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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 the work of our Community Days – how they are changing!

Can you tell us about your professional background?
I chase 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 refurbishing child soldiers in Africa, supporting small-scale micro-businesses in India, 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. Prior to this, I 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’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 what I was thinking in introducing Flynn to you all – I’m looking 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 such as Hearing Dogs for Deaf People would be unable to deliver the work that they do.

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...”

Hearing Dogs family welcomes new CEO

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.

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Can you tell us about your professional background?
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.

What 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 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.

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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.

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

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. HRH meeting members of Hearing Dogs staff

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 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
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 USA 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 another new path. Whether or not they will ever get down new paths.

Giving back
One of these new paths includes 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 approach to my life and a new found confidence in channelling my energies down new paths.

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.

Julia’s story

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

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, 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.”

“Meet others with hearing loss.”

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 the 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.uk/communitydays 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.

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.

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.

Our Hearing Information Days are back for 2023!

We are opening our doors once more to give you access to our information events. 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 Orangery, 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 personal 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 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 so 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
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 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 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’re 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.

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 Cax on 01844 348130, email legacies@hearingdogs.org.uk, or visit hearingdogs.org.uk/legacies
Protecting your hearing

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 Ceramic™ technology filter to help you cope with ear clogging, popping and discomfort.

They are available in adult or children’s small ear sizes. Find out more at: hearinglink.org/earplugs

Make a splash

To ensure fun times in the pool or at the beach, there are earplugs that can help. There are lots of different types of earplug available to support and protect your hearing.

There are many 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 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.

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.

Technology Corner

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

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

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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.
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. 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!”).

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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. 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.

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!”

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.

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.

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!). 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!).

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.
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.

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.

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.

We’re a team of volunteer speakers ready to tell you about our work. 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.

Did you know your fundraising helps to fund ALL of our hearing loss services? We would love you to join the Hearing Dogs team for your next challenge!

Hands up if you want to raise money for Hearing Dogs

Fabulous February!

Paws Appeal

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Our furry friends also got in on the fun.

Hula-hooping Hannah

Late Summer Show
10 September 2023

Christmas Market
25-26 November 2023

Dates for the diary

Ask for a speaker!

Hand on a challenge in six steps...
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 baying of hearing 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, 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 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.

“I work with an amazing team.”

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.

Communication barriers:

Communication barriers due to hearing loss can present many challenges. This is particularly true in outdoor spaces, where there may be wind, noise and distance.

If you are on your own, it can be hard to hear conversations or announcements, and you may struggle to lipread without good lighting. Once darkness falls, it becomes harder, if not impossible to lipread, without good lighting.

Communication barriers due to hearing loss can create anxiety and undermine confidence.

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 you have your horizons provides.
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 LinkCups online (LUODJ). 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 resounder, 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 on a Cardiff roundabout. June was a fantastic volunteer for Hearing Dogs and she supported June, providing lots of assistance and companionship.

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 memories of Echo 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 loveable quirkiness when I needed them the most. Sleep well Echo xx

News in brief

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 wrap up the Hearing Dogs Summer 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 euro 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 Pet’s at Home 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 earing 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 see-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, Vero 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 are 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 Chromcast, at launch. ITV stated that the remaining subtitles 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 (505 only) and Sky Glass. ITV stated that it hoped to make AD available on those in the first half of 2023.

For further details, see hearinglink.org/ITVX

© Photography Paul Wilkinson and contributors
Hearing dog partnered with BekS (Rebekah) from Ketton, 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 way for me to say goodbye. 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.

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 Yorkspoo for 14 years with his deaf partner in 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, for all at Hearing Dogs for Deaf People. R.I.P.

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

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.

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 Hootch in 1994, followed by an amazing 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 lifetime to her – Jordan even won an award for bravery after derailing her after 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.

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.

Retired 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.
Win a paw-dropping £10,000!

You could win an amazing prize
When you play, you will help deaf people to leave loneliness behind and reconnect with life.

Playing the Weekly Lottery is easy
Join online at lottery.hearingdogs.org.uk or call 01628 200 342

For full terms and conditions please visit - https://lottery.hearingdogs.org.uk/terms-conditions

Call the National Gambling Helpline on 0808 8020 133
Open 24 hours, 7 days a week.