

## Kathy and Bess

Kathy first heard about the Assistance Dog program a few years ago, before we were placing dogs to the disabled. She knew of the concept from the documentaries that have been on television from other overseas programs.

Once I told her she had been placed on the waiting list for an Assistance Dog she was nearly in tears of excitement. Kathy mentioned to me, that she always wanted a dog, but family and friends had dissuaded her because she would have been unable to look after the needs of a puppy, due to her disability and living independently within the community. The idea of a fully trained Assistance Dog was a dream come true.

Kathy and Bess went through the team training course which was conducted at her premises. Now they have been together for six months, passing all the tests that are required for them both to go out in public together. Since then, they have gone to the movies, shopping together and for many leisurely walks around Sydney.

They both make a great team and Ellie and Geoff Fitzsimmons, the puppy raisers who raised Bess, had the chance to officially hand her over to Kathy at the Assistance Dog Graduation ceremony. It was fantastic to see that all the hard work had paid off and the joy that Bess is now providing to Kathy.



# Assistance Dogs Graduates

## Cameron and Brandi

Latest graduate Cameron has been confined to a wheelchair since an accident 3 years ago. When lying in Talbot South Spinal Unit in Melbourne with a C-6 fracture and spinal cord damage he was watching the Today Show. A segment was shown on the Assistance Dogs Australia program. Cameron has compared his excitement to that of reading the Celestine Prophecy. This was his chance to complete a dream that he thought he would never be able to fulfil.

Since this time, Cameron has followed the program through three years of development and finally applied for an Assistance Dog. Cameron was placed on the waiting list and could not wait to jump on the first plane to Sydney to complete the two-week Team Training course.

Cameron's dream finally came true with him flying to Sydney to meet his Assistance Dog Golden Retriever Brandi, the bond was instant. The two passed through the team training and public access test with flying colours.

Cameron returned to Melbourne with a new found friend. Brandi is able to sit, wait, open a door, pick up his dropped mobile phone from the ground and place it back on his lap, speak on command and he is even working on getting Brandi to retrieve a beer from the fridge for him. Since returning home Brandi has been constantly by Cameron's side. Cameron said, "She has been to shopping centres, restaurants, sporting events, work and on weekend social occasions. She has been a real motivator, companion and a great help."



## Tanya and Harry

At the age of 19, Tanya Clarke was involved in a road accident, which left her a quadriplegic, confined to a wheelchair, with limited arm movement and no hand function. Tanya has her own wheelchair accessible unit in the backyard of her parent's home, with an intercom for communication.

Then a new helper arrived in the form of Harry, Tanya's Assistance Dog. As Tanya says, "Harry came into my life and made a huge difference to my level of independence. For the first time since my accident, my quality of life has improved a great deal."

Harry helps Tanya around the home. Owing to her disability, she is always dropping things such as her hairbrush, mobile phone, remote controls. Harry often only has to hear something drop and he comes to the rescue, retrieving the item and returning it to Tanya. So Tanya's mother is saved a lot of time and effort running from house to house. And if Tanya gets into trouble and cannot access her intercom, she gets Harry to speak. Her family knows that if they hear Harry bark, she needs their help.

"And for the first time I could get out of my own front door, because Harry could open it for me! I can now come and go independently without parental assistance, which makes such a difference."

The other interesting thing that Tanya has noticed is that before she got Harry she tended to be invisible to the people around her – they bumped into her or even walked over the top of her. Now when she is out with Harry, people notice both of them and they offer to help. She meets a lot more people as they stop to talk. She is no longer invisible.

Tanya is employed in the field of website design and development, having completed two Diplomas after her accident. In the evenings, Harry and Tanya go to the movies, concerts, nightclubs and the theatre. With Harry she is approached more and people are more comfortable in making eye contact with her. And that means a lot to Tanya.

As Tanya says, "Harry has improved my independence, my quality of life and the way I feel about myself. He is also my companion and the very best friend anyone could ever wish for."



## Full Time Program Instructor

Assistance Dogs Australia, a non-profit organisation providing trained Assistance Dogs to disabled people, is seeking a full time program instructor with enthusiasm to assist in all aspects of the Assistance Dogs program.

Great opportunity to be involved in a growing, young, energetic team.

Demonstrated knowledge and skills in the following is required:

- \* Dog behaviour, breeding and dog training techniques
- \* Volunteer management
- \* Outstanding oral and written communication skills.
- \* Microsoft applications
- \* Disability sector

This key role will suit an organised, creative, energetic person with enthusiasm to succeed in an exciting environment and help people with disabilities.

Location: Heathcote, Sydney  
Included in your application: CV and 100 word document showing your interest/experience in the position.

Written Applications to: Andrew Biggs, Assistance Dogs Australia, P O Box 455, ENGADINE NSW 2233,  
E-mail: [abiggs@assistedogs.org.au](mailto:abiggs@assistedogs.org.au).