

inTouch

News for our Hearing Dogs & Hearing Link Services communities

ISSUE 24

Royal seal of approval

HRH Princess Anne
marks our 40th
anniversary

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VISIT US: hearingdogs.org.uk and hearinglink.org

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Sarah and Albert, our fundraising superstars

Fabulous February

Find out how The 28 Challenge worked out on p20!

Welcome!

Thanks for reading the summer issue 2023 of *inTouch*.

It's amazing to share with you our latest news and stories of how the Charity is supporting deaf people, and those living with hearing loss.

This issue, it's our pleasure to introduce our new CEO, Tracy Griffin.

We celebrate the visit of our Royal Patron, HRH The Princess Royal, to our southern training centre. There's a chance to find out more about how our Community Days are changing, and meet Carolann and hearing dog Walnut.

There's also the chance to meet another team member and learn more about speech-to-text apps. Enjoy!

The next issue of *inTouch* will be published in winter 2023.

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inTouch

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inTouch is accessible in BSL via the links at: hearingdogs.org.uk/intouch

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Hearing Dogs family welcomes new CEO

We are delighted to introduce Tracy Griffin



A new chapter begins for the Charity this July, as we welcome Tracy Griffin as the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Hearing Dogs for Deaf People.

Tracy is joining us from The Big Issue Foundation where she has been CEO for several years. Prior to this, she gained a wealth of experience working for several UK charities and held Trustee roles at Action for Children and now Jeans for Genes UK.

We are delighted to welcome her to our charity family and looking forward to getting to know her. Ahead of taking up the post, Tracy recently took the time to answer some questions about herself...

Can you tell us about your professional background?

I chose a professional career in the charity sector, both in the UK and overseas, and feel very privileged to have worked in some fantastic organisations – Save the Children, NSPCC, Shelter, Scope and The Big Issue. My passion has always been working towards inclusion of people who either do not have a voice, are marginalised, or otherwise feel excluded from their communities. My work has involved repatriating child soldiers in Africa, supporting small-scale micro-businesses in India, to supporting abused or bullied young people, homeless individuals, people excluded due to disability.

What areas of the charity world have you been involved in before?

I've been involved in all parts of an organisation, having been Director of Fundraising, Services, Marketing and Communications for many years.

“I'm looking forward to getting to know you all – people and dogs, and to making a difference.”



“I am thrilled to be joining you all in July, and privileged to be able to lead Hearing Dogs for Deaf People into its new chapter...”

the world and participate in it. It can transform anyone's life, but especially people living with a variety of disabilities and wellbeing issues.

Do you have any family dogs or pets? Can you tell us a bit more about them?

I've never been without a dog, having grown up with dogs, and for many years fostered and owned dogs. I currently have a 10-month-old water-loving chocolate and white Sprocker, Flynn, who I'm sure you'll all get to know, and a 16-year-old black and white cat, Ruby, who wonders what I was thinking in introducing Flynn to the family.

What do you do in your spare time?

I met my partner Tim while at university and we have three sons. We spend a lot of time together – travelling, walking, eating, drinking – and we all love the theatre. In escaping from the boys' love of anything to do with a ball, I swim, windsurf and head for a spa with my friends.

What message would you like to share with our volunteers and staff?

I am thrilled to be joining you all in July and privileged to be able to lead Hearing Dogs for Deaf People into its new chapter, building on all that has gone before, and in partnership with you all. I very much look forward to meeting you all and hearing your ambitions for the future. A special thank you to everyone who volunteers in whatever capacity, without whom charities like Hearing Dogs would be unable to deliver the work that they do.

Both Save the Children and NSPCC are volunteer-led organisations and volunteers are at the heart of both organisations. As Director of Community and Corporate Fundraising, I worked alongside and was accountable for 1,500 volunteer fundraising groups in the UK and their representation on the board. I've been a charity trustee for many years and enjoy working with charity boards from both an executive and non-executive perspective.

What are you looking forward to most about joining the Hearing Dogs for Deaf People family?

I'm looking forward to getting to know you all – people and dogs, and to making a difference. I recently joined a trustee and senior team awayday, and it's clear how much passion, expertise, excitement and opportunity there is for the future of the Charity.

Why is it so important that our charity helps as many deaf people as we can?

Feeling excluded from the world around you is a lonely place to be. It drains confidence and is the cause of many wellbeing and mental health issues. The connection with an animal has a unique and powerful effect on how people view



HRH meeting members of Hearing Dogs staff

Royal visit to mark our 40th year

This past year, Hearing Dogs for Deaf People has been celebrating its 40th anniversary with our supporters, volunteers, staff, deaf partners and beneficiaries. In March, we capped off a truly amazing year, with a very special visitor to our southern training centre

It has been a wonderful year of celebration as our charity marked four decades of supporting deaf people and those living with hearing loss with our life-changing services.

And, we found the perfect way to conclude our ruby anniversary celebrations by welcoming our Royal Patron, HRH The Princess Royal, to our home in Buckinghamshire.

This was HRH's first visit since before the pandemic. A lot has changed within the Charity since then and we were delighted to show some of these changes to HRH and talk to her about how we are now able to help thousands more people with hearing loss every year through our range of personalised services.

When lockdowns began, we very quickly

had to change how we trained our puppies. Hearing Dogs went virtual with online puppy classes, one-to-one video calls, and an online support hub for volunteers.

We also moved our LinkUp support groups online and begun offering 1-1 support sessions and Community Days via video calls.

Many of these practices have remained in place and HRH was interested to see our new and modern ways of working that have enabled us to continue training our pups and helping more deaf people.

Wonderful occasion

During her visit, HRH met some of the incredible volunteers who care for and train our pups and help to deliver our Hearing Link Services.

Charles, a peer support volunteer for



A beneficiary meets HRH

Hearing Link Services, was delighted to meet Princess Anne.

He said: "We were speaking about Hearing Link Services' range of personalised activities and services for people with hearing loss.

"It struck me that HRH was not only very interested in what she was hearing, but she has a realistic view of hearing loss and its challenges. She mentioned that she has a family member who has a hearing aid. The Princess Royal definitely seemed to be able to relate to what we were saying. She was very good to speak to."

For Helen, who volunteers at our LinkUp support groups, not only was it a wonderful chance to meet our Royal Patron, but also to connect with fellow volunteers.

Helen said: "She asked me about my volunteering work, and we spoke about how volunteers operate online, and about the Helpdesk, among other things. The Princess Royal seems to embody a sense of community, like her late mother the Queen. I loved meeting fellow volunteers, Hearing Dog beneficiaries and staff, and feeling like I was part of a big community.

Meeting our partners

There was also an opportunity for Princess Anne to meet some of our fantastic hearing dogs and their deaf partners – and it was a wonderful occasion.

Maxine, who is partnered with Walter, (pictured middle right) said: "During the royal meeting, my mum, Evelyn and her Sound Support Dog Madge, exclaimed, 'Oh no I forgot to curtsy, can we do it again?' HRH kindly replied, 'Of course we can.' This was a real icebreaker and made everyone laugh."

Her mum Evelyn added: "At 77-years-old this was the best day of my life – with Max, Madge and Walter – when we got to meet HRH Princess Anne.

"She stopped and chatted, and listened. It was so emotional someone had to pass me a hanky – what a day!"

During her visit, Princess Anne also saw our amazing dogs demonstrating how they alert deaf people to sounds such as the smoke alarm, Skype calls, and even a baby's cry, and she met some of the Charity's beneficiaries.

HRH then took the opportunity to thank the entire Hearing Dogs family – from donors and puppy sponsors to volunteers and staff, for everything they do to help change deaf people's lives.

We are grateful to HRH for helping us celebrate our 40th anniversary and for her continued support of the Charity.

Photography by Paul Wilkinson



Volunteers May, James, Charles and Helen



Maxine and Evelyn meet HRH



Princess Anne meets our peer support volunteers

New paths and helping others

Julia's story 

Retired university lecturer Julia lost her hearing in one ear suddenly, before experiencing the same loss in her “good” ear five years ago. Despite struggling with her own hearing, Julia is using her experiences positively to help others. This is her story...

I first experienced hearing problems 26 years ago, when Sudden Sensorineural Hearing Loss (SSHL) occurred in my right ear. My hearing capacity was considerably reduced and I contended with severe balance issues.

Then, about five years ago, I lost a significant amount of the hearing in my left ear and suffered from balance issues again. On both of these occasions, the effects on my balance were undoubtedly the most tricky thing for me to deal with, emotionally and physically.

My “new normal”

It meant I couldn't walk well or drive, and these restrictions on my life were the most worrying feature. Thanks to specialist physiotherapy, a lot of help from audiologists, and the use of hearing aids, I began to cope with my new “normal”.

Then last Christmas, I experienced another setback when I lost the remaining hearing in my right ear. The specialists couldn't tell me why. My balance was unaffected – I could walk and drive – but I suppose I'm now classed as profoundly deaf. Hearing devices only work in my left ear, so here I am once more learning to adjust to yet another new “normal”.

The impact

The more recent hearing problems – along with the Coronavirus pandemic – had quite an impact on me. In my working life I was a history lecturer with a focus on Medieval and Early Modern History. I ran short courses for older students and also gave talks to history societies and U3A groups.

I came to the job late, having done a degree and PhD after raising a family. The university administrators were quite understanding, but my hearing problems, coupled with the pandemic, were a challenge.

I'm now retired and fulfilling a long-held ambition to write. I've started writing a series of historical novels set in the Tudor period which I am excited about. Whether or not they will ever get published is for the future, but the writing has given me a new

approach to my life and a new-found confidence in channelling my energies down new paths.

Giving back

One of these new paths includes my volunteering for Hearing Dogs for Deaf People. I first came across the Charity when one of my sons bought me puppy sponsorship for a hearing dog (I've had dogs all my life!).

I'd done some fundraising for Hearing Dogs, but now I focus on the Hearing Link Services side as a peer support volunteer. I am a Helpdesk Responder, where my experience of sudden hearing loss can help people going through the same challenges and emotions.

During the pandemic, I also volunteered for the LinkUp Online support groups. And now, I'm really excited about my next challenge, which is to volunteer at the LinkUp support groups which are held in-person. These groups were paused during the pandemic, but they are now available for people to join again, which is good news.

Developing new support

More recently, I have been part of a small team of volunteers and Hearing Link Services staff who are developing a new service called Helpful Hours. (See p9.)

Working, researching and discussing our various experiences, and looking at how we can put together information and knowledge to help others who have hearing loss has been a brilliant experience for me. I can see how it will develop the

“Community, companionship and a sense of having a way forward are all the things I feel I've gained from my volunteering.”

important work of the Charity into the future. The group has only met online, but it has allowed me to develop new friendships with others who understand the complexities of living with hearing loss in a hearing world.

When my right ear stopped functioning, this group gave me the most incredible support and friendship. In the future, if anyone can benefit from Helpful Hours anything like as much as I have benefitted from this group's support, it'll be an amazing thing we have achieved.

The future

As to my future I look forward to continuing my journey as a volunteer for Hearing Link Services. I also want to start learning British Sign Language (BSL) with my husband. I want to be an ambassador for the deaf community by encouraging a greater understanding of hearing loss, especially amongst children. I have two young grandchildren and know that children's voices can be quite hard to hear. They realise granny can't always hear them and so, most vitally, they are learning about the deaf world as well.

Community, companionship, a sense of having a way forward: these are all things I feel I've gained from volunteering. People do live in a completely different world when they're deaf, but that doesn't mean they have to be isolated.

Hearing Dogs and its Hearing Link Services offer so much support in so many ways and give those of us who don't reflect the world of sound in the same way as “normal” hearing people a chance to live life positively and successfully.

Find out how we can support you at hearinglink.org/services

Julia is a peer support volunteer for Hearing Link Services



Our Community Days are changing

We have opened up these wonderful events, previously available to our hearing dog partners, to anyone affected by hearing loss. Find out how they could support you...

KEY GUIDE

- Public
- Invited guests only
- Both

(Dates correct at the time of printing)



We now have a wonderful opportunity for anyone affected by hearing loss to join us at a Community Day in their area throughout the year.

We want to reach out to people with hearing loss in the community by providing great social opportunities and connecting them to services that offer help and support. Our Community Days can do just that!

Community Days are fun and enjoyable. Each one is a little different, but they all allow people to meet socially, share experiences and learn about how we can help you or a family member. Some people may go out for a local dog walk together too.

Please see the map (left) for the planned days taking place from July to

March 2024. If you would like to join us, please go online and complete our form.

Meet a peer support volunteer

At many of our Community Days, attendees can meet our peer support volunteers who work alongside our community support team of partnership instructors.

Our lovely volunteers all have lived or professional experience of hearing loss. They will be able to meet attendees from a place of personal understanding, and offer support and signposting for any issue connected with managing their hearing loss, or that of a loved one.

Our peer support volunteers, alongside our partnership instructors, can share the value of the different services we now offer.

We can refer people to our services pathway, or share knowledge of local services such as sensory support, lipreading classes or other support groups, such as deaf clubs.

Our volunteers will also be able to demonstrate some of the most widely available apps, such as speech-to-text,

“Our volunteers are an invaluable piece of the puzzle as other people look for the solutions to their own particular hearing loss.”

Meet others with hearing loss



Photography by Paul Wilkinson and Hearing Dogs staff

They're a chance to share solutions and a cuppa!



which can hugely enhance a conversation one-to-one and in social settings.

Nicholas Orpin, Service Delivery Manager, said: “Our peer support volunteers come from the unique experience of overcoming challenges since they lost their hearing, or their circumstances changing.

“They are an invaluable piece of the puzzle as other people look for the solutions to their own particular hearing loss. They will be empathetic to your situation and will be able to signpost and suggest the next steps to take.

“That way anyone who comes along to a Community Day can find out more about current and upcoming services and get help and encouragement to live better with their hearing.”

Helpful Hours

Our Helpful Hours service focuses on a particular subject around managing your hearing loss.

Our first topic “Getting the most from your Audiology appointment” offers tips for people newly diagnosed with hearing loss, as well as those who have been attending appointments for many years and feel they could be getting more from this valuable service.

The hour will cover how to prepare for your appointment, what happens during the appointment, information about hearing aids, and post-



appointment support. We have many more topics planned, so keep an eye on the Hearing Link Services website for future learning experiences.

Helpful Hours are delivered in person and online by our peer support volunteers, and either as a discussion in small groups or as a presentation format. Some subjects will also be available as a demonstration at our Community Days. We aim to be able to offer some of these at our upcoming Community Days as needed.

Registering to attend a Community Day

If you would like to join us at one of our Community Days, we would love to hear from you. Please contact us for more information, depending on your relationship with the Charity, in the following ways:

- If you are a hearing dog applicant, or have recently applied to the Charity for support for your hearing loss, please contact your support advisor.

- If you are a hearing dog partner, please contact your partnership instructor
- If you are a member of the public, please visit hearinglink.org/hlcommunitydays and complete our short webform, and a member of our team will be in touch.

We look forward to seeing you there! From all in the Hearing Loss Services department.

Services to help in your community

Our charity offers a number of personalised hearing support services in communities across the UK. Here are some of the ways we are supporting people with hearing loss in a town near you



Hearing Support Sessions

If you're looking to talk in confidence to someone who understands the impact of changes in your hearing – our sessions could help you. We host them in-person at venues in Edinburgh and London, as well as 1-1 online. Our trained volunteers offer emotional and practical support about different aspects of living with and managing your hearing. We can also give advice for a loved one. To find out more, visit hearinglink.org/hearing-support

Talks

Our informative and insightful talks are delivered by our fantastic volunteer speakers or staff, and each talk can be flexible to fit your audience whether it is a social group, workplace or conference event. We can deliver our talks online or in-person. Both types of talks last between 30 and 60 minutes and we allow time for questions at the end. Although we do not charge for our talks, we would be grateful if you would consider a small donation to support our work. Find out more at hearinglink.org/talks

Local and national events

Our volunteers and staff regularly attend and exhibit at events such as trade shows, conferences, community and fundraising fetes, and sensory events. We use these as an opportunity to start conversations about hearing loss for individuals, and their families and friends. They are also a chance to raise awareness of hearing loss, and share how our services can help to manage changes in hearing.

Find out more at: hearinglink.org/events

On-site assessments

When starting the application process for being partnered with a life-changing hearing dog, we always want to find out more about you, your hearing loss and how it impacts on your daily life. That's why we invite hearing dog applicants to our northern or southern training centres for a personalised 1-1 conversation about their hearing. This will help us to start you on your journey of identifying which of the services we offer are most suitable for you.



Our Hearing Information Days are back for 2023!

We are opening our doors once more to give you access to our information events

This summer and autumn, we're opening up the doors of our training centres once more to host our popular Hearing Information Days. This new format of event was launched last year as part of our 40th anniversary celebrations – and it's here to stay!

Due to their popularity we are hosting two further dates in 2023. The events are taking place at the following dates and locations:

- 15 July, Beatrice Wright Centre, near York
- 29 September, The Grange, near High Wycombe

We can help

Hearing Information Days welcome along members of the public, supporters and beneficiaries to find out more about our range of personalised services and wonderful hearing dogs.

Our peer support volunteers are on hand to demonstrate equipment and technology that can support hearing loss on a daily basis. There's a chance to browse products that can support your hearing including pin badges, communication cards and lanyards, technology such as personal listeners and alerting devices including extra loud alarms clocks.

We also welcome exhibitors including audiologists, hearing aid manufacturers, and equipment providers. Of course, a Hearing Dogs event wouldn't be complete



Last year's events were a great success

Photograph by Alexandra Agass

without a chance to find out more about how we train our life-changing hearing dogs and show all the ways they alert their deaf partners to important sounds in their home.

Angie Southcott, Director of Hearing Loss Services, said: "Our inaugural Hearing Information Days last summer were extremely popular. It was lovely to welcome many new and familiar faces to our events so they could find out more about our services, connect with others and meet

providers who could support them on their hearing journey."

Don't miss out

To avoid disappointment, please make sure you book to attend our Hearing Information Days, as places will be limited. This will let us know about any assistance you may require on the day.

To book your place, visit hearinglink.org/infodays



Can we help you?

If you or a loved one need support to work out the next steps to take in your hearing loss journey, please contact us:

- hearingdogs.org.uk/helpingyou
- 01844 348111

Peer support is at the heart of our Hearing Link Services

Could you use your skills and experience?

Central to our hearing support services are our team of peer support volunteers, all with lived or professional experience of hearing loss. We'd love for more of our Hearing Dogs family to use their own experiences to help others. Find out how you could get involved...

No one person is the same. We all possess different knowledge, skills and experiences in life that make us the wonderful individuals we are.

At Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, we embrace the lived experience of our peer support volunteers to help people with hearing loss and their families.

Our wonderful team are at the heart of our wider hearing support services such as the Helpdesk, Hearing Support Sessions

and LinkUp support groups – it's what sets us apart.

While our core roles involve regular volunteering, our microvolunteering opportunities are also a way to support our work in a small capacity. These roles also help us to achieve our charity aims, and transform the lives of deaf people and those living with hearing loss.

What our volunteers do

There are lots of ways peer support volunteers contribute to the Charity



“We realised there was not enough being done for deaf people and decided that we both wanted to volunteer.”

Steve and Christine began volunteering in 2006, after attending a course which was run by Hearing Link Services (formerly Hearing Link) in Eastbourne.

They both attended; Steve as a deaf person and his wife Christine as a hearing person.

Steve said: “We realised that there was not enough being done for deaf people and decided that we both wanted to volunteer. We have been volunteering for 17 years now.”

Steve and Christine undertake various roles for our charity including, but not limited to, tin collections, attending training sessions for updates on volunteering, and selling merchandise.

Most of their volunteering experience for Hearing Dogs has been as speakers to groups, clubs and organisations to make more people aware of the Charity, our services and to raise funds to support people living with hearing loss.

They also play an important role at our Community Days for hearing dog partners and beneficiaries of our wider services.

Steve added: “We help to inform attendees about what is available in their local community for deaf people and how to cope with changes in their hearing. Community Days are a good way to do this and for people to meet others in a similar position.”

“I wanted to help people who are struggling with their deafness, having been through similar experiences myself.”

In Ailsa's work as a teacher of the Deaf she had a colleague who was partnered with a life-changing hearing dog. This was her first introduction to our charity.

She said: “My colleague's dog was a wonderful addition to our office and I saw the difference one could make to someone's life. On my retirement I wanted to do some voluntary work and the Charity was a good fit for me.

“I'm a peer support volunteer on the Helpdesk, where people make contact with problems to do with deafness. I research possible solutions and compose a reply. I also attend Community Days where the partners of hearing dogs get together to meet each other.

“I really enjoy meeting different people and of course their wonderful dogs. Through volunteering, I wanted to help people who are struggling with their deafness, having been through similar experiences myself. I felt that I would find it satisfying, and this has proved to be the case. I was also keen to do some volunteering which I could do from home.”



Barry's role as a volunteer began more than 10 years ago when he became a Trustee – firstly with Hearing Link, then Hearing Dogs, following our merger in 2017.

He said: “I'm an audiologist by profession. I experienced sudden hearing loss with tinnitus more than 40 years ago. My professional background, combined with my lived experience of hearing loss, have enabled me to contribute in a variety of ways including writing articles and helping with videos for the website, participating in LinkUp support groups and responding to Helpdesk enquiries.

“I've seen peer support in action and so admire the invaluable, dedicated work of our volunteers who use their own knowledge and personal experience to help people for whom hearing loss has diminished their quality of life. Making a difference is so rewarding and fulfilling. There is no doubting the value of peer support and the transformation it can achieve, not only for those with hearing loss but also for those close to them.

“Anyone who has learnt to live a better, happier life in spite of hearing loss, may have the answers or solutions needed by so many people. Being a Hearing Link Services' volunteer in one or multiple ways can be such an enjoyable experience.”



in a gentle way. For example, some microvolunteers use their professional knowledge to write content for our Hearing Link Services website, offering expertise on topics including Access to Work or specific audiology content such as balance issues or tinnitus, and technology.

Elsewhere they share their experiences by chatting to others at a community event, taking part in bucket collections or sending out literature to potential beneficiaries and audiology providers – there's something for everyone!

The future

In 2023, we're continuing to develop our range of Hearing Link Services in communities across the UK.

We'd love for more people to get involved, especially our hearing dog partners, who have so much to offer.

It's really simple to join our peer support family, especially if you are using your own knowledge, experience or skills.

So, if you have good understanding of a topic relating to hearing loss or would like to use your experiences to help someone

who is going through something similar to you – we'd love to hear from you.

Volunteering in this way is really easy to do. It's flexible and you only offer as little or as much time as you can afford. It will give you the opportunity to meet your community and beyond, and most importantly help other deaf people.

If you would like to discuss volunteering with our peer support team, please get in touch today! Email enquiries@hearinglink.org

More than half of all our services are paid for by gifts in Wills

With your help we will reach a day when no deaf person feels alone



This is a visual representation of how many people are helped by our range of services thanks to gifts in Wills.

If you choose to leave a gift to Hearing Dogs, you will be helping deaf people to leave loneliness behind and reconnect with life for years to come.

We realise this is an extremely personal decision, so if you'd like to know more about leaving a gift, please contact Zoe Cox on **01844 348130**, email legacies@hearingdogs.org.uk, or visit hearingdogs.org.uk/legacies

Earplugs that can help

Summer's here and it's time to get out and about. However, this can bring its own challenges if you live with hearing loss – which is where the humble earplug, in various guises, can help you

Whatever your level of hearing is, it is crucial to do everything you can to preserve it. Noise protection may make all the difference, whether you're travelling to your summer holiday, while you're there or even if you're staying at home this summer to work or study.

Have a pleasant flight

If your holiday plans involve flights, the rapid changes in cabin pressure may cause problems.

To alleviate this, one option is EarPlanes – specialist earplugs tested by US navy pilots and recommended by doctors.

They use a CeramX™ technology filter to help you cope with ear clogging, popping and discomfort.

They are available in adult or children/ small ears sizes. Find out more at: hearinglink.org/earplanes

Make a splash

To ensure fun times in the pool or at the beach, there are earplugs that can help to stop water entering your ear canal, and ones that remove excess water after swimming or bathing.

BioEars are made from soft silicone and are designed to keep water out of your ears. They can help protect your ears against water damage such as swimmer's ears. Additionally they can also help with noise reduction up to 20db or be used to aid sleep.

ClearEars are worth considering too. They help to remove water which may



ClearEars remove water from your ears

There are lots of different types of earplug available to support and protect your hearing



have become trapped while you've been swimming or surfing.

They're suitable for children and adults to use, and they are useful after baths and showers too. Browse the range at: hearinglink.org/earplugs

Feel the noise

If outdoor events such as sports fixtures or music festivals are your thing, then the noise from thousands of your fellow fans (as well as loud PA systems) is something to bear in mind.

A bumper pack of **soft foam earplugs** may be just what you need. Our range contains 10 pairs which reduce noise levels by up to 30db. They're also handy if you're a DIY expert who spends long hours handling power tools, or a student who

wants to cut out extraneous distractions while finishing your dissertation.

View the product at: hearinglink.org/softfoam

Under pressure

Many people suffer ill-effects of migraines, often brought on by changes in air/ barometric pressure.

There's now a solution to help alleviate causes of these headaches. **WeatherX** earplugs have a built-in ceramic inner filter which slows down the shift in pressure changes.

They can also be used alongside an app which can help forecast when symptoms might occur.

Read more about this product at: hearinglink.org/weatherX

Your ears are a valuable commodity

It is essential for everyone to take care of their ears and hearing, as damage to the auditory system could be irreparable.

Your hearing is delicate and susceptible to damage, even from everyday activities and environments.

However, if you have hearing loss it is especially important to preserve and protect your remaining hearing as communicating freely with others is vital.

Visit hearinglink.org/protecthearing to find out more about how loud is too loud, and how to protect your ears and look after your hearing.

Technology Corner



Speech-to-text apps and how they can support hearing loss

Speech-to-text apps are programmes designed to transcribe spoken words into written text. They can be of great benefit to people living with hearing loss, because they can make it easier and faster to communicate with others and access information without the need for writing or manual typing.

How does it work?

The technology behind speech-to-text apps is built on natural language processing (NLP), machine learning (ML), and artificial intelligence (AI). When you speak into the microphone, the app uses natural language processing to analyse the sound and convert it into digital signals. These signals are processed by machine learning, which use models to identify patterns in the sound and match them to known speech patterns.

The technology behind the app is continually improving, and progress has been helped by growing numbers of people using them. Two areas of improvement in the technology include how well speech-to-text apps work with people who talk with accents, and in isolating the intended speaking voice when other voices are talking near to the microphone.

What are the benefits?

One of the benefits of speech-to-text apps is that they can be used on a variety of devices, including smartphones, tablets, and computers.

This means that users can access the apps from anywhere, making it easier to stay connected and communicate effectively. It has become commonplace now for the function of speech-to-text to take place on a device, without the need of an internet connection.

Many speech-to-text apps can be



Speech-to-text apps are a useful tool for people with hearing loss

customised to allow the user to adjust settings such as microphone sensitivity, transcription speed, and how the text is displayed to suit their personal needs.

Supporting hearing loss

For people with hearing loss, speech-to-text apps can be incredibly empowering. By providing real-time transcription of spoken words, these apps can help to break down communication barriers and enable more effective communication.

For example, a person with hearing loss can use a speech-to-text app during a conversation to read the text of what the other person is saying in real-time, rather than struggling to hear.

This can be especially useful in busy or noisy environments such as cafés and public transport. There are also many other real-time uses for speech-to-text apps.

For example, in a classroom or lecture hall, a speech-to-text app can be used to provide students with captions of what is said. Similarly, in medical or work meetings, a speech-to-text app can be used so important information can be followed more accurately and in real-time. In large meetings or conferences, the

technology can allow all attendees to follow the talk or presentation.

The future

Speech-to-text apps are an incredibly useful tool and can help overcome some of the challenges encountered by people with hearing loss when communicating with others.

With advancements in technology and ongoing research and training of NLP, ML, and AI, speech-to-text apps are only going to continue getting better in the future. They are certainly not perfect, but they are well worth giving a try now, and depending on your experience, worth trying again in the future to see how they've improved with the benefit of time.

Find out about available speech to text apps at hearinglink.org/useful-apps

“It was literally LOVE at first sight!”



Carolann with Walnut, her new hearing dog partner

Photography by Paul Wilkinson

Carolann lacked confidence and suffered from anxiety and depression due to her deafness. Marly, her first hearing dog, turned her life around. But when he passed away suddenly in 2020, Carolann was left without her “ears”. Her past feelings quickly returned and she struggled to deal with daily activities without her life-changing partner. But then a new face arrived on her doorstep, and she hasn’t looked back since

Before Hearing Dogs came into my life in 2009, I lacked confidence, and suffered from depression and anxiety due to my deafness. My first hearing dog partner was Marly, a rescue dog, who was trained by Hearing Dogs.

Every time Marly went off for his assessments – one day, two weeks then four months away from me – I kept thinking he wouldn’t pass because he was a loopy, giant, chocolate Labrador! But he excelled and passed with flying colours!

The sound work Marly did for me was incredible. I discovered I had “new ears”. It gave me confidence when we went out when Marly wore his coat (although people thought I was the trainer as “I didn’t look deaf!”).

Marly alerted me to real smoke alarms in our house, a fire alarm going off in the town centre, helped me stop flooding the bath, or burning dinner with the timer. We had such a bond and I loved the awareness Marly brought when he wore his coat in public places. I found people were more understanding about my communication needs.

Goodbye to my shadow

Sadly, Marly passed away suddenly in November 2020; he was 12 years old and it was such a shock. He was my shadow, my ears and a great family member.

It hit me hard. I felt another dog could never replace the love I had for Marly. At this time, we were in the middle of lockdown due to the COVID pandemic and I had all my family around me. I didn’t have to worry about doorbells, telephones and timers. They would answer the door or tell me the phone was ringing.

However, when lockdown restrictions ended, my son and his fiancée moved out, my husband was working and my stepson went back to work.

Dealing with change

Suddenly, I was alone at home, with no shadow and no sound alerts. I was losing confidence quickly and my anxiety was high.

I was missing a four-legged friend and trained hearing dog so much. I was missing out on walking with my dog friends in our beautiful woods. I would jog in the woods, but it just wasn’t the same.

One night I was so emotional, my husband Steve said you need another hearing dog, so I knew I had to find out if another partner was possible.

A new match

Fast forward 18 months, and in August last year I got a lovely email from Hearing Dogs to say they had found a match! It was a bit of a shock because I didn’t believe it would happen so soon.

Walnut, a black Labrador, arrived in September. To be honest, I was scared and anxious. What if we don’t bond? What if I don’t have the same love I had for Marly? So many thoughts were running through my head.

However, September came and Walnut arrived on our doorstep. It was literally LOVE at first sight! She boldly walked in, ran upstairs, gave Steve and me a fuss, looked at Jackie her amazing trainer and seemed to say: “Yep this will do!”

“I was alone at home with no shadow, no sound alerts. I was losing confidence quickly and my anxiety was high.”

So much love

From that day on, Walnut settled in and it feels like we’ve had her for years. She has filled our home with so much love. She is affectionate, attentive, loves her cuddles, likes to try and sit on your head if she gets the chance, and loves to chat back. We are impressed with her sound work.

When she wears her coat, she turns into Mrs Serious. She doesn’t react to people fussing, and is so focused on looking after me – it’s an amazing transition.

I take Walnut almost everywhere. She comes along to my art group, where she settles so quickly and sometimes likes to groan at the tutors – to the amusement of the other group members.

I am lucky where I work because Walnut gets to play with her doggy friends – a German Shepherd and Whippet – whilst I am doing spreadsheets and invoicing.

We belong to an American car club and take her to car shows, where she sticks her nose out of our Mustang car window posing.

She fits in everywhere and absolutely nothing fazes her. As soon as her coat is off, she is grabbing a toy, wanting so much affection (and treats).

Walnut has filled a massive hole, and we never thought that would happen. She is loved by so many people and has a massive fan club that is continuing to grow. And I’m loving the fact I have “new ears” again.



Carolann with Marly

Challenge yourself



Can you take on a fundraising challenge this year? There are lots to choose from!

Are you ready for a new challenge? We have put together a list of superb challenges across the UK for your consideration – from walks to runs, swims to cycles and a few unusual ones too!

There is something for everyone, take a look at our list of events for 2023-24 and see what we've found. If anything grabs your fancy, get in touch – it's that easy!

Each year thousands of pounds are raised towards

training our wonderful hearing dogs and providing our full range of personalised hearing support services such as the Helpdesk and LinkUp support groups.

We would love you to join the Hearing Dogs team for your next challenge!

Check out our list at hearingdogs.org.uk/support. If you would like to take on a different challenge for Hearing Dogs, please email events@hearingdogs.org.uk and we will support you every step of the way with your efforts.



Join in a challenge with your friends



Hands up if you want to raise money for Hearing Dogs



Sarah and Albert step into action



Our furry friends also got in on the fun

Fabulous February!



Lots of wonderful treats were baked



Hula-hooping Hannah

The response to this year's 28 Challenge has been absolutely incredible with over £23,500 raised by our fantastic Hearing Dog supporters.

We've seen creative challenges like knitting, crocheting and drawing, daily exercise challenges, and fun challenges with your dog.

Plus, Peter's famous pasties, Freya's epic swimming challenge and 10-year-old Hannah hula-hooping her way through February.

A huge thank you to everyone who took part, your inventiveness and kindness will make a huge difference to the deaf people we help across the UK.

Did you know your fundraising helps to fund ALL of our hearing loss services?

We've a team of volunteer speakers ready to tell you about our work



Ask for a speaker!

Do you know anyone who has links to a local community group such as Rotary, Inner Wheel or Probus?

If so, please let them know that we have fabulous speakers across the UK who could speak to their group about fundraising for our wonderful charity.

To request a speaker, simply fill in this form: hearingdogs.org.uk/talk

100 collections took place



Paws Appeal

For our second ever Paws Appeal, more than 100 Collections were planned around the country, to take place over April and May.

Volunteers from across the country were out in force to raise funds for, and raise awareness of our range of personalised hearing support services and life-changing hearing dogs.

We'll update you on how much we raised in the next issue of *inTouch* but it was lots of fun to meet people in communities throughout the UK.

If you'd like to help with future fundraising collections for our charity, please contact events@hearingdogs.org.uk

Dates for the diary



Late Summer Show
10 September 2023



Christmas Market
25-26 November 2023

Meet Janet

Site Co-ordinator – Beatrice Wright Centre, Bielby

Coming from a background in community development and health and safety, I saw the advert for the role at Hearing Dogs and thought: "That's for me!"

On arrival on my interview day at the Beatrice Wright Centre (BWC), the Charity's northern training centre in Yorkshire, I was overwhelmed by the tranquil surroundings and really impressed with the site. The bonus of having dogs around while I worked sounded perfect.

I have now worked for Hearing Dogs for a year and I absolutely love it! I don't dislike anything about my job.

Lots to do

At the BWC, I work in the reception area and I am the first point of contact for anyone visiting the site.

On a typical day, the first thing I do is open the reception area. I then make sure all the post is franked ready for collection and get my emails up to date. Then, I respond to any on-site queries throughout the day.

Fridays are always my on-site weekly/monthly safety check day. On other days I get involved with Pawtrails around the site, manage building/room bookings, accommodation requests, arrange transport of dogs should the need arise, and manage our vehicle maintenance fleet and pool cars.

I also co-ordinate all the cyclical maintenance and contractors on-site and manage all aspects of Health and Safety. My days are very varied.

Strive for excellence

My aim is to ensure that BWC is presented in the best possible way and offers a warm and welcoming environment for our visitors, staff and volunteers.

Part of my responsibility involves co-ordinating the volunteer drivers, gardeners,

"I have worked at Hearing Dogs for a year and I absolutely love it!"



cleaners and maintenance team who keep our site looking amazing. I also support the wider operations team with movements of dogs around the north of the country and arrange for volunteer drivers to enable this to happen.

I get involved in the events that happen here and last year I had a baptism of fire with the 40th anniversary celebrations, but wow, it was an amazing experience.

I struggle to say just one thing I like about my job, but meeting people is great. I know some people would dread doing health and safety, but I just love it! I work with an amazing team at the BWC and I am always keen to see colleagues from The Grange, our southern training centre, and other parts of the country.

My other loves

Away from my role at Hearing Dogs, I am married, with a son and a black working Cocker Spaniel.

Misty is 12-years-old and joined our family the day before the wedding of HRH Prince of Wales, William and HRH Princess of Wales Catherine in 2011.

Misty is just wonderful. She knows she is loved and always gets the best seat in the house. She loves walks and being out and

"I work with an amazing team."

about. We like to explore the country in our motorhome, in particular Scotland. I am also a keen motorcycle road racing fan and travel yearly to the Isle of Man to watch the Southern 100 races or TT races. I also enjoy gardening.



Janet with Misty

Summer socialising

Volunteer Sylvia shares how she's learned to manage her hearing loss during active summer months

Summer conjures up warming images of outdoor activities, picnics and barbecues with friends and family, as well as trips to new and favourite places. It should be a carefree time, but for those of us with hearing loss it can seem very daunting.

Outdoor spaces can make hearing more difficult, particularly if it's windy, or there's lots of background noise. Once darkness falls it becomes hard, if not impossible to lipread, without good lighting. If there is insufficient light from lanterns and no indoor option, something simple like an inexpensive and portable battery-operated lantern – available in most outdoor living shops – can help. It might sit on a table or hang on a branch.

In my experience, it's worth thinking in advance of the likely pitfalls rather than leaving it to chance. It puts you in control so you can then allow yourself to relax and enjoy the company and surroundings.

There are some useful tips for socialising on the Hearing Link Services website – go to hearinglink.org/out-about – there're tips about hearing loss and eating out, as well as travelling by plane or train.

Communication barriers

Communication barriers due to hearing loss create anxiety and undermine confidence. Travelling by bus, train or plane may also present problems, which require receipt of verbal information.

However, to avoid it would be detrimental to the wellbeing that meeting up with friends and family and expanding your horizons provides.

If you are travelling alone, make sure

"Communication barriers, due to hearing loss, create anxiety and undermine confidence"



Summer activities can present challenges

there's someone you can contact by your preferred means (e.g. by text or Relay UK), if you need support, and carry a notepad or pocket-sized LCD e-writer. Don't hesitate to ask anyone nearby for an explanation of announcements – people are usually very obliging when help is needed.

Stay determined

Adopting the attitude that there are very few things that cannot be resolved by determination not to give up, combined with a little thinking outside-the-box, has helped me to deal with the unexpected.

An example of the latter occurred when I recently visited a tailor for alterations to my dress for my daughter's summer wedding.

It was about an hour's drive from home so I tested the route on Google Maps and set off with name of house with white railings to look out for, because there were no door numbers. On arrival, to my dismay, there were three houses with white railings but none with the name given.

Undeterred, I phoned via Relay UK for directions, but the tailor rejected the call, thinking it was spam. It was understandable, but my heart sank. My husband was uncontactable, therefore I had no means of contacting the tailor.

At that moment, I spotted a dog walker and a solution sprang to mind. I dashed

"A little thinking outside-the-box has helped me to deal with the unexpected!"

over and asked if he could make the call. He was delighted to help and escorted me to the house, which was next to a pond with white railings.

For the wedding I will have transcripts of the speeches to hand, and for the outdoor reception I will ensure that both seating plan and lighting favours my hearing loss.

I hope you're able to make the most of your summer socialising.

There're lots of helpful tips for managing hearing loss at hearinglink.org

Could a Confidence & Companion dog be right for you?



If you're a dog lover with mild or moderate hearing loss, a Confidence and Companion dog might be right for you.

These well-trained and loving dogs are partnered with people who have some kind of difficulty with their hearing (for example, mild or moderate hearing loss in one or both ears) but who don't need to rely on a dog to alert them to sounds.

Confidence and Companion dogs provide companionship and emotional support, helping their partners to feel more confident and independent and, in many cases, less isolated and lonely.

When one of these dogs is matched with someone with hearing loss, we provide support during the 'settling in' period to ensure the match is successful before the dog is permanently adopted by their partner.

To find out more visit hearingdogs.org.uk/apply/confidence-and-companion-dogs/

Late Summer Show returns!

We are very pleased to announce that the Hearing Dogs Late Summer Show – our fun day out for the whole family – is back in September!

Join us on 10 September at our southern training centre for food and drink, entertainment for all, funfair rides, face painting, doggy demos, information about our range of personalised services, and much more.

All situated in a beautiful location, nestled among the idyllic Chiltern hills, it's the perfect way to end this summer! Dogs on leads are welcome.

More information is available on our website – visit hearingdogs.org.uk/summershow



Pets at Home supports Hearing Dogs for a second year

A fabulous summer of fundraising is underway!

Following the success of Pets at Home's Summer Fundraiser for Hearing Dogs last year, we are delighted to have been chosen again – with all the money raised helping to train hearing dog puppies that will go on to transform the lives of deaf people.

The Summer Fundraiser is underway this month (July), with every area of the business getting involved – from all the Pets at Home stores, Groom Rooms, and the Pets at Home Veterinary Group, to their distribution centres and offices – all raising funds for our charity.

Steve Heyes, director of communications and fundraising for Hearing Dogs, said: "We are absolutely over the moon to have been chosen as the Pets at Home's Summer Fundraiser charity for a second year.

"Our relationship with Pets at Home, a huge national retailer, not only helps to fund the training of our amazing hearing dogs, but it also provides us with a brilliant opportunity to raise awareness of Hearing Dogs with a big, new audience.

"We are really excited for the fundraiser to take place this month and to see the many ways Pets at Home colleagues raise money to help deaf people leave loneliness



behind and reconnect with life. A huge thank you to everyone at Pets at Home for choosing us again."

Amy Wilson, fundraising manager at the Pets at Home Foundation, said: "We love what the Charity does to change the lives of deaf people through these incredible dogs, and the high level of love and care hearing dogs receive throughout their lives. We are delighted to be supporting the Charity for a second year!"

This year, every store and business area will showcase Hearing Dogs branding. Colleagues will also be wearing charity t-shirts, there'll be merchandise to buy at the till, and every customer will be asked if they'd like to make a donation – you might even see one of our volunteers and life-changing hearing dogs if you pay a visit this month.

ITVX launches BSL channel

With the launch of ITVX last year, ITV announced that deaf viewers will now have access to a British Sign Language channel, solely featuring signed programming.

It means that many of the nation's favourite programmes including Emmerdale and Coronation Street omnibus episodes, Alan Carr's Epic Gameshow, Vera and Lewis will feature an interpreter.

ITVX, which launched with a selection of 20 themed channels, will also have subtitles for over 90% of on-demand programmes on every platform and device – from mobile apps, through web browsers to all connected TVs and plug-in devices.

For live TV watched through ITVX, subtitles will be available to around 80% of viewers, watching through our mobile apps,

web browsers and most connected TV devices, with work in progress to enable live subtitling via the remaining platforms.

Subtitles will also be available on all 20 themed channels on all platforms except Freeview, YouView, Freesat and Chromecast, at launch. ITV stated that the remaining subtitling gaps would be resolved in the first half of 2023.

At launch, audio description was available for around 20% of programmes on the platform, including all new ITV drama, and worked on the mobile apps, Amazon Fire, Apple TV, Samsung TVs, Chromecast (iOS only) and Sky Glass. ITV stated that it hoped to make AD available on these in the first half of 2023.

For further details, see: hearinglink.org/ITVX

Tributes

These pages are dedicated to the memory of the people and dogs who have helped shape Hearing Dogs for Deaf People into the successful and respected organisation it is today

Remembering Jenny

Hearing Link Services volunteer from Fife, Scotland



Our kind friend Jenny, who passed away in December 2022, joined the Charity as a Hearing Support Services volunteer at the audiology department in Edinburgh just before lockdown. Jenny's enthusiasm and commitment to her role supporting others with hearing loss was unwavering and she became one of our IT Superusers. The Hearing Link Services Team valued her enthusiastic support, including helping to provide LinkUps online (LUOL). Jenny's determination to learn how to use Teams herself, inspired her to help other participants to do so too. Jenny was also a Helpdesk responder, always calm and understanding. Her warmth and empathy towards those she supported on a one-to-one basis made them feel understood and less alone. Jenny had been very active within her community in Fife. She was instrumental in setting up the Dunfermline Hard of Hearing Group, and remained a key contact for them, organising talks and sharing information. Jenny was warm, sensitive and always happy to support others in whatever way she could. She is greatly missed.

Remembering June

Hearing Dogs volunteer, partnered with hearing dog Issy, from Cheshire

June was a fantastic volunteer for Hearing Dogs and specifically the Cheshire Fundraising Branch. She was partnered with hearing dog Paddy who accompanied her to as many talks as possible. June always had interesting tales to tell – particularly about Paddy's rough start in life when he was found abandoned in a drain in Cardiff. He was subsequently trained as a hearing dog and supported June, providing lots of assistance and companionship. She always said that once she had her hearing dog, people who didn't even know her stopped in the street to ask about him. After her husband John sadly passed away, June bravely carried on supporting speakers at talks. She frequently visited her son, daughter, and grandchildren in London. Paddy passed away around seven years ago and she was offered another hearing dog, Issy. June was a lovely person and did everything she could to help Hearing Dogs, despite ongoing problems with mobility. She drove her car until she suffered from a stroke a few years ago, which affected her eyesight, and she was unable to continue driving – that was a great disappointment to her. However she never lost her wicked sense of humour. She was a very dear friend to many who miss her company and personality.



Remembering Echo

Hearing dog, partnered with Steven from St Ives, Cambridgeshire

Echo. No words can describe the amount of pride and love I have for this special hearing dog, she was my girl. I will always have such a special place in my heart for her. I have so many amazing memories. One that stands out was when Echo and I won Partnership of the Year 2012 and collected our award from Princess Anne. Echo was my world, my everything. I will always cherish the amazing memories we had together and of course her being my ears when I needed them the most Sleep well Echo. xx



BOOK OF REMBRANCE

To remember a special person please contact us on 01844 348148 or email fundraising@hearingdogs.org.uk



Remembering Donald

Hearing dog partnered with Beks (Rebekah) from Kettering, Northamptonshire

Donald, I never knew you would be gone too soon. I feel so sad you couldn't accompany me through life farther than this. I feel so cold and lonely without you around me. You stood by me and made me smile. You were the greatest gift the universe has blessed me with. Saying goodbye is the most painful word for me to say right now, I can't believe that those days of walking and playing interesting games are over. Though you are gone, your memory lives on in my heart, and forever miss you my lovely best dog, Donald. ♥

Remembering Nixie

Retired hearing dog, adopted by Hearing Dogs volunteer Margery, from Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire

I first met Nixie in 2007, when I volunteered to help with dog walking. Each week I'd go to Tring to give her a good walk for her deaf partner. When the lady passed away in 2009, Nixie was matched with a new partner and we lost touch. Fast forward to 2019 when Nixie came back into my life on her retirement. We settled down very happily together. Nixie enjoyed her walks and would spend a lot of time sniffing on our outward trips, but the moment we headed home she would speed up, and go straight to the cupboard in which I kept her treats! Nixie was very foodie and would never allow me to forget her mealtimes – as if I would! She was not interested in toys unless it was food-related, and loved to play hunt the treat. She was not interested in TV but usually allowed me to watch it in the evenings, when she would curl up beside me for a while before deciding she would prefer her bed. Nixie was popular with everyone. People out walking would comment on how lovely she was, and were amazed at how bright and sprightly she was for her 16+ years. Nixie became poorly in January and I had to say goodbye to my dear little friend. Farewell Nixie and many thanks for very happy times.



Remembering Oz

Hearing dog partnered with Rosalyn from Ashford, Kent

Oz and I met at The Grange in August 2011. We clicked straight away and fell in love. He was an amazing, wonderful

boy. Strongly loyal to the end. Oz changed my life a lot. He was a wonderful companion and was by my side 24-hours a day. Oz was a lovable character and loved by everyone we met, we had a lot of adventures together. I will cherish memories of our time together forever. Thank you, Oz, for everything. Rosalyn. ♥



Remembering Ash

Retired hearing dog, fostered by Hearing Dogs volunteer Phil from Buckinghamshire

Ash sadly passed away recently at the super age of 16 and a half years old. Ashy Boy, as he was known, had a wonderful life as a working Yorkipoo for 14 years with his deaf partner up in Yorkshire, and then I fostered him for his last two years in retirement. Ash never looked his age and was well known around The Grange as he joined me doing my volunteer gardening duties. He loved meeting other dogs and Hearing Dogs volunteers. Finally, age caught up with Ash and he sadly passed away. Thank you, Ashy Boy, from us all at Hearing Dogs for Deaf People. R.I.P.



Remembering Tom

Hearing Dogs volunteer from Driffield, East Riding of Yorkshire

Tom passed away on 22 September after a long illness with prostate cancer. Tom loved dogs. Whilst walking the family dog some years ago, Tom and Joan met a hearing dog and its happy volunteer, and quickly decided they wanted to help. They spent many joy-filled times socialising puppies, and feel blessed to have been part of the Hearing Dogs family. Photos of all the hearing dogs they looked after have pride of place at home, and great memories remain. Our family continues to sponsor hearing dogs and look forward to hearing of their escapades and progress.



Remembering Kass

Hearing dog partnered with Polly from Teddington, Middlesex

Kass came into my life in 2013 when I was eight years old. A beautiful black Labrador, we enjoyed a wonderful nine-year partnership until December 2022, when we said the hardest of goodbyes. Kass changed my life completely. Her calming presence helped me sleep and feel safe at night. Her emotional intelligence was exceptional; when I was having a tough time, she would sit beside me, calmly sensing that I needed company. But she also loved to have fun. Every afternoon when I came

home from school, she would run off and roll around on her back with joy at the prospect of dinner. She was very cheeky too: the sound of her running around with a shoe after her dinner was a daily highlight. She was adored by everyone, and she adored them all too. Kass, I miss you so much and cannot begin to put into words how much you mean to me – thank you, for everything. Night, Kass. x

Remembering Jean

Hearing dog recipient and volunteer fundraiser from Renfrewshire, Scotland

Beloved mum and nana, Jean MacDonald was lucky enough to be partnered with four hearing dogs in her lifetime; and what incredible partnerships they were. She was first partnered with Hooch in 1994, followed by an amazing wee whippet named Sheena, then Jumble and finally Lewis. For 10 years Lewis and Jean made an incredible partnership and had such a close bond, but sadly he passed away just a few months before Jean. Jean's hearing dogs were a lifeline to her – Jumble even won an award for bravery after alerting her to a fire. Over the years, Jean and her hearing dogs helped to raise funds for Hearing Dogs and increase awareness of the challenges faced by deaf people in everyday life. In her memory, Jean's family launched a justgiving.com tribute fund in support of Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, to help others like Jean to leave loneliness behind and reconnect with life.



Remembering Beau

Beloved companion to retired Hearing Dogs volunteer Sue from Knutsford, Cheshire

Beau was a very special dog who was sent from Heaven to look after me. He started out in life training to become a hearing dog but for some reason he didn't make it. Then by a twist of fate I was lucky enough to adopt him – I like to think he was just waiting for me. We had some wonderful times together touring Scotland and England in our caravan, but the real test came when my

husband had to go into care in 2020, and subsequently passed away in 2021, then our bond became even deeper. Suddenly, this Easter, Beau was found to have an inoperable tumour so sadly I had to say goodbye to my beloved boy on 14 April. To say I'm devastated is putting it mildly, he was my everything, my boy Beau.



Remembering Marlow

Hearing dog partnered with Rob from Brighton

Marlow was the only positive I can say about being deaf. The day I brought him home in 2007 the hell in my life lessened somewhat.

He brought great joy to everyone who met him, and he loved coming to work with me at the council, meeting all the lads – and nicking their lunch! He loved driving around in the road sweeper in his high-vis jacket looking down on everyone – which he couldn't normally do because of his short legs! And, because of the nature of my job, he got to visit all the parks in Brighton. He also gave me the confidence to find someone to love. He was a good natured and fun boy who'll be sorely missed by everyone, none so more than me.



Remembering Teddy

Hearing dog partnered with Vincent Wakeling from Dagenham, Essex

Teddy meant the world to me. He was like my guardian angel. The day I went for training with Teddy was the day my life started. As soon as I blew the whistle, he came straight back to me, and I realised my life had changed forever. From that day on I grew more and more confident. For so many years I'd had fears about all sorts of things, I was afraid of life itself. But when I got Teddy, I didn't feel frightened anymore. No one talked to me before I got Teddy. I felt invisible. He completely changed my world, made it so much better. I miss him. Teddy was my rock, he kept me going. I never went into shops before I got Teddy – he took away the fear. Teddy helped me discover life – he gave me an identity, a purpose, and made me complete. Teddy, you smiled with your eyes, laughed with your tail, and loved with your heart. I can't stop crying for you, my Teddy Boy. I feel frightened of life again and so very lonely without you.





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