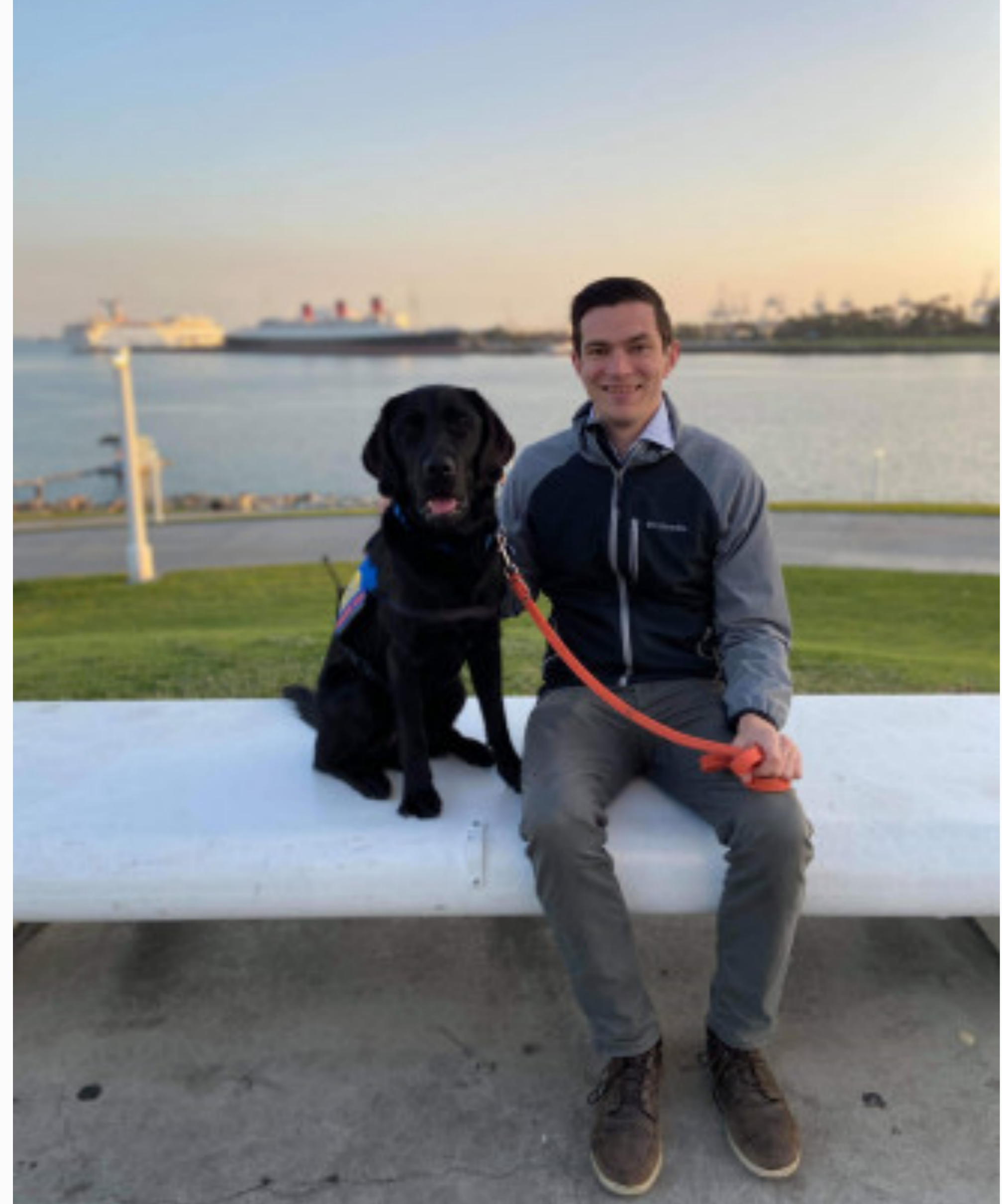


LOCAL NEWS • News

# Cerritos College professor graduates training course with new hearing dog



Cerritos College professor Nick Matthews and his new hearing dog, TJ, pose in Long Beach after graduating Canine Companions for Independence training class. (Courtesy photo)

By **HUNTER LEE** | hlee@scng.com | PUBLISHED: May 14, 2020 at 3:40 p.m. | UPDATED: May 14, 2020 at 3:41 p.m.

Everyone could use a helping hand. Or four.

Long Beach resident and Cerritos College professor Nick Matthews recently completed a two-week training course with the nonprofit Canine Companions for Independence and has been partnered with his new hearing dog, TJ.

Canine Companions for Independence, based in Santa Rosa, breeds, raises and trains assistance dogs for people with disabilities.

Matthews, who has congenital hearing loss, decided after living on his own to apply for a hearing dog through the organization. He was matched with TJ, a 2-year-old black labrador/golden retriever mix that has been professionally trained to alert Matthews to sounds in his environment.



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“Having TJ with me makes me more confident that I can be in touch with what is going on around me,” Matthews said in a statement. “Sounds I would normally be oblivious to, TJ will alert me.”

Matthews graduated with TJ after completing an intense, residential training course in Santa Rosa. During training, students are matched with assistance dogs and learn how to work with them, an experience that was made even more special for Matthews because his mother was there receiving her hearing dog, Gita.



Cerritos College professor Nick Matthews with his new hearing dog, TJ, Matthew's mother, Ann, also graduated from Canine Companions for Independence with her own hearing dog, Gita. (Courtesy photo)

Though costs to breed, raise, train an assistance dog and provide ongoing support to the team are estimated at \$50,000, Canine Companions assistance dogs are provided free of charge to recipients.

Hearing dogs alert their partners to sounds by making physical contact such as nudging their leg or arm, then leading them to the sound. These sounds include a doorbell, alarm clock, smoke alarm or someone calling their partner's name. After being placed in the home, the partner can further train the dog's alerting to their own environment and needs.

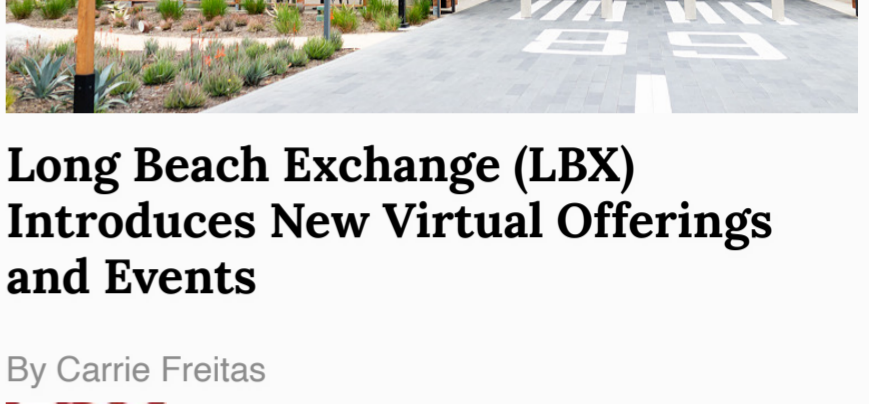
TJ will be by Matthews' side as he finishes up his doctoral degree at California State University Long Beach. Matthews' dissertation research focuses on accessibility in higher education for students with disabilities. TJ will also have a lifelong buddy in his partner's mother's hearing dog, Gita.

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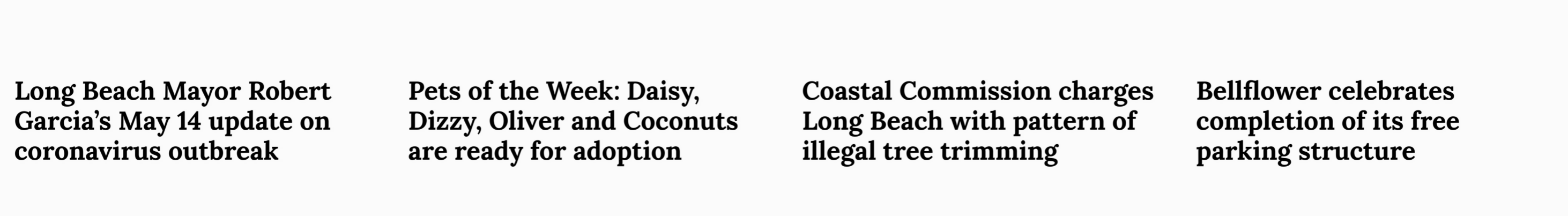
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