My partnership with Kaiser has changed my life for the better in so many ways. We’ve only been together since October 2013 but I can’t really imagine the time before having him by my side. Within one week of returning to high school after the training, I was able to travel to my classes on my own without an aide at my side. I don’t need an adult to meet me at the bus to carry my things or to walk by my side in the crowded hallways. Now I can be part of the crowd in the halls and be with my friends. I am so grateful to have Kaiser in my life.

– Karley
Canine Partners for Life enables individuals with a wide range of disabilities to live full, productive, and independent lives by creating partnerships between individuals and highly-trained service dogs.

Canine Partners for Life (CPL) has launched the Partnership for Independence Campaign; an $8.5 million capital initiative to renovate and expand our existing office to become our new Program Services Center, and to build our new Training Center. We are off to a strong start and are now seeking major gifts from individuals, foundations, and businesses which will be crucial to our success.

Much more than bricks and mortar, this partnership will profoundly transform lives by creating the bridge from disabled to enabled for many vibrant and talented members of our communities.

HISTORY

CPL was founded in 1989 by Darlene Sullivan, who continues to lead the organization today as Executive Director. The organization flourished and in 1997, a 45-acre property in Cochranville, Pennsylvania was purchased for further expansion. To date, CPL has placed more than 650 service and companion dogs in 45 states.

The decision to launch the Partnership for Independence Campaign with our community stakeholders is the result of seven years of diligent planning and organizational development at CPL.

In 2009, with help from the Philadelphia Foundation, CPL conducted a feasibility study to explore the possibility of improving and expanding the campus to accommodate the growing demand for CPL service and companion dogs, while maintaining the exceptionally high standards that have always been the hallmark of CPL.

The CPL Board of Directors endorsed moving forward with the Partnership for Independence Campaign as part of a multi-year strategic plan.
WHY THE PARTNERSHIP FOR INDEPENDENCE CAMPAIGN?

The cost to train, place, and provide lifetime support for one service dog is in excess of $30,000, and CPL receives no government or insurance funding of any kind. Rather than pass this expense along to our applicants, CPL assumes these costs and the majority of the annual budget offsets them. In order to address current needs while continuing to fulfill our mission, additional substantial funding must be procured so the organization can continue to grow and expand.

Strengthening our capacity to raise these funds...

- Expanded Development team now in place with extensive relevant experience
- 25% growth in number of donors
- Creation of CPL’s major giving society of donors, The Independence Society – now more than 150 members strong
- 30% increase in corporate and foundation support
- Newly created marketing department growing national awareness of CPL programs

- In 2005, CPL became one of the first service dog organizations in the world to secure accreditation from Assistance Dogs International (ADI), the preeminent accrediting body.
- A comprehensive, two-year training period for service dogs and a three-week team training for individuals and their new canine partners ensures the highest quality for CPL teams.
- The CPL follow up program is widely recognized as one of the strongest and most comprehensive in the industry.
- CPL is one of the few organizations in the country to train Seizure, Cardiac, and Diabetes Alert Dogs.
- CPL holds the highest ratings in financial health and accountability – a four star rating from Charity Navigator, and Guidestar Gold Membership.

INCREASED SERVICES

CPL is one of the few organizations nationally that provides medical alert dogs, most frequently to detect seizure and cardiac changes before they happen. Applications from around the country are steadily rising as we spread the word about this work. In addition, past graduates are returning to CPL as their current canine partners prepare to retire.

This increase is rapidly placing greater demands on our facilities and training schedules and has led to the challenge of growing our capacity to increase the number of graduated teams each year. To resolve this issue, we first need to address crucial infrastructure needs of physical structure and space.

- % of class comprised of previously graduated returning for a successor dog:
  - Fall 2014: 40%
  - Fall 2015: 60%

- Anticipated Wait List:
  - 2012: 6 to 18 months
  - 2014: 12 to 24 months
  - 2016: 12 to 60 months

ADDRESSING THE URGENT NEEDS FOR...

PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

Originally constructed as a pole barn for livestock, our current Training Center lacks running water, natural light, and restrooms. The heating and cooling systems are vastly inadequate, particularly for recipients with a wide array of medical challenges. Poor air quality and weakened physical structure have created substantial safety concerns. Current buildings also lack accessibility options and accommodations for emergency situations (tornado and fire).

ADDITIONAL SPACE

The current CPL Program Services Center, a small converted farmhouse, serves the needs of many different CPL stakeholders, including staff, volunteers, applicants, donors, visitors, and service teams. The building is currently straining under the demands of all these constituencies and is in need of extensive rehabilitation and expansion in response to the increased demand for information and services.
The current CPL Program Services Center, a small converted farmhouse, serves the needs of many different CPL stakeholders including staff, volunteers, applicants, donors, visitors and service teams. The building is currently straining under the demands of these many constituencies and is in need of rehabilitation in response to the increased demand for information and services.

- The planned Program Services Center will provide critically needed access and space for scooters and wheelchairs.
- The new Center will also feature handicapped accessibility to the lower level, which will house a larger, improved harness shop, and will include space for cubical work stations as the staff expands in the future.
- Additional space will ensure privacy for applicant interviews and provide a greatly-needed dedicated conference space for meetings.
- The new space will include improved accommodations for emergency situations (e.g., tornado and fire).
- The new Center will allow for modern technology systems and new efficient room energy systems to save operational dollars.
- Online computer and teleconferencing with applicants and recipients across the country will improve our ability to disseminate informative digital content to staff, recipients, and supporters while eliminating paper and postage costs.
At its most basic level, the new Training Center will accommodate the need for natural light and meet the highest standards for environmental health and safety – all crucial needs.

At a more advanced level, the new facility will vastly improve the quality and quantity of training that we are able to provide. For example:

- A simulated apartment will help students to better meet the challenges of daily life that they will face when they return home.
- Multidisciplinary Assistive Technology will be installed to help those who are hearing and/or vision impaired.
- Multiple handicapped-accessible restrooms will save wasted hours each day, eliminating travel to other buildings and waits in line.
- A semi-commercial kitchen will allow for preparation of meals on-site each day.
- Greatly increased space will allow canine and team training activities to rise to meet the increasing levels of demand.
- A new retail space (for CPL gear and dog supplies) and glass viewing walls in the entrance of the training center will immediately enhance the experience for visitors and prospective recipients.
- The addition of an auditorium with seating and a stage will allow us to host our graduation ceremonies and other events on-site.
- Meeting space will allow us to host community groups, and additional parking and walking paths will ensure that our guests stay safe while they are on our campus.
- The new Training Center will add 10,600 sq ft of space to CPL’s campus – all fully accessible and energy efficient.
Through our community outreach programs, CPL provides ongoing education to the world regarding the valuable role of these dogs in providing services to people in need of assistance.

Notwithstanding these outreach efforts, we believe that many people still are not aware of the amazing work that service dogs are doing every day. From calling 911 in an emergency via a canine-enabled phone, alerting to seizures before they happen, or detecting low blood sugar in advance of a glucose monitor, CPL dogs continue to astound us in new ways.

We look forward to the day when everyone who might benefit from a canine partner is able to obtain a service dog and regain their independence.

Help make the future of independence brighter by making a gift to the Partnership for Independence Campaign today!

Photocredits: Dave Osberg and Peter Foster

The first week was hard and I felt like an inconvenience to my other classmates. I was really scared that after all the hard work I’d put in to this process, I may not be able to leave with a dog. But, I am so thankful that CPL staff went above and beyond to clean the barn and keep it open. They did everything they could to make this new partnership a reality. This process is a lot to take on emotionally and physically, particularly for those living with a disability. My wish is that no one should have to face any additional obstacles that could prevent them from receiving a service dog.

– Marty Harris, CPL’s first Cardiac Alert Dog Recipient

Marty has a mold allergy that was activated when she entered CPL’s current training facility. Due to the symptoms of this allergy and a previous accident that severely limited her lung capacity, Marty feared she would not be able to complete her training in this building. She says,