

News PRINTS

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Puppies ... Puppies ... Puppies

DFL Loves Puppies

by Ken Defren

The bond between humans and dogs is as old as time itself. Caveman old.

It is enmeshed in a halo of mutual devotion, respect and a form of love that has the strength and magic to save a life. Such is nurtured by Dogs For Life, a nonprofit organization that thrives on supporting veterans, first responders and others with special needs by harnessing that ancient discovery that dogs can be man or woman's best friend.

This is an emotionally fraught story.

Dog For Life's largest core of beneficiaries are military veterans in need of service, hearing or psychiatric service dogs. There are millions of women and men who over time have heeded the call of our country to stand ready to defend it, even at the sacrifice of their lives. Many veterans deployed to stressful regions, even war, have returned with scars seen and hidden, and with limitations that interfere with the normal course of life.

Dogs For Life, through a strict and skilled course of training temperamentally suited canines, fulfills its most admirable mission by gifting these highly skilled animals to veterans in need of a companion to cope with the stresses or physical limitations brought on by circumstances that now burden them.

There are remarkable ways in which a dog can penetrate even the most hardened veneer of self-protection, which is so often built as a defensive mechanism by a soldier, Airman, Marine, firefighter and others who have placed their very existence in jeopardy through service. Post-traumatic stress, physical limitations or other barriers erected by those in our uniformed services who have encountered profound threats might be beyond the reach of those who would treat them. But a dog, available to help on a different level, can move into damaged human crevices in a way that people cannot.

Let me tell you about Bob, a major in the Air Force, who

saw way too much mayhem during his stay in Afghanistan. It deeply roiled him and remains a constant in his damaged psyche.

He lies sleepless at night, replaying the horror he saw. The images remain with him during the day too, and as anyone who knew this officer and gentleman before his deployment, he has changed -- and not for the better. He doesn't speak to many people, not even friends, and keeps a tight rein on his conscious thought, a guarded person where once he was boisterous and joyful. His marriage has suffered mightily and may not survive.

He heard about DFL, and while thoughts of suicide



Patsy and Cooper Janssen, a 16-week-old Shih Tzu

Puppies ... Puppies ... Puppies

erupt with regularity, he decided to give this type of treatment a try.

The process of receiving a dog is custom-made for the personality and limitations of the recipient. The specific kind of help the dog can manage, from opening doors, giving beneficial comfort, turning lights on and off, creating a safe zone, providing pressure for a calming effect, reducing stress and conducting specialized tasks yields a path toward comfort and coping. Just as with Bob.

Bob was matched with Biscuit, a golden Lab full of compassion and loyalty.

Vero Beach resident Shelly Ferger founded Dogs



Foster Mother Roxanna Hinzman and 8-week-old Labrador Retriever



Labrador Retriever puppies donated by Southeastern Guide Dogs

For Life in 2002. Since then hundreds of veterans, first responders and others have found themselves walking next to four legged heroes, unsung for the most part and manifestly selfless in all they do for us. It is a service where nothing has more meaning than the partnership, the friendship, of a dog.

Ferger was practically born to establishing these partnerships, having made this her career from early in life. It began in childhood when she made friends with deaf neighbors and learned some sign language. This empathy and skill followed her through the years and remains to this day.

Five years as the adoption counselor at a Humane Society gave her focus and dogs entered her realm of giving. Ferger became an indomitable force.

She is undaunted by the challenges associated with creating and growing Dogs For Life, from obtaining and training dogs, building an infrastructure of professional and experienced trainers and dedicated volunteers, to managing the physical place to organize this non-profit.

It typically takes eight months to a year to properly train a dog for certification, a requirement by Assistance Dogs International, the accrediting agency of Dogs For Life. Their human partners take part in this procedure and the bonding begins. Labs and golden retrievers are highly suitable breeds, but others are up to the job as well.

The success of this program can be measured in emotional fulfillment, and a return to a form of nor-



Pat and Lana Scott, a 10-week-old Boston Terrier

malcy by those who have felt or undergone a trauma that has set them back physically or by mental distress. It also is about finding a savior through the unconditional and uncomplaining sacrifice of dog to human. They are more partner than pet, yet unyielding affection permeates the relationship,

which rests upon a devotion rarely found in life.

Dogs For Life's information can be found on its website at www.dogsforlifevb.org, by calling 772-567-8969, or stopping by its facility at 1230 16th Avenue, Vero Beach.

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- Dogs For Life, 1230 16th Avenue
Vero Beach, Florida 32960
(772) 567-8969 • www.dogsforlifefvb.org*

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Treasure Coast Jeep presents check to Dogs For Life



Treasure Coast Jeep Club members, from left, Jameson Ward, past president; Shelly Ferger, DFL CEO; Bobby Thomas, treasurer; Ralph Wnuk, president; and Lee Rech, vice president.

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NEWSPRINTS Correction

In the Fall 2020 issue of NewsPRINTS, the caption for this photo was incorrect.

The people pictured are (L to R standing) Harriet McCarthy, Cassie Ford, Gale Bracken, Clayton Kettle, Diane Kimball, Denny Velarde, Bob Cheshire and Bo. (L to R seated) Jasper, Maurine Turner, Barbara Defrino, Michael Brew and Brenda Daniels.



From the President



*President Eleanor M. Bengyak
with her service dog Rufus*

Who said slow down? We're seeing a definite increase at Dogs For Life, Inc. With the change in the emotional support laws and people suffering with post traumatic stress the demand for service dogs is tremendous. And, it's being felt across this country too.

The Board of Directors recently re-prioritized our programs to maintain consistency with our mission statement and the decision, after twenty years, was to no longer host the Howl-O-Ween Pawrade. Although we know this will be a disappointment to many who have enjoyed this event, we plan to put more emphasis on our graduation ceremony and the donor & volunteer appreciation events.

Another decision that weighs heavy on my heart, is the cancellation of our bridge tournament. Due to covid concerns many are no longer playing in person which made it impossible to hold this fundraiser. My deep appreciation to the co-chair Kathi G. Schumann for underwriting this event over the years.

Finally, I hope to be able to invite the Bridge Tournament players to an outdoor event, at the off-leash dog park later this year to support our Veteran Dog Training Program through the Bengyak Legacy Society. Supporting this mission is important for DFL and our heroes.

Founder and CEO

As I watch six puppies entering DFL's hearing and service dog training program, I realize we are seeing into our future.

It will take up to two years to fully train these pups and their owners, and it is incredibly gratifying to see the product of what our supporters have created come to fruition.

I can not express my gratitude enough to Southeastern Guide Dogs for donating three puppies to our organization. Last year, DFL joined the Assistance Dogs International ABC Breeding Cooperative in hopes we would be in line to receive donated puppies, and in the past six months we have received three! These donations not only help save time, but they also extend our budget and allow us to assist more of our veterans in need.

Surprisingly, service and hearing dog training classes are growing in spite of COVID-19; and the Veterans Training Veterans, Trainers and Foster Dog/ Puppy Workshops are being put on a virtual platform with the help of Citrus Three Marketing & Advertising. DFL volunteers -- our "most valuable players" -- are going above and beyond to pull our organization through the pandemic.

Memberships to the Off-Leash Dog Park are continuing to increase as more people are spending time outdoors with their dogs. It warms our hearts to see so many enjoying spending time with people of like minds, giving their dogs the opportunity to exercise, which is essential to most dogs' wellbeing.

A special thank you to the Dog Park Committee, which recently refurbished the Memorial Garden. It is absolutely beautiful.

DFL celebrated its 20th annual Howl-O-Ween Dog Costume Pawrade in 2020, which later was decided to be its final one. This annual event took many forms and directions over the years, all to promote dog park membership and corporate sponsorships. All of these events were successful and have now accomplished their goal. We know many will be disappointed as it was incredibly fun, and many of you attended each year, but we had an incredible 20-year run. Our energies will now be consolidated into our annual Hearing and Service Dog Graduation and Donor Appreciation Awards Ceremony.

The Veteran PTSD Recovery and Support Groups also are increasing. Every Monday night a faithful band of soldiers meet at DFL and encourage each other in their battles. Thank you to our veteran mental health professionals for donating their time to



*Founder & CEO Shelly Ferger
with service dog Sully*

make their recovery possible, the DFL Board of Directors, Next Generation Veterans of Indian River County, and American Gold Star Mothers of IRC for supporting this increasingly demanding and life-saving program.

A special thank you to the courage of the Legacy Ladies Golf League for sponsoring more veteran dog teams this year. We are grateful for your selecting DFL for a second year to receive the proceeds from your "Celebrate America Fundraiser."

With the help of our board of directors and supporters, staff and clients, we are moving full steam into 2021 and we are grateful that you have become a part of our team.

Thomas R. Metzinger, LCSW, CCHT
Therapist/Owner Progressive Mind Center, PLLC



United We Stand, Divided We Fall

In a speech delivered in 1799 by Patrick Henry, he spoke, “Let us trust God, and our better judgment to set us right hereafter. United we stand, divided we fall. Let us not split into factions which must destroy that union upon which our existence hangs.”

This phrase rings true today as much as it did over 200 years ago. It captures how the strengths of a union far outweigh individual strengths. We hope that our country can remember this and unite together, despite our differences, to become strong again. It’s not about choosing sides. It’s about compromise. It’s about using each other’s strengths to combat our own weaknesses. Even the Bible gives credence to this concept.

“And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, ‘Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.’” -- Matthew 12:25 (KJV)

Our community of veterans here on the Treasure Coast have seen first-hand how uniting helps us to overcome. Because of each other, we have the courage to face our fears, conquer our triggers, and heal from our traumas. Our PTSD group at Dogs For Life Inc. has grown incredibly strong over the past year. We have grown in numbers and in our resolve to be better men and women. We have made lasting connections that keep us strong even after the meetings, knowing that we are united and committed to each other. I feel stronger for being part of the meetings and I can assure you that the other members agree.

Let us remember this concept and how it has made us strong. Let us keep building our PTSD group to help others capture the same sense of hope we feel. Let us see how we can unite together to repair the unrest that 2020 has brought. It has served us well in the past. Let it serve us now.

Jim Romanek

Executive Director of Veterans Council of Indian River County



Jim Romanek with Savannah.

Grateful for Our Network

The year 2020 was something, wasn't it?

The Veterans Council of Indian River County had many things to be thankful for through it all. Our network of friends, supporters and volunteers made all our programs successful in providing for the needs of veterans in our community and we could not be more grateful. If you are reading this, you are a part of our network and we are ever so thankful for you.

We completed our annual report for 2020; and if anyone would like to receive a copy they can contact me and I'll get one out to you.

Our end-of-year campaign was launched as 2020 came to a close, which helped jump-start our fundraising efforts for 2021. With all that goes on at year's end, we still were able to receive support from our many donors.

Stay tuned as 2021 will bring new and exciting things that the Veterans Council has in the works. New events and fundraisers that will be COVID-19 compliant are being planned.

*Michelle Dale, President
American Gold Star Mothers of Indian River County*

\$37,000 Proceeds Donated from 2nd Annual Walk-A-Thon for Military Suicide Awareness

The American Gold Star Mothers of Indian River County recently divided proceeds from its second annual Walk-A-Thon for Military/Veteran Suicide Awareness between three agencies to help support these organizations with their programs for veterans struggling with PTSD.

The agencies that received a portion of the \$37,000 raised from the Walk-A-Thon were Dogs For Life, which will use the money for its Veteran Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Recovery and Support Group; the Mental Health Association's Veteran's Meet Up, and the Next Generation Veterans of Indian River County.

American Gold Star Mothers is grateful for the generosity and support of its sponsors, donors and participants in the Walk-A-Thon,

which enabled the cause and showed support for our struggling veterans.

Dogs For Life's Veteran PTSD Recovery and Support Group, in collaboration with the Next Generation Veterans of Indian River County, was able to conduct virtual meetings during the state mandated COVID-19 shutdown, resuming in-person meetings when the DFL center was allowed to reopen.

The Support Group meets at 7 p.m. each Monday. Those who attend are opening up and sharing with others and understanding that they are not alone with their struggles. Sessions are expected to expand to include a women's only group, and by adding an additional meeting to accommodate increasing attendance at Monday meetings. The meetings are facilitated by licensed veteran therapists.

The Mental Health Association of Indian River County's Veteran's Meet Up, which started at the Vero Beach Drop-In Center in September, will continue from 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesdays, facilitated by a veteran social worker.



The Veteran PTSD Recovery and Support Group and the Veteran's Meet Up hope to coordinate efforts in the future to help area veterans. The MHA also will continue to provide same-day free screenings and follow-up treatment at its main office for veterans in Indian River County.

There are 22 military and veteran deaths by suicide every day in the United States and these numbers are rising due to COVID and the unrest in America, according to the American Gold Star Mothers of Indian River County.

"One suicide a day is a tragedy, and 22 is unacceptable," according to Michelle Dale, president of the local Gold Star Mothers chapter, which plans to continue doing everything it can to help the area's veterans. "They gave up so much for us. They need -- no, they DESERVE -- our help."



Ingrid Hernandez and Vanessa Bartoszewicz walked at Memorial Island.

Active Military Christmas Mailing

By Richie Keller & GiGi

After years of coordinating Dogs For Life's Christmas care packages sent to active military, shipping requirements presented many challenges in 2020. Additionally, care package sponsor Kathi G. Schumann let us know she wanted to include military dogs in the Christmas joy this year.

So, through the DFL veteran dog teams, we were able to reach out to our active military K-9 handlers, asking them what they wanted for their dogs. We received their wish lists and then Santa's helpers got to work. Kong toys, collars, leather leashes, equipment handling bags, and extra-large dog beds were all ordered.

Once the K-9 equipment was delivered to DFL, we gathered the K-9 items and other donated supplies, such as socks, canned goods, thermal camouflage shirts, toiletries, foot powder, and mosquito repellent.

Each K-9 box was individually packed and marked "K-9" by dedicated volunteers Bill Heile, Tina Sozzi, Bernice and Gigi Keller, Steve Defren, Darryl Daniels, Bob Cheshire and Bo, and Earl Tindol and Arrow.

Upon arrival to the military bases, DFL received special gifts in the form of a thank you and picture with two of our finest military members with their beloved dogs, each sporting a Kong toy.

Many of the DFL staff, volunteers, Dog Park members, and donors have deep respect for our active military and veterans. Many of them are veterans or have family members who are veterans. So, when Mrs. Schumann and DFL founder Shelly Ferger asked for volunteers to help with and donate to this holiday event, everyone was eager to complete the mission. "Semper Fi" / 0321



Volunteers included (L to R standing) Bill Heile, Tina Sozzi, Bernice Keller, Army Veteran Steve Defren, and Darryl Daniels. (L to R seated) Marine Veteran Richie Keller and Gigi, Army Veteran Earl Tindol and Arrow, Navy Veteran Bob Cheshire and Bo.



Kathi G. Schumann and Army Veteran Earl Tindol



Some of the packages have arrived, big shot out to you and Dogs for Life for making it happen!!

*Chuck Gerrald, First Sargent
Next Generation Veterans of Indian River County*

Next Generation Veterans of Indian River County: Still Serving



Chuck Gerrald and his dog, Max.

The Next Generation Veterans of Indian River County launched a veteran PTSD support and recovery group with Dogs For Life and Gold Star Mothers of Indian River County in October of 2019. The objective was to provide a safe place for those veterans with PTSD to meet and discuss how to cope with everyday life and the issues brought on by PTSD.

With a view to having veterans help veterans, the group is completely peer run and facilitated by a mental health professional who is also a veteran. We know that only a fellow vet truly understands what other vets have seen and experienced. This warm and compassionate group is very different from what so many have experienced through the VA. The meetings are held at Dogs For Life in Vero Beach and dogs are a big part of the program.

Participants are united in their desire to tear down walls of

defensiveness, and to move forward without judgement.

Our group provides a truly safe and confidential place to land for those who face demons every day. We can relate on a variety of issues and we work to share resolutions for overcoming those common obstacles.

While PTSD cannot be cured one of our goals is learning to live peacefully with it.

We strive to bring our soldiers home, but we don't always bring them all the way home, and this is a tragedy. Our goal is to make the person whole again by addressing invisible wounds and working together to heal them.

The group has established a bond and interact with their peers outside of the meetings. No member feels alone anymore. They have their veteran family covering their six. The perimeter is secure and there is a cold wet nose to keep you grounded.

The PTSD group launch has been more successful than expected. The group has grown

by grass root efforts and word of mouth. A lot of hard work and time has gone into the development of the group.

Funding has been generated by fund raising efforts and the generosity of donors who will not accept 22 a day. There are plans to add additional groups and to have a female only group. This group will have their own female facilitator.

We hope we can help other veteran groups establish their own PTSD support and recovery groups. Now is the time to fight the enemy within. No soldier should have to die twice and never by their own hand.

The Next Generation Veterans Group of Indian River County PTSD Support and Recovery meets every Monday at 7:00 pm at Dogs For Life. The meeting is for veterans only. All members who served in the armed forces are welcomed.

A flyer for the "Veteran PTSD Recovery and Support Group". The flyer features a background of an American flag. At the top, it says "Veteran PTSD Recovery and Support Group" in bold black text. Below that is a circular logo for the "Next Generation Veterans of Indian River County". The meeting schedule is "Mondays 7:00 PM". Facilitators listed are "Thomas R. Metzinger, USMC, LCSW, Therapist" and "Michael Wright, USA, (Ret.), RCSW/MCAP". It also promotes "PTSD Coach Online Tools" with the URL "ptsd.va.gov/apps/ptsdcoachonline/tools_menu.htm". At the bottom, it features the "Dogs For Life" logo and contact information for the "Service Dog Training Center": "1230 16th Avenue, Vero Beach, FL 32960, (772) 567-8969, www.dogsforlifevb.org".

Christmas “Under the Oaks” at DFL

On a beautiful warm and sunny day in December we gathered “under the oaks” in the Dog Park for the 2020 Dogs For Life Christmas Party. Early in the morning, our dedicated and hard-working volunteers prepared the park by setting up the tents, moving the tables and chairs, and decorating each table for the party.

At noon, about 40 volunteers, donors and clients with their service dogs arrived in high spirits and dressed in their finest holiday attire to enjoy a box lunch. This was followed by an amazing array of holiday cookies which everyone brought to share with each other. We are so sorry that the COVID 19 kept some from attending especially our host Mrs. Kathi G. Schumann who also provided service dog Christmas ornaments and a box of toffee candy to the participants.

At the Christmas Party there was another highlight, the 2019 Service and Hearing Dog Team Graduation Ceremony.

And then, yet another highlight of the day, was the introduction of Sully’s Silver Star, a yellow Labrador Retriever, who arrived the night before. Thanks to our volunteer’s puppy limo that picked him up in Bradenton just in time for the party.

Again, thank you to our benefactor, our staff, and volunteers for making this day of celebration one we will always remember.



Presents and lunch



Jessica and Honey Jacobs



Michele and Ken Dale, Colonel Sam Kouns and Sargent Hap Allston



Laurie Iodice, DFL Finance Manager Laura Bonney, and Chris Consi



Sally Dunn and John Hartwig

A Perfect Pair – US Navy Veteran Reshaard and Zoey

By Dustin Tackett

Every veteran has a unique experience - and an equally unique set of problems that can arise - from their time in the service.

For 21-year-old Navy veteran, Reschaard, it was not the fact that he spent time nearly 1,000 feet below the ocean's surface in an undisclosed location aboard a US Naval submarine that led him to Dogs For Life, but rather his unfortunate experience as an E-3 seaman being targeted by a superior officer that drove his separation from the Navy and eventual diagnosis of Post Traumatic Stress.

It was the anxiety that made day-to-day life so hard to cope with following his departure from the Navy, but everything changed once he connected with Dogs For Life and was paired with his service dog Zoey, an energetic, loving 15-month-old labradoodle.

"After I came out, I was kind of disconnected from people," Reschaard said. "And that's why I have her because I don't like going anywhere without her; it makes me super uncomfortable and always on edge. I have those moments where I don't even know that something's about to click in my head, but she can sense it and will literally bump into me on purpose like 'hey, snap out of it'. I don't know how she knows, but she knows."

Still surprised by what his young service dog can accomplish, he continues to work daily to fine-tune her abilities. Zoey already had many of the basics down when the two were paired, which he considers a blessing because he has seen how difficult it can be to start with a puppy, but she never ceases to amaze him. And he can still recall the first moment he realized that what he had in Zoey was something special.

"It was so random," Reschaard said, "I was having kind of a rough time that day or something and literally face-planted on the bed. So, she jumped up on the bed, being goofy, and then jumped over onto my back and just laid there on top of me, knowing that I needed her to do something weird to take my mind off whatever had me down. It's been great. Now that I have her, I can't imagine not having her."

Reschaard, from Port St Lucie, first learned about Dogs For Life after leaving the VA Hospital in West Palm Beach, when his social worker gave him a long list of service dog organizations to reach out to. He applied to them all. However, not all of them were the perfect fit in his eyes. Some of the programs - he believed - were too



short to really learn the ropes and get a grasp on what it takes to train a service dog. Some had waiting lists far too long, and at that point he was eager to get started. And then he heard from Shelly Ferger at DFL.

"Shelly reached out to me and explained that Dogs For Life has had people stay anywhere from a year to a year and a half - and even more than that - and I knew that this was the kind of program I wanted to be in," Reschaard said. "And she was telling me about the park and the agility course right down the road, and really just made me feel comfortable about the entire process. It's just been amazing, and I can't imagine being anywhere else."

The pair obviously has a connection, and that bond will only grow stronger with time; as

— Continued on page 16

Sponsorship

2019 The Final Howl-O-Ween Parade

By Dustin Tackett

Dogs For Life held its 20th annual Howl-O-Ween Mask-A-Rade on Oct. 24 at the Off-Leash Dog Park, but unlike previous years, this event was combined with the Class of 2020 Service & Veteran Dog Team Graduation and its Donor & Volunteer Appreciation BBQ.

Those events were postponed from earlier in the year due to COVID-19.

The day was a huge success, but it was recently decided that it will be the final Dog Costume Pawrade.

Dogs For Life has had an incredible 20-year run with the event, which featured dogs in adorable costumes and their owners. “Hundreds of people have taken part in the parade throughout the years, and we could never get enough of all the great costumes,” said Shelly Ferger, DFL founder and CEO.



But the planning and organizing of the event was very time-consuming for the DFL staff and volunteers. In light of this, the DFL Board of Directors recently decided it was too much so to remain in line with DFL's mission of improving the lives of veterans and other people with disabilities by training service and hearing dogs. This mission takes a commitment of one to two years of training of the dog by its handler toward full public access graduation. “We may still reach out for all of you to share pictures of your dog's adorable costumes with us on social media when Halloween comes around, because we will certainly miss the event as much as you will, but we will be happy knowing that more of our time will be spent training new service dogs and supporting our graduates,” said Ferger.

Dyer!



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999 US Hwy 1
Vero Beach, FL 32960

772-266-5860



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700 22nd Place #2A, Vero Beach, FL 32960
772-539-7878



VCA Florida Veterinary League

1360 US Hwy 1
Vero Beach, FL 32960
772-567-3070

2019 Graduation Ceremony Celebrated

By Dustin Tackett

2020 was the first year that DFL live-streamed one of its graduation ceremonies, and everything went smoothly.

“We decided to live-stream the event because we wanted to give an opportunity for family and friends of graduates to be able to tune in, even if they could not be there in person,” said Ferger. “And even for those who were not able to make it, they now have a way to go back and watch the event at a later date.”

Moving forward, DFL staff and volunteers plan to shift more of the focus from the annual Howl-O-Ween Pawrade to the DFL Graduation & Awards Ceremony.

“We hope all the amazing sponsors that have sponsored the Pawrade will continue their support to sponsor service and hearing dog teams,” said Ferger.



(L to R) Army Veteran Kimberley Mann-Day and Elvis; Devon Williams, Quilts of Valor; Army Veteran Earl Tindol with Arrow; Marine Veteran Claude Vitale and Beebe.

2020 Service Dog Certifications

COVID-19 presented challenges to Dogs For Life’s training programs in 2020. Despite the chaos and interruptions, DFL trainers were able to issue six-month certifications to two individuals who worked extremely hard and got it done.

Danielle Ley began training with her 2-year-old mixed breed named Ollie in January 2020. Ollie passed the DFL temperament test and the two moved quite quickly through the program. Dani had a trip planned in December, so she was quite motivated to get Ollie trained to go on an airplane. They made their deadline with flying colors.

Army veteran Kris Hasenauer began training in October 2019, as soon as he received DFL’s year-old Labrador Retriever named Jasper. He too had many challenges running two businesses and caring for his family during the COVID quarantine. Kris still found time for the required training that mandates certification.

You will hear a lot more about these two teams as they will acquire their one-year certification soon in 2021, and then annually. Congratulations Dani and Ollie, and Kris and Jasper. Well done!



Beth Sexton-Stryker and Tigger received the 2019 Dogs For Life Kathi G. Schumann Award that honors a proven record of exceptional generosity.



Dani Ley and Ollie



Army Veteran Kris Hasenauer and Jasper

The Legacy Golf and Tennis Club “Celebrate America Week”

The Legacy Golf and Tennis Club’s Ladies Golf League did not let COVID-19 stop it from conducting its annual tournament dedicated to raising money to support military veterans. The tournament is held

each year during Veterans Day week.

In 2020, the event supported Dogs For Life for the second year in a row, but the event committee faced incredible obstacles: COVID-19 safety restrictions,



US Army Veteran Earl Tindol and Arrow

record rainfall and extremely wet course conditions leading to cart restrictions and less play. Nonetheless, the Legacy Ladies Golf Association and the entire Legacy membership donated over \$20,000 in November toward acquiring and training puppies to become service dogs for military veterans.

Planning the event in 2020 was particularly challenging for the committee, whose members were Cindy Fettrow, Charlene Furman, Nancy Lewis, Gail Murphy, Lynda Richards and Rita Turner.

Safety restrictions at Legacy included limited gatherings indoors and out, eliminating the traditional luncheon the ladies have held following their Wednesday tournament and ensuring social distancing and mask wearing to protect participants. Additionally, since local businesses have suffered from the effects of the pandemic,

the committee decided

they would not ask for donations beyond the members of Legacy, eliminating good sources of added revenue from raffle and silent auction items.

So creativity had to kick in.

Instead of a one-day ladies’ tournament, the committee proposed to the club’s management a “Celebrate America Week” that would include the whole membership. Management enthusiastically supported the idea, seeing it as an opportunity to bring members together for a wonderful cause. So the schedule was set:

- The week began with a solemn tribute to veterans, including the 31 Legacy member veterans; the membership gathered outdoors to see the St. Lucie County Fire District Honor Guard and the St. Lucie

County Fire District Pipes and Drums. Members also got to meet Bob Cheshire and Bo, who did a fabulous job telling everyone what Dogs For Life does and how Bo has helped Bob. Committee members were on hand to sell sponsorships as well as 50/50 tickets.



US Navy Veteran Bob Cheshire and Bo



US Navy Veteran Kimberley Mann-Day and Elvis

Sponsorship

They also put together a raffle to win either a large basket of cheer or a golf package. The Twilight Tournament that had been planned following the tribute was cancelled due to weather and course conditions, but that didn't stop the members from coming out for the kickoff of Celebrate America Week.



Rita Turner, Cindy Fettrow and Nancy Renda.

- The next event was a “Meet the Teams Day,” where veterans and their dogs were on hand to meet members and share their stories and how their service dogs have changed their lives for the better. As members showed up for their rounds of golf, the veterans were right there near the practice green, along with committee members who were again selling chances and sponsorships. Some Legacy members simply showed up with checks, with several donations for “Puppy Patron” sponsorships of \$1,500 and more.

- The next two days involved men's and ladies' golf tournaments, both of which were well attended. The men's league made a special \$200 donation to Dogs For Life in addition to the many individual donations. The ladies each donated \$25 and also bought many raffle tickets.

- Celebrate America Week closed with the drawings for the 50/50 and the raffles.



Rita Turner speaking at the Special Veterans Ceremony featuring Bob and Bo.



US Navy Veteran Diane Kimball's dog Ralfee



US Air Force Veteran Judy Schmidt and Bentley

The committee also was greatly appreciative of the enormous support from the club's management and staff, in particular General Manager Anna Stewart and Head Golf Professional Rich Waage.

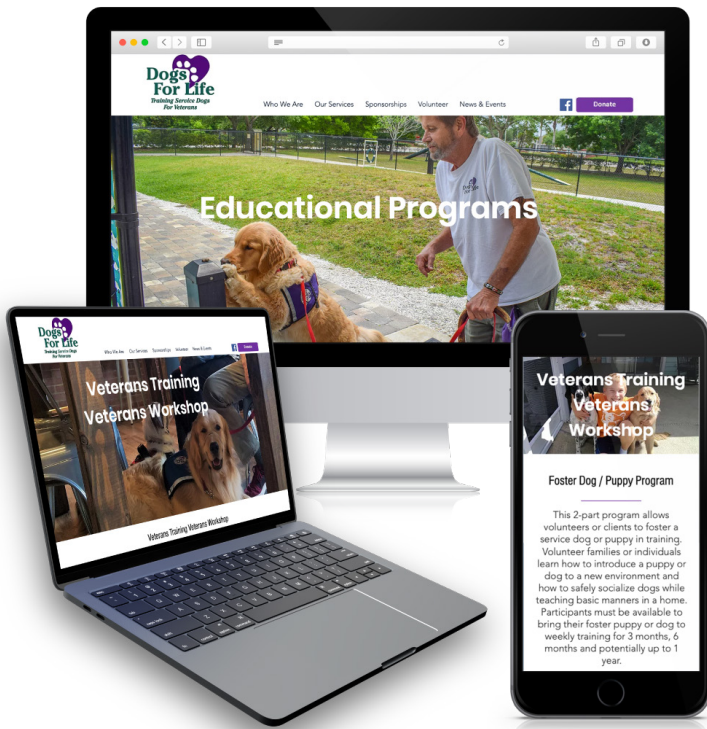
The club membership absolutely loves Dogs For Life, its mission, and the specific cause supported by the club. In 2019 and 2020 combined, the Legacy Ladies' Golf Association

has raised over \$50,000 in cash and in-kind donations. Shelly Ferger has done a great job keeping Legacy members advised on the puppies acquired and placements made. And everyone loves the dogs: Jasper, Savannah, Ralfee, Zoey, Sully, and others to come.

The Legacy Ladies Golf Association is hopeful it can again support Dogs For Life in 2021, albeit with a little less stress.

Educational Programs Online

By Dustin Tackett



One of the things we learned as an organization throughout a difficult 2020 is that we need to shift some of our focus to the digital side of things, so we're beginning to do that here in 2021.

COVID-19 made it nearly impossible for us to gather as we normally would, and while we knew it was only temporary, it did amplify our need to be able to easily reach and engage with those within our programs, even if something unforeseeable comes our way.

And with this in mind, we are happy to share that - in the very near-future - we will begin to offer our Veterans Training Veterans Workshop and Foster Dog Program digitally on our website. We are working now to make the experience as smooth and as user-friendly as possible before launching the programs on our website, but we are excited about taking that next step into the modern age and being able to reach more people with our mission of helping veterans in mind.

"It's something that we've been planning for a while," DFL's Shelly Ferger said. "But when COVID hit us in 2020 and shut everything down, it only made it more obvious that we needed another way to reach people in our programs."

We are working closely with Dustin Tackett and his team at Citrus Three Marketing as he spear-heads this project and brings it to light.

Reschaard and Zoey, continued from page 11

will their ability as a service dog team. And Reschaard knows that it is still a learning process for both he and Zoey, especially when it comes to public outings.

"Most of the time it's me overthinking it and not being sure if she's ready," Reschaard said. "We went to Mulligans for my friend's birthday and I was super anxious because it was my first time bringing her out to any restaurant. I looked at her and said 'table,' she stayed right by my feet the entire time. So, I know that she knows how to act in public, and she's only going to get better."

Listening to Reschaard's story first-hand, it is impossible not to feel happy watching he and Zoey stroll confidently around the fenced-in dog park at Dogs For Life. Her scruffy-faced, tongue-dangling smile as she looks up towards his attention is only the icing on the cake. You can tell with every step that she breathes new life into him as well. If - at the very least - she can create some separation between he and whatever struggles he may be dealing with at any particular moment, then she is doing what service dogs are meant to do - changing lives for the better.

"It's been great," Reschaard said. "That's my girl, my partner in crime. It's like having a kid, except she also takes care of me. I give you your food, your water, I bring you out; I try to have the best time with you so you're happy, and then, in exchange, you literally make me feel happy, you make me feel safe. And now I can't imagine not having her."



Volunteer Virtual Classes Coming Soon

By Linda Barberi



Yes, that is what volunteers do for Dogs For Life each day. Whether it is answering the phone, being an Ambassador in the Off-Leash Dog Park, helping with special events, stuffing envelopes, fostering a puppy, scanning documents, or setting up tables and chairs for a class, our volunteers freely offer to do all this and more.

I was lucky to start as a volunteer at DFL over a year ago and I am still learning, but during that time I have

tried to “freely offer to do something” and help in any way that is needed.

One of the tasks needed at the time I arrived was to be the Volunteer Coordinator. This job is very rewarding for me as the program continues to evolve and improve. I hope my experience will help enhance the experience for the other volunteers, as well as benefit DFL.

When an application is received from walk-ins, by phone, or on the website, I meet each person either in person or by telephone. An assessment is done to see what our needs are at that moment or what they will be in the future, and to see if there is a fit for the applicant.

We are so happy to soon be able to offer our new volunteer applicants an opportunity to be part of the rollout of our

education classes on a web-based virtual platform for both the Veterans Training Veterans, Volunteer Trainers Workshop, Foster

Dog/Puppy, and Dog Park Ambassador Programs. These classes are very important for our new volunteer applicants to attend before they begin to volunteer so that they can learn as much about DFL as possible. Their educational experience will be a benefit to them as well as DFL.

Praises go to all our volunteers! Thank you for your loyalty, reliability, and timely assistance during these trying times. You know we cannot do it without you.



David Walsh with Navy Veteran Kimberly Mann-Day and Elvis



Volunteer Coordinator Linda Barberi at the David Walsh Radio Show with Sunny

Poodles Galore

By Katherine Bauman

Beth Sexton-Stryker, a native of Vero Beach, and Maureen Turner, a relatively new resident to the area, share something very special in common: new 9-week-old miniature poodle puppies that will be trained as service dogs at Dogs For Life (DFL).

DFL Trainers will work with Beth and Grady and Maureen and Angus over the next nine months to a year. The dogs will be task trained to assist their owners with hearing and mobility challenges and psychological support.

Dogs For Life specializes in training dogs to help their owners 24 hours a day, 365 days a year lead lives of independence and self-reliance.

Beth and Maureen recently answered questions about how they came to receive Grady and Angus and what Dogs For Life means to them.

Please tell NewsPRINTS readers how you learned about Dogs For Life and how you got connected with this non-profit organization.

BETH: Florida Dog Guides For The Deaf trained my first hearing dog, a miniature Dachshund named Bandit, back in 1995. Shelly Ferger was my lead



Beth Sexton-Stryker and Grady

trainer. I started to volunteer for (Florida Dog Guides) and attended an extended workshop in Bradenton, Florida, where I became a certified assistant hearing dog trainer.

MAUREEN: My standard poodle died a few years ago and I found DFL on the internet. Shelly was quite welcoming, and

I attended many educational classes observing and learning and realizing how much I truly needed a dog.

What service(s) will this dog be trained to perform for you?

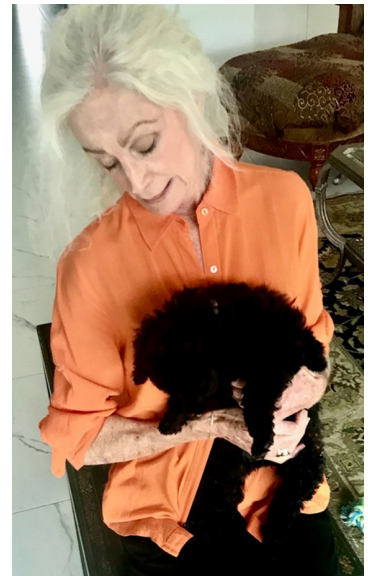
BETH: Alarm clock, smoke alarm, door knock, doorbell, intruder, telephone (I have a captioned telephone) and the K-9 911 phone, because my balance nerves were damaged along with my hearing nerves from meningitis.

MAUREEN: I'm still exploring all the mitigating tasks my pup can be trained at the moment. It's an

ongoing "story" that will be played out, in the not too distant future.

What can you tell readers about the puppy you just received? How is this breed best suited for your needs?

BETH: My second hearing dog was a toy poodle named Tigger. While Bandit was a very determined and reliable hearing dog, when DFL and I began to train Tigger I was blown away by the superior intelligence of this breed. Tigger was an awesome hearing dog and my soulmate for 12 1/2 years. The brute intelligence, intuition,



Maureen Turner and Angus

enthusiasm, and can-do personality packed into his 6-pound body was indescribable. However, his size caused me much anxiety in many public outings because I feared he would be stepped upon and injured. When a congenital illness took Tigger early, I knew I wanted a poodle, but decided on a miniature poodle rather than a toy poodle.

Grady, my new miniature poodle puppy, will be at least twice the size of Tigger. In fact, at 9 weeks he already weighs 3.8 pounds and is almost as tall as Tigger. Grady's size will still be manageable for me and I am already seeing signs that he will be very intelligent and an excellent worker.

MAUREEN: Angus will be my support, physically and emotionally, allowing me the gift of freedom and security in this very big, yet small, world.

How hands-on will you be with the training?

BETH: Very. I plan to be involved in every aspect of his training under the supervision of a DFL certified trainer. Bandit and Tigger received "in-home" training because the DFL Training Center did not exist then. So training in the center will be a new experience for me and I am looking forward to seeing how Hearing Dog Training will work in a group scenario!

MAUREEN: I will attend classes and with the help and assistance of Dogs For Life, I will form a successful team with my puppy. He was born Dec. 1, 2020, just a real infant now.

What do you think this dog will bring to your life?

BETH: Independence, freedom from fear and freedom to engage with the world in many ways I would otherwise avoid. For example, I travel to an out-of-state doctor once a year. I am able to do this alone because I know if there is a hotel fire, my hearing dog will alert me to the alarm and get me out of my room ... just like Bandit did when we were in a hotel fire in Boston many years ago. It does happen!

Please tell NewsPRINTS readers a little more about yourself.

BETH: I was born and raised in Vero Beach. I went to college in Virginia and Spain, then returned to Madrid to get my master's degree in Spanish Philology. I started work in a large multinational advertising agency and worked my way up from the bottom. My final career position was as an owner and senior vice president of a small marketing and promotional agency in Westport, Connecticut.

Then meningitis struck. Suddenly I was without hearing, balance and suffered a number of other disabilities; not to mention being without a career, home or husband. I did not have a clue how to live with hearing loss and there were no resources in a town the size of Vero Beach. It was a dramatic change, and I did not know how I was going to survive.

Life was very bleak until I got Bandit, and someone told me I should have him trained as a hearing dog. My response was "a hearing ... what?" I did not even know hearing dogs existed! Someone put me in touch with Shelly and my life began to change for the better. Suddenly I had a new purpose in life. When I went out in public, my dog -- wearing his blaze orange jacket -- told people there was something different about me. Bandit made an invisible disability visible. My Mom no longer had to come over to be sure I was awake for a doctor's appointment. I did not miss friends who came to call. Just a few things on a very lengthy list.

My mother, brothers and their families still live in Vero Beach. Unfortunately, due to my health issues and the COVID-19 pandemic, I am not able to attend family functions, or any group functions for that matter. Truth be told, the lifestyle limitations imposed by this pandemic make it a good time to train a new hearing dog since I will be able to dedicate more time than ever to my new partner and soulmate.

MAUREEN: I am a widow of a World War II

Normandy Beach veteran who died in 2005. He is buried with honors at Arlington National Cemetery.

While married for almost 40 years, I spent many, many hours, days, weeks and months absorbed in veteran issues, which are all-encompassing both for the veteran and for the close family members. I always found that sometimes most people concentrate on the veteran when, in fact, it is the partner that is the one who needs the help, maybe more so. It is said the veterans of WWII covered up their hurt, but how much more did their wives? (Now, that could be a book!) My friends never knew my story at home.

After working for attorneys from age 15 while in high school and after school, and living on my own since age 17, I succeeded in obtaining a license as a court reporter. I started working in the corporate world and my positions allowed me to travel as a young, single woman, quite extensively throughout various areas of the Middle East when that was unheard of in the early 1960s. Women's Lib had not yet really been on the forefront. I had my own apartment then in Manhattan and was quite happy in the city.

After meeting my husband through a mutual friend, I decided it was time to go to college and I did. I completed college and a master's degree while attending to his needs, all within five years. I always say I got my college degree while studying in the car while he was in the doctor's office.

In 1969 my husband and I moved to Israel; but since my husband needed more extensive health care, we returned home. I again tried my hand in the corporate world as a diversion and was quite successful in the business world. As an aside, I used my master's degree with the emotionally handicapped as a part-time teacher. It was quite stressful work, but extremely rewarding.

Anything else you would like to share about yourself, your new puppy or your relationship with Dogs For Life?

BETH: I have been involved with DFL from the beginning in one capacity or another.

I am in awe of how Shelly has taken a small in-home Hearing Dog Training Program and turned it into one of the premier Service Dog Training Centers in the country. Certified by Assistance Dogs International and one of very few recognized by the Veterans Administration, hundreds of local lives have been transformed thanks to Dogs For Life, most recently our veterans who have given so much to our country. We are very fortunate to have a program of the caliber of DFL in Vero Beach.

Flying Rules Have Changed

The rules for flying with Fido have changed.

Because flying presents unique challenges for those with disabilities, the airlines are exempt from the rules established by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Airlines have their own set of mandates, specific to air travel, outlining how they must accommodate individuals with disabilities while providing a safe environment for both flight crews and passengers. In 1986, Congress passed the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA), which guaranteed that people with disabilities would receive consistent and nondiscriminatory treatment when traveling by air. The ACAA mandated that the airlines transport passenger service animals and emotional support animals on the aircraft free of charge. Little did they know they were opening Pandora's Box.

Service animals are task trained to mitigate their handler's disability. They receive extensive public access training that ensures these animals are well behaved in situations while interacting with people and animals in the community.

Emotional support animals (ESAs) make their owners feel at ease by having them in their presence. A mental health care professional must make the recommendation for an ESA based on their client's needs. There are no training requirements for emotional support animals, so they are not afforded the same public access privileges that are given to service animals.

ESAs were previously allowed on flights in the cabin for free. Many travelers took advantage of the ACAA by buying ESA vests, IDs, and sometimes letters online to transport their pet in the cabin free of charge. On any given flight, there can be a combination of service animals, ESAs, and untrained pets posing as service animals or ESAs. We've all seen the news clips of pigs, peacocks, raccoons, snakes, and badgers that people have carried on the aircraft for

their owner's "emotional wellbeing." Some voyages felt more like a trip on Noah's Ark than a flight in a modern passenger jet.

After many passenger conflicts onboard flights, animals relieving themselves in the cabin, injured flight attendants, and lots of lobbying, the ACAA got a facelift. The Department of Transportation received over 15,000 comments from travelers, airports, unions, airlines, and service dog training organizations. There was a substantial amount of pressure for the agency to change the definition of a service animal to mimic the ADA definition so that all federal agencies would use common terms. There also were many comments encouraging a training

standard for service animals and the removal of ESAs since many incidents and injuries were the result of untrained animals.

The new rules went into effect on Jan. 11, 2021.

For those who have previously traveled with a service dog, not much has changed other than the need to fill out and submit some paperwork 48 hours before the flight. If you previously traveled with an emotional support animal, under the new

rules, you are now traveling with a pet and must follow the airline's restrictions regarding pets and will likely have to pay a pet fee.

Most people find airline travel stressful. Most dogs find airline travel stressful. Given all the protections afforded to the disabled while traveling with a service dog under the ACAA, if you get to the gate and your dog isn't behaving like a service dog or growls at a gate agent because he's stressed, you will not likely be boarding the aircraft with your dog. Airline personnel only have a few minutes to observe and evaluate your dog, and at the end of the day, passenger and crew safety outweighs your rights to travel with a service dog.

Is the new ACAA perfect? By no means, but it's a huge step in the right direction.



Mark Poziomek and Ranger

A Summary of the Changes



- Definition of a service animal: A service animal is a dog, regardless of breed or type, that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a qualified individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability.
- Airlines are not required to recognize emotional support animals as service animals and may treat them as pets.
- Psychiatric service animals are treated the same as other service animals that are individually trained to do work or perform a task for the benefit of a qualified individual with a disability.
- Airlines are permitted to limit service animals to dogs.
- Airlines are permitted to require passengers to remit a completed hardcopy or electronic version of the department’s “U.S. Department of Transportation Service Animal Air Transportation Form” as a condition of transportation. (This form asks for information about the dog’s health, vaccines and training.)
- Airlines are permitted to require individuals traveling with a service animal on flights eight hours or longer to remit a completed hardcopy or electronic version the department’s “U.S. Department of Transportation Service Animal Relief Attestation” as a condition of transportation.
- Airlines are permitted to limit the number of service animals traveling with a single passenger with a disability to two service animals.
- Airlines are permitted to require a service animal to fit on their handler’s lap or within its handler’s foot space on the aircraft.
- Airlines are permitted to require a service animal to be harnessed, leashed, or otherwise tethered in areas of the airport that they own, lease, or control, and on the aircraft.
- Airlines are prohibited from refusing to transport a service animal based solely on breed or generalized physical type, as distinct from an individualized assessment of the animal’s behavior and health.
- Airlines are not permitted to require a passenger with a disability to physically check-in at the airport, rather than using the online check-in process, on the basis that the individual is traveling with a service animal. Airlines may require a passenger with a disability seeking to travel with a service animal to provide the service animal form(s) at the passenger’s departure gate on the date of travel.



Certified Service Dog Ranger Poziomek shows his task work while in flight

Memorial Garden Dedication



Friends and family gathered at Dogs For Life's Off-Leash Dog Park for the Memorial Garden Dedication in memory of founding member Robert G. Bowman and his dog Robbie on Saturday, February 6th.

Dogs For Life CEO Shelly Ferger started off the ceremony by speaking about the updates to the Memorial Garden as well as her memories of Mr. Bowman and how much he cared about programs supporting veterans at DFL.

The Memorial Garden is a place for members to reflect on our past as an organization, said Ferger, and to remember those who have joined this journey, especially founding members like Mr. Bowman.

"I knew when I met him that he was a gentle man,"



"In memory of our beloved pets who have gone over the Rainbow Bridge."

Ferger said. "His smile, laughter and overall demeanor was nothing short of genuine. It has been rewarding to dedicate this Memorial Garden to Mr. Bowman and Robbie. There is a lot of love here, and while carrying the Bowman name, there will always be love here."

It was a wonderful ceremony that allowed people to walk around and see the renovations the Memorial Garden has undergone for themselves. Others

had a chance to speak in memory of Mr. Bowman, including Memorial Garden Committee member and long-time friend Laurie Iodice.

"This is really special to me," Iodice said. "Especially when I see Bob's dogs and know that he's a part of this. And I know that he's up there looking down on us. He is really, really happy that we went through putting this all together, and that's just really special."

In conclusion, Ferger said, "We hope you'll take time to come out and see all the hard work our committee – Suzie Gomez of Seal Rite Pavers, Eddie and Sassy Boatwright, and Laurie Iodice – put in to make this all possible. They did a wonderful job recreating this beautiful space."



Space for interment of pets is available.

Memorials



Robert G. Bowman with Shelly Ferger, Laurie Iodice and Zoey during a puppy visit.

Tributes and Memorial Gifts

In Memory Of

“Teddy” Brewer
Shelly Ferger
Beth Sexton-Stryker

Cora Fruneaux
Peter and Donna Polk

Alma Lee Loy
Shelly Ferger
Warren Capital Management

“Tigger” Stryker
Martha Bear
Barbara Brewer
Elinor Clinton
Shelly Ferger
Ann Hamner
Eleanor Sexton
Beth Sexton-Stryker

Ted Swartz
Doris Tropf

In Honor Of

Linda Barberi
Darrin Dickerson
Matt and Eliza Marra

Jason and Meredith Bybee
Elizabeth Bybee

Pax and Laik Fairbairn
Laile E. Fairbairn

Laurie Iodice
Elizabeth Bybee

Maxx Ruma
Shelly Ferger
Kay Ruma

In Honor Of

Donovan Schumann’s Birthday
Shelly Ferger
Kathi G. Schumann

Gene Schumann’s Birthday
Shelly Ferger
Kathi G. Schumann

Kathi G. Schumann’s Birthday
Shelly Ferger
Mae Frances Garrett
Virginia McKeown
Gene and Martha Schumann
Mark and Cheri Schumann
Kim and John Schumann III
Barry and Vickie Wyatt



We're Going to the Dog Park

by Katherine Bauman

Bicyclists going by Dogs For Life most mornings are often greeted by Blue, a Miniature Australian Shepherd, brought there by his owner to get some fresh air and exercise. The greeting comes in the form of the 10-year-old dog running the fence along 16th Avenue barking hello to the bicyclists.

But this morning ritual has evolved over time.

When Blue first started going to the DFL Off-Leash Dog Park, he would chase bicyclists riding down both sides of the road, said Don Fennell, Blue's owner and an Army veteran. But as he's aged, Blue has become more selective and now will only bark and run after bicyclists on the north side of the road and on the sidewalk.

"And they have to be going pretty fast," the 77-year-old Fennell said.

Blue, named after his blue merle coloring, is owned by Vero Beach residents Don and Linda Fennell. The Fennells have been members of the Dogs For Life Off-Leash Dog Park for more than 11 years. In honor of DFL's

Assistance Dogs for Veterans Training Program, there is no cost for military veterans to use the park.

Don Fennell is a veteran of the Vietnam War. He was drafted in 1965 and served for two years. He spent one year in Vietnam as a door gunner on a troop carrier helicopter.

"As the First Calvary in Vietnam, we flew all over. We called it the 'golf course.' We were real cowboys

back in those days, conducting extractions, guarding, and searching for troops," he said. "We were all petrified until the shit hit the fan, and then we didn't have time to be scared."

Not eager to talk too much about his experiences there, Fennell said he was proud of the time he served but admitted "the whole world was against us." But he followed the advice of his mother, who he described

as "hard core" about her faith, family, and work ethic. "She told me 'Go do your job, boy.' That's just the way she was," Fennell said.

Fennell said he grew up in the Wabasso area and was attending Indian River Community College when he met Linda. They've been married 48 years.

His work took him to a number of different locales – "I was in Memphis the day Elvis died," he said – but he and Linda eventually settled in Boca Raton before moving to Fort Pierce and then Vero Beach. He retired from Siemens in 2005. "I was fortunate in that I loved my job.

I didn't make a lot of money, but I enjoyed it. I've had a great life," he said.

Fennell now enjoys spending his mornings at the Off-Leash Dog Park with Blue. And when called upon, he takes on the responsibility of raising and lowering the American flag to half-staff.

"I am big on honoring and respecting the American flag," this Army veteran said.



Don Fennell, US Army Veteran with Blue

Spotlight