



2015 >

Fidos For Freedom

# ANNUAL REPORT

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An Assistance and Therapy Dog  
Training Organization

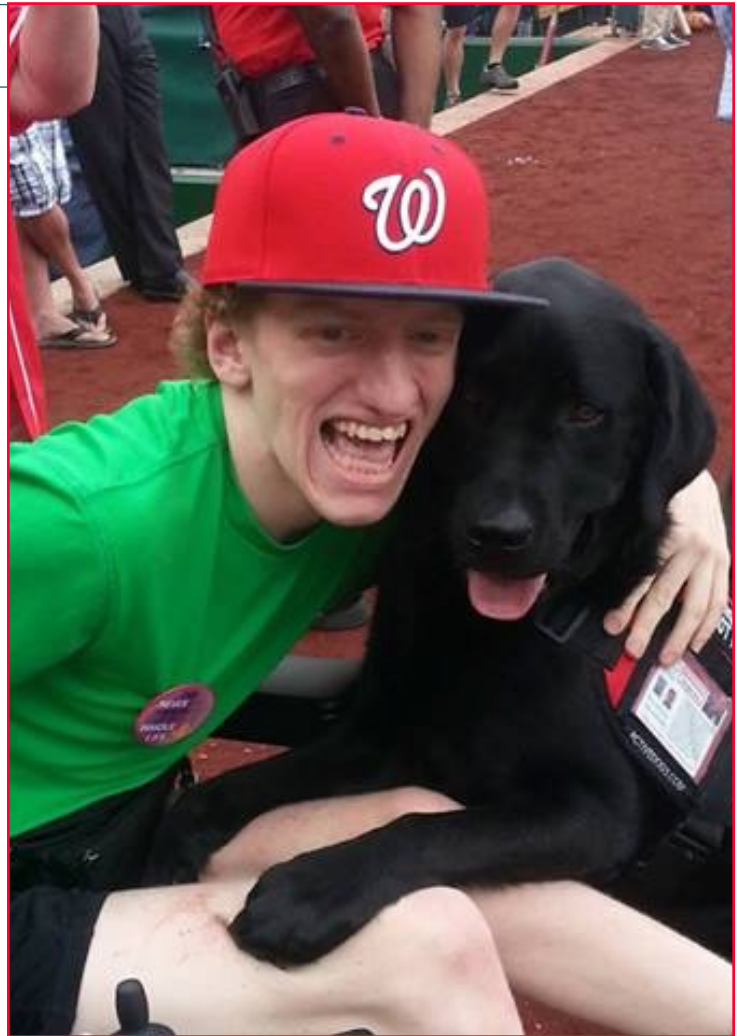
# INTRODUCTION

*Fidos For Freedom, Inc. (Fidos) is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization located at 1200 Sandy Spring Road, Laurel, Maryland.*

## OUR MISSION

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.



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# ASSISTANCE DOG PROGRAM

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*The foundation of a hearing or 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.*



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 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.

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 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 future service and hearing dogs.

Puppy raiser volunteers are crucial to our program. 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.

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## 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.

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## At-A-Glance 2014 Assistance Dog Program

- 44 – Number of Fidos Service Dog Teams active in 2014
- 4 – Number of Service Dog Teams graduating in 2014
- 36 Months – Typical service dog training period from birth to team graduation
- \$12,500 – Total cost for veterinary care, food, supplies and incidentals in 2014
- 10 – Number of advanced trainers
- 12 – Number of puppy raiser families
- 18 – Total number of dogs in any part of training program in 2014
- 10 – Number of dogs entering training program in 2014
- 12 – Puppies placed at some period with puppy raiser families in 2014
- 12 – Puppies attending the intermediate prison training program in 2014
- 11 – Puppies matched or in advanced training status in 2014
- 1 – Number of dogs re-careered in 2014



# CLIENT SERVICES PROGRAM

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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 client volunteers--the Director, Intake Coordinator, and multiple 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, and client contracts.

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.

# THERAPY DOG PROGRAM

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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 2014.

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

# THERAPY DOG PROGRAM

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- Domestic Abuse Center
- Nursing Homes
- Local Hospitals
- Hospice
- Family Support centers like the Ronald McDonald House and Johns Hopkins Children's House

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

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.

## **At-A-Glance - 2014-15 Therapy Dog Program**

- 108 – Number of active Therapy Dog teams
- 536 – Number of Therapy Dog demos or visits
- 3484 – Number of total volunteer hours serving the community
- · Top Active Therapy Dog is Alex. His handler is Sue Deatherage with 683 hours and 486 visits in 7 years!

# DOGS EDUCATING AND ASSISTING READERS (DEAR)

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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 in recent years have included Bond Mill Elementary School in Laurel, MD, and three Howard County libraries (East Columbia Library, Glenwood Library, and Savage Library).

# JUNIOR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

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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. 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.



# COMMUNITY EDUCATION

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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.





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