

ROUND OF A PAWS FOR AUTISM ASSISTANCE DOGS!

National charity Autism Assistance Dogs Ireland (AADI) has welcomed eight new Golden Retriever/Labrador cross puppies, as part of the first breeding programme to tackle the five-year waiting list for children with autism who need a highly-trained assistance dog.

Headquartered in Mallow, Co Cork, AADI is the only Irish charity to breed and train assistance dogs solely for children with autism. It costs €15,000 to provide a fully trained dog, free-of-charge, to a child with autism. AADI relies solely on donations, receiving no funding from the government to breed, train or place these assistance dogs.



The charity has, to date, trained and supplied 27 assistance dogs, along with 19 companion dogs, to children with autism.

The charity, which suspended its waiting list over two years ago, has since received over 800 enquiries. With the success of its new breeding programme, AADI now has ambitious plans to train and place 20 dogs a year.

CEO and founder Nuala Geraghty said: "These dogs are life-changers for the children and their families. As our charity relies heavily on volunteers, we urgently require funds to support the puppies in their journey to become highly-trained assistance dogs.

"Our organisation depends entirely on the generosity of the public to raise the €15,000 needed to train each pup. We are

asking people to donate money or to get in touch with us if they have an idea for a fundraising initiative."

PUPPY FOSTER CARERS

To date, AADI has trained and supplied 27 assistance dogs, along with 19 companion dogs, to children with autism.

The new litter of puppies are currently with volunteer puppy foster carers across Munster, who will bring them up for the first 12 months. The dogs will then enter training, before being assigned, free-of charge, to families.

This is in keeping with the charity's ethos that all children with autism should have equal opportunity to obtain a dog. While an autism assistance dog's primary role is to keep the child safe, they also offer additional benefits such as providing companionship and reducing stress and anxiety.

"This puppy breeding programme is a huge step in helping us to provide these dogs to children with autism. For the first time, we have the ability to breed our own pups which will dramatically increase the rate at which we can provide assistance dogs to children with autism who have been on the waiting list for some time. Receiving one of these dogs would be a dream come true for many families," Geraghty added.

To donate €4 to AADI, the public can text 'autism' to 50300. For more information on hosting an event or becoming a corporate partner for AADI email fundraising@aadi.ie.



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