Ben Polega: “My name is Ben Polega, I’m a freshman, so I'm new (*SHOW: Shots of Ben walking into campus w/ Friday, HEAR: Low NATS of Ben talking to Friday).* A little fish in a big pond.”

Ben Polega is entering his freshman year at McCallum with a best friend at his side, his service dog Friday. *(SHOW: Shot of Ben entering school’s front doors & shot of Ben giving Friday a treat, HEAR: Low NATS of door opening)*

Polega: “It has been crazy, people have been friendly. *(SHOW Ben going down the hallway with Friday & Ben’s first day of school pic w/ Friday, HEAR: Low NATS of Ben and Friday)* I’m planning on bringing a white lab into campus soon -- coming attraction: Friday!”

Ben was born with Quadriplegia *(SHOW: Photo of Ben w/ Friday @ main hallway mosaic)* which presents daily challenges that Friday helps to manage. *(SHOW: Friday picking up a bar for Ben, HEAR: Low NATS of Friday’s collar jingling)*

Polega: “I was born with quadriplegia, it affects all four limbs. But that does not stop me. I am in general ed classes and this whole school journey has been amazing.” *(SHOW: Picture of Ben and Friday at a basketball court)*

Ben met Friday on September 25th of last year, when the trainers from Topaz Assistance Dogs came from Florida to introduce them to one another. Since then, Friday has been a big help to Ben. *(WMT of Ben and Friday examining McCallum’s hallways and classrooms, HEAR: Low NATS of shot)*

Polega: “She picks up stuff, she also can get things for me. She also can open doors and close doors, get help if I’m having a seizure, *(SHOW: WMT shots of Ben giving Friday a command, HEAR: Low NATS of Friday’s commands)* and currently I am working on helping her learn soccer. She can nose the ball!”

But the help Friday gives Ben goes both ways. *(SHOW: Shot of Ben releasing Friday from a command, HEAR: Low NATS of Ben talking to Friday)*

“I like the support she gives me. We do a thing called ‘you scratch my fur, and I’ll scratch your fur,’ which basically means we do things for each other.” *(SHOW: Pictures of Ben and Friday cuddling in bed together)*

With their friendship now being a year old, Ben has taught Friday a few tricks, but Friday still has more to learn as she enters the strange new territory of high school. *(SHOW: shot of Friday putting away a towel and turning on a light switch & shot of Friday dropping something on Ben’s tray, HEAR: Low NATS of Friday’s commands)*

Polega: “Last year the trainers came out from Florida and stayed with us for a week. They were really so inspiring, they were amazing. *(SHOW: Pictures of Topaz Assistant Dogs’ website)* By the end of the two weeks we were ready to go out, but we did not test, we’re waiting to test school. So I like to call it puppy boot camp!”

Friday is trained to sit still, so while she’s at school she’s on the clock, even though it might be tempting, it’s important to resist the urge to pet her. *(WMT shots of Ben giving FRIDAY a sit command, HEAR: Low NATS od Ben saying “sit”)*

Polega: You can’t pet her, she’s working. She can only be released by me. Ask me and talk to me first.”

Ben wants students and staff to know that if they see a white fluffy dog on campus, her name is Friday. *(SHOW: Shots of Ben talking to teachers at McCallum, HEAR: Low NATS of Ben talking to teachers)*

Polega: “She’s energetic and she is coming soon to a classroom near you!”

This has been Lucy Marco and Alice Scott reporting for the Shield online. *(SHOW: Shot of Ben releasing Friday from a command, Hear: Low NATS of Ben talking to Friday)*

*(NATS: Ben telling Friday “good girl”)*