

# Champions of Hope

By Nancy Secrist, Easdale: the best pet care

Some dogs win ribbons with high jumps, long flowing coats, a steady trot or dependable down stays. Other dogs win lives with a steady gaze, a lifted ear for listening and an accepting tilt of head that shows they don't judge--they are just there. These dogs are Champions of Hope. Since we began a new millennium, the national suicide rate has risen by nearly a third and has become the second most common cause of death in the United States among youth ages 10-19.

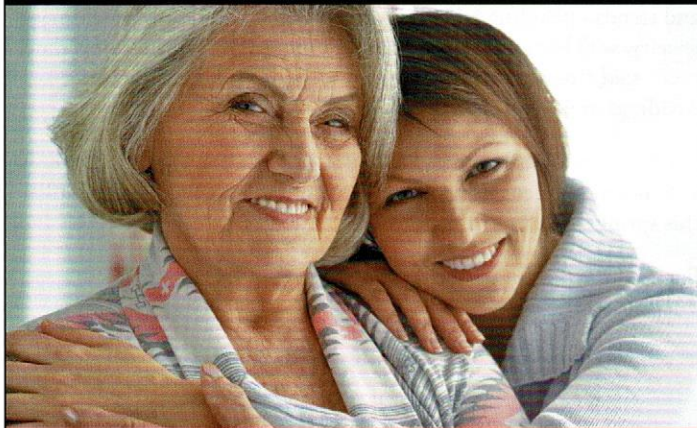
People who feel loss, a lack of support or even abuse/neglect may fall into depression and anxiety. School, family, relationships can all be a source of pressure. The good news is that a dog doesn't care about any of that. They come over and show affection and give people attention just for being there. The great thing about a dog is that it doesn't show judgment--no expectations at all. Students who are unable to focus find that petting the dog while they're talking helps them get centered and grounded. Even kids who are defiant, isolated by their peers and who struggle to make friends can build trust and self-esteem anew. It's been said, "There's nothing a dog can't fix." That's a tall order but why not let them try?

How to help? If you want to take your own dog out to help people, they need to be a certified therapy dog. Or you might like to help with a donation for this important work. Check out Therapy Dogs International, a non-profit organization started in 1976. TDI is fully recognized and offers guidelines on training and certification. [www.tdi-dog.org](http://www.tdi-dog.org).

As any dog owner can tell you, dogs can make life worth living. For service dogs who win lives instead of ribbons, this is especially true.



Mom introduced you to a world of family, friendship, and home.



Now you can introduce her to the same...

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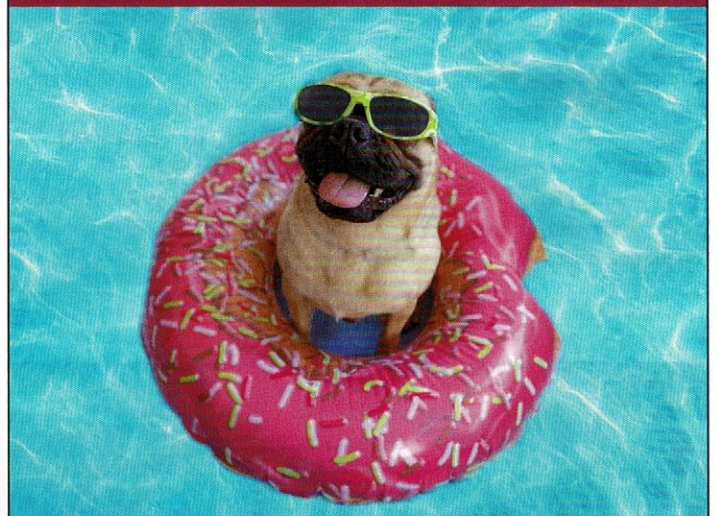
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