



PRESS RELEASE

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Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation

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FIDELCO GUIDE DOG "IZAAC" HONORED WITH RED CROSS HERO AWARD
PARTNERED WITH BILL DEMAIO, DIRECTOR OF PARKS AND RECREATION FOR THE CITY OF
NEW BRITAIN

BLOOMFIELD, Conn. – A life-changing Fidelco Guide Dog named "Izaak" is among a group of life-saving heroes honored by the Connecticut chapter of the Red Cross with the 2014 Heroes Awards. Izaak is partnered with Fidelco client Bill DeMaio, Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of New Britain. DeMaio is blind due to the degenerative eye disease retinitis pigmentosa.

Founded and headquartered in Connecticut, Fidelco breeds and trains its elite German Shepherd Guide Dogs for people who are blind across North America. This isn't the first time one of its guide dogs has been bestowed with the prestigious award. Fidelco Guide Dog "Unique" was honored with a Heroes Award in 2010 for leading Fidelco client William "Bill" Podolny to safety after his Manchester home was struck by lightning, triggering an intense fire.

"We are very proud of Izaak and all of our Fidelco Guide Dogs working diligently every day to keep their partners safe in a world that presumes the ability of everyone to see," said Fidelco CEO and Executive Director Eliot D. Russman. "Bill and Izaak are a shining example of the life-changing partnerships made possible by our donors. It is an honor for Izaak to be counted among the life-saving heroes recognized by the Red Cross."

"The characteristics of a hero are bravery, courage and performing extraordinary duties," said Bill DeMaio. "I think Izaak does that every minute of our lives together. He's my hero, every single day."

Izaak was placed with DeMaio in 2011. It takes two years, 15,000 hands-on hours and \$45,000 to produce and place each Fidelco Guide Dog. They are provided at no cost to blind clients along with lifetime client services.

Since its founding in 1960, Fidelco remains the only Connecticut-headquartered guide dog school. The non-profit organization relies solely on the gifts and the generosity of individuals, foundations, corporations and civic organizations to help it Share The Vision®. For more information visit www.fidelco.org.

About Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation

The Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit based in Bloomfield, CT. Fidelco is an internationally accredited organization and an admired expert throughout the world for its highly valued German Shepherd Guide Dogs.

Each Fidelco Guide Dog takes two years, 15,000 hands-on hours and \$45,000 to produce. They are given to clients at no cost. Fidelco provides 24/7 client support for the entire working life of its guide dogs – typically 10 years. Fidelco relies solely on the generosity and financial support of individuals, foundations, corporations and civic organizations to help Share the Vision®.

Fidelco has trained and placed over 1,350 German Shepherd Guide Dogs throughout North America – in 41 states and five Canadian provinces. Fidelco pioneered In-Community Placement in the United States — a process that allows all guide dog users to be trained in the communities where they live and work.

Fidelco also has placed hundreds of its German Shepherd Dogs with law enforcement agencies, first responders, search and rescue, and missing child recovery organizations to help protect our fellow citizens and keep our communities safe. For more information visit www.fidelco.org.

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