“Cameron and I have made DBL our No. 1 charity because we love helping both dogs and people.”  Dr. Danielle Rose

Mission

Dogs for Better Lives is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization that professionally trains dogs to help people and enhance lives while maintaining a lifelong commitment to all dogs we rescue or breed and the people we serve.
Welcome from the President

Thank you!

Thank you to everyone who made our 2017-2018 fiscal year such an amazing one for an organization with an incredible history. For over 40 years, Dogs for Better Lives has focused on the mission of rescuing and professionally training Assistance Dogs. As you know, Assistance Dogs make an amazing impact on the lives of the people we serve as well as the family, friends and community members they encounter.

This year, we took significant steps to expand our services and renew our purpose into the next decade and beyond. After much deliberation, we made a major decision to diversify into Autism in addition to our Facility and Hearing Dog Programs. To better represent our broadened mission, we changed our name from Dogs for the Deaf to Dogs for Better Lives. With the official opening of the Training Center, this year, we have a brand-new asset that will help us meet the demand from our clientele for dogs prepared to change lives in all three program areas.

In this fiscal year, we’ve also changed leadership. I was honored to join the team as the organization’s fourth CEO in August, and Al Lane took the position of Chairman of the Board. Together, our aim is to continue and expand our current great work and seek ways to impact more effectively those we serve. We hope you remain as a significant partner with us on this adventure and see the great things we all can accomplish together.

In the following pages, you’ll find some amazing client stories, as well as perspectives from a few of our longtime supporters. I think you’ll agree that these stories offer insight into the opportunities we have to focus on sustainable growth while maintaining our values and quality.

If you are reading this annual report, there’s a good chance you changed someone’s life in a meaningful way this year. Thank you for your efforts. I am excited to join you in the year ahead as we continue making a difference.

Sincerely,

Bryan Williams
President & CEO
Good Sam Clubs
Campers and canines make good friends

An avid fisherman, Bennett Mintz was trolling for steelhead in the Rogue River on a holiday from his Los Angeles home when a sudden storm wiped out his chances for the day. Changing plans, he found himself in historic Jacksonville, Oregon, enjoying a delicious bowl of soup at a quaint restaurant. To his surprise, he encountered a professional acquaintance from California, Roy Kabat. As the two caught up about the intervening years, Roy asked for Bennett’s assistance in promoting his newly founded organization called Dogs for the Deaf. A professional publicist, Bennett was quickly enticed to help by the lure of regular fishing opportunities.

Unfortunately, their great success at promoting the organization in hometown newspapers didn’t translate to substantial donations. Bennett remembers a phone call a year or so later from a discouraged Roy, who felt the whole effort was in financial peril. While the two were discussing ideas, Bennett noted that loving the RV lifestyle and loving dogs usually go together. Through his professional connections, Bennett introduced Roy to representatives of the Good Sam Club, who were happy to spread the news through their membership about the good work Roy was doing.

“It was an absolutely fortuitous relationship that came at a crucial time,” Bennett said.

The connection between Good Sam Clubs and Dogs for Better Lives has lasted 37 years and provided over $4 million in support to date.

That affiliation has lasted 37 years and provided over $4 million in support to date. Good Sam Club has 1.8 million members in chapters across the United States and Canada. Last year, the Washington State Good Sam Clubs donated the most to DBL of all Good Sam Clubs. Contributions from Oregon State Good Sam Club allowed DBL to create professional videos to showcase client and dog stories to help with outreach and education.
Hearing Assistance Dogs
The doctor (and dog) is in

As the doctor asks the 7-year-old to bend over and touch her toes, there is a soft knock at the examination room door. An otherwise unobtrusive black shadow rises from the floor and puts a cold nose to Dr. Danielle Rose, alerting her to the sound. Delight is doing the job she was trained to do as a hearing dog, but she plays a much larger role in Danielle’s pediatric practice and personal life.

“While I lead exams, Delight sits on the floor and relaxes and entertains our patients,” Danielle said. “Sometimes, she serves as a demo ‘patient’ for a reluctant child.”

Delight charms the other physicians and staff at the pediatric group in North Carolina with her ability to play hard on breaks and then return to calm, professional mode, Danielle said.

The two became partners in January 2018. Delight is Danielle’s third hearing dog from DBL. During her medical residency in the 1990s, Danielle’s hearing loss progressed to the moderate/severe range, making work and life harder. She had a frighteningly close call when her apartment building burned down in the night. She was only rescued because of her landlord’s persistence in banging on her window. She realized she needed help, so she attended a hearing loss expo looking for answers. There, she witnessed a DBL team demonstrate a hearing dog’s training to alert to household sounds for everyday safety and independence.

Dr. Danielle Rose and her pediatric assistant make sure there is always a few treats on hand for the hardworking Delight.
“I knew I wanted a hearing dog after that, but I had to wait until I could afford a place with a yard to meet the dog’s needs,” she said.

Danielle was paired with Chuckie (a black/brown terrier cross) in 1995, who she remembers as 24 pounds of brainy speed demon. Danielle and Chuckie bonded quickly. In fact, he soon started alerting her to sounds he had not even been trained for. In his first weeks, Chuckie proved invaluable as he alerted Danielle to a phone call summoning her to a cesarean section birth that she would have otherwise missed.

Ginger, a sweet and gentle Labrador retriever, followed in 2009. Danielle describes Ginger’s successor, Delight, as obedient (but with a small streak of mischief) and adoring of children.

“Cameron and I have made DBL our No. 1 charity because we love helping both dogs and people.” — Dr. Danielle Rose

“The trainer access and assistance at placement and over the life and death of our other two service dogs was so comforting,” Danielle said. “I believe this commitment to teams adds another layer of professionalism that sets Dogs for Better Lives apart.”

Danielle is one of 110 active hearing dog clients across the country, whose lives are enriched by these trained workers at no cost other than the $50 application fee.

Delight’s comforting presence encourages Danielle to persevere despite misunderstanding words at times. “My dog also helps people remember why I might misunderstand something, which ultimately deepens our connection.”

As both longtime supporters and beneficiaries of DBL, Danielle and her husband, Cameron, volunteer as ambassadors for DBL in their local community.

“Cameron and I have made Dogs for Better Lives our No. 1 charity because we love helping both dogs and people,” she said. “It is no easy task to weather 41 years of change and continue to grow and adapt. We both feel DBL has done an exemplary job.”

Delight helps Dr. Rose by alerting her to sounds while she is seeing patients.
Career Change Dogs
Finding forever homes

Dakota’s sweet disposition prompted a DBL team member to rescue her from a shelter. But a thorough medical exam back at DBL headquarters showed that Dakota has slight hip dysplasia that makes her unfit to train as a hearing dog. About one-third of DBL’s rescued dogs need a “career change,” because they aren’t suited to the job for one reason or another. However, all these dogs are perfect companion animals, as their lucky adoptive families can attest.

John and Lela Larkin, who live in southern Oregon, were excited to be considered when they learned Dakota was available for adoption.

“The process was very thorough, and we were impressed,” John said. “We’ve gotten our previous dogs from shelters, but never experienced the attention to detail that the Dogs for Better Lives staff brought to the interviews and home visits. When they brought Dakota to our home, they also brought food, collars, leashes, brushes and toys. After it was agreed we would keep her, I asked, ‘What do I owe you?’ We were stunned when they said there was no charge.”

Though John and Lela made a generous donation, DBL finds forever homes for career change dogs as a free service. Each year, DBL rescues approximately 30 or more dogs as a team scours shelters from Washington to California in search of trainable dogs that greet them and are food motivated. Before adoption, all dogs are given medical exams, vaccinations and microchips, as well as spayed or neutered.

Three years later, you can spot John and Dakota on their daily walks and occasional visits to the dog park. At night, John, Lela, Dakota and the family cat all pile into bed together.

“When I tell Dakota’s story, everyone is always impressed by the effort made to appropriately match us,” John said.

John and Lela Larkin with DBL Career Change Dog Dakota.

43 Number of dog adoptions 2017-2018
Facility Dogs
Modeling Kindness

The boy reads slowly, occasionally losing his place or stumbling over words. As he reads, a black Labrador lays her head in his lap, listening patiently and without judgment. Gloria Alonso, the learning center teacher at a K-8 public school in Portland, Oregon, sits nearby as her Facility dog, Britt, works her canine magic.

Gloria works with and supports children who have physical and behavioral special needs, such as autism, ADHD or traumatic experiences. She waited two years after applying to receive the good news that DBL had the Facility dog for her in May 2017. After a year on the job, school staff and children alike love Britt.

“Everyone knows her and greets her and then starts smiling,” Gloria said. “Britt is extremely calm compared to any other dog. She sits calmly in loud lunchrooms or school assemblies. She loves to cuddle, and she’s very gentle. Her favorite thing is to have belly rubs.”

Britt makes Gloria’s job easier in many ways. Gloria can offer play time or walking time with Britt as a reward to her students for following directions and working hard. If a child is upset, hyperactive or withdrawn, Britt knows just what to do: lick their faces.

“Britt helps kids to calm down and, in most cases, she puts smiles on their faces right away,” Gloria said. “Also, when I would go to a classroom to pick up a student to come with me to the learning center, it was sometimes a struggle because the child didn’t want to be singled out. But now that I’m arriving with Britt, the students are happy to come along. They feel it’s a privilege.”

At the start of the school year, Gloria and Britt visited every classroom. Gloria explains about service dogs and shared some rules about interacting with Britt. Facility dogs like Britt help professionals such as physicians, teachers and counselors/therapists to work with their clients and students with special needs. DBL has partnered six teams through this program with several more now on the waiting list. When Britt is off the clock, she goes home with Gloria for long runs and plenty of play time.

Though only some students get extra time with Britt, Gloria feels the whole school benefits from her presence.

“With Britt among us, she makes it easier for us to remember that we share a common humanity,” she said. “Britt is a daily reminder of kindness for teachers and students”, she said.

Gloria and Britt are one of six teams supporting children with special needs in facilities around the Pacific Northwest.
Autism Assistance Dogs
Furry helper offers freedom and reassurance

People often don’t realize how isolating it can be to have a child on the spectrum, according to Jessica Knuepel, whose 6-year-old son, Liam, has autism.

“Because of the difficulties in taking Liam to a grocery store or elsewhere – becoming overstimulated and instant judgment from people – it was easier to not go out,” she said. “We hadn’t eaten at a restaurant in a couple of years until Dumas joined our family. Dumas visibly helps calm Liam and alleviates some stress for all of us. Now our lives aren’t so confined.”

Living in Oregon, Jessica heard the news about DBL offering Autism Assistance Dogs. She had to wait until Liam was old enough (over 5) to apply. In March, they met Dumas, a 2-year-old yellow Labrador Retriever. Boy and dog instantly bonded.

“They have the same personality in different species,” Jessica said. “They’re both goofballs and they can go all the time. I call them my buff blondes.”

Dumas sleeps on Liam’s bed, a companionship that has significantly improved their nights.

“Liam often wakes up in the middle of the night with night terrors,” Jessica said. “Having Dumas there with him has significantly cut Liam’s reaction time. There were nights it would go on for an hour or more, but with Dumas, the longest one lasted 20 minutes.”

Jessica and Dumas see Liam on and off the school bus each morning, and they are there to greet him when he gets home. The two companions then play in the backyard or snuggle together.

“What I was looking for was an anchor to keep Liam grounded, and I mean that literally because he’s a runner and will bolt,” Jessica said. “Dumas is like an extension of me. Now I have confidence that when we are out, Dumas will alert me if Liam is doing something I need to know. He’s my eyes and ears, my extra help.”

The family even braved a theme park this summer, a vacation they would never have considered without Dumas. With their training, autism dogs sit down and hold position if they feel a strong tug on the leash from the child. This prevents the child from running away or into danger. The dogs also learn to lie against the child’s legs or body to provide compression.

“You can see Dumas’ training,” Jessica said. “His demeanor changes when he has his ‘cape’ on, his autism vest. He knows it’s work time.”
Foundation Giving
Respect and dignity as building blocks of success

In 2017, DBL received a $300,000 capital grant – the largest grant received in the history of the organization – from the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust to support the building of the 18,900 square-foot, 40-kennel Training Facility and its east and west exercise yards.

Based in Vancouver, Washington, the Murdock Trust makes about 300 grants a year to nonprofits in the sectors of health, human services, arts, education and scientific research. Key factors for receiving a grant include the nonprofit’s potential capacity, impact of its work, and the quality of leadership within the organization.

Romanita Hairston-Overstreet, program director at the Murdock Trust, said DBL is an exemplary model of these three building blocks. She said a memorable impression following a site visit to DBL was the palpable feeling of care and dignity staff provided to both clients and animals.

“Dogs for Better Lives has an impressive perspective on who they serve and a well-thought out plan to execute strategies and goals,” she said. “They gave us confidence that their proven methodology, infrastructure and leadership will achieve wonderful work training animals and respecting the dignity of all.”

With the assistance of the Murdock Trust, DBL opened the Training Center in the fall of 2018.
Corporate Giving
Coming Together to Build a Future

When businesses join together to support their community, miracles happen.

Established in 2017, Partnerships for Better Lives is a program through which local businesses can support Dogs for Better Lives (DBL) mission to provide a future for dogs and people. This year, DBL asked the local business community to help start a corporate philanthropic effort to assist with the cost of a Canine Exam Room in the new 40-kennel Training Facility – nearly double the kennels in the current Training Facility. Our total need for the project was $25,000, and by the end of the year, we had exceeded that goal with over $27,000 raised! The Canine Exam Room will be instrumental in the care and diagnosis, ongoing wellness, responding to unexpected illness and/or necessary surgical procedures for our dogs on campus for many years to come. We are grateful to the businesses listed here for making dreams come true and supporting our efforts to care for these special dogs in the best way possible.

**Partnerships for Better Lives**
Applaud them. Support them. Join them.

**Leadership**
Akery Construction
Little Caesar’s Pizza

**Executive**
Coming Attractions
Dixie Hackstedde, Principal Broker
Ecluse Wines
Pacific Electric
SkyOak Financial

**Senior**
Banner Bank
Brown and Brown Northwest Insurance
Medical Eye Center
Mercedes Benz of Medford
Pacific Office Automation
People’s Bank
Pioneer Financial Planning
Paul Smith, Nelson Maler and
Norman Fincher at Morgan Stanley
RKD Alpha Dog
Rosebud Media
Rogue Benefit Planning
5:00 O’clock Marketing

**Partner**
Advocate Insurance Services
Ear, Nose & Throat Associates
Shannon Booth, ENT
Northwest Retirement Plans, Inc.
Ram Offset Lithographers
REED WEALTH MANAGEMENT
Advisors with D.A. Davidson & Co.
Elemental Graphic Designs
The Cow Creek Umpqua Tribe

To join this unique group of leaders or for more information, contact Wanda Cockey at (541) 826-9220 or wanda@dogsforbetterlives.org

Dr. Bradord Frank pictured here in the new Canine Exam Room performing an orthopedic exam checking for any hip or kneecap issues. DBL Kennel Tech, Destiny Johal keeps Weston still for the exam. Weston is a mixed breed rescued from Central Valley California. Dr. Frank is celebrating 40 years as a veterinarian and has been the primary vet for DBL since 1979.
Major Gifts
A Good Investment

For 17 years, Donald Carlson participated in Country Coach Clubs, a social organization for motor coach owners. In addition to enjoying good food and good times, the club also raised funds for Dogs for Better Lives. Carlson’s mother-in-law was deaf, and his wife eventually lost her hearing in one ear, so he was familiar with the challenges of hearing impairment. He is also a dog person, having enjoyed pet companions large and small his whole life. During his membership, the club raised enough to fund 37 Hearing Dogs, he remembers.

After retiring to Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, Donald continued to personally support Dogs for Better Lives. Though he has given to many organizations over the years, Carlson has also stopped giving to groups that didn’t maintain his two philanthropic requirements: a worthy mission and fiscal responsibility.

“The way Dogs for Better Lives is run, they have a high percentile of the donated dollar used for what it is intended for, and I like that, and I want to know it,” he said. “Even when a dog doesn’t work out to become a Hearing Dog, it still gets to be a companion dog. And they use rescue dogs. No waste. I like that.”

When DBL announced extending the mission to autism clients, Donald’s enthusiasm for the organization got a renewed boost. He knew about the difficulties for children on the spectrum from within his own family.

“Even when a dog doesn’t work out to become a Hearing Dog, it still gets to be a companion dog. And they use rescue dogs. No waste. I like that.” Donald Carlson

A few years ago, Donald sold some property, and he gave a significant portion of the proceeds to DBL.

“I had some money and I could,” he said. “I was impressed with the positive results and the good that has come out of Dogs for Better Lives, so I feel like it is a good investment.”

DBL makes a lifetime commitment to all the dogs they rescue or breed. The photos to the left are all an example of this guarantee. Far left photo is Luther, a black lab mix, rescued from Sanctuary One in Jacksonville OR and placed with Stacy in Central Point, OR. Middle photo is Snow from Central California SPCA, placed with Anne and Roger in Trail OR and is featured in the “Rescue Road Trip” film now available on the DBL website. The far right photo is Clover, a small terrier mix from a private owner who had to surrender his pet. Clover was placed with Ginny in Jacksonville, OR. Each have found an important career as someone’s loving companion.
Planned Giving
Paying it forward

Ray Randall was volunteering at a Maryland psychiatric-geriatric facility in the 1980s by bringing his well-mannered show dogs to visit the patients. After several visits, one female patient gradually became willing to pet the dogs. One day she spoke to the furry visitors – the first words she’d spoken in 10 years.

“It was amazing to watch the patients’ reactions to the dogs and how it brought them out of their shells,” Ray said. “I’ve always been around animals, and I have a great regard for them. I know what animals can do to help people.”

Ray first became aware of DBL around the same time, when he encountered one of the organization’s clients and her dog. Ray was familiar with the challenges of the hearing impaired, as he had an aunt and a fraternity brother who were deaf. The organization’s purpose immediately impressed him, so he picked up the phone and made his first donation.

“Dogs for Better Lives has a great mission, and it’s a good way to spend money in my mind,” Ray said. “Dogs love to have jobs and to be rewarded for doing the work.”

“It’s a win-win: the dogs get to help, people receive their help, and everyone is happier for it.” Ray Randall

Following a career in law in Washington, D.C, Ray now lives in Fort Collins, Colorado. As an attorney, Ray often counseled clients to prepare a will to plan for the distribution of their assets. He has taken his own advice, and one of his beneficiaries is DBL.

“I wanted to do some good with my money when I don’t need it anymore,” he said. “By making a planned gift, it allows me to direct my assets and allows the organization some sense of future income, so they can continue their work. For those of us who have our families’ needs covered, it’s a good thing for humanity to provide something beneficial to society – something you believe in and that resonates with you.”

As a long-term donor, Ray has confidence DBL will use his bequest wisely to support the combination of two causes close to his heart: dogs and assisting people with special needs.

In FY 17/18, Dogs for Better Lives received $1,695,887 from individuals who believed in the mission to train and place dogs with individuals seeking greater safety and independence in their lives. For information on how you can become a member of our Guardian Society and support our life-changing mission by making a future gift through your will or trust, contact us at (541) 826-9220 or visit www.dogsforbetterlives.org/planned-giving.
Ambassadors
Creating connections

“I didn’t know there WAS such a thing as a Hearing Dog!”

As an ambassador for DBL, freelance travel writer and DBL client Christine Goodier gets that comment a lot.

With her Hearing Dog, Raylene, Christine has volunteered to represent DBL at activities such as Hearing Loss Association of America chapter meetings and Good Sam Club rallies. She also led a preliminary interview and home visit for a prospective client on behalf of the organization. A resident of Florida, Christine believes ambassadors serve an important role by extending the range of DBL.

“By taking our dogs to meet groups of people, we put a human – and canine – face on the work DBL performs,” she said. “As a devoted corps of volunteers on the ground across the United States, we can look for grassroots opportunities to spread the word about what these wonderful dogs can do. We also save the organization time and travel costs when we can perform essential services like applicant interviews. It’s a long way from Oregon to Florida!”

Through National Ambassadors and onsite Volunteers, DBL received 6,377 hours of volunteer time in Fiscal Year 2018.

Currently, there are 77 DBL ambassadors spread across the United States. Christine said opportunities to promote and support the organization come in large and small ways. She has spoken to large groups in formal situations, but she’s also dropped in on the office staff of an RV park where she was visiting just to introduce Raylene and thank them for their support.

“Many people who have provided financial support to DBL for years have never seen an actual Hearing Dog ‘in person,’ so it is a great opportunity to say thank you on behalf of the organization and those who have received dogs,” she said. “It’s also a chance to speak about the tremendous professionalism of the staff who trained Raylene and me to become a team.”

As a DBL client, Christine also finds it gratifying to demonstrate to other deaf and hearing-impaired people how a Hearing Dog can change their lives for the better.

“Being an ambassador is meaningful to me because it provides ways to give back to Dogs for Better Lives,” she said. “Receiving a professional Hearing Dog, my wonderful Raylene, at no cost was a priceless gift.”

To become an ambassador visit www.dogsforbetterlives.org and learn more about this critical volunteer role. DBL is especially in need of Ambassadors in the Midwest region of the U.S.
2017-18 Financials
Audited as of September 2018

Statement of Activities

Support and Revenue
Individuals, Businesses and Clubs - $1,062,317
Foundations - $341,590
Bequests - $1,695,887
Investment Income and Other Revenue - $1,430,847

TOTAL SUPPORT & REVENUE – $4,530,641

Expenses
Dog Training and Placements - $1,752,736
Public Education - $1,451,911
Fund Development - $309,709
Administrative - $143,619

TOTAL EXPENSES – $3,657,975

81 cents of every dollar you give goes toward the programmatic services of Dogs for Better Lives.
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President, Coming Attraction Theaters

Trish Welch, Vice Chair
Executive Director, Creating Community Impact, LLC

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Special thanks to all contributing Dogs for Better Lives staff and clients who helped in the production of this Annual Report.

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John Drach
Training Director

Harvey Potts
Development Director

Meagan Steahly
Finance Director
Training director John Drach with national DBL ambassador and actor Ryan Lane and Bryan Williams, the new CEO of DBL, shown above cutting the red ribbon at the grand opening of the new Training Facility in October 2018. Members of the DBL Executive Team and the Medford Chamber of Commerce also pictured above.

Corporate Partner Matt Burkholder of Mercedes-Benz of Medford hosted a corporate mixer for DBL in September 2017. He is joined here by DBL Client, Catherine and Facility Dog Fancy, of the Child Advocacy Center and Fancy’s trainer, Jessica Reichmuth.

Derek Davis and Damien Rennie of SkyOak Financial share a toast to a successful Corporate Partner’s mixer. SkyOak along with all FY18 Partners, raised over $25,000 for the new Canine Exam Room.
Dogs for Better Lives National Pawprint
Total number of Clients

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