

THE Sniff

News from **Medical Detection Dogs**

Summer 2015



Medical
Detection Dogs

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Dogs saving lives

www.medicaldetectiondogs.org.uk



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Contributing photographers, Claire Wood,
Emma Jeffery, Natalia Baker and Ali Clarke
Journalists, Jan Shillum and Natalia Baker



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Welcome...

Welcome to the latest edition of Sniff. I do hope you enjoy reading about the work of Medical Detection Dogs.

We are very excited at the publication of work recently completed by our colleagues in Italy. Their study published in the Journal of Urology using almost one thousand patient samples has revealed dogs to have a reliability rate of 98 per cent in detecting prostate cancer in urine samples.

These results are truly spectacular and replicate our findings, which in recent exploratory training trials have indicated bladder and prostate cancer reliability rates of around 93 per cent.

If the next stage of our research shows that the detection dogs can achieve consistently accurate results from thousands of patients, we plan to offer an additional test that could be used alongside the current PSA test, which would save more lives.

Our breast cancer study is under way, with six dogs in training. This work is not without its challenges, but I'm sure whatever our research reveals will be of great value.

We are on target to place eighteen medical alert assistance dogs this year and our recent successful partnerships continue to inspire the team and change lives in ways we could not imagine. Read in this edition about the difference these wonderful dogs have made. These stories still bring a tear to my eye. It is overwhelming what dogs do for us they offer so much. Each partnership is so special in their own way and teach something new.

Much has happened in all other areas of our work. We have begun a new series of workshops for our puppy socialisers who do such a valuable role for us. The first session went really well and it was lovely to see the socialisers swapping stories about their dogs. If you would like to become one of our socialisers do have a look on the website for more information.

I am very proud to let you know my 10-year-old Labrador, Daisy, has been awarded the Blue Cross Medal for her pioneering work in the field of cancer detection. This medal was last presented in 2007 to a Metropolitan Police dog called Jake, who cleared the scene at the Tavistock Square bus bombing and helped paramedics get access to the injured. You can read more about Daisy on page 20.

Florin, Daisy's niece, who lives with me, is progressing well – apart from recently chewing my best shoes! Florin is destined to become a urological cancer dog. Midas, my three year old Vizsla and Florin's best friend, is going to participate in our prostate study. Sadly, Tangle, the original British Medical Journal dog is slowing down - he will be thirteen in June 2015. It is hard to see him getting older but he will always be known as the cancer dog whose work changed history.

We were honoured to hold an event at Speaker's House which showcased our work to a new audience, to welcome the Speaker of the House, John Bercow to our offices and



Courtesy of Janine Warwick Photography

DR CLAIRE GUEST AND CANCER DETECTION DOG DAISY

also welcome two new ambassadors – EastEnders actress Gillian Wright and TV presenter Kate Humble.

We must thank the readers of the Daily Telegraph who supported Medical Detection Dogs as one of the paper's three Christmas charities. This was a superb opportunity for us to showcase our work in well written, accurate and informative articles in The Telegraph, The Sunday Telegraph and their magazine. The response from readers about the work we do was incredible and we were totally overwhelmed not only by the level of public support and interest in our work but by the cheque for £280,000.

The Medical Detection Dogs team would like to thank you for your continuing support – as I write, volunteers are helping with our major fundraiser and fabulous annual event "Canter for a Cure", which like so many other events throughout the year, raises valuable funds and awareness of the work we do.

These are truly remarkable times, many studies are now planned and there is growing interest and support from medics and researchers, something in the early days we never thought possible. The fantastic ability of dogs is becoming increasingly accepted, many of you have believed this for years and have worked hard with us to get our work accepted. We are now breaking through. Thank you for your belief and passion we are now on the brink of great advances with these special dogs, we know we can make a difference.

Thank you for all you do to support us we really appreciate every one of you.


Dr Claire Guest

Chief Executive and Director of Operations

Kate Humble

becomes a Medical Detection Dogs ambassador





“ *I was utterly blown away by my day at Medical Detection Dogs. The work they are doing is extraordinary and, although of course it sounds cliché, truly life-changing.* ”

Television presenter Kate Humble, best known for her wildlife programmes such as *Countryfile* and *Springwatch*, has joined charity Medical Detection Dogs as an ambassador.

Kate Humble first visited the Medical Detection Dogs centre in May. She commented: “I was utterly blown away by my day at Medical Detection Dogs. The work they are doing is extraordinary and, although of course it sounds cliché, truly life-changing.”

“Claire Guest is one of the most inspiring and exciting people I have ever met. Her story is incredible, but her unshakeable belief in what she is doing and how she and her team are continuing to push boundaries and defy scepticism left me in awe!”

Humble added: “I have agreed delightedly to be an ambassador for them.”

Dr Claire Guest was alerted to a deep-set breast cancer tumour by her own dog Daisy in 2009. Since then, she has worked with her team to produce robust scientific evidence to prove her long-held belief that dogs are capable of detecting odours associated with cancer volatiles.

In training trials, her cancer detection dog Daisy has achieved 93 per cent reliability in the detection of cancer. A recent study carried out by Italian scientists, has supported the work of Medical Detection Dogs. They found dogs to be 98 per cent reliable at finding the urine samples that contained cancer volatiles.

Dr Guest commented: “I could not be more delighted that Kate Humble has agreed to become an ambassador for us. Not only is she a highly credible animal behaviour expert, having studied them for most of her career, but she is also a much-loved national figure.

“We are so glad she will be joining our other lovely ambassadors, Lesley Nicol and Gill Wright, in getting the word out about the charity and the ways in which it could save thousands of lives.”

Tara & Willow



TARA AND MEDICAL ALERT ASSISTANCE DOG WILLOW

For 36-year-old Tara from Surrey, the superhuman ‘scent-sitivity’ of our canine friends is a daily life saver. Without exaggeration, Tara’s nut allergy is so severe she can be hospitalised from being exposed to nuts on someone’s breath. In fact, Tara might well react if those nuts had been eaten the day before.

Depending on the level of exposure, Tara’s response varies from taking an antihistamine tablet (if spotted early) to using an epi pen, which each time requires her being monitored for 6 hours in hospital afterwards. Full anaphylaxis, where the body goes into shock, was a regular and life-threatening reality; Tara was rushed to A&E 41 times in a two-year period. Even hospitals were a danger zone where most people wouldn’t think twice about eating a bag of peanuts and talking to another person.

Such is her sensitivity to airborne traces of nuts that, before alert dog Willow arrived, Tara’s life became dominated by the condition she had developed in 2004. Unable to control her exposure to nuts, Tara’s

Tara’s world grew smaller and smaller until only home felt safe.

world grew smaller and smaller until only home felt safe. Unknown areas were too risky, and even those she hadn’t reacted to in before could change in an instant. Imagine a simple trip out of the house, worrying that anyone you encounter could trigger an allergic reaction without even needing to touch you.

This fear is something that Senior Scent Instructor at Medical Detection Dogs, Lydia Swanson, really tried to understand as she got to know Tara. “I was on the Underground one day and it struck me how draining it was having to monitor my surroundings constantly. Every rustle of a packet could mean nuts being consumed nearby. Everything was a risk.”

Until her introduction to the charity in 2012, Tara’s life had become so limited that her partner

Emma had to look for a solution. With Tara in and out of hospital, unable to work and at crisis point they contacted Medical Detection Dogs. Emma had come across the work of peanut allergy dogs in the States, although such dogs are trained to search areas for owners with ‘hand to mouth’ allergies where they have to touch or ingest nuts to react. No dog had ever been trained to alert for traces in the air. The team at Medical Detection Dogs weren’t sure if it would be possible. Lydia remembers, “Tara’s allergy was of another level - she can react to anything in her environment. We simply didn’t know if it was possible to teach a dog to pick up nuts in the air, mixed in with another smells, literally anywhere. We had no protocol to follow.”

Having decided to go ahead with a prototype training programme, two-year-old Willow was selected from amongst other dogs for her placid but determined nature. Originally destined to be a brood bitch - a mother who provides puppies for working use at Guide Dogs - Willow was diverted to the new training programme after being spotted by Puppy Manager Kimberly Cox. Willow’s training programme became a collaboration between Claire Guest (Chief Executive), Lydia Swanson, Rob Harris (Bio Detection Manager), and instructor Helen Marsden. Over the course of 6 months, Willow proved herself not only a willing subject but extraordinarily able in meeting the training milestones.

In fact it became harder to challenge Willow such was her success rate. “She wouldn’t put a foot wrong. Her detection rate was incredible,” recalls Lydia. Willow could detect nuts from a sealed jar of peanut butter when walked down

Assistance dogs are perhaps better known for being the eyes and ears of their owner. But what about replacing their nose? And what if a dog's sense of smell, which outdoes a human's by at least 20 times, could pick up on warning signals that wouldn't even be possible otherwise?



the aisle of a supermarket. One time, Willow didn't alert when exposed to a hazelnut latte at Costa and Lydia worried that missing such an obvious mark would spell the end of the trial. "Then we looked at the ingredients on the hazelnut syrup bottle only to realise there weren't any nuts in it at all!" she laughs.

Once the programme was complete, the team knew they had broken new ground in assistance dog training. Willow's learning, however, didn't end there. Now partnered with Tara, she and Emma must keep clarifying what they need to know and don't need to. With infinite combinations of nuts against background odours - take a fruit and nut bar as an example - Willow can't possibly be taught to identify each item so she needs reinforcement about the individual nut smells that are so critical.

As with all assistance dogs, Willow also had to demonstrate appropriate behaviour in public. For her type of work, entering an environment before Tara to detect nuts, Willow had to relax the boundaries of her previous guide dog training. Instead of always maintaining a polite distance from others, whilst searching she may need to approach people and their belongings to check things are safe for Tara. She's also been encouraged to have the full length of the lead instead of keeping a steady heel position by Tara's side.

The final hurdle to overcome was making sure Tara and Willow were a good match for each other. Luckily their strong partnership formed quickly and the two are now inseparable. More than a helping paw, Willow's affection for Tara is evident; only twice has Tara been admitted to hospital in the 6 months since their partnership, but each time Willow insists on staying by her side.

There was of course a trial period in Tara's home, where luckily Willow also hit it off with the couple's other dog, a Jack Russell. "The bond is really key to any dog-client relationship. You could see theirs was there from the start," says Lydia.

Since having Willow, Tara's life is a far cry from what it used to be. Now able to work (as a part-time swimming teacher at a private school), she knows too well the value of having with her a sense of smell that can beat her sensitivity to nuts. When Willow alerted at the pool, at first no one knew why, until it emerged that one of the pupil's parents had washed her hair with almond shampoo.

At the Medical Detection Dogs summer party, Medical Detection Dogs staff had made sure to check all visitors for nuts at the door. Despite their vigilance, Willow still alerted, and surprised everyone that she had been right to; a mother revealed her daughter had eaten a peanut butter sandwich a few hours before. It goes to show the extent to which Willow is protecting Tara all the time, and which wouldn't be possible any other way.

It's hard to quantify exactly how good Willow is at her job but the dramatic drop in Tara's hospitalisations is an important benchmark. What's not hard to see is the difference it has made to Tara, who is now contemplating previously unthinkable trips to the cinema, shopping, and travelling by bus. In any of those scenarios, Tara is aware that the situation can change with the opening of a packet, causing her to need to leave, but knowing that she can be alerted before a serious reaction is helping her overcome the psychological barrier that was there.

A shopping trip after Christmas was a huge milestone achieved for Tara, who's determined not to look back. Willow's joy in working and affectionate companionship mean so much to her. She is a different person who carries herself more confidently now, which has been amazing for both her and Emma.

With a waiting list of allergy sufferers, Medical Detection Dogs will be training more alert dogs at the first opportunity. Tara's priority from her rare form has proven that even the most severe conditions can be helped. Similarly, another dog whose owner reacts to the onset of an allergic reaction caused by, amongst other things, changes in temperature - which can be life-threatening - naturally began to show the ability to detect, and is being helped by the charity to alert reliably and behave well in public.

Stories like this, and Tara's journey with Willow, go a long way to teaching us about the potential within dogs to improve people's lives. With the right guidance, that potential can be unlocked for incredible purpose as 'world-first' Willow has proved. Medical Detection Dogs meanwhile continues working hard to push the boundaries of alert dog training. Whatever new discoveries the future brings, it's certainly an exciting one.



MEDICAL ALERT ASSISTANCE DOG WILLOW

European pet night

A Night to Remember

On Wednesday 25th February I was invited by the International Federation for Animal Health-Europe to be a guest speaker at their annual European Pet Night event at Bellevue Museum, Brussels. IFAH-Europe is the federation representing manufacturers of veterinary medicines, vaccines and other animal health products in Europe. It represents both corporate members and national animal health associations in Europe.

I previously met with their Communications Director, Kim Hardie at a NOAH (National Office of Animal Health) event at the Houses of Parliament when I had first been partnered with Polo. I was very honoured if not a little nervous to be given this opportunity, especially as talking to a large audience, is not something I am very confident with.

Fortunately my school gave me lots of help and tips on presenting to people and when it came to the event I was actually very excited.

We travelled to Brussels via the Eurotunnel and arrived at our hotel in the afternoon. After a visit to a very nice chocolate shop and some lunch we returned to our hotel to



GEMMA AND POLO MEETING ALEJANDRO BERNAL, CHAIRMAN OF IFAH-EUROPE

get ready for the evening. On arrival we met with Kim Hardie and Alejandro Bernal, Chairman of IFAH. There were presentations given by MEPs on the important role of animal medicine. Then Dr Claire Guest, gave a presentation on the role of Medical Alert Dogs and the importance they have in helping people with long-term health conditions. When it came to my turn I did feel very nervous but also incredibly excited. Polo was on the podium right by my side, when I finished telling my story on

how I got to meet my best friend Polo and the enormous difference he has made to our lives, I felt like I was on top of the world.

I received so many compliments and got to talk to so many people afterwards; it really was one of the best nights of my life and I will never forget it. I owe so much to Medical Detection Dog charity and also to Kim Hardie for remembering me and giving me such a wonderful opportunity.

Gemma



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A light-colored dog, possibly a Weimaraner, is sitting in a field of yellow daffodils. The dog is looking towards the camera with its ears perked up. It is wearing a red collar with a small tag. The background shows more daffodils and some bare trees under a clear sky.

Paws for thought

Remembering those lives who touched our hearts, reflecting on the lives who give meaning to our day's work, in the Medical Detection Dogs memorial garden.



BEFORE WORK STARTED



ENERGETIC VOLUNTEERS FROM DOMINO'S PIZZA

Anyone who has visited the training centre at Medical Detection Dogs will appreciate just what a busy and frenetic place it is. And as the charity continues to grow, this hectic pace is set to carry on. However, sometimes the best remedy for a rushed and challenging day is simple – stop, pause and reflect.

In the summer of 2014, work began to transform an overgrown patch of land next to the training centre into a peaceful outdoor space for quiet contemplation: the Medical Detection Dogs Memorial Garden.

Energetic volunteers from Domino's Pizza and Milton Keynes Action for Youth kindly provided the muscle power to clear the area. In the autumn a working party from the Fraud Department at Barclays generously stepped in to fund and plant two thousand spring bulbs, all

under the guidance of Ali Clarke of our Operational Support team.

The heavy horticultural work quietened down over winter and nature took over. By February 2015 primroses and crocus started to emerge along with clumps of early daffodils, that spilled into sweeping drifts throughout spring - happy



VOLUNTEERS FROM BARCLAYS PLANTING BULBS

swathes of yellow shining in the sunlight. With bursts of bluebells in May followed by pockets of meadow wildflowers colour will gently infuse the natural setting, all the way to autumn.

Work is still very much 'in progress', as we now concentrate on the focal point of the garden; a memorial to the dogs themselves. In the meantime a charming bench donated by Chesham Fencing Supplies offers a place to sit and pause. Other garden visitors may prefer to sniff and scamper in the long grass!

The Medical Detection Dogs Memorial Garden offers a space to take time out and think about the individuals – staff, supporters, friends and family (both two- and four-legged) - whose compassion, courage and commitment lie at the charity's heart.



RACHEL, KIWI AND FLORIN ADMIRE THE RESULTS OF ALL THAT HARD WORK



New Bio Detection Unit

Following a generous financial donation from the Wolfson Foundation, the Bio and Cancer Detection team have been able to design and move into a brand new, self-contained, purpose built area at Medical Detection Dogs HQ in Great Horwood.

The move has been part of a whole office reshuffle which reflects the huge growth of the charity and its ever expanding needs, and has led to a more effective use of the available space and enhanced experience for our visitors.

The team is now organised around a large “Bio Detection Unit” where all of the sniffing action takes place. It has fully washable floors, a change which, as simple as it may sound, has meant that the area can be fully cleaned down at the end of every day.

As if watching our cancer and bio detection dogs at work wasn’t already impressive enough, there is

now a stunning 5m x 2.5m glass wall from which to observe all the action from the outside. An intercom style sound system links the viewing area to the working area, so that trainers can talk their audience through the proceedings in the room. Feedback from visitors to this new area has been hugely positive.

Outside of the room, there is now a space dedicated to the storing and preparation of all the samples. With multiple studies underway there are numerous samples potentially handled on a daily basis. For obvious reasons, the treatment of these samples is of the utmost importance

in ensuring the validity and credibility of the results, and to have a dedicated space for this element of the work is hugely important.

This area is situated next to a new office space, now with four desks, meaning that the whole team can all work in close proximity to each other. This is accessed directly to the outside via a separate entrance so that the morning and evening “school run” of foster carers dropping off and collecting their dogs is not only much easier and quicker, but also much less disruptive to other teams in the building.



Photograph by Emma Jeffery

The real stars of the team of course are of the four legged variety, and the new Bio Detection Unit would not be complete without having catered for their needs. The bio dogs now have a spacious chill out area, again fully washable, but complete with cosy beds and blankets where they can get away from the daily bustle if they need to. Throughout the day the dogs have direct access (with a trainer) to a large grass exercise area just outside the front door, visitors will often see the team running riot around the field!

Since moving into the new area in November, the first breast cancer proof of principle study has been underway to determine whether the odour of human breast cancer is detectable on breath. There are six dogs involved with the study and although not without challenges, we aim to have initial findings in the summer of 2016. Alongside this, there is the ongoing training of the



Photograph by Emma Jeffery

CANCER DETECTION DOG AT WORK

existing (bladder) cancer dogs, as well as other fledgling projects.

The whole team would like to extend their heartfelt thanks to the Wolfson Foundation, without whom these vital changes would not have

been possible at this time. This gift will have an enduring effect on the vital research that Medical Detection Dogs are doing into the early detection of cancer.

The Wright Way

Our ambassador, actor Gill Wright, talks to Jan Shillum about leaving East Enders and what comes next.

Gill Wright's ready laugh and friendly, relaxed personality seems slightly at odds with dizzy Jean Slater, the character she played for eight years in the BBC's long running 'soap' EastEnders. It's been a bit of an on/off relationship, Gill was originally signed for one episode in December 2004, was brought back a year later for four more episodes then 'guest starred' until November 2007 when 'Jean' finally moved into Albert Square. In 2006 she collected a Mental Health Media Award for her portrayal of the character dealing with the severe mood swings of bipolar.

Her departure from the show was announced in 2010, along with that of her on-screen daughter Stacey Slater, played by Lacey Turner but it was later confirmed that 'Jean' would return in spring 2011 and in 2012 Gill won the 'Best Actress' award at the Inside Soap Awards. She made the decision to leave EastEnders again in 2013 but went back for another short stint last year.

"As I'd asked to leave I was cheeky and said I would like a happy exit, I didn't want to leave The Square in a black cab, that always means trouble," Gill tells me. "I don't think members of the public, who kindly comment on how well a scene has been portrayed, realise the kind of pressure everyone is under when shooting EastEnders. We work 12 hours a day six days a week, even the endless periods of waiting on set are wearing. I thought long and hard about leaving but I needed to step back from that particular character. I was so lucky with lovely Lacey, who played my on-screen daughter,

we have a great rapport, so since we hardly ever had time to rehearse at all we'd say 'just go ahead and shoot and we'll see what happens' and the directors would trust us, not even knowing where it might lead!"

Gill is quoted as saying when she left "it has been a huge privilege to play Jean Slater these last eight years. I treasure the viewers' care and love for the character not only through her hard times but through all the laughter too. I will miss EastEnders enormously, but it is time for me to step back and enjoy other acting challenges. I would love Jean to return to the Square one day, so let's hope this is not goodbye, but au revoir."

"I'm really enjoying a bit of time off now," she says, "and appreciate that I'm in a privileged position to be able to do it. I didn't even do panto last season, [she appeared the year before as the Fairy Godmother in Cinderella at the Gordon Craig Theatre in Stevenage]. I've been doing up the house [in Hertfordshire], making a sunken garden and working on my allotment. I usually only have one day off for Christmas and my family have always made a huge effort in the past to come to me,

wherever I happened to be, so this year I decided to repay them and did all the cooking — I thought after it would have been easier to do several shows!"

Gill, 54, lives alone with her Lurcher cross rescue dog Professor Scruff who gained his name because "he was very scruffy when I first got him about three years ago and has huge, bushy eyebrows that make him look as if he should be wearing professorial half moon spectacles." But she spends as much time as she



can with her younger sister a single mum with MS and her nephew who is embarking on his GCSEs.

“The first nine months of having Professor Scruff were a nightmare”, Gill remembers, “I had to get up at about 4am through the winter to arrive in time at the EastEnders set and he was so insecure it would send him the wrong signals, he’d cry his eyes out. I got a professional trainer in to advise me and did all the right things, going out and coming in again, then staying out for increasingly longer times so he knew I was coming back but this meant I was lurking in our quiet lane in the dark at the crack of dawn, I did get some strange looks from the neighbours.”

It was a neighbour, in fact, who told Gill about Medical Detection Dogs. “It’s a small community, she works for Medical Detection Dogs and lives just down the lane. I went to visit when the charity was smaller and less well known. The office was crammed into what has become the meeting room and everyone was wrapped up against the cold, the working environment wasn’t nearly as lovely as it is now. I couldn’t commit to being an ambassador then because I was so busy at work, I didn’t want to say yes, then keep having to say no because of time constraints.

“This year, as an ambassador, I was thrilled to help on the Crufts stand and a fabulous reception at the House of Commons. I went to an ‘open house’ before Christmas, met Claire Guest and saw a demonstration of the detection dogs working with the carousel, it is remarkable but such common sense I wonder why no one has ever thought about using dogs’ amazing sense of smell like this before. Watching the assistance dogs alert is so moving too; that really brought a lump to my throat.”

Originally inspired to take up an acting career by her mother, whom, she has said, would play a part so convincingly that she wouldn’t even recognise her, Gill’s credits include many well loved TV programmes including cameo appearances in Coronation Street and parts in,



GILLIAN WITH MEDICAL DETECTION DOGS CLIENT CLAIRE PEARSON AT CRUFTS 2015

among others, The Bill, Dalziel and Pascoe, Heartbeat, Holby City and Sir Gadabout, the Worst Knight in the Land. She appeared on the big screen in the film Calendar Girls (2003) and performed on stage in the production of Steven Berkoff’s Religion and Anarchy in September 2013 at the Jermyn Street Theatre in London.

She knows she is fortunate to work in a job she loves and tries to “keep her feet on the ground and give something back to the profession” by encouraging young people to enter it, agreeing with Julie Walters and many other well known figures campaigning about the lack of opportunity for working class ‘voices’ in contemporary drama. Gill is co-founder of Pilot Theatre an award winning national touring theatre based in Yorkshire, and a visiting director and workshop leader at drama schools, universities and with young people with special needs.

Gill gained a BA in Theatre, English and Dance at Bretton Hall, West Yorkshire where she met a fellow

student who is now assistant head teacher of Burnt Mill Academy in Harlow, Essex. He invited her to run a workshop there, using her Steven Berkoff experience to help year 10 students with their study of the director’s work. She helps disadvantaged children through the Mousetrap Foundation and explains, “it gives GCSE level students the opportunity to see a West End show and attend professional workshops — many of my teenage students have never had the opportunity before to go to the theatre.”

As for the future, she regrets that there are so few parts written for women in their early fifties, “you can count them on one hand,” she says, “when I go for an audition people often expect someone larger — I’m five feet three and three quarters and that three quarters of an inch is very important. I would really love to do something funny in the theatre so I’m keeping my fingers crossed an offer will turn up.” Don’t get too busy again Gill, we at Medical Detection Dogs need you too.

Speaking Out

In March a very special event was held in the State Rooms of the Speaker's House, House of Commons, to showcase the vital work of Medical Detection Dogs — Jan Shillum was there.



DR CLAIRE GUEST TALKS AS CANCER DETECTION DOG KISSY GOES THROUGH HER PACES.

As we emerge from Westminster station into the light of a clear spring morning, the first thing we see is the red coat of an Medical Alert Assistance Dog who turns out to be Roots with father and son Neal and Jack who both live with Type 1 diabetes, and who need pointing in the right direction of Portcullis House where we are all to meet.

We've been advised to arrive early because of security measures and encounter them the minute we step inside the building. "Belts off, watches off, jackets off," the security guard barks, though he seems to have had a sense of humour bypass, it's good to know the Mother of Parliaments is in such stern hands.

Portcullis House though modern, blends beautifully with the Gothic splendour of the Palace of Westminster. The glass atrium is light and airy, filled with trees and foliage, the Members'

Centre and Café bustling with MPs. Escaping from security each with a green lanyard and identity number around our necks, we mingle with the gathering crowd. Claire Moon is talking to Lydia, a Medical Detection Dog instructor who's known Claire's diabetic alert dog Magic from a puppy. "He was always a clever boy," says Lydia proudly, "he started alerting the very first day Claire got him." More of Magic's magic will emerge as the day progresses...

I talked to another client with a diabetic alert dog, Sue Surbey: who tells me that Medical Detection Dogs matched her to Casper, her pretty, three-and-a-half-year-old apricot poodle because she works in a secondary school. "Poodles don't shed their coats so they're unlikely to affect children with allergies," she explains.

Eventually, attendees are conducted through what appears to be an

ancient fan-vaulted underpass guarded by heraldic beasts, we emerge into a courtyard with an unfamiliar insiders' view of Big Ben (now officially named the Elizabeth Tower). A flight of stairs leads to a foyer with a magnificent Pugin fireplace, the entrance to the crimson and gilt State Rooms of the Speaker's House that are awash with Linen Fold panelling and magnificent paintings of previous illustrious Speakers.

I meet Lydia again, with fellow trainer Rob; they tell me about Willow, Medical Detection Dog's first ever air-born nut allergy detection dog, featured recently in The Guardian Weekend supplement.

"Willow can detect the tiniest traces of any nut," they explain, also mentioning another important first, a dog trained to alert a PoTS sufferer. *

There are drinks and delicious nibbles to dispose of before the serious work

begins. I talk to CEO Dr Claire Guest's mother, temporarily confined to a wheelchair so even more than usually empathetic to the problems of Medical Detection Dogs clients and obviously so very proud of her brilliant daughter, agreeing that the charity has made huge strides in the last few years. "It was obviously all meant to be," she says as she introduces Claire's father John, an Medical Detection Dogs Founder Member, Trustee and Honorary Company Secretary.

After welcoming guests, and commenting on "this magnificent venue to showcase our important work for the future," Claire Guest explains for the uninitiated how Medical Detection Dogs came into being and asks those of us who have seen dog demonstrations before to stand back so others can see and be as amazed as we were. There are gasps and applause as Lydia and Rob put cancer detection dogs Ulric and Kizzy through their paces. They give, as always, a faultless display despite Claire's concern that the urine samples might have been compromised on their journey down to London.

Reiterating the importance of the work Dr. Guest tells her audience, including several eminent urologists, that Medical Detection Dogs is currently working on prostate cancer. "Dogs can prevent unnecessary biopsy," she tells us, "and have high levels of reliability, much higher than the standard PSA test. A very strong study by Italian colleagues is about to be published, their remarkable results

support our own findings on canine accuracy; two dogs working with samples from 900 patients achieved 98 per cent accuracy. This work cannot be ignored, it is telling us something about diagnosis that could save thousands of lives. There are other diseases we are working on for the future, Parkinson's is one we are collaborating on with Edinburgh University right now."

Claire Moon is about to speak to us when she is interrupted by Magic, twice. He is alerting for Claire to check her sugar levels. Simultaneously, next to me Sue's Casper also goes into alert mode. Both women do their blood tests; Claire needs to take some sugar and Sue decides to check again in 20 minutes as her levels are only slightly raised. Nothing, not noise, crowds, applause or gilded surroundings will ever stop these wonderful animals from doing their vital work.

When Claire M does get to speak it is most movingly. "Imagine", she says, "a life with an incurable disease that impacts every minute of every day of your life. Imagine a relentless battle for health, struggling every day to keep a balance, pretending that you are normal and can carry on. Imagine being reliant on others to participate in everyday activities such as going to the cinema, shopping or going to work... Imagine being afraid to go to sleep for fear of never waking up. Imagine the exhaustion of waking every hour night after night, in the hope that you will prevent the episode that may otherwise kill you. Many people don't have to imagine,

they have this existence day after day. They wonder what the future may hold, many not daring to plan for the future for fear that today may be their last. Partners, parents and children continually worry about what they may come home to."

"Now imagine a four legged friend, his devotion only bettered by his love of dog biscuits, bacon and cheese whirlers and a tummy tickle. Imagine a dog jumping on your bed at 3am, warning you to take action now before it's too late. Imagine a dog saving your life. Imagine this dog doing it day after day, night after night. For me that dog is called Magic. Every time Magic prevents a severe hypo he is saving me from embarrassment, a seizure or unconsciousness... When Magic alerts and saves me from relying on someone else to realise that I am about to collapse and intervene, he prevents an ambulance call that is saving the NHS £250. Every time Magic prevents an overnight admission to hospital he is saving the NHS £1,700. Magic has saved my life 1,855 times (counting the twice he has just alerted today). I'll let you work out how much money the NHS has saved because of him. I owe my life to Medical Detection Dogs they are now part of my family I now not only imagine what my life would be like, I live it."

I've 'done the math', that's a potential saving to the NHS of £3.617million and counting. Multiply that by how many Medical Detection Dogs client and dog teams there are and will be in the future and it becomes mind-boggling not to mention the potential saving in medical diagnoses.





GEMMA AND MEDICAL ALERT ASSISTANCE DOG POLO WITH MR. SPEAKER, THE RT HON JOHN BERCOW MP

Little 11-year-old Gemma Faulkner is up next with her black Labrador Polo and really wows us too with her confidence and sincerity. Mature beyond her years, she tells us she was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes at just 18 months old. "I used to feel", she tells us movingly, "like a snowman melting, I felt lonely and scared. My mum and dad had to set the alarm clock so they could check my sugar levels throughout the night and I was rushed into hospital several times. My grandma read about Medical Detection Dogs in 2010, I waited 18 months then Valentine's Day 2012 became the Best Day of My Life."

"I was nervous but made friends with Polo and have never looked back. I look forward now to a healthier future, I've had no more emergency trips to hospital, only routine appointments. I've never had a dog before and we had to learn a lot about each other but he has opened up so many opportunities. My confidence has grown; we enjoy

charity events together to help raise money and awareness for Medical Detection Dogs. He is much admired when we walk through town with him wearing his red coat, he is gorgeous, my best friend and guardian angel and he has the most incredible nose!"

Mr. Speaker, The Rt Hon John Bercow MP, held up by Parliamentary business, arrives a little late but has been listening most intently to what Claire and Gemma have to say. Obviously impressed and convinced he thanks them both for their "piquant and eloquent testimony." Welcoming us all to Speaker's House he tells us he is "always happy to open the State Rooms to celebrate great causes" and points out that he doesn't have breakfast every day in such magnificent surroundings as his own less palatial apartment is upstairs. He praises the "magnificent and awe inspiring work" Medical Detection Dogs does and tells us he visited Great Horwood in the early days to

see a detection demonstration. "It is," he goes on, "a striking achievement for dogs to work with such instinctive precision to identify the odour of human disease. There should be a culture change in attitudes so it is understood that dogs can do as much to help as humans — the hierarchy in favour of human work is quite wrong. Considering the money saved by the NHS and the fact that Medical Detection Dogs funding draws from charitable sources, I can't believe it is anything other than good value. I challenge anyone in the room to listen to these stories and remain unmoved."

"We cannot have fund raising events in Speaker's House but we do have awareness raising events, 750 over the last six years and Betsy [Duncan Smith, an Medical Detection Dogs Trustee] has thrown her heart and soul into this cause, so if you feel able to support it please do, though we wouldn't want you to think you shouldn't also volunteer resources on another occasion — it is life enhancing, life saving and life transforming."

After the demonstration and speakers we enjoy some dainty sandwiches while mingling with the guests. I corner The Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith, my constituency MP, who promises he's working on the possibility of Government funding for our cause. I am bowled over as always by the enthusiasm of Dr John Church who has recently returned from Germany where he collaborated on some fascinating research into fruit flies recognising cancer. Donna Brander, an animal behaviourist and Medical Detection Dogs Welfare Advisor who is married to our Chairman, Michael Brander, Baron of Whittinghame, has insightful things to say about the importance of training people to understand the needs of dogs. But these are stories yet to come...

*PoTS (Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome) is a life altering and debilitating chronic health condition that causes an abnormal increase in heart rate after sitting down or standing up producing dizziness, sweating and fainting.

My Mum & Pal



CLAIRE AND MEDICAL ALERT ASSISTANCE DOG PAL

My brother and I have been young carers for my mum for 10 years, she has brittle Type 1 diabetes and end stage renal failure and is waiting for a double organ transplant. Up until about three years ago our lives were in a pretty dark place, Jed and I were coming home from school on a daily basis to find mum on the floor having had a hypo or an ambulance on the door step or a note to say she was in hospital.

Dad's job was jeopardised by it because he couldn't travel too far without getting a call to say mum was ill. When mum was home she suffered with depression because she was afraid to go anywhere and our schooling was effected because all we could think about was mum.

Then the most amazing, funny, endearing, witty, smart, clever comical, cheeky, handsome, energetic, wonderful loyal, mischievous lifesaver came into our lives in the form of a gangly 18 month old black lab called Pal.

Pal has completely changed mum's life and the dynamics of the whole family. Pal is trained to alert mum when her blood sugars are dropping or rising as she has no awareness

herself and can quickly go into a diabetic coma. Pal is a star at his job and is never wrong, he will alert mum then fetch her blood glucose monitor and insulin or glucose, he saves her life on a daily basis alerting at home, in shops, during the night, wherever they may be his nose never stops working.

Pal has turned mum from a shy, quiet anxious lady into the bubbly mum we love to bits. Mum's confidence has soared, she is now much happier to go out alone and does lots of talks and charity fundraising for Medical Detection Dogs, Pal loves to meet people and puts a smile on everyone's face. Mum has to go for renal dialysis 3 times a week and Pal goes with her, he raises the spirits of all the other patients as well as giving mum and the staff at Maidstone renal unit the confidence that he will let them know if mum's blood sugars are dropping.

Pal brings pleasure to many people, he has helped my younger brother Jed cope with dyslexia at school by just being there with a very very waggy tail when he comes home. Pal's loving nature to the whole

family helps Jed to unwind and not stress too much about school. Pal takes on every challenge our family gives him with great strength and character, without the support of his puppy socialiser and Medical Detection Dogs he would not be the courageous dog he is today.

Pal has recently taken on a new challenge, our dad has been diagnosed with MS such a blow to our family. My brother and I are now carers for two parents and Pal has taken on this role with no additional training he has learnt to fetch the phone, TV remote, newspaper and dad's walking stick all with a look of pleasure and a waggy tail. Although he is mum's hypo alert dog, he has become a natural carer for all of us, we wouldn't be without him and find it hard to look back on life without him. Pal has been with us for 3 years and continues to amaze us with the new skills he learns on a daily basis, he is a 'dogtor' and pet but most of all mum's best friend, thank you Pal and Medical Detection Dogs.

Jake



PAL ATTENDING HIS FIRST DIALYSIS SESSION WITH MUM, MAKING LOCAL HISTORY AS THE FIRST ASSISTANCE DOG TO BE ABLE TO DO SO AT CANTERBURY HOSPITAL HEMODIALYSIS UNIT.



Meet the dog who has received a medal for cancer detection

Kelly Felstead speaks to Dr Claire Guest, whose Labrador Daisy has received a prestigious medal for her pioneering work in cancer detection.

Courtesy of



www.yourdog.co.uk

(Q) How did you feel after discovering that Daisy had joined the rank of heroic pets awarded the Blue Cross Medal?

(A) "Absolutely thrilled — it's a massive honour! The Blue Cross Medal is a very prestigious award and rarely given, so for Daisy to achieve it is something that will set her in history. With the work she's done for Medical Detection Dogs, she's a very deserving winner.

"One of the supporters of the charity nominated her; I didn't think it would go any further: to us, Daisy is incredibly special but there are a lot of dogs doing fantastic things."

(Q) Tell us about Daisy's work for the charity?

(A) "Daisy has been working for the charity for 10 years and is a trained cancer detection dog. She is trained to sniff out the volatile compound that comes from cancer cells. She can detect odours in urine samples from bladder, prostate, and renal cancers.

"She was part of a big study published in a journal in 2011; Daisy was in a team of dogs who showed they can reliably detect bladder cancer. Since then she has been working on numerous studies. Daisy has screened more than 6,000 training and test samples and found more than 500 cases of cancer. She has shown to have an overall reliability of 93 per cent.

"Daisy has taught us an awful lot about how cancer can be detected. Cancers have an odour and this can be detected by dogs. The work she is doing will save the lives of thousands of people in the future."

(Q) Is Daisy the only cancer detection dog?

(A) "There are 14 cancer detection dogs at the moment. Six are working on a new breast cancer study, two are advanced urine detection dogs, and another six are coming into training. Daisy is the most senior cancer detection dog.

"Some of the samples that come through for training are from people who have cancer and others who may not have cancer, so if we have a sample we are not sure about, or want her to check if one of the younger dogs is confused, Daisy helps out."

(Q) How is Daisy trained?

(A) "It's quite difficult; the difference between this work and teaching a dog to become a search dog is that we don't have the odour to start with.

"She has all the different samples and learns that one sample is very rewarding and has to work out why. The dog then starts to realise that when they have samples like that they get a reward. They are then taught an alert: Daisy will sit and touch it when she's found the right sample.

"The dogs are taught to problem-solve at a young age using a clicker. We have to make sure dogs are confident before they start."

(Q) Daisy alerted you to cancer — what happened?

(A) "Daisy was working on her second big study. One day I took her for a walk and lifted the back of the car up. My other two dogs jumped out but Daisy kept jumping against me, at my chest. I felt a bruised area which

seemed funny. I went to my GP and was sent for a biopsy. I had a mammogram and other tests. They revealed I had a very deep breast cancer. I had surgery and other treatment, and I am still here to tell the tale.

"My consultant said if my attention had not been drawn to it, I would never have known and, by the time I did, it would have been advanced. Daisy saved my life."

(Q) Why was Daisy chosen as a cancer detection dog?

(A) "She's got all the attributes: she has a good sense of smell and is very reliable. A dog has to have a good focus — Daisy never gets distracted and she enjoys her work."

(Q) What does Daisy like to do away from work?

(A) "She goes jogging with me, likes playing with tennis balls, and getting on the sofa — she just loves being a dog! I have got a couple of other dogs and she plays with them."

(Q) What's the charity hoping to achieve in the future?

(A) "We are finding more and more diseases that dogs can smell. A new study we are working on is looking at whether dogs can detect breast cancer from a breath sample. It will take two or three years before we can prove it one way or another. If they can, what a difference that will make! Daisy is not involved in this study.

"There are other diseases we are starting to investigate, such as whether dogs can detect Parkinson's disease. It's limitless."



Dogs' Day Out 2015 raises enough funds to train a Cancer Detection Dog.

Dogs of all breeds, shapes and sizes put their best paw forward to help raise funds for Medical Detection Dogs – and what a great job they did!

Together hundreds of dogs and their families raised a fantastic £5,785.64. This superb sum of money means they can fund the full training programme for a new cancer detection dog (£5,000) and it's first year's costs (£750).

Organisers are delighted. Medical Detection Dogs Trustee Betsy Duncan Smith said: "This is our third year of running the event and each year it gets bigger and better. This year we set a target of £5,000 to raise and we were delighted to discover we had completely exceeded all expectations. It was a brilliant day out, the rain stayed away and everyone had a smile on their face or a waggy tail."



Taking place in parkland at Swanbourne, Bucks, this doggy day out on Sunday April 19 provided a host of activities and competitions for dogs of all abilities.

For gundogs there was a range of first-class scurry competitions where dogs had to jump bales of straw, race across fields and pick up various shapes of dummies designed to resemble game birds like pheasants.

Other dogs tried out the have-a-go agility course where they jumped fences, ran through tunnels and walked over a seesaw. And dogs of all breeds took part in the Kennel Club licensed Companion Dog Show with classes for pedigree dogs as well as fun classes such as waggiest tail, best trick and dog most like its owner. Several Medical Alert Assistance Dogs were seen sporting brightly coloured rosettes they had won in the showing classes.

More than 1,000 people attended the event and humans were able to enjoy less energetic activities like the tombola, the popular raffle with prizes like a visit to the Formula One Force India team factory, the trade stalls offering a variety of lovely products or sideshows like Guess the Weight of the Great Dane.

Naturally the fabulous cakes in the tea tent proved popular – and thanks in particular go to the teachers and

pupils from Sir Thomas Fremantle School in Winslow for helping with refreshments – while the barbecue, beer tent and ice cream van attracted long queues.



Dogs' Day Out was lucky to be joined by Medical Detection Dogs Ambassador and BBC Eastenders actress Gillian Wright with her dog Professor Scruff. Gill really impressed everyone with her enthusiasm to 'muck in'. She brought star quality to the prize-giving at the end of the day while Professor Scruff demonstrated his hidden talents when he had a go at the agility course.

Betsy Duncan Smith added: "The day couldn't go ahead without the tremendous help from our many volunteers, including Medical Detection Dogs supporters."

Look out for next year's date for Dogs' Day Out at Swanbourne – scheduled for April 2016.



Duerr's raise the 'WOOF' with £35,000 donation

Duerr's offer a new 'leash' on life after raising over £35,000 for Medical Detection Dogs.

The money, raised following the Manchester based preserves and peanut butter producers' annual ball, will provide essential resources to acquire and train three new puppies for the charity, to detect the odour of human disease.

Honey, Peanut and Berry, named after Duerr's famous preserves, are three of the

new pooches who will be trained to detect early signs of human disease, through identifying odour changes associated with complex medical conditions.

Mark Duerr, Managing Director of Duerr's comments: "Each year we select a charity that inspires us. With the money raised at the Duerr's ball, we have been able to provide enough funds to train three new dogs who will help change lives, detect illness from an early stage and assist those

in need on a daily basis. With no government support or grants, this deserving charity relies on public donations."

Dr Claire Guest, CEO and Director of Operations for Medical Detection Dogs says: "This donation and support from Duerr's for the Medical Detection Dogs will help us continue our research and train more dogs to assist individuals, ultimately detecting illness early and saving more lives in Manchester and around the UK."



CLIENTS AND THEIR MEDICAL ALERT ASSISTANCE DOGS WITH DR CLAIRE GUEST AND MARK DUERR, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF DUERR'S.



Alice & Holly

Our journey so far...

Photograph by Claire Wood

In June 2006 at the age of fifteen my life was suddenly turned upside down when I was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes.

In June 2006 at the age of fifteen my life was suddenly turned upside down when I was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes. Despite feeling dizzy when I woke up that morning, I was still expecting to go to school that day; see my friends, sit through numerous lessons and continue with my every day routine however less than 12 hours later things were very different; I was sat on a bed in the paediatric ward surrounded by numerous medical professionals informing me about diabetes, insulin became my life saver and taking my blood sugar was to become one of my daily routines as was insulin injections with everything I ate. At the time of diagnosis, I felt overwhelmed! It was just like being on a roller coaster, emotionally going

up and down as I came to terms with all the information that I had to digest and the changes it meant to my everyday life. It appeared my life was to become one of routine, the highs and lows of my blood sugar and the way it made my body react.

Within months of my diagnosis with diabetes, I was frequently being admitted into my local hospital with fluctuating blood sugar levels. A normal blood sugar should be between 4 and 7mmols, mine was fluctuating between 0.5 and 39mmols. As a result I would regularly be found unconscious due to low blood sugar seizures and on the other scale, my body acidic due to extremely high sugar levels. The hospital was

becoming my home and normal everyday living like socialising with friends came to a sudden halt.

Ten months after my diagnosis my condition became life threatening and I was transferred to the Leeds General Infirmary in the hope some answers would be found. Moving away from home comforts and the company of family and friends was difficult and upsetting but I knew it was for the best. The results showed my body was fighting the insulin I require to keep me alive. Although I needed the insulin, it was in fact making my condition worse. Everything was a risk and a guessing game, there wasn't anyone out there with a similar problem and that was the difficult part. My health was deteriorating and each new treatment failed to work. Being diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes was one thing but less than a year later I had a unique condition which didn't even have a name nor could anyone answer any of our questions.

Eventually, I was given an unlicensed and high risk drug with unknown side effects. It was a risk we had to take as there were very few options available. Fortunately the drug proved effective and after a three and a half year continuous stay in hospital, I was delighted to be discharged from my hospital bed with a team of nurses to monitor my blood sugar levels at least hourly overnight and for us as a family to monitor my blood sugars closely during the day.

Due to the large number of high and low blood sugar levels I have had over the last nine years, I have lost all my warning signs. This meant without closely monitoring my blood sugars, I could have a seizure or slip into a diabetic coma. As a result, my independence was restricted but after reading about Medical Detection Dogs, I began to have a glimmer of hope that maybe with the help of a specially trained assistance dog, I could start to gain my independence.

On the 31st October 2011, Holly arrived in Yorkshire for the training placement to begin and completely transformed my life. Before getting Holly I was informed she was very much a Princess – goodness knows why they thought her and I would be a perfect match! Five years ago I would never have imagined I would be walking in all weathers, usually ending up getting drenched and my hair going frizzy, waterproofs becoming my everyday fashion and that I would be woken in the morning with an affectionate lick of the face to tell me it's time for walkies!! I may not have been an animal lover before getting Holly but do you know what, despite what I have I wouldn't change a single thing because if you hadn't guessed already I am completely and utterly besotted with her!

When I applied for a Medical Alert Assistance Dog, I always had at the back of my mind whether a dog could actually cope with the fluctuation in my blood sugar levels and the prolonged high and low blood sugars I can have! From the very first day Holly arrived, she experienced what life was going to entail living with the girl who had been diagnosed with a one in seven billion condition! Could she cope? Would she alert? Did she detect a change in odour in my blood sugar levels? Of course she did! Within



ALICE AND MEDICAL ALERT ASSISTANCE DOG HOLLY

weeks of Holly and I being partnered together, she began to recognise and alert both high and low blood sugars. She alerts me by licking my hand forcefully and going to fetch the kit and bringing it back to me. I still remember the first time Holly came and alerted me, the day I sat on the sofa completely oblivious that my blood sugar was crashing into dangerous levels and thanks to my little super dog and her incredible nose, she saved my life with a simple sniff!

Over the years, Holly and I have formed a close bond and established what works best for the two of us as a partnership; she now alerts anything above 14.7mmols and anything less than 4.7mmols. In just over three years, a day has very rarely gone by where Holly hasn't needed to alert me at least once! I don't think she had even been with me for a month when she showed me just how incredible she is; twelve hours, twenty eight alerts and a girl who would have previously been admitted into hospital was snuggled in her own bed with her little life saver beside her! Before

Holly, a day like that could have resulted in a hospital admission due to a hypoglycaemic seizure or diabetic ketoacidosis but thanks to Holly's regular alerts, so far we have been able to manage my condition at home. A huge achievement and step in the right direction after previously spending three and a half continuous years in hospital!

Holly's determined character has brought challenges on occasions but I feel it has enabled her to succeed with my condition. Dr Claire Guest CEO of Medical Detection Dogs recently said "We chose Holly for Alice because she is so calm, intelligent and determined, and we thought that would suit the challenging nature of Alice's condition. Holly loves her work and it's a joy to see them together." I am in awe of what Holly does for me. She has changed my life beyond recognition and we all love her to bits. Every alert is special but when she is distracted on free play and she suddenly comes running back to me with her tail wagging furiously, her body quivering with excitement and her tongue hanging out of her mouth,

the only word to describe those alerts are awe-inspiring. Knowing she has stopped doing something that she loves just so she can save my life with a simple sniff makes me realise how strong our bond is now.

"Thank goodness for Holly!" is often the comment from my consultant during my clinic appointments as he looks at my blood sugar readings and observes the prolonged periods of high and low blood sugars and the rapid decreases in my blood sugar levels. For example dropping from 19.7 to 2.4mmols in a couple of hours and still having no warning signs but for the last few years I am fortunate to have Holly beside me saving my life with a simple sniff. She really is a valued member of my medical team – she has kept me out

of hospital on so many occasions and we would all be lost without her! I am so lucky to have a supportive consultant who believes in Holly and that incredible nose of hers! During my last clinic appointment, we were delighted to be given the results of my recent HbA1c result, 50mmol/mol, the best reading we have had for a very very very long time. Not only is this a near on perfect reading but my medical team have realised the positive impact a Medical Alert Assistance Dog has both on my well being and my quality of life too.

I know first hand what a huge difference having an alert dog has on people's lives, and the true value of the donations given to fund such amazing dogs. I knew Holly would transform my life but I don't think I realised to

what extent, I certainly do now though. Medical Detection Dogs have given me the greatest gift of all and something no one else could ever give me. She has given me confidence, she has taken me on so many adventures in the last three years, she has made me giggle one way or another and above all that she has saved my life!

Since getting Holly I am no longer known as the girl that lives in hospital. Together we are a partnership; we are known as Alice and her life saving sniff Holly and that is how it will stay for many years to come! In three years, so much has happened, she has changed my life for the better and if the weeks, months and years ahead are to be like the last few years...I know they are bound to be just as incredible! *Alice*

'Tail' From Abroad



Medical Detection Dogs volunteer, Natalia Baker, who is currently living in New York, has had an encouraging glimpse of the assistance dog world in the US. "My husband and I were hiking in the National Redwoods Forest in California when we passed a beautiful longhaired pointer and his owners on the trail path." Noticing the word 'diabetes' on the dog's jacket, Natalia stopped to learn more about its work.

The dog's owner, Bryn, from Salt Lake City, Utah, was more than happy to tell their story. She explained that she and 17-month-old Alan had been paired just two weeks prior through Working Dogs Alliance. Despite having to quickly adapt to being a pet owner - to a particularly active and slobbery pointer! - Bryn reported that things were going incredibly well so far.

Bryn has Type 1 diabetes and this is the first time she has had an assistance dog help her manage her blood sugar levels. When

asked how their early relationship was going, Bryn couldn't hold back her enthusiasm. "Alan is already warning me of hypos and hypers before I reach the danger zone," she reported. "We are completely in love with him." That day, Alan had already alerted Bryn twice correctly as she and her partner took a long drive and hike in the hills. She said this level of activity and independence simply wouldn't have been possible before Alan.

Natalia was thrilled to meet a blood sugar alert dog so far from home and in such a remote location. She willingly introduced Bryn to the work of Medical Detection Dogs, for whom she has volunteered for two years. "I was fascinated to hear yet another story of the life-changing impact an assistance animal of this kind has made to its owner. Appreciating the difference these dogs make can be quite overwhelming, and I'm proud to represent Medical Detection Dogs abroad."

We wish Bryn and Alan all the very best in their journey together, hopefully one of many years. It's wonderful to see blood sugar assistance dogs doing their incredible work elsewhere in the world, and demonstrates the value of excellent training. This can only help to raise the global profile of diabetes and Addison's alert dogs and increase support for our training and research.

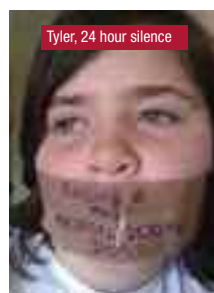
Here is Natalia's attempt at capturing her and Alan in the same photo, but as Bryn laughingly explained, "The one thing he's not good at is taking a selfie!"



Out and about

raising funds for Medical Detection Dogs

Thank you to everyone that supports us



Commission a portrait of your dog and help Medical Detection Dogs



Bridget Wood has drawn this portrait of Cancer Detection Dog, Daisy.

Bridget bred Daisy who is owned and trained by Dr Claire Guest.

Bridget has previously undertaken commissions for the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh, the Duke and Duchess of Westminster, and the Rt. Hon Iain and Mrs. Duncan Smith.

Having worked in the past on "Survival", Anglia TV's wildlife documentary programmes and been a photographer of weddings, children and newborn babies at the Portland and St. Mary's Lindo Wing, Bridget now has more time to concentrate on her pastel drawing in her small studio in Kent.

Bridget is very kindly giving half of her profit to Medical Detection Dogs.

For any commissions. Email: bridgetwood2011@gmail.com



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Moira & Treacle



Life with a dog who closely resembles a Teddy bear is pretty good but when that Teddy bear saves your life every day then no words can adequately describe how I feel about Treacle, my hypo alert dog.

I have had Type 1 diabetes for 30 years and despite getting an insulin pump 15 years ago, I have struggled with wildly swinging blood sugars and the complications that resulted from that. Before I had Treacle my blood sugar would routinely drop from very high to very low (hypo) within minutes and eventually I had no awareness of this happening. I also developed heart disease as a consequence of my brittle diabetes. This put me at even greater risk from my hypos as the combination of hypo and diabetes carries a greatly increased risk of a heart attack. Every time I had a hypo I was scared I would have a heart attack. I lost my confidence and became very depressed as I felt it was only a matter of time until I “kicked the bucket”.

My diabetes consultant actually suggested I get a Medical Detection Dog as he felt we had tried everything else and he had heard wonderful things about the dogs. Now here I am three and a half years later with my very special boy. The first time he alerted me I actually burst into tears of joy. I couldn't believe it and for the

first time in 30 years I felt there was something positive associated with my diabetes. He quickly became my best friend as well as my life saver. He is of course, very easy to love. He is a Cavapoo, his mum is a Cavalier King Charles spaniel and his Dad is a poodle. He is totally non shedding and incredibly soft. He loves to kiss me and anyone else he can get near! Because he only weighs 7 kilos he is very portable which is great as I travel a lot. When I first had him I was working as a Principal Lecturer in Diabetes at the University of Brighton teaching diabetes to Pharmacy and Medical students. I was incredibly well supported by everyone at work and Treacle became a bit of a celebrity. One of the administrators even made him a staff card and the Medical students put him on their Facebook page as a medical student. Dr. Treacle will see you now!

When I walked into lectures you can imagine the response of 120 students to the arrival of a very cute dog in their lecture. If I had an ego at all, it was certainly gone very quickly when I realised that the students would

have been happy to just play with Treacle and skip the lecture entirely. After the lectures I did allow him to say hello to the students. I went to get a coffee during a break in the lecture and came back in to find Treacle lying on his back having his tummy tickled by the entire class. He is totally unfazed by his fame and fearless when going into new situations. When I give talks to groups on Medical Detection Dogs, Treacle is a fabulous ambassador for the charity and his kisses extract many donations. He has been to America for a long holiday when we toured New England and he was a bit of a celebrity on the plane and even got to meet the pilot. The other passengers did grumble a bit that he got more attention than they did.

At night if I am hypo he sits on my head and licks my face and when I am awake he does the same to my husband to make sure we are all up. If we are out walking not only does he alert me to a low blood sugar, he alerts me when it is dropping rapidly. He amazes me every day and he makes me smile as well as he is a bit of a comedian too. I have met so many people who are drawn to come up and ask about him and he always does his bit to raise awareness. My only complaint is that he possibly too cute, people have a tendency to run up and grab him without asking which can be a problem but overall it has been more positive than negative. My life has changed beyond recognition thanks to Treacle and my diabetes is much less of a burden. He truly is a life saver.



Helen Marsden

My name is Helen Marsden I joined Medical Detection Dogs as an Assistance Dog Instructor in April 2014. The job role for me was a great opportunity to use my previous experience. My first job was with Dogs for the Disabled where I was a Dog Trainer. I would train five dogs at any one time in various tasks. These would involve push, pull, retrieve and speak. These tasks would help aid someone with everyday tasks such as emptying the washing machine or pushing a pedestrian crossing button. After working there for 11 years I wanted to develop my people skills and I went on to become a Prison Officer. Within a year I had progressed to Drugs Dog Handler.

I had two dogs a passive drugs dog who would search for drugs and a pro-active drugs dog who would search for drugs and mobiles. My passive dog would search people that included prisoners, staff and all visitors entering the prison.

My pro-active dog would search all areas including cells, workshops and vehicles. After 6 years at the prison I needed a new challenge.

The job here at Medical Detection Dogs was the perfect chance for me to use all my previous 17 years' worth of knowledge of assistance dogs and scent work.

The role of Assistance Dog Instructor involves scent training the dogs before placing them with a client. The placement of dog with a client and then the ongoing support required by the individual client once the dog is in the home. Even after the dogs are accredited and fully qualified assistance dogs our support doesn't stop. We continue to support in the way of annual visits and we are also looking to skype clients regularly to keep the communication going. (This is once we have learnt how to use this new-fangled technology!). At present we have 60 partnerships to support annually and 17 partnerships in training. Since being with the charity I have been lucky enough to be involved with the training of the first airborne nut detection dog, the first POTS dog and a number of diabetic alert dogs. Upon joining the charity I spent some time in the bio detection department and became one of the bed bug dog handlers.

In the short space of time I have been with Medical Detection Dogs I have had the privilege to meet some amazing people, these include the clients, supporters, volunteers and of course the staff.



Photograph by Natalia Baker

A huge thank you to author Malcolm Morecroft

by Sharon Lynn



DAVID WIMSETT AND SUE ASHLEY PRESENTING DR CLAIRE GUEST WITH A CHEQUE AT CRUFTS 2015

Some of you may know that over the last three years, along with Brian & Lucky, I have done an extensive amount of fundraising talks and events in the Southeast, including presenting to the Southern Golden Retriever Society and Display Team. The SGRS have been huge supporters and fundraisers for Medical Detection Dogs in recent years.

Something you may not know about me though is that I also run two self-publishing companies and had been discussing the idea of writing a book about some of the incredible partnerships at Medical Detection Dogs. Claire Akehurst had recalled one of these conversations when a gentleman rang her about the book he wanted to write on the history of Golden Retrievers. He told her that he and his wife wanted to help raise funds for the charity from the sales of such a book; however, he had no idea how to get it published.

So, in May 2014 I got a call from the author, Malcolm Morecroft. After a very lengthy conversation we arranged to meet and discuss if we could help bring his book to life. The rest, as they say, is history and a few

months later we published *From Yellow to Golden - The Stately Heritage of the Golden Retriever*.

Malcolm and his wife Christine are owned by two Golden Retrievers themselves (Tessa & Lucy) and having had numerous conversations and meetings with them I know just how many miles they have all travelled together to research the information in this book!

Spanning more than seventy years, *From Yellow to Golden* is a social and family history of seven people whose contributions were pivotal in the development of the breed. It was their devotion that helped make the Golden Retriever so successful as a working dog and in the show ring. These people left a lasting legacy.

Malcolm says "The people I have written about in this book came from all levels of society - from those who attained great wealth in the corporate and financial arenas, to politicians whose families represented a constituency from one generation to the next; and from those of independent means to those who worked on the land, their daily routine dictated by the seasons of the

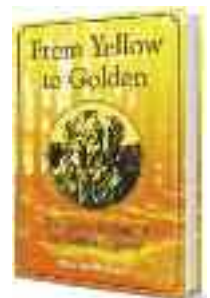
year. Some worked alongside each other and, despite their different status in life, forged a mutual understanding and respect that spanned the decades. But what brought them all together was their dedication to the development of one of today's most beloved breeds of dog: the Golden Retriever."

Did you know...? Medical Detection Dogs has one pure Golden Retriever and a number of other Golden Retriever cross breeds working as lifesaving Medical Alert Assistance Dogs.

So, why the huge thank you?

The Southern Golden Retriever Display Team handed over a cheque for £5,850 to Dr Claire Guest at Crufts this year - an incredible £600 of this came from the sales of Malcolm's book. So, a huge thank you goes out to Malcolm and Christine for all their efforts, not only researching and compiling this book but promoting and selling it all over the world in order that Medical Detection Dogs could benefit in this way.

With tales (and tails!) from the forests of Inverness-shire to the fashionable Park Lane, London this book is a fascinating read for anyone that has even a vague interest in history, Golden Retrievers - or indeed both! It has lots of photographs throughout and a Family Tree at the start of each chapter. I have read it and thoroughly enjoyed it, especially the bit about a dog in the pocket!



From Yellow to Golden is available in both hardcover (ISBN 978-0-9556722-6-2) and a softcover version (ISBN 978-0-9556722-3-1) through Amazon and any good bookstore, however, if you order through the author directly, Medical Detection Dogs will receive more money per sale.

Please call Malcolm on 01622 - 861530 or email him at toadflax@tiscali.co.uk or visit www.HerkimerPublishing.com

Are YOU up for a challenge?

Why not support Medical Detection Dogs and take part in one or more fantastic charity challenges across the country ...

Euro City Cycling Challenge

11th-15th May 2016 & 7th-11th Sep 2016



Join us as we cycle for charity 270 miles, in 3 countries to 3 capitals – London, Amsterdam and Brussels.

An exciting charity cycle combined with breathtaking city sights make this a

European charity challenge extravaganza! This superb charity bike ride caters for every level of cyclist. One of our newest fundraising events will see us cover approximately 270 miles with 4 days in the saddle, and takes in the rolling countryside of Essex, the plains of Holland and the sleepy lanes of Belgium. Join us for one of the best cycling challenge experiences in Europe!

For more information visit

www.globaladventurechallenges.com/uk/euro-city-cycling-challenge

Lands End to John O'Groats

10th-22nd May 2016 & 30th Aug-11th Sep 2016



Pedal 1000 miles, end to end, on this classic challenge from Land's End to John O'Groats, the furthest possible distance in the British Isles. This is a classic challenge that is on many a cyclist's 'to do' list. Covering more than 12 counties, this is one of the toughest fundraising cycle events available.

From the rocky cliffs and pounding seas of Land's End, through the rolling hills of Dartmoor, through the stunning mountains of the Lake District and along the Lochs of Great Glen to our finish line at the Northernmost point of the UK mainland, LEJOG will test you to your limits, but it is the most fabulous way to see the UK and one of the biggest achievements you are every likely to accomplish!

For more information visit

www.globaladventurechallenges.com/uk/lands-end-to-john-ogroats

The Roubaix Challenge

7th-11th April 2016



This unique cycle challenge is set to be the most exciting cycling opportunity yet! The Roubaix Challenge is a fantastic 155 mile bike ride for charity, over two days from London to the beautiful town of Lille in Northern France. Lille is very close to the town of Roubaix, most famous for its epic pro cycle race, the Paris-Roubaix.

After your two day challenge to Lille, on Day 3 you have the option of taking part in the 'Paris-Roubaix Challenge'; one day before the professional race, amateur cyclists can sign up to ride on the same route as the Paris-Roubaix elite cyclists.

The ride will offer some of the same cobbled sections that professionals face the next day and you can choose between three distances:

**163km (approximate distance) 139km (approximate distance)
70km (approximate distance)**

After completing your chosen route and after a well-earned rest, on Day 4 you are free to watch the pros ride and cheer your favourite riders as they race along the infamous pavés that you took on yourself the day before! This is always an exciting race as Paris-Roubaix remains one of the most memorable classics.

For more information visit

www.globaladventurechallenges.com/uk/the-roubaix-challenge/?international

Lakes 4 Peaks Challenge

20th-22nd May 2016



This stunning challenge takes place in one of the UK's most beautiful locations. Trek and summit the four highest peaks of The Lake District – Scafell Pike, Scafell, Helvellyn and Skiddaw.

The trekking begins at Seathwaite, from where we tackle Scafell and Scafell Pike via the Corridor route.

This is the toughest part of the challenge and involves steep ascents and rugged terrain.

The next day, our start point is Thirlmere, from where we will ascend Helvellyn. This is a short but steep ascent with some minor scrambling. On return to Thirlmere we will transfer to Millbeck where we will ascend our final peak, Skiddaw.

Stamina and determination are a must on this fantastic but strenuous challenge; although it involves some tough trekking, the stunning views of the Lake District will be with us all the way and the close proximity of the four peaks means that it's possible to do all this in one great weekend!

For more information visit

www.globaladventurechallenges.com/uk/lakes-4-peaks

South Downs 100km



25th-27th June 2016

This is an extremely arduous 100km endurance trek over the rolling hills and high ridges of the scenic South Downs. We walk through day and night, with some steep ups and downs, before coming to the spectacular final stretch over the famous white chalk cliffs of the Seven Sisters. We finish on the highest chalk sea cliff in England – the beautiful headland of Beachy Head, near Eastbourne. You'll be incredibly happy to see it!

This is a very tough challenge – you will need to be a very fit, experienced walker and determined to conquer the hilly terrain and the fatigue in order to succeed. Your sense of achievement will last a lifetime!

For more information visit

www.discoveradventure.com/challenges/south-downs-100km

Snowdon Trek

24th-25th Sep 2016

The Snowdon trek in the heart of Snowdonia, North Wales comprises breathtaking, rugged scenery and rewarding trekking for those who take on this one day charity challenge!

Join us as we trek to the top of Wales to conquer Mount Snowdon at an elevation of 3,560ft. Our trail to the summit is the Pyg Track, which starts at the top of Pen y Pass and rises steadily with the



imposing Crib Goch directly above. As the path gradually rises we are privy to amazing views down to Glaslyn far below. We continue to zig zag up until reaching the monolith which opens up dramatic views as far as Anglesey; from here it's just a short walk to the summit.

After congratulations all round and the obligatory celebration photos at the summit, we start our descent on the Llanberis Path. Although this is the longest in distance, it is a gradual descent, so easy going underfoot after the strenuous climb up to the summit and we are treated to the most stunning views as we wind our way down to Llanberis for our celebration meal!

For more information visit

www.globaladventurechallenges.com/uk/snowdon-trek

For further information about challenge events please email: challengeevents@medicaldetectiondogs.org.uk

Medical Detection Dogs teams up with Will - Writing Service **The Goodwill Partnership**

Courtesy of Tony Cortazzi

The Will-writing service will allow Medical Detection Dogs to generate further legacy donations as well as offer its support-base low cost solicitor-written Wills.

The Goodwill Partnership offer home-visit, solicitor-written Wills. This makes the process of making a Will easy, in the privacy of your own home, and at a time to suit you. This allows individuals to leave a legacy to Medical Detection Dogs if they so desire.

The partnership with Medical Detection Dogs is the latest of a number of recent alliances by The Goodwill Partnership. These have included The National Autistic Society, Motability, World Cancer Research Fund UK, Action for Children, Care for the Wild and Macmillan Cancer Support.

Mark Jackson, Director of The Goodwill Partnership, says: "As a dog-owner myself, Medical Detection Dogs is one of the most inspiring charities I have ever come across. Not only is the charity helping researchers develop non-invasive tests for cancer, but their specially trained Medical Alert Assistance Dogs can warn individuals of oncoming life threatening events. We are thrilled to be assisting such an innovative and pioneering charity."



**The future of Medical Detection Dogs relies on legacies.
If you would like to write your Will in the privacy of your own home
please contact**

**The Goodwill Partnership on 0844 669 6148
or visit www.thegoodwillpartnership.co.uk**

Please sponsor our puppies

From only £5 a month

By sponsoring our puppies and young dogs you can make a real difference by helping to support their care and training which enables them to change and save lives.



For further information please contact Claire Akehurst

E: claire.akehurst@medicaldetectiondogs.org.uk T: 01243 839306

