

Paws of Allegiance

Spring 2022 Newsletter - Southeast Region



**PAWS FOR
PURPLE HEARTS**
WARRIORS HELPING WARRIORS®

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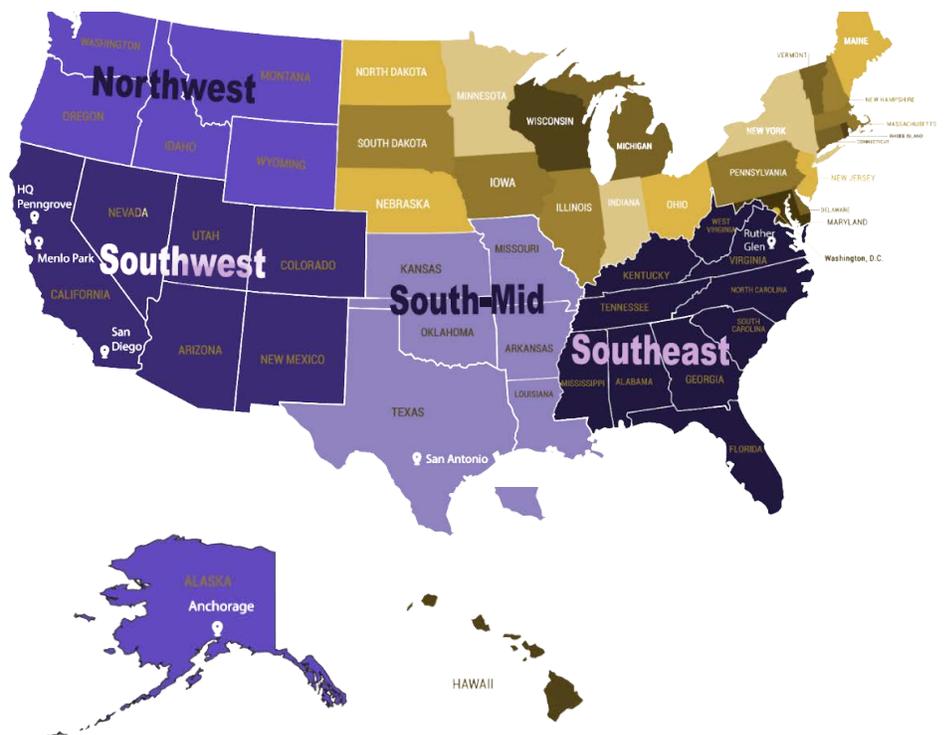
ADI ANNIVERSARY

Pawsome Expansion

By: Claire Richardson, Advancement Associate

As Paws for Purple Hearts continues to grow and provide services to Warriors throughout the United States, we are excited to announce the opening of our new Northwest Regional field site in the Seattle/Tacoma, Washington area.

Many of our donors, volunteers, and readers know that Paws for Purple Hearts has already been serving the Northwest region through our Anchorage, Alaska operation.



Cont. Pawsome Expansion

The implementation of Canine-Assisted Warrior Therapy® and Assistance Dog placement in the Northwest have been extremely successful, however the need our Warriors have for these life-changing programs is larger still. For this reason, Paws for Purple Hearts is proud to bring its programming to the large military community in Washington.



PPH "E" Litter Ericson



Cassidy and Ericson

Leading the opening of this new facility is Bergin University of Canine Studies Masters of Science graduate, Cassidy Cooley. Cassidy is a United States Marine Corps Veteran and comes to us with many years of experience within the Assistance Dog Industry. With multiple years of training under her belt, we are delighted to have her assist with the expansion of Paws for Purple Hearts. Cassidy is extremely excited to facilitate the opening of this new location in the Seattle/Tacoma area with Ericson, one of the puppies from the PPH "E" Litter.

In addition to this growth in our Northwest Region, in the near future, Paws for Purple Hearts will also be opening new locations in our last two untouched regions in the United States: the North-Mid and Northeast. We plan to expand into Detroit, Michigan for our North-Mid location. We are planning to open our Northeast site in the New York/New Jersey area. It is our mission here at Paws for Purple Hearts to bring these therapeutic programs to Veterans and Active Duty Service Members throughout the country, and with these openings, we are furthering this mission. You can help in many ways. Please consider telling any Warriors you know who might benefit from our services about our programs or just help spread the word in your general community about the difference we make. You can also stop by your local VA and ask them to contact us to find out about how we can work with them to help their Veterans recover from PTSD or TBI. If you are near one of our sites, please consider volunteering with us. You can also help by donating or by purchasing items on our Wish Lists.

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Southeast Region

Ruther Glen Updates

FAQ with a Senior Program Instructor

By: The Southeast Team

Senior Program Instructor Heather has been with Paws for Purple Hearts since 2015. She established our Southeast program in Ruther Glen, Virginia upon her graduation from the Bergin University of Canine Studies in 2015. Since then, she has helped to grow the Virginia team's therapy programs and has worked with over 20 Service Dogs-In-Training. Currently, Heather has three dogs in her string, two-year-old Antje, one-year-old Booth, and nine-month-old David. In this interview, Heather answers some frequently asked questions about her favorite aspects of being a Paws for Purple Hearts Program Instructor and shares what it's been like to watch the growth of the organization.

What is your favorite command to train?

I really like working on "Sit up!" It's a cute command, and the dogs enjoy doing it. It's also good for the dog's abs and balance. Some dogs are definitely better at it than others. In order to do a good "sit up," the dog has to sit square, not on its haunches. It doesn't really work if the dog sits like Winnie the Pooh. Because of this, it can be a tough command to teach. I generally work on it at mealtime so the dog is more motivated to complete the action. They tend to learn it faster if dinner is involved!

What is your favorite behavior to work on?

I think the most frustrating and rewarding behavior to work on is Dog Reactivity, where your dog reacts to another dog by barking or hackling. It can be frustrating because other dogs that our dogs don't know are everywhere, sometimes even in places where you aren't anticipating them. In these situations, you have to still be prepared to teach your Service Dogs-In-Training not to be distracted. Eventually, though, you get to a point where your dog can walk by another dog and not react. You seriously see the results of your efforts. Scout was like that. When he was a puppy, he was excited to see other dogs so he would get very distracted by them. His other trainer and I focused on this throughout his time in training. He eventually improved enough to become a Service Dog!

What was it like to start the Southeast program and see it grow?

Alissa, a former PPH Program Instructor, and I were fresh out of college when Dr. Bergin asked us to start the Virginia branch of Paws for Purple Hearts. It was really daunting to be responsible for starting and growing the program. When we started, we didn't have many therapy groups, volunteers, or dogs! We picked up our first dogs, Suzi, Napa, and Chuck a few weeks after we got to Virginia and moved into our facility shortly after that.



**Senior Program Instructor Heather
with Booth**

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Southeast Region

Ruther Glen Updates

Cont. FAQ with a Senior Program Instructor

We were just two girls and a dog when we first approached the VA about starting Canine-Assisted Warrior Therapy® sessions. We didn't know much about the VA or how it worked and vice versa, they didn't know much about us and the benefits of working with dogs. There was definitely a learning curve there. We eventually met a few therapists that were interested in our program and we started doing sessions with Veteran groups. The therapists quickly saw a change for the better in their patients and helped us to spread the word about our therapy programs. We were so excited to help even more Warriors!

It's night and day, the difference between where we started and where we are now. Now our facility is huge. We have four 1200 sq. ft. units. We have a washer and dryer, dog bath and dishwasher now. We didn't have anything like that at the beginning. We've also been super lucky to have plenty of amazing volunteers and Puppy Parents, who have really helped us grow. There have been over 30 dogs that have undergone training in Virginia and we've been able to help countless Warriors and their families.



Ruther Glen's Service Dogs-In-Training

Keeping Your Dog Cool in the Summertime

By: Danielle Stockbridge, Advancement Associate

As many of you know, the summers in Virginia can be brutal. When the temperature reaches over 80 degrees, it becomes unsafe for dogs to play outside. If a dog becomes too hot, it risks dehydration and heatstroke. Some of the signs of this are excessive panting, dry gums, and low energy. In addition to overheating, walking outside in the heat can be dangerous to your dog's paw pads. If it's 85 degrees outside, blacktop pavement can be as hot as 140 degrees. These extreme temperatures are unsafe for dogs to walk on as they can burn their feet. Sometimes it's best to just stay inside during the Summer, but you may be wondering, how do I exercise and prevent boredom from my dog during the hot months?

During the day when it's too warm, you can entertain your dog with different enrichment activities. Treat puzzles are a fun way to exercise your dog's mind as they require your dog to use their brain to figure out how to get a tasty snack. You can also give your dog a snuffle mat filled with kibble or low-calorie treats to give your dog a chance to sniff and root around while they're stuck inside.

If you are an early bird or a night owl, you can take your dog for walks in the morning, before the sun comes up, or in the evening, as the sun goes down. It's best to walk on a trail that has some coverage to avoid hot surfaces. During the walk, pay special attention to your dog in case they show any signs of overheating. If you do see any of the symptoms noted above, stop your exercise immediately, and get your dog out of the heat. On top of this, make sure they drink lots of water before, during, and after being outside! You always want to be sure to bring a collapsible dog bowl and bottle of water when you're planning to be outside for an extended period of time.

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Southeast Region

Ruther Glen Updates

Canine-Assisted Warrior Therapy®

By: Danielle Stockbridge, Advancement Associate

During Canine-Assisted Warrior Therapy®, Veterans facing trauma-related conditions such as Post-traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury learn the important skill of reinforcing commands for a Service Dog-In-Training.



David snuggling a Veteran

During sessions, Warriors build bonds with our dogs through practicing commands, playing together, and grooming them. As a result of this program, participants have reported positive outcomes such as improved mood and outlook on life, decreased

dependence on pain medication and improved family dynamics. At our Virginia site, we provide Canine-Assisted Warrior Therapy® to Veterans in partnership with the Hunter Holmes Mcguire VA Medical Center in Richmond, Virginia. Our partnership has been in place since 2016. This partnership has been essential to expanding our programming and serving Warriors across Virginia. Program Instructor Mami says, "I love watching my dogs and our Warriors build bonds with one another during Canine-Assisted Warrior Therapy® sessions." Thanks to the support of our donors and volunteers, we are able to provide all of our programs to Warriors free of charge. If you are interested in supporting our programming, visit paws4ph.org to learn more!

ADI Anniversary

By: Danielle Stockbridge, Advancement Associate

It has been one year since Assistance Dogs International came to the Ruther Glen facility to conduct a visit as the final step in our accreditation journey. Assistance Dogs International (ADI) is a worldwide coalition of nonprofit organizations that raise, train and place Assistance Dogs. During the visit, the assessors took a tour of our facility, observed a Canine-Assisted Warrior Therapy® session, and interviewed one of our Assistance Dog teams. Paws for Purple Hearts' hard work paid off, and we received accreditation on Tuesday, March 2, 2021! This year we celebrated our first membership anniversary.

As a member of ADI, Paws for Purple Hearts receives many benefits such as resources and training opportunities for staff members, the chance to contribute to conversations about the future of the Service Dog industry, and eligibility for VA Veterinary Health Benefits for our Service Dog Teams. We also get access to the ABC Breeding Co-operative. This is where #pphBooth came from!

Booth celebrated her first birthday in December. During this past year, Booth has learned over 50 commands. She has also been on several exciting field trips, like a trip to an Apple Orchard and the movie theater. Booth has even been on vacation to California with her trainer. We're so proud of her progress and excited to be an ADI Accredited Member!



Booth in Washington D.C.

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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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