



2024 ANNUAL REPORT



**A year of enhancing independence,
providing support, and creating bonds to
change lives forever.**

OUR TEAM

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Sue George - Kennel Technician

Maddy Burke - Client Services Coordinator

RFI MISSION



To change lives through the training and placement of service dogs for Veterans with disabilities and children with autism.



CEO MESSAGE



On my first visit to Retrieving Freedom, Inc. (RFI) Headquarters, I met a Veteran client and his wife who were in training and staying in our beautiful facility. Ivan served multiple tours in Vietnam and suffers from PTSD. Mary

Jo is his devoted wife and caregiver. Listening to Mary Jo explain what it is like to be the caregiver of a person dealing with PTSD was a lightbulb moment for me. With tears in my eyes, drawn out by this woman's unconditional love for her husband, I knew in the moment, I had to join the team at RFI and dedicate myself to leading this organization to new heights.

From day one, January 2, 2024, I have felt called to serve the mission of Retrieving Freedom. Each day I hear the stories of Veterans and the parents of children with autism explaining how life changing their training and service dog placement has been. I hope as you learn more about our organization, you feel a calling to join us in providing service dogs, for free, to Veterans with disabilities and children with autism.

As a member organization of Assistance Dogs International, Retrieving Freedom is held to the industry's most stringent standards. This ensures we place the highest quality service dogs with our clients. It's also important to note, only service dogs placed by an ADI certified organization have medical coverage through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Change was a constant in 2024. We created new positions, said goodbye to some people, and onboarded new key staff members in numerous positions. We held wonderful fundraising events in our two hometowns, Waverly, Iowa and Sedalia, Missouri. We expanded our marketing and communication efforts, and plan to grow this area of our business significantly. Ultimately, we increased revenue and reduced expenses while doubling the number of dogs we placed with clients, growing from 10 in 2023 to 20 in 2024.

The goal for 2025 is to strengthen our foundation. We must continue to improve our financial situation. We must refine our core processes to improve efficiency. We must train and empower our staff to be their best. We must build a larger, stronger, and more active volunteer base. All of this, we must do to grow the number of service dogs we can place with clients, so they may lead safer, happier, more fulfilled lives. At the end of the day, everything we do is for the clients we serve.

We can't do it without you. By the time RFI places a service dog with a client, there is \$50,000 invested. Still, we don't charge our clients dime. We can only do this because of the generosity of individuals, foundations, organizations, and companies committed to improving the lives of Veterans with disabilities and families of children with autism.

Thank you for your interest in Retrieving Freedom. By whatever means best suits your ability, we hope you will join our efforts to change, and sometimes save, lives.

Sincerely,

Brandon Butler
Chief Executive Officer

BREEDING



22 puppies born

Maple - Jet, Jude and Jolly

Laika - Itty, Ivy, Ion, Indigo, Idexx, Idol, Irwin, Ira and Iowa

Piper - Kona, Kato, Kermit, Kipper Karma, Kismet, Kita and Kitty

Many of the “**B litter**” (DOB 1/1/22) were placed in 2024:

Rose - Had 9 puppies & 7 placements - Barley, Bingo, Balto, Bullet, Birdie and Berkley
(3 Autism and 4 veteran placements)

Bonnie - Became a breeder and had her first litter on 1/10/24

PLACEMENTS

At Retrieving Freedom, we are committed to our mission of uniting Veterans with disabilities and children with autism with carefully matched service dogs. Throughout the past year, our specialized training programs have continued to create life-changing partnerships that foster independence, emotional support, and renewed confidence—all provided at no cost to the families and individuals we serve.

Our personalized approach sets us apart. Each service dog receives approximately two years of comprehensive, individualized training at one of our facilities in Waverly, Iowa, or Sedalia, Missouri. This ensures every RFI service dog is at its best and prepared to address the specific needs of their future handler.

As a proud accredited member of Assistance Dogs International, we maintain the highest standards in our training programs and placement processes. The results speak for themselves. RFI service dogs assist with daily challenges and provide the immeasurable gift of constant companionship. Time and again, we witness the profound transformation that occurs through these special bonds, reinforcing our conviction that the human-animal connection has extraordinary healing power.

- Zachary & Stormy - Chapel Hill, NC
- Robert & Jewel - Meridian, MS
- Parker & Kenai - Westmont, IL
- Kasen & Sage - Garden City, MO
- CJ & Bingo - Norfolk, VA
- Aria & Emerald - Marion, IL
- Ezra & Luna - Ozark, MO
- Justin & Barley - Waterloo, IA
- Fynn & Bubba - O'Fallon, MO
- David & Bullet - Bellevue, NE
- Terry & Lola - Mason City, IA
- Ivan & RB - Watts, OK
- Kevin & Lilly - Charles City, IA
- Bill & Cabo - Ellisville, MS
- Chloe & Berkley - North Liberty, IA
- Joey & Lennex - Johnston, IA
- Jennifer & Birdie - Henderson, NV
- Harry & Maggie - Long Prairie, MN
- Lyric & Balto West - Monroe, LA
- Hannah & Chai La - Motte, IA





“

Going out and about town is a dream now. We no longer live in constant fear. I can look at things and not worry about having my hands on Hannah the whole time. Life is so much easier this way.

”

Kay Shriver Althoff

PRISON PROGRAM

Retrieving Freedom's prison program creates a powerful dual impact by providing incarcerated individuals with meaningful skills, while advancing the training of future service dogs. Within correctional facilities, handlers work daily with RFI dogs, teaching essential commands and behaviors that will eventually help Veterans and children with autism. This innovative partnership accelerates the development of our service dogs and offers these individuals a path to rehabilitation through responsibility, purpose, and emotional connection.



Participating facilities:

- Putnamville Correctional Facility - Greencastle, Indiana
- Iowa Medical Classification Center - Coralville, Iowa
- Boonville Correctional Center - Boonville, Missouri

Sabo helps bring hope, joy, and emotional support to a place that often struggles to find any of these. She has taught me more than I think I ever taught her. I plan on using the skills I've learned through Retrieving Freedom and Sabo to help create a new life and career after incarceration.

-Inmate Michael on training SDIT Sabo

“ Goodness is the only investment that never fails. ”

- Henry David Thoreau



VOLUNTEER IMPACT

Volunteering with Retrieving Freedom creates ripples of transformation far beyond the time given. By fostering, training, or supporting RFI's service dogs, volunteers become essential links in a chain that ultimately changes lives for Veterans with disabilities and children with autism.

Each hour contributed helps develop these exceptional service dogs who go on to provide independence, support, and companionship to those who need it most. Volunteering with RFI is meaningful work, and a profound investment in human potential and healing.

“ *The reason we chose to foster a breeder female is because we were talking about getting a dog but we didn't know if we were ready for the full commitment or even where to start. Roughly a year before this we had started weekend fostering and occasionally did a few weeks long fosters and fell in love with the dogs and mission of RFI! We had the chance to weekend foster Piper a few times throughout the year and she went to football games, proms, Apple orchards, and more with us. We knew how great of a fit she was with us and when she became a breeder female we couldn't pass her up. It was meant to be!*

We're very glad to have Piper in our lives. She makes everyday brighter and we love the RFI organization! We were so lucky to have three healthy litters of puppies with Piper and get to spend 24-ish weeks with 25 puppies over the last couple years. It's so rewarding to see them start their service dog careers and watch all the lives they interact with and touch along the way. We've learned so much and the support of the RFI staff along the journey was amazing.

- Paige Bergman and Carew Vogt



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Retrieving Freedom is looking for dedicated volunteers. Whether you can open your home or lend a helping hand at our facility, your support makes a lasting impact.

Some of our volunteer opportunities include:

- Puppy Raisers – Help raise and socialize future service dogs.
- Weekend Fosters – Provide short-term care and socialization.
- Breeder Fosters – Care for our breeding dogs and litters.
- Facility Volunteers – Assist with cleaning, maintenance, and administrative support.
- Event Volunteers – Help at community and fundraising events by setting up, greeting guests, and providing general event support.

Interested in volunteering? Call 319-505-5949 (IA) or 660-586-2055 (MO), or email Calvin@retrievingfreedom.org



MIZZOU ROTC



During my time at Mizzou, my involvement with RFI became a defining part of my college experience. As a member of ROTC and an Animal Science student, RFI offered me an outlet to serve my community in a nontraditional yet profoundly meaningful way. This experience reinforced my commitment to advocacy and has shaped my future as I pursued a career as a veterinarian, and I am now a military officer, carrying the lessons I have learned into every aspect of my service. With all that said it really is hard to put into words the impact RFI has had on my life!

-Cadet Loughead

The partnership between Retrieving Freedom and University of Missouri ROTC creates a unique win-win opportunity where cadets help train future service dogs for Veterans and children with autism. In this three-month program, ROTC students work in groups with a primary handler and rotating secondary handlers to socialize the dogs and teach essential commands, developing leadership and patience skills that translate directly to their military training.

The cadets witness firsthand the profound impact these service dogs have on Veterans, giving their volunteer work deeper meaning and purpose. Though saying goodbye to the dogs is difficult when the training period ends, the students take pride in knowing they've played a crucial role in preparing these canines to change the lives of those in need.

DELTA WATERFOWL

The partnership between Delta Waterfowl and Retrieving Freedom represents a powerful alliance that has raised over \$650,000 for RFI since its inception in early 2019, with approximately \$100,000 generated in 2024 alone.

This collaboration unites Delta Waterfowl's expertise in waterfowl conservation with Retrieving Freedom's mission of providing service dogs to Veterans, creating unique opportunities for Veterans to experience the therapeutic benefits of outdoor activities like duck hunting alongside their service companions. Delta Waterfowl chapters regularly host specialized hunting events and fundraisers that support Retrieving Freedom, demonstrating how shared values around service, nature, and healing can create meaningful impact.

Through this partnership, Veterans receive life-changing service dogs and gain access to the restorative power of outdoor experiences, creating a comprehensive approach to supporting those who have served our country.



GOLD AND WHITE STAR PROGRAM

Retrieving Freedom, Inc. (RFI) is honored to launch the Companion Dog Program for Gold and White Star Families. This program places “career-change” dogs—loving, gentle companions who may not be suited for service dog roles—into the homes of military-connected families who have experienced the heart-wrenching loss of an immediate family member.

Healing Through Companionship

RFI knows there is a growing body of evidence in favor of animal assisted interventions during the grief process. A recent study exploring what determined sufficient support during grief cycles ranked animals among the highest form of all social support, which included categories like friends, family, community members, faith, and therapists. Several studies have shown children and adolescents engaged in animal assisted interventions, such as a pet, improved their mental health after a traumatic experience and were less likely to engage in risky behaviors, such as suicide.

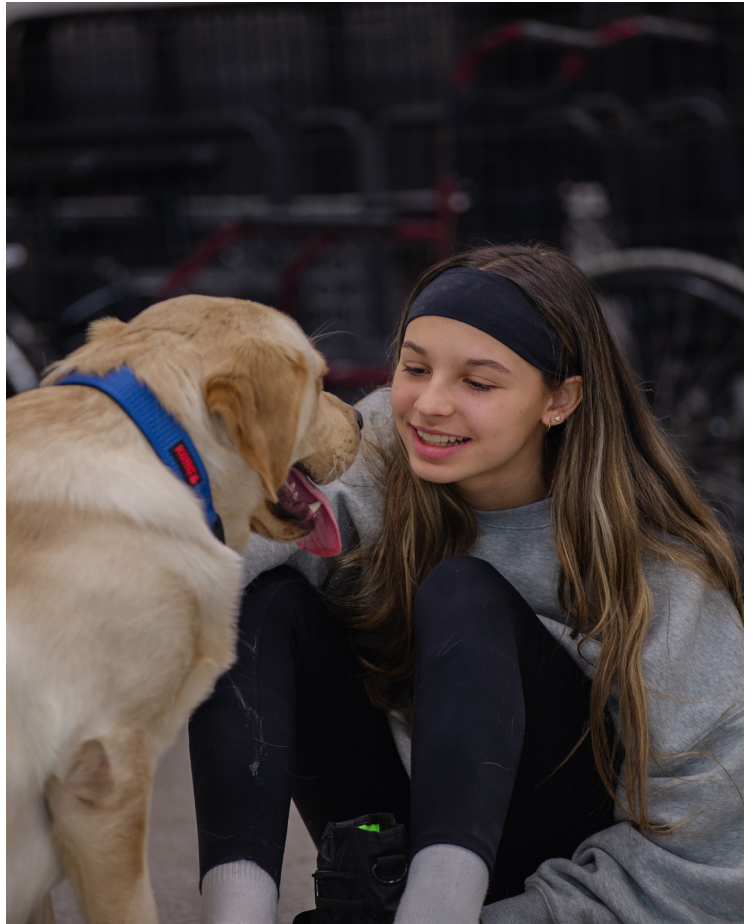
Gold Star Families bear the unbearable loss of a loved one killed in the line of duty, while White Star Families endure the devastating tragedy of suicide. RFI understands the depth of their grief and the profound toll it takes, especially on children, who are at a higher risk for depression, anxiety, and PTSD.

The Companion Dog Program offers these families comfort, healing, and unconditional love, helping them navigate their sorrow through the proven healing power of human-animal bonds.

The first placement, Linus, a Labrador retriever, recently joined the Moore family from Kansas City. As a White Star Family mourning Army veteran Bryan Moore, Linus has provided much-needed comfort to the family, including their youngest daughter, Peyton, who shared a deep love of dogs with Bryan.

Linus was moving through his service dog training and passing training benchmarks with flying colors, but then he started showing signs of allergies in early 2024.. His severe allergies mean he cannot be placed as a client’s service dog, but his temperament and calm demeanor make him perfect to be this program’s first Companion Dog. Linus will bring hope and healing to a White Star Family based in Kansas City.

RFI is proud to offer these life-changing placements at no cost, working hand-in-hand with partner organizations to bring healing and change, one family at a time.



DONATIONS

NOTABLE DONORS

3 Minutes Out, Inc.
7955 Edgewater Properties, LLC
ACR of Sedalia
Al & Kelly Hogen
Allen P. and Josephine Green Foundation
Amber Martin
American Legion Auxiliary No. 642
American Legion Auxiliary Post 27
American Legion Post 297
American Professional Staffing Solutions
Amy Creighton
Anne Schmitz
Big Frigg
Brandon Butler
Brock Swenson
BTC Bank
Caesars Enterprise Services LLC
Cameron and Katie Wahl
Carl Liliequist
CBE Group, Inc.
Central Bank of Sedalia
Central Iowa Delta Chapter of Delta Waterfowl
Charles & Amanda Booth
Chive Charities
Clint Myers
Community Foundation of Greater Memphis
Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa
County Distributing Company, Inc.
Dale Christensen and Mary Burns
Dave and Vikki Distler
David and Renee Lyons
Parkhurst Family
DeeAnn Francis
Delta Waterfowl
Don & Lindy Ziemet
Doug and Lynn Dodgen
Duggan Family Foundation
Duncan A. Christie
Eastern Star Foundation of Iowa
Equity Bank
Eric Wisher
Eric Wright
First Bank
First Christian Church of Sedalia
First United Methodist Women Sedalia
Fredsville Lutheran Church
Frogg Toggs
Goodwill Industries of Northeast Iowa, Inc.
Grand Chapter of Iowa
Order of the Eastern Star
Hanger Foundation
Hayden Freedom Foundation
HeadHunters NW
Henry and Jodi Maddocks

Hodgdon
Hornady Manufacturing Company
Howard E Hunt Revocable Living Trust
HWCC-Tunica, LLC
Hydrite Chemical Co.
Impact Signs Awnings Wraps Inc.
Ingram Capital Investment LLC
Inter-State Studio & Publishing
James Everts
James Newcomb
Jamie Gunderson
Joan Heuer
Joan Loslo
Joe and Kathy Rodgers
John & Lori Swearingen
John Deere Corp.
John L. Konefes
John Umiker
Justin and Kim Van Driel
Kevin and Tamara Dill
KMG Consulting LLC
Kyle T Herrick
Lambda Chi Alpha
Leland Zwanziger
Leveda Whitaker
Loren Mattke
Malta Bend Memorial Post Number 558
Mandy Root
Masonic Lodge
177 Car Show
Matthew & Julia Sola
McNeal Veterinary Service, LLC
MD Edwards, LLC
Melinda Wells
Michael and Margy McCoy
Mike & Gail Scherr
MLGC Veterans Tourney
Mystery Ranch
Nathan Larbus
Nathan "Shags" McLeod
National Retriever Derby Club
Northwest Cascade Inc.
Patrick Genseal
Paul Chapman
Paul Witt
Peggy Huisman
Peter Goldschmidt
Plainfield United Methodist Church
Pond-Tini
Prairie Lakes Delta Waterfowl Northwest Iowa
Premier Climate Control
Randall & Patricia Martin --Martin Family Trust
Randall and Paula McDougall
Robert & Tracey Schwartz

Robert A. Treuner Masonry Company
Robert and Deanne Sigmund Robert
Patricia Hadley
RCBS
Robert Russell
Ron Inman
Ron Kessler
Ruger
Ruth VanDeest
Ryan Foley
Sally Billings
Santa Barbara Foundation
Sean Brakss
Sedalia Pettis County United Way
Septagon Construction Company
Silencer Central
Sons of American Legion Squadron 279
SONOS, Inc.
Southwest Iowa Delta Waterfowl Foundation
Starline Brass
Stephen and Ann Hinchliffe
Stephen and Mary Birch Foundation
Sterling Simonson
Strong Waterproofing, LLC
Sylvia Hopkins
Tee It Up for the Troops- Mid-Missouri
The Chris Hodgdon Family Fund
The Hunting Shack, Inc.
The Ronald D. Deffenbaugh Foundation
Three Rivers Delta Waterfowl
Todd Boyd
Todd Pittard
Trevor Inman
Trivalley Ice Management LLC
TUA William
Dean Charitable Foundation
Tyrrell Lodge #116 UAW Local 281
Veridian Credit Union
Veterans United Foundation
VGM Associates Ltd.
Vinton-Shellsburg Community School District
Walter and Marlis Moodie
Waterloo Fire Fighters Local #66
Waverly Area Veterans Post
West Central Missouri Vintage Auto Club
Wings Cupped Feet Down
W-K Family of Dealerships
Yeti

GRANTS

Stephen and Mary Birch Foundation
CL Warner Foundation
Veterans United Foundation
The Ronald D Deffenbaugh Foundation
William Dean Charitable Foundation
United Way Pettis County

Kansas City Royals
Whitaker Foundation
Walmart Neighborhood Grants (Waverly & Sedalia locations)
Fredsville Lutheran Church
Allen P. & Josephine Green Foundation

Community Foundation of NE Iowa
Chive Charities
Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque
(Mike & Gail Scherr Foundation)

BUSINESS ALLIANCES

Partnerships fuel our mission. Through the support of businesses and community partners, we continue to create life-changing opportunities.



Gold
Transparency
2024

Candid.



Hornady
Accurate. Deadly. Dependable.

Impact

SIGNS • AWNINGS • WRAPS

f X @ in impact4800.com



Sedalia wkfamily.com Boonville

BUSINESS ALLIANCE PROGRAM

Retrieving Freedom relies on the generosity of businesses like yours to change lives. We want to honor those who support our Veterans and families of children with autism. Our Business Alliance Members are recognized at different levels of commitment.

Total Giving Levels

Bronze: \$1,000 - \$4,999

Silver: \$4,999 - \$9,999

Gold: \$10,000 - \$24,999

Platinum: \$25,000 - \$49,999

Diamond: \$50,000+

Starline Brass Lifetime Achievement Club: \$100,000+

When your business supports Retrieving Freedom, you are in a partnership with purpose. Together, we will make a lasting impact on the lives of Veterans, children, and their care teams through service dogs. We invite you to join a network of compassionate, community-focused businesses in this special Alliance. Make a direct and lasting impact while enhancing your corporate philanthropic efforts.

Benefits of joining the business alliance:

- Earn naming rights to puppies
- Display a custom engraved granite plaque
- Be included on our donor recognition wall
- Tax benefits of 501(c)(3) contribution

Contact us to learn more:

- 660-281-9804
- brandon@retrievingfreedom.org
- retrievingfreedom.org



To be around the clients and see how these dogs change, and sometimes save, their lives is remarkable. When they can better integrate back into society, bridge those gaps and have more freedom, that's what it's all about. ”

– Robert “Bobby” Hayden,
CEO of Starline Brass

NEW INITIATIVES



Challenge Coins: Supporting the RFI Mission

Retrieving Freedom's Challenge Coin program honors the military tradition dating back to World War I while creating a tangible symbol of commitment to the organization's mission. Each uniquely numbered coin represents a donor's ongoing monthly support that directly funds the training and placement of service dogs with Veterans and children with autism.



More than mere collectibles, these Challenge Coins embody the camaraderie between supporters and those served by RFI, creating a community united in the belief that specially trained canines can transform lives. By participating in this program, supporters become an essential part of Retrieving Freedom's work, helping more service dogs reach those who need their extraordinary skills and companionship.

Mallards Smokin' Bar-B-Que: Raising Awareness for RFI

Mallard's Smokin' Bar-B-Que has forged a meaningful partnership with Retrieving Freedom, Inc., combining delicious food with a commitment to support Veterans and children with autism through specialized service dog training. Through this collaboration, Mallard's helps raise critical awareness about RFI's mission while actively fundraising to sustain the extensive training programs that prepare service dogs for their life-changing roles. The partnership creates valuable community connections that strengthen support for Retrieving Freedom's work, demonstrating how local businesses can play a significant role in addressing the needs of veterans with disabilities and children with autism. By leveraging their customer base and community presence, Mallard's Smokin' Bar-B-Que exemplifies how business partnerships can amplify nonprofit impact and help connect more specially trained service dogs with those who will benefit most from their remarkable skills.



“ Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing. ”

- Theodore Roosevelt



FUNDRAISING EVENTS

WINGS FOR WAGS



RFI Attended Events

- 2nd Annual Zoom Lunch with Microsoft employees
- Iowa Conservation Convention - Winterfest
- Wartburg board Spouse tour and demo
- Lawler Stars and Strips Spectacular
- John Deere of Dubuque Health Fair
- John Tumilson Crush It 5K
- Waterloo Fire Fighters Gold Tournament
- Mason City Veteran Stand Down
- Vinton High School Veterans Assembly
- Grand Chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star
- Tee It Up for the Troops Mid-Missouri
- For those who Served and Still in the Fight Charity Golf Fundraiser

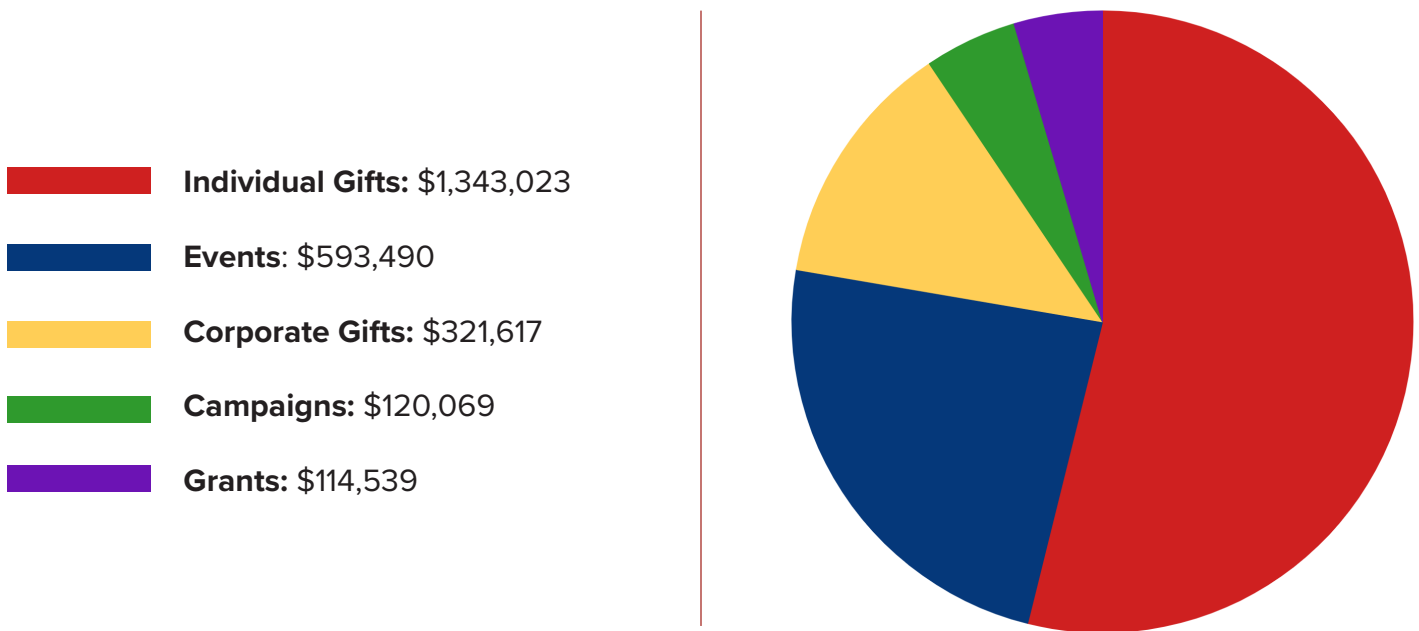
Both Shindigs from Sedalia, MO and Waverly, IA raised \$93,230!

Thank you to our dedicated supporters and generous sponsors. It is your unwavering commitment that makes every successful service dog placement possible.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Retrieving Freedom strives to ensure every dollar we receive from our generous supporters is spent wisely. In 2024, we evaluated every expense our organization incurs to confirm it is mission critical. We found some expenses we could operate without, eliminate those expenses, and reduced our overhead. With enhanced fundraising activity and re-imagined development strategies, we saw an increase in revenue on top of our reduction of expenses. Much of our growth came from an expanded event schedule, stronger presence in our local communities, the development of our Business Alliance, and most of all, major donor contributions.

Moving forward, we recognize our need for an influx of small dollar donors. We are developing plans and options to make supporting RFI easier and more impactful for donors of all economic means, with enhanced methods of donor recognition and financial reporting.



CONNECT WITH RFI



“ I am not as worried or as afraid to be on my own. I am more active now, I can go out in public and not be worried about who is staring at me. At night when I go to bed, he crashes on me. It is like he is saying I am here we are ok, we will make it.

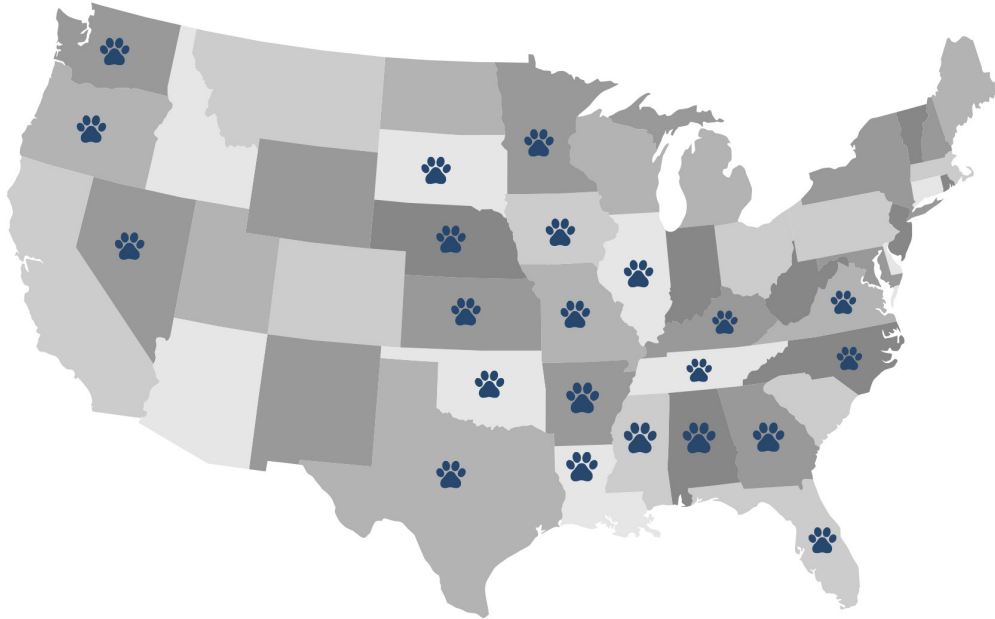
I truly believe in your organization and I thank you for helping me.

**- RFI Veteran Client
Ambassador Michael
Wasson**

FIND US ON SOCIAL



REFLECTING ON 2024 & LOOKING AHEAD



This map reflects the reach of Retrieving Freedom’s mission—changing lives through the training and placement of service dogs with Veterans and children with autism. Each placement is a testament to our generous supporters, dedicated volunteers, and exceptional staff.

As we peer into the future, Retrieving Freedom is going to expand our reach and deepen our impact through the continued training and placement of exceptional service dogs with Veterans and children with autism.

We are striving to further enhance our training programs, strengthen our partnerships, and ultimately, serve more clients.

The need for our service dogs continues to grow. We have more applicants than we can serve. With your support, we can grow our capacity for changing lives.

If you are new to our organization, we hope you will become a RFI supporter. If you have supported us in the past, thank you! We appreciate you and hope we have earned your continued support.

