

Let's Go!



Canine Partners

Amazing dogs. Transforming lives.

Summer 2021



caninepartners.org.uk



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Welcome to our Summer 2021 issue of Let's Go!

As restrictions are beginning to lift across the UK, Nicola Martin, CEO of Canine Partners, talks about looking to the future and continuing to make an impact.



Nicola Martin,
Canine Partners CEO



"After a challenging year-and-a-half through the Covid-19 pandemic, it seems as though lockdowns and tough restrictions are becoming a thing of the past as we take positive strides towards a brighter future.

"As a charity we are indebted to our dedicated teams of staff and volunteers who have provided incredible support and commitment to our partnerships, dogs-in-training and each other over the last year. Thanks to our wonderful community and supporters we are in a strong position as we gradually restart all our activities.

Information about our training programmes, fundraising and Covid-19 restrictions easing are correct at time of printing.

"The pandemic has really highlighted the strength of the human-animal bond. Our dogs have not only been providing practical support, but also emotional support, companionship and unconditional love during difficult times. You can read more about the impact our canine partners have on pages 6-7.

"This issue of Let's Go! is full of truly inspirational stories that I'm delighted to share with you, including our cover star Steph's story on page 11 – she has had three canine partner assistance dogs since the 1990s and has watched the charity grow to what it is today. You can also follow the journey of canine partner Carmen on pages 8-9 from puppyhood to partnership, showcasing why our Puppy Parent volunteers are so vital to raising the UK's next generation of assistance dogs.

"I hope you enjoy this issue of Let's Go! magazine."

**A heartfelt
thank you for all
your support during
these exceptional
times from
everyone at
Canine Partners**

This issue is kindly supported by our corporate partners
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Get in touch We always love to hear from you.

You can follow us on Twitter Facebook YouTube and Instagram.
Write to us at: **Canine Partners, Mill Lane, Heyshott, West Sussex, GU29 0ED.**
Email info@caninepartners.org.uk or call us on **08456 580 480.**

Transforming the lives of people living with MS

The MS Society report that more than 130,000 people in the UK have Multiple Sclerosis (MS), which affects the central nervous system and immune system. MS is currently the condition of over 18% of the 425 people that have a working canine partner assistance dog.



Lucas allows Sean to be an active part of his children's lives, helps Sean with daily tasks, and gives the family peace of mind that Sean is safe when they aren't there.



One of the people the charity supports is Sean, from Hampshire, who has secondary progressive MS. With his condition becoming steadily worse, life for 40-year-old Sean and his family was becoming more difficult. But in August 2018, their lives changed with the arrival of canine partner Lucas, who was specially trained to support Sean's needs.

Now, two years on, it's not just Sean's life that has been impacted by Lucas, but the whole family who benefit in such a wide variety of ways.

“Quite often my daughter Elsie will leave her dolly behind downstairs at bedtime. Before Lucas it was really difficult for me to help as mobility is such an issue for me. But now I can ask Lucas to fetch it for her which is such a simple thing, but it makes me feel great and like a proper dad.”

Sean, partnered with canine partner Lucas

“My own mental health has improved, as I don't feel guilty for needing a moment to myself. If I need a break, I feel comfortable to go out of the house knowing that Lucas is there.”

Josie, Sean's wife

* from mssociety.org.uk – March 2021.

Watch Sean and Lucas' story in a video on our blog
caninepartners.org.uk/seanandlucas



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Sign up at lottery.caninepartners.org.uk

Sponsor our amazing puppies



Help transform someone's life forever by signing up to support our My Amazing Puppy scheme. Sponsor a puppy through their first year of training to become a fully trained assistance dog – for just £4.34 a month!

Say hello to our amazing new spring puppies Berry and Fizz. Berry is an inquisitive black Labrador and she likes to explore and sniff everything around her. Fizz is a loving Labrador x Golden Retriever who loves getting her head scratched!

When you sponsor a puppy you'll receive quarterly 'Pupdates' and a special welcome pack about your chosen puppy. My Amazing Puppy also makes the perfect gift.

Help start one of our puppies on their incredible journey to become a fully trained assistance dog.

Visit myamazingpuppy.org.uk
to sponsor today



The **impact** we've made on people's lives



In October 2020, we launched our first User Voice Survey to all active partnerships and we are pleased to share some of the results with you.

95%

of the partners who took part in the survey said that their dog has met or exceeded their expectations.

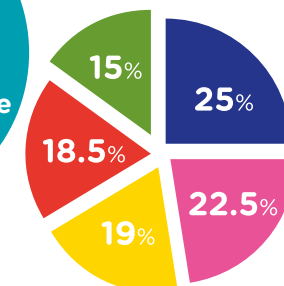
92%

of the partners who took part in the survey indicated that they would either 'recommend' or 'strongly recommend' the charity to others.



Even though 2020 was a difficult year, we made a positive impact in so many ways, including these examples (right)

Top 5 biggest impacts on partners' lives



Information from Canine Partners User Voice Survey 2020
Responses to the question 'Rank the top 5 areas where your canine partner has made the biggest impact in your life'.



How partners felt supported by our dogs during the Covid-19 pandemic



72%

felt more supported than usual by their dog in relation to companionship



67%

received more support than usual from their dog in managing their mental health and emotional well-being



38%

felt more able to tackle new challenges during the pandemic because of their dog

Data collected from Canine Partners User Voice Survey 2020

Voices from the survey

“My canine partner has given me a new lease of life and a sense of independence that I had lost. During lockdown I would have been incredibly lonely had it not been for the companionship and support that my canine partner has given me.”

“I had not anticipated how much my canine partner would improve my confidence and how strong our bond would be. I am able to work full-time again and that's all because of my girl.”

There were 272 respondents to the 2020 User Voice Survey

Nationwide support from our volunteers



1 million hours

of support, care and training provided by our wonderful volunteers to the puppies and dogs in their care

March 2020 to March 2021

Nationwide support from our Aftercare Team



15,500 hours

of support to partnerships across the country delivered by our Aftercare Team

March 2020 to March 2021

Canine Partners tracks the impact of its work in 11 different ways ...



Please visit caninepartners.org.uk/impactseries to find out more

Help to raise the UK's next generation of assistance dogs

What does it take for a life to transform? It starts with a puppy adorable and warm. When Golden Retriever Carmen was born on 11 June 2017 she had no idea that, to someone living with a physical disability, she was a bundle of hope.

.....
Training complete, canine partner Carmen was paired with Wendy

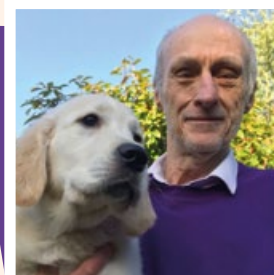


On a warm August day, at just eight weeks old, Carmen was placed in the East Dorset home of a volunteer called Graham.

Vital Puppy Parent volunteers like Graham, take care of the charity's precious puppies during the first year of their training. Our volunteers are committed, consistent, compassionate and kind, with a good dose of patience to guide and

encourage a little pup while they learn the ropes and begin their journey to becoming a future life-changer.

"As with all the reward-based training we do alongside the charity's specialist Puppy Team trainers, the focus is short and fun basic training sessions each day," says Graham, who helps to socialise and train the puppy in his care for up to 14 months.



“The reward of being Carmen's Puppy Parent was the sense of achievement and being part of a dedicated Canine Partners team working towards her becoming a successful assistance dog.”

.....
Graham, a Puppy Parent volunteer who has looked after eight puppies for the charity

"We enjoyed many adventures together while I helped Carmen experience a variety of different places that she would be likely to encounter as a fully trained assistance dog such as public transport, shops, crowded places, heavy traffic, hospitals, lifts and church services to name a few."

It can be a tug on the heartstrings for each Puppy Parent volunteer to see the pup they've nurtured move on to the next stage of training at one of the charity's two national training centres. However, many volunteers, describe knowing that their puppy is now a fully trained dog, transforming someone's life, as the only reward they need.

After completing the charity's specialist Advanced Training programme, Carmen was successfully matched with Wendy, who has a rare genetic condition called Dystrophic Recessive Epidermolysis Bullosa. The condition is painful, causing open wounds and blisters at the slightest touch.



"I had previously had a canine partner called Edward, lovingly known as Teddy, but when he retired I knew I couldn't manage without another assistance dog and I could not bear to lose my independence again," says 71-year-old Wendy, from Lancashire.

Carmen is trained to very carefully help Wendy get undressed and dressed; she helps with household tasks too, like loading and unloading the washing machine and will also hand a purse or credit card to the cashier in shops. These tasks and others help Wendy to avoid trauma to her skin.

“Carmen is my hands and anything I need she does for me. She picks up anything I drop – often without being asked!”

Wendy, partnered with canine partner Carmen

Carmen is one of over 420 working canine partner assistance dogs in the UK today, all of which had a Puppy Parent volunteer help to give them the best start in life.

Could you, or someone you know, help Canine Partners to raise the UK's next generation of assistance dogs? Please visit caninepartners.org.uk/puppyparents to find out more.

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Partnership story

Steph and Wisteria

Our Let's Go! cover star, Steph Flower, has Hereditary Spastic Paraplegia. As one of our first partnerships, she has been partnered with three canine partners over 30 years.



Above left: Steph with Frodo ©Paul Hackett. Centre: Elmo takes over from retired Frodo in 2009. Right: Wisty becomes Steph's third Canine Partner in 2017.

“My three children have the same condition as I do, and I was not diagnosed until after they were born. My life just revolved around disability and it was hard as there was so much that I couldn't do on my own.

“When I met my first canine partner, Frodo, in 1999, it was like someone put the light on and my life was completely transformed. Because of Frodo I met John, now my husband, as having a canine partner gave me the confidence to sign up to a dating agency.

“When Frodo retired in 2009 I was partnered with Elmo, a yellow Labrador X Golden Retriever. The short time I had with no assistance dog made me realise what a huge difference a canine partner makes to my life.

“When Elmo retired, I met my current canine partner Wisteria, in June 2017. She is a little blonde bombshell and pocket rocket!

“Wisty, like the other two I had before her, helps me in so many practical ways, including fetching my crutches, helping me get undressed and bringing me my slippers. Out shopping she'll pass my purse to the cashier, take my card out of the card reader, get things off the shelf and put them on the conveyer belt too!

“Each of my canine partners have had their own qualities and definitely their own personalities. Most importantly, they have all given me my independence back, which is priceless.”

To read more of Steph's story and other partnership stories on our blog, please visit caninepartners.org.uk/blog

A day in the life of an Advanced Trainer during Covid-19



My name is Faith and I am one of the team of seven specialist Advanced Trainers at the Canine Partners Midlands Training Centre.

When our dogs are around 14 to 18 months old, they move into advanced training at one of our two Training Centres.

The core skills they learnt as puppies are extended to tasks, such as opening doors and unloading a washing machine. This is taught by me and 12 of my colleagues in the charity's Advanced Training Team.

“When the first lockdown began, our weekend Fosterers welcomed our dogs into their homes full time. Since then they have been fantastic at helping us train the dogs remotely using video call technology. It has been invaluable for us to have such amazing volunteers to care for our dogs and help them keep up their training and enrichment under our guidance.”



Working through the Covid-19 pandemic

We have been through many different ways of working depending on which restrictions are in place. Our Advanced Training Teams are split into 'bubbles' to ensure that there are minimum people onsite at one time.

Half of my week is taking dogs into the community and working from home catching up with paperwork, and the other half is based on site.

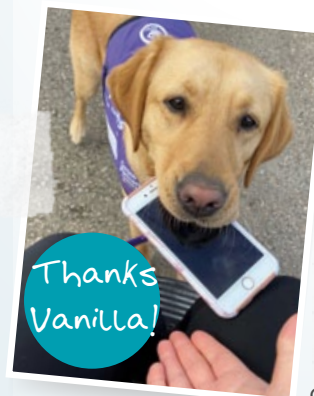
Our amazing volunteer Fosterers

Our dogs in training live with our volunteer Fosterers full time off-site. Our training schedule means we work with each dog at least twice a week. It is important for the dogs to come to the Training Centre so that we can work on the dog's task work and they can see our Dog Welfare Team for a health check. We also work with our wonderful Fosterers to give them training activities they can practice with the dogs at home.



We couldn't do our work without the support of Fosterers like Alison

Out and about in the community



I usually work with four dogs, on rotation, across the week. Depending on restrictions, I will take each dog, in turn, into the community.

There we develop the skills for them to walk nicely next to different mobility aids, whilst getting them used to different distractions out and about. It's important to give each dog a break so after a short training session, I take them for a good off-lead run in a local park or wooded walk, so they can enjoy some free time, sniffing around and getting to play.

At the training centre

I work with my dogs separately throughout the day, so each dog spends some of their time in our lovely new kennels. Throughout the day I really focus on the key skills the dogs already have when they first come into advanced training - retrieve, push and tug. We have all the household equipment they need to be trained to use too, such as washing machines, shop shelves and household furniture.

Fun and games

Our training programme is based on being fun, positive and reward based, with lots of enrichment. The dogs also have plenty of rest, usually having a snooze whilst we have our lunch or getting to relax with a tasty frozen Kong treat. They then have a relaxing evening at home with their foster family.

Fosterers provide a vital role in supporting our Advanced Trainers to ensure that the assistance dog in training is in tip top condition to be matched into partnership, which will change someone's life.

Could you be a volunteer Fosterer?
Find out more at caninepartners.org.uk/foster

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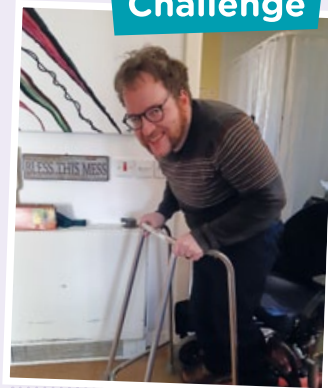
Check out our full range at: caninepartners.org.uk/shop

#FitFor30Challenge Mark's fundraising story

"I've applied for a canine partner myself and I know fundraising has been difficult due to the Covid-19 pandemic. I wanted to raise money for the charity as I am passionate about disabled people being as independent as possible.

"I was inspired by Captain Sir Tom Moore, as I use a walking frame for exercise therapy. I just doubled what I normally do in a week and decided to tie it in to the Fit for 30 Challenge.

"I didn't originally set a fundraising goal for my challenge, I was just hoping for a couple of hundred pounds. In total I raised over £2,490 and I am very shocked by the support, but also very pleased with the money I've raised for Canine Partners."



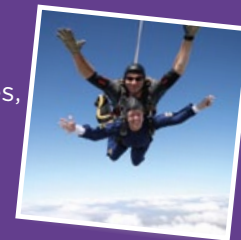
Mark from Scotland, participant in the Fit for 30 Challenge in March 2021

Coming up at Canine Partners

Here are some exciting ways for you to get involved!

Take on a challenge

Are you ready to step out of your comfort zone and take on a challenge? From abseils and skydives for adrenaline junkies, to the Virtual London Marathon and our own Fit for 30 Challenge – we have plenty of options to challenge yourself whilst raising vital funds for Canine Partners. Please visit caninepartners.org.uk/challenges to find out more.



Paws for a Cuppa

If you're planning to get back together with friends and family over the next few months, why not do it with a 'cuppa' for Canine Partners.

Whether you host your Paws for a Cuppa tea party in your garden or sell cakes to your neighbours, you'll be helping us to train more amazing assistance dogs.

Please visit caninepartners.org.uk/pawsforacuppa to find out more.



SUSSEX FREEMASONS

We are extremely grateful to the Sussex Freemasons for awarding a £30,000 grant to support us in providing companionship, self-confidence, independence and motivation for those in later life, whom we partner with our highly trained assistance dogs.



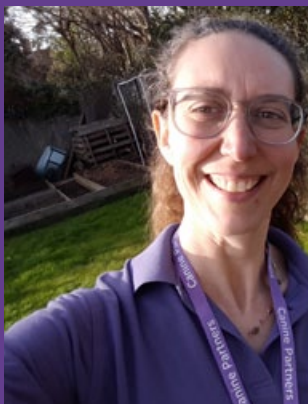
Could we be your Charity of the Year?

Do you belong to an organisation or work for a business that supports a Charity of the Year? Please consider nominating Canine Partners and help us to train more amazing dogs. For more information, please email corporate@caninepartners.org.uk

We have some simple, every day initiatives that are quick and easy to do from the comfort of your home. We have lots of ideas that might help to make your life a little easier, and they could all add up to making a big difference to Canine Partners.

little things

Please visit caninepartners.org.uk/littlethings to find out more.



**A huge thank you from all of us here at
Canine Partners for your incredible support**

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 **Canine
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