



K9S FOR WARRIORS

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DOG TALES

K9s' Most Tail-Wagging News Source Warrior Update 109, November 2017



Photo Credit: Paul Honnick, Syracuse University VSO PAO



Update: PAWS Act Proceedings

Last May, U.S. Rep. Ron DeSantis [R-FL-6] introduced a Bill into Congress. This legislation – the Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers "PAWS" Act (H.R. 2327) - could substantially impact our veterans and organization. You may be aware that May 2017 was the second time this Bill was introduced to the House of Representatives. The first time the PAWS Act was launched, it lost fuel after take-off. We were all very disappointed. The setback, however, did not slow our efforts from requiring the VA to provide qualified, disabled veterans with highly-trained service dogs. If anything, the Bill's early demise inspired us. Giving up was never an option because there was too much at stake – the lives of our beloved veterans.

This year we are getting somewhere. As of Nov. 2, 2017, PAWS has 202 cosponsors from across the country and across partisan lines. The simple majority (218 of 435 House members) is in sight and then PAWS can move on to the U.S. Senate. However, as of this moment, PAWS is stuck in the House Veterans Affairs Committee and is being opposed by Committee staff for reasons beyond comprehension. We are doing everything we can to move it out.

I'm very proud of how successful this initiative has become and want to thank you for helping us spread the word about the PAWS Act. As always, I will keep you posted on the status of the Bill.

Rory Diamond
Chief Executive Officer, K9s For Warriors

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PAWS Act Proceedings

An update on the current status of the PAWS Act (H.R. 2327)

"Paw"ing it Forward: Veterans Helping Veterans

For Veterans Day, we're featuring two of our graduates who are using their new leashes on life to help other veterans in their communities and across the nation.

Adam LeGrand, who graduated in 2015 with service dog, Molly, currently attends Syracuse University. He's a highly active member of the Student Veterans Organization there, holding the roles of the Disability Services Liaison Program Manager, and Peer Advisor for Veterans Education. He was named October's Student Veteran of the Month for all his efforts assisting student veterans with the VA Medical system, campus Office of Disability Services, and guiding other student veterans through the transition to college life.

You may recognize Randy & Captain, 2014 graduates, from our award-winning PSA, "Dear Captain." He is also a pioneering student veteran advocate at University of Nevada Las Vegas, where he is president of Rebel Vets, the university's chapter of Student Veterans of America (SVA), representing 1,800 of his fellow student veterans. Under Randy's leadership, Rebel Vets advocates for student veterans locally, and petitions for veteran education policies nationwide. All of the bills the Rebel Vets advocated for in Nevada passed.

As Warrior Ambassadors, Adam and Randy also speak frequently in support of the PAWS Act to urge federal funding of service dogs for PTSD. They travel to Washington D.C. to provide a voice for the thousands of disabled veterans who could benefit from a service dog. These two warriors, once on the verge of suicide, show us what remarkable good our veterans can do with their canine battle buddies, "paw"ing forward the support they've received to back up their fellow veteran brothers and sisters on their own journeys to a future of hope and purpose.

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

2017 - 2018

November

- 1st:** November Class Dog Day
- 10th:** Marine Corps Birthday
- 11th:** Veterans Day
- 16th:** Graduation, 6pm
- 23rd:** Thanksgiving
- 28th:** #GivingTuesday
- 29th:** December Class Dog Day

December

- 12th:** Hanukkah Begins
- 13th:** National Guard Birthday
- 14th:** Graduation, 6pm
- 24th:** Christmas Eve
- 25th:** Christmas Day
- 31st:** New Year's Eve

January

- 1st:** New Year's Day
- 10th:** January Class Dog Day
- 15th:** Martin Luther King Day
- 25th:** Graduation, 6pm

February

- 2nd:** Groundhog Day
- 7th:** February Class Dog Day
- 14th:** Valentine's Day
- 19th:** Presidents' Day
- 22nd:** Graduation, 6pm

Shari Duval takes the stage at TEDx Jacksonville

TEDx Jacksonville, the local chapter of the national nonprofit TED, hosted Shari Duval along with 12 other powerful speakers at its annual conference.



The 2017 conference, titled "We, The People," followed the format of its parent organization by presenting some of Florida's top minds devoted to spreading world-changing ideas. Shari received a standing ovation after her speech about the epidemic of veteran suicide, imploring federal funding for this innovative "prescription on four legs" that we know helps our nation's heroes heal. The day long event was held at the historic Florida Theatre on October 14th, and also featured local musicians.

Shari had this to say about her TEDx talk: "I've done a lot of talks to advocate for our warriors, but this was, hands-down, the most challenging speech I've given. It took me out of my comfort zone, but helped setup the program to achieve new heights that, without this talk, might not be an opportunity. I'm very grateful to have participated."



Leading the K9s Pack

He's always been our ultimate CEO, and this year the Jacksonville Business Journal also recognized Rory Diamond in its 11th annual Ultimate CEO Awards issue.

The Ultimate CEO awards are meant to highlight those who "set the standard in our corporate community, including civic leadership and charitable contributions."

To honor the recipients, the Business Journal hosted an awards luncheon where each awardee had an opportunity to make a brief speech. Diamond thanked his K9s For Warriors team and spoke about developments in our growing program.



Donor Spotlight: Robert Swinarton

A compassionate donor's unique family tie to the K9s family.

Bob Swinarton is one of our nation's few remaining WWII vets; he volunteered to serve in the Army and the Air Force during the Great War. At 91 years of age, he is still on a mission to serve his fellow service members.

Bob discovered the value of investing in the futures of our warriors when he sponsored his first dog last year. His connection to the canine runs deep: he named it Roddy, after his wife of nearly 70 years, who died one year ago. Roddy the rescue dog was paired with warrior Ric in February 2017. Bob attended the team's graduation, where Ric eagerly thanked the man who sponsored his life-changing service dog. The pair stays in touch now, sharing a unique bond over Roddy.

Bob's second sponsored dog graduated with his warrior in September, this time with the name Potter (a nickname of Bob's). Bob says what continues to inspire him to give is: "The donations provide ongoing feedback. Following your sponsored dog as it develops and seeing how much it means to the vet is something that keeps on giving. There's no other program that has the rewards you see from K9s."



A Message from Our Chief Operating Officer

As an Army veteran deployed to Iraq in 2003-04, I am intimately familiar with the challenges that our warriors face daily. Depression and isolation are just two of the many problems service members may experience when returning from a combat zone. In 2012, when I was introduced to K9s For Warriors, I realized there was hope for returning warriors who, like me, struggled with issues related to deployment.



However, rather than applying to the program to receive a service dog, I embraced K9s For Warriors in a different capacity: I started volunteering regularly. That grew into employment, and eventually, into my role today overseeing Warrior Operations. Every month, warriors teetering with little hope come to us for help, often as a last resort. Remarkably, over a three-week period, there's an enormous positive change in them which is very gratifying to observe.

I have watched in amazement this organization blossom into the nation's largest provider of service dogs for PTSD. With growth comes change, but K9s For Warriors consistently saves lives and offers the highest level of respect for those warriors who have sacrificed for our country. As the COO, I am committed to making sure I do my part to help my brothers and sisters in arms. Thank you for your continued support of K9s For Warriors!

Jason Snodgrass
Chief Operating Officer, K9s For Warriors