



July Hearing Dog Herald



Jeff & Atlas!

International Hearing Dog is pleased to introduce our newest team, Jeff & Hearing Dog Atlas!

"Perfect!" Jeff signs upon meeting his hearing service dog Atlas. Born deaf, Jeff spent his earliest childhood years without language. In his rural Pennsylvania hometown, access to ASL and Deaf resources was limited. Jeff's parents and siblings worked diligently to engage with him through gestures, play, and hands-on activities until he was able to attend a school for the Deaf in another town. Over time, Jeff taught his family ASL, enabling his dad to instruct him on the art of welding in his late teen years.

After graduating high school, Jeff went on to welding school and worked as a welder for 30 years. However, as Jeff approached retirement from welding and knowing that he would become more isolated, Jeff's sister supported him in applying to IHDI to be partnered with a hearing service dog as a professional aid, trusted partner, and loyal companion.

Atlas, an incredibly patient and willing Yellow Lab, was raised by one of IHDI's Master Inmate Handler, James Boule, from our PawsAbilities Program at the Wyoming Medium Correctional Institute. After a year of working with his Master Handler, Atlas returned to IHDI in March with a rock-solid foundation in obedience cues and sound alerts. He readily moved through public access and advanced sound training with IHDI's trainers. At every step of this journey, Atlas has been quick to learn, delighted to please, and thrilled to be with his "person." In mid-June, all the pieces came together – Atlas and Jeff were ready to meet and begin their lives together!

"When we get it right, I can feel it inside," Jeff, who waited four years to be matched with a hearing service dog, shares as he and Atlas practice sound alerts together during Team Training. Jeff and Atlas worked diligently and patiently with Trainer Jack and Certified ASL Interpreters Jordann and Betsy for two weeks, mastering smoke alarm, door knock, and phone/iPad sound alerts throughout IHDI's team training course. This mighty team also practiced one by one each skill needed to pass Assistance Dogs International's Public Access Test, such as riding an elevator, staying under a table, and walking with a grocery cart. Jeff and Atlas built confidence in executing these skills as a team through visits to an indoor mall, multi-floor sporting goods stores, eateries, Home Depot, and Walmart. When it was time to board Denver's RTD Light Rail to visit the airport, Jeff and Atlas handled it like pros. Although the airport was thick with crowds, this team navigated the bustling scene without a hitch. On the way home, it was all hugs from Jeff for Atlas. "My family and friends will be extra excited to learn about our airport outing during my video calls tonight," Jeff signed with a huge smile.

Jeff had always wanted a lab, and he expressed in a recent Zoom meeting that Atlas has exceeded every expectation Jeff ever had for a hearing service dog. Jeff even chose an ASL name sign that signifies Atlas' happily narrowing eyes when smiling, which Jeff will tell you is often. Since returning home, not far from where he grew up and near to his supportive four siblings, Jeff exuberantly reports that Atlas has been alerting Jeff to his trained sounds. Jeff, a part-time custodian for schools, is also thrilled that Atlas can accompany him to work, following agreed upon safety protocols, as he usually works alone until nearly midnight. With Atlas by his side, Jeff navigates his work and personal environments with renewed independence and a greater sense of security. When asked what he is most looking forward to in the near future with Atlas, Jeff replied, "Camping!" and next year, "Maybe even a cruise with Deaf friends!"

To the village that took part in the training, funding, volunteering and support in the creation of this team, thank YOU!

What can a gift do? It can change not one but two lives!



To the Salon!

Maintaining a well kept appearance is important for a Service Dog, not only for their general hygiene but to also ensure a clean and professional presentation while out in public. In addition, regular grooming helps to regulate body temperature with the changing seasons - Cosmo says thank goodness for this, as he proudly sports his cooler trim!

To ensure a positive and cooperative relationship with grooming, we start the introduction to grooming tools and sounds at a very young age. Lucky for us, we have both a groomer on staff in addition to our Master Handlers who have gone above and beyond in pursuing grooming skills, ensuring health and happiness for their trainees!



Partners for Life

Having a Hearing Dog is having the peace of mind in knowing you've always got a partner you can depend on!

"Last night I left Fawn in the flat while I went to the laundry room in our apartment complex. As I unlocked the laundry room door, a resident came up behind me and gave me a fright. I neither heard nor saw her and I was reminded how dependent I am on Fawn to alert me to sounds. I love this dog!" - IHDI Client Cindy & Hearing Dog Fawn



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