

# The New Dog on Campus

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Unless you've been hiding under a rock, you've probably noticed Aspen High School's newest furry addition. His name is Georgie, a one year old golden-doodle, who's changing the life of one student at our school. Senior Channing Seideman, who has had Juvenile Myoclonic Epilepsy since age nine, recently took in Georgie, an extraordinary dog that can alert when a seizure is happening.

"She was trained with the basic 90 commands; however because I got her so young, I still have to teach her the more advanced commands such as opening doors, turning on lights," Channing says. "And hopefully teach her how to do laundry," she adds playfully.

Georgie may look tempting to pet when you see her wagging her tail enthusiastically down the hallway, but when she's wearing her vest it means she's working. Georgie must remain focused so when duty calls, she can answer. Of her many responsibilities, possibly the most imperative is learning the words that trigger her crucial response to emergencies.

"Right now we are working on 'go get help' so if I'm alone she can go get an adult. We are also working on 'get meds,' so once I stop seizing and I'm able to speak I can tell her to get my medication in my bag, which would stop the seizing," Channing explains.

Georgie's work is no walk in the dog park. She was trained by a non-profit organization called Canine

Assistants located in Milton, Georgia, which trains and provides service dogs for children and adults with disabilities or certain conditions. These



Photo Courtesy of Kelly Hall  
Channing Seideman and Georgie smile after being matched together in November through an organization called Canine Assistants based out of Georgia.

dogs are in such high demand, the waiting list for the Canine Assistants program is nearly 2,000 recipients long. Dogs like Georgie are making people feel more comfortable living normally and independently. Before Channing could take Georgie home,

she attended a two week training camp to learn the ABC's of working with a seizure response dog. Georgie is still young and constantly learning new commands.

"Whenever I have a seizure, big or small, my mom or dad will get Georgie and bring her to me while I'm seizing and say the word 'seizure' so Georgie will eventually understand what it means. When she alerts, she will start barking and go get my mom. Dogs are able to alert due to a body odor -- not like sweat or anything, but just a scent emitted," Channing says.

Channing doesn't let epilepsy slow her down; she enjoys activities such as skiing, horse back riding, and spending time with friends. Most places Channing goes, like restaurants, school, and even the movies, Georgie follows (except of course when Channing hits

the slopes).

Channing hopes to spread the word about Georgie and other aid dogs by raising awareness locally. Every Tuesday and Thursday, she makes a trip to the elementary school and has kids read aloud to Georgie to make

them feel more comfortable reading out loud in school; this program is called "The Georgie Project." When the kids are around a dog, they feel less pressure than when they're surrounded by teachers, classmates, and adults. This method has been proven to raise reading ability nation wide.

What can our school do to help? Channing hopes to start "Coins for Canines" at Aspen High School, an organization that raises money to help fund an aid dog in our valley. Part of raising awareness is understanding and being compassionate towards a cause like this one. Channing's positive outlook and ambition is a real inspiration to those around her.

Lena Nicholson, one of Channing's closest friends, says, "Channing Seideman is a modest, talented, and extraordinarily courageous individual. The strength she possesses to work through medical challenges everyday with a spunky, comedic attitude is enough to inspire anyone who learns her story. Her accomplishments leave a powerful impact on the society around her, and can give hope of success to other children and teenagers dealing with epilepsy. Most importantly though, Channing is a great person to call a friend."

Clearly Channing's many accomplishments in school, sports, and her personal life are a true testament to her determination and good will. Aspen High School is excited to embrace Georgie, the remarkable new addition to our community.