

Paws of Allegiance

Summer 2022 Newsletter - Southeast Region



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2022 Assistance Dog Graduation

By: Danielle Stockbridge, Virginia Site Manager

Independence. Freedom. Hope. These are just a few of the things a Paws for Purple Hearts Service Dog gives to their forever partner. In a CB-S6 Heroes Among Us Segment, Retired Army Sergeant David Wright, who was matched with PPH graduate Scout in 2021 says, "I feel like I can do things more independently now. He helps me with my mobility. He picks things up for me. He is a blessing."

This year several more Warriors will be receiving their own life-saving battle buddy. In October, Paws for Purple Hearts Virginia is hosting the 2022 Client Training and Assistance Dog Graduation. For two weeks in October, several Warriors will undergo intensive training to learn all about dogs and their new Service Dog. With the support of our field teams, these Service Dog Teams will work hard to pass assessments designed to ensure team longevity. On October 22, 2022, these teams will graduate as Service Dog Pairs and begin their life-long journey together.



**Veteran David and his
Service Dog, Scout**

We are proud to be part of this momentous event and hope that our local community will join us in celebrating these pairs!

11 Year Anniversary Recap

By: Danielle Stockbridge, Virginia Site Manager

It's hard to believe that Paws for Purple Hearts has been a 501(c)(3) for 11 years already! In that time, PPH has grown a lot. Our Virginia facility opened in 2015 and has had a huge impact on the Warriors in the Southeastern Region. To celebrate Paws for Purple Hearts' 11 Year Anniversary, PPH Virginia participated in our first annual Move-A-Thon, Pawsitive Miles for Positive Minds with staff led walking groups. Strong evidence has linked exercise to symptom-relief in patients with PTSD, and the most valuable exercise is any that the patient enjoys doing and does regularly, such as daily walks with a canine companion! Each week, participants walked in honor of PTSD Awareness. The Move-A-Thon ended in a Wrap Up Party/Open House at our state-of-the-art Service Dog Training Facility in Ruther Glen, VA. Visitors got a chance to see the facility and observe a Service Dog demonstration. Most excitingly, attendees got to meet our newest Service Dog-In-Training, Nemo. It was the perfect way to wrap up the 11 year anniversary, and it made us excited to see what year 12 will bring!

Say Hello to Nemo

By: Genevieve Timpone, Advancement Associate

Hi, my name is Nemo! I am eleven weeks old. My trainer, Heather, says I came from the International ADI Breeding Cooperative through Assistance Dog International. I've been at my new home in Virginia for a month already! In that month, I've learned lots of stuff. My favorite command so far is "Kennel" cus I eat all my yummy meals in my kennel. I also learned that if I sit really well, I get treats! I'm still learning my basic manners, but someday I'll do really cool things that can help our Warriors. I'm gonna learn how to open doors, turn on light switches, and retrieve things.

I'll also be able to provide companionship and help people feel better when they're upset. Heather says I will be in training for a whole two and a half years to get really good. I'll participate in Canine-Assisted Warrior Therapy® sessions and social therapy. While in training, I'll work with over 60 Warriors before my placement as a Service Dog. Did you know that my training will cost \$35,000 but I'll be matched with a Veteran facing mobility challenges and/or trauma-related conditions as a Service Dog for free? We could really use your help! To sign up to volunteer or make a donation in support of my training visit paws4ph.org. Man, am I getting sleepy now. I'm gonna cuddle with my giant dinosaur stuffie and take a nap so I can grow big! In the meantime, I hope that you'll keep up with my training journey on social media with #pphNemo.



Nemo at Ruther Glen

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PAWS Act: Groundbreaking Opportunity

By: Claire Richardson, National Advancement Associate

Many of our readers know Paws for Purple Hearts is dedicated to Veterans and our programs are exclusively offered to them, but this year we are taking it one step further by participating in the PAWS Act. You are probably curious as to what the PAWS Act is all about and what it entails? Well we are here to break it down and give you all a glimpse into the science behind our Service Dog Programs!



Ruther Glen Service Dog-in-Training, David

The PAWS Act was brought about from a new bill enacted by Congress and signed by the President of the United States. It had previously been presented to Congress back in 2016 and has gone through many reconstructive changes over the last six years. It is now called "Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers" (PAWS) for Veterans Therapy Act.

This act requires the Veterans Affairs Administrations to implement a five-year program that offers Veterans suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder the opportunity to train with Service Dogs as a portion of their complementary health program.

This allows eligible Veterans registered through the VA health care system that have been recommended by a professional mental health care official to participate in the therapy offered through programs such as ours. Of the five sites authorized, two of our PPH sites out of the five were selected: PPH Alaska and PPH San Antonio! PPH agreed to participate in this five year volunteer program to help prove just how life changing these dogs are to our Veterans and why it is important to continue to promote the Service Dog Industry.

Within this five year training program through the VA, our two facilities are proving to the world and our government that Service Dogs do make a difference in the lives of wounded Warriors which has been our mission from the very start. Paws for Purple Hearts and the other organizations within this PAWS Act are here to show through various studies and research over the course of these five years just how much it matters. We cannot wait to share with you more on this phenomenal opportunity and the impact that it will make. Since we are receiving no funding from the government for providing this program to Veterans, we are more grateful than ever for contributions to our organization from donors like you!

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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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