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**September is National Service Dog Month: PawPADs Invited to Mongolia by U.S. Embassy to Share Benefits of Assistance Dogs for Persons with Disabilities**

**LAKEVILLE, Minn., Sept. 5, 2016** - In conjunction with National Assistance Dog Month, PawPADs' Founder and Executive Director Linda Ball, and service dog "Victory" will be heading to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, later this month at the invitation of the U.S. Embassy there. They will be taking part in a Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP) sponsored speaking tour on how assistance dogs can help people with disabilities. They'll be participating in a week of meetings and presentations with the Mongolian government, international NGOs, disability related groups, schools, universities and the general public, as well as spending some time with the only animal rescue organization in Ulaanbaatar "Lucky Paws." Ball will be promoting awareness about assistance dogs and explore the possibility of establishing a training program for Mongolian assistance dog trainers at the PawPADs training center in Lakeville.

Ball is a Minnesota native and a University of Minnesota Alumnus. She's also a former Peace Corps volunteer to Mongolia (1993-1995), where she developed the first-ever Mongolian sign language dictionary. Her familiarity with Mongolian culture and public, combined with her professional expertise and experience in assistance dog training and her work background in international development, make her the ideal candidate for this program.

"I had my first real experience of the impact an animal can make in a person's life while in Mongolia with Peace Corps," Ball said. "After Peace Corps, during my years of working in humanitarian and international development, I saw the power of the human/canine bond in every culture. I decided to combine my passions of working with persons with disabilities and working with dogs when I returned to the U.S. In the decade since PawPADs has been changing lives, I have also hoped to be a part of the foundation on which the assistance dog concept can be built in countries that do not yet have mechanisms in place to create these partnerships."

**Background:** Through the successful collaboration of the U.S. Embassy and the Mongolian government, Mongolia's first law on the rights of persons with disabilities was passed in February 2016. The State Department's "Target of Opportunity" (TOO) program and the Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP), provides funding for credible American experts to travel overseas and engage in substantive dialog with contacts to assist countries in going the "last three feet," expanding and strengthening the relationship between the people and government of the United States and citizens of the rest of the world.

**About PawPADs**

Pawsitive Perspectives Assistance Dogs (PawPADs), a 501(C)(3) nonprofit organization headquartered in Lakeville, Minn., provides trained assistance dogs to wounded warriors, and persons with disabilities and diabetes. It is an approved Assistance Dogs International candidate and a member of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers, Assistance Dogs United Campaign and the Minnesota Council on Nonprofits. For more information, please visit [www.PawPADs.org](http://www.PawPADs.org) or call 1.612.643.5671.

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