

Shining Star Award 2021

CCA Shining Star Committee: Corinne Boon, Deborah Gates – Co-Chairs
Ann Boles, Susie DeLorenzo, Candace Hunter,
Jerry Sulewski, Celia Van Voorhis

Every year, the Collie Club of America invites applications for the Shining Star Awards program. The program is open to any purebred Collie who works as a service dog, therapy dog, education/library assistance dog, search and rescue dog, or has done any exceptionally good deed(s) for his family or the community.

This year, the CCA Shining Star Committee received 19 applications describing special Collies across the USA and even internationally. While there can only be one Shining Star Ambassador team, all applicants meeting the CCA Shining Star criteria receive a formal certificate of recognition.

The Collie Club of America Shining Star Committee proudly announces the 2021 Shining Star Ambassador Team:

Phil Cox and his service Collie—Crookshanks Suburbia’s Chasing Garden Gnomes CGC CGCA TKN NTD VHMA

Breeders: Robin Modrzynski, Karen West, and Renee McGlone

Phil reached out to Clear Path for Veterans in the Syracuse, New York, area. The mission of Clear Path for Veterans Canine Program is to provide healing therapy for PTSD veterans through the bonding process of handler and partner. Phil’s search for a replacement service dog ended with the introduction of a sable merle Smooth Collie named Crookshanks. Over the course of one year, Phil and Crookshanks completed extensive service dog training at the Clear Path for Veterans facilities.

Crookshanks calms and grounds Phil in the various manifestations of his military service-connected disabilities. Crookshanks is Phil’s rock: Crookshanks has been trained to provide emotional support as well as physical support to his owner. Crookshanks has even learned to respond to hand commands and rudimentary sign language.

When needed, Crookshanks provides Phil with deep pressure therapy. Crookshanks will lie across Phil’s lap and lean into his chest, applying his entire body weight to help Phil ground and refocus. Alternatively, Crookshanks will come up to Phil and put his head in

Phil’s lap. When someone approaches Phil from the rear, Crookshanks will alert Phil by leaning into Phil’s side. Crookshanks also turns lights on.

Crookshanks is able to detect the blood sugar changes associated with diabetes. At night, when Phil’s sugar levels drop too low, Crookshanks alerts Phil’s wife who then administers glucose. This is potentially lifesaving.

Here is Phil’s description of what Crookshanks’ support means to him: “An effective treatment for depression can be very elusive to capture. So when I hear positive comments from people who are not used to seeing me out and about, smiling and engaging with others, it tells me that I have found an incredibly positive influence in my life that transcends the walls we create – unconditional love. With Crookshanks by my side, I feel invincible at times. And when I don’t, he does his very best to prop me up so I can make it through my day. Essentially, he gives me a reason to crawl out of my hole and face my worst fears head-on.

My wife and I have been paralegals by trade, and ADA advocates by accident. When I was first introduced to the concept of service animals I was quick to familiarize myself with service animal laws. Since then, I have shared my knowledge base with individuals and businesses alike, giving lectures or over tea. Crookshanks accompanies me as an ambassador of Service Dogs at large...We are often on the road, talking to fellow veterans and active duty soldiers at Fort Drum, New York, and random members of the public (“What kind of dog is that?”), and giving orientations to business. This activity is an exercise in learning to calm my nerves on the fly and get back into public speaking.”

Crookshanks has earned CGC, CGCA, TKN, NTD, and VHMA titles. Phil is also a member of the Collie Club of Central New York and has plans to expand horizons with additional club and outreach activities. ❖

