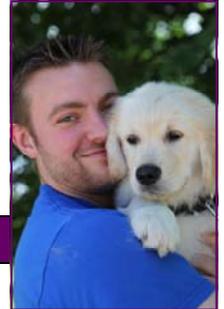
- **Puppy Raising:** Volunteers help socialize and train puppies-in-training by welcoming one into their home for approximately 16 months
- **Dog Walking:** Volunteers walk, groom and massage the dogs in Advanced Training
- **Weekend Sitting:** Volunteers help provide a relaxing weekend for a dog in Advanced Training
- **Fundraising:** Volunteers work with NSD staff to ensure the success of various fundraising events
- **Building Maintenance:** Volunteers assist with general painting and repairs, including building kennels, completing electrical work and plumbing, mowing and gardening

## 2010 Volunteer Awards

Every August, NSD recognizes the outstanding dedication of all their volunteers and pay special tribute to the winners of their volunteer awards. In 2010, the Inman Family won the Shade Volunteer of the Year Award, Gina McDonnell won the Heather Fowler Award, TD Securities Employees won the Danielle Forbes Award, the McNair Family won the Chris Fowler Award, and Russell Fockler won the Brodie Morin Youth Award.

## 2010 Volunteer Report

In 2010, NSD welcomed many new supporters and volunteer retention remained high. The following table provides a breakdown of NSD's volunteer base.



2010 Active Volunteers	
Key Volunteers	11
General Kennel Volunteers	99
Weekend Sitters	20
Sitters for Puppy Raisers	24
Puppy Raisers	92
Fundraising	100
<b>Total Volunteers</b>	<b>346</b>

## The Words of a Puppy Raiser

"Although it is extremely difficult for us to raise a puppy and then return it to NSD for Advanced Training and onto a child with autism, getting feedback from the child's family and knowing how much our puppy is loved and cared for gives us the motivation to continue with the program both in breeding Daisy and raising puppies." *The Inman's, 2010 Shade Award Winners*



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