

Paws of Allegiance

Fall 2023 Newsletter - Northwest Region



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Highlighting Heroes

By: Claire Richardson, Marketing and Communication Specialist

Over the years, Dr. Bonita Bergin has been acknowledged for her development of the Service Dog industry, as well as founding our organization Paws for Purple Hearts. This fall, it is our pleasure to inform you of her most recent venture, as she has been awarded the title of Person of the Year at the inaugural Purple Poppy Awards & Fundraiser held by the National Service Animals Memorial (NSAM)! Not only was she acknowledged as Person of the Year, but a separate organization originally founded by Dr. Bergin, Canine Companions for Independence, won Organization of the Year!



CEO Dr. Bonita Bergin alongside Canine Companion CEO, Paige Mazzoni

The National Service Animal Memorial has been authorized by Congress to construct a memorial site to honor the sacrifices and contributions made by Service Animals and pioneers in this field. This event was held to memorialize the passing of this bill and celebrate the achievements made within the community. The memorial itself will be positioned in the heart of the nation's capital to inspire visitors to pay their respects and gain a deeper understanding of the work done by the variety of Service Animals recognized in this exhibit. (Cont.)

To be honored at this ceremony was a milestone for Dr. Bergin and we could not be more grateful to celebrate this award alongside her. We'd like to take this opportunity to thank the National Service Animal Memorial for hosting this event and allowing us to take part in this historical celebration!

A Glimpse Inside Our Cohort

By: Claire Richardson, Marketing and Communication Specialist



Paws for Purple Hearts, Alaska PAWS Act Participant Mary Pavloff & Service Dog Kreitzberg

Mary Pavloff, a Kodiak, AK, native, served as a cook in the U.S. Army from 2008 to 2015. It was a career she loved and still misses to this day. Physical difficulties due to personal health issues caused her to leave the service. In 2018 she found Paws for Purple Hearts at her local domiciliary. After spending time with our dogs through therapy programs, it was an easy yes for her to join a PAWS Act cohort at our Anchorage facility.

One of the aspects she spoke of missing most from her time in the military was the camaraderie amongst the soldiers. Being an active participant, she said, has given her back that sentiment amongst both dogs and other participants alike. When asked about how the PAWS Act has helped with the gap between her time in the service and maintaining the switch back to civilian life, she said, "It's helped a lot, working with the dogs". It was even more exciting to realize she was making an impact on the lives of the dogs as well. Having them recognize her when she returned after those first few

sessions is "great to see" and helps encourage the idea that bonds are being built on both ends. Another amazing aspect that many people don't think to factor in is the improvement it brings our dogs during these training sessions.

Over the past eight weeks, participating in the PAWS Act has helped change her life in many ways. Overall, it has made her more calm and patient in her day to day life, as well as helped her gain confidence in her abilities working with the dogs. The entirety of this Act is to prove that PTSD symptoms are alleviated due to the presence and aid of Service Dogs. For Mary and the many other Veterans participating, we have already proven in just a little over a year and a half the significance of Service Dogs. We are thrilled to be able to serve Warriors like Mary not just through these sessions, but through the many other ways we can support them!



Pavloff & Kreitzberg Practice the ADI Service Dog Exam

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Supporting Washington's Warriors

By: Sonja Jordan, Marketing and Communication Specialist

Starting this quarter, we've got some exciting news to share from Paws for Purple Hearts WA! We've kicked off our CAWT® sessions at the Soldier Recovery Unit, Joint Base Lewis-McChord. These CAWT® sessions play a crucial role in training our Service Dogs by exposing them to a variety of people, much like the Veterans they'll be paired with at the end of their training. During these sessions, our dogs get to practice and refine their skills under the guidance of different trainers.



Paws for Purple Hearts, Washington Service Dog-In-Training Ericson with CAWT® Participants

For the Veterans and service members involved, it's an amazing opportunity to work with dogs in training. Helping a dog learn skills that will one day change a Veteran's life is incredibly rewarding. And just spending time with our dogs has some fantastic effects, like boosting everyone's mood and spirits.

But don't just take our word for it – the soldiers taking part in CAWT® can vouch for these benefits too. We asked some of them about their experiences working with Ericson and Patrick and they had some great stories to share. One of them mentioned how CAWT® sessions break up what would otherwise be a long, tough day, making it something to look forward to. Another highlighted how CAWT® provides a positive structure for both the soldiers and the dogs. Right now, Patrick and Ericson are leading the pack in Tacoma's CAWT®, but soon Rachel and Mark will be joining them to support our nation's Warriors!

Celebrating A Year in Washington

By: Sonja Jordan, Marketing and Communication Specialist

Our Washington Site has experienced a remarkable journey over the past year! Since its establishment in the fall of 2022, we've welcomed new team members, including a dedicated MCS and a skilled Trainer, alongside the addition of two wonderful new dogs. Furthermore, our facility has begun to undergo some much needed updates to ensure it caters to both our dogs and clients more effectively.

Let's begin with our staff- during the summer, we were thrilled to welcome Sonja Jordan from Enterprise, AL, as our new Marketing and Communications Specialist, and Yayoi Jinko from Osaka, Japan, as our new Instructor. These outstanding individuals have brought fresh ideas, unique perspectives, and invaluable expertise to our site. Yayoi's arrival is particularly exciting as she has also brought along two new furry friends for us to train: puppy Rachel and the one-year-old Mark. These lovely additions will be joining Patrick and Ericson in various activities, including training, Canine-Assisted Warrior Therapy®, and social therapy.

With the unwavering support of our dedicated staff and volunteers, Paws for Purple Hearts Northwest is committed to expanding and evolving to better serve our community and the surrounding regions. Together, we will continue to make a positive impact in the Northwest Region.

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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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