



# Canadian National Autism Foundation

## Grant Report



September 2020

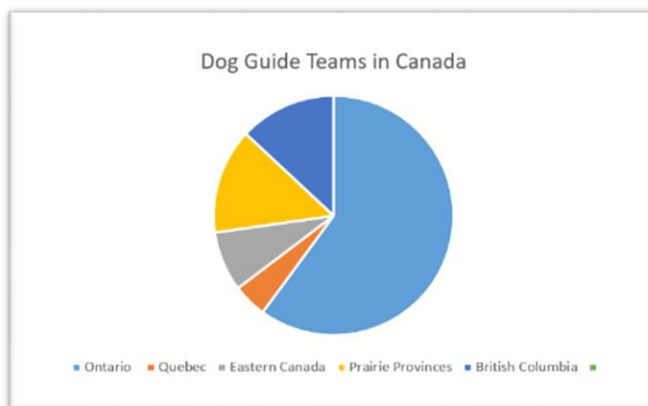
Thank you to the Canadian National Autism Foundation for its grant of **\$5000** in 2019 that supported the Autism Assistance Dog Guide program. As requested, these funds were divided between two families living with autism spectrum disorder – one from PEI and the other from the Kitchener area. These special Dog Guides transform lives and the Canadian National Autism Foundation has **again** helped make that happen.

Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides faced some significant challenges as a result of COVID-19. Before March, 77 people graduated with their new Dog Guide. However, for the safety of the entire Dog Guides community classes for the spring and summer were cancelled and 120 Dog Guides in training were placed with temporary foster families.

Some dogs have gradually returned to the school for training so that Dog Guides can be placed with some of the many clients on our waiting list with the goal for modified in-class training to resume in September. Lions Foundation has established many protocols and procedures over the last few months that will allow training to be conducted under modified conditions that maintain the necessary social and physical distancing requirements recommended by Public Health and ensure the safety and health of our instructors and clients.

During the past 5 months, instructors quickly and enthusiastically adopted new ways of supporting the 1,100 active Dog Guides teams across the country (via video conferencing, email, phone and Facebook Live). In addition, puppy staff and instructors assisted the 410 volunteer foster families currently providing homes for the Dog Guides in training and Dog Guide puppies. Dog Guides veterinary staff continued to provide essential care to all dogs - under modified conditions that included drive-thru clinics for vaccinations and heartworm testing.

Lions Foundation of Canada places Autism Assistance Dog Guides all over Canada. Funding from the Canadian National Autism Foundation was directed to recipient families in PEI and the Kitchener area. In particular, these funds were used to provide teaching and hands-on instruction to families while they trained at the school with their new Dog Guide.



## Autism Assistance

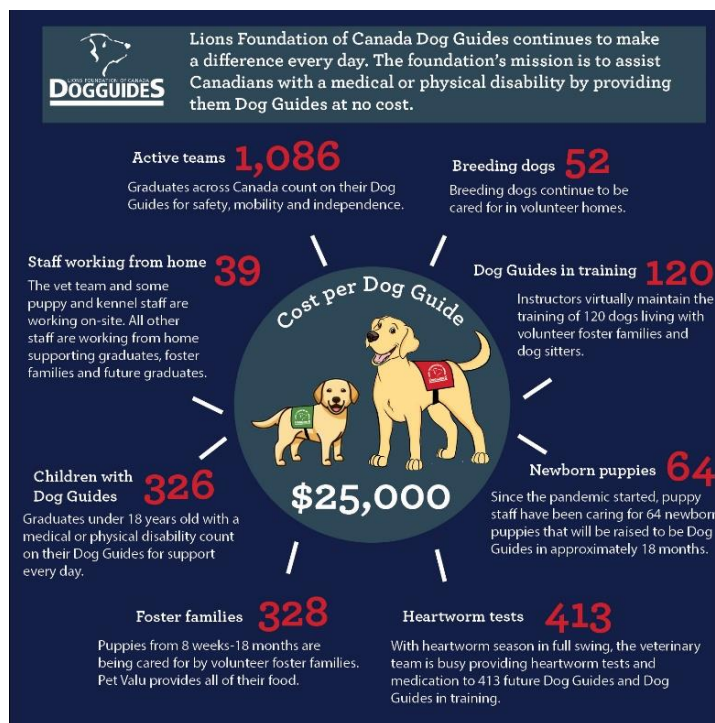
Autism Assistance Dog Guides provide life-changing support to families with children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and this program continues to be the most in-demand program at Dog Guides Canada. The handler for the Autism Assistance Dog Guide is not the child but their parent who comes to the school in Oakville and spends 10 days in intensive training with Dog Guides instructors. This training includes all aspects of dog care (handling, nutrition, grooming) as well as training on the skills and commands specific to an Autism Assistance Dog Guide.

Autism Assistance Dog Guides are taught a set of very specialized skills. For example, Autism Assistance Dog Guides are trained as comforter to provide “deep pressure” in times of anxiety - the dog is trained to lie across the child (this is the “hug” command) while the child strokes their ears and paws. This skill is extremely helpful at school, medical appointments, shopping and other daily tasks we take for granted. These special dogs are also trained to sleep in the bed of the child and their calming presence allows for consistent sleep patterns – for not just the child, but the whole family. Autism Assistance Dog Guides provide comfort, independence and safety.

Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides remains committed to providing Dog Guides at no cost, despite the expense of over \$25,000 to raise, train and place each one. With no government funding, Lions Foundation of Canada relies on donations to provide these special Dog Guides.

We are most grateful to the Canadian National Autism Foundation for its **continued** support and for making a difference, especially during these challenging times. It has enabled our organization to pivot and continue to operate in many new ways throughout the pandemic. From all of us at Lions Foundation of Canada,

**Thank you!**



Canine Vision • Hearing • Diabetic Alert • Seizure Response • Service • Autism Assistance • Facility Support

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[www.dogguides.com](http://www.dogguides.com)



# Autism Assistance Dog Guide Partnerships 2020



## Adam and Shawn – Innisfil, ON

"Adam would not be the same without his dog Shawn. He makes him laugh, gives him confidence and calms him down when the world is too much to handle. Shawn also helps people around Adam - he helps them recognize Adam's needs very quickly by notifying them of his disability, which in turn helps them understand Adam." – **Zuzana, mother of Adam**



## Tommy and Forest – Burlington, ON

"I'm amazed at what a difference Forest has made in Tommy's life, and in turn, how much that has brightened up the whole family. How quickly he went from being a stranger to an invaluable part of our home. He's been a true blessing to our family." – **Amy, mother of Tommy**



## Liam and Ace – Mississauga, ON

"Our son's Dog Guide, Ace, has been life-changing for him, and also for our entire family. Our son literally sleeps better with his warm, furry friend to cuddle up with, and we all sleep better knowing that Ace is always there to help keep Liam safe." – **Michael, father of Liam**



## Ewan and Galaxy – Oshawa, ON

"Galaxy has helped me through a lot. She has made me and my whole family happier. When I am upset or having a meltdown, she comes to help calm me and tries to make me happy. It's hard not to smile when she's around me. Galaxy is my best friend. I am able to talk better and walk with my head up at school now that I have Galaxy by my side. Thank you for my best friend!" – **Ewan, graduate of the Autism Assistance Dog Guide program**



## Tommy and Tyrone – Kanata, ON

"As parents we can see that Tyrone helps Tommy stay happy and calm, and that's been especially helpful now when all the usual routines have changed so much with COVID-19. Tyrone helps him to forget about difficult memories or problems, and at night he helps Tommy to forget about nightmares." – **MaryAnn, mother of Tommy**