

RAISE A PUPPY, CHANGE A LIFE!

Summit Assistance Dogs' Volunteers Make a World of Difference

BY LYNNE JORDON

"Dogs are not our whole life, but they make our lives whole," so goes the quote by Roger Caras known by many a dog lover. Summit Assistance Dogs, a local organization that provides mobility service dogs for people living with disabilities, exemplifies this sentiment every day.

Rebecca Yueh of Fidalgo Island first learned about Summit from the February 2019 edition of Fidalgo Living Magazine. Rebecca and her husband, Chris, had recently relocated to the area for his assignment at Whidbey Naval Air Station and the opportunity to get involved with a local organization was appealing. She inquired about puppy raising opportunities and, after learning more, determined it would be a great fit for their family. Rebecca says "There's a lot of joy in watching the dogs progress, seeing the fun they have learning new cues. Although the process is rewarding as a handler, the ultimate benefit that someone receives by having a service mobility dog as a partner is the greatest reward to the entire organization. Clients receive a lifetime partner and friend. I am thrilled by the possibility that I could know a dog who will go on to positively transform someone's life."



Team training group outing to learn how to work as a service dog team in public

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New Summit graduates Joe, of Everett, and Jamon

Rebecca was hooked after co-raising her first Summit puppy, Tide, with another local volunteer, Erin Shiflett, and has continued as a puppy raiser while also joining the Summit Board of Directors in the summer of 2020. Rebecca is now raising her third Summit puppy, Nelson, who is the brother of the puppy, Nugget, being raised by Erin. Rebecca, Erin, and other puppy raiser volunteers are essential to Summit's success in creating life-changing service dog partnerships.

It takes two years and many helpers along the way to train and place a skilled service dog with a waiting client. Summit's single biggest volunteer need is puppy sitters. Volunteer foster homes, including puppy sitters and puppy raisers, help provide a solid foundation for Summit's puppies and adolescents to grow into valuable, life-changing service dogs for people living with disabilities. Thanks to Summit's supporters, the organization can provide skilled and loving service dogs to qualified applicants at no cost to them.

Summit has created more than 100 partnerships since its founding in 2000. Every client tells of renewed hope and greater independence, starting on the day they met their dog and growing ever stronger over



the course of their partnership. Client Joe and service dog, Jamon, graduated as a team in June 2021 and Joe has already seen his life transform for the better. Joe was born with cerebral palsy, which is a condition that affects his muscle function, dexterity, and walking. Jamon assists Joe with picking up dropped items, retrieving Joe's clothing from the dresser, turning

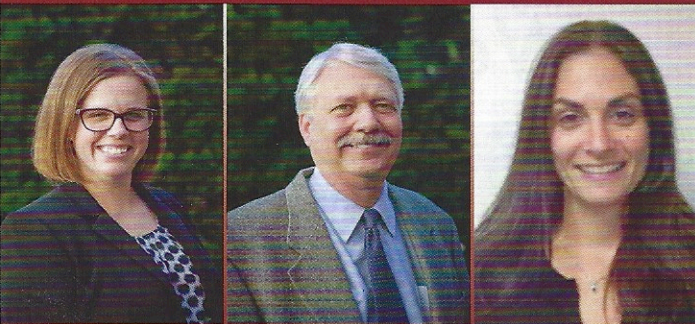
light switches on and off, and pushing and pulling doors. Additionally, Joe has felt an emotional impact with having Jamon by his side. "Jamon has uplifted me in a lot of ways," says Joe. "He gives me purpose each day. I get up and have something to look forward to. He's made me more active, creative, and adaptive."



Erin with Nugget in downtown Anacortes

To learn more about Summit and how you can help change lives, visit summitdogs.org

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