

# Purina Volunteer Puppy Raisers Welcome Labrador Retriever Puppies Home As Part of First-Ever Assistance Dog/Facility Dog Litter Partnership

Associate volunteers will raise and socialize puppies ahead of training and certification from St. Louis-based Duo Dogs as future facility or assistance dogs

**ST. LOUIS** (Jan. 19, 2023) – Purina announced it is sponsoring a litter of puppies, all of which will be raised by company employees and trained to serve as certified Duo Dog facility, assistance or service dogs. The new program is another step the pet care company is taking to address the mental health epidemic by harnessing the positive impact of pets.

Each of the 10 Labrador Retriever puppies will be paired with a Purina associate serving as a volunteer puppy raiser. These individuals are responsible for puppy development and socialization from eight weeks old to around 18 months old, preparing the puppies for their adult years as a working dog. After 18 months, each puppy will return to the Duo Dog Facility for Advanced Training, where they'll complete final evaluations to determine how best to serve the community.

Purina plans to work with Duo Dogs to identify one of the 10 puppies to go on and serve as official facility dog for St. Louis CITY SC, the new Major League Soccer club set to kick-off its inaugural season next month. Purina is a founding partner and the official kit sponsor of the team. Plans to add a facility dog to the CITY team roster is just one step Purina is taking to make CITY SC the most pet-friendly sports club in the world.

“At Purina, we believe that pets and people are better together, and it’s humbling to watch our associates go above and beyond to find inspiring new ways to bring the power of pets to those in need,” said Purina Community Affairs Director Kim Beardslee. “These 10 puppies will go on to touch hundreds of thousands of individuals throughout their lives. This is a significant step as we continue working to find ways to put pets in the forefront of how we address mental health.”

The Purina associates serving as Volunteer Puppy Raisers include:

- Paula Boeckmann, Medical Representations
- Belinda Brin, Purina Retiree
- Kristine Costello, Marketing
- Neil Dwivedi, Marketing
- Megan Hecke, CheckMark
- Elizabeth Hennekes, Consumer Sensory Insights, Product Technology & Development
- Noa Hefer, Marketing
- Amanda Jones, Quality & Applied Science, Product Technology & Development

- Emily Lamprecht, Technical Applications Group
- Ryan Stanko, Engineering
- Jessica Strabley, Marketing

The Purina Volunteer Puppy Raisers and litter sponsorship announcement comes on the heels of a new class of Purina associates enrolling in the Touch Therapy certification program in partnership with Duo Dogs. Last December, six Purina associates and their family pets graduated from the inaugural employee-led program and are already active volunteering in the community by visiting youth and families struggling with mental and physical health challenges. Duo certifies each dog and handler to be a Touch Therapy team who visits youth organizations, schools, hospitals, treatment centers, nursing homes and other locations as needed.

## **About Purina**

Nestlé Purina PetCare creates richer lives for pets and the people who love them. Founded in 1894, Purina has helped dogs and cats live longer, healthier lives by offering scientifically based nutritional innovations.

Purina manufactures some of the world's most trusted and popular pet care products, including Purina Cat Chow, Purina ONE, Pro Plan, Fancy Feast and Tidy Cats. Our more than 8,700 U.S. associates take pride in our trusted pet food, treat and litter brands that feed 51 million dogs and 65 million cats every year. More than 500 Purina scientists, veterinarians, and pet care experts ensure our commitment to unsurpassed quality and nutrition. Purina promotes responsible pet care through our scientific research, our products and our support for pet-related organizations.

Over the past five years, Purina has contributed more than \$150 million towards organizations that bring, and keep, people and pets together, as well as those that help our communities and environment thrive. Purina is part of Nestlé, a global leader in Nutrition, Health and Wellness. For more information, visit [purina.com](https://www.purina.com) or [subscribe here](#) to get the latest Purina news.

## **About Duo Dogs, Inc.**

Duo Dogs, Inc., is a nonprofit organization that trains and connects dogs with people to cultivate positive change in individuals, families and communities. Duo breeds and trains assistance dogs and facility dogs, provides touch therapy certification and basic obedience classes. Duo provides on and off-site volunteer opportunities for corporations and individuals throughout the community. To learn more, visit [duodogs.org](https://duodogs.org).