

KSDS Puppy, Éclair, Headed to Ireland this Summer

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KSDS Assistance Dogs, Inc. (KSDS) is excited to share that Éclair, a puppy from their Doughnut Litter born March 14, 2021, will be traveling to Ireland later this summer! Éclair is the first puppy that KSDS will be sending “across the pond” as a member of Assistance Dogs International’s International Breeding Cooperative (IBC). KSDS has been a member of Assistance Dogs International and their North American Breeding Cooperative (ABC) since 2003 but was recently selected as one of only seven assistance dog facilities in North America to send a puppy to Europe. In exchange, KSDS will receive a puppy credit from a yet to be determined European assistance dog facility. The credit will be used in the future to further diversify KSDS’ bloodlines and improve the genetic dispositions of their assistance dog placements.

KSDS Assistance Dogs, Inc. is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization located in Washington, KS that provides professionally trained guide, service, and facility dogs for people in need of a canine partner to enhance their independence, to fully function in society, and/or to enrich their professional career responsibilities with the ongoing support of KSDS trainers to ensure proficient working partnerships. Guide dogs provide independence to individuals with visual impairments or blindness by detecting overhangs, navigating city streets, knowing left from right, and identifying obstacles. Service dogs assist those with mobility related disabilities by retrieving dropped items, opening handicap accessible doors, bracing, and pulling manual wheelchairs. Facility dogs work alongside professionals in the fields of education, counseling, and other specialty services to enhance their connection with their students/clients. All KSDS assistance dogs are given to their clients free of charge thanks to generous donations from the national, state, and local communities. No federal funding is ever received by the organization.

Beginning in 1987, 4-H dog project members from Cloud, Riley, and Washington counties began serving as puppy raisers for organizations in Ohio and California. These 4-H members discovered very few assistance dog placements were made in the Midwest. They wanted to see dogs placed in Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri, and other surrounding states. In 1990, the families involved began the process of starting an assistance dog training school to serve the citizens of the region. KSDS began with *a one-time only* \$500,000 grant from the Kansas Department of Rehabilitation Services and opened their doors on Sept. 1, 1990. Over the past thirty-one years, they have placed 607 teams in 36 states; however, they could not have gotten there alone.

KSDS has benefited from long-term partnerships with Hill’s Pet Nutrition, Boehringer Ingelheim, and Topeka Correctional Facility. Hill’s Pet Nutrition has provided food for KSDS dogs since 1995, while Boehringer Ingelheim has given Frontline and HeartGard to KSDS working dogs since XXXX. KSDS has also continuously had dogs at Topeka Correctional Facility since 1996, except for the last year due to Covid-19. The partnership began with inmates serving as puppy raisers but has since grown to include intermediate training of various KSDS assistance dogs. KSDS has also developed partnerships with Ceva Animal Health, LLC (ADAPTIL Calming Collars), Kansas Lions Clubs (scholarships/donations), Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation (team sponsorships), the Veterinary Health Center at Kansas State University (discounted health

clearances), and Zoetis (Revolution – flea/tick protection). Most importantly, KSDS has benefited from the help of hundreds of volunteers nationwide, many of whom have served as puppy raisers for multiple KSDS dogs.

Puppy raisers are a special group of volunteers who are responsible for taking an eight-week-old puppy into their home and giving it an appropriate upbringing. They teach the puppy basic obedience, leash training, public manners, and socialize it in a variety of environments. At approximately four months, the puppy receives a KSDS “assistance dog in training” cape to wear while in public. Depending on the state’s law, the puppy will have varying public access. When the puppy reaches an appropriate age (varying from 16-20 months), it will be returned to KSDS to begin formal training to become a guide, service, or facility dog. Puppy raisers are special people who put other’s needs before their own and have a deep love for people and animals. Whether the dog is with their puppy raiser for a few weeks, as will be the case with Éclair before she heads to Europe or for the full 20 months, the bond they form with their partner is incredible. To celebrate the bond, puppy raisers are given the opportunity to meet the graduate with whom the dog is partnered. They are also given the privilege of presenting the new team to the public at graduation. Although puppy raising can be hard from time-to-time, the reward of knowing you played a part in changing someone’s life for the better is incredible! For more information on becoming a puppy raiser, please visit www.ksds.org/dogs/puppy-raisers or email ksdspuppyraisers@gmail.com.

Even if you are not interested in being a puppy raiser, there are other ways to support KSDS. The most direct is via financial contributions. KSDS accepts donations on their website, www.ksds.org, by ACH, or via cash/check mailed to 120 W 7th St. Washington, KS 66968. If you are truly moved, we are also willing to discuss estate planning and other large-scale donations with you over the phone or in-person. Giving what you are able helps KSDS to continue placing assistance dogs and changing lives one dog at a time.

For more information about KSDS, please call (785) 325 – 2256, email ksds@ksds.org, or visit their website, www.ksds.org.