

A Girl and her Shadow

by [Susan Quinn - Alberni Valley News](#)

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Kayla Aolick and Shadow, her seizure guide dog, pause during a walk along Kitsuksis Dike, where the second annual Purina Walk for Dog Guides will take place on May 31. Image credit: KATYA SLEPIAN/Alberni Valley News

Kayla Aolick views the day she saw her Shadow as the day she gained her independence.

Aolick has multiple seizures thanks to the after-effects of a brain tumour she had removed when she was younger. Shadow is her dog guide, and he is able to alert Aolick before she has a seizure, or alert someone nearby to get help for her.

More importantly, having Shadow by her side means Aolick is able to go about life without having someone watching her every step.

“I still have a lot of independence now. I go to a cooking group on Mondays and I don’t have to drag my mom with me. I can go just with him,” Aolick says.

“I can go other places without my mom having to watch over me all the time.”

Life has been a lot better since the Lions Foundation of Canada paired Aolick with Shadow, a five-year-old golden retriever, she said.

“Since having him I’ve been a lot better. The seizures have decreased. I might have one every couple of months.” She attributes being less stressed now that she has Shadow, as well as the fact he can alert her before she has a seizure so she can take medication to calm down. “He detects them before they happen,” Aolick explained.

“I might still have [a seizure] but it might not be as bad as when I wasn’t able to know before I got him.”

Shadow is not the only dog guide from the Lions Foundation of Canada assisting people in the Alberni

Valley: there are at least three other dogs from the same foundation helping children who have autism, Aolick said.

The walk takes place in more than 200 communities in Canada (the closest to Port Alberni is in Nanaimo) and 100 per cent of the money raised goes toward the six dog guide programs.

Aolick and her mother Sheila are giving back to the foundation by organizing the second annual Purina Walk for Dog Guides at Blair Park in Port Alberni on Sunday, May 31 at 1 p.m. (registration is at 12:15 p.m.).

Last year the pair raised \$4,800 and this year Kayla said she would like to raise more than \$5,000.

The Lions Foundation of Canada gives Canadians a new “leash” on life by providing dog guides to people dealing with a variety of challenges. There are canine vision, hearing ear, seizure response, autism assistance, diabetic alert and service dogs.

When Kayla Aolick was chosen to receive a dog guide, she spent three weeks in Ontario training with Shadow. The length of time a client trains with their dog guide is different, but all the programs are expensive to run, she said.

For more information or to register for the Purina Walk for Dog Guides, or if you are interested in helping sponsor the walk, please call Sheila Aolick at 250-720-1062 or the Lions Club of Port Alberni at 250-724-3393.

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KATYA SLEPIAN/ALBERNI VALLEY NEWS

Kayla Aolick walks her guide dog Shadow at Kitsuksis Dike last week. Aolick is preparing for the second annual Purina Walk for Dog Guides.