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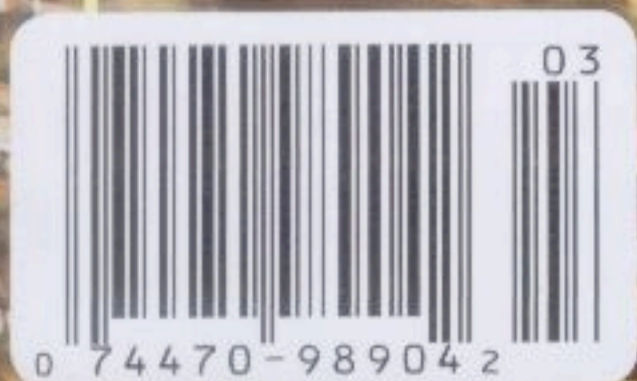
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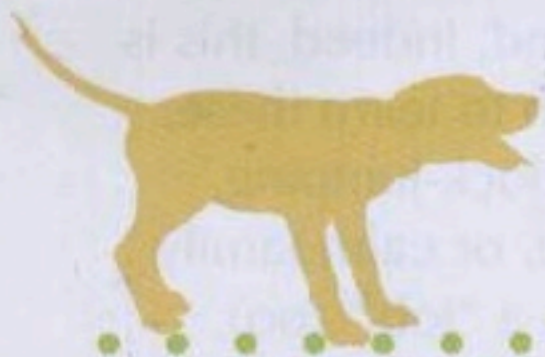
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A Celebration of the Labrador Retriever



In Their Debt

by Shelley Bueche

Detecting Invisible Disabilities

“Until There’s a Cure, There’s a Dog!”

Ten years ago, Dan Warren founded Warren Retrievers, a Labrador retriever breeding facility in Montpelier, Virginia. He worked hard to build a solid reputation for excellent dogs with superior scenting capabilities, and began supplying dogs to work in canine drug and bomb detection. His early clients included Homeland Security, the Marine Corps, Virginia and California correctional facilities, and municipalities nationwide.

In keeping with his commitment to providing the best Labrador retrievers, Warren offers the most rigid health clearances in the industry for all the dogs, not just the ones placed for alert work. He also offers a lifetime health guarantee against congenital, hereditary, and genetic defects, and only breeds via artificial insemination to ensure the health of the mother and her pups.

Shortly after a medical crisis left him diagnosed with diabetes, Warren became interested in a new genre of detection dogs. “We already had proven scent detection capabilities in place, and so Diabetic Alert Dogs by Warren Retrievers was born in the spring of 2010. Our protocol, developed in collaboration with Master Trainer Dee Bogetti, places puppies in client homes at a young age to increase their bonding and enhance their training.”

Warren further explains: “Diabetic Alert Dogs – DADs – often alert to blood sugar fluctuations anywhere from twenty to forty-five minutes before the meter does, thereby preventing the dramatic health risks

associated with wildly fluctuating blood sugar levels. We place pups early because we want to enhance the bond between the dog and its handler, and we want the dog to begin alerting as soon as possible.”

One Warren Retrievers client is Beverly Yopp Tyler. The health issues related to her diagnosis of reactive hypoglycemia – a condition similar to diabetes – caused her to take disability from her job as a labor and delivery nurse. She experienced dangerous highs and lows, sometimes resulting in dizziness, exhaustion, incoherence, and fainting. Her search for a dog to help her eventually led her to Warren Retrievers. Most agencies she found in her research would only work with Type 1 diabetics, but at Diabetic Alert Dogs by Warren Retrievers, Tyler found a group of caring individuals who would not only provide her with a dog and training, but could also provide her with ongoing support.

Warren Retrievers’ other Diabetic Alert Dog clients range from three years of age to seniors, and they all



Murphy and Master Trainer Dee Bogetti. In addition to being Dee’s personal dog, Murphy is also a therapy

have a variety of health issues associated with their Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes. Family members of a Type 1 diabetic child will tell you that the most critical time is in the wee hours of the night. They spend countless sleepless nights checking their child’s blood sugar multiple times to ensure that the child is not in danger.

Adult Type 1 diabetics can be unaware of dangerous drops in their blood sugar, and often worry about having a diabetic seizure or losing consciousness while driving or sleeping. Adult or child, no one should be afraid to go to sleep at night for fear they won’t wake up.

Master Trainer Bogetti and her team temperament test all puppies to ensure that the right dog is matched with the



"[This] is the face that checks on me constantly all day, every day," Beverly says of her Warren Retrievers Lab Sugar. "It has changed my life and made my family and friends able to stop worrying and checking on me all of the time. They have seen him in action and trust him, as do I." (Photo by Beverly Yopp Taylor)

right family. It is vital that the puppy selected for service dog work not only have the "right nose," but the right temperament. Bogetti explains, "The puppies we place have to match the lifestyle and medical needs of the individual and the family. For example, an active teenager will need a very different service dog than someone with a more sedentary lifestyle.

"The process of training a DAD begins when a pup is seven weeks old," explains Bogetti. "For a minimum of three weeks, these pups are enrolled in an intensive early education program at Warren Retrievers. When the pups are placed with their new family at ten weeks of age, they continue their obedience training and begin their scent training. When the DAD is consistently alerting on the diabetic's fluctuating sugar levels around eighteen months of age, the dog and handler take a public access test at which time they are certified as a working service dog team."

In addition to his successful breeding facility, Warren Retrievers, and Diabetic Alert Dogs by Warren Retrievers, founder Dan Warren has also started Guardian Angel Service Dogs, a non-profit charitable foundation to serve as a philanthropic arm to provide education and outreach about service dogs.

According to Executive Director Sue Kindred, the nonprofit's primary mission is to raise public awareness

about individuals and families who are struggling with "invisible disabilities" such as Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes, seizure disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), hypoglycemic unawareness, and traumatic brain injury (TBI). Kindred states, "Guardian Angel also works with organizations to raise awareness about how a service dog can provide life-saving assistance to these individuals. Quite literally and profoundly, a service dog can save lives."

The organization also believes that anyone who could benefit from having a service dog in their life should be able to do so regardless of their financial means. To support this mission, they offer fund-raising opportunities and assistance, which enables clients to raise the necessary funds to pay for their dog and training.

Furthermore, the organization offers staff training programs to business owners who may be unfamiliar with the rights afforded to service dogs and their handlers by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). A service dog is a working dog, not a pet. Business owners who try to deny equal access to individuals with disabilities – including invisible disabilities – and their service animal are in violation of federal civil rights as provided by the ADA. For additional information about laws covering service dogs, please contact the Department of Justice at 1-800-514-0301 or visit the ADA website at www.ada.gov.



Beverly Yopp Taylor with Sugar, her appropriately named diabetic alert dog. (Photo courtesy of Alison McCollum)

As noted in the literature for both Diabetic Alert Dogs by Warren Retrievers and Guardian Angel Service Dogs, "Until There is A Cure... There is a Dog," and "Hope is Good." And, when it comes to saving lives, delivering hope in the form of a furry best friend is pretty great!



Shelley is a canine journalist living with her family and three dogs, in Austin, Texas. She enjoys writing about working Labrador retrievers and related programs and is eager to read

your tips for future columns. Please contact her directly – SHBueche@aol.com – with your ideas.

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