



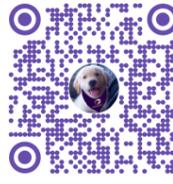
**Home of the
Assistance Dog Institute**
10201 Old Redwood Hwy
Penngrove, CA 94951
707-545-DOGS (3647)
www.BerginU.edu

Q4 2020

QUEST

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF BERGIN UNIVERSITY OF CANINE STUDIES

IN QUEST OF: The Beginning of the Service Dog



Want to Donate?
Scan here!

INSIDE:

- THE BEGINNING OF THE SERVICE DOG
- ANNUAL HALLOWEEN CONTEST
- ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT
- GIVINGTUESDAY



Photo of
Kerry and Abdul

Kerry Knaus died unexpectedly on Oct 26, 2020. Why does knowing this matter? Kerry is a historical figure, she and Golden-Lab cross, Abdul, were the first service dog team in the history of the world. Kerry was given numerous awards, featured in multiple articles and on TV shows. She was thanked by many celebratory figures including Sparky Schulz, Betty White, city, state and national politicians and most importantly, by those who followed the trail she set and were able to receive their own service dogs. A larger than life mural of Abdul in his blue and yellow backpack and Kerry in her power wheelchair were featured under a Santa Rosa 101 overpass, an iconic depiction of their partnership that I waved to each time I drove by.

In 1975, I was in a Master's class studying Early Childhood Education/Special Education at Sonoma State University when I had the epiphany that later became the service dog. I was a teacher, not a dog trainer, so I tried to find someone to take on this concept. Guide Dogs in San Rafael said no, it couldn't be done: the top trainers in Sonoma County said there was no way to do it. Everywhere I turned, I ran into a brick wall, 'til finally I called the Disabled Services Center. I was so used to hearing "no" that when a weak, relatively high-pitched, reedy voice answered the phone insisting that I first needed to explain my business to her before I could be transferred to the Director, I despondently did.

By that time I had a spiel down, "Individuals with disabilities partnered with dogs who would do tasks for them they couldn't do themselves." Expecting to be turned down in my quest to talk to the director, I instead heard, again in the reedy child-like voice, now with a degree of enthusiasm, "I'll do it!" Stunned, I agreed to meet with her, having no intention of being the trainer, but rather passing the idea on.

It turned out Kerry lived in a trailer park in Rohnert Park, minutes away from where Jim and I were living upon our return from our world travels interspersed with teaching in Australia and Turkey. My first surprise upon arriving at Kerry's address was a long ramp rather than the traditional stair. The next surprise was meeting Kerry herself. A tiny woman, not quite out of her teens, dressed in relaxed-fitting clothing, and enormous shoes compared to the rest of her body size. She was sitting in a strange-shaped wheelchair that I soon came to know as a power wheelchair.

Nineteen years of age all lived as a severe quadriplegic, with an unknown life expectancy, she persisted with next-to-no strength in her very thin arms and bony but beautiful hands.

Her neck muscles were virtually non-existent such that if her head fell forward, someone had to lift her head to rest it upright on her neck, not, as I came to know, an unusual need because she often drove that power wheelchair fast, and if she braked quickly, her chin would indeed end up resting against her chest until someone lifted it up onto her neck, a task I became quite familiar with.

Her face was arresting. Saucer shaped large brown eyes set in a heart-shaped face rimmed by shimmering long brown hair. And while I don't remember the mouth, I do remember the frequent smile and gentle demeanor. People liked her, I liked her and Abdul loved her. She was worth it.

That first day we immediately launched into conversation and to this day I am unsure who took the lead. A weak respiratory system contributed to that weak child-like voice which my awareness of was soon lost to the dynamics of our conversation. My questions as to how she thought a dog could help her produced a litany of possibilities that are now standard usage for service dogs throughout the world. Despite her physical limitations, Kerry was one of the most compassionately powerful people I've ever known, confident in who she was, what she could and couldn't do, and very skilled at directing other people to do things for her such that they were always willing and never offended. I became one of those people.

As Kerry continued brainstorming about what a service dog could do for her, I had the confirmation I needed that this epiphany I'd had could really make a difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities. I also found myself accepting the probability that if it were ever to come to fruition, I would have to do it myself, knowledge or lack thereof, shaping my destiny as well as Kerry's. As her list grew, and more importantly, her rationale behind the need for those tasks I found myself mesmerized. She listed no needs unique to her disability, just everyday needs we all have, that she simply did not have the physical capability of doing for herself.

I learned that she had twenty-four hour attendant care to help dress, toilet, feed, and shop for her. Her clothes were loose-fitting so as to make toileting easier, her - what I thought were unwieldy shoes - ensured she did not turn an ankle or sprain a toe. She was bathed in her bed, fed in her wheelchair, and turned over regularly through the night so as to prevent bedsores.

So why did she want a service dog? Because, she said, currently she could never be alone. Someone was with her or near her all the time or only gone for a short time. And she wanted the independence to do some things herself, or with the help of a dog. She didn't like having to call on her attendant to pick up the TV remote each time she dropped it, which was often. Her constant need for help for this or that not only accentuated her dependence on others, but limited what she could do, since she often would have to "wait" for the people she needed help from, for them to finish a task they were involved with, before they freed themselves to come help her with her needs.

For Kerry, critical tasks like retrieving something she dropped, were immediate needs but seen as mundane tasks by her attendants. Putting her shoe back on the wheelchair foot pedal were not an emergency for the attendant but limited Kerry's ability to drive forward. And her dependence on her State low-paid attendants did not allow her to demand quicker responses from them, or to be insistent about her needs because they could quit, leaving her completely helpless, unable to even call for help. The year, 1975, did not even have cell phones, let alone the immediacy of technological communications we have in 2020. Kerry's revelations spelled out her need for a service dog, and my realization of the many other individuals with disabilities having similar needs grew.

That same year, by chance, Jim and I had just whelped a litter of cross-bred Golden-Lab pups. So Kerry and I talked about her raising one of the pups so he would grow up bonded to her, be more savvy regarding her abilities and disabilities, and fit into her lifestyle.

She felt that her attendant would love to have a pup join her household and the housebreaking and feeding issues could be solved. She named this pup Abdul and it is almost as if they grew up together.

However, when Abdul outgrew his cute puppy stage she asked that I take him back for a time to do more formal training. Her attendant was not enjoying him anymore. During his time with her he had learned some problematic behaviors like running out the door, trying to eat from the table and other habits many pet dogs develop. Based on Kerry's experiences, it became clear to me that maybe it would be best to train the dog first, then place it as a service dog - an experience that soon became policy.

Kerry wanted simple things. She worried that one of those times her attendant went shopping, the house might catch fire and she had no way out. She asked if we could train Abdul to tug the door open. That command became *tug*. She also wanted Abdul to tug open the refrigerator door and bring her a sack lunch prepared by her attendant. Her power wheelchair had a small piece of plywood attached to both armrests that served as a small table to eat from or to set things on she needed throughout the day. Her question was could Abdul tug open the refrigerator door and get a brown bag from a shelf and bring it to her. She had just enough physical ability to open the brown bag and take out a sandwich without needing the attendant to feed her. Independence!

She said she hated it when the attendant left to shop in early evening but got home after dark. She did not like to sit in the dark waiting for her attendant to return. So could Abdul turn lights on? The command became *light*. But what if she was lying in bed and wanted Abdul to go to the switch and turn off the light? That command became *switch*. As a quad, people would come up and gently put their arms around her shoulders to give her a hug. No full-body hugs. Since her physical limitations made it impossible for her to reach down to pet Abdul, we taught him to put his front feet and chest on her lap so she could pet him. This became the command *lap*. But to further that contact to one of fuller front body contact, the *snuggle* command was created. Abdul would first do a lap, then rest his head gently in the curve of her shoulder bringing his upper body in contact with her chest and the side of her head, warming both.

Retrieving was hugely important for Kerry. She also wanted Abdul to retrieve and set the item on her lap so she could slide her hands down her lap to get to the item and actually get ahold of it. That became first *get it, bring it, here*, then *visit* which meant to rest his chin on her thigh, then, *give*. Over time Abdul no longer needed the series of commands, having learned Kerry's needs well enough to respond to fewer directions.

Kerry had a van with a lift that her attendant would drive her places in, so another issue that cropped up was about going shopping. The command to get Abdul in the van, became *car*. In the store or mall with Abdul, Kerry wanted to shop without an attendant.

Despite the fact that the concept of the service dog was unknown, Kerry was so obviously disabled and Abdul so well behaved, Sonoma County proprietors said nothing when she entered and shopped or ate in their establishments.

By the same token, Kerry reveled in the sense of independence going into stores with Abdul by her side gave her. When she did find something she wanted to buy, a clerk would bring it up to the checkout counter, and Kerry would have Abdul take her credit card or money, who was then commanded to *up* and *give* it to the clerk. The clerk would then package the item including the change or credit card, and Abdul was once again told to *up* only this time to get it and off. Abdul would then carry the item through the store or mall for Kerry when told to hold. Ironically over all these intervening years we've never changed that command although I think a better word for it would be *carry* since all the commands were developed from the very beginning to be words that represented that tasks that were being asked of the dog, thus easy to remember and utilize. *Hold*, taken from obedience dog lingo has for over 40 years been a confusing word for our clients to learn.

Kerry's contribution to the service dog concept is immeasurable. The list of tasks she wanted Abdul to do for her expanded well beyond the training any working dog had ever been required to do. And his vocabulary grew daily along with the motor skills she needed to him to do. As his cognitive capabilities grew, their teamwork intensified, and their trust in each other soared to heights few have experienced with a dog. An exchange of looks, glances, abbreviated words, minimal body language cues became the transmission that ran their mutual communication engine.

Looking back, I am amazed at how much Abdul taught Kerry and me by being such a willing and cooperative worker. His devotion to her was complete. Most of the tasks she asked for and Abdul proved could be done continue to be expanded upon and refined by newer service dog teams. The one thing Kerry couldn't do that others following in her footsteps could, was switching to a manual wheelchair that Abdul pulled, although we even tried that. Visiting various countries of the world and seeing service dogs at work has been mind-blowing for me, especially since most use the commands being used are those Kerry first asked for, and irrespective of the country, the commands are often being given in English.

I truly don't know if being "confined" (an unacceptable term) to a wheelchair gave Kerry the opportunity to develop extra-sensory perceptions, but I do know that she saw things, knew things, was aware of things, that people living physically-busy lives didn't, me amongst them. Spring was her favorite time of year because she could sit and enjoy the smells, sights and sounds of nature giving birth to its seasonal beauty. As she lay in her room unable to use her wheelchair those last days, her family and attendant grew a window garden for her to revel in.

In her honor, the University is creating a sensory garden named appropriately "Kerry and Abdul's Sensory Garden" to keep their memory alive, while providing a place for our clients, pups and dogs, faculty, volunteers, visitors and staff to enjoy the peace and serenity Kerry and Abdul shared sitting together experiencing nature at its best.

To this day, I don't know if she and Abdul hadn't been successful, would I have continued on or would I have let my vision, my passion, die a slow death like so many of us do. What I do know is that Kerry and Abdul were pioneers, wading through the unknown, seeking solutions that opened an entire new world for individuals with disabilities.

Swit

Photo of Kerry and Abdul



BERGIN UNIVERSITY of CANINE STUDIES HALLOWEEN COSTUME CONTEST 2020

Our judges this year...



John Dell'Osso
Former Mayor of Cotati



Erin Armstrong
President of Cotati Chamber of Commerce



Lorette Swit
Former actress on TV show M*A*S*H



Dave Phillips
Board Chair of Bergin University

A virtual Halloween contest was hosted this year that involved the entire community and BUCS social media followers. On a typical year, students will dress up their assigned Bergin dog for Halloween, followed by prizes and a parade on campus. This year, due to students learning virtually, staff hosted the event online. Anyone and everyone was welcomed and encouraged to enter, and it was a great success. Thank you to everyone who participated, as well as the judges who dedicated their time to choose the winners!





ALUMNI spotlight

-JENNIFER BARNHARD-

While riding my horse Maverick and listening to veterinary school lectures, with my service dogs in tow, I received a phone call from the infamous Dr. Bonnie Bergin. As a fellow master of multitasking, Bonnie was personally checking in on alumni, and asked if I would share how Bergin University fits into my, Jennifer Barnhard's, story.



Top photo: Jenny riding Maverick on the edge of a hay field during sunset followed by SD Spock and SDiT Tiberius. Lower photos from left to right are Spock running behind Jenny, Jenny galloping Maverick, and Tiberius running behind Jenny. Both dogs are off leash and having the time of their lives.

Just three years ago I remember visiting Bergin University with my friend Ashley Tringali, the Chief Operating Officer of Starfleet Service Dogs, Inc (SSDI), a non-profit that I founded in 2016. Ashley and I were both UC Davis undergraduates at the time and had no idea what to expect. However, very soon we had accepted Master's admissions in our hands and visions of the future in our minds.

I have always had monumental aspirations for the future. One of which is running a training, rehabilitation, and research practice for performance animals- humans, canines, and equines alike. If you ask me whether or not I currently have all of the knowledge and skills to execute this plan, the answer is not yet. But, it is the connections and integrations of various life experiences that will bring it to fruition. The day Ashley and I visited the campus and staff of Bergin University, I knew that they needed to be included in my plan. Dr. Bonnie Bergin recognizes, defines, and solves problems in a very unique way. The woman does not do anything unexceptional or small-scale and neither do I.

In 2017, I started my Master's of Science in Human and Canine Life Sciences. It was apparent that Bergin University mirrors everything I want to do with my future veterinary practice. They assemble a group of the world's experts in their respective fields to give students the tools to realize their own dreams. My courses were delivered as interactive discussions and hands on training, where I learned to integrate the perspectives of all stakeholders in any given situation. Bergin's courses accurately reflect the interconnected nature of understanding high-level problems. And, how in order to create meaningful change within a larger system, you must first become cognizant of each of its moving parts.



From left to right: Spock and Jenny on a cruise, Spock on a hike in the UK, Spock preparing for a boat trip, and Spock retrieving an Epi Pen.

Now let's go back to my phone call with Bonnie on the back of my horse Maverick. Bonnie was eager to hear about my most recent endeavor, attending the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) in London, England with my assistance/service dog, Spock, while continuing to run SSDI with Ashley from 6000 miles away and fellow Bergin University Master of Science alum Jaimie Bennett from 3000 miles away. I shared with her that with my Master of Science degree, not only was I able to accelerate my veterinary degree at RVC, by entering as a second year vet student, but I was also given the opportunity to teach my peers about working dogs, canine cognition, and dog training within a veterinary practice - subjects often omitted from traditional veterinary curricula.



From left to right: Jenny and Spock practicing with Jaimie and her service dog in training (SDiT) Jemma followed by Ashley and SDiT Tiberius next to Spock and Jenny.

On a more personal note, successfully completing my degrees from UC Davis and Bergin University with Spock, gave enough of a precedent that the United Kingdom now has their first ever veterinary student with an assistance dog that will be completing their degree alongside them. It is thanks to Bonnie's initial creation of the service dog as we know it, that I was even allowed to pursue higher education with my disability.

It is because of Bonnie that I was able to meet Bonnie as a Master's student at Bergin University. It is because of Bonnie that I am currently pursuing my dreams as a veterinary student at RVC, CEO of Starfleet Service Dogs, Inc, and future pioneer of the working dog behavior and rehabilitation center (BARC)! Thank you to Bonnie and Bergin University for the influence you have already had in my life and I cannot wait to see what the future holds in our joint efforts.



A selection of Starfleet Service Dog Inc.'s service dogs: Princess Leia, Hodor, Jedi, Bark Obama, and Enterprise.



From left to right: Jenny and Spock graduate UC Davis earning a B.S. Neurobiology, Physiology & Behavior and a B.S. Animal Science in 2017, followed by Bergin University earning a M.S. Human and Canine Life Sciences 2019, a current photo of them at the Royal Veterinary College representing the class of 2023 Graduate Accelerated BVetMed.

GIVING TUESDAY

Follow us!

It's that time of year again!

GivingTuesday was created in 2012 as a simple idea: a day that encourages people to do good. Over the past 8 years, this idea has grown into a year-round global movement that inspires hundreds of millions of people to give, collaborate, and celebrate generosity.

We are proud to be a part of this day that brings a sense of connection and makes our communities stronger together! Volunteering our time or skills, monetary donations, and gift donations are all ways we can give this GivingTuesday.

This year we are taking a different approach to GivingTuesday. Our goal is to raise \$54,500 to build Kerry & Abdul's Sensory Garden on our new campus. All donations restricted for this purpose will be going to the building of this garden.

The design of this garden will include things that stimulate our six senses: Statues, swings, slides, flowering plants, mint, cilantro, fruit and flowering trees, differing surfaces, wind chimes, water falls, fountains, plants that attract birds, bales of hay, stairs, grates, culverts and moving wiggly objects.

This is intended to be a place Kerry and Abdul would have appreciated watching our clients, pups and dogs, faculty, volunteers, visitors and staff interact with the poetry of life, sharing sensory experiences, or relaxing in the peace and serenity of nature.

 www.instagram.com/BerginUniversity

 www.facebook.com/BerginU



➔ Ways to donate:

- Scan the QR code on the front page of this newsletter
- Use the envelope included in this newsletter
- Click the "donate" button in the link in our Instagram bio
- Click the "donate" button on our website at www.BerginU.edu

➔ Our Sensory Garden vision board...





**Home of the
Assistance Dog Institute**
10201 Old Redwood Hwy
Penngrove, CA 94951
707-545-DOGS (3647)
www.BerginU.edu

Staff (alphabetically):
 Bonita M. Bergin, EdD -- President/CEO
 Devan Amundson -- Dog Kennel Manager
 Carol Bracco -- Receptionist
 Emma Coenen -- Inmate & Development Program Manager
 Denise Gregersen -- Registrar/Chief Operating Officer
 Rachel Hanson -- Staff Accountant
 Eric Jensen -- Facilities Manager
 Shinya Kawasaki -- Breeding and Early Puppyhood Education Manager
 Jennifer Longman -- Vet Care Assistant
 Rebecca Richardson -- Chief Academic Officer
 Sherri Rieck -- Campus Operations Manager
 Molly Rodgers -- Student Services Administrative Assistant
 Connie Van Guilder -- Director of Admission Services

Faculty: Listed on our website, address above

Board of Trustees:
 Dave Phillips -- Chair
 Mark Quattrocchi -- Secretary/Treasurer
 Bonita Bergin -- Member/President
 Ricky Dukes -- Member
 Roy Hurd -- Member
 Rob Rutherford -- Member
 Clem Carinalli -- Member

Newsletter Editor -- Emma Coenen
 Photo Credits -- Sherri Rieck



