

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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State Legislators Kick Off “Service Dog Awareness Week” Tuesday

State Representatives Margaret Ann Ruhl, Kristin Boggs, OOD to Join Pilot Dogs, Inc. for Demonstrations

(COLUMBUS, OH) – The last week of July marks the first annual “Service Dog Awareness Week” in Ohio, recognizing the important role service dogs play in helping their human partners with disability related limitations. Pilot Dogs, Inc. of Columbus, will host an awareness event Tuesday, July 26 at 10 a.m. with bill co-sponsor, Margaret Ann Ruhl (R-Mount Vernon) and representatives from the Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities, including Executive Director Kevin Miller. The media is invited to attend.

As part of the Service Dog Awareness Event, attendees will experience the opportunity to be led by service dogs while blindfolded.

On February 14, Governor Kasich signed House Bill 121 (Stinziano, Ruhl), that raises awareness of the services dogs provide their owners including detecting medical problems, assisting post-traumatic stress disorder patients, including enhancing mobility, increasing safety and assisting individuals in a workplace setting. These services allow more individuals with disabilities the ability to seek and maintain quality employment.

This year, Pilot Dogs, Inc. is joining OOD and Representatives Ruhl and Boggs in kicking off the inaugural week. “Service Dog Awareness Week is a great occasion to recognize the limitless benefits that service dogs provide to individuals with disabilities, said Director Kevin Miller, Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD). “These dogs loyally serve their owners and allow these individuals a type of lifestyle they may not be able to have without their uniquely trained service dog.”

“Service Dog Awareness Week recognizes the important role that service dogs play in enhancing the lives of citizens with disabilities across the State of Ohio,” Columbus City Council Member Michael Stinziano added. Stinziano was a co-sponsor of the bill when he served in the Ohio House.

“Service Dogs often remove the barriers individuals with disabilities have to seeking employment. Allowing these individuals not only an added sense of independence but the ability to work and have an increased quality of life,” Miller added. “It is important to take the time this week to recognize service dogs and the individuals who raise and train them for the contributions to the lives of those with disabilities.”

Pilot Dogs, Inc. was established in 1950 to train and furnish Pilot Dogs to guide individuals who are blind. Since its first class of four students, the program has grown to serve an average of 150 individuals each year. These individuals come to Pilot Dogs, Inc. from all over the United States, as well as many foreign countries. The original mission has not changed -- "To provide the finest of dog guides to the qualified sightless." Pilot Dogs are trained to offer greater mobility and independence.

"After 75 years, it is exciting to have Service Dog Awareness Week become law in Columbus. It will be a great refresher and awareness builder for the general public," said Jay Gray executive director of Pilot Dogs.

**Service Dog Awareness
Event
Tuesday, July 26, 2016
10 a.m.
Pilot Dogs, Inc.
625 W. Town Street
Columbus, OH 43215**