



2012  
Annual  
Report

*Fidos For Freedom, Inc.*



®



**An Assistance Dog and Therapy Dog  
Training Organization**

Fidos For Freedom, Inc.  
1200 Sandy Spring Road,  
Laurel, MD 20707  
410-880-4178; 301-490-4005  
FAX: 301-490-9061

[www.fidosforfreedom.org](http://www.fidosforfreedom.org)



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
A Message from the President, Judy Cannon.....	3
Board of Directors and Program Directors.....	4
Introduction.....	5
Assistance Dog Training Program.....	6
Client Services Program.....	12
Therapy Dog Program.....	14
DEAR (Dogs Educating and Assisting Readers) Program.....	21
Junior Volunteer Program.....	23
Community Education Program.....	24

*A Message from Fidos'  
President, Judy Cannon*



*Thank you for your continued support of Fidos For Freedom, Inc. I have concluded my term as President of the Board of Directors at the end of the fiscal year. Please continue to support our new president, Tracy Bowman.*

This past fiscal year was one of changes at Fidos For Freedom. We undertook major renovations at our facility, beginning with the flooring on the main training floor. We removed the carpeting and put down dog friendly rubberized flooring. This change has been wonderful in reducing allergens, aiding cleanup of dog messes and being safer and easier on everyone's feet and backs.

We discovered an unexpected consequence in the process. The new flooring does not absorb sound the same way the carpeting did, and as a result, our deaf and hard of hearing clients experience reverberating sounds and echoes from the hard surfaces. We are now looking for sound baffling solutions.

The other major renovation we made was to the offices; we relocated the offices to the front of our space, where the old conference room was located, and made the old office area into a conference room. This has created a better work flow in the building, allows the office staff to better respond to the front door, and has created private work spaces for staff, and a small conference room for the board of directors. Renovations were funded by the Dorothy Rich Foundation.

This past spring our volunteers spent countless hours preparing for our re-accreditation with Assistance Dogs International (ADI). This process involves gathering many documents to demonstrate that we meet numerous standards of excellence in our training of service dogs, handling of clients, and providing support to the trained teams. This year the accreditation process also included our prison program. This process occurs every five years.

We had a very successful Stroll 'N Roll fundraising event on September 30th at Allen Pond Park in Bowie, MD. Allen Pond Park was a new location for Fidos. It is a beautiful, well maintained park and we look forward to returning in 2013. This event was organized in record time by a dedicated group of Fidos volunteers. This group was creative in their approach and raised over \$11,000 on that beautiful fall day.





2011-2012 Board of Directors and Program Directors

Board of Directors

President of the Board:	Judy Cannon
Secretary of the Board:	Terry Portis
Treasurer of the Board:	Jane Harford
Board Member:	Tracy Bowman
Board Member:	Eileen Thacker

President Emerita: Sherri Sirotkin

Executive Director: Suzanne Miller<sup>1</sup>

Program Directors

Training Program:	Pat Jarvis
Client Services Program:	Sandy Ball
Therapy Dog Program:	Sylvia Zborowski
Community Education Program:	Sharon Tucker

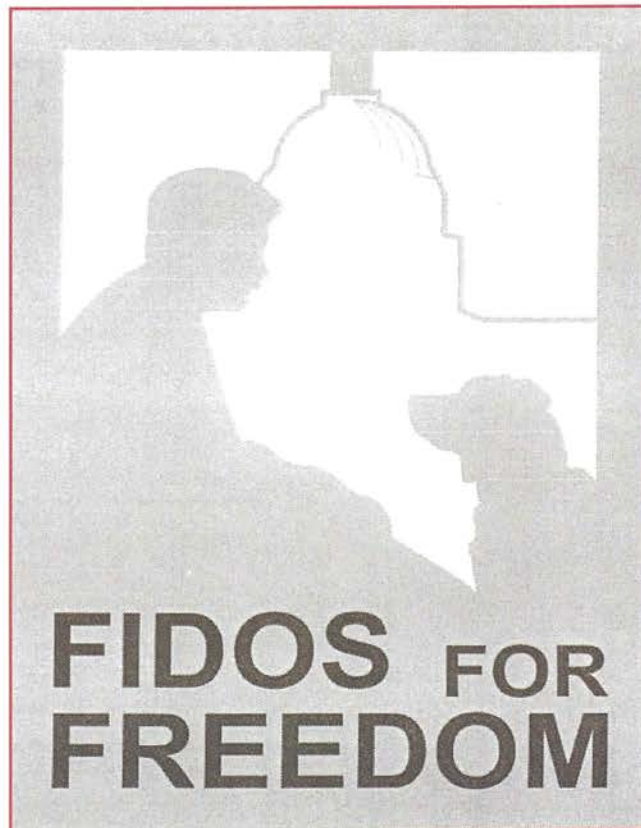
---

<sup>1</sup> Through September 13, 2012

## *Introduction*

Fidos For Freedom, Inc. (Fidos) is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization located at 1200 Sandy Spring Road, Laurel, Maryland. Our mission is to enhance the quality of life for people in the Washington-Baltimore Metropolitan community by providing specially trained hearing dogs, service dogs, and therapy dogs.

Fidos has many programs through which we educate the public about individuals with disabilities and about the benefits of assistance dogs and therapy dogs and the work that these specially trained dogs do for individuals with disabilities, children with reading difficulties, and patients in health care facilities. Fidos For Freedom, Inc. programs consist of Assistance Dog Program, Client Services Program, Therapy Dog Program, DEAR Program (Dogs Educating and Assisting Readers), Junior Volunteer Program, and Community Education Program.



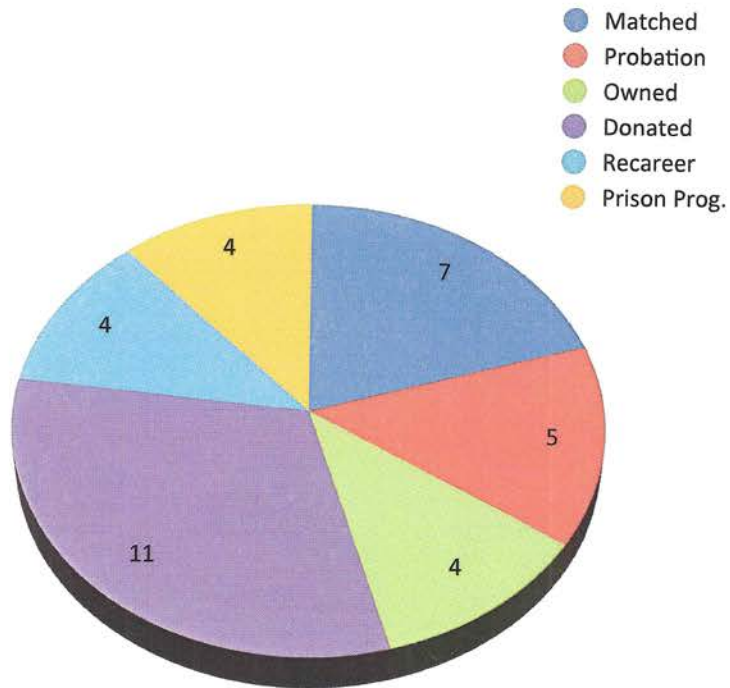


# Assistance Dog Program

## It's all about the dogs

The foundation of a hearing team or a service team is the happy, well adjusted dog doing a job for which the dog has been well trained and is well suited to do, both physically and emotionally. Our program is geared to selecting, training, and preparing that dog to take its place with a client to assist that client in his or her day-to-day life.

The training department at Fidos is comprised completely of volunteers, including all of our trainers and puppy raisers. This group of dedicated volunteers prepares dogs to become hearing dogs for deaf or hard of hearing individuals or service dogs for individuals with physical disabilities.





## *Puppy and Dog Selection and Puppy Raisers*

Our staff selects the puppies or young dogs that are donated by breeders or obtained through rescue programs. The puppies are screened for social skills and basic aptitude for learning as well as for their general health including physical structure and any breed specific tendencies requiring diagnostic checks. We have also accepted dogs raised and trained at the Dwight Correctional Center Helping Paws Program in Dwight, Illinois.

Our volunteer puppy raisers bring the puppies into their home and provide love, socialization, training at our training center, and the transport to veterinary care that our growing puppies need. The foundation each puppy's early life is very important for their overall development. Living in a home, learning the "house rules", traveling in the family car, venturing out to meet neighbors, and seeing the "big world" out there is crucial for our future service and hearing dogs.

These puppy raiser volunteers are crucial to our program. Our puppy raisers are often asked how they can give up a puppy they have raised. They know that the job they are doing to raise these puppies has the power to help change lives.

## Intermediate Dogs – The Prison Stay

An intermediate step in our dogs' training is a stay at the Federal Correctional Institution in Cumberland Maryland. Fidos runs a joint program with the FCI Cumberland named Tails of Freedom. Four of our dogs in training are in residence in Cumberland. The inmates at Cumberland have learned how to train both the basic obedience and the more advanced skills such as retrieve, opening and closing doors and refrigerators, flipping light switches and the wall plate for automatic door openers. Our training staff volunteers who work with this program are also required to be qualified as volunteers in the Federal Prison system. This dedicated group of trainers travels to Cumberland and visits the inmates and the puppies every two weeks. Classes are conducted and updates on the dogs' progress are provided. The puppies come back from the program as young adult dogs with solid assistance skills.



## Advanced Training

Once the dogs return from Cumberland or come to us from Dwight Correctional Center they go to live in a trainer's home. The trainer brings the dogs to training classes, has the dog accompany them in public and, if permitted, to their work. This is the stage where the dog learns to use their skills and socialization and receive advanced training in public settings. The dogs go to restaurants, shopping, on the subway and to many other public places and events to get ready to work with their future partner. The dogs are evaluated at this point for the skills they do best and whether they have the abilities to become a hearing dog or service dog, or a combination of both. The dogs are closely evaluated for their skills and their working "style" as well, to better determine the best partnership between client and dog. The dogs start working at the center with wheelchairs, walkers, and other medical equipment and then with clients in training. Dogs with the ability to become hearing dogs are identified and specially trained.

## The Matched Team



The training staff carefully evaluates both the clients who are training for dogs, their specific needs, and the dogs who are in training. When the client's needs and the dog's size and skills match up, we have a match. This is an exciting time, but also a time for a lot of work on the part of the trainer, the client, and the dog. The trainer works with the client and dog to customize the dog's skills to the needs to the client. The dog starts spending time at the client's home, in their place of business, and other places the client frequents. The client's family is involved in the training also as needed. When the team is ready, they take several tests. One is the Assistance Dogs International public access test to show they are ready and safe to work in public. They also take and must pass the skills test to show that they can utilize their dog's skills safely and effectively. We also test the clients on their knowledge about the health of the dog, proper handling, feeding and weight management, grooming, and providing the proper veterinary care for their dog. The clients are taught how to teach their new partner additional skills they may need down the road.

## Beyond the Match

The team enters a probationary year following testing and the dog moves into the client's home. We provide two classes each week for our client teams to drop in and work with their dogs, not only for their probationary year but for as long as the team would like to attend. Clients are always able to confer with the training staff, both in person at the polishing classes and via phone or email.

Yearly re-certification tests are offered to all client teams for the life of the team as well. These tests include the ADI public access test, team tests, skills tests, Americans with Disabilities Access rights, and general dog knowledge.



## *Volunteers*

Fidos can't operate our training department without volunteers. Our training staff consists of some of the most dedicated volunteers any organization would be proud of. We ask a tremendous amount of these volunteers and they go above and beyond delivering.

We continue to look to increase our volunteer staff to maintain the quality of our teams. We need puppy raisers, prison trainers, vacation home providers, trainers, class callers, liaisons to breeders and rescue groups, record keepers, photographers, writers, staff developers, equipment managers, computer and AV personnel, and others. Staff development and continuing education for our training staff are essential to maintaining the quality of our program.

## 2012 Sponsors



Anne Arundel Community College,  
memorial for Meribeth Allman

Ameriwaste

John Bledsoe

Nelva Bledsoe

Brian Bowman

Judith Kneen

Carol Margolis

Nelkin Fund

Order of the Eastern Star

Margaret Paul

Rotary Club of Columbia-Patuxent

E. Wiesburger

Joanne Wilson

Sponsors are the lifeblood of Fidos For Freedom. They make our work possible by generously supporting the dogs in training. Their donations provide for the food, supplies and vet care for Fidos dogs until they become assistance dogs.



# *Client Services Program*



Since its establishment in April 2002, the Fidos Client Services Program has made great strides in providing valuable assistance to both new and experienced clients. The Client Services Program currently consists of eight client volunteers--the Director, Intake Coordinator, and six Case managers.

Client Services coordinates closely with the training department in areas that involve client training. This collaboration included changes in the Service Dog and Hearing Dog programs and ongoing work on updating Client Progress Records, contracts, and revisions to the client handbook.

The mission of the Client Services Program is to ensure that applicants and clients progress through the application process and the training program at their own pace. Client Services works to insure that each client's individual needs are addressed. Client Services works to cover all aspects of the client training process from application requests to coordination with the Application and Client Review Committee through the graduation of each assistant dog team.

Key elements of the client services program include conducting an orientation period for in which new clients are prepared for the training process and client support meetings to assure continued support and success. There were three such meetings during this fiscal year. The series began early in our fiscal year, November 19, 2011, when Beth Mittleman discussed "Case Managers". On January 28<sup>th</sup> the topic was "Household Pets and Fidos Assistance Dogs", which was presented by Pat Jarvis, Director of Training. On March 24<sup>th</sup>, "Grooming Your Fidos Assistance Dog" was presented by Suzanne Miller, our Executive Director. There were also two client outings for training purposes; January 7, 2012 at Arundel Mills Mall, and BWI Airport on March 17, 2012.

The Client Services Program received 106 requests for Hearing Dogs or Service Dogs during the year, which was a substantial increase from 46 requests in 2011. Applicants returned 11 completed applications. There were two Applicant and Client Review Committee (ACRC) meetings during the year. The committee conducted 4 Interviews. There were 4 interviewees accepted (3 Service Dog clients and 1 Hearing Dog client); no interviewee was denied. Only one applicant/client dropped out after the interview.

Graduating teams at Fidos' Annual Banquet in April 2012 included:

David & Maya (Service Dog)  
Hunter & Raven (Service Dog)  
Laurie & Patti (Hearing Dog)  
Ron & Derby (Service Dog)

During 2012, the Client Services Program, in conjunction with the Training Program hosted an Open House during International Assistance Dog Week. With help from therapy teams, the August 12, 2012 event was a success. The Client Services and Training Program have developed a revised application for use by military veterans.





## *Therapy Dog Program*

### **Giving to the Community – Fidos' Therapy Dog Program**

The Fidos For Freedom Therapy Dog Program sends specially trained, well-mannered dogs to provide emotional and physical benefits to many people in the community. The volunteers and their dogs bring unconditional love to patients in various health care facilities throughout our community. The Fidos Therapy Dog Program continued to deliver patient therapy and further expanded our community outreach in 2012.

This year the Therapy Dog program added our first ever Domestic Violence Abuse Center and also began delivering animal Assisted Therapy, a directed physical therapy style using dogs to improve patient outcomes.



Each facility type addresses the needs of a different section of the community. The dog's skills are often matched to the type of facility and the needs of the patients. The variety of facilities showcases the broad skill range of the Fidos Therapy Dog Program.



Visits include the following types of facilities:

- Autistic Adult Day-Care
- Domestic Abuse Center<sup>2</sup>
- Nursing Homes
- Local Hospitals
- Hospice
- Family Support centers like the Ronald McDonald House and Johns Hopkins Children's House

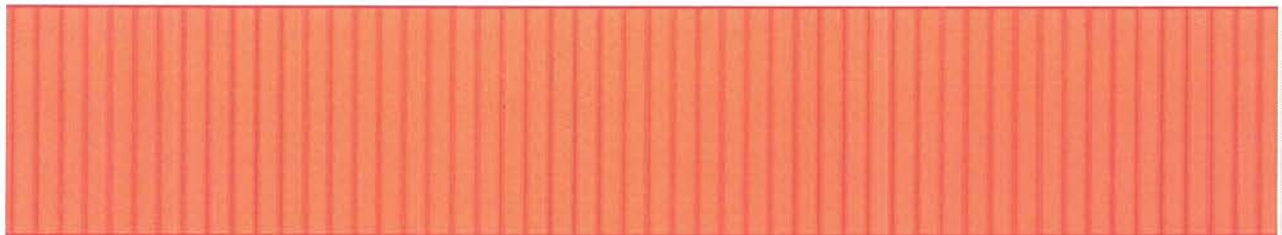
---

<sup>2</sup> New in 2012



Each month the scheduled visit is showcased on facility bulletin boards and calendars.

Patients look forward to snuggling and kissing with new friends (unconditional love is hard to beat); the staff appreciates giving patients a break in their routine; and family members welcome visitors to brighten the day. Everyone looks forward to our monthly visits!





When our Therapy Dogs visit hospital and rehabilitation patients they do very important work, such as:

- cheering lonely and depressed patients
- reducing boredom
- making the facilities feel more homelike
- encouraging conversations with visiting family
- helping patients achieve goals through Animal assisted Therapy and Pet Therapy visits
- comforting a patient's family and friends



These wonderful **Therapy Dogs** are our own volunteers' pets that have passed special temperament and obedience tests. Each dog and person team attends weekly classes at the Fidos facility to further improve obedience skills and learn visit etiquette for our many different types of facilities. The dogs practice maneuvering through crowds, safely entering elevators, walking around health care equipment, proper 'bedside manners' for visits with fragile patients, and best of all, how to give kisses. These classes also strengthen the dog-owner bond, important to a good therapy visit.

Fidos Therapy Dog teams **provided 238 health care visits in 2012**. The 120 Therapy Dog teams brightened the lives of residents, staff and family at 22 local health care facilities serving Anne Arundel County, Prince Georges County, Montgomery County, Howard County, and Baltimore City. Fidos added 16 new Therapy Dog teams and one new patient care facility in the year 2012.



# *Fidos Therapy Dog Facilities*



- AAMC DeCesaris Cancer Center, Annapolis, MD
- Anne Arundel Medical Center, Annapolis, MD
- Athelas Institute, Columbia , MD
- Brooke Grove Retirement Village , Sandy Spring , MD
- Cedar Lane School, Fulton, MD
- Cherry Lane Nursing Center , Laurel, MD
- Heritage Harbour Nursing Home, Annapolis, MD
- Holy Cross Hospital , Silver Spring , MD
- Holy Cross Rehabilitation and Nursing Center, Burtonsville , MD
- House of Ruth, Linthicum, MD
- Johns Hopkins Children's House, Baltimore , MD
- Joseph Richey Hospice House, Baltimore MD
- Kennedy Krieger Institute, Baltimore , MD
- Manor Care Health Services, Silver Spring , MD
- Montgomery General Hospital, Olney , MD
- Port Discovery Children's Museum, Baltimore , MD
- Riderwood at Renaissance Gardens, Silver Spring , MD
- Ronald McDonald House, Baltimore, MD
- Spa Creek Center, Annapolis, MD
- Tate House, Baltimore, MD



Another year of bringing smiles and happiness to the community by visiting facilities with our wonderful therapy dogs is what makes Fidos Therapy Dog program so special and enduring. Our therapy dog teams tell us all the time how much it means to them to be able to bring some small measure of happiness to the patients, their families, the staff, and all those who lives we touch.

The people we visit tell us over and over again how much the therapy visits mean to all who get to be a part of the experience. The facilities we visit tell us how residents or patients eagerly await the dogs visiting every month and how it brightens what for some is a very difficult day or time in their lives. The Fidos TD program continues to strive to bring therapy, warmth, and good old fashioned happiness to all we touch and hope to do so for many years to come.

# DEAR Program

## Dogs Educating and Assisting Readers

The Fidos DEAR Program (Dogs Educating and Assisting Readers) is a reading literacy program that matches elementary school children with a therapy dog and handler for reading tutoring. The program provides the children with a sense of accomplishment and self-esteem enabling them to increase their reading grade levels.

DEAR visits were conducted weekly at Bond Mill Elementary School in Laurel, MD, and in three Howard County libraries (East Columbia Library, Glenwood Library, and Savage Library).



# *DEAR Program...*

“We have 24 students who participate in Fidos DEAR program at Bond Mill Elementary School. The students are a combination of 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders.

After reviewing the data from the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter and 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter benchmarks given to these students we have seen the following:

- 62% improvement overall in reading scores for all grades
- 28% improvement in reading for the 3<sup>rd</sup> graders
- One of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students moved from basic to proficient
- 26% improvement overall in reading for the 4<sup>th</sup> graders
- One 4<sup>th</sup> grader moved from Proficient to Advanced
- One out of three 5<sup>th</sup> grade students improved in reading by 8%

The Fidos DEAR Program provides an environment for the students to read in that is less threatening. The children are benefitting and I know we will continue to see growth from these students in reading because of this positive and unique reading program.

Student’s attitudes toward reading have improved. They look forward to bringing a favorite story to read with their dog. Areas of improvement: Fluency, Comprehension and Vocabulary development.”

Annette Mosier,

Teacher liaison for Bond Mill’s DEAR program, a Prince Georges County, MD, Public School

Fidos also continued our ground breaking DEAR Program for adult students at Howard County Community College. In 2012 Fidos volunteers participated in over 110 DEAR visits and added 4 new DEAR teams to the program.



# *Junior Volunteer Program*



The Fidos For Freedom, Inc. Junior Volunteer Program was initiated in 1994 in an effort to help more students between the ages of 12 and 18 meet the Maryland State requirements for community volunteer service that they need for high school graduation. Approximately twenty students participated in this program during the school year of September 2011 through May 2012. The group meets every Wednesday evening for one hour during the school year. These young people performed a variety of services for Fidos, including socializing dogs in Fidos various programs, helping at information booths, holiday decorating of the training facility, newsletter folding/addressing, making gifts for patients in local health care facilities, and assisting with preparation and break down of our annual graduation banquet. The juniors received classes by our clients and volunteers on numerous subjects relating to disability awareness issues and dog care and training. They learned about dog shows by participating as ring stewards, setting up and moving course equipment, and worked hard to raise several hundred dollars for Fidos.



Comm

# *Community Education Program*



The Community Education Program provides educational presentations to residents, government agencies, schools, and businesses in the Baltimore-Washington, D.C. area. These demonstrations provided education to the public on the valuable role of Hearing Dogs, Service Dogs, and Therapy Dogs in our community. During these demonstrations, Fidos volunteers demonstrate how a Hearing Dog alerts its person to all types of sounds in the environment. Service Dogs demonstrate a multitude of tasks they perform to help a person with a physical disability. These tasks include opening and closing doors, retrieving dropped items, helping a person remove shoes and clothing, and many other tasks.



## The Future

The future of dogs helping people to mitigate their disabilities is promising. As the years have gone by we have continued to expand the physical disabilities that our dogs can assist with. We have trained dogs for clients with a mixture of hearing and physical disabilities. In the future Fidos For Freedom will continue to expand our services to help with a wider range of disabilities and increase our outreach to the veteran population.

