PAWS Act of 2019: Update

In June, the Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers (PAWS) Act of 2019 was reintroduced by Congressmen John Rutherford, Gil Cisneros, and Mike Waltz. If you haven’t heard of this legislation, it will require the VA to grant $25,000 to each qualifying veteran with PTSD to obtain a Service Dog from an accredited agency of their choosing. While that may not sound like big news, since you know K9s For Warriors has provided service dogs to veterans since 2011, it indeed would be transformative to thousands of veterans in the VA healthcare system who would benefit from a service dog. Historically, the VA has opposed providing Service Dogs for mental health care. I generally like to share only good news, but frankly, our efforts in DC for this were disappointing. For the last three years, we have been pushing PAWS because the VA refuses to acknowledge what we all know: Service Dogs are dramatically improving the lives of disabled veterans suffering from PTSD. Most importantly, these dogs are helping keep our heroes alive. Yet, each year I meet with the House Veterans Affairs Committee staff and each year they find a new way to say “No.” This past week, we sat down with the Majority and Minority staff and, again, they said “No” to Service Dogs for veterans with PTSD, and “No” to our mountain of evidence that these dogs are saving lives. Instead, they told us to “wait.” Wait until the summer of 2020 (or most likely later) until the VA completes a study to tell us what we already know. The VA has spent tens of millions of dollars and over ten years “studying” what one of our 558 graduates (and our rigorous, privately funded, peer-reviewed hard science studies) can tell you in seconds—the dogs work! We can’t afford to wait any longer. Please ask your member of Congress to support the PAWS Act – HB 3103.

For updates and to find out how you can lend your support, please visit our website and search for “PAWS Act.”

Rory Diamond, Chief Executive Officer, K9s For Warriors

To DONATE go to www.k9sforwarriors.org
Thanks for your continued support!

Rolling with Jax

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2019

August
1st: Air Force Day
4th: Coast Guard Day
16th: National Airborne Day
17th: National Nonprofit Day
22nd: Graduation, 6pm

September
2nd: Labor Day
10th: World Suicide Prevention Day
11th: Patriot Day
19th: Graduation, 6pm
20th: National POW/MIA Recognition Day

October
4th: Columbus Day
17th: Graduation, 6pm
24th: Day of the Deployed
27th: Navy Day
31st: Halloween

Warrior Update: Donny & Harbaugh

Donny graduated with Harbaugh in the January 2018 warrior-canine class. On July 12, 2019 he shared with K9s For Warriors the many milestones and personal achievements he's made since having Harbaugh in his life. We wanted to share that update with you, to help you understand what your support can achieve. Here is the update, in Donny's own words:

“We did another big thing today. We bought an old mansion in the historic district of our city. Since I've been with Harbaugh, my life continues to get better every day, and it's all been because of the work that Harbaugh and I do. My wife has finished her master’s, she’s back to work, our family has grown with the birth of our third child, and all of this is because I’m independent and able to take care of the household on my own with the help of my best friend. It's still a challenge every day and we work hard to make things happen, but we’re even finding time to work and be productive on our own creative endeavors with an album that we recorded coming out in August.

If you put in the work with your dog, what you get out of them is incredible. I'm pretty happy with what's going on in my life right now.”

Rescue Puppy Feature – Part 3

In the life of a K9s For Warriors puppy raiser, there comes the heart-wrenching time when they must say goodbye to the pup they’ve dedicated months of love, sweat and tears to. The countless hours and energy puppy raisers put in to preparing our dogs for formal service training means they’ve also built a unique bond.

In the last two issues of Dog Tales, you read about how hard Kathy worked to boost Marmaduke’s confidence, help him learn to trust, and give him a new start to the life of abandonment we found him in. Since our last update, Marmaduke has been introduced to even more adventures to help him grow: he went to Indiana with his puppy raiser family where he met chickens, ducks, mules and tiny horses; he visited a fire station, went on an Old Town Trolley tour in St. Augustine, and participated in TSA training at the airport. From trips to IKEA, to eating lunch at new restaurants, to a boat ride on the Intracoastal and a cooking class, Marmaduke has enjoyed quite a full life compared to the barren road he was found on.

On July 15, Marmaduke’s next chapter began. On that morning, Kathy returned him to Camp K9 to enter the kennels and begin his formal service canine training. While it’s a milestone of achievement for both her and Marmaduke, it wasn’t done without a good cry and many hugs from empathetic K9s staff members who know the bittersweet moments of completing their mission as a puppy raiser. As Kathy said goodbye, Marmaduke’s ultra-sweet personality lightened the mood for everyone. He eagerly and happily met the new family members who will help guide his journey to saving a veteran who once also felt abandoned.

Stay tuned for Marmaduke’s rescue puppy feature, part 4.

Gold Family Campus Update

Over the last three months, we have partnered with Gratitude America to offer even more services to veterans in need. During our “off” weeks, Gratitude America uses our facility for a one-week residential program. Gratitude America’s mission is to provide critical support for service members, veterans, and their families by conducting meaningful restorative retreats to assist participants affected by deployment exposures such as combat related stress and Traumatic Brain Injury.

We've also graduated four warriors and are about to start our second remedial class of the summer. Our dog trainers and K9 Caretakers have been hard at work training and caring for our ten dogs that will be paired with their warriors this Fall.

Training Center Update

Our new indoor training center is now up-and-running. There was a ribbon-cutting ceremony on August 14th to mark this new, valuable asset and recognize the donors who made it possible. All of our K9 trainers are now using this daily for foundational service dog training. It is a large, open space with fitness equipment, crates for crate training, and everyone’s favorite in the Florida heat – air conditioning!

1,059 Dogs Rescued, 558 Warriors Graduated

Check out the K9s For Warriors Facebook page to see updates on warrior graduates and dogs in training. Be sure to “LIKE” us when you get there!