



## Why You Should Walk With Us on May 26<sup>th</sup> 2013

**Below is an excerpt from a letter written by a local resident and the mother of one of this year's Barrie Walk organizers. Michelle benefited from funds raised by the Purina Walk for Dog Guides in 2009 and it speaks to the reasons why your support by joining the fun on May 26<sup>th</sup>, is so important. Please read on:**

"In the fall of 2005, our daughter was a healthy, happy teenager who swam competitively, was active in Girl Guides of Canada and basically had the world by the tail and was swinging just as hard as she could. Three short years later, her vision was completely gone, she was scared out of her mind, and she refused to leave the house without either my husband or I by her side. Phil and I watched helplessly as Michelle's world became smaller and smaller and the activities that she had once enjoyed fell away. By 2009, our dreams of University for Michelle were all but abandoned as our family struggled to find a way forward. Fate intervened and Michelle met a new friend at a life skills weekend that had a service dog. Michelle recognized a way out and quietly launched her campaign to add a service dog to our family.

Thomson bounced into our home in the summer of 2010, instantly drawing us in with his gentle disposition. Almost overnight, Michelle's world changed. Thomson bridged the gap of isolation that people's fears created, drawing them into conversation with her with questions about him, opening the door to better understanding and new friendships. All of a sudden she had a way to attend University, get to her medical appointments, and gain independence - in essence, a way out of the dark and back into the light. As Michelle and Thomson worked and learned together, her confidence grew and the feisty side of our daughter's personality returned. She had found her voice and the confidence to fight back. She resumed her determination to get an education and become financially independent.

As we watch our daughter continue to mature into the fine young person we always knew she would be, we also know in our hearts that this would not have been possible but for Thomson, his foster parents, trainers, and the wonderful people who reached into their pockets and made a donation to his training through the Purina Walk for Dog Guides."

**Please consider joining us on May 26, 2013 at Shear Park in Barrie for this year's Purina Walk for Dog Guides. It is sure to be an amazing day full of fun and laughter. Michelle, Thomson, and Diane look forward to seeing you there.**