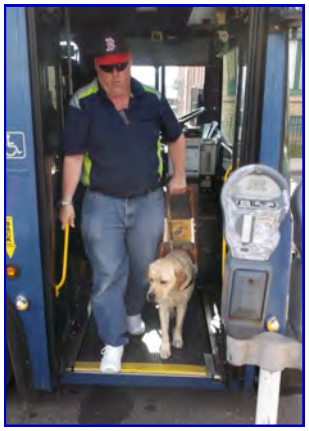
Freedom Forum

A celebration of those dedicated to our mission to partner guide dogs with the visually impaired through Hometown Training, and the members of those special partnerships.

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS 1992-2017
FREEDOM GUIDE DOGS
HOMETOWN TRAINING



Graduating with Woz...At a Young 93!

Angelo grew up east of Syracuse, New York and at the age of 17 enlisted for four years in the Marines. His tearful mom wanted him to finish high school, but his dad was convinced that Angelo should do what he wanted to do.

Angelo was sent to Paris Island for basic training, and upon graduation learned that Pearl Harbor had just been bombed. World War II had begun and he was on his way to the South Pacific, where he would stay for 38 months.

Asked if he was going to re-enlist, Angelo declined but was held over for 4 extra months. Once discharged he began his career as an electrician, which included twenty years at his local VA hospital. At the age of 21 he was making ninety cents per hour. "I was a handy guy," Angelo said. "I could do anything." A few years later he married and bought a two family house where he and his wife raised six children. They're now spread out over several states and have increased his family to include 11 grandchildren and 18 great grandchildren!

Leaving New York to live in Florida, Angelo and his wife resided there for twenty years. When he was in his mid seventies he was driving one day and realized he was seeing large spots in his vision. Angelo's wife said that he was driving badly and they rushed to the eye doctor to learn that he was beginning to lose his sight. That was 17 years ago.

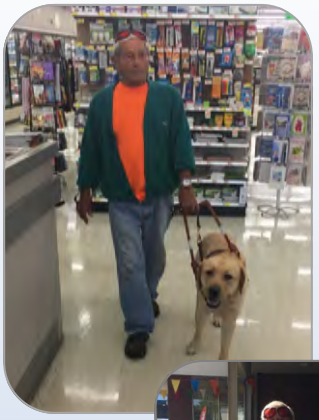
Reaching out for help acclimating to his new situation, someone recommended that Angelo contact Freedom Guide Dogs. Mobility training and other requirements completed, Angelo received his first Freedom guide dog—a black lab named Ivory—who he had for thirteen years.

Ivory's guiding days ended gradually, when she was elderly. "She first started ignoring stairs," Angelo remembers, "and then she slowly became incontinent and was sleeping from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m."

When Ivory was no longer with him, Angelo thought he should allow guide dogs to be placed with younger, more active individuals. He continued to do things with the aid of his wife until she passed away two years ago. Feeling lonely and not getting out as much as he should, Angelo contacted Freedom again.

Enter Woz! Placed together very recently, Angelo says, "We are still learning from each other, but we're getting it down!"

Angelo and Woz are quite busy, going out together three to four times a day. "It keeps his training sharp," he comments. "We have to keep practicing what we know." The active pair can be seen daily walking the complex where they live, and visiting the barber shop, grocery store and VA hospital. They are going to keep each other young!



Watching over Woz . . . . .

We picked up Woz from Freedom in June 2015. He was the last one of the W litter to leave the guide dog school. And Freedom very nicely held back another pup his age to keep him company!

Woz is the fifth guide dog we have raised. From the moment he came into our lives, we knew there was something special about him. Woz was always curious, always listening, and always loving. Please don't tell any of our other pups, but Woz is definitely our favorite!

In the summer of 2016, we took a cross-country road trip. Each day there were new surroundings, a different hotel, and new people to meet. Woz handled these ongoing changes like a champ, as if he had done this all his life. We made sure to bring along his own bed, so that at least each night he had a familiar smell to make him comfortable.

Alison (Freedom Puppy Placement Specialist) jokingly said Woz had seen more of America than she had!

While giving up Woz in December of 2016 was heartbreaking, we knew in our hearts he was destined for great things. We were impressed with John Byfield's training methods and how he customized his training specifically for Woz. Woz has a slow, easy gait and enjoys working at a relaxed pace.

We couldn't be more thrilled as we watch Woz (from afar!) embark on the next leg of his journey as he matures into a full-fledged guide dog. ♥

Editor's note: Article written by Bunny Wilks. Bunny and her husband Ephraim live in Virginia and are currently raising their sixth guide dog puppy, Elvis.

Do you love puppies and have some time to spend with one? Consider becoming a Freedom puppy raiser! Puppy raisers house pups for 12-16 months, give them love, teach them basic obedience and house manners, and socialize them in all kinds of situations—then give them back to become specially trained guide dogs. For more information please contact alison@freedomguidedogs.org. ♥

We'd like to thank all of our donors, volunteers and sponsors! There is no way we could ever travel this road without you! And special thanks to our clients who give back. Want to help? It's easy! Donate a day's coffee money each week, put a donation box at your vet or groomer's office, save your change, ask your local service organization to support your cause. We appreciate you!

I Love You, Xaverie!

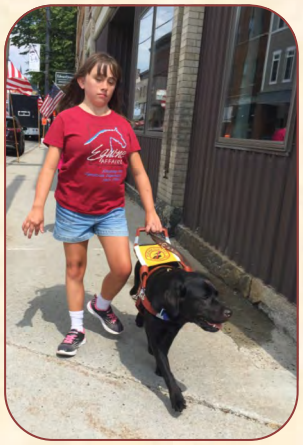
Blind since birth and with other issues to deal with, including autism, 24 year old Alyssa works four days a week with Community Services in her area. Her multiple issues made her an unlikely candidate for a guide dog from some schools, and costs were prohibitive at others. A year ago she was introduced to Freedom Guide Dogs by a Community Services worker who said that two of her relatives were puppy raisers for them, so Alyssa started the application process.

Interviewed in early spring, Alyssa and her family thought there would be a wait for a dog to become available for her; however, a dog that was thought to be a perfect match for her was identified recently and Xaverie came into her life.

There were a few challenges during training, like the lack of sidewalks in the quiet town where Alyssa and her family live. It was confusing to Xaverie at first to learn there were no curbs. Alyssa's mom followed behind the pair while they were being trained in order to pick up on some of the issues and to be able to help address them once training was over.

Alyssa and Xaverie usually travel to multiple places a day with Community Services workers, as Alyssa volunteers a LOT! At a local daycare Xaverie watches as Alyssa reads children's books in Braille to students. She also helps prepare meals for seniors, goes to Zumba classes, and goes swimming.

Walking confidently with her new dog, Alyssa is often heard saying, "I love you, Xaverie.... I just love you!"



Xaverie has two small dogs to play with at home. They all get along great, and she seems to realize that she is bigger so she lays down on her belly for playtime. The little dogs hide on the bed from her as Xaverie knows she's not allowed up there! She also needed to be taught about water a couple of times before she took to swimming, which we all think is natural!

Being only two and still somewhat a puppy, she thought squeaking ducks on a commercial was the sound of her squeak toy. Xaverie rushed to the television speaker looking for the sound, then raced around the house searching for her toy.

Xaverie should save some of that energy! Since Alyssa is very, very busy in her community and has mastered the art of handling a guide dog, they both have lots to do together. Just think of the things they'll accomplish as a team! ❤

Graduation!

Twenty-two new Freedom partnerships were formed this spring. We know that together they will go far and travel safely! Congratulations go out to:

Mary and Mozart, black Poodle, MA
Lindsay and Thorton, black Labrador, MA
Shawn and Wags, yellow Labrador, NH
Raymond and Wenonah, black Labrador, NY
Jonah and Wrangler, yellow Labrador, CT
Barry and Xander, black Labrador, NJ
Stephen and Xarissa, black Labrador, MA
James and Vito, black Labrador, NY
Leon and Winston, black Labrador, NY
Kevin and Xbeau, black Labrador, NY
Shawn and Xener, black Labrador, NY

Alissa and Valor, black Labrador, NY
Angelo and Woz, yellow Labrador, NY
Alyssa and Xaverie, black Labrador, NH
Carlen and Dally, black Labrador cross, FL
David and Remi, black Poodle, FL
Cynthia and Tilly, yellow Labrador, FL
Eugene and Vara, black Labrador, CT
Alice and Willa Mae, black Labrador, NY
Bill and Wonder, black Labrador, NY
Rachel and Vader, black Labrador, MD
Matthew and Webster, black Labrador, VA

Upcoming Events…

Open Kennel

Saturday, September 16, 2017; 12-4 pm
1210 Hardscrabble Rd, Cassville, NY

Meet trainers, staff, puppies in training and observe working guide dogs. Tour the kennel and pup house, navigate the obstacle course blindfolded, and take a break for lunch! Free fun for all ages!

Bowling Benefit

Sunday, October 1, 2017; 1-4 pm
Spencerport Bowl, 45 Nichols St, Spencerport, NY

Bowl to raise funds to help Freedom breed, train, raise and place guide dogs! Have friends sponsor you per pin, or invite them to join the fun. Contact Jeff Butterman at 585-964-8815. Bring the family!

25th Anniversary Dinner

Thursday, October 5, 2017; 6-9 pm
Twin Ponds Golf Resort & Country Club, 169 Main St, New York Mills, NY

Buffet dinner, music, dancing, silent auction and wine pull—support a great cause. Emcee Dave Dellecese, local writer, author and actor. $50 each, $85 per couple. Contact info@freedomguidedogs.org.

Dining in the Dark

Friday, October 13, 2017; 6-9 pm
The Gallery, 141 New London Tpke, Glastonbury, CT

Silent auction, 50/50 raffle, puppies in training, working guide dogs, blindfolded dining and special Freedom 25th anniversary raffle. $50 each, $450 table of 10. Contact Karen Bass at dogfamily@cox.net or 203-634-3044. Fun for all ages!

Wanted!

Can you help? We can use:

- *Gift cards for Staples, PetSmart, Pet Supplies Plus, Petco and gas stations
- *Frequent flyer miles
- *Hotel room discounts
- *Fundraisers to benefit Freedom
- *Sponsors or raisers for puppies
- *Volunteers

amazon

Are you an Amazon shopper? You can help Freedom by shopping at Amazon Smile. Just type http://smile.amazon.com into your browser and choose Freedom Guide Dogs as your charity of choice. Then shop as you normally would. When you complete your purchase, Amazon will donate 0.5% of what you spend to Freedom!

Looking Forward…

Freedom Guide Dogs continues to support clients who have received their guide dogs in the past, places guide dogs with new clients each year, and looks forward to providing new and successor dogs into the future. You can be a part of Freedom's future by arranging for your assets to go where you want them to!

Consider matching donation programs at work, notifying us of your employer's charitable foundations, donating your appreciated stocks and bonds, and remembering Freedom Guide Dogs in your estate planning.

And did you know? If you are age 70-1/2 or older you can now make a tax free rollover gift from your IRA.

Many thanks for aiding Freedom in providing independence and safety for future generations. Email info@freedomguidedogs.org for more info.

Through Freedom, bring independence!

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ **State**_____ **Zip**_____

Phone_____ **Email**_____

Make checks payable to:
Freedom Guide Dogs, 1210 Hardscrabble Rd., Cassville, NY 13318

Save time, donate online! www.freedomguidedogs.org