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10TH
**PAWS FOR
PURPLE HEARTS**
ANNIVERSARY
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Ten Years of Warriors Helping Warriors

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Canine-Assisted Warrior Therapy® In-Person in Alaska

By: Julia Roberts, Advancement Associate

Here in Alaska, our Program Instructors have worked to navigate the VA and CDC's guidelines for conducting sessions during COVID-19. Earlier this year, we were approved to host in-person Canine-Assisted Warrior Therapy® at the VA Domiciliary and Chris Kyle Patriots Hospital, and multiple social therapy sessions at JBER.

Canine-Assisted Warrior Therapy® is simple; those with PTSD, TBI, and/or MST help PPH trainers with service dog training.

Soothing, light-hearted contact with PPH puppies and dogs, together with caring and capable trainers, eases a Warrior's symptom severity.

Sessions like these, especially when conducted in-person, provide substantial relief for Warriors and caretakers alike. Suffering Warriors learn all over again how to trust. CAWT® gently guides Warriors to learn once again how to connect with others, both dogs and humans. Over time, Warriors who participate regain that sense of purpose that comes with accomplishing an important mission – training a lifelong service companion for other comrades in need.

The great part about Canine-Assisted Warrior Therapy® is that all it requires is a place to work with and care for dogs. At Paws for Purple Hearts Alaska, we are flexible on where we conduct CAWT®. We can do it at our facilities, at a Veterans Administration (VA) facility, on Base, or a related site.

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Clients: Elma Update

By: Julia Roberts, Advancement Associate

Specialist Therapy Dog Elma and Licensed Clinical Social Worker Sara, in partnership with the True North Program, create meaningful connections with warriors in high-stress areas, opening the door to mental health opportunities without the associated stigma. More than any other project with the Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Anchorage, Alaska, Elma means mental health resources are accessible to all; with her ability to be non-judgemental and unconditionally accepting, Elma makes it possible for the squadron and others to receive care and support anytime.

According to handler and LCSW Sara: Elma has been such a blessing to our squadron. She attends all functions with me and is truly embedded in the squadron. We do squadron PT with the group - which currently is outside; she goes to commander's calls, staff meetings, EMDR training, going away luncheons, readiness exercises, resiliency days, squadron picnics, etc. Elma and I participated in the obstacle course during the prime beef Olympics (our readiness training for the civil engineering group). Currently, I'm doing suicide prevention training throughout the squadron, and Elma brings a calming presence during difficult discussions. She is definitely part of the squadron. When Elma comes around, you can see the smiles and joy she brings. I feel like this is what she was born to do. She is all-inclusive and makes sure to greet every person when we go into a shop. Having Elma has definitely broken down barriers and paved the way to help people connect and feel more at ease. I can't thank Paws for Purple Hearts enough for everything they do. Dogs change lives!"



Specialist Therapy Dog Elma

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Weathering the Winter in Alaska

By: Julia Roberts, Advancement Associate

We're heading into winter here in Alaska, and the temperatures have already dropped to around 35 degrees Fahrenheit. Preparing for winter weather is no joke "way up north," for pups and people alike! From December through February the temperature varies between 27 and 14 degrees Fahrenheit in general. This, plus snow, ice, and wind throughout the season make for a very chilly mix. Here are our top five tips for preparing to train, work and play in cold weather:

1. Boots! Dog paws need to be covered when dealing with snow and ice regularly. We practice wearing boots indoors and outdoors until the dogs are comfortable working in them regularly.

2. Avoid salt/deicers. Most ice melt compounds are bad for paws, so we avoid them on our walkways when possible. If going into town where we will walk on sidewalks regularly, we utilize balm to keep the dogs' feet clean and healthy.

3. Hydration. The weather in Alaska gets particularly dry in the wintertime, so it's important for us to ensure the dogs are staying hydrated as they work throughout the day.

4. Brushing. Brushing out old fur will allow a fuller coat to grow in. Clumpy, matted fur doesn't insulate as well as a clean coat, and it takes longer to dry.

5. Coats! Just like our Alaskan Program Instructors, our dogs wear coats in the winter time. We look for coats designed to keep them warm and not limit mobility during their work time.



Tank practices cold weather training



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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