

## A Man and His Dog: Partner Jamie McDole Raises Service Pup to Help People with Disabilities

---

November 19, 2018

---

Haynes Boone Partner Jamie McDole has always had a passion for raising dogs. So when he learned about a non-profit organization that provides highly trained service dogs to veterans and other people with disabilities, he decided to use his passion and experience for a good cause.

McDole applied to become a volunteer puppy raiser for Canine Companions for Independence, which has provided more than 6,000 assistance dogs to people with disabilities at no cost to the recipients.

After McDole was accepted into the program, he welcomed an energetic lab puppy named Nyoko into his home to join his family of five humans and three other dogs. McDole is tasked with giving basic obedience training, socialization and care to the pup and teaching her dozens of basic commands.

The commitment also means taking the 9-month-old just about anywhere McDole goes to help socialize her – including the Haynes Boone Dallas office on Fridays.

“Our family regularly takes her on errands, to restaurants, sports stadiums and many other places,” said McDole, who is a first-chair trial lawyer in Haynes Boone’s Intellectual Property (IP) Litigation Practice Group. “The goal is to get her accustomed to people, loud noises and different environments.”

Nyoko must master more than 40 commands and complete approximately two years of training before she can be matched with an adult, child or veteran with disabilities. McDole will raise Nyoko for 18 months, and then she will be professionally trained by Canine Companions for another six to nine months. All the work will culminate in a joyful graduation ceremony, when Nyoko and the McDole family will walk across a stage together to hand off the leash.

Only 55 percent of the puppies in training will graduate to be skilled assistance dogs, according to Canine Companions. If Nyoko does not graduate, she could be released for meaningful placement as a therapy dog, guide dog or possibly a search-and-rescue dog. Several hundred “release” dogs currently work as as bomb searching, border patrol, customs, therapy and guide dogs.

### **Moved to Community Service**

Haynes Boone strongly encourages community service through pro bono work, mentorships and other initiatives and fully supports McDole’s undertaking. He said he became motivated to volunteer when firm Partner Phillip Philbin, co-chair of the IP Litigation Practice Group, suggested he use one of his passions to become involved in the community.

Soon thereafter, McDole heard District Judge Ed Kinkeade speak at a Northern District of Texas Bench Bar Conference about his work with Canine Companions, and the facility in Irving aptly named the Kinkeade Campus. Inspired by Judge Kinkeade’s presentation, McDole quickly contacted Canine Companions and began the process of becoming a Canine Companions puppy raiser.

“Haynes Boone lawyers have a long tradition of being good citizens in our communities. Jamie’s decision to work with the Kinkeade Campus of Canine Companions for Independence reflects well on the entire firm, and I am so proud of him,” Philbin said.

Aside from the pure love of working with dogs, McDole was moved to volunteer with Canine Companions because of the strong need for trained service dogs to help individuals lead more independent lives. The pups are trained to handle specific tasks such as:

- Retrieve and deliver dropped items
- Tug to open a door or drawer
- Pull a laundry basket, or help with a sock or jacket
- Push with their nose to shut a drawer
- Open a door with an automatic push plate
- Pull a lightweight manual wheelchair over a short distance
- Turn lights on and off
- Alerting and orienting recipients to sounds

Using the command “visit,” McDole showed how Nyoko can comfort a person by pressing her chin down on his or her leg. This is one of more than 30 commands that the duo practices.

With an increase in military veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), Canine Companions has launched a program to directly place service dogs with veterans with PTSD. The dogs will be trained in tasks such as nightmare interruption, turning on lights, retrieving items and supporting their handler in crowded public situations that might provoke anxiety for people with PTSD.

### **Family Affair**

Balancing a busy career as a lawyer with training a service pup is no problem for McDole, he says, because his family is very helpful. “I do the most with her, but this is truly a family effort.”

Taking care of dogs is also a labor of love for the McDoles. “My wife and I bought each other a pair of yellow labs as wedding gifts to each other,” he said. “We’ve always had two or three dogs, and I love to train them.”

The family knows it will be bittersweet to say goodbye to Nyoko when she graduates and moves onto her new home, but they take comfort in knowing she will be given to someone she can help.

“It is absolutely worthwhile knowing that we can change someone’s life,” McDole said, adding, “And after graduation, we get to do it all over again with another service puppy.”