Volume 1, Issue 7– December 2008

The Brigadoon Barker

4759 Mission Road, Bellingham WA 98226 Tel:(360) 733-5388 Fax:(360) 733-9326

E-mail: denise@nas.com Website: www.brigadoondogs.org

Happy Holidays from Brigadoon!

Service Dogs — Changing the World of Autism

Autism now affects one in every 150 children — a disorder of almost epidemic proportions. A diagnosis of autism not only impacts the child, but it also changes the lives of every family member. It means setting new priorities, rearranging hopes and dreams, and frequently results in social isolation.

Once believed to be a type of mental illness, autism is now recognized as a sensory processing disorder. It affects the areas of the brain that control language, social interaction and creative and abstract thinking. Autism knows no bounds — it affects rich and poor alike.

People with autism process and respond to information in unique ways. Many children with autism engage in repetitive movements such as rocking and twirling, or in self-abusive behavior such as biting or head-banging. They don't know how to play interactively with other children. While many have a reduced sensitivity to pain, they are abnormally sensitive to sound, touch or other sensory stimulations. These reactions may cause a child to become resistant to being hugged or cuddled.

There is no cure for autism and the cause is still a mystery. It's likely that both genetics and environment play a role in the disorder.

Therapy and behavioral interventions can bring about substantial improvement. Most professionals agree that the earlier the intervention, the better. Family counseling for parents and siblings often helps families cope with the challenges of living with an autistic child. And various medications may be used to handle specific symptoms.

Service dogs have been proven to provide life-changing benefits for both the child and his or her family. Autism service dogs have the potential to improve a child's communication skills and behavior. Dogs have been used to "anchor" autistic children and keep them from running into dangerous situations. They provide the child or adult challenged with autism an opportunity to safely access different environments which result in improved social skills. The service dog's presence offers a calming influence and provides a sense of security to the child and the parents.

Autistic children with service dogs have fewer emotional outbursts, their abstract thinking and ability to focus improve, and their attention spans increase. Dogs trained to work with autistic children must master specific responses. They are taught to retrieve a child to a parent, they interrupt potentially dangerous behavior, they alert parents to night awakenings and will crawl onto a child's lap to provide comfort. Perhaps best of all, they are steadfast friends devoted to changing the lives of these special children.

Mission Statement

We provide highly trained dogs to perform tasks and support that would otherwise require human assistance for children and adults with physical and developmental disabilities. We engage the youth of the community in this process. We are a 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation.

Denise our founder with Int'l Am/Can Champion Cassidae's Brigadoon aka "Briggs"

As the year 2008 comes to a close, I find myself reflecting on our accomplishments and what we need to improve upon.

We have 15 dogs in training and have graduated 12 dogs to date. Next year is going to be a whopper of a graduation. This means a lot more planning, not only for the event itself, but for the team training and the public access tests that must be done before the graduate team can be certified.

As the founder of Brigadoon, I'm somewhat like a mother hen with her chicks, keeping a close watch on my volunteers, trainer and dogs. I think about the clients while watching Kathleen train the dogs. I'm picturing the dog with the client…"Kathleen, remember Suzie can't physically do what you're doing right now, so train the dog as though you have the same disability." Kathleen agrees. We also must improve the good manners in the dogs—no use having a dog that performs all its tasks if it jumps on people.

The best part of the training I am responsible for is working with the client and the dog once they have been partnered; especially the children. To guide a young person to give direction to the dog and watch the dog respond is amazing. The look of accomplishment is like taking the training wheels off a bicycle they have learned to ride.

Doggie Do-Goods

Kathleen Ball, Trainer

Brigadoon dogs continue to mark new milestones:

Mindy Mae went on the treadmill for the first time and now loads into both the car and the van.

Conner (formerly Buddy) will go up and down stairs for the first time. He also had his first time on the treadmill.

Rufus (5 months old) carried the crutch about five feet.

And two dogs — Chelsea and Jet—celebrated their first birthdays this month.

Holiday Pumpkin Dog Cookies

Looking for a special holiday treat for your canine friends. Here's a quick and easy dog cookie recipe:

1-1/2 cups whole wheat flour

1/2 cup canned pumpkin

1 Tablespoon brown sugar

1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg

4 Tablespoons shortening

1 egg

1/2 cup buttermilk.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Combine flour, cinnamon and nutmeg and cut in shortening. Beat egg with milk and pumpkin and add to flour mixture, mixing well. Stir until soft dough forms. Drop by tablespoons onto ungreased cookie sheet and bake for 12 to 15 minutes. Let cool.

Our Wish List

Gift Cards are a great way to help, i.e. Whatcom Farmers Co-op, Walkers Healthy Pet, Pet Stop, Cost Cutter Foods, Petco, Petsmart, or Costco. Other stuff needed…

First Class Postage Stamps

Blankets and towels

Paper towels

Copy paper for our printers

Jennie O Jumbo Turkey Franks

HP Inkjet Print Cartridges (#s 95 and 92)

Poodle Grooming (i.e. Critter Clips)

$150,000 toward new Kennel Building

Fun Fact

Franklin Roosevelt spent $15,000 for a destroyer to pick up his Scottie in the Aleutian Islands.

Contributors to Brigadoon-October-November

There are no words to express our gratitude for your support of our program. Thank you!

First Choice Building Inspection Services

Solid Gold North West, Inc.

Executive Women International, Portland Chapter

Colleen and Douglas Thornburg

Patricia Starcher

Joseph and Glenis Morrison

Georjan Bridger

Microsoft Giving Campaign

Carl and Nancy Angell

Dolly Turner

Mike McCurdy

Richard Walpole

Steve Seymour

Megan and John Mittelstaedt

Terry Holland

Julie Urban

Maureen O'Brien

Karl Kleeman

Martin Cuthbertson

Courtney and Gabriel Kopp

Brigadoon Tour

Mark your calendars for the next tour. It will be January 3, 2009 from 10 to 11 am. Presentation begins at 10 am. Bring a friend! Come visit our facility, meet the-dogs, and learn more about what we do. You will not be asked for a donation. Call and let us know you're coming.

Board of Directors

Denise CoStanten, President/ CEO/ Founder

Leon CoStanten, Vice President

Julie Urban, Tresurer

Kathleen Ball, Secretary

Miles Olszko, Volunteer Coordinator

Marguerite Turner

Newsletter Editor: Carol Viens