

More people are crossing a visit to each state off their bucket list. **Page E6**

Find out what's happening in the Tucson-area real estate market. **Pages 12-14**

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2017 | SECTION E

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RON MEDVESCEK / ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Bailey Bish, 17, who has mobility issues and loses consciousness many times a day, says her service dog Onyx "has given me much more than independence."

ALWAYS THERE WITH LOVE AND SUPPORT

By Natalia V. Navarro
SPECIAL TO THE ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Onyx is a little gift from heaven. That's what Bailey Bish, 17, and her mom, Helena Bish, say about the black lab mix they adopted as a service dog for Bailey in February.

The family found Onyx through the Handi-Dogs' Rescue to Service program. Bailey says her life has changed significantly since she and Onyx first met.

"He has given me much more independence," Bailey said. "He allows me to do things that I could never do without him. I can walk more now than I have ever been able to walk before."

See **HANDI-DOG, E4**



Bish, holding a clicker near Onyx, adopted the dog in February. Onyx senses when Bailey is about to faint and pushes his nose against her hand or puts his paws on her lap about 15 seconds before she loses consciousness.

DOGTOBERFEST FOR HANDI-DOGS

- **When:** 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 5
- **Where:** The Gregory School, 3231 N. Craycroft Road.
- **What:** Dog activities, 10 a.m.-1:45 p.m.
- Tickets are \$5. Children under

12 and dogs are free. According to the Dogtoberfest website, all well-mannered dogs on 6-foot or shorter leashes are welcome.

- The fun includes paw painting (think finger painting for pups), obstacle courses for both dogs

and owners, dog speed tests measured by radar gun, puppy IQ tests with the UA Canine Cognition Center and a selfie kissing booth. You can even get your dog blessed at the St. Mark's booth.

- **On Stage:** Stage area schedule available at dogtoberfestaz.org. Events include dog costume and trick contests and service dog and canine unit demonstrations.

Hungry Dog Food & Beer Garden

- Food and drinks will be available for sale. A beer garden, opening at 11 a.m., will welcome those 21 years of age or older, with ID. Beer provided by 805 Brewery.
- There's also a Dogtini Lounge.

Some of the best gifts to child are family stories, memories

A recent column expressing my conviction that thank-you notes are still obligatory (Oct. 10) generated a whirlwind of positive responses from grandparents. I had no idea this was such a hot issue among my fellow grandparents.

All of the emails thanked me for calling attention to this matter. Many said they sent the column to their grandchildren and/or the



Marilyn Heins

parents of their grandchildren. Many friends and strangers approached me to say, "Right on!"

One friend, with a smile on her face, told me I was much too soft on grandkids. Her approach with her grandson: "See this birthday present? It's the last one you will ever get from me unless I get a thank you note!" It worked!

I am delighted so many grandparents play a successful role in promoting civility and good manners. You get an A+.

I have another task for you, a homework assignment for grand-

parents. It will take a little time and thought, but it will be fun and worthwhile for both you and your grandchildren.

Talk with your grandchildren whenever you can about yourself and your world. Remember that "talk with" includes listening and encouraging questions and comments.

Mostly we grandmas and grandpas talk to our grandkids about their world.

How is school? What do you want to be when you grow up? Do you have a girlfriend or boyfriend yet? How's your job going?

Don't stop doing this but also talk about you and your world when you were growing up. The world changes so rapidly these days that we are "history" in the real sense of the word. Day-to-day life as we remember it does

See **HEINS, E4**

HANDI-DOG

Continued from Page E1

Bailey and Handi-Dogs trainer Pam Lundy trained Onyx, with clicker and reinforcement training, to apply constant pressure to his harness when the two walk together.

Bailey says this forward momentum task is the only thing keeping her out of a wheelchair full time.

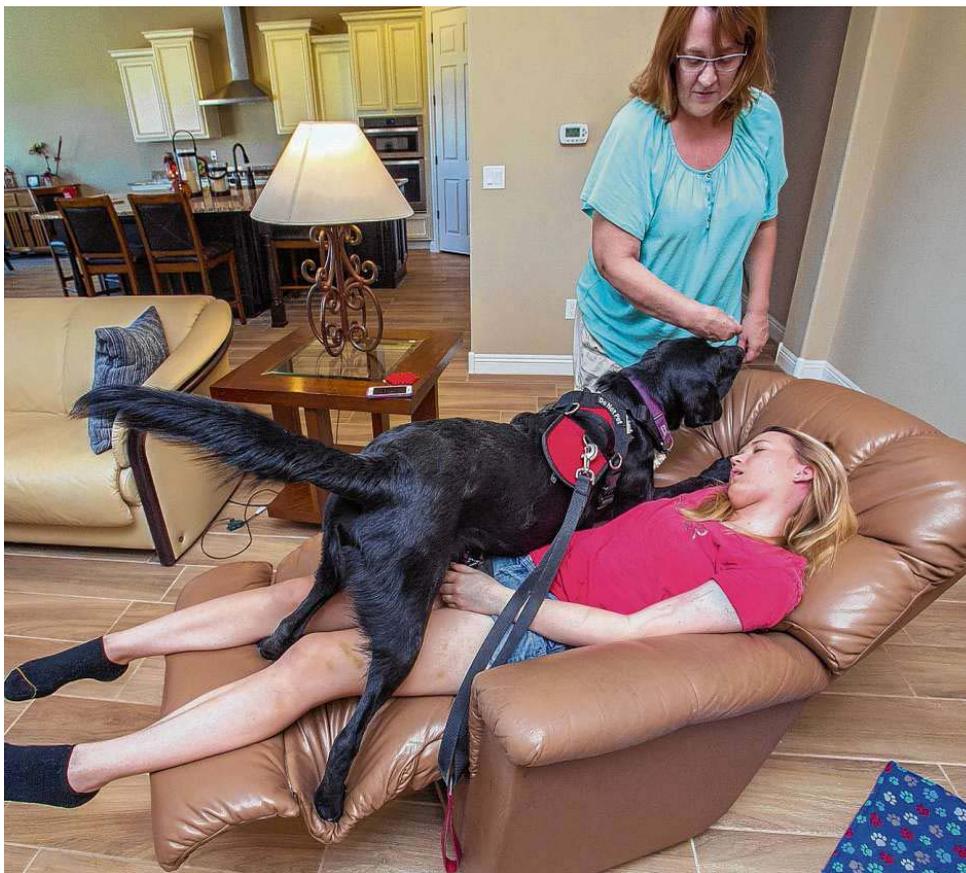
Handi-Dogs, a local nonprofit, sends volunteers to the Pima Animal Care Center and the Humane Society of Southern Arizona among other shelters to identify dogs who have potential to become service dogs for Tucsonans with disabilities.

Handi-Dogs will hold its major annual fundraiser, Dogtoberfest, a carnival for dogs and their people from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 5 at The Gregory School to raise money for programs, including Rescue to Service.

"We want dogs who are engaged with people, who can be handled, and, as in any kind of training, we have to make sure they don't have any resource guarding," Lundy said.

If a dog has the right temperament, he or she is tested by Handi-Dogs trainers and placed in a volunteer foster owner's home. The volunteer must bring the dog to several months of introductory training with Handi-Dogs before the dog is matched with a client. Once the dog is placed with a client, a trainer such as Lundy works with both dog and owner through several levels of training specialized for the person's needs.

"The nice thing about Rescue to Service is that if a dog doesn't work out for a team, someone who needs them for their own service dog, they've got several months of training so they're easily rehomed,"



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Helena Bish works with Onyx to respond to Bailey Bish's fainting spell during service dog training at their Tucson home.

Lundy said. "We never leave anybody out in the cold."

The nationally accredited organization is one of only a few programs that works with owners to train their service dogs themselves rather than training a dog with a set of general skills before they are placed with a client.

"Ultimately, they are the only ones who know what their needs are," Lundy said. "It creates a unique bond. During the training process, the dogs start to really relate to their person. Like, Onyx — he is instinctively doing things that are just remarkable."

Bailey has mobility issues due to encephalitis and

loses consciousness many times a day due to postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome, or POTS, a dysautonomic syndrome that affects the function of the autonomic nervous system.

At some point early in his training, Onyx started to sense when Bailey was about to faint. He began to push his nose against her hand or put both his paws on her lap about 15 seconds before she lost consciousness.

"There's no way to train that alert," Bailey said. "Like, at school I'll pass out two or three times a class and if I fell out of my chair, I would have to go home.

But with him, he alerts me and then I can put my head down so I am safe and I can just get right back up."

Lundy, who has worked with Onyx, Bailey and Helena since they began the program, says Bailey and Onyx are a seamless match.

"It's about Bailey and him finding the right dance," Lundy said. "Her and Onyx have become such a strong team together that they kind of fast-tracked through the training process. ... They make a beautiful picture."

In addition to the forward momentum pressure and the fainting alerts, Onyx helps stabilize Bailey with stability when she

stands and helps her get up when she falls. He also lays on top of her for deep pressure therapy and tactile stimulation to ground her nervous system when she needs it.

Onyx even alerted one of Bailey's friends at school before she passed out, Bailey said.

She says there are many misconceptions about service dogs. They do important work for their owners, but they do it out of love. And when they get home, they most certainly get time to be pets too.

"They are more than just a working dog," Bailey said. "He is really goofy, very hardworking. He just

wants to keep me safe ... but he also chases his tail and fetches balls."

Service dogs have become a passion for Bailey. She identified that there was a need for a Facebook group for POTS patients with service dogs. In the two months since she started the group, nearly 1,000 people have joined.

"He has helped me so much in all aspects of life and I want other people to experience that," Bailey said.

But what if you see a service dog in public?

Bailey says there are rules for interacting with service dogs.

"Treat him like he is not there," she said. "Don't talk to him if you're talking to me. Look me in the eye when you talk to me. He's not there for everyone's entertainment. He's there to help me mitigate my medical disabilities that I have no control over."

She also emphasizes that people should never pet a service dog without permission. It can affect the way the dog does his job. For example, if Onyx were distracted by passers-by oohing and aahing, he may miss the clues that tell him Bailey is about to lose consciousness.

According to Bailey, service dogs are legally considered medical equipment, just like wheelchairs.

"If you wouldn't go up and pet a wheelchair, don't come up and pet my service dog," she said.

As a mother, Helena is thankful for the newest addition to their family.

"Having a daughter go from very active and a go-getter to how she was when she was so ill," Helena said, "having someone like Onyx to prop her up and help her a little bit has been a wonderful thing."

Natalia V. Navarro is a freelance writer in Tucson.