

Mission Statement: Dogs For Life, Inc. is a non-profit organization devoted to improving the quality of life for veterans and other individuals in need through training hearing and service dogs, providing therapy dogs for first responders and school resource programs, and owning an off-leash dog park.

PRINTS

Vol. 26 / Issue 2 / Fall 2025

Phil Tettleton DFL Director, Client, and Volunteer

September 26, 1964 - May 5, 2025



Phil, his wife Kat, and service dog Sully at DFL's 2025 Patriots For Puppies gala

Board of **Directors**

Eddie Boatwright, President
Michelle Dale, Vice-President
Kathi G. Schumann, Treasurer
Shelly Ferger, Founder & Secretary
Linda Barberi, Volunteer Coordinator
Steve Defren, USA
Rick Lewis, USN
Terry Treat, USA

Staff

Shelly Ferger, CEO & Director of Training Ann Nolan, Administrative Assistant Laurie Bridges, Office Assistant Chris Consi, Finance Manager Harry Taylor, Maintenance Manager Michael Wright, USA, RSCWI / MCAP

Service Dog Trainers

Shelly Ferger Marcia Adache



DFL service pups in training, Gage and Genie, enjoy some free time.

Coming in 2026!





Eddie Boatwright and service dog Rosie the Riveter

From the President

Many of you have supported our "Invest in DFL's Journey" campaign. On behalf of the entire Board and all of us at DFL, I express our sincere thanks.

Your generous donations fund key programs that save clients' lives. Your past gifts have trained and certified 229 Hearing and Service Dog Teams, and brought 2-3 service dog puppies into our program annually.

Did you know the average working life of a service dog is only 10 years? Currently, we are focused on how to best position DFL to provide replacement service dogs to our clients once their dogs reach retirement age.

Recently, the Board expanded the "Invest in DFL's Journey" campaign by instituting a new recurring giving opportunity called "The Sustaining Journey Circle." This initiative makes it easier than ever for you to make a recurring gift to DFL through our website at www.dogsforlifevb.org. Support from The Sustaining Journey Circle will allow us to worry less about monthly cash flow and focus more on providing life-saving programs for our clients.

Thank you, as always, for investing in DFL's journey and sustaining our mission.

DFL's Sustaining Journey Circle

"Every dollar counts and collectively goes toward saving a hero's life with the love and comfort of a service dog." Visit www.dogsforlifevb.org to learn more.

What's New?

Dogs for Life is pleased to announce that Steve Defren (USA) and Terry Treat (USA) have joined the DFL Board. Our new directors bring expertise from their former careers and have a close connection to military and veteran causes.

Both Steve and Terry are U.S. Army veterans. Steve began his career as an Optician; after several years he founded a wholesale optical supply company that he operated for 30 years before retirement. He also volunteers his time at the Victory Center Military Store. Terry is a retired Independent Financial Services Professional and past president of the Indian River Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). Please extend a warm welcome to Steve and Terry!

Remembering Phil (September 26, 1964 - May 5, 2025)

With heavy hearts we remember our friend, Philip Tettleton, Dogs For Life Board member, volunteer, and client, who passed away on May 5, 2025.

Phil came to DFL after he and his wife Kat retired to Vero Beach. Needing a service animal to assist with his disability, Phil applied and was accepted into DFL's service dog training program. He was paired with Sully's Silver Star, a smart, outgoing yellow Lab with whom he immediately bonded.

Sully was a perfect match for Phil, and they became inseparable. Over the years, Phil and Sully gave back to DFL in many ways. They spent time with service members, veterans, and first responders; they visited fire halls and police stations to provide comfort to those on the front lines. Phil and Sully were ever-present at DFL events, and attended many other fundraisers to bring awareness to the need for service animals and the special assistance they provide our service members.

Phil even trained some of DFL's newest puppies, teaching them the basic skills needed to eventually become a successful service dog like Sully. Phil was honored as DFL Volunteer of the Year in recognition of his commitment to the organization. He became a DFL Board member in 2024.



Phil and his service dog, Sully's Silver Star

"We all miss Phil terribly," said Shelly Ferger, DFL Founder and CEO. "He was involved in all of our programs and virtually every aspect of our organization, from serving on the Board, to training our service puppies, to helping out with the Dog Park. Phil gave so much of himself, and we will always feel his presence at DFL. Our

Phil teaches a service pup to "stay."

hearts go out to his wife, Kat, and all of his family and friends. Phil touched every one of us in the DFL community, and not a day goes by that we don't think of him."





Phil and Sully demonstrate the command "lap."

American Gold Star Mother News

Michelle Dale, President

American Gold Star Mothers of Indian River County



The Gold Star Mothers of Indian River County have been busy, as usual, helping veterans and their causes which in turn helps us cope with our loss.

We keep in touch with the Veteran groups in our county by attending services within each group, whether it is with the American Legion Post 39 in Vero Beach or American Legion Post 189 and the VFW 10210 in Sebastian. We also attend services on Memorial Day honoring and remembering our fallen heroes, and on Veterans Day, honoring all who served in the Armed Forces of the United States. Services are held at both Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary in Vero Beach and Veterans Memorial Park in Sebastian. Sometimes I make a point to attend in both places!

Last September the American Legion Post 189 dedicated a Gold Star Monument in their Veterans Memorial Park where all Gold Stars can go to remember their loved ones who lost their lives in service to our country, especially on Memorial Day and Gold Star Mothers and Family Day, which is on the last Sunday in September. This past year we honored 3 WWII Veterans - Harold Granitur, Clarence Korker, and Dallas Stevens - who turned 100 in March by sponsoring a 100th birthday party and "drive by" at the American Legion Post 39 in Vero Beach.

PTSD Sessions in IRC

Monday Night: Coed Veteran & First Responder Support Group Session at Dogs For Life, 1230 16th Ave, Vero Beach 6-7 PM (Facilitators: Tom Metzinger & Michael Wright)

Tuesday Night: Female Only Veteran & First Responders Curriculum Based Support Group Sessions Collaborated by The Next Generation Veterans of IRC at Voices for Veterans, 1956 41st Ave, Suite C, Vero Beach,1st, 3rd, & 5th Tuesday 6-7 PM

(Facilitator: Paula Robinson)

Wednesday Night: Coed Veteran Support Group Session at MHA Drop-In Center, 2183 Ponce De Leon Circle, Vero Beach 6-8 PM (Facilitator: Michael Wright)

Thursday Night: Coed Veteran & First Responder Curriculum Based Support Group Session Collaborated by The Next Generation Veterans of IRC and Emerald Medical at IRSC Schumann Center (Bldg D) 6155 College Lane, Vero Beach 7-8 PM (Facilitator: Kris Hasenauer)

Thursday Night: Spousal Veteran & First Responder Support Group at St. Elizabeth Church, 901 Clearmont St, Sebastian,

(Facilitator: Laura Saputo)

• All Sessions are Facilitated by Veterans and Peers.

1st Thursday 5:30-6:30 PM



ircgoldstarmoms.org

I also attended the 101st birthday party for WWII Veteran Bill Keegan at Portside Pub and Grill in Sebastian. A good time was had at all of the parties. One thing is for sure: The WWII Veterans like to attend parties!

Our 7th Annual Walk-A-Thon for Military/Veteran Suicide Awareness and Veteran Resource Expo is being held at Riverside Park's Grand Pavilion on November 2nd this year. We're praying for good weather; last year we had to do our event virtually due to tornado debris being stored at the Grand Pavilion.

Thankfully, all sponsors and donors continued to support us and made it another good year for funding our sessions at DFL, MHA, and with Next Generation Veterans of IRC. These sessions are helping our veterans struggling with service-related PTSD. We will be very busy the next few months seeking sponsors, donors, and walkers for our annual Walk-A-Thon.

Twenty-two Veterans dying by suicide every day is something our Gold Stars want to help eliminate. Please make plans to join us in support of our IRC Veterans struggling with service-related PTSD on November 2nd at Riverside Park in Vero Beach.

Celebrating the Success and Impact of the PAWS Pilot Program

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Jade Garneau-Fournier, Ph.D., PAWS Psychologist

Center for Development and Civic Engagement, West Palm Beach VA Healthcare System



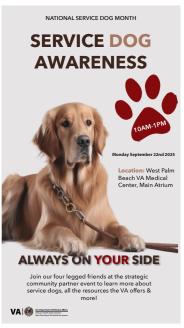
The 5-year Puppies Assisting Wounded Service Members (PAWS) Pilot Program is now in its fourth year with 12 cohorts and more than 60 Veterans having successfully completed the program. Graduates of PAWS have described their experience as "lifechanging," and have praised the quality of information received as "impeccable."

Many participants have shared positive testimonials, emphasizing key lessons learned through the program, such as hope, patience, consistency, and companionship. As one graduate eloquently put it, "You can teach an old dog and a Veteran new tricks!"

One standout story is that of a retired U.S. Army Sergeant First Class Chaplain Brad C. Turner Jr. Through PAWS, Chaplain Turner gained invaluable knowledge about service dogs and had the opportunity for hands-on experience with Dogs For Life's service dogs in training.

Initially motivated by curiosity, he emerged from the program with a renewed sense of motivation and purpose. Inspired by his own transformative experience, Chaplain Turner launched the Building Awareness and Resilience through Canines (BARC) program at the Miami VA. BARC aims to provide dog education, acquisition, training, and certification to Veterans residing in South Florida. Chaplain Turner's dedication and innovation underscore the profound impact that service dogs can have on Veterans' lives.

In celebration of these achievements and to further promote the benefits of service dogs, the West Palm Beach VA is thrilled to announce the 3rd Annual Service Dog Awareness Event on Monday, September 22, 2025, at the Thomas H. Corey VA Medical Center.



DFL took part in the 3rd Annual Service Dog Awareness Event.

This event will offer Veterans and the community the opportunity to learn about and connect with local service dog organizations, including Dogs For Life. Attendees will have the chance to interact with service dogs, hear success stories, and learn about ways to get involved with the service dog training community. Together, we can continue to build awareness and support for the incredible work dogs provide to Veterans.



Cohort 12 graduates pose with DFL representatives.

Service Dog Re-Certifications

DFL annually re-certifies every one of our service dog teams. As part of our Assistance Dogs International (ADI) Accreditation, owner and service dog must be performing their required obedience and task work to maintain a certified status.

Class of 2015

Wanda Haaland and Lola

Class of 2017

Mark Poziomek and Ranger

Class of 2018

Richie Keller (USMC) and Gigi Judith Ricard and Fitz Judy Schmidt (USAF) and Bentley

Class of 2019

Sue Bergmann and Spencer Michael Bores (USA) and Bandit Kelly Colmey and Joey Barbara Gormas and Lola

Class of 2020

Tammie Mandeville and Poppy Kimberley Mann (USN) and Elvis Elizabeth McGoldrick and Oliver Earl Tindol (USAR) and Arrow Claude Vitali (USMC) and Beebe Jessica Walls and Honey

Class of 2021

Dani Ley and Ollie Sean Timberlake (USA) and Judy

Class of 2022

Christopher Adams (USN) and Dozer Andy Beebe (USAF) and Truffle Marisel Munoz Febo (USAF) and Honcho Julie Ann Rollins and Dottie Beth Stryker and Grady

Class of 2023

Tim Barnes (First Responder) and Gypsy Sally Bricker and Nick Steve Defren (USA) and Rosie Ingrid Hernandez (USA) and Chance Jim Hyde (USN, First Responder) and Otis Michele Laibe and Lua Sarah Lang and Bradley Howard Teich (USA) and Tucker

Class of 2024

Robyn Candarini and Spirit (IRCSO Therapy Dog) Guillermo Contreras and Whiskey Kisha Ford Torres (USA) and Kolumbo Joan Freeman and Minnie Ron Garrison and Buddy (IRCSO Therapy Dog) Kymberlee Mitala and Chocolate Laurie Turner (USMC) and Marley

Class of 2025

Mark Birtel (USN, First Responder) and Chip Bob Cheshire (USN) and Dallas Star Feustel and Zephyrh Steve Flynn (USA) and Rigby David Reese and Tilly Juan Soto (USA) and Antonella Carol Trotta and Max



ADI accreditation allows DFL Certified Service Dog Teams such as Guillermo Contreras and Whiskey to fly internationally. They recently visited Italy and France, and even ventured north of the Arctic Circle to Kiruna Airport in Sweden.

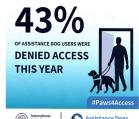
Guillermo and Whiskey Travel the World!





International Assistance Dog Week: Paws 4 Access Event





At a special event held on August 8th at the Dogs For Life training center, DFL celebrated both International Assistance Dog Week (August 7-13) and the birthday of DFL benefactor and Board Treasurer, Kathi G. Schumann (pictured above with her dog, Lady Bentley). The event promoted Assistance Dogs International's PAWS 4 Access campaign, which aims to bring awareness to the public access challenges often faced by service dog teams

According to the Paws For Access Report on Assistance Dog Rights, which looked at real-world experiences of over 1,000 assistance dog handlers across 20 countries, too many service dog users face discrimination, denial of access, and emotional harm, despite laws meant to protect them. The report recommended a five-point action plan to help change public attitudes and behavior based on better education; stronger and more standardized regulations; improved identification of assistance dogs; training for small business owners; and legal reform.

Instead of focusing only on the negative, DFL recognized a number of local businesses that understand the law and welcome our service dog teams at their establishments. Service dog users in attendance gave testimonials about their positive experiences with businesses in our community. The event concluded with cake and cupcakes in honor of Mrs. Schumann.

In Memory of Marilyn J. Cance



marnyn J. Cance



Marilyn's dog, Fashion.

Marilyn J. Cance passed away In Vero Beach on September 11, 2025. Marilyn was born and grew up in Belmont, Iowa. After attending school in Nebraska, she was hired by Pan American World Airlines and moved to New York City. She worked for Pan American for 30 years in administration, and flew as a stewardess for 2 years after moving to Vero Beach. She joined World Wings International, a worldwide organization of previous Pan Am flight attendants, of which she was a member until her passing.

Marilyn met her husband Don in New York City. They were married for 47 years before he passed. During their marriage, they enjoyed traveling, playing tennis at the West Side Tennis Club in New York, and racing sailboats on the Long Island Sound. Marilyn and Don moved to Wellington, Florida for 11 years, then moved to Vero Beach. They were members of the Orchid Island Golf and Beach Club for 16 years. Marilyn survived breast cancer a year after Don's passing. After Don died, she played a lot of bridge. She became a Bronze Life Master and also continued her love of travel to East and South Africa, Myanmar, Europe, and Canada, and enjoyed many bridge cruises.

Dogs were always a part of Marilyn's life. Her last dog was named Fashion and they went everywhere together. Marilyn took up croquet in 2020 and Fashion would come to watch her play. Marilyn's last move was to ACTs Indian River Estates. She will be missed by all the wonderful friends she made, including those of us at Dogs For Life.



New service pup in training, Gage, is all smiles.

Meet Gage!

Dogs For Life is excited to introduce our newest service pup in training - Gage! A perky, caramel-colored Lab-Golden mix, Gage comes from Ears, Eyes, Nose and Paws (EENP), an Assistance Dogs International (ADI)-accredited nonprofit located in North Carolina.

Both DFL and EENP are members of ADI. DFL's membership qualifies it to be a member of ADI's Breeding Cooperative, through which DFL typically receives 1-3 donated puppies annually from other ADI members with breeding programs, such as EENP.

ADI's partnership program with American Airlines, Puppies in Flight (PIF), is the means by which service puppies typically travel between ADI member organizations.

Diane Hurst, an employee of American Airlines, volunteered to transport Gage from North Carolina to Florida via PIF. Gage was Diane's first transport! Diane enthusiastically shared her experience:

"I work in International Sales/Reservations for American Airlines. I submitted a request to be part of the PIF program about 4 years ago. Last year I was told I was chosen to attend PIF training in Dallas, and I was overjoyed. I thoroughly enjoyed the training. This transport was my very first! I travel all over the country, but this was the first time an available transport worked for my schedule. I was thrilled and thought the transport went very well.

I was lucky to be traveling with my husband, Keith; it helped having an extra set of hands. Gage was adorable and very well behaved. He walked very well on the leash when I wasn't carrying him, and was very curious about the sights and sounds around the airport.

Lots of people smiled at him and, for me, that was a nice feeling. Once settled on the plane he was happy to sleep and only the pilot's voice over the intercom startled him a bit. Since it was my first transport I was a bit nervous but he made it easy and fun, and I can't wait to do more!"

DFL is grateful to everyone that supports our puppy raising program. We extend heartfelt thanks to Diane Hurst for volunteering to transport Gage, and to everyone at EENP!





Gage with fellow service dog in training, Genie (left), and taking a nap on the plane en route to Florida (above)



Gage at the airport with Diane Hurst and her husband

Bob & Dallas - A Perfect Match!

Many of you know Bob Cheshire (USN), a long-time friend of Dogs For Life. Bob and his service dog Bodacious (Bo) graduated as a DFL service dog team in 2016. Bo served Bob for many years, including during the difficult times since his beloved wife Lynn passed away in 2022.

Over the years, Bo survived some health challenges, and the need to find a replacement for Bo was always in the back of Shelly Ferger's mind.

Shelly, Founder and CEO of DFL, knew that broaching this subject would be difficult, and Bob's initial reaction was as expected: He and Bo were not ready for her to retire.

Earlier this year, however, Bob contacted Shelly and said it was time.

As luck would have it, DFL service dog Dallas, a big, happy-go-lucky, 18-month old black Lab, had just completed his training and was looking for the perfect partner.

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Bob Cheshire (USN) and his service dog, Dallas

Shelly told Bob about Dallas, and Bob was very interested. Bob and Dallas began training together to determine if they were compatible, and to see if Dallas could adapt to Bob's needs – specifically, mobility and hearing support.

All of us at DFL held our breath and hoped for the best. Would Dallas take to hearing work? Would Bob and Dallas bond? Would the transition be hard on Bo? Would Bo and Dallas get along?

We are thrilled to report that Bob and Dallas are thriving as a new service dog team. According to Bob, Bo accepts Dallas as a "housemate," and everyone gets along. When Bob leaves the house he usually takes Dallas, but sometimes will bring Bo. He makes sure she feels needed but isn't pressured to perform beyond what she's capable of at her age. The transition could not have gone better.

As for Dallas, the photos Bob sends us say it all – whether it's shopping at Tractor Supply, "supervising" Bob's workouts at the gym, socializing with other veterans, playing bingo at the senior center, or enjoying

breakfast at IHOP – Dallas is by Bob's side, living his best life.

"This is the happy ending we all hoped for," said Shelly. "No one wants to think about having to replace his or her service dog, but the reality is that more than ten DFL-trained dogs will reach retirement age in the very near future.

This transition worked very smoothly because Bob did everything right. He recognized when Bo was slowing down and reached out to me when he felt it was in her best interest to take a step back from the daily demands of service dog life.

Bob bonded with Dallas separate from Bo, but once he introduced the two dogs, he continued to include Bo in certain activities. The three of them developed a new routine, and now Dallas is Bob's primary hearing and mobility support.

We are thrilled with the outcome and feel it bodes well for other clients who will face this difficult, but necessary, situation in the future."



Dallas (left) with service pup in training, Rocket (right), on one of their last days together at the training center.

Dog Park Membership News



Harry Taylor with service pup in training, Gage

Our six-week dog obedience class for Dog Park members continues to be extremely popular! Almost 40 members have graduated so far. This class prepares participants to pass the AKC Canine Good Citizen test. The fee is \$125. If you are interested in obedience training for your dog and are a current Dog Park member, contact DFL to join an upcoming class.

As demand for Dog Park membership grows, so does the need for Dog Park Ambassadors. Our Dog Park Ambassador Program teaches members, among other things, how to identify different dog behaviors. This helps keep the park safe, since Ambassadors are able to recognize behaviors that could spell trouble before anything happens, potentially averting a problem.

Please spread the word and consider signing up as a Dog Park Ambassador if you haven't done so already. If you currently are an Ambassador, please let us know if you can help us with Meet & Greets to welcome new members.

Finally, remember that Dog Park members are eligible to join the DFL Dog Park group's Facebook page. We look forward to seeing Dog Park members at our monthly meetings, held the first Wednesday of each month at 9am.



Dog Park Obedience Class participants" paws" for a photo.



Pet Therapy at VBPD

Steve Defren (USA), with his service dog Rosie, presented DFL's 2024 Pet Therapy Team of the Year Award to Michele Laibe and her service dog, Lua. Members of the Vero Beach Police Department gathered to say thank you to Michele and Lua for their service.

Tribute Gifts

In Honor of

Marcia Adache's birthday Linda Barberi Shelly Ferger

Lacey Adams' birthday Linda Barberi Shelly Ferger

Kathy Allston's birthday Linda Barberi Shelly Ferger

Laura Bonney's birthday Linda Barberi Shelly Ferger

Sally Bricker's birthday Linda Barberi Shelly Ferger

Laurie Bridges' birthday Linda Barberi Shelly Ferger

Chris Consi's birthday Linda Barberi Shelly Ferger

Michelle Dale's birthday Linda Barberi Shelly Ferger Steve Defren's birthday Linda Barberi Shelly Ferger

Shelly Ferger's birthday
Linda Barberi
Andrew & Laurie Beebe
Laura Bonney
Laurie & Garry Bridges
Steve Defren
Edgar & Linda Duncan
Roxanna Hinzman
Kathleen MacGlennon
Sharon & Duane Marshall
Jerry & Cindi Miller
Daniel & Ann Nolan
Jason & Leydiana Patzer
Judy Schmidt

Barbara Gormas' birthday Linda Barberi Shelly Ferger

Julie Vergara

Jocelyn Woodruff

Gregory Houston's birthdayLinda Barberi
Shelly Ferger

Laurie Houston's birthday Linda Barberi Shelly Ferger

> Jeri Jacob's birthday Linda Barberi Shelly Ferger

Michele Laibe's birthday Linda Barberi Shelly Ferger

Rick Lewis' birthday Linda Barberi Shelly Ferger

Wendy Machachlan's birthday Linda Barberi Shelly Ferger

Cheryl Marshall's birthday Linda Barberi Shelly Ferger

> Yogi Oliger Kay Ruma

Kathi Schumann's birthday
Marcia Adache
Arleen Arsenault
Linda Barberi
Steve Defren
Shelly Ferger
Frances Garrett
Richie Keller
Toddy McKeown
Judi Ricard
Jack Saucerman
Kim & John Schumann, III
Vickie & Barry Wyatt

Kathi Schumann, Mother's Day Kim & John Schumann, III Vickie & Barry Wyatt

> Harry Taylor's birthday Linda Barberi Shelly Ferger

> **Kat Tettleton's birthday** Linda Barberi Shelly Ferger

Sean Timberlake's birthday Linda Barberi Shelly Ferger

Memorial Gifts

In Memory of

Bella Annalea Celio

Lynn Cheshire Shelly Ferger Jami Trojanowski

George Farnham Cook, Jr. Mike & Laura Hewitt

Theodore Jones
Penie Jones

Sally Lake
Ronald & Marie Deeds

Tomas Rene Perez Shelly Ferger

Judy Saucerman
Laura Bonney
Steve Defren
Shelly Ferger
Tony & Dale Hampton
Patti Schell
Karen Strouse
Doris Tropf

Robert Saucerman Frank & Shirley Roscoe

Ryan Scott Patrick & Laura Hopkins **Phil Tettleton**

Guff & Patsy Abbott
Boyd Bailey
Steve Defren
Shelly Ferger
James Howell
Kate Kellum
Cynthia Keyser
JoAnn Luning
Michael Miller
Daniel & Ann Nolan
Sean & Elizabeth Ryan
Patti Schell
Suzette Shelmire
John & Anna Tettleton

Charlie Watson

Ace Thorton
Peter & Donna Polk

Wriggly Marcia McIntosh



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Sponsorship

Leaders Furniture



Shelly Ferger, DFL Founder and CEO, and service dog in training Genie, with Cathy Shoun, Showroom Manager

Italian American War Veterans



Jack DiGiorgio, President of the Italian American War Veterans, with DFL Director Linda Barberi and service dog in training Rocket

Vero Beach Elks Lodge #1774



Kathi Muller, Exalted Ruler, and Flo Synenko, Grant Coordinator, with Shelly Ferger, DFL Founder and CEO, Mark Poziomek, DFL Client and Elks Member, and service dog Ranger

The Sustaining Journey Circle in Full Swing

Dustin Tackett, Owner/Creative Director, Citrus Three Marketing & Advertising

Dogs For Life is constantly striving to find new ways for donors to connect with and support our programs. The Sustaining Journey Circle is just that. A campaign built on recurring gifts, it will allow donors to not only provide



support, but to provide that support on a regular basis - monthly, quarterly, semi-annually or annually - helping to keep our programs flowing.

To take part in The Sustaining Journey Circle, please contact DFL for assistance with securely setting up monthly giving through DFL's website.

