



Top photos, left to right: service dog Sully at Veterans of IRC Golf Tournament, Honorary Board Member Janet Riley receiving award from DFL Executive Director Cynthia Ryan, public display showing 22 veteran suicides per day is unacceptable. Bottom photo: On April 24, 2021, Dogs For Life held its annual Volunteer and Donor Awards Ceremony under the oak trees at the DFL Off-Leash Dog Park. See page 2 for list of award winners.

NEW STAFF	5	Meet DFL's Executive Director
MENTAL HEALTH	8	Helping and Compassion Fatigue
EDUCATION	18	Puppies in Flight Comes to Vero Beach
VETERANS	22	DFL Receives 15-year Re-accreditation

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Contents

NEWSPRINTS

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What's New?



Three at One Time!

When opportunity knocked, DFL opened the door to three Labrador Retriever puppies. After a long dry spell, a DFL volunteer found a litter of puppies while in north Florida and plans were made for DFL to immediately buy two of the dogs. Then, two days later, staff got a call from the ADI ABC Breeding Co-Op with the message that Southeastern Guide Dogs would donate another Labrador Retriever puppy to DFL. Meet Chocolate, Vanilla and Chip!

Cover Photo Information

At the annual Volunteer and Donor Awards Ceremony, the following individuals received awards for their hard work and dedication to DFL programs in 2020.

(Left to right, front row)

- Volunteers of the Year: Arleen Arsenault and Chris Consi
- Corporate Philanthropist Award Winners: Michelle Dale and Diane D'Angelo, on behalf of American Gold Star Mothers of Indian River County
- Kathi G. Schumann Award: Janet F. Riley
- Volunteer of the Year: Kathy Allston
- Military Veteran of the Year: Next Generation Veterans of Indian River County Commander John Pallazzalo (US Army)
- Volunteer Trainer of the Year: Gabriele "Gaby" Harrison
- Volunteer of the Year: Brenda Daniels
- Foster Dog Family Award: Steve Defren (US Army)

(Left to right, back row)

- Military Veterans of the Year: Next Generation Veterans of Indian River County, Executive Sergeant Doug Klock (US Air Force) and First Sergeant Chuck Gerrald (US Army)
- Military Veteran of the Year: Michael Wright (US Army) Ret.
- Volunteer of the Year: Darryl Daniels

Not pictured: Military Veterans of the Year: Kris Hasenauer (US Army) and Thomas Metzinger (US Marines); and Individual Philanthropist Award: James Woodruff.



Eleanor M. Bengyak and service dog Rufus

From *the* President

In 2015, I instituted the Bengyak Legacy Society in memory of my husband Victor, and then in February 2020 I included my son Michael McCalister.

Victor, who was a New York firefighter, supported Dogs For Life from the beginning, and my son Michael did too. Michael volunteered his time for various projects at DFL. Our dream through the Bengyak Legacy Society is to secure future funding for DFL and its programs.

I would like to reach out to my friends who have faithfully supported Dogs For Life since 2002, and ask you to send a legacy gift to DFL. It's so easy to do, just write a check and put it in the mail: 1230 16th Ave., Vero Beach, FL 32960; go online to the DFL website www.dogsforlifevb.org; or drop a donation off in person at the Training Center and while you are there, ask to tour the facility. And, if you are lucky, you might just be able to pet a service puppy.

From *the* Founder & CEO

As I transition into full-time Director of Training Programs, I would like to thank the DFL Board of Directors for the decision to hire Cynthia Ryan as Dogs For Life's full-time Executive Director.

Also, as the Founder of the off-leash dog park and Dogs For Life Inc., I am grateful for the support of our community that has brought a fledgling grassroots non-profit organization to where it is today.

From humble beginnings, DFL is thriving with Service Dog Training Programs for Veterans and other individuals; a Puppy Raising Program that is proven to produce reliable dogs that reach certification in the fastest way possible; a Volunteer Program that is second to none in dedication, ethics, and talents brought to DFL through our clients, board of directors and other community members; and a Dog Park Ambassador Program that continues after 20 years to fulfill the vision of a safe and fun place for people and dogs to socialize and exercise.

With confidence and gratitude, I hand the reins of the day-to-day operations at DFL to Cynthia Ryan. And I will move full-steam ahead paving the way through our educational programs so that others will continue learning the ropes and carrying the organization into the future.



Shelly Ferger and service dog St. Cloud



Cynthia Ryan and Luna

From *the* Executive Director

Wow! It is an incredible honor to join the Dogs For Life team!

I sincerely thank Founder and CEO Shelly Ferger and the entire DFL team for the warm welcome. I look forward to being part of DFL's mission to improve the quality of life for veterans and other individuals with disabilities through training hearing and service dogs.

The Dogs For Life staff, clients, volunteers, and donors have demonstrated incredible resilience, fortitude, and determination during ever changing times. Our goal is to always be a good and responsible steward of the support that we receive throughout the year. Together, we will do great things for the community we serve.

As 2021 comes to a close, DFL is looking forward to all that the future will bring. 2022 looks to be filled with lots of puppies, expanding DFL's partnership with Next Generation Veterans of IRC, American Gold Star Mothers of IRC and now the

Mental Health Association to support the Veterans PTSD Support and Recovery Group, and the Female Veterans and First Responders Meet Up.

I look forward to meeting many of you at the first annual Patriots For Puppies fundraising event slated for February 26.

Meet DFL New Staff Members



Cynthia Ryan and Luna

The past eight months have seen many staff changes at Dogs For Life. As an organization grows, so does the need for additional staff.

The most notable change was the addition of Cynthia Ryan as Executive Director. Ryan joins DFL Chief Executive Officer Shelly Ferger in handling the day-to-day operations, fund development and overall program support.

Ferger, Founder of DFL, also is transitioning into a full-time position as Director of Training Programs.

Additional needs in the Training Center required the addition of Ann Nolan as an administrative assistant who handles all records related to the puppy raising program and service dog training.

Gabriele Harrison, voted as Volunteer of the Year, was hired to teach puppy classes; and Marcia Adache was hired as an assistant dog trainer.

Chris Consi, also voted as a Volunteer of the Year, was hired as office assistant for support in the education department.

Maintenance needs at the center and on the Dog Park property are being met by long-term puppy raiser and trainer Harrison “Harry” Taylor.



Ann Nolan and Chocolate



Gabriele “Gaby” Harrison and Chocolate



Marcia Adache and Vanilla



Chris Consi and Gigi



Harry Taylor and Sully

Executive Director

Non-Profit Veteran Comes to DFL

By Katherine Bauman

Cynthia Ryan is a veteran when it comes to supporting and raising money for non-profit organizations.

She did it on a volunteer basis in 2011 as a member of the Fire Girls of Indian River County and its “We Care to Wear Pink” campaign, raising money and awareness for Breast Cancer.

“It was my first taste of diving into the non-profit world,” said Ryan. “I was able to see a need in the community and worked to fill it. We raised money to pay for mammograms for women in need.”

Her success there whet her appetite for making a career of leading a non-profit organization, which she is now doing as Executive Director of Dogs For Life.

Dogs For Life, started in 2001 by Shelly Ferger and based in Vero Beach, is devoted to improving the quality of life for veterans and other individuals with disabilities through training hearing and service dogs, and owning an off-leash dog park.

Ferger dedicated decades to Dogs For Life in the roles of Founder, Chief Executive Officer, Board Secretary, and other jobs as the need arose. In May 2021, she turned the administrative side of the agency over to Ryan as Ferger transitions into the role of Director of Training.

Ryan and Ferger met through the Veterans Council of Indian River County, where Ryan was working as development director. “Shelly mentioned at a Veterans Council meeting looking for an Executive Director,” said Ryan.

Ryan welcomed the opportunity as the next step in developing her career in the non-profit world.

A 1998 graduate of Sebastian River High School, Ryan went on to earn an Associate of Arts, an Associate of Science degree in Interior Design, and a Bachelor of Education in Elementary Education. She put those degrees to work for 20 years as a designer, project manager and collaborator for local and national design firms. Ryan is currently working on a Master’s degree in Public Policy and Non-profit Administration at the University of Miami.

Ryan’s first big project as Executive Director of

Dogs For Life is planning the inaugural Patriots For Puppies fundraiser on February 26, 2022, at the Heritage Center in Historic Downtown Vero Beach.

This 1940’s USO-themed dance and show will feature dancing, live music, food and raffles, echoing back to World War II when the Heritage Center was used by local service men.

“This event will have a very throw-back feeling,” said Ryan. “There’s so much military history here in Vero Beach. We’re incredibly excited to honor that and our local veterans.

“We believe it’ll be a great community event, bringing people together to learn about Dogs For Life’s programs and Vero’s military history while having a good time.

Money raised from Patriots For Puppies will support the agency’s programs, which in recent years have expanded to serve the community’s existing and growing veteran populations.

Dogs For Life offers Veteran Service Dog Training, a Veterans Training Veterans program, Veteran PTSD Recovery and Support Group and Female Veterans and First Responders Support Group. It works closely with the Next Generation Veterans of Indian River County, Gold Star Mothers of Indian River County and the Mental Health Association.

The fastest growing need for assistance dogs in Florida is among the men and women who have served in the U.S. military or as First Responders. This statistic is supported by the VA. With the recent influx of veterans coming back from Afghanistan and Iraq, Dogs For Life’s veterans’ services are definitely needed,” said Ryan. Her goal is to continue building community partnerships with veteran organizations, offering a range of services to meet veterans’ needs.

“Now more than ever, with mental health being recognized as a crisis in our country, the need for Dogs For Life will be even greater,” said Ryan. “And the dogs are the magic. It’s proven that dogs improve a person’s quality of life. It’s an honor to be a part of that. Absolutely.”

Quilts of Valor

By Devon Williams

Quilts of Valor, a non-profit organization started in 2003 by Catherine Roberts, has presented 278,847 quilts to service members nationwide over the years. Its mission is to cover all service members, both active and retired, with quilts to honor them for their dedication and service.

Sebastian Freedom Stitchers, a local chapter of Quilts of Valor, was started in 2007.

We would send our quilts overseas, but now we have the great honor to present them personally. As a group we have made over 311 quilts. It is so heartwarming to wrap a veteran in a Quilt of Valor; it is our way to thank them for all they have done for all of us.

Members of the Sebastian group have presented quilts to 29 veterans who have graduated from Dogs For Life, including 22 of their dogs. Members also made and donated one quilt and matching dog quilt as a fundraising raffle item for Dogs For Life.

“We couldn’t be more grateful,” said Shelly Ferger, Founder of Dogs For Life.



Receiving quilts in 2021, (l to r) Resharrrd Coleman (USN) and Zoey, Sean Timberlake (USA) and Judy, Diane Kimball (USN) and Ralfee.



Dogs For Life representatives at the Esquire Elks Lodge 1774, Vero Beach, for a check presentation for puppy sponsorship. Pictured, from left, DFL Board Member Eddie Boatwright, Esquire Elks Exalted Leader Diane Short with DFL puppy Vanilla, DFL Founder/CEO Shelly Ferger with DFL puppy Chocolate, and DFL Volunteer Steve Defren.



Dogs For Life representatives invited to speak at the Republican Veterans Club, from left, DFL team Kris Hasenauer with Jasper, Missy and Scott Boatwright, and DFL team Earl Tindol with Arrow.

Sponsorship

Curtis Paulisin

President of Veterans of Indian River County

Golf Tournament Raises Over \$25,000 for Area Veterans' Housing



DFL CEO Shelly Ferger with DFL Executive Director Cynthia Ryan, Tony Snyder with Sully and Past Commander of Vero Beach Veterans Gary Mills attend the 2021 golf tournament in memory of Mary Snyder.

The Veterans of Indian River County, in collaboration with the Vietnam Veterans of Indian River County, recently raised \$25,000 at its sixth annual golf tournament at Sandridge Golf Course, which was attended by a record 260 golfers.

“If it wasn’t for this great community, we would not be able to do what you all do to help our veterans of Indian River County,” said Curtis Paulisin, president of Veterans of Indian River County. “We made approximately \$25,000 this year, not including in-kind (donations).”

All monies stay in Indian River County to help maintain veterans’ homes or when emergency shelter is needed.

The funds help the homeless or soon-to-be homeless veterans have a place to stay as they work through re-integration, address their PTSD and while trying to get treatment at area VA facilities.

“Thank you all for your support, as you have been with us since the inception of this incredible tournament and fundraiser for our Veterans of Indian River County.”

Bengyak Says Play Bridge!

I miss my friends. Online bridge is just not the same. My sincere hope is that on February 28, 2022, I will again chair the annual Bridge Tournament for my favorite charity Dogs For Life. Space will be limited to 72, so contact DFL now to secure your spot.

*Eleanor Bengyak
and her Service Dog Rufus
Invite You To...*

SAVE THE DATE!

RSVP NOW! Space will be limited to 72.

Monday, February 28th, 2022

Dogs For Life's Bridge Tournament

Bid, Play... Veterans Win!

*Help raise funds to train Service Dogs in 2022!
Eleanor Bengyak ~ Tournament Chair
Kathi G. Schumann ~ Silent Auction Chair*

Reservations will be confirmed by January 31st, 2022 • For more information call: 772-567-8969



Yes, life goes on for our military veterans who need service dogs in our area and DFL hasn't missed a beat to fill this need. The number of veterans and other individuals needing service dogs has increased dramatically in the past two years and so has the staff at DFL who carry out our mission.

— Eleanor M. Bengyak

Thomas R. Metzinger, LCSW, CCHT
Therapist/Owner Suggestive Minds Center, PLLC

Helping and Compassion Fatigue



When handling trauma, therapists, counselors, health professionals, caregivers, and others that are helping, seek to understand the person, get a pulse on the crisis, engage in triaging the most

devastating issues, and offer interventions that help to restore, or in some cases, create stability. None of these previously stated tasks are easy. In fact, the challenges that these helpers face, especially in working with trauma, can lead to an apathetic state of mind, body, and spirit. The most recent name for this affliction is compassion fatigue.

Professionals and helpers may become traumatized by fully experiencing the stories of those who they are trying to help. This is known as secondary traumatic stress. Recognizing secondary trauma is essential in preventing compassion fatigue. It is helpful for professionals and helpers to identify and bring awareness to their helping health, so to speak. Helpers are humans, not robots, and need support as much as the people they are helping. It is important for professionals and helpers, as they seek to become

more in tune with those they serve, to understand the impact and nature that trauma has had on people's lives.

The helper needs help too. Compassion fatigue causes sufferers to find a way of coping with their vicarious trauma, which manifests as intense emotional, physical, and psychosocial challenges. The goal would be to increase a helper's fulfillment of their work. This enjoyment and fulfillment can be described as compassion satisfaction. Along with satisfaction would be for a professional and helper to identify and improve their personal and professional self-care.

Finding peace and serenity in one's life is essential for wellness and vitality. It can be tough to deal with stress amongst a seemingly endless barrage of other issues. The goal would be for professionals and helpers to implement relaxation into their daily lives to achieve some inner peace amongst the demands of therapy, helping, and caregiving. Self-care is essential. Self-care practices must include multiple physical, psychological, and emotional components. Addressing all these areas offers a comprehensive strategy to overcome the overwhelming effects of compassion fatigue.

Jim Romanek

Executive Director of Veterans Council of Indian River County

Thanks for Grants and Donations



Jim Romanek and Savannah

The Veterans Council of Indian River County has been blessed in 2021 with over \$250,000 in grants and donations.

Impact 100 of Indian River County, a women's philanthropy group, surprised the Veterans

Council with a \$100,000 grant for a second time.

Since the onset of COVID-19 in March 2020, the Veterans Council has spent more than \$142,000

helping 64 veterans and their families in the Veterans Helping Veterans program, doing basic home improvements and repairs, and has helped over 124 veterans and their families in the Upward American Veterans program, spending more than \$107,000 in direct aid.

"So, as you can see by the numbers, things did not slow down even as we continue to fight this battle with COVID," said Marty Zickert, Veterans Council chairman. "Thank you to everyone who continues to support the Veterans Council of Indian River County."

Chuck Gerrald, First Sergeant
Next Generation Veterans of Indian River County

PTSD Groups Help in Trying Times



Chuck Gerrald and Max

When you read this article two milestone events will have taken place that rippled through the PTSD community. The first is the withdrawal of forces from Afghanistan. The second is the 20-year anniversary of Sept. 11, 2001.

These are trying times for our military members, past and present.

The good news is that Vero Beach has a strong PTSD support group for our veterans. Dogs For Life, Next Generation Veterans of IRC, Goldstar Mothers, and our newest partner Mental Health Association have built a program that helps the veteran move forward and live a good life.

The support system is peer led and the group facilitators are veterans too. PTSD cannot be cured so the group focuses on the future not the past and shares life skills to help deal with the triggers encountered in daily life.

In addition to the weekly meeting, the group has a monthly activity ranging from a restaurant outing to the driving range.

The original veteran support group is experiencing a growth spurt. We are welcoming both individuals coming to the group and an entire support group that was disbanded by the VA. Due to this growth we are in the process of developing and implementing a second support group. We are always looking to expand and to continue to meet the needs of our veterans.

Recently we launched a Female Veteran and Female First Responder Meet & Greet and a support group that has a veteran female facilitator. The program is spearheaded by one of our most highly decorated female veterans, Ingrid Hernandez.

“I’m honored to be a part of this milestone. I am excited to see how this grows and benefits female veterans and female first responders” Ingrid said.

This group will provide opportunities for attendees to establish relationships with like-minded individuals. It also allows us to show appreciation for what they do for Indian River County.

The group is peer supported and places emphasis on coping with the daily stress of the job. It too concentrates on moving forward and not dwelling in the past.

Group members are very grateful that a program is being offered just for them and we are honored to help serve this overlooked group in our community.

Our program succeeds because we put the veteran and now female veterans and female first responders in charge of what they need. We feel that it is important that those who have experienced the struggle be there to guide those who are struggling. We worked as a team and the team environment speaks to the group. Together our combined skills work to provide our brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters with the tools to live a better life.

Our veteran PTSD group meets at 7 p.m. every Monday at Dogs For Life. The female group also meets at DFL on the first and third Wednesday of the month. The doors are open to all veterans and female first responders.



Posing at the Words from War Monument located at Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary are (l to r) Next Generation Veterans of IRC Commander John Pallazzalo (USA), Past President of Next Generation Veterans, Inc. Bruce Cady (USMC), Words from War Artist Ross Power, Words from War Contributor and DFL Board Member Kathi G. Schumann, Veterans Council of IRC Treasurer and Trustee Vero Beach Veterans Ken Dale (USA), American Gold Star Mothers of IRC President Michelle Dale, DFL Executive Director Cynthia Ryan.

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

Walk-A-Thon for Suicide Awareness

American Gold Star Mothers are mothers whose sons or daughters served and died in combat while on active duty with the military, are POW/MIA, or more recently lost their loved ones by suicide to the Battle Within.

American Gold Star Mothers of Indian River County are actively working to promote its 2021 Walk-A-Thon for Military/Veteran Suicide Awareness, the third annual walk to help beloved veterans struggling with PTSD. This year's Walk on Nov. 7 at Riverside Park in Vero Beach will pass through the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary and include a Veteran Resource Expo.

A mother losing her son or daughter after returning home from war to the Battle Within is a tragedy no mother wants to experience. Recent events in Afghanistan have our veterans who served there and even our Vietnam veterans questioning their service, which is causing more stress on those who are struggling.

Our veterans need our help; actually, they DESERVE our help. Proceeds from the Walk-A-Thon go directly to Dogs For Life, Next Generation Veterans of IRC and the Mental Health Association of IRC to support programs for veterans.



Programs these organizations offer include the Veteran PTSD Recovery and Support Group at Dogs For Life at 7 p.m. Mondays; and the Veteran Meet-Up at Mental Health



Association's Drop-In Center at 7 p.m. Wednesdays. Recently, these sessions have expanded to include a Female Veteran and First Responder Group, which meets at DFL at 7 p.m. the first and third Wednesdays of the month.

Due to the success of the sessions and increasing demand, plans are being made to start a second Veteran PTSD Recovery and Support Group on Thursday nights at Dogs For Life. These sessions are supported by licensed mental health facilitators who also are veterans, an extremely important factor to healing. A veteran with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder wants to be able to talk with someone who understands their struggle. Future plans are being made to start a Sebastian Area Veteran PTSD Recovery and Support Group.

One military/veteran suicide a day is a TRAGEDY; 22 a day is UNACCEPTABLE.

Members of American Gold Star Mothers of Indian River County will continue to make this community aware of this tragic statistic and do all that they can to help struggling Veterans.

For more information about American Gold Star Mothers of Indian River County, please visit its website at ircgoldstarmoms.org.



2019 Walk-A-Thon participants pose with Michele Dale for group photo.

Sean Timberlake, US Army Veteran with Judy

No Journeys to DFL are the Same

By Dustin Tackett

For Sean Timberlake, retired Army veteran of 22 years, he found his way to DFL's doors with his now nearly four-year-old service dog Judy already heeling by his side.

"I got her from K9s For Warriors in St. Augustine three years ago," Timberlake said. "Her certification ran out and I didn't want to have to go back up there and stay for an extended period of time, so I found Dogs For Life through the VA and went through their volunteer program. Dogs For Life has been excellent, it's allowed me and her to come a long way."

Joining the Army in 1993, Timberlake "drove tanks and jumped out of planes" for the Airborne. In October of 1994, he went to Haiti for Operation Uphold Democracy. He had four MOSs before taking a five-year break in service until he returned to service and became an MP and eventually landed with Transportation Terminal Operations. And although he may no longer be an active service member, he continues to serve to this day by being heavily involved with a number of veteran organizations throughout the community.

"I'm part of the VFW, DAV, American Legion, Next Gen Vets and Vietnam Vets of Indian River County," he said. "And then every Friday I come to Dogs For Life. It pretty much wipes me out for the month."

It may seem like a lot on one man's plate, but he knows there's work to be done. He believes there's a lack of knowledge out there about what service dogs can provide to people in need, and it brings him

back to the beginning of his service dog journey.

"I didn't know too much about it until my therapist suggested it," he said. "She's for mobility and PTSD. I'm not very good around big crowds and she helps with that. She offers true companionship. When I'm down, she can make me smile. She makes me laugh, too. I think she can sense it and then she feeds off of that and plays into it. She'll sit there and stare at me, wanting to go out as I try not to laugh."

This isn't the end of their service dog journey, though. He says Judy is still working toward her one-year certification and is still working to learn new things.

"She's trying to learn new things," he said. "We've tried the indoor obstacle course where she's never gone through a tunnel and stuff like that. We're working on public access, too. She had anxiety, especially when we first got to Dogs For Life, but now she's a lot more relaxed. And I'm glad for that because I feed off of that."

After this much time with Judy by his side, he's never

surprised to find veterans and non-veterans alike asking him about service dogs and how to get one. And he doesn't hesitate when asked what kind of advice he would give to somebody considering the option.

"I would say definitely get one," he said while looking down at Judy. "If you feel like you need one, definitely get one. I don't know where I would be right now if it wasn't for her."



Sean Timberlake and his service dog, Judy

2021 Graduates



2021 graduates include (left to right) Sean Timberlake (USA) and Judy, Dennis Och and Zoe, Reshardd Coleman (USN) and Zoey, Diane Kimball (USN) and Ralfee, Danielle “Dani” Ley and Ollie.

Dogs For Life is proud to recognize its 2021 training graduates.

ONE-YEAR CERTIFICATIONS

Danielle “Dani” Ley with Ollie and Kris Hasenauer, a U.S. Army veteran, with Jasper recently received their 1-year certification.

- Dani Ley entered the DFL Service Dog Program in December 2019 with her 2-year-old mixed breed named Ollie, who needed to overcome some insecurities to complete the program.

“Ollie was a rescue and we just were not sure Dani could do it,” said Shelly Ferger, Dogs For Life Founder, CEO and Director of Training. “But I love working with people who have challenges because they are more determined than most.”

After about nine months training in the program, and a lot of hard work, Dani and Ollie had plans to travel by airplane. Despite some initial objections and interference from airline authorities, Dani mustered up the courage to stand up for her rights and Ollie did his job too. It resulted in the airline

allowing Ollie to accompany Dani on the flight. She reported the ride home was met without any interference. Congratulations Dani.

- Kris Hasenauer entered DFL in February 2020, where he met Jasper, a Labrador retriever being raised and trained at DFL and sponsored by Steve and Nancy Lewis of the Legacy Ladies Golf Association. “It was truly love at first sight and this pup was placed with Kris right away,” said Ferger.

In December 2020 they received their 6-month certification and are now certified for one year. Kris and Jasper were not able to attend the recognition ceremony, but Kris prepared a video that has been posted on DFL’s Facebook page.

6-MONTH CERTIFICATIONS

DFL trainers also recently bestowed 6-month certification status to Diane Kimball (US Navy) and Ralfee; Dennis Och and Zoe; Sean Timberlake (US Army) and Judy; and Reshardd Coleman (US Navy) and Zoey.

2021 Graduates

• Diane Kimball and Ralfee met at DFL in July 2020. Ralfee, a Labradoodle, was about seven months and was being trained at DFL, sponsored by Martin and Charlene Furman of the Legacy Ladies Golf Association. A six-month certification signifies they are working successfully as a team and will receive an annual certification after an additional six months in training.

“Diane is doing the work and has learned to be a dog trainer,” said Ferger. “She has also attended the Veterans Training Veterans program and we fully expect she and Ralfee to re-certify with DFL for many years to come.”

“We must remember all our clients have illnesses and injuries, which is why they are here. But they push through their pain, their surgeries, and other challenges. They make a commitment, and they stick with it. I am so proud of Diane.”

• Resharrd Coleman and Zoey started training in December 2020. Zoey, a sister to Ralfee, was a 9-month-old Labradoodle in training at DFL and unlike Ralfee, Zoey was wild.

“Did I say she was wild? I just wondered how much longer she would be in our program because of it,” said Ferger. “You see, it takes a special dog to make the cut. Sometimes a dog has marginal potential and needs a strong handler to make work. We found this handler in Resharrd Coleman.”

“I have been amazed at the dog handling knowledge and skills Resharrd came to us with and fully expect him to grow within the organization. I’ve told him he has a future here, as he is already volunteering in the puppy training classes. Thank you for bringing your talents to DFL Resharrd.”

Zoey is being sponsored by Dennis and Pamela Holisky of the Legacy Ladies Golf Association.

• Dennis Och and Zoe, a 9-month Golden Retriever, began training in July 2020. Prior to losing his dog to old age, Dennis had been a Dogs For Life Dog Park member since 2011. When he rejoined the park with this exuberant pup Zoe, it was suggested he train her as a hearing dog.

“Dennis was not too sure about the whole thing,

but Zoe convinced him they can do it,” said Ferger.

Since their hearing training has begun, Zoe has successfully learned to alert Dennis to the sound of a door knock and the doorbell. She will now move on to learning the sounds of the alarm clock, telephone, and smoke alarm. They too will reach annual certification in six months.

• Sean Timberlake (US Army) and Judy joined DFL’s program in December 2020. Sean and Judy, a German Shepherd Dog mix, were already working as a team as she was acquired from K-9s for Warriors. Sean wanted to sharpen his dog handling skills in the DFL program, as well as joining the Off-Leash Dog Park. “Judy now helps to exercise and socialize the DFL puppies, and for that we are grateful,” said Ferger. Sean also has attended the Veterans Training Veterans educational program and volunteers on many levels. Thank you, Sean.

COMPANION DOG

A special thanks is extended to Rita and Bob Turner, also of the Legacy Ladies Golf Association for sponsoring Savannah, a Labrador Retriever who due to insecure behaviors was re-homed as a companion dog with the David and Jackie Kolesnik family where she joins another Labrador Retriever named Georgia.



Service dog Ranger Poziomek quietly watches the graduation ceremony.

2021 Service Dog Re-Certifications

Did you know that DFL re-certifies every service dog in our program every year? As part of the ADI Accreditation, owner and service dog must be performing their required public obedience and task work to maintain an annual certification status.

Class of 2011 Re-Certifications

Joan Freeman and Daisy 2011-2021
Fred Jones and Sissy Girl 2011-2021

Class of 2015 Re-Certifications

Wanda Haaland and Lola 2015-2021
Chere McCoy (USAF) and Stella 2015-2021

Class of 2016 Re-Certifications

Bob Cheshire (USN) and Bo 2016-2021

Class of 2017 Re-Certifications

Corinne Cruickshank and Aya 2017-2021
Mark Poziomek and Ranger 2017-2021
Pamela Simon and Skye 2017-2021

Class of 2018 Re-Certifications

Al Cabral (USA) and Coco 2018-2021
Richie Keller (USMC) and Gigi 2018-2021
Perry Martin (USAF) and Sassy 2018-2021
Judith Ricard and Fitz 2018-2021
Judy Schmidt (USAF) and Bentley 2018-2021

Class of 2019 Re-Certifications

Eleanor Bengyak and Rufus 2019-2021
Sue Bergman and Spencer 2019-2021
Michael Bores (USA) and Bandit 2019-2021
Barbara Gormas and Lola 2019-2021
Bill Moruzzi (USA) and Remington 2019-2021
Roxanne Pagliaroli and Swag 2019-2021

Class of 2020 Re-Certifications

Lauren Carr and Coco 2020-2021
Kris Hasenauer (USA) and Jasper 2020- 2022
Jessica Jacobs and Honey 2020-2021
Dani Ley and Ollie 2020- 2022
Tammie Mandeville and Poppy 2020-2021
Elizabeth McGoldrick and Oliver 2020-2021
Kimberley Mann-Day (USN) and Elvis 2020-2021
Howard Rizio (USMC) and St. Cloud 2020-2021
Earl Tindol, (USAR) and Arrow 2020-2021
Claude Vitali (USMC) and Beebe 2020-2021

Class of 2021 Certifications

Resharrd Coleman (USN) and Zoey 2020-2022
Diane Kimball (USN) and Ralfee 2021- 2022
Dennis Och and Zoe 2021- 2022
Sean Timberlake (USA) and Judy 2021- 2022



Richie Keller (USMC) and Gigi, with Earl Tindol (USAR) and Arrow



Mark Poziomek and Ranger, with Judy Schmidt (USAF) and Bentley

2021 AKC Canine Good Citizens

On the way to certification as a service dog, team members must pass many milestones. One of the first is the ability to transition from pet dog to service dog. This may seem like an easy task, but it takes work.

One of the earliest milestones is the ability to pass the American Kennel Club Canine Good Citizen Test.

This test is performed in 10 different areas and dog with owner must pass all 10 areas, including obedience, sociability with dogs and people, tolerance of strange objects, mild or no objections to being left with a stranger in an emergency, sitting politely for petting, walking on a loose lead, walking through a crowd and coming when called.

Meet DFL's newest Canine Good Citizens.



Andy Beebe (USAF) and Truffle, a 1½ year old Labrador Retriever



Chris Adams (USN) and Dozer, a 2-year-old Great Pyrenees, Marty Pillar with Mellow, a 2-year-old Yorkie, and Steve Defren (USA) DFL Volunteer with Sully, a 1-year-old Labrador Retriever

2021 Service Dog Re-Certifications / *continued from pg. 14*



Howard Rizio (USMC) and St. Cloud



Chere McCoy (USAF) and Miss Stella

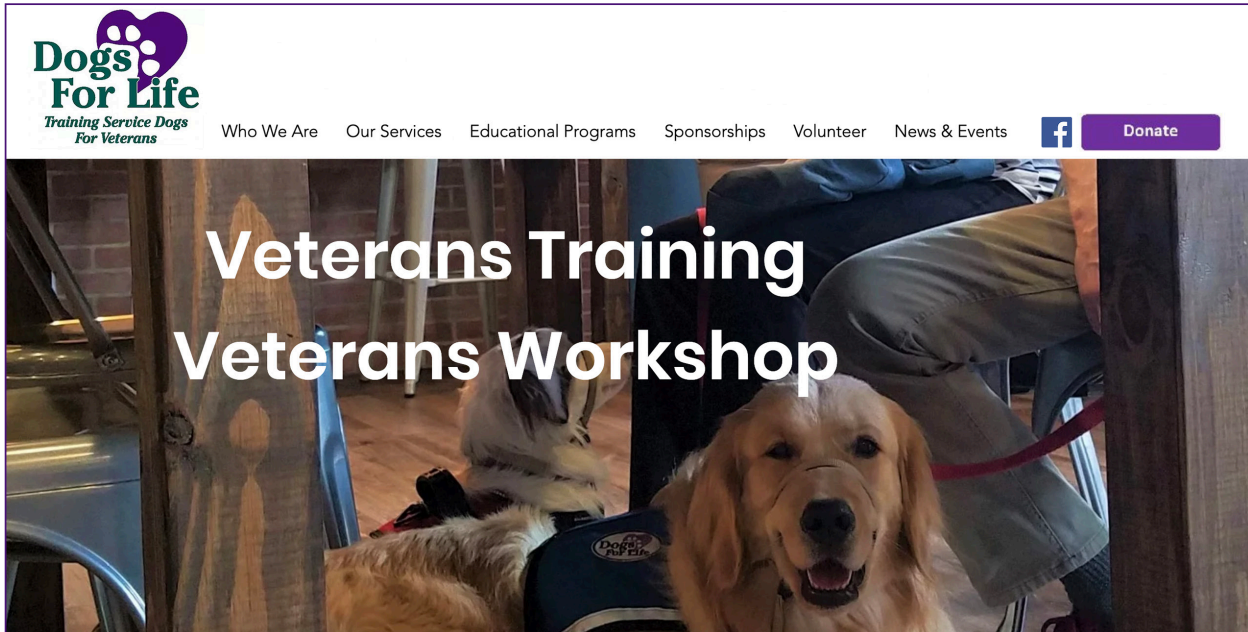


Bob Cheshire (USN) and Bo



Kimberly Mann-Day (USN) and Elvis

Dogs For Life Website Update



We announced last year our plans to offer our Veterans Training Veterans and Puppy Raising/Foster Dog Program Workshops on our website, and we're excited to share an update with all of you.

People can now access our veterans Training Veterans Workshop directly from our website, with only a few clicks of a button. Not only can people access all of the literature they will need, but they'll also be able to sign in and watch a video of each class.

Finishing this project has been high on our priority list because we want people to have easy access to this important information.

"We've been working really hard to make this happen for a while now," Dogs For Life CEO Shelly Ferger said. "In this day and age, it's important to provide ways for people to access information like this digitally, and I'm thrilled we can now offer that."

Puppy Raising and Foster Dog Program

The Puppy Raising/Foster Dog Program is now accessible on the Dogs For Life website. The long awaited manual and videos are complete and can be downloaded from the Educational Programs tab.



For additional information on this program and others, please contact Dogs For Life at office@dogsforlifevb.org or Shelly Ferger, Director of Training Programs, 772-567-8969.



DFL Board Member Kathi G. Schumann and Chip

DFL Re-Homes PT Sandy (Sammie)

Most days are happy days at Dogs For Life.

However, there are times when staff members are not able to train every dog that is interviewed, or even place every dog in the program. This was the case with PT Sandy. “Sandy” came to the program as a litter mate of Honcho, and although they were bred as service dogs, Sandy just didn’t have the confidence of his brother Honcho.

“The day we met the pups, there was a distinct difference in their behaviors and reactions to strange people or things,” said Shelly Ferger, DFL Founder and Director of Training. “This is not uncommon in a litter of puppies as the pack hierarchy starts in the litter. Some pups are just naturally more dominant, and others more submissive from alpha to omega.

“These omega dogs can make a fine companion dog, but do not have the confidence level needed to be put under the daily stresses required of a public access certified service dog,” said Ferger.

We are grateful to Charles and Christine Davis, who provided the perfect home for Sandy (renamed Sammie), because they also own an older dog who is a perfect match for a more submissive family member.



Christine and Charles Davis adopted PT Sandy, and renamed him Sammie.

Update: Sully’s Silver Star and Golden “Honcho” Rubicon

After one year of training for Sully and nine months for Honcho, these Dogs For Life service dogs have been matched with their partners.

Both are perfect placements – Sully’s, because he is a softer dog and needed a gentle handler, and Honcho, because he has a higher energy level and needed an active handler.

After a year, the matched placements are very dear to all our hearts. From the donors who sponsor

the pups, to the volunteers who house the pups, the trainers who take them through puppy class, the volunteers who feed and exercise them, and the staff who make sure they make their veterinary appointments, all our dogs are showered with love.

And then comes the icing on the cake: the placement.

Stay tuned for more updates on these fine dogs and their dedicated new owners.



Lee Rech, Secretary Treasure Coast Jeep Club, with Marisel Munoz Febo (USAF), Golden Honcho Rubicon and Ralph Wunk, President Treasure Coast Jeep Club. Sponsored by TCJC.



Phil Tettleton in training with Sully. Sponsored by Judy and Larry Brandt, Legacy Golf Club.

Puppies in Flight

When you are a non-profit organization accredited by Assistance Dogs International (ADI), the organization qualifies to join the ADI Breeding Cooperative. These organizations are sharing genetics of purpose-bred puppies all over the world with the goal of creating the best service dogs.

So, how do these puppies get to their destination for training? Meet Puppies in Flight! American Airlines and ADI are partners in this valuable Puppies In Flight program. This program allows American



Rudy before his flight from New York LaGuardia to Tampa.



Tired puppy Andy flew from SFO to Charlotte, where he started his training.

Airlines employees who volunteer and use their flight benefits to transport assistance dogs on American Airlines flights. Transports may include delivering the animal to its puppy raiser, escorting the dog to and from program training, pairing the animal with its new handler or familiarizing the dog with the flight experience to various airports in the United States and Canada.

DFL is helping to prepare the American Airlines volunteers for transport by holding educational programs that familiarize them with training equipment and puppy protocols.



Kim Putman and Honcho.



Lola in Hawaii

By Wanda Haaland

Lola, my hearing service dog, just accompanied me to the Big Island of Hawaii. My husband and I were traveling to see our new grandson, who was born during the COVID-19 quarantine.

Pre-planning was essential to a successful trip. My first step was to contact the accessibility desk of our chosen airline. They booked my seats behind the bulkhead. We like the window seat and seat next to it, so nobody has to step over Lola.

I questioned the airline representative about the new Department of Transportation Service Animal Air Transportation Form. Some airlines have you upload it, but our airline just required I have it on my person.



This being our first vacation since the airline industry's ban on emotional support dogs, I must say this trip was quite different. In the past, many of the emotional support dogs barked at Lola and some were even aggressive. On the Hawaii trip, the dogs she encountered were all well trained.

Due to Hawaii's special requirements,

I also carried a copy of Lola's vaccination documents and her Assistance Dogs International accreditation records.

We flew Orlando to San Francisco the first day, spent the night and then on to Kona, Hawaii the next day. Both flights were five and a half hours.

A few days before we left I moved Lola's last meal to earlier in the day. The day before we left she had her last meal at 1 pm. She was walked that evening



and had a bowel movement. She had limited water the morning before the flight. She was walked before we got to the airport.

We checked our bag and then headed to the animal relief area. I downloaded an app called "Where To Go" that shows the location of outside and inside relief areas at all airports. Unfortunately, Lola refuses to use the inside

artificial grass so we give her plenty of time to go outside.

I am so grateful for the obedience and public access training Lola received from Dogs For Life. When talking to the check-in agent and boarding agent she stayed in her down position. We did TSA Pre-Check, but one TSA agent made me remove her leash that was causing an alarm, so I put her in a sit/stay and then called her through the metal detector. She performed excellently.

We walked Lola around the entire terminal so she would be tired when she got on the plane. I always request priority boarding when I get to the gate, that way we can get Lola settled without the crowding. About half-way through the flight I request ice chips and offer them to her.

Lola was at ease in the elevators, the moving sidewalks, the Air Train and the parking bus. I took her to the relief area as soon as possible after landing. I carried collapsible bowls and kept a small bottle of water that we received on the plane to give to her.

While in Hawaii, we stayed at the Hyatt and they had bowls and a dog bed waiting for her.

The flight back was different in that we had to walk up a ramp on the tarmac, but again Lola did great. We left at 8:30 am., but with the time change we landed at almost 5 pm. While I had to feed her that late, she did go to the bathroom after a long walk, which made the trip back to Orlando less stressful.

We had a wonderful visit to Hawaii. Lola's training and our planning paid off.

Six Incredible Roles Dogs Performed in World War I

*Contributed by Major Terry Treat (USA) Ret. and Vice President of the Military Officers Association of America
Authored by Ashley Lipman - United States World War I Centennial Commission Website*

America loves their pets, and according to ownership statistics, dogs are the favorite. More than 60 million American households own a dog, and this shows no signs of slowing down. People love to choose from good dog breeds and find the next member of their family.

However, dogs aren't always reserved for being a pet. They can be great guards, investigators and can play many other roles. In fact, back in World War 1, dogs had several roles that were instrumental in the success of various operations. Read on to learn about 6 of the roles that dogs performed in World War 1.

Guard Dogs

While dogs today are often used as guard dogs, the same could be said around 100 years ago in World War 1. These sentry dogs would often sit alongside a soldier who was on guard and could often alert him when trouble was near. Dogs have great senses in most cases, and these guard dogs were trained to bark or growl when a stranger approached the camp or post.

Casualty Dogs

In the battlefield, injuries and wounded soldiers were common. Another incredible role that dogs had in the war were as casualty dogs, or medic dogs. These dogs were trained extensively to be able to find hurt soldiers. They would often carry medical supplies, which could allow the soldier to treat themselves or help other nearby soldiers treat them. The dog would also keep the soldier company during these potentially difficult times.

Message Carriers

Carrying messages was an important part of communicating during World War 1. Standard field communication was quite slow, and it was often too dangerous for people to pass messages along the battlefield due to their size and relatively slow

movement. This is where dogs came in. Trained dogs could traverse many terrains not only with ease, but also a lot of speed. They were much harder targets to see and/or hit as well. Dogs were also very dependable and reliable if they were trained well enough.

Providing Comfort and Companionship

Being away at war, many soldiers yearned for even a small slice of normalcy or a reminder of home. For many of them, having dogs around gave them the sense of home that they were craving. The psychological comfort provided by these dogs was very important to the mental health of many soldiers. These dogs could have a very positive effect on the morale of soldiers, as well. While this might not have been as practical as some of the other roles, it was just as important.



Major Terry Treat (USA) Ret. with Riley and Maude

Trackers

Many different dog breeds are well known for their tracking abilities. As you could imagine, these abilities were seen as very useful and important during World War 1. They could track a variety of things if trained, but one of the most common and useful roles they had in terms of tracking was detecting explosives. Tracking down soldiers for a variety of reasons was another thing that they were often used for.

Dealing with Pests

In the trenches of war, it was all too common for soldiers to have to deal with rats and other pests. They were annoying, potentially carried diseases and there were a ton of them. Instead of soldiers focusing their attention on these, they would often have dogs come in and handle the pests. They are effective rat catchers, and this could allow soldiers to focus on the task at hand without distractions.

Puppy Raising Program

What do you say when you've received three puppies you were not expecting, and one month later you are offered a fourth puppy?

Well, you say YES, because the offer is not just any offer. This is a special puppy. It's a female from the ADI ABC Breeding Cooperative of which Dogs For Life is a member, and this special puppy will potentially be approved as a breeder dog to launch a Dogs For Life puppy breeding program.

What this means is in two years, once all testing has been approved, Dogs For Life will be able to produce a litter of service dog bred puppies. Over the years, DFL has purchased or had donated two to three puppies per year to pre-



train as service dogs.

“To have a breeding program from this caliber of genetics is so important to our organization,” said Shelly Ferger, DFL CEO and Director of Training. “The ADI ABC Breeding Cooperative puppies are genetically bred to produce the best service dogs in the world.”

This special puppy has been named Rosie The Riveter. She's small, but she's mighty.

“She has a big name to fill, and we have high hopes for her,” said Ferger. “In the meantime, she'll be trained in all the service dog tasks so that when she retires as a breeder, she'll be placed in our program as a certified service dog.”



Filberto Silveira picks up Rosie The Riveter at Southeastern Guide Dog Campus.



Dogs For Life, Inc. Foster Dog Families: (l to r) Service dog Gigi with Richie and Bernice Keller holding Chip, Roxanna Hinzman holding Vanilla, Steve Defren holding Chocolate, Laurie Beebe holding Rosie, and Andrew Beebe with service dog Truffle.

All Paws on Deck!

DFL Reaches 15-year Re-accreditation

It took all paws on deck for Dogs For Life to meet the standards of its 15-year re-accreditation with Assistance Dogs International.

Every five years DFL conducts interviews and provides records associated with the process; and while it was almost a year late because of COVID-19, DFL volunteers, staff and board of directors all stepped up and did their part in the re-accreditation process.

“And we all enjoyed spending time with the

assessors, who are professionals in our field,” said Shelly Ferger, Dogs For Life Founder, CEO and Director of Training.

The assessors were Grete Eide, chief canine care officer with Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind Inc. and America’s VetDogs, based in Smithtown, New York; and Zuehy Medina-Gonzalez, director of genetics, reproduction and puppy care for Southeastern Guide Dogs in Palmetto, Florida.

Who is Assistance Dogs International?

Assistance Dogs International, Inc. (ADI) is a worldwide coalition of not-for-profit programs that train and place Assistance Dogs. Founded in 1986 from a group of seven small programs, ADI has become the leading authority in the Assistance Dog industry.

Members of ADI meet regularly to share ideas and conduct business regarding educating the public about assistance dogs, advocating for the legal rights of people with disabilities partnered with assistance dogs, and the setting of standards and establishing guidelines and ethics for the training of these dogs.

Mission - ADI fosters a collaborative global community dedicated to the highest standards of excellence for the assistance dog industry.



Tributes and Memorial Gifts

In Memory
of
Robert G. Bowman
And Robbie

Our Dogs Leave
Paw Print Memories
In Our
Hearts Forever

In Honor Of

Don Ambrose
Joyce Leach

Laura Bonney's Birthday
Mark Eisenhardt
Kris & Nicole Eisenhardt
Shelly Ferger
Katie Kutschinski

Sally Bricker's Birthday
Laura Bonney
Steve Defren
Shelly Ferger

Steve Defren's Birthday
Shelly Ferger

Sally Dunn's Birthday
Linda Barberi
Steve Defren
Shelly Ferger

Dan Hingle
Joyce Leach

Jessica Jacob's Birthday
Linda Barberi
Steve Defren
Shelly Ferger
Patti Schell Pet Sitting

In Honor Of

Kathi Schumann's Birthday
Shelly Ferger
Mae Frances Garrett
Virginia McKeown
Gene & Martha Schumann
Mark & Cheri Schumann
B.A. Waggaman
Barry & Vickie Wyatt

Kathi Schumann for Mother's Day
Gene & Martha Schumann
John Schumann Jr.
Mark & Cheri Schumann
Barry & Vickie Wyatt

Mr. Earl Tindol
Susan Biggs

Shelly Ferger's Birthday
Linda Barberi
Laura Bonney
Patti Schell Pet Sitting
Mary Margaret Hatch
Corinne Cruickshank
Michelle Dale
Steve Defren
Gino DiSisto
Myles Holmes
Laurie Iodice
Kathy Jeffries
Richie Keller
Ray & Gail Knight
Chere McCoy
Virginia McKeown
Cindi Miller
Terri Hinzman-Mills
Jason Patzer
Kim Pilger
Craig Schlitt
Connie Stevens
Larette Stradey
Chris Taylor & Family
Julie Vergara
B.A. Waggaman
Jocelyn Woodruff

In Memory Of

"Sunny" Ferger
Laura Bonney
Brenda & Darryl Daniels
Steve Defren
Shelly Ferger
Patti Schell Pet Sitting

"Sherra Belle" Francoeur
Kay Ruma

Margie Keller
Linda Barberi

Tom Labadia
Shelly Ferger
Patti Schell Pet Sitting

Bill Leach
Joyce Leach

Barb Nearhood
Linda Barberi

Bruce Pfaff
Sandy Anast

"Romeo" Richardson
Carolyn Richardson

"Kaia" Ryan
Brenda & Darryl Daniels
Shelly Ferger

Carl Schoenfelder
Linda Barberi

Jane & Bear Winters
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From Dogs For Life

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A 1940's USO Themed Dance & Show

1st Annual Patriots For Puppies



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- ★ Service Dog Training
- ★ Veterans Training Veterans
- ★ Veteran Service Dog Training
- ★ Veteran PTSD Recovery & Support Group
- ★ Female Veterans and First Responders Support Group
- ★ Puppy Raising/Foster Dog Training
- ★ Off-Leash Dog Park

Tickets & Sponsorship Opportunities Coming Soon! www.dogsforlifevb.org

For additional information contact Cynthia Ryan, Executive Director
cynthia.ryan@dogsforlifevb.org • 772-567-8969 • www.dogsforlifevb.org