

# My life as a Dog

**B**y day, Jason Weingardt is an unassuming and shy sophomore at Walt Whitman High School in Bethesda. But on summer evenings, Weingardt adopts a different persona—or maybe it’s a “pawsona.” Weingardt becomes Homer, the fun-loving mascot for the Bethesda Big Train, an amateur baseball team made up of collegiate players.

Being a 5-foot-5-inch hound dog isn’t easy. During the dog days of summer, it’s sweltering inside the Homer suit. “It’s about 110 degrees, it’s terrible,” says Weingardt, 15. And the Big Train doesn’t even throw him a bone in terms of getting paid. “I do it for community service hours,” he says. “I’m aiming for 200.”

But Weingardt says he loves being Homer. “I get into the games for free, and I get to show another side of myself I don’t usually get to show. I’m normally a shy person.”

*Bethesda Magazine* asked Weingardt what life’s like as a large hound dog:

**Bethesda Magazine:** How did you become Homer?

**Weingardt:** I started in the summer of sixth grade. I went to a lot of Big Train games and the former general manager said they were desperate for a mascot. The Homer suit I got then is the same suit I’m wearing today. It was enormous.

**Bethesda Magazine:** Are you the only Homer?

**Weingardt:** There are several of us, although I make more appearances than the others. I’ve given Homer his own personality. A lovable loser. As a Cubs fan, it has a double meaning to me.

**Bethesda Magazine:** What have you learned not to do as Homer?



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**Weingardt:** I’ve learned to try not to scare the infants because they cry.

**Bethesda Magazine:** What do your friends think of your doing this?

**Weingardt:** They can’t understand why I would do this and not get paid.

**Bethesda Magazine:** Do your friends come to the Big Train games?

**Weingardt:** Last year on the last day of school, I told people at school they should come to the game that night. When I came out of the press box, there was a large group of 15-year-olds with pen and paper in hand, asking for autographs—along with the 5-year-olds.

**Bethesda Magazine:** Has Homer become your moniker even when you don’t have the suit on?

**Weingardt:** My nickname is Homer on

the Whitman JV baseball team.

**Bethesda Magazine:** Does being Homer help you meet girls?

**Weingardt:** It’s a terrible way to meet girls. Girls will think I’m crazy. They’d say “There’s no way I’d go out with that kind of guy!”

**Bethesda Magazine:** Do you watch the mascots at other sporting events?

**Weingardt:** Yes. I recently went to a Wizards game and watched their mascot, G-Wiz. He moves around a lot really fast. Homer is a different kind of mascot. He’s more dull than any other mascot I’ve ever seen. He’s a hound dog.

**Bethesda Magazine:** Do you think being Homer will help you get into college?

**Weingardt:** Sure. How many kids can put something like that on their résumé?

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