

BluePath

SERVICE DOGS®

Fact Sheet

Mission

BluePath provides autism service dogs, offering safety, companionship and opportunities for independence.

- Our expertly trained autism service dogs are provided free of charge. They improve safety and provide families with the freedom to unlock life's potential.
- We have an unwavering commitment to deliver personalized service that surpasses expectations.
- We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and rely on the generosity of donors and volunteers to fulfill our mission.



Autism Stats

Currently, more than 5.4 million Americans live with an autism spectrum disorder. It is the fastest growing developmental disability in the United States, with a dramatic increase in diagnoses from 2000 (1 in 150) to today (1 in 36.) -Autism Society

Autism Service Dogs

Scientific studies have confirmed the transformative nature of the human – canine bond, and as a result, animal assisted therapies have grown dramatically. Many children with autism exhibit bolting tendencies, which can make trips outside the home a frightening proposition. An autism service dog is connected to the child via a specially designed tether system, and the dog is trained to anchor in response to a child bolting. This immediate, emotionless reaction keeps the child safe – and often helps to reduce or eliminate the bolting behavior.

Basic BluePath Stats

- Founded: 2016 by Dr. Jody Sandler, Michelle Brier, and Caroline McCabe-Sandler
- Graduated autism service dogs: 46 as of February 2024
- Five Facility Therapy Dogs
- Paws to Learn programming impacts over 2,500 individuals annually.
- Service area: 32,000 square miles surrounding our Headquarters in Hopewell Junction, NY (two-hour radius)
- Over 150 volunteer puppy raisers, fosters, sitters, and administrators support the mission.

BluePath Dogs

BluePath dogs are some of the finest Labrador and Golden retrievers in the country. The dogs are purpose-bred, meaning they possess the superior health and temperament that will allow them to be successful as service dogs.

Puppy Raising

- Dedicated volunteer puppy raisers work with BluePath puppies from the time they're eight weeks old until they're approximately 18 months old, teaching basic obedience skills and appropriate house manners.
- BluePath staff provides training and support to puppy raisers throughout the raising process.
- Puppy raisers socialize the puppies to everything the world has to offer, enabling them to develop comfort with a variety of sights, sounds and experiences.
- Puppy raisers give the dogs a solid foundation and prepare them for the next phase of their service dog training.
- BluePath pays for major equipment and veterinary expenses.

Formal Training

- At about 18 months of age, BluePath dogs begin training with a professional instructor.
- Instructors build on the foundation of the Puppy Raising Program and teach the dogs advanced behaviors. These include skills like anchoring, when a dog learns how to stop a child from wandering or bolting, and visit, in which a dog rests his head on a child to provide support.
- Prior to placement in their forever homes, BluePath dogs engage with the community via the Paws to Learn Program, in which they provide therapeutic support in schools, camps, residential homes, and day-habilitation settings. Paws to Learn partners report that BluePath dogs provide emotional support, assistance with mood regulation, opportunities for social engagement and connectedness, and increased physical activity.
- Towards the conclusion of formal training, the dog will be matched to a family. At that time, BluePath staff work primarily on training behaviors that will support the family's individual needs.

Service Dog Placement

- BluePath dogs are placed with families with children with autism at approximately two years of age.
- A specially designed tether system connects the child to the dog. The child will hold a padded handle on the service dog's vest and the parent or caregiver will hold the dog's leash.
- Applicants must provide reference letters from their children's education and medical professionals. In-home interviews are also conducted to ensure a service dog is a good fit for the family.
- Parents are taught the dogs' commands and how to utilize the dogs to redirect behaviors and keep their children safe. They learn the guidelines associated with the Americans with Disabilities Act and how to responsibly travel with their service dogs in public. They also study dog health and grooming, ensuring they will provide our dogs with optimum care

- BluePath staff visits frequently during the first two months, supporting milestone moments such as the first time the child and dog are “connected” and work together as a team.

BluePath is committed to the success of each of our placements. We remain closely connected to all families, answering the normal questions that arise when learning to navigate life with a service dog.

Released Dogs

We’re devoted to our dogs’ health and well-being throughout their lives. Dogs retiring from service work will remain in their homes as cherished pets. Dogs not suitable to work as service dogs will find alternative placements.

Fundraising

- Each BluePath dog comes with thousands of hours of training from dedicated volunteers and professional staff. Our cost to prepare these incredible dogs is upwards of \$40,000, yet thanks to the ongoing generosity of our supporters, BluePath service dogs - and intensive, ongoing follow up support - are provided free of charge.
- Families pay a nominal fee of \$1,200 for room, board, equipment and supplies.
- Funds are raised through the following avenues:
 - Corporate, foundation and major individual giving
 - Annual Walkathon event
 - Third party events

Connecting with BluePath

- Training Facility (by appt only): 946 Route 376, Suites 3&4, Wappingers Falls, NY
- Mailing Address: 71 E. Main St., PO Box 328, Wappingers Falls, NY 12590
- Phone: 845.377.0477
- Email: info@bluepathservicedogs.org
- Web: www.bluepathservicedogs.org
- Facebook – fb.com/bluepathservicedogs
- Instagram - @bluepathdogs

