

# PARAGON

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## SERVICE DOGS



## Paragon Press April 2025



Warm weather has finally arrived, and we couldn't be more excited to soak up the

sunshine along with our pups. The grass is green, the skies are clear, and it's the perfect time for our dogs to stretch their legs and play in the yard.

So grab a seat, get comfortable, and join us as we share some of the exciting adventures and heartwarming moments from this April.

## A Perfect Match: Perry and Shandy Graduate!

Our most exciting event this March was the graduation of Perry and Shandy! We are absolutely thrilled to share that this incredible pair has officially become our newest service dog team.

Perry has bilateral hearing loss and has undergone multiple surgeries in hopes of improving his hearing. Despite these



efforts, he continued to struggle with profound hearing loss, and balance issues, and often felt isolated in social situations, finding it difficult to follow conversations as he once could. Determined to find a solution, Perry discovered Paragon Service Dogs and began his Paragon journey. From his very first interviews with us, Perry dove into learning everything he could about service dogs, eager to prepare for his perfect match. While he waited, Paragon staff quickly grew fond of his humor, and kindness as we became more familiar with



each other. Behind the scenes, we were equally dedicated, searching for the right dog to fit his needs.



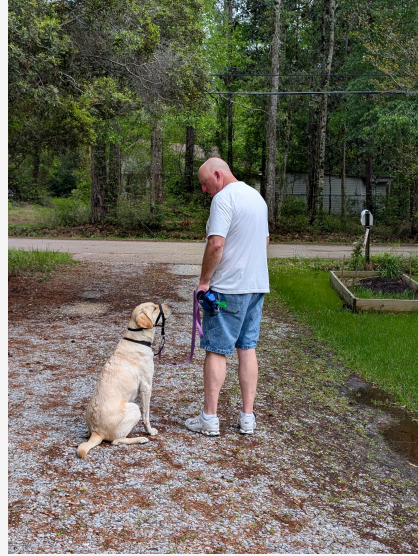
Then came Shandy, a puppy who arrived at Paragon from a partner service dogs organization in Canada. Our trainers were instantly impressed by his calm but attentive nature. As Shandy grew and trained, Perry was always on our minds as his possible match, and as the months passed it became clear that Shandy was indeed going to be Perry's perfect match.

We initially introduced the two to each other via video's and photos. "He's perfect!" Perry exclaimed during one of the calls. Due to Perry's special health circumstances, he was not able to travel to Paragon; therefore, Leah, our Training Program Coordinator, accompanied Shandy to Perry's home in New Orleans to begin their team training. They spent



an intensive week training together, navigating cars, stores, and restaurants--

Perry learning all the skills he would need to partner with his new service dog. By the end of that week, a strong bond had already formed, and their journey as a team officially began.



Perry has since shared how completely blown away he is by Shandy, by his reliability, his alertness to sound cues, and the way he effortlessly draws people in. Today, the two can often be found together in Perry's woodshop, Shandy resting peacefully until it's time to respond to an alert. Perry recently wrote: "I am eternally grateful. I will never be able to convey in words my deepest, sincerest appreciation, but I can show it by loving Shandy forever. And I promise to always love him and give him the best care possible!"

## Volunteer Spotlight: Bethany



In Officer Bethany Sander's office there is a sign that reads "In a world where you can choose to be anything, choose to be Kind". And this is the choice Bethany



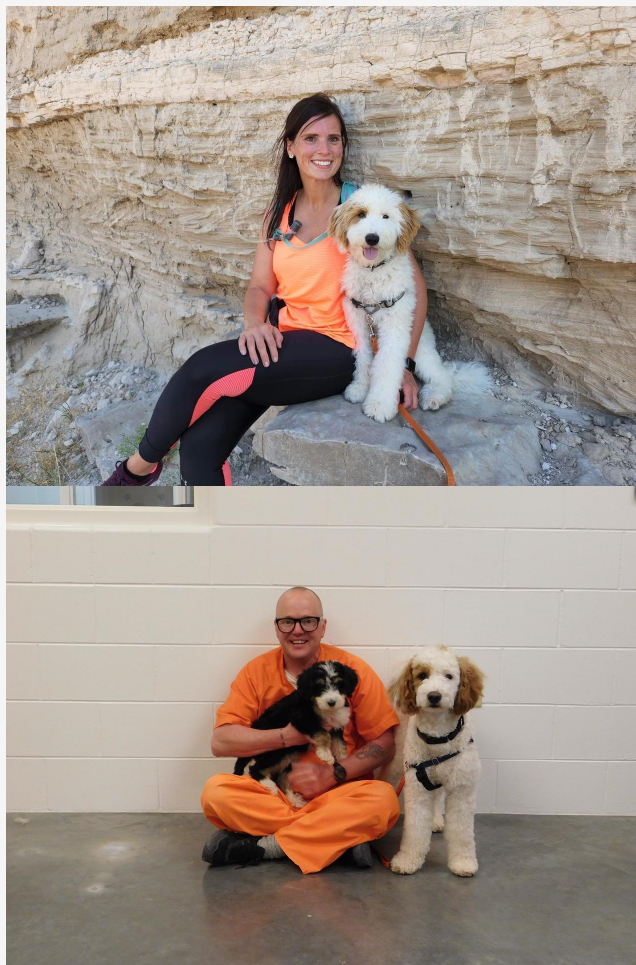
makes every single day! At Paragon, we simply cannot say enough good about Officer Sanders, the Canine Program Coordinator for the Wyoming Medium Correctional Institution (WMCI). Bethany is not only a phenomenal leader, but an irreplaceable partner whose vision, heart, and unwavering dedication have shaped the PAWS'abilities Program into what it is today.

From the very beginning, this program would not have existed without Bethany. Her commitment to making it work — through every step, challenge, and unknown... and there have been MANY — was the foundation that allowed PAWS'abilities to launch and thrive. She walked beside us through every obstacle as we developed and implemented this initiative from the ground up. Her motivation never wavered, even in the face of complex logistics and institutional challenges. Bethany hasn't just supported the program — she has championed it!

Bethany brings incredible leadership to PAWS'abilities every single day. She supports the inmate handlers and our dogs with patience, compassion, and an unmatched sense of responsibility. Whether it's a pup emergency, a master handler's concern, or a need from our Paragon team, Bethany steps up instantly — proactively addressing issues before they ever have a chance to escalate. Her energy seems bottomless, her commitment unshakable.

Because of Bethany's tireless efforts, the PAWS'abilities Program has grown exponentially. What began with just three puppies in the first year now supports six, and by Fall 2025, we're on track to add four more. Consequently, before the end of 2025, Paragon will have 10 dogs in training at the prison at all times! This expansion has resulted in a 100% increase in the number of dogs we train each year -vastly expanding our ability to serve clients in need of highly skilled service dogs.

The caliber of dogs emerging from this program speaks volumes. The Master Handlers, under Bethany's guidance, are producing some of the most impressive service dogs we've ever seen. Her mentorship extends to everyone involved — staff, handlers, and pups alike. As we have learned to navigate the prison system, Bethany has been an incredible teacher and mentor, always guiding us with grace and professionalism.



Bethany's dedication doesn't stop at the prison gates. For the past three years, she and her husband Jared have volunteered as Weekend Puppy Sitters, opening their home and hearts to help our pups develop house manners and socialization skills – doing a stellar job with pups in training Augie, Cosmo and Echo. That level of commitment, outside of her already demanding volunteer role with us, is simply extraordinary.

PAWS'abilities has become a cornerstone of Paragon's mission, allowing us to train more dogs, serve more people, and do both with excellence. And none of it would have been possible without Bethany Sanders. She gives abundantly—her time, her knowledge, her heart, her problem-solving, and her unwavering support. She is, simply put, an astounding human!

Bethany is not just our Canine Program Coordinator at PAWS'abilities—she's an essential member of the Paragon family and a key figure in training the next generation of elite service dogs. We are endlessly and profoundly grateful to have Bethany in our world, and deeply honored to work alongside her.



Bethany, Thank You again and again and again! Your passion and dedication have made this program — and our mission — possible. You are the heart of PAWS'abilities and a source of bright light and warmth in the world. Knowing you helps us choose kindness. We love you!

## Saturday Puppy Class!

Each month, we host a special Saturday puppy class out in the community. This month, thanks to a generous invitation from one of our wonderful volunteers, Trina, our puppies had the opportunity to visit a local retirement community.

We were warmly welcomed by residents who were excited to meet the puppies and learn more about the important work they are training to do. It was a true joy to spend time with the residents, share information about our program, and introduce them to our future service dogs. Truly a meaningful experience for everyone involved.

This month's outing was made even more special by the presence of 8-week-old





Forest, who joined in on the adventure and stole many hearts. Outings like this are a vital part of our dogs' growth. These real-world experiences help build their confidence and prepare them for their future roles as service dogs.

A heartfelt thank-you to Trina for inviting us and helping create not only a valuable training experience but also beautiful new connections between our dogs and the community.

## Spring Projects At Paragon

There's always something happening at Paragon as we continue to grow. This month we tackled a few new important projects.

First up, we tackled our irrigation ditches, Clearing the ditches and building dams,

we are now ready to run water. Next, we turned our attention to improving the backyard and repairing winter damage. Our team spread new grass seed



and fertilizer, and we're already seeing it begin to sprout. With a little sunshine, a lot of water and care, we're hopeful it will be fully grown just in time for graduation.

And last but not least, we built a brand new shed. After a few days of hard work, we now have a safe, organized space to store our spare crates, kennels, and X-pens.

We're delighted with the progress and thankful to everyone who helped make it happen. Stay tuned to see how things grow from here!



## Dog Diaries: Epic



Hi Friends!

I just started advanced training, and I'm so excited to tell you all about it!

Things have been pretty busy since I came down from our prison program in Wyoming. There are so many new smells and dogs to meet, my tail hasn't stopped wagging!

One of the best parts is that I was reunited with my brother, E. A. Pruitt! People say it's tricky to tell us apart, but I'll let you in on a little secret. His coat is wavy, and mine is straight. It's easier to see when we're not zooming around.

Oh, the things I've seen! I met a HUGE horse, and I've explored all kinds of stores and new places. On weekends, I get to stay with a weekend companion volunteer. It's the best. I learn house manners, get cuddles,



fun, and someone special to spend time with while I recharge for the week ahead.

I'll keep you posted as my adventure continues!

Epic





# Thanks for Reading!

Thanks for following along with this month's adventures. We're so proud of everything we've accomplished. Congratulations again to Perry and Shandy! Looking ahead, we're thrilled to announce that another team training is just around the corner.

Stay tuned, May is sure to bring even more exciting moments and milestones!

With gratitude,  
The Paragon Team ☐♥



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