

Paws of Allegiance



It's Our 10th
Anniversary



Warriors Helping Warriors

National



The Beginning

By: Bonita Bergin, President

On a crisp autumn morning in 2007, I rushed out onto the deck of Kaiser Hospital in San Francisco in time to take a phone call from Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington D.C., the U.S. Army's flagship medical center. That very morning my husband had been hospitalized due to a heart condition. At the very day and time the phone call had been scheduled, my husband was in surgery. Needless to say, my emotions were in an upheaval and my CEO hat was tilted sideways, but I was cognizant enough to realize Bergin University of Canine Studies (BUCS) was being invited to implement a program for Veterans at the most prestigious military hospital in the county, a program similar to that of the small hometown program we were operating with at-risk teens in Sonoma County, California.

Cont. The Beginning

Visibly shaken on two fronts, I rushed upstairs to the waiting room to await word of his condition and was thrilled to learn almost immediately that my husband's surgery was a success and that he would be able to leave later that afternoon, his heart now pumping strongly with the aid of five stents.

In 1994, Bergin University (then known as The Assistance Dog Institute) had started a program at El Camino Continuation High School teaching teens to train service dogs for people with mobility disabilities in the hopes of giving them a sense of purpose. It was very successful and we were invited to expand the program to the local juvenile detention center with the expectation that involvement with dogs would work miracles with that population of young kids caught up in the fray of absentee parenting, low confidence, low social self-esteem, anxiety and depression, and the social isolation that resulted in gang banging to fill in the gaps.

The gathering spot for staff communications in our office was the copy machine. One day, having seen a newscast about the reintegration struggles our Veterans had upon returning from the Middle East wars, a staff member linked the similarities of our purposeful work with teens at-risk to the needs of these returning Veterans. To this day I can't explain my reaction, but upon hearing this, I immediately said (it felt like I shouted it), "That's it, that's what we should do!" Like so many of us with friends or spouses during the Vietnam War era, we didn't understand the impact of war, we only knew that the draft invaded our lives, put it on hold.

And when our drafted friends returned, changed, depressed, seeking drugs, isolation, we were only superficially supportive due to a complete lack of understanding or depth of perception of the cause. With age and life experience came an understanding of the horror our then youthful friends must have experienced. Our perspective changed, society's awareness changed, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) became a medical term and in 2006 development began on this new University program subsequently named Paws for Purple Hearts (PPH) with an inspired staff and Board of Trustees.

Unfortunately about this same time, Walter Reed had some serious problems and were unable to move forward with the program, but an insightful BUCS' volunteer became aware of the concept and shared it with his daughter, a manager at the Palo Alto VA's Menlo Park Trauma Care Center. As luck or divine intervention would have it, this VA was foremost in the country serving these returning Veterans. Bergin University was invited to start this fledgling but determined program there.

Mark Quattrocchi, Chairman of the Board

"I couldn't be more pleased to celebrate Paws for Purple Hearts' Tenth Anniversary! PPH and our extraordinary staff have come a long way since our humble beginnings developing a new and unheard-of program of Canine Assisted Warrior Therapy® at our first site at the Menlo Park Veterans Trauma Care Center – where veterans trained dogs for their fellow wounded warriors and found therapeutic healing for themselves. What originally began as a research program at Bergin University of Canine Studies, grew into a nationwide organization supporting wounded Service Members and Veterans.

As part of the original Board of Directors, there were times when our fledgling organization struggled to find our footing, as we adapted to and overcame governmental bureaucracy and limited financial support. Over the years I saw the dedicated PPH team, led by Dr. Bonnie Bergin, continue telling our story and sharing the program's successes. I continue to be moved by our staff, and stories by the Veterans and Service Members we serve – of course in hindsight, success for such an extraordinary program was inevitable.

As we celebrate this significant milestone, I offer my heartfelt thanks to our donors who believed in us as we remained vigilant and told our story. Without you the over 10,000 lives PPH has touched would not be possible."

Cont. The Beginning

As Menlo Park's clinical staff began to document the program results, other VA's became interested and PPH blossomed into its five current sites across the US. Many of these clinical benefits were in line with those experienced by the teens at-risk, others more specific to the war experience:

- Less anxiety and depression
- Greater sociability and a more positive outlook
- A mission driven focus and renewed sense of purpose
- Lessened social isolation
- Improved family dynamics
- More successful readjustment
- Decreased avoidance
- Lessened hyper-arousal
- Decreased dependence on pain medications
- Improved parenting skills

It wasn't smooth sailing. Unexpected snags arose often enough to almost knock us off our game. Donors whose sole interest was in supporting the Paws for Purple Hearts project but not Bergin University, suggested PPH be separately incorporated. The Board and I were worried that the quality of the PPH program might deteriorate were it to begin at a beginning – as a separate unguided organization. So a licensing agreement was created to ensure Bergin University's program quality and new research and development "best practices" continued to be a part of PPH's operation. Incorporation was completed in 2011. Incorporating was relatively easy, but gaining the same not-for-profit 501 (c)3 status Bergin University already enjoyed took legal help, time and money.

Unexpectedly, shortly thereafter, we were informed that the terms, Purple Hearts, was trademarked requiring us to make a name change. This after several years of working hard to meaningfully associate our program concept to the name.

After in depth negotiations, we were able to resolve that glitch by agreeing to conditions that were in both of our best interests, like maintaining the sanctity of our mission, not selling products like swords or any other war-related items, and reviewing any major program changes with the owner of the trademark. Another glitch came as our Walter Reed program was undercut and our resources usurped by a competitor. After an expensive legal battle, once again a compromise was reached. With the almost limitless need Veterans had for our services across the US, holding onto that one site was cutting into our ability to meet the greater need. So PPH marched onward.

Triumph seems to come as unexpectedly as glitches. Our twin mottos of "Dogs Helping Veterans", and "Veterans Helping Veterans" were realized in so many ways. Not only were the dogs providing the Veterans a segue to loving and embracing life again, after the horrifying experiences of war, but by training dogs for their fellow Veterans, a sense of purpose was definitely renewed.



Dr. Bonita Bergin

Cont. The Beginning

In those six months that I personally drove down to the Menlo Park VA bringing pups to teach the Veterans to train, I witnessed firsthand the Veterans' dedication, the caring, the desire to do right by the pups so they would become the most perfect service dog to help a fellow Veteran. And I had the awesome opportunity to meet and interact with the dedicated Menlo Park VA staff which over time resulted in some of our most exciting research and innovations.

While many similarities between our work with teens at-risk and Veterans existed, PTSD was not an apparent one. I continue to be saddened by the ignorance of our initial expectations resulting from our experiences with teens at-risk, but I am grateful to have been at a place and time to be a part of the solution. Although we were expecting the dogs to provide solace and support to the Veterans, it never occurred to us that the dogs misbehaviors like trying to chase a squirrel, of which there are many on the Menlo Park campus, could trigger a PTSD episode. For the Veteran, the ensuing battle to stop the dog's chase did on several occasions bring back memories of the war which was an emotional trigger, the exact opposite of the intended purpose of the dog's presence.



Dog practicing "Go Say Hi" with Veteran

However, in meetings with Menlo Park staff, in particular Melissa, Sarah and Michael, we were able to develop policies and breeding practices to alleviate much of the problem. It was in those meetings that it became clear also, that any tasks taught to the dog whereby the dog would assume his role was to create and maintain a distance between the Veteran and any approaching person, was an impediment to the Veteran's ability to reintegrate or readjust to life. At this time, in history, even Assistance Dogs Int'l programs were using commands that focused on providing a distance between the general public and the Veteran. The same was true for commands taught to the dog that reinforced fear like "clear" to make sure the house had no dangers within when in actuality most Veteran PTSD concerns arose from being outside the home, the home often being the isolation sanctuary.

PPH began focusing on commands the Veteran could give like "shake" with the paw reaching outward toward the approaching person so that the person's approach would be sidetracked to shake and converse with the dog first, giving the Veteran a chance to ready him or herself for social communication "about the dog". A command like "go say hi" was still considered acceptable as long as it was initiated by the Veteran and not an action automatically assumed by the dog.

Assistance Dogs International also changed during these last ten years. Not only did it begin to accredit programs in an attempt to upgrade quality, but its knowledge expanded to include the medical community's recommendations about Veteran service dog training. The old adage, "whatever the Veteran wants" transitioned to "whatever is medically best for the Veteran".

Our plan, to be within reach of every Veteran in these United States has yet to be realized, but we are moving forward. (See "Expanding to Better Serve our Brave Warriors") In the meantime, we continue to dedicate PPH and its dogs to those who have given so much to this country to make it a safer place for us and our families.

CAWT® Programs

By: Cate Dorr, BUCS Clinical Director

Canine-Assisted Warrior Therapy® is a goal oriented intervention which supports Veterans in treatment for Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI), and other diagnoses to achieve their highest level of potential. Paws for Purple Hearts (PPH) instructors work closely with VA staff and clinicians to enhance traditional curriculum with the incorporation of therapeutic service dog training for Veterans in recovery. By learning the skills to help train a service dog for another wounded Warrior, participants can improve their memory, emotional regulation, adaptive skills, social connections, dexterity, and decrease

barriers to community reintegration. To date and thanks to our generous donors, PPH has supported over 40,000 hours of Canine-Assisted Warrior Therapy®, free of charge, across our five national program sites for Veterans in recovery and in rehabilitation programs.



The Magic of Three

By: Casey Koslosky, National Client Manager

The time has come in which we say our "See you later's." There are happy tears, slimy doggy kisses, and warm, safe hugs. Graduation has come to an end and it is time to launch our service dog teams out into the world after spending thirteen days (over 90+ hours) with one another. There may be a sense of nervousness and uneasiness deep down for our Warriors as they leave our facility and staff to return to home base with a new four-legged addition.

However, the magic of three is yet to come...

Naturally, there is a transitional period when team training ends and routine home life sets in: What time should I feed her dinner? When should we exercise together? Am I brushing her too much! Is she getting too many treats?!

But suddenly with patience and trust, it all clicks together...

I now have a dog who is relying on me to feed, exercise and love. I am reliant on her for physical assistance, emotional support, and unwavering love. I consistently find white tufts of fur on my clothes, on my comforter, and one small stubborn strand seems to always find itself in my sandwiches!

Effortlessly, she has become my right hand. My battle buddy...

I continue to unwrap the facets of her personality... she is goofy in the morning when I open my eyes. Serious in her vest at my doctor's appointments. Valiant in crowds. Vulnerable when we snuggle.

The greatest blossoming of a service dog team happens three months after graduation day...

As the National Client Manager, I work with our Warriors from the time they make the vulnerable and sometimes difficult decision to apply for a service dog. The frustrations, excitement, and exhaustion throughout team training. The blooming of their dyad after graduation.

There is something uniquely special about how our Warriors and their dogs effortlessly click around 90 days after graduation. Their body language understanding of one another is stronger. Their love for one another is beaming through their eyes. Their confidence side by side is unfounded. It is magic.

Purpose Breeding

By: Shinya Kawasaki, Dog Program Director

All of our dogs are purpose-bred, meaning they are bred to have specific characteristics that give them the best possible chance of success. We want puppies to be both calm and willing to please Veterans. Our goal is not only placing dogs but having our dogs support the lives of Veterans as long as possible, thus we carefully select our breeders for good health and temperament.

These characteristics are passed down from generation to generation - So the best dogs have the best puppies who grow up to be the best service dogs.

By screening out problematic characteristics and selecting healthy genes, we can improve our breeding lines and produce healthier offspring.

Thus our breeders go through different kinds of health clearances. There are 2 main categories of health clearances:

Phenotypic tests

Phenotypic tests provide information about the dog's physical status at the time of examination:

- Hips and elbow tests
These tests make sure that breeders' hips and elbows look good, especially for large breed dogs, such as Golden Retrievers and Labrador Retrievers that we breed for our program.
- Heart tests
The heart test is an Echo Cardiogram test by a Board Certified Cardiologist. Labrador Retrievers tend to have a heart issue called Tricuspid Valve Disease. With this disease, their Tricuspid Valve doesn't work correctly allowing blood to leak backward. Echo Cardiograms are critical in making sure the heart looks great.
- Eye tests
Every year we have our dogs' eyes checked by a Certified Canine Ophthalmologist.

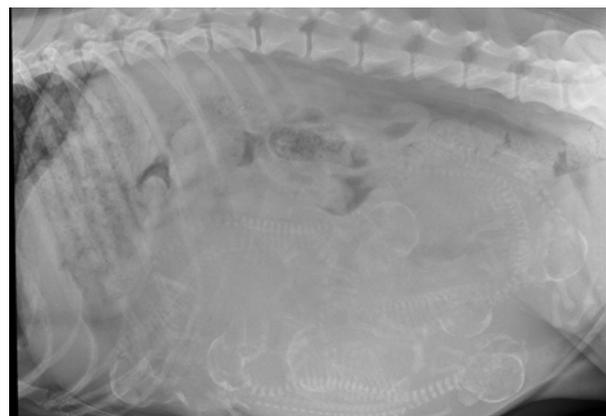
Genotypic tests

These are tests that offer direct information about the genes that an individual tested dog can contribute to his or her offspring. Saliva samples are taken and sent to a lab for these tests

Even though Goldens and Labs are similar, we do different types of Genotypic tests with each breed.

- For Goldens, we test for common breed diseases, such as PRA (progressive Eye disease), Degenerative Myelopathy (Spinal Code Disorder), Copper Toxicosis (Liver disease), Neuronal Ceroid Lipofuscinosis 5 (Neurological Disorder), and Ichthyosis (Skin Disease).
- For Labs, there are more available Genotypic tests than available for Goldens. We test our Labradors for PRA (progressive Eye disease), Degenerative Myelopathy (Spinal Code Disorder), Copper Toxicosis (Liver disease), Exercise Induced Collapse (Elbow Disorder), Hereditary Nasal Parakeratosis (Chronic Irritation and Inflammation on Nose), Centronuclear Myopathy (Muscle Disease), Congenital Myasthenic Syndrome (Skeletal Muscle Weakness), Macular Corneal Dystrophy (Eye Disease), Retinal Dysplasia (Eye Disease), Skeletal Dysplasia (Bone Disproportionation, and Stargardt Disease (Eye Disease).

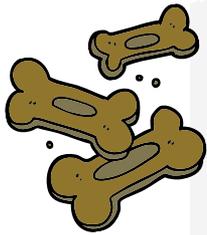
Since our dogs did not submit an application to join the PPH program to be an assistance dog, we always remember that we have responsibility to ensure their lives are wonderful. Some dogs may decide to change their career paths. When that happens, we are 100% responsible to find them the new home. We select these family homes carefully. And if something happens to the partner of our service dogs or to the family of a career-changed dogs, and they cannot keep our PPH dogs, they MUST BE returned to us. We then take the responsibility to search for a new "perfect" forever home.



Pregnancy radiograph 4 days prior to whelping

5 TIPS TO KEEP YOUR DOG HEALTHY

By: Jen Longman, MS, RVT



#1 QUALITY DIET & HEALTHY WEIGHT

Feeding a quality food to your dog is beneficial to their health and ensures they receive the nutrients they need to function at their best. Weight management is also crucial to dogs living a long and healthy life. Dogs who are overweight are more prone to health issues, mobility concerns, and shorter lifespans overall. During the holiday months, it is especially important to not allow your dog to eat many of the holiday foods that humans enjoy as it can cause them to become sick.

#2 PHYSICAL AND MENTAL ENRICHMENT

Providing regular exercise and opportunities for physical activity for your dog will not only keep them healthy, but also happy! Finding new places to explore with your pooch provides mental and physical enrichment for the both of you! There are many games and activities that you can also play with your dog to keep them mentally happy. Many are great for when the winter weather limits outside activity.



#3 GROOMING

Regular grooming is very important to the overall health of your canine friend. This includes regular bathing and brushing of the coat, checking and cleaning the ears, and regular toe nail trimming.



#4 DENTAL CARE

Brushing your dog's teeth is very important to their overall health. The accumulation of tartar and plaque can cause systemic illness in the dog. Always check your dog's teeth to ensure there are no fractures or broken teeth as these will need veterinarian attention. Talk with your veterinarian.



#5 ANNUAL VETERINARIAN VISITS AND PREVENTION

Taking your dog to their annual exam is vital to ensuring your canine friend stays healthy. This typically will include a thorough examination, blood work to ensure the body is functioning appropriately, and updating needed vaccinations. Flea, tick, and heartworm medications are also very important to preventing disease and keeping your dog healthy. Talk with your veterinarian about scheduling regular dental checkups and cleanings as needed.

Pupdate

By: Mandy Drexhage, National Administrative Assistant

Earlier this summer, Mom Rosie, a BUCS Golden Retriever, and Dad, a yellow Labrador from Susquehanna Service Dogs, welcomed 8 new pups! All 4 girls and all 4 boys of this newest "K" litter were so small they could fit in the palm of your hand. And faster than we thought possible, those little balls of fluff were soon crawling and discovering what to them seemed like a huge, expansive world! Truth is, it was merely their whelping box. Then, in the blink of an eye, they outgrew that once seemingly enormous

whelping box and started exploring more! It seemed like we were constantly trying to come up with new and exciting things for them to investigate while still in the safety and comfort of "home" but these little pups are so full of wonder, and courage, they were conquering things faster than we could supply them! It seemed like just yesterday they were stealing our hearts. Now they are giving theirs to help someone in need.



Fun Fact! Puppy's eyes open around 2 weeks of age!



Summary of Financials

By: Lynn Dremann, Bookkeeper

In the past 10 years, Paws for Purple Hearts has an average growth rate in income of 5% and expenses of 11% enabling our PPH programs expansion.

We have had over \$1,800,000 in grant money contributed to us by various businesses and foundations.

With your help we have been able to supplement the first location in Menlo Park, CA and establish new training campuses in Virginia in August of 2015, Alaska in November of 2016, Texas in September of 2017 and San Diego in April of 2018.

In the past 10 years we have spent over:

- \$145,000 for dog supplies
- \$90,000.00 for dog food and treats
- \$60,000 in dog medications and supplements
- \$140,000 in veterinary costs.

With your generosity we have been able to deploy 128 Dogs, and conduct 15,865 Therapy Sessions directly improving the lives of 10,497 Veterans.

With your kindness we can continue our mission and help many more people. Thank you!

Expanding to Better Serve our Brave Warriors By: Operations Team

Paws for Purple Hearts continues its bold march forward to expand throughout the United States. In keeping with our vision to establish a facility within two hours or every Veteran and Active-Duty Service Member Warrior in the country, we are shoring up our foothold in several areas in which we have current operations while targeting new locations in key areas with large populations of the brave patriots whose lives we work every day to improve.

Our new facility in Alaska signals our firm commitment to the Warriors of "The Last Frontier." A true game-changer for our colleagues there. The newly upgraded building with outdoor area provides an optimal location to raise and train our dogs and conduct our life-changing Canine-Assisted Warrior Therapy® sessions. Prior to this major improvement, our local team operated out of temporary facilities and sometimes even their own homes. We look forward to serving our beloved Warriors "Way Up North" for years to come.

We are in the midst of a focused effort to acquire a dedicated facility in the San Francisco Bay Area. The move to own a facility in the vicinity of the iconic Golden Gate Bridge will have two major advantages for our team and the Warrior community there. First, we will now truly have the space we need to grow our human and canine team there to its full potential. Second, it will provide the ability to conduct the full spectrum of operations with greater flexibility, including Canine-Assisted Warrior Therapy® sessions with groups of Warriors from various partner facilities around the Bay, and our famous

"Team Training" – the multi-week course during which we match our top-of-the-line Service Dogs with their ideal Warrior recipients. We will also be able to train and breed dogs, provide care for our dogs that require "time out" for veterinary issues, and conduct media and stakeholder visits with maximal flexibility. A win for everyone!

Paws for Purple Hearts is setting its sights on two particular areas for expansion in the near term. Both areas have huge Veteran and Active-Duty Military populations and we are very excited about the prospect of helping them from nearby locations.

First up: the Tampa, Florida area. Known for its sun and fun, the "Sunshine State" is home to almost 2 million Veterans; a very high percentage of the overall population. There are dozens of partner sites in the Tampa area as well, so this is poised to be a big win for us and the Warriors we serve.

Next: The New York City Metropolitan Area. For us, the key to the "Big Apple" is the "Garden State." From a choice location near Elizabeth in northern New Jersey, our teams can easily serve Warriors at any one of the over 20 partner facilities in locations such as East Orange, Lyons, Brooklyn, The Bronx, Queens, Manhattan and Montrose. Home to over 19 million people, of which almost 2 million are Veterans, the area will make a great new home for Paws for Purple Hearts.



Stay tuned for more updates as we continue to grow and serve more Warriors throughout the USA!

Northwest Region

Updates from Anchorage, Alaska

New Facility, New Hope

By: Julia Roberts, Advancement Associate

Did you know Alaska is home to over 70,000 Veterans and approximately 20,000 Active Duty Service Members, hosting more Veterans per capita than any other state? For Paws for Purple Hearts, that means a significant population of potential service dog recipients and canine assisted therapy participants. The Anchorage area is home to Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) which was formed through the merger of Elmendorf Air Force Base and Fort Richardson.



We've been in operation serving Alaska's Warriors since 2015. In 2016 we opened a facility in Fairbanks. In 2019 we relocated to Anchorage and in 2021 we opened our own specially configured facility to the public. Our innovative therapy programs reach Veterans and Active Duty Service Members at the Chris Kyle Patriots Hospital, the VA Domiciliary in Anchorage, and JBER. Beyond Alaska, we support and assist dog recipients throughout our region to ensure a successful lifelong partnership when we provide a service dog, facility dog or specialist therapy dog.

Southwest Region

Updates from the Bay Area and San Diego, California

San Diego Graduation

By: Kerry Blum, Southwest Regional Director

August 7, 2021, marked the first San Diego Paws for Purple Hearts Service Dog Graduation. San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria was there along with Miss San Diego and key-note speaker Captain Ted Carlson, US Navy. The Navy Band Southwest played for the room filled with friends, families, and members of the community.

The graduating canine class included Drew, a handsome blonde full of excitable energy. He is a real goofball, and photo-shoot model. There was also Liberty, lovingly dubbed "Party girl Libby" as a pup, but whip-smart. Then, of course, Sergeant, the good old boy, never saying no and always willing to do anything. The graduating canines joined their forever Warriors Michael Higgins, Marine Corp Veteran; Kevin Huogh, Air Force Veteran; and Carlos Perez, Army Veteran. These men had undergone extensive training with their canines during our "Team Training" course before they were paired with them.



"We have been fortunate to have a dedicated staff, amazing volunteers, and generous community donations. Of course, we always welcome anyone who would like to support Paws for Purple Hearts in any way they can. I am always available to answer any questions about Paws for Purple Hearts."
- Kerry Blum, Southwest Regional Director

There are approximately 800,000 veterans assessed with trauma-related conditions. 44% do not seek care. Often, the price for inaction ends in isolation, alcoholism, drug abuse, poverty, and suicide. Paws for Purple Hearts refuses to let these Warriors suffer alone.

South Mid Region

Updates from San Antonio, Texas

Happy Chappie

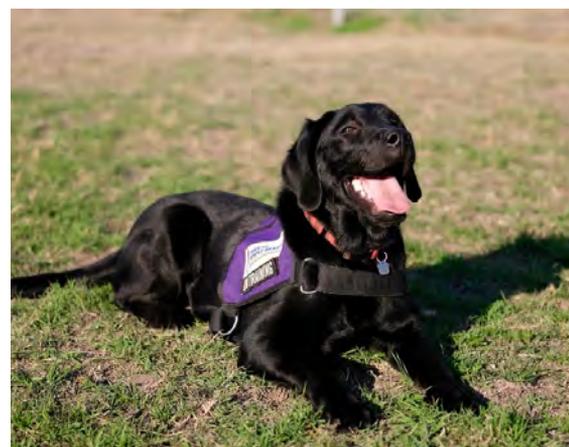
By: Dani Garrouette, Advancement Associate

Tis' the season of giving and our Service Dogs-in-training are no stranger to giving their all to change the life of each Warrior they work with. Chapman is a prime example.

He gives his all to provide a fulfilling and life-changing experience for every Warrior he comes in contact with. Throughout the course of our program, our Service Dogs-in-training impact upwards of 60 Warriors on average.

After just turning one year old in September, Chapman has already touched as many as 50+ lives this year alone. Chapman thrives when he is able to greet new people and share his love with his handler or with a new friend. He often goes by the nickname "Happy Chappie" because he is constantly eager to meet new people, make new friends and connect with those he is around.

To learn more about the benefits our service dogs provide to our Warriors, check out our website at paws4ph.org/how-we-help/.



Southeast Region

Updates from Ruther Glen, Virginia

Community Partners Rock

By: Danielle Stockbridge, Advancement Associate

This season we have so much to be thankful for. Over the past year, the Southeast Regional Team has added three new puppies to the trainers' assigned training population. With the addition of puppies; Jeanette, Booth and David, our Southeast Regional Headquarters has seen over thirty dogs pass through its doors on the way to becoming top-notch assistance dogs.

What started as a small operation with three dogs in training in rural Ruther Glen, Virginia has grown immensely. However, this growth would not have been possible without our community partners:

We would like to thank our incredible donors and grant makers: MANARC Bourne the Battle, Rosie's Gaming Emporium, The Richard S. Reynolds Foundation, The Gratis Foundation, The Michele and Agnese Cestone Foundation, and The Wawa Foundation.





Paws for Purple Hearts

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Paws for Purple Hearts is licensed by the Military Order of the Purple Heart and the Military Order of the Purple Heart Service Foundation, chartered by an Act of Congress for combat-wounded Veterans.



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