In This Issue:

Leadership Change
Recent Graduates
Grad Retreat

KSDS welcomes TWO new summer litters!
Welcome our new board members!

Pete Sherlock, DVM
“I look forward to being a part of the great KSDS story. KSDS does wonderful work to improve the lives of many people...I am anxious to get started to help in any way I can.”

Bill Stenfors
“I look forward to serving on the KSDS Board. I have been a Lion for many years and know the organization is well run and has changed many lives.”

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Upcoming Events

State Fair
September 9-18

Fall Graduation
Saturday, October 8th
KSDS Assistance Dogs, Inc. Welcomes New CEO

May 9, 2022, Washington, KS – A new Chief Executive Officer is officially leading KSDS Assistance Dogs, Inc. Duane Toews is a familiar name and face to the Washington County, KS, area. After spending 20+ years in broadcasting and even more in the agriculture industry, Toews is enthusiastic about shifting his focus and taking on this executive role.

“I am pleased to be on board with a great organization that does amazing work to enhance people’s lives,” said Toews.

He received a bachelor’s degree in Agriculture Education and a master’s degree in Secondary Education, both from Kansas State University. Toews was previously the Washington County Extension Agent in 1992. He then moved to the extension office in Beloit. From there, Toews accepted a position with a pair of radio stations in Clay Center, KS, where he has been Farm Director over the last few decades.

“This will be a new challenge, and I am looking forward to working with a great staff and supportive board,” said Toews.

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, KSDS operates under a board of directors. Board President Bob Bartkoski said they are very pleased Toews agreed to fill the CEO position. “He has proven his ability to communicate, as one who follows through on projects, and possesses strong organizational skills,” explained Bartkoski.

“Duane is very enthusiastic about the KSDS motto, changing lives one dog at a time. We are pleased to announce him as our new CEO.”

Toews joined the organization only a few months after Bryce Dolan was hired as the Director of Marketing and Fundraising. Dolan moved to Kansas in 2017 from Omaha, NE, after accepting a position as News Director at KFRM in Clay Center. After spending four years running the news department, Dolan made a career shift and is excited to be in his new role at KSDS.

“I learned about KSDS from the previous CEO and Marketing Director in 2019,” explained Dolan. “From the start, I was amazed at what this organization was able to do. It’s a privilege to be a part of this staff.”

Dolan received a bachelor’s degree in broadcasting with an emphasis in marketing and management from the University of Nebraska at Kearney. With his wife Maggie, they have a two year old daughter and enjoy the outdoors and traveling.

“The K-State Athletic litter won the name game! Named after notable figures in Wildcat athletics, mom Wabash is a KSDS breeder & dad Chorizo from Freedom Service Dogs in Colorado.
Spring 2022 Graduates

Bobette Figler & Ven
St. Louis, MO
Guide Team #611
Puppy Raiser Katie Krehbiel

Hayley Van Amburg & Montana
Topeka, KS
Facility Team #612
Puppy Raiser Lisa Hamilton

Matt Swedlund & Sugar
Topeka, KS
Facility Team #613
Puppy Raisers Vicki Coleman & Kyanna Volkman

JC Russo & Moss
Wichita, KS
Service Team #614
Puppy Raisers Bruce & Julia Opheim

Sue Kanthak & Jebediah
Rockford, IL
Service Team #615
Puppy Raiser Shannon Beltzer

Amelia Dalton & Neon
Manhattan, KS
Service Team #616
Puppy Raisers Matt & Lea Vandervelde

Angela Duffy & Corwin
Humboldt, IA
Service Team #617
Puppy Raiser Diana Blankenship

Nancy Phillips & Cappuccino
McPherson, KS
Service Team #618
Puppy Raisers Marty & Barb Mashak

Kelly Miller & Emerald
Hutchinson, KS
Guide Team #619
Puppy Raiser Scott Hall
Graduate Stories

St. Louis Woman Receives Third Assistance Dog From KSDS, Inc.

Prior to receiving her first service dog, Bobette Figler was completely wheelchair bound. Then in 1982, she suffered a complete respiratory crisis and spent the next decade bed ridden.

“I was on a respirator for some of the ten year period,” explained Figler.

Before her service dogs, Figler said she was not heavily involved in her community or the workforce.

Upon receiving her first service dog, Figler was immediately able to be more independently mobile. She used the dog for bracing and transfers. “My first dog helped me do tasks around my house and save my energy to be able to get to work and do my job,” said Figler.

Today, Figler’s physical independence has continued to improve, but her vision has worsened due to her multiple sclerosis. Since her needs have changed and her recent service dog aged out of his working life, Figler has been partnered with KSDS guide dog Ven.

No longer needing a wheelchair, she now gets around using a walking cane and Ven. With his help, Figler said she will continue to use public transportation to commute to her daily job from her home in the St. Louis suburbs.

“Each of these dogs has helped me incredibly to be able to maintain and improve my mobility.”

Figler and Ven are what KSDS refers to as a successor team. When a KSDS graduate loses their canine partner, whether it be to age or health reasons, they are placed at the top of the waiting list to receive another assistance dog. Why? Well once an individual relies on a canine partner for independence, it is difficult to traverse everyday life without that independence.
Washburn Rural High School Coach, Social Worker Receives KSDS Successor Dog

Seeing a dog sporting a blue KSDS cape is a familiar sight at Washburn Rural High School in Topeka, KS. Soon, students will have another four-legged friend with the same cape.

Washburn Rural High School social worker, Matt Swedlund, learned about KSDS through a fellow social worker. “She had a KSDS dog that was awesome,” he said.

“I saw all the cool things her dog could do and knew it was an organization I wanted to be involved in.”

In 2020, Swedlund was paired with a female KSDS black lab named Pistachio. Sadly, she passed away two months after a cancer diagnosis. She was only in the school for seven months, but Swedlund said her absence was noticeable.

“Pistachio added so much value to my work at the school. Whether it be students or staff, everyone she encountered she seemed to brighten their day. She had a big impact on our school and since she’s been gone there has been a hole.”

On March 14th, Swedlund was introduced to his new facility dog, Sugar, who is three quarters yellow lab and a quarter golden retriever. This successor team then spent the next five days completing the KSDS Facility Program. Swedlund and Sugar would spend the day completing obedience and command training and visiting various public spaces. At night, they stayed in the six-plex on the KSDS campus and spent hours growing their bond.

“My experience with KSDS has been so positive. All the staff are clearly passionate about what they do. You can feel it when you walk in here and when you interact with the dogs. I don’t know of any other organization where you can get this kind of quality partner and experience other than with KSDS.”

On March 18th, Swedlund and Sugar successfully completed the Facility Program. They returned to the KSDS campus in April for graduation.
Graduate Stories (con’t)

JC Russo and Moss being introduced the morning of Day 1 of class. Due to his cerebral palsy, JC often found himself unable to press automatic door buttons or retrieve dropped items like his phone, but now he has Moss. JC works in IT at Textron Aviation in Wichita and regularly takes Moss for walks by the river!

Corwin patiently waiting for Angela as she descends the stairs. She switches between using walking canes and her powered chair. Corwin enables Angela to live a more independent life while accompanying her to work as a grade school special education teacher.

Sue and Jeb embrace during the morning routine. Since returning home, Sue said Jeb has enabled her to be more active in the community. Jeb is becoming a bit of a celebrity in Rockford, IL. He met & snapped a picture with the mayor!

Nancy & “Happy Cappi” pose after a morning grooming session. Nancy and Cappuccino are a successor team, and this is Nancy’s third KSDS dog.

Kelly & Emerald getting some love in during a break in class. Thanks to her new partner, Kelly has found a sense of independence she hasn’t had in over 10 years.

Hayley & Montana relax during bonding time. Hayley is an elementary school social worker in Topeka. She & Montana had only a few months of class before the summer break. We’re sure they are both excited to return to school!
These 16 active teams attended this year’s Grad Retreat to renew their Assistance Dogs International (ADI) certification. The retreat also serves as a refresher on basic commands, an opportunity to learn new commands and to connect with other KSDS teams!

Teams are encouraged to renew their certification yearly, but are required to renew every five years. We want to give a very special thank you to Derry and Carla McGuire who traveled from east Iowa to provide meals during the retreat!

July 1st BBQ!
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For more information on how to support KSDS dogs, visit www.ksds.org.

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