



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Petco Foundation Invests in Pawsitive Perspectives Assistance Dogs' (PawPADs)
Life-Changing Work Supporting Service Dogs**
*Grant of \$25,000 will extend efforts to help pets and people in Minnesota and Wisconsin
live their best lives*

Lakeville, MN (July 11, 2017) – Pawsitive Perspectives Assistance Dogs (PawPADs) has been awarded a \$25,000 grant investment from the Petco Foundation to support the training of an assistance dog, who will be a rescue, through a new and innovative program (ADEPT, Assistance Dog Education Program and Training) at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls

PawPADs is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to facilitate the power of the human-canine bond, and enhance the lives of others, through the *process* of training assistance dogs and the *outcome* of placing them with people with disabilities. PawPADs' innovative programs demonstrate a symbiotic approach of addressing multiple needs within diverse populations including, but not limited to, youth at-risk, Veterans, students at UWRF, people with disabilities and rescue organizations.

Since arriving in Minnesota in 2009, PawPADs has:

- Trained and placed 24 assistance dogs, including service dogs for individuals with physical disabilities, diabetic alert dogs, autism dogs and facility dogs;
- Developed and facilitated programs that utilize the training of the dogs as an educational and therapeutic opportunity. Through these program participants develop life-skills such as emotional regulations, self-control, communication skills and empathy through working with PawPADs dogs. These programs include:
 - Project YES! (Youth Empowerment Services) which has worked with youth at-risk, children with development disabilities and mainstream students. Through this program 5 School Resource Dogs have also been permanently placed with ISD #194 in Lakeville, MN.
 - Prison Road Puppies Program which, for 3 years, worked with inmates in 2 Federal prisons;
 - Paw Corps which has worked with veterans with PTSD and prioritizes placement with wounded warriors;
 - ADEPT (Assistance Dog Education Program and Training) which is PawPADs' newest program in partnership with the University of Wisconsin–River Falls.
- Placed Minnesota's *first* Victim Support/Courthouse Dog with a Victim Advocate.
- Taken an assistance dog on an unprecedented international advocacy initiative through a U.S. State Department program in Mongolia. PawPADs introduced the entire concept of assistance dogs, while laying the foundation for dogs assisting people with disabilities, in Mongolia. The PawPADs' dog, Tory,

was an amazing representative for all assistance dogs and was a great testimonial about training dogs using reward-based methods.

The initiative included meeting with top government officials to discuss laws surrounding the training & use of assistance dogs, presenting to disability-related groups, universities, service clubs and others, meeting face-to-face with over 1,200 people and countless others through media outreach while helping to educate people about the ability of dogs to do a variety of different jobs and the unexpected benefits for families and society. In addition PawPADs met with the only dog rescue organization in Mongolia to discuss the current homeless dog situation.

This grant was made possible through the Petco Foundation's annual Helping Heroes fundraising campaign, in partnership with Natural Balance Pet Foods. Each October during the campaign, customers are invited to donate online and in Petco stores across the country to support the life-changing work of service, therapy and working animals.

The Petco Foundation investment will help PawPADs include rescue dogs in the inaugural semester of the ADEPT program and allow the program to impact more lives.

"We are incredibly grateful for the generous grant from the Petco Foundation. This support will allow PawPADs to change lives on both ends of the leash – from the puppies, to the program participants to the eventual partners of our assistance dogs," said Linda Ball, Executive Director.

For more information about Pawsitive Perspectives Assistance Dogs (PawPADs) or the Petco Foundation, visit www.PawPADs.org or www.petcofoundation.org. Join the conversation on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) or by using the hashtag #HelpingHeroes.

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About Pawsitive Perspectives Assistance Dogs (PawPADs)

PawPADs is a nonprofit organization based out of Lakeville, MN whose mission is to facilitate the power of the human-canine bond, and enhance the lives of others, through the *process* of training assistance dogs and the *outcome* of placing them with people with disabilities.

About the Petco Foundation

At the Petco Foundation, we believe that every animal deserves to live its best life. Since 1999, we've invested more than \$185 million in lifesaving animal welfare work to make that happen. With our more than 4,000 animal welfare partners, we inspire and empower communities to make a difference by investing in adoption and medical care programs, spay and neuter services, pet cancer research, service and therapy animals, and numerous other lifesaving initiatives. Through our Think Adoption First program, we partner with Petco stores and animal welfare organizations across the country to increase pet adoptions. So far, we've helped more than 5.3 million pets find their new loving families, and we're just getting started. Visit petcofoundation.org to learn more about how you can get involved.