

# Four Paws for Silence: How Mari II Makes an Invisible Disability Visible

Greeting, humans!



Lions Club -2026 District  
24-L Fall Conference  
September 19, 2026  
Jim Purton  
Irene Schmalz



**Star Trek opening  
mission statement,  
"To go boldly where  
no one has gone  
before."**





# Wendell's Impact



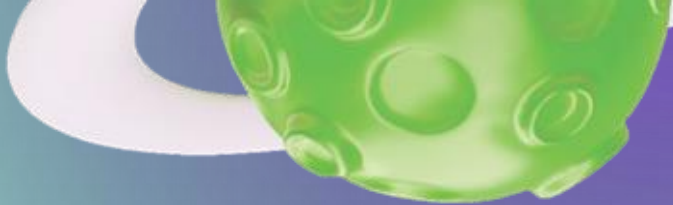
Hearing Dog Wendel's Impact |  
Canine Companions



Finally, I got Wendel. So, he's the perfect one for me.

Wow!





THE SILENT EXCEPTION: BEING THE  
THIRD CHILD, THE ONLY ONE WHO  
COULDN'T HEAR - THOUGH MY  
MOTHER DIDN'T KNOW IT YET  
WHEN THIS PICTURE WAS TAKEN.





(Harold Whittles - a 5 year old boy profoundly deaf reaction when fitted for the first time with a hearing aid in 1974).

<https://rarehistoricalphotos.com/harold-whittles-hearing-sound-first-time-1974/>



SCHOOL NO. 4, MADISON AVE 1931



Public School 4 in Albany where I learned to talk.



# Meet and Greet Fredericksburg, VA



**A long anxious  
wait for the  
magical email  
to come  
through...**





# Canine Companions Training Center Southeast Campus



Peering into each  
crate, thinking  
which dog will be  
mine?



**Now, which dog  
would be a good fit?**



*Which one?*



# Match Day! Mari II



# Mari II Hearing Service Dog





**Learning to  
work with Mari  
at Lowe's**



**What can Mari do  
today?**



# Graduation Day!



Graduation Day (November 21, 2024) at Southeast Canine Companion center, Orlando Florida.  
Five hearing service dogs graduated on that day!

# Recent trip to the Canadian Rockies





# White Water Rafting



# Interactive Group Challenge

**The Scenario:** Imagine you owned this white-water rafting company. I arrived with my service dog and am deaf without my cochlear implants.

**Your Task:** Brainstorm three practical accommodations to ensure this trip is safe, thrilling, and inclusive.

**Discuss:** Brainstorm with your immediate tablemate. You have three minutes to discuss.

**Share:** Be ready to pitch your best idea to the room when three minutes are up!



“Let’s see what is  
out there.”

