



**Position Guide**

**Chief Executive Officer**

[www.pawswithacause.org](http://www.pawswithacause.org)



**POSITION:** Chief Executive Officer

**REPORTS TO:** Board of Directors

**LOCATION:** Grand Rapids Region, Michigan

#### **VISION STATEMENT**

Paws With A Cause's vision is:

*Embracing innovation to address the aging population and to strengthen families living with disabilities.*

#### **MISSION**

Paws With A Cause's mission is to:

*Enhances the independence and quality of life for people with disabilities nationally through custom-trained Assistance Dogs. PAWS® increases awareness of the rights and roles of Assistance Dog Teams through education and advocacy.*

#### **ABOUT PAWS WITH A CAUSE (PAWS)**

Paws With A Cause® enhances the independence and quality of life for people with disabilities nationally through custom-trained Assistance Dogs. PAWS® increases awareness of the rights and roles of Assistance Dog Teams through education and advocacy.

In 1979, Michael D. Sapp Sr. and Antoinette (Candy) Sapp founded Paws With A Cause, initially named Ears for the Deaf®. PAWS® began when Mike agreed to help a friend. Marty Jansen and his wife, Dianne, are both deaf and had just adopted a young deaf child. Their hope was that Mike could train their Cairn Terrier CRYSTAL to alert them to important sounds such as their baby crying. Mike agreed and soon other deaf and hard of hearing people approached Mike and asked if they could have dogs trained as well.



What started out as Mike and Candye helping a friend has grown into a national organization that has impacted the lives of thousands of people. Because of Mike and Candye's vision and hard work, PAWS enhances the independence and quality of life for people with disabilities across the country through custom-trained PAWS Assistance Dogs. Through the years PAWS has added additional Assistance Dog programs. PAWS now trains several types of Assistance Dogs:

- [Service Dogs](#) for people with physical disabilities
- [Hearing Dogs](#) for people who are deaf or hearing impaired
- [Seizure Response Dogs](#) for people with seizure disorders
- [Service Dogs for Children with Autism](#)

PAWS puppies who do not become assistance dogs may also work in the fields of bomb detection, arson detection and related service fields. In addition, PAWS provides the following programs to further advance the service they offer:

- [PAWS Prison Partners](#): With more than 200 people with disabilities waiting for a PAWS Assistance Dog, PAWS has a huge need to raise and train more puppies. PAWS has recently increased its capacity in meeting that need through PAWS Prison Partners, a partnership with area prisons in which detainees help to raise puppies and to provide focused training.
- [Team Life Cycle](#): PAWS breeds, matches and custom-trains each dog for a client's unique needs.
- [Education](#): Paws With A Cause serves an important role in educating people about the rights and roles of Assistance Dog Teams. PAWS' education empowers clients, supporters and others to use this information and to share it with the broader community.
- [Research and Development](#): PAWS' R&D department designs, manufactures and customizes each piece of equipment that clients need. PAWS R&D has created more than 150 assistive products including special leashes, collars, harnesses, pulls, alarms, capes and bags. R&D also works with PAWS Training and Client Services departments to invent new products that meet the specific needs of clients.



At this point in its history, PAWS has placed more than 2,800 assistance dogs and currently has 450 clients throughout 35 states. PAWS field representatives conduct needs assessments for clients, help to train dog and owner teams, and provide certification for the dog and owner teams each two years.

## **THE OPPORTUNITY**

The Chief Executive Officer position is an exceptional opportunity for the right candidate to employ all of their skills in leadership, management, visionary thinking, fundraising and advocacy for a strong organization composed of a highly committed staff team and volunteer board.

The next PAWS leader will have the opportunity to help cast and guide the organization towards a long-term sustainable vision, taking the best qualities and aspects of PAWS programming and pairing these aspects with a solid funding and fundraising model. The next Chief Executive Officer will work creatively with the PAWS team to develop new ways to raise financial and other resources such as PAWS Dog Volunteers, puppy donations and other in-kind donations.

The leader will collaborate with the board and staff to discern the manner and geographic scale with which PAWS will pursue its mission. He or she will have the opportunity to build an organization that is the organization of choice for both employees and volunteers in the Western Michigan area.

## **POSITION SUMMARY**

Reporting to the Board of Directors, the Chief Executive Officer will manage this organization with an operating budget just over \$4 million and a total staff of 49. The next PAWS Chief Executive Officer will think strategically about how to balance mission and sustainability, raise resources in support of the mission, and help to cast and implement the PAWS vision of leadership in serving people with disabilities through the training of service dogs.

The PAWS Chief Executive Officer is a visionary leader who partners with, helps to inspire, and serves as the face of the organization to external partners, advocates, donors and the general public. The Chief Executive Officer will provide executive management of board relations, program delivery, resource development (including fundraising), external collaboration, finance and budgeting, and advocacy. The Chief Executive Officer will internally invest in and retain a long-serving and diverse team, and will have the opportunity to build a positive culture in a challenging fiscal environment. He or she will employ strong business acumen and financial savvy and will work with program experts to build a sustainable model in a changing landscape.

Overall, the Chief Executive Officer will help Paws With A Cause achieve its threefold goals:

- Achieve excellence through innovation and cost-conscious methods to increase the number of people's lives enhanced by PAWS dogs.
- Establish leadership effectiveness through the assessment and development of existing and future leaders.
- Increase the financial and volunteer capacity of the organization to effectively serve clients.

## CANDIDATE PROFILE

PAWS seeks a proven leader, with a passion for the mission of enhancing the independence and quality of life for people with disabilities nationally through custom-trained Assistance Dogs. The next leader of PAWS must like dogs while realizing that PAWS' mission focus is on quality of life and independence for the people it serves. The ideal candidate should have experience working with the disabilities community (or other historically marginalized communities) and be knowledgeable of their unique history, specific challenges and an understanding of the current national conversation. He or she will be a visionary leader, able to inspire and harness the talents and hard work of people around them to achieve that vision. This leader will bring the ability to lead and execute strategic plans that impact client care and public policy.

The next PAWS leader must be a person of the highest integrity and will have demonstrated strengths in valuing people, in building unified, collaborative teams, and in cultivating positive, inspirational team environments.

The successful candidate will have management experience with a nonprofit organization of similar or larger size. He or she will have strong financial acumen. In the effort to increase financial strength of the organization and to increase service, PAWS candidates will have skill in product development and innovation.

Excellent communication and relationship-building skills are essential to success in this role. PAWS seeks a person whose interest in community involvement and professional engagement is well demonstrated. The candidate will be personable and will have a track record of involvement in both civic and professional communities and associations.

Proven personal success in fundraising, with an emphasis on major gifts solicitation and/or capital campaigns is a key requirement. The ideal candidate will be able to demonstrate fundraising success as part of his or her responsibilities or as a fundraising volunteer, through active solicitation of contributions from individuals, foundations and corporations, and through development of a supportive, diverse board of directors. The next Chief Executive Officer should have the ability to build a board based on a model of organizational sustainability and be able to meaningfully engage board members for the sake of the organization.

Although the next PAWS Chief Executive Officer does not have to be from the dog industry, industry knowledge or experience would be ideal. Personal qualities desired would be sincerity, an inspiring and engaging personality, as well as focused, communicative consistency. We seek a leader who is a strong listener and who is empowering, collaborative and communicative, as well as decisive

PAWS' next leader should be one who respects, acknowledges, and invests in the knowledge of others, including those who lead the various PAWS departments. While supporting, encouraging and celebrating achievements of both individuals and departments, he or she should be a lifelong learner who is open minded and willing to make changes for the better. As an example, he or she must be curious and open to learning about dog training philosophies in order to collaborate on related policies and decisions.

The candidate must demonstrate experience in organizational management and the ability to build and nurture a culture that is grounded in a shared vision, vibrant in team work, supported by mutual respect and unrelenting in its pursuit of quality.

## **PAWS' CORE VALUES**

As Paws With A Cause strives to fulfill its mission, these Core Values guide the organization:

### **TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE**

A transformational change engages the heart and the mind. It unleashes the power of teamwork to achieve our deepest goals. It is life-altering in profound, positive ways. It is the essence of "making a difference."

We believe we can be a catalyst of such change in the lives of our stakeholders and our community. We believe it is the natural outcome of our mission work.

### **TEAMWORK**

We believe that we are stronger together than we are alone. We believe the most successful Assistance Dog teams are built through collaborative effort.

We recognize that teams are comprised of individuals working together toward a common goal. We believe all our stakeholders are our teammates, and we seek opportunities to engage them. As teammates, we treat each other with care and hold each other accountable.

We believe EVERYONE has the ability to make a positive contribution.

### **LEADERSHIP**

We believe in doing what's right. We believe in leading by example.

We take an active role in the broader Assistance Dog industry and seek opportunities to share our expertise for the benefit of all its members.

### **STEWARDSHIP**

We believe we have a duty and strive to use our resources wisely. We use our history and experience to plan with care for our sustainable future.

### **EXCELLENCE**

We believe that "good enough" is just a starting point. We strive to exceed our industry's standards and our stakeholders' expectations. We believe our stakeholders deserve nothing less than our best work.

We invest in talent. We believe in challenging each other to greater achievements. We encourage the sharing of ideas and believe creativity can overcome obstacles.

### **CELEBRATION**

We are mindful of life's preciousness. We believe in cheering each other's accomplishments and honoring milestones. We believe in the power of laughter and of puppy breath.

To apply, please send a current resume and letter of introduction to Kittleman & Associates, LLC at <https://www.kittlemansearch.com/news/current-searches/paws-with-a-cause/>.

For more information about Paws With A Cause, please visit [www.pawswithacause.org](http://www.pawswithacause.org).