

## Constant Companions

**Specially trained service dogs help children with autism move bravely into a bigger world.**

*By Wendy Bedwell-Wilson*

A trip to Costco may not frighten most people, but for 8-year-old James Pyle-McCrackyn, it was a nightmare. James has autism, and the bright lights, open space and throngs of people used to trigger a panic response that turned into an emotional meltdown, complete with screaming and tantrums.

But thanks to a Golden Retriever named Comet, visits to Costco – and the airport, the mall and even a Disneyland cruise – aren't as traumatic for the boy and his family.

"Costco was a very overwhelming place for James," explains his mother, Raven Pyle-McCrackyn. "About a month after Comet started working with James, he walked into Costco and took a deep breath. I thought he was going to scream. But then he looked down and said, 'Comet,' and just walked right in. He was totally fine. I couldn't believe it."

Because of his assistance dog, James has begun to socialize with adults and his peers. He feels more comfortable and stable in new environments. Most importantly, he and his parents know that he will be safe.

Want to read the full story? Pick up the December 2009 issue of DOG WORLD today, or [subscribe](#) to receive the best dog articles, dog news, and dog information every month!