



## A Dog as a Layer of Protection



Julian was 6 years old when he was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes (T1D). At their first diabetes walk that October, Julian's family met another family with an Early Alert Canine, and his mom, Carolyn, knew immediately that a diabetic alert dog was the missing piece in Julian's diabetes care.

"My husband and I had never had dogs growing up, and initially, my husband didn't want a dog. I explained to him why it was important. They talk about safety in swimming pools for little children: you have the gate around the pool, you have the children wear floaties, you don't let them in the pool alone; you have these layers of protection, and it's the same thing with diabetes. You have to do all of these things to safeguard your blood sugar levels. It's not an easy, 'put a band-aid on it' type of situation. Diabetes is more complicated than that." So, they came to Early Alert Canines and applied for a dog. After the application

process, orientation, and team training, "Guinness became one of our levels of protection!"

On orientation day with EAC, Julian and Carolyn were introduced to several program dogs. Julian fell in love with Nunzio, but "Nunzio was too strong minded," Carolyn told us. When doing an exercise in the parking lot to see how each person handled each dog, "Nunzio dragged me around the parking lot, and I was like, 'no, no, no, it's fine, my son likes Nunzio, my son wants Nunzio, it's fine!' EAC knew that Nunzio wasn't the right fit for us." EAC placed Julian with Guinness, a big, gentle, black lab. "We have birds at home, and you have to pick a service dog that is able to override their hunting instincts, like the instinct to catch a bird! Not all dogs can do that. Guinness, i.e., the perfect dog, was submissive to our parrots. They would make eye contact and Guinness would look down, it was just perfect."

One of Guinness' primary jobs upon placement was the nightshift. "Julian's room is in the back part of the house, and we use a baby monitor to hear his pump and sensor beeping from our bedroom at night. Guinness is trained to get up and come across the house, into our bedroom and around to my side of the bed, and put two paws up on my side of the mattress."

Carolyn told us a story of a night where Julian was having a bad blood sugar night, “Julian slept on the couch in my bedroom one night. I forgot to move Guinness’ dog bed into my room, so he just slept back in Julian’s room. I thought, ‘oh, he won’t be alerting tonight, I forgot to move his bed.’ In the middle of the night, I hear Guinness’ collar jingling on the baby monitor. I knew Julian’s blood sugar was low, because I had already gotten up to treat it, but sure enough, from the back of the house, Guinness came into my room, in the middle of the night, from the other side of the house, rooms away from Julian, and he alerted! I gave him a treat, and he went back to bed in Julian’s room! He’s just amazing.”



Guinness was initially placed with Julian as a skilled companion dog, as Julian was under the age of 12. A skilled companion dog primarily stays home, and is handled by the parent or caregiver of the child with diabetes. Shortly after Julian turned 12, he wanted to transition Guinness to a full service access dog. “Julian was fortunate enough to have the same teacher two years in a row, his teacher moved up grades with his class. Before he turned 12, Julian didn’t bring his dog to school, but Guinness would come to visit, so Julian’s teacher was familiar with Guinness. After Julian turned 12 Julian says, ‘I’m bringing Guinness to school this year,’ and his teacher says, ‘well of course, it’s his service dog!’ Guinness was the first dog at our upper elementary school, and now he goes to middle school with Julian.” Guinness took very well to the school life, “he’s just been wonderful and a Godsend.”

Julian recently turned 13, an age of manhood in many cultures. “Guinness was actually in the bar mitzvah with Julian! Julian had to go up *bimah*, the equivalent of an alter, and Guinness was up there with Julian when he did his bar mitzvah. Guinness was probably the first dog to be bar mitzvahed! Guinness even wore a yamaka, it was just the cutest thing.”



“We have the CGM, we eat balanced foods, and blah blah blah, but you just can’t predict diabetes. It’s such a serious disease with so many variables, you just can’t get it right all the time. What they say at EAC is true— the dog is always right. Sometimes he will alert, but his CGM will be totally flat and his meter will say he’s fine, and a few minutes later, he will just tank. For no reason! **I rely on Guinness.**”

“Guinness will keep things from becoming a



full disaster. Sometimes, when we are busy, maybe hosting a party with 50+ people over, and I'm cooking, that's when diabetes goes to the back of my mind. That's when Guinness will come and alert, when I'm just not thinking about it. That's when he really is helping me, because I forgot to keep watching.

**“Guinness is just amazing. The emotional support and comfort that he gives my son, is equally valuable to his diabetes alerting. The love he gives, he's just part of our family. He's the wonderdog!”**