

# Paws of Allegiance

Fall 2020 Newsletter - Paws for Purple Hearts



## Warriors Helping Warriors

128 Dogs Deployed | 15,865 Therapy Session Participation\* | 10,497 Lives Improved

\*Session slots filled (many Warriors attend multiple sessions)



2020 Graduates, Ozzy and Angela

### Ozzy Impacts a Great Warrior, Woman, & Mother

By: Jessica Delgado

CMSgt (Retired) Angela Wood began her journey in the U.S. Air Force enlisted ranks in 1982. Ready to forge a path of her own making, she followed in the footsteps of her predecessors and pledged her life to serve her country. In the next thirty years, she would shatter the glass ceiling and achieve the highest enlisted rank, E-9/Chief Master Sergeant. This prestigious honor is only attained by 1% of Warriors; by Women Warriors, even less. Her dedication to her country and family have had a lasting impact on the people around her, most especially her son, who, like his mother, has pledged his life to fight for our freedoms.

Angela and Ozzy recently graduated as a service dog team. On September 4th, 2020, in San Antonio, Texas, a match made in heaven was cemented in commitment and loyalty to each other. As our first female Veteran to be paired with a service dog, she is, again, forging new paths. Already, Ozzy has changed the world she lives in and how she views it in a significant way. A paw sized space has been filled, and life without him has become unimaginable.

**“Ozzy has impacted my life in so many ways. He has brought life back into my life if that makes sense. I have a reason to get up in the morning and have someone to focus on other than myself.”**

To donate, text **PURPLEPAWS** to 707070 or visit [www.paws4ph.org/donate](http://www.paws4ph.org/donate)

# The Mission Continues

Paws for Purple Hearts is serving our brave Warriors despite the global pandemic

## Social Therapy in Menlo Park

By: Megan Franke

The Menlo Park team has been providing Social Therapy to the Veterans and hospital staff at the Community Living Center (CLC) at the Menlo Park VA almost every week, starting when service dog-in-training, Arri, was just eight weeks old. Now at seven months old and almost 65 pounds, Warriors at the CLC have watched Arri grow up.



The CLC is a place where Veterans can receive a nursing home level of care and have help with daily activities. Because of the concerns of COVID-19, visitors are not permitted to enter the building. However, the building is one story with easily accessible windows, which allows for Veteran's families to visit, as well as our pups. The hospital staff put up signs that say "puppy visit please," so the Menlo Park team knows which windows to stop at and have our pups say hi.

**"We are trying to do anything that we can, providing a moment to decompress and stay connected even if it's from a distance." - Tamara, senior program instructor at PPH Menlo Park**



Drew with a Veteran during Canine-Assisted Warrior Therapy®

## PPH San Diego Hosts First On-Site Canine Therapy Program

By: Caitlin Donahue

Since 2016, the San Diego team has traveled weekly to local Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities to teach recovering Warriors how to train service dogs, but this program was put on hold in March due to COVID-19 safety restrictions. That got our team thinking.

**"If we can't bring PPH dogs to our Warriors, let's bring the Warriors to our dogs." - Selah, senior program instructor at PPH San Diego**

After months of negotiation and collaboration with our VA partners, we came up with a plan to safely begin therapy sessions at our very own training center for the first time. Not only did this allow us to keep serving Warriors, but it actually improved the quality of the program itself. With Veterans coming to us, we now have access to all of our equipment and a huge space for training, making each session even more impactful.

We couldn't have done it without the generous support of our donors, who provided funding and supplies to get this program started, and our generous volunteers who committed time and energy upgrading our facility.

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# From Puppy To Placement

PPH dogs positively impact 40-60 Warriors throughout their training journey

## Welcome Beo!

By: Danielle Stockbridge

Usually, our motto, Warriors helping Warriors® refers to our Canine-Assisted Warrior Therapy® program, where Warriors help train life-long service companions for their comrades. But sometimes our dogs are Warriors in their own right, like Beo, a service dog-in-training at our Ruther Glen facility.

Beo's litter was infected with a disease that caused his siblings to pass away. Miraculously, this puppy demonstrated the heart of a champion as he struggled to overcome numerous obstacles and grew a little stronger each day.

When it became clear that he would not succumb to the sickness, his name was selected. Beo, short for Beowulf, comes from a famous 8th Century Anglo-Saxon epic poem about a Scandinavian warrior of the same name. The original Beowulf fought for his life and to protect a neighboring kingdom from fearsome monsters, just as our Beo fought to survive against an unseen illness and now dedicates his life to protecting the Warriors he serves. If you see this vibrant young puppy now, you would never guess all of the trials he's already faced and conquered.



Beo with CEO, Bonnie Bergin



Six-month-old Beo



Warrior hugging Elma

## Specialist Therapy Dog Graduates in Alaska

By: Megan Franke

Elma is a 3-year-old black lab, originally from our Ruther Glen site. She recently traveled to Alaska to be placed with her forever partner, Sara, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) at a military base in Alaska. Elma graduated as a specialist therapy dog, meaning she will work alongside Sara to assist with clinical evaluations, interventions, and treatment of Veterans and Active Duty Service Members.

Paws For Purple Hearts provides assistance dogs to selected health/human service specialists who want to utilize dogs in clinical work to provide therapeutic benefits and improve the quality of care for Warrior patients.

**"My hope is that Active Duty Service Members and Veterans feel more at ease and seek help if they need help and just to decrease the stigma around talking to a mental health professional." - Sara, LCSW**

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## **Paws for Purple Hearts**

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**San Antonio, Texas** (210) 526-0100

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