



## **New Program Trains Shelter Dogs to Become Service Dogs**

Kindness launches From Shelter to Service Dog Program in Texas

CARROLLTON, TX (June 12, 2023) — Dogs for Better Lives (DBL) and Operation Kindness (OPK) are eager to announce a new partnership, with a goal of transforming the lives of shelter dogs and people.

The program, "From Shelter to Service Dog," identifies shelter dogs at Operation Kindness that have the ideal temperament and abilities to become a Service Dog and places them in a unique training program to become a Hearing Assistance Dog, Autism Assistance Dog or Facility Dog through Dogs for Better Lives. The program is a significant opportunity for all shelter dogs that are selected to participate. Even the dogs who do not go on to be Service Dogs will have received additional training that increases their adoptability.

Operation Kindness brought nearly 2,000 dogs into their care in 2022 and adopts out nearly 100 animals every week through its animal shelter. It also provides lifesaving medical care, foster homes, and resources for pet parents and animals in the community. "Shelter dogs are truly special animals that possess many of the qualities needed to excel as service dogs, including resilience, loyalty and intelligence. We're honored to collaborate on this unique program that will train shelter dogs to become hearing assistance dogs and place them into loving homes," said Kelly Furnas, Chief Operating Officer at Operation Kindness.

Dogs for Better Lives has trained shelter dogs to become Service Dogs since its inception in 1977, but in recent years, it has been more challenging to find shelter dogs suitable for Service Dog programs near their headquarters in Oregon. "The population of shelter dogs in the Pacific Northwest has dwindled since the pandemic, leading to fewer available dogs to be trained to assist people," said Trish Welch, Vice President of Operations at Dogs for Better Lives. "We've been actively working to find ways to continue to train shelter dogs, and this partnership with Operation Kindness is an important step in achieving that goal."

Shelter dogs selected to enter the program will live with an Operation Kindness foster family for the duration of their training and will work with a Dogs for Better Lives Assistance Dog Trainer throughout the training period to learn the specific skills needed to become a Service Dog. Shelter dogs who don't graduate to become a Service Dog will be adopted out in the community, benefiting from the additional skills they learned in the program.

The impact of the From Shelter to Service Dog Program will be experienced by more than just the dogs in the program. There is a waitlist for all types of Service Dogs trained by Dogs for Better Lives, with some individuals waiting up to three years to receive a dog. By increasing the number of dogs that become Service Dogs through this program, it will be possible to place Service Dogs with more people with disabilities.

"The demand for our Service Dogs is as high as ever, and we are thrilled to be partnering with Operation Kindness to train shelter dogs who will go on to significantly change the lives of people with disabilities," said Bryan Williams, CEO of Dogs for Better Lives. "We know this program will transform the lives of both shelter dogs and people."

For more information about the program, visit [www.dogsforbetterlives.org/shelter](http://www.dogsforbetterlives.org/shelter) To become a foster volunteer with Operation Kindness, visit [www.operationkindness.org/foster](http://www.operationkindness.org/foster).

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### **About Dogs for Better Lives**

Dogs for Better Lives is a nationally recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization focusing on the professional training and placement of Hearing Assistance Dogs, Autism Assistance Dogs, and Facility Dogs and is accredited by Assistance Dogs International (ADI) and recognized by Charity Navigator as a top 4-star nonprofit. Dogs for Better Lives has trained and placed more than 1,600 dogs with people in need since 1977. Assistance Dogs are placed at zero cost to the client, thanks to donor support. Learn more at [dogsforbetterlives.org](http://dogsforbetterlives.org)

### **About Operation Kindness**

Operation Kindness, a 501(c)(3) non-profit animal welfare organization, operates a lifesaving animal shelter and programs to assist people and pets. Founded in 1976, Operation Kindness is a pioneer in Texas for assisting animals in need of veterinary care, companionship and most of all, a home.

In addition to pet adoptions and lifesaving medical care, Operation Kindness' programs provide foster care for vulnerable animals, behavior and training support for pet parents, affordable veterinary services for community pets, a pet food pantry, and volunteer opportunities. To learn more about Operation Kindness, please visit their website at [www.operationkindness.org](http://www.operationkindness.org).

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