

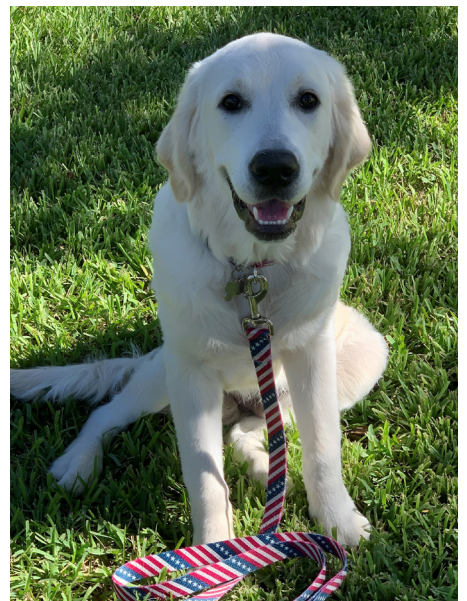


Mission Statement: Dogs For Life, Inc. is a non-profit organization devoted to improving the quality of life for veterans and other individuals in need through training hearing and service dogs, providing therapy dogs for first responders and school resource programs, and owning an off-leash dog park.

News

PRINTS

Vol. 24 / Issue 2 / Fall 2023



Above photo, l to r: Indian River County Sheriff's Office K-9 Sergeant Jake Curby with Robyn Candarini, Public Safety Dispatch Unit Director, and IRCSO's newest S.T.A.R. team member, Spirit. Right photos: DFL volunteer puppy raiser Cheryl Marshall, USAF (Ret.), receiving Indy at 8 weeks old, and Indy (still growing!) today.

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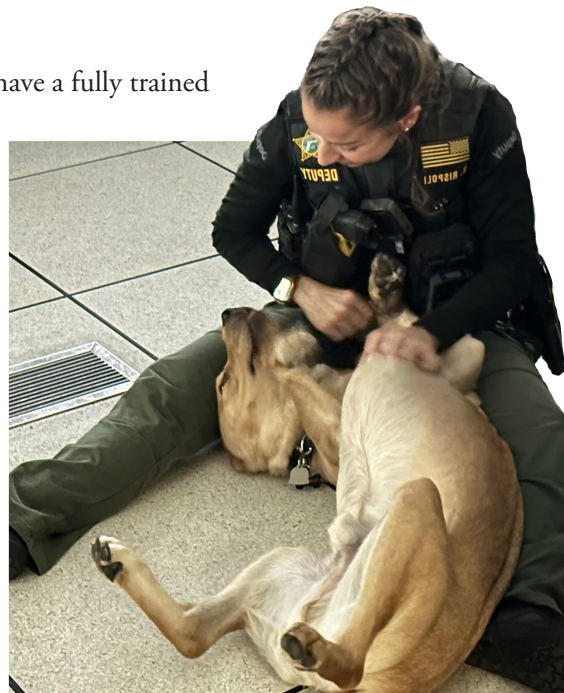
Vol. 24 / Issue 2 / Fall 2023

What's New?

What do you do when you have a fully trained 1-year-old compassionate and personable Labrador Retriever that loves everyone? You make an offer to the Sheriff's Department to include their S.T.A.R. team in DFL's Pet Therapy Program!

It's a perfect match as we like to say around here. When we see Spirit training with his new partner Robyn, it's obvious he's in his element.

Good Boy, Spirit! We know you will do many good things for our public safety officers.



Spirit joins the S.T.A.R. team at the Sheriff's Department.

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



Eddie Boatwright and service dog Rosie the Riveter

From *the* President

Dog park members will be happy to see five new water stations installed at the park. It was a daunting task to undertake, but we are thrilled to have new park amenities that will last for many years.

As we move into fall, we are working on DFL's year-end appeal. This year's appeal will showcase the hard work of DFL's marketing committee in updating DFL's many brochures that highlight our various programs.

Mark your calendars for February 3, 2024! Planning for DFL's signature fundraiser, Patriots For Puppies, is underway for the third year in a row. This fun event has proven to be a real hit with our veterans and donors alike. DFL is truly grateful for the sponsorships that make this always-sold-out event such a success each year.

Lastly, as the DFL Board of Directors continues to chart the course for DFL, our CEO Shelly Ferger will be reaching out to our founding members for their input and support after the first of the year. DFL wouldn't be able to continue our lifesaving programs without community support, which we deeply appreciate.

From *the* Founder & CEO

"Countless veterans in south Florida have learned that it is possible to train your own service dog, thanks to DFL's 'PAWS Act' partnership with the WPB VA Medical Center."

As DFL brings you the fall issue of NewsPRINTS, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the contributors who help us bring news from other veteran organizations to our constituents. We greatly value the contributions from all our NewsPRINTS committee members, whose writing, editing, placement, and proofing help ensure that each issue is even better than the last.

Countless veterans in south Florida have learned that it is possible to train your own service dog, thanks to DFL's "PAWS Act" partnership program with the West Palm Beach VA Medical Center. I take personal satisfaction in being able to empower others to help themselves and am grateful to the visionary DFL Board members that allowed DFL to take on this program.

We are delighted to report that DFL service dog Spirit has joined the Sheriff's Traumatic Advocate Response (S.T.A.R.) team at the Indian River County Sheriff's Department. Spirit was partnered with Robyn Candarini, Public Safety Dispatch Unit Director and certified S.T.A.R. team member, whose dedication to her profession is evident by her willingness to bring Spirit into work each day to bring comfort to her law enforcement colleagues.

Finally, with a heavy heart I say farewell to Colonel Marty Zickert, who led us in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance before many DFL events. He will be greatly missed. Until we meet again on that great morning.



Shelly Ferger and service dog St. Cloud

Spirit Goes to Work

The Indian River County Sheriff's Office has a new member of its vital S.T.A.R. team, and he is Spirit – a year-old Yellow Lab therapy dog, provided and trained by Dogs For Life.

S.T.A.R. stands for Sheriff's Traumatic Advocate Response and is a peer-to-peer support team within the Sheriff's Office to address the needs of sworn deputies and civilian personnel who have been involved in or witnessed a traumatic incident.

Adding Spirit to the program is an extension of the partnership between Dogs For Life and the Sheriff's Office, which started with the placement of therapy dogs within Indian River County schools. Since 2021 Dogs For Life has trained three therapy dogs to work with school resource officers.

The success of the school program and the value a therapy dog offers to school children led Sheriff Eric Flowers to consider dedicating a therapy dog to his own staff.

Deputies frequently encounter situations that

could lead to PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), such as responding to drownings, horrific automobile accidents, and crimes involving child sex abuse.

"We now know that those traumas live with you and affect your life going forward," Sheriff Flowers said.

So, the Sheriff's Office developed S.T.A.R. and now has 24 certified team members who check-in on traumatized personnel and offer additional resources when necessary.

The idea to include Spirit on the team resulted when the Sheriff and his staff saw how a visiting dog could provide a special level of

comfort and stress relief.

"First, we found that when we allowed people to bring a dog or puppy to work, the response was positive. And our dispatchers, because they are under tremendous stress, had been asking for a dog for a while," Sheriff Flowers said. "Then, a dispatcher passed away, and Gracie, a school therapy dog, visited the department." The staff reaction from such a compassionate visit illuminated the benefits of a therapy dog. And the decision was reached to place the next therapy dog offered by Dogs For Life within the agency. Spirit's handler is Robyn Cardarini, who is the Public Safety Dispatch Administrator and a certified S.T.A.R. team member.

Dogs For Life's accreditation with Assistance Dog International allows the organization to certify therapy dogs for a facility, such as a school, nursing home, or in this case a Sheriff's Office. A therapy dog differs from a service dog, which is trained for specific tasks to accommodate an owner's disability. A therapy dog is trained to have impeccable manners, to remain calm in all situations and to provide comfort and relieve stress by obeying commands such as to lean against a person, applying gentle pressure, or to put its head on a lap.

A therapy dog's personality is an important factor in placing a dog in a facility. The dog must be social and want to be with people and want attention and



Sheriff Eric Flowers accepts a donation from Kathi Schumann to support the Sheriff's Traumatic Advocate Response (S.T.A.R.) Team.

Pet Therapy

affection. “Spirit is the perfect dog for this,” Robyn claimed.

Dogs For Life obtained Spirit from a breeding co-op for service and therapy dog bloodlines and trained him and Robyn together for their important role within the Sheriff’s Office on the S.T.A.R. team. Dogs For Life Board Member Kathi Schumann sponsors the partnership with the Sheriff’s Office to cover the additional expenses, which include insurance, proper equipping of the handler’s vehicle to safely transport the therapy dog, and other maintenance costs.

“We are incredibly grateful to Mrs. Schumann and Dogs For Life. Because of our partnership with Dogs For Life we have not had to ask the county for any money to support this needed program,” Sheriff Flowers said.

“Our therapy dogs in the schools and within the Sheriff’s Office are important additions to our agency. We would love to expand the partnership to include a therapy dog in all our schools.”

This, too, is a goal of Dogs For Life. To contribute to this program, please visit the website at dogsforlifevb.org.

Rick Lewis Joins DFL Board

Please join us in welcoming new DFL Board member Rick Lewis! Richard “Rick” Lewis has been a resident of Indian River County since 1971. His experience includes 30 years with the City of Vero Beach Electric Transmission and Distribution department and five years as a realtor. Rick spent six years in the United States Navy and is very involved with local veteran organizations. A member of the American Legion Post 39, Rick spent three years on the executive board and three years as Director of Chapter 39 Riders. He also is a member of the VFW Auxiliary Post 10210 in Sebastian and Vero Beach Veterans. As delegate of the American Legion Post 39, Rick serves as local coordinator for Wreaths Across America. With his business experience and ties to local veteran groups, Rick is the perfect addition to our board. We look forward to his contributions, particularly in helping to steer our veteran programs.



Rick Lewis (USN)



DFL CEO Shelly Ferger and representatives from Instituto Adimax take a photo during a tour of the DFL campus.

International Visitors

As one of only five Assistance Dogs International-accredited service dog organizations in Florida, one of Dogs For Life’s responsibilities is to mentor other organizations seeking accreditation. When we’re asked to host another service dog organization from Florida or even the Southeastern U.S., it’s not unexpected. However, when we were contacted by São Paulo, Brazil-based Instituto Adimax, which is the largest school for assistance and guide dogs in Latin America, it was quite the surprise! We are honored to be recognized by other service dog organizations around the world, and it was a privilege to meet the young men from Instituto Adimax. You may recall several years ago we were visited by a service dog organization from Israel. Israel, Brazil . . . if this global recognition keeps up we’re going to have to pack our bags!

Dog Daze of Summer Fundraising Event

What could be a better way to announce a new program than to hold an event? And what an event it was, with an actual “big top” air-conditioned tent! Dogs and people alike enjoyed fun and games at the “Dog Daze of Summer” fundraiser. Festivities included a pool party for the dogs with wet T-shirts, a water slide, and prizes.

The event was quite a success. Dogs For Life pups, dog park members, and our service dog teams had a blast. The festivities were capped off with an official announcement from Sheriff Eric Flowers and CEO Shelly Ferger concerning the expansion of DFL's Pet Therapy Program to include the Indian River County Sheriff's Office S.T.A.R. team, which provides support to deputies and civilians who have experienced trauma.

Dogs For Life and all the service dog teams wish Spirit the best as he EMBARKS (pun intended!) on his new career as a therapy dog with the Sheriff's Department!



Left photo, l to r: Ingrid Hernandez (USA), Peer Leader Womans PTSD Support Group and member of Next Generation Veterans of IRC, and Laura Moss, IRC Board of County Commissioner play with Chance. Right photo: Don Peterson (USA Ret.) and Buddy head to the pool party.



Newly elected board member Rick Lewis presents Mrs. Kathi G. Schumann with an award for her support for Wreaths Across America during the Dog Daze event.



On this year's Wreaths Across America Day, more than 2 million veterans' wreaths will be placed across local, state and national cemeteries in all 50 states.

"Remember the fallen. Honor those who serve. Teach the next generation the value of freedom."

Ingrid Hernandez, USA

Next Generation Veterans of Indian River County

Female Veterans Group Grows

It's hard to believe that we've just celebrated the two-year anniversary of our support group for female veterans and first responders. How far have we come, and how did it all begin?



Ingrid Hernandez and service dog, Chance

About five years ago, I had heard about the support groups and PTSD sessions, but I was incredibly apprehensive and never seriously considered attending one. It didn't take long for me to notice a troubling pattern: many female veterans would

show up once and never return. Some would even arrive, park their cars, and then drive away without ever coming in. I understood that the experiences and needs of female veterans were different, but I wondered how we could address this issue.

Being a female veteran often feels like being overlooked. When people think of veterans, they tend to envision males. Did you know that females make up only 10% of the veteran community? That's just what's officially recorded; many females go unregistered. Three years ago, during a meeting, the idea of forming a female support group was brought up. We realized a significant prevalence of sexual trauma among female veterans. How could we create a safe space for them to be heard and begin their healing journey? Addressing military sexual trauma (MST) or other service-related trauma is incredibly challenging, and female veterans face unique hurdles. Often, they blame themselves for what happened to them, leading to silence and self-blame. It's not about what's wrong with them; it's about what happened to them.

I couldn't help but think how incredible it would be to find a female/veteran facilitator. I immediately exclaimed, "That would be amazing!"

The response was, "Okay, great, Ingrid, let's make it happen."

That marked the beginning of a year-long search. Yes, it took an entire year to find a female veteran who understood trauma and was willing to embark on this journey with us. We've been exceptionally fortunate to have had our facilitator for two years now, and she has been a true blessing to both me and the group.

It has not been easy, but these past two years have been nothing short of incredible. The women who have attended our group have taught me that there's power in purpose, and this endeavor has undoubtedly given me a sense of purpose. While some of our members have moved on, we remain connected. During their time in the group, they've built friendships like no other. Despite the shared trauma, we cherish the unbreakable bonds formed here. All females are welcome, regardless of their branch of service. All we request is your integrity and confidentiality.

Over the past two years, we've acquired coping skills and tools, realizing that healing takes time. We've enjoyed numerous outings, from dinners and art classes to meditation, yoga, and even pedicures. Both male and female groups have come together for family outings.

We maintain regular communication through a chat line, ensuring everyone's well-being. We know the healing is a never-ending journey. I've always told them, "It's okay not to be okay"; we're all navigating the same ocean, just on different boats. If a veteran ever needs immediate help, we have access to facilitators who can assist.

I'm so proud of what we've built. It's an honor and privilege to fulfill my purpose. While I wish we didn't have to deal with these issues, I'm immensely grateful that this support group exists. My goal is to bring awareness to other veterans and the community that we are here.

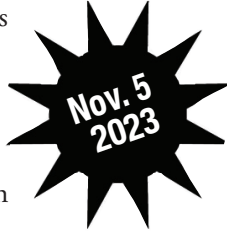
The Female Veterans and First Responders Support Group meets at 7PM the first, third and fifth Wednesday of each month at Dogs For Life.

Veterans

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

5th Annual Walk-A-Thon

American Gold Star Mothers of Indian River County, Inc. is hosting our 5th Annual Walk-A-Thon for Military/Veteran Suicide Awareness and Veteran Resource Expo on November 5th at Riverside Park in Vero Beach.



Helping our military and veterans who are struggling with service-related PTSD continues to be our main focus. Our veterans sacrificed so much for us. They need and deserve for us to do everything we can to end the UNACCEPTABLE 22+ suicides a day by those who are still fighting “the battle within.” I pray for a successful walk to show our veterans that our community supports them and is thankful for their service.

My term as President of the American Gold Star Mothers, Inc., Department of FL-PR, ended in May at our 70th Annual State Convention held this year in Vero Beach. I am grateful to the sponsors who donated to our convention and those who helped

me prepare to make our 70th State Convention one for the books! Our speakers, USAF (Ret.) Brigadier General Randal C. Guthrie, Next Generation Veteran SGT E5 Civil Affairs



NCO Ingrid Hernandez, and Dogs For Life founder and CEO Shelly Ferger, impressed those in attendance and showed how we work together to help our Indian River County veterans.

A new passion of our Indian River County Gold Stars is getting to know our local WWII veterans. Yes, I said WWII! There are quite a few WWII vets who live in Indian River County and are active in veteran clubs. They are remarkable. It is humbling

getting to know them and listening to their stories. Former Mayor Tony Young and I work together to contact these veterans and bring them together at the Felix Poppell American Legion Post 39 on Old Dixie Highway. Our Gold Stars host luncheons and birthday parties for them. Our latest birthday party was for a Navy Veteran who turned 100 on August 19th!

Being a Gold Star Mom and DFL Board member has opened many opportunities in my life that help me cope with the loss of my son, Army CPL Dale J. Kridlo. Thank you DFL, Mrs. Schumann, and Shelly!



L to R: Sean Timberlake (USA) and Judy with Marisel Munoz Febo (USAF) and Honcho at last year's successful Walk-A-Thon.

Michael C. Wright, US Army (Ret.)

How to Deal with Grief or Loss

In psychotherapy, one of the educational concepts strongly emphasized at the master's level and beyond is how to help clients deal with loss. The one common denominator, regardless of the myriad of fields that social workers occupy, is that everyone will lose someone at some point in time. This is life in its simplest form. However, how they react to it varies from person to person.

There is a well-known guide, probably utilized nationwide in psychotherapy, called the Kübler-Ross 5 stages of grief. Dr. Ross posits that denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance are the most common reactions to grief or loss.

Naturally, it is supposed that she is referring to human loved ones lost to sickness, disease, tragedy, or other circumstances, and this of course by and large is true. Nonetheless, I would briefly like to call attention to lesser-known losses that occur through the years, including loss of self, loss of a sense of purpose, loss of empathy, loss of emotions and the ability to connect socially, and loss of emotional equilibrium. I have noticed that these losses also can be comparatively traumatic.

Some of the vets in our meetings complain or express concern that they indeed have experienced some of these lesser-known losses. This in turn causes internal grief, and when verbalized, many find that the loss has not been properly processed on an emotional level. Left unchecked, there is a void that needs to be filled with something. We can imagine what that might be, but anger, bitterness, complaining about things in the past, resentment over perceived injustices, and even excessive drinking are not uncommon.

On the positive side, many other vets who acknowledge similar struggles have chosen to fill the void with fun, leisure, or sober activities, such as boating,

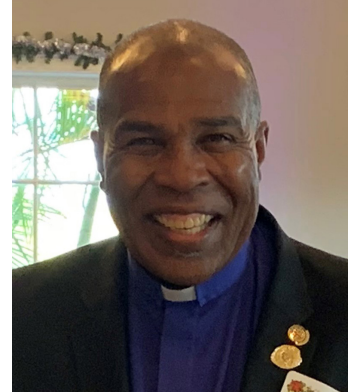
kayaking, dining out, engaging in crafts, organizing annual fundraisers, skydiving, and other activities, just to name a few. This of course is encouraged, and it's wonderful to see how much the eyes of fellow vets light up when healthy outlets such as these

are shared. To be sure, these are not perfect solutions by any means, but what one vet goes through correlates to some degree with what the others experience, and therein lies what makes our PTSD meetings significant, relatable, and valuable. Over time, grief does diminish if dealt with consistently.

As an ordained chaplain, I believe there is always the offer of peace through faith in Christ, but the decision is left up to the individual. Each chooses his or her own path, and that is what is unique about our meetings. Attendance numbers rise and fall but there is always a core group whose weekly presence is a testimonial to the effectiveness of our group.

As we approach the celebration of our 200th meeting, I solicit the prayers of readers who believe that our meetings have served, and will continue to serve, a significant portion of vets who seek camaraderie in the power of the group. My hope is that the laughter, joy, and empathy found in our meetings will help our vets overcome any feelings of loss and grief.

May God bless you all.



PTSD Support Groups

The Veteran PTSD Support Group

Meets at 7:00 PM
Mondays and Thursdays at
Dogs For Life, 1230 16th Avenue, VB

The Female Veterans and First Responders Support Group

Meets at 7:00 PM
First, third and fifth
Wednesday of each month at
Dogs For Life, 1230 16th Avenue, VB

Harper Marsolek, PAWS Coordinator

Center for Development and Civic Engagement, West Palm Beach VA Healthcare System

Veterans in Pilot Program



We will be completing five PAWS (Puppies Assisting Wounded Service Members) Pilot cohorts this year with a total of 16 Veterans completing the program so far! Veterans have learned about service dog laws, service dog training, and canine behavior all while engaging with fellow service members and community partners.

Hear it from the Veterans:

“I am developing a community with the people around me along with the dogs and I am gaining more self-confidence and improving my self-esteem that might be lost with PTSD.”

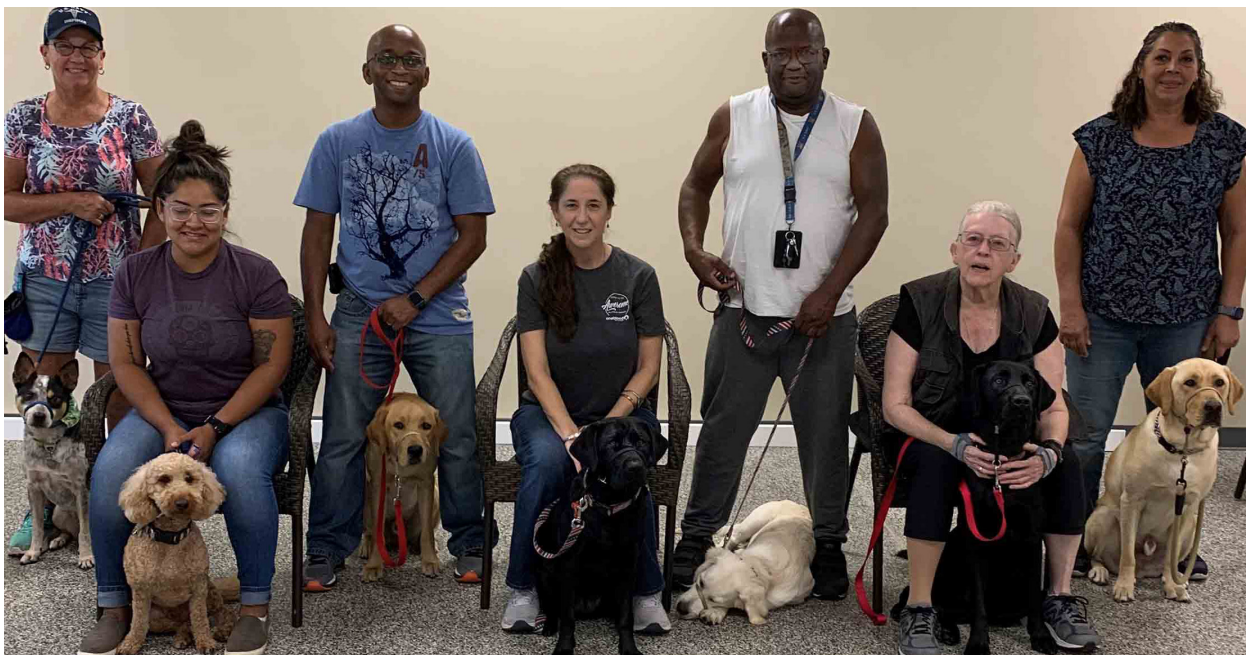
“From the first program, I was nervous but now I have opened up and I am able to go a little further, show the skills that I have learned, and enjoy my time with the Veterans and the dogs.”

“If other Veterans are considering this program, don’t wait! Jump in right away and get your name on the list and enjoy yourself!”

The West Palm Beach VA Healthcare System is looking forward to continuing this program in 2024 to better serve Veterans as an element of a complementary and integrative health program.



PAWS Program graduate Deborah Quon (USN) and Buddy.



Photo, l to r: DFL Volunteer Kimberley Mann (USN) with Elvis, Norma Arevalo-Sanchez (USA) with Huey, Bentley Williams (USA) with Spirit, Joanne Przybylowski (USA) with Rosie, Leroy Harris (USN) with Indy, Judith Kephart (USM) with Buddy, and Marisel Munoz Febo (USAF) with Honcho.

Nancy E. Kicherer, DVM

Open Wide!

Last month, service dog in training St. Nick received a worrisome diagnosis of an ameloblastoma, or oral tumor. The decision was made to remove the mass by partial maxillectomy, a surgical procedure to remove part of Nick's jawbone.

The procedure was performed by a Veterinary Dentist in Melbourne, Florida, and we are very happy to report that the surgery was a success. However, the experience is a good reminder of the importance of monitoring your service dog. Your service dog's health can be derailed easily by not paying attention.

Close attention to our dogs' health, including oral health, along with veterinary care and pet insurance, can save the day. Nick's CT scan and radiographs, together with the specialist, surgical, and lab fees, cost many thousands of dollars. Thankfully, 90% was covered by Trupanion pet insurance. Nick is doing great and will live a full life thanks to DFL, his veterinarians, and Trupanion.

Examining your dog is easy enough, and we really should do it daily, head to toe. Looking into the mouth is a bit more difficult, but easily accomplished, and should be done weekly to biweekly.

Next is the dilemma of brushing your dog's teeth. Only 5% of all pet caregivers brush their dogs' teeth. So, what can we do? The Veterinary Oral Health Council (www.VOHC.org) provides a list of



Dr. Nancy Kicherer and her service dog, Stryker.

dental chews, water additives, and toothbrushes that we can use to stay on top of our dogs' dental health. The VOHC website is a reliable source of information when you are choosing dental devices for your dog. Don't forget also to visit www.veterinarypartner.com as a source of information about dental disease.

In my experience, Trupanion pet insurance is your friend, and not your adversary. Recently, a fellow DFL member recounted his frustration dealing with a claim made

to Trupanion. It is important to remember that insurance companies train their staff to question all claims as a routine matter. If your claim is denied, the veterinarian involved should help you with any issues, and if you are a client don't hesitate to ask Dogs For Life to intervene. Though Trupanion does not cover routine dental cleanings, it does cover extractions and other expensive non-routine dental procedures.

Hope this helps with supporting your dog's oral health. Any questions, give me a shout at NancykDVM@gmail.com.



New Water Stations Keep Dogs Hydrated!

This service dog knows the importance of staying hydrated during playtime. Be sure to check out the new water stations on your next visit to the DFL dog park.

Independence Day

DFL puppies usually come from Assistance Dogs International breeding cooperative members that are located in other parts of the state or outside Florida – but DFL’s newest pup is a local!

Independence, or “Indy” for short, came to DFL through a stroke of luck. In early May, DFL founder and CEO Shelly Ferger learned that a local veterinarian had Golden Retriever puppies for sale.

Normally it is difficult to find puppies with the right temperament to be service dogs, but in this case the lineage of the



parents was known and Shelly felt comfortable. Shelly went to see the litter of pups and fell in love with 8 week-old Indy (photo right).

Volunteer puppy raiser Cheryl Marshall (USAF Ret.) was at home with DFL puppy in training Nick, then 7 months old, when Shelly called. “Usually we know when a new puppy is coming, but this was unexpected,” recalled Cheryl. “Shelly asked me to bring Nick to the center and take Indy home



DFL CEO Shelly Ferger with 3-month old Indy.



with me. I was surprised but quite happy to do it.”

Cheryl raised Indy for his first four months. They bonded immediately and Indy was quick to learn basic manners at home.

In true younger brother fashion, Indy initially had to bark at the older DFL dogs to get them to play with him, but in no time, he was one of the gang. Indy started training classes at DFL and impressed everyone with his calm demeanor and ability to keep up with the older pups in class.

If you saw Indy as a young puppy, you might think that he is related to Ingrid Hernandez’s service dog Chance, who came to DFL in the spring of 2022.

Both are towheads, with nearly white fur, but Indy is starting to look more like a Golden Retriever as his long wavy hair grows in.

Cheryl says Indy was aptly named, as his independent streak became obvious early on. “He always was willing to explore on his own,” said Cheryl. Unfortunately for Cheryl, one of Indy’s earliest explorations involved a mud puddle. “True water dog that he is, he never met a puddle he didn’t like,” joked Cheryl. “The only negative thing I can say about him is that he is impossible to keep clean!”

Mellow and lovable, Indy is always happy to make new friends. Stop by the center to say hello and meet Indy and the other DFL pups before they are placed with clients.

For additional information on DFL’s Puppy Raising Program, contact Shelly Ferger at office@dogsforlifefvb.org.

Lieutenant Phil Huddy, Vero Beach Police Department

Pet Therapy Continues at VBPD

Our therapy dog program at the Vero Beach Police Department continues to develop with the assistance of Dogs For Life. We have revised our visitation schedule and continue to find ways to touch more officers and employees throughout the department. Service dog teams, including Ms. Dani Ley and Ollie and retired Indian River County Sheriff's Office Lieutenant James Hyde and Otis, have made evening visits to our department during officer shift changes. They have spent time with our communications officers during their visits as well.

With the change in schedule, our civilian employees who work during normal business hours are suffering from puppy withdrawal. Many have asked for more visitation hours. It is amazing to see the effect the volunteers and their service dogs have on the individuals I work with. I hope this momentum continues to grow and our current therapy dog program becomes an essential part of our health and wellness plan here at the VBPD.



DFL service dogs Indy and Nick provide pet therapy during shift change at VBPD.

DFL can always benefit from support from the public. Whether it be through financial support or simply volunteering, you can make a difference in the lives of veterans, first responders, and individuals suffering from various mental health issues. Dogs can change people's lives for the better through comfort, companionship, and improved mental well-being.

DFL Legacy Society

The DFL Legacy Society recognizes the generous donors who remember Dogs For Life in their estate plans. Legacy gifts take many forms. For example, you might name DFL as a beneficiary of your will, bank, or brokerage account, IRA or other retirement account, trust, life insurance policy, or other estate planning vehicle. Your legacy gift can be anything of value, such as appreciated securities, including stocks, bonds and certificates of deposit, or simply a designated portion of your estate.

Past board member Eleanor Bengyak not only patronized DFL during her lifetime by raising funds and serving as a director, but also remembered DFL in her estate plans. Dog park member Robert Bowman left a legacy gift that allowed DFL to remodel the dog park's memorial garden, which was renamed in honor of him and his dog, Robbie.

Whether large or small, and whether designated for a specific purpose or given without restrictions, your legacy gift will ensure that DFL can serve veterans, first responders, local schoolchildren, and others in need for generations to come.

We invite you to join the DFL Legacy Society today. Please contact Shelly Ferger at DFL with any questions.

Tim Barnes and Gypsy

When Tim Barnes brought newly adopted Gypsy to meet Shelly Ferger, he wasn't sure Shelly would agree to admit the retired first responder and his rescue pup into the service dog training program. Shelly, Dogs For Life Founder and Director of Training, was indeed skeptical. "Rescue dogs can be challenging, depending on the amount of time spent at a shelter and their background and experiences. They can be timid and anxious and need time to heal."

Unfortunately, the brindle-colored, half Labrador Retriever and half American Fox Hound displayed all those characteristics. Yet, Tim asked Shelly to take a chance on them, and she did. "The best predictor of success is the relationship between dog and owner," Shelly admits. "Tim was motivated. It was my hope he could build Gypsy's self-esteem, and once they started working together with Tim in a leadership role giving directions, things would fall into place."

That's exactly what happened. For the next six months Tim and Gypsy trained together on specific tasks to help Tim manage his mobility and balance issues. In April of this year, they graduated from the program. And what a difference this has made in Tim's life.

Tim and his wife Wendy have always had dogs – always rescue dogs that they considered more than pets. In 2021, they lost two of their precious "family members." They thought they were finished adopting dogs. But after a time of grieving, they considered their home to be just "too quiet." That was also about the time Tim's mobility problems were becoming more pronounced and he considered entering a service dog



Tim Barnes and his service dog, Gypsy

program "to get ahead of further problems," like a bad fall.

The Barnes adopted Gypsy from the Brevard County Sheriff Department's "Paws and Stripes" program. The animals in the program are strays picked up by deputies and trained for about eight weeks by county-sentenced inmates. After that, some serve as comfort/therapy dogs to children or veterans in need of emotional support, while others are put up for adoption.

Gypsy, age a year-and-a-half at the time, had several run-ins with the sheriff's department. She was adopted out twice but allowed to wander off by her owners. However, she and the Barnes' bonded immediately and when the couple brought Gypsy home, they all knew she was there to stay. In her role as a trained service dog, Gypsy assists Tim in a number of ways. "She helps me when I have trouble getting out of a chair. I will give a command to 'brace,' and she will sit close so I can put my hand on her and raise myself."

Gypsy stays beside Tim in case he has balance issues, which he did recently on a shopping trip to Home Depot. "She was



The Pentagon burning in the distance on September 11, 2001.

Then and Now

right there, bracing herself against me when I started to lose my balance and I was able to put my hand on her and feel secure again.” And when he is shopping at the grocery store, Gypsy will often position herself between his legs, facing behind him to watch his back.

Tim served for over 30 years with the Washington, D.C. Fire and Emergency Services Department, including duty at the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, until back problems necessitated his retirement.

“Gypsy is also good at reading my moods,” Tim says. For instance, the anniversary of 9/11 every year is understandably a difficult time for Tim. He remembers that morning well, when American Airlines Flight 77 took off from Washington Dulles International Airport bound for Los Angeles, with 53 passengers and a crew of six. Also on board were the five hijackers who flew the plane into the western façade of the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, killing 125 citizens as they worked.

“I had gotten off my shift early that morning and was mowing my lawn. It was a beautiful day and the only thing that seemed strange was I noticed when I looked at the blue sky, there were no planes flying. I was not near a television and so I had no idea what had happened until I got the call to report for duty immediately.”

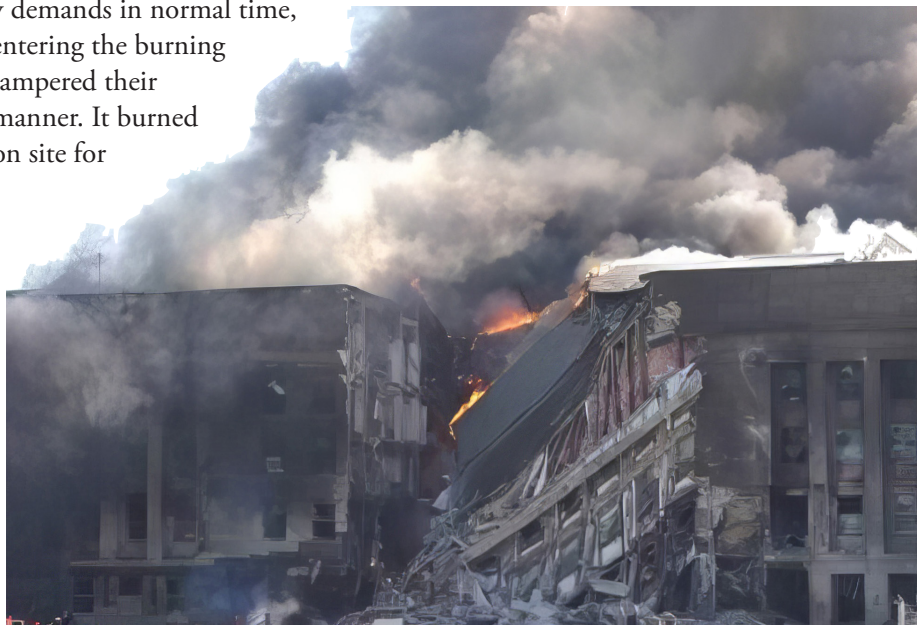
He drove back to his station at 16th and U Streets in NW Washington, D.C., but the fire trucks were already en route to the Pentagon, so he and the others called in were bused to the scene. There he became a member of his department’s triage team that took turns going into the building to battle the fire.

Because the Pentagon is headquarters of the U.S. Department of Defense, with security demands in normal time, each team had to be screened before entering the burning facility. This, Tim said, significantly hampered their ability to put the fire out in a timely manner. It burned for a full 24 hours, and he remained on site for 48 hours.

This anniversary of the terror attacks, Tim had Gypsy by his side to help him cope with the memories. “When I was remembering that day 22 years before, she sat right next to me and pressed her body next to mine, put her head on my lap, and looked at me until I made eye contact with her big brown eyes. It helped. That is just more one way she makes my life better.”



A piece of American Airlines Flight 77 outside the Pentagon.



This is the first aerial view of the Pentagon after the attack.

Check Presentations



St. Helen's Catholic Women
Mary Graves with Shelly Ferger and service dog Rosie.



Boozefighters
Heidi Bates, Next Generation Veterans of IRC, accepts donation from members of Boozefighters.



Kappa Kappa Gamma
Chuck Gerald, Next Generation Veterans of IRC with Rosie, receives check from Peggy Anderson of Kappa Kappa Gamma.



Sebastian American Legion
Members of the Sebastian American Legion present a check to DFL volunteer and client Steve Defren (USA) with Rosie.



Florida State Jaycees
Florida State Jaycees sponsor veteran dog training at DFL.



Foxy Ladies
The Foxy Ladies of Heron Cay sponsor puppies at DFL.

Empowering Veterans

Insights from the National Service Dogs for Veterans Conference

In July, for the third year running, Dogs For Life sent a representative to the National Service Dogs for Veterans conference in Washington DC. The event was organized by the Association of Service Dog Providers for Military Veterans (ASDPMV), a coalition of non-profit service dog providers dedicated to supporting military veterans grappling with post-traumatic stress, traumatic brain injury, and military sexual trauma. The overarching goal of the coalition is to mitigate the alarming rates of suicide while enhancing the mental well-being of military veterans.

At the core of ASDPMV's mission lies a commitment to uphold rigorous standards in assistance dog training and partnership. This dedication to excellence serves as a cornerstone in fostering a symbiotic relationship



Shaun Logan (USM), PAWS Graduate and DFL Volunteer, teaches Spirit to apply calming pressure with the "lap" command.

between veterans and their service dogs. For organizations like DFL, participation in conferences and seminars of this nature is an invaluable opportunity to connect with kindred spirits and fellow entities within the service dog realm. Each organization brings a unique perspective to the table, but they all share a unified purpose: enhancing the quality of life of disabled veterans and individuals through the use of service dogs.

One significant theme that resonated throughout this year's conference was the pressing issue of post-traumatic stress. Esteemed speakers representing ASDPMV-accredited organizations delved into a spectrum of topics related to PTSD. From evaluating the readiness of clients to form partnerships with PTSD service dogs to providing sustained support for these partnerships, the conference encapsulated the complexities of managing PTSD within the context of service dogs.

A pivotal facet of managing PTSD is the establishment of a robust support network.

Recognizing this, many programs are exploring innovative avenues to integrate family members into the process of transitioning to life with a service dog. This recognition of the importance of familial involvement has not gone unnoticed by DFL. By fostering a supportive community, DFL is taking an active role in addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by PTSD.

As the Association of Service Dog Providers for Military Veterans and its accredited providers continue to forge ahead with unwavering determination, the collective impact of their initiatives promises to reshape the lives of veterans and their service dogs for the better.

DFL's Digital Scrapbook

By Dustin Tackett, Citrus Three Social Media Marketing

The Dogs For Life team has been working hard behind the scenes on the next big website project - a journey through 20 years at DFL.

DFL is always looking for ways to make things more convenient for its supporters, and that goes for sharing our journey and making that more accessible as well. While some of our readers may have been with us from the beginning, we know some of you have only joined us recently and may not know our entire story and how it all began. We want to make that story available.

It all started by thinking about what to do with a huge collection of scrapbooks stored in a closet. We knew we wanted to find a way to share all the photos, articles and more



Photos and newspaper clippings from many DFL scrapbooks will soon be available for viewing on our website.

with our members. So, why not try and figure out a way to make it available on our website? Voilà! Converting photos, articles and other pieces of content from the scrapbooks, the DFL team is creating a section on the website that will walk users through the years at DFL. They will be able to travel through time in between major milestones along DFL's journey as a non-profit organization, brought to life by chronological images, articles, newspaper clippings and more.

A lot of work has been going in to getting this experience ready to launch, but we're getting close and can't wait to see what you think.

Service Dog Re-Certifications

DFL annually re-certifies every service dog in our program. 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 2015

Wanda Haaland and Lola

Class of 2016

Bob Cheshire (USN) and Bo

Class of 2017

Corinne Cruickshank and Aya
Mark Poziomek and Ranger

Class of 2018

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

Class of 2019

Sue Bergman and Spencer
Michael Bores (USA) and Bandit
Kelly Colmey and Joey
Barbara Gormas and Lola
Bill Moruzzi (USA) and Remington
Roxanne Pagliaroli and Swag

Class of 2020

Lauren Carr and Coco
Jessica Jacobs and Honey
Tammie Mandeville and Poppy
Elizabeth McGoldrick and Oliver
Kimberly Mann (USN) and Elvis
Howard Rizio (USMC) and St. Cloud
Earl Tindol, (USAR) and Arrow
Claude Vitali (USMC) and Beebe

Class of 2021

Kris Hasenauer (USA) and Jasper
Diane Kimball (USN) and Ralfee
Dani Ley and Ollie
Sean Timberlake (USA) and Judy

Class of 2022

Christopher Adams (USN) and
Dozer
Andy Beebe (USAF) and Truffle
Marisel Munoz Febo (USAF) and
Honcho
Julie Ann Rollins and Dottie
Beth Stryker and Grady
Phil Tettleton and Sully
Maureen Turner and Angus

Class of 2023

Tim Barnes and Gypsy
Mark Birtel and Chip
Steve Defren (USA) and Rosie
Ron Garrison and Ellie Mae
Jim Hyde (USN) and Otis
Dr. Nancy Kicherer and Stryker
Michele Laib and Lua
Sarah Lang and Bradley
Barbara McCoy (USAF) and
Mercedes
Howard Teich (USA) and Tucker
Charlie Watson (USA) and Sam
Gary Wilson (USA) and Swift



Marisel Munoz Febo (USAF) and Honcho
with Julie Ann Rollins and Dottie



Christopher Adams (USN) and Dozer



Kelly Colmey and Joey



Tim Barnes and Gypsy, Jim Hyde (USN) and Otis, Steve Defren (USA) and Rosie, and Gary Wilson (USA) and Swift

Service Dog Protocol

Service Animals in Public Places

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed by Congress in 1990 and amended in 2008. It is a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in everyday activities.

The ADA explains what businesses and state/local governments must do to make sure that they do not discriminate against a member of the public with a disability who uses a service animal. Generally, businesses and non-profits that are open to the public as well as state/local governments must allow service animals to go most places where the public can go. This is true even if they have a “no pets” policy.

Many members of the public, business owners and their staff, do not realize there is a legal difference between emotional support animals and service animals. Sometimes pet owners will claim their dog is a service dog in an effort to bring their pet into a shopping center, grocery store, or other public place.



Sassy Martin, 2018 DFL Graduate

Sadly, the number of “imposters” makes it more difficult for those who truly need service animals. Local Publix grocery stores recently posted new signs reminding customers that animals other than service dogs are not

permitted, and that misrepresenting a pet as a service animal is a crime in Florida. Though it is unfortunate that these signs are needed, it is a positive development given the general confusion around service dogs.

The ADA’s website, www.ADA.gov, is a great place to find guidance on this topic and offers many resources that members of the public are encouraged to reproduce. The following information was excerpted from the ADA’s website:

ADA Requirements: Service Animals ¹

Service animals are defined as dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities.

Examples of such work or tasks include guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack, or performing other duties.

Service animals are working animals, not pets. The work or task a dog has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person’s disability. Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA.

This definition does not affect or limit the broader definition of “assistance animal” under the Fair Housing Act or the broader definition of “service animal” under the Air Carrier Access Act.

Some State and local laws also define service animal more broadly than the ADA does. Information about such laws can be obtained from the relevant State attorney general’s office.

Where Service Animals Are Allowed

Under the ADA, State and local governments, businesses, and nonprofit organizations that serve the public generally must allow service animals to accompany people with disabilities in all areas of the

¹Excerpted from www.ADA.gov. Last updated: February 28, 2020. Contact the ADA For more information.

facility where the public is allowed to go.

For example, in a hospital it usually would be inappropriate to exclude a service animal from areas such as patient rooms, clinics, cafeterias, or examination rooms. However, it may be appropriate to exclude a service animal from operating rooms or burn units where the animal's presence may compromise a sterile environment.

Service Animals Must Be Under Control

A service animal must be under the control of its handler. Under the ADA, service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless the individual's disability prevents using these devices or these devices interfere with the service animal's safe, effective performance of tasks. In that case, the individual must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls.

Inquiries, Exclusions, Charges, and Other Specific Rules Related to Service Animals



When it is not obvious what service an animal provides, only limited inquiries are allowed.

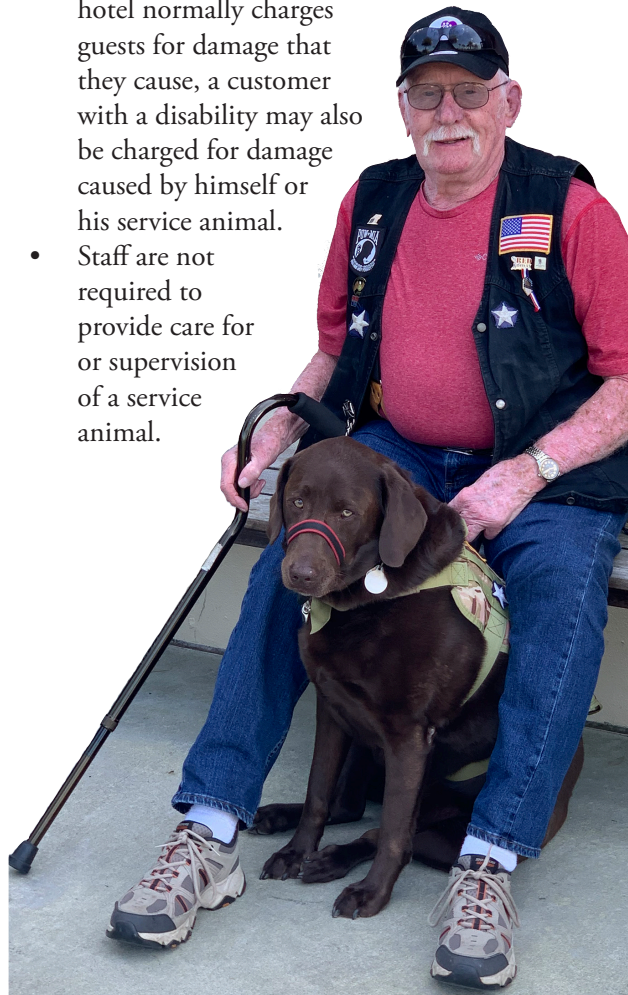
Staff may ask two questions:

- (1) is the dog a service animal required because of a disability, and (2) what work or task has the dog been trained to perform. Staff cannot ask about the person's disability, require medical documentation, require a special identification card or training documentation for the dog, or ask that the dog demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task.

- Allergies and fear of dogs are not valid reasons for denying access or refusing service to people using service animals. When a person who is allergic to dog dander and a person who uses a service animal must spend time in the same room or facility, for example, in a school classroom or at a homeless shelter, they both should be accommodated by assigning them, if possible, to different locations within the room or different rooms in the facility.
- A person with a disability cannot be asked to remove his service animal from the premises

unless: (1) the dog is out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it or (2) the dog is not housebroken. When there is a legitimate reason to ask that a service animal be removed, staff must offer the person with the disability the opportunity to obtain goods or services without the animal's presence.

- Establishments that sell or prepare food must generally allow service animals in public areas even if state or local health codes prohibit animals on the premises.
- People with disabilities who use service animals cannot be isolated from other patrons, treated less favorably than other patrons, or charged fees that are not charged to other patrons without animals. In addition, if a business requires a deposit or fee to be paid by patrons with pets, it must waive the charge for service animals.
- If a business such as a hotel normally charges guests for damage that they cause, a customer with a disability may also be charged for damage caused by himself or his service animal.
- Staff are not required to provide care for or supervision of a service animal.



Bob Cheshire (USN) with Bo, 2016 DFL Graduate

In Memory of Marty Zickert

By Colonel Tony Young

“Marty,” Colonel Martin Zickert USAF, passed away July 2, 2023. Born in February 1941, he was 82 years old. His loss was unexpected. It was a significant blow to the veterans of Indian River County.

For over a dozen years, Marty led numerous efforts to organize and foster local veteran activities. His work complemented the success of Dogs For Life. He, along with Colonel Sam Kouns, advocated for the benefits DFL promoted.

When you think of Marty’s gift to Vero Beach and Indian River County many revelations come to mind. Some examples follow.

- ✓ DFL and Marty were a natural fit. Both were passionate about supporting those in need. He championed the veteran suffering from his time in uniform.
- ✓ Marty was dedicated and brought joy in the process. Search the TC Palm photos of Colonel Marty Zickert. You will see the common thread. He lived fully in his quest.



Colonel Martin Zickert

✓ Marty was like your beloved dog. He greeted you enthusiastically. He smiled and laughed just like a hound’s wagging tail and eager trot.

✓ DFL’s work is much more about teaching the owner than the dog. Likewise, Marty understood his focus was convincing the public how best to deal with the veteran.

What can we gain from Marty’s example of serving? It may be the same lessons we might learn from our faithful four-legged friends.

- ✓ Attitude is imperative. Live in the moment. Meet every day with joy. Each one is another chance to savor new smells!
- ✓ Be there! People and dogs speak differently. Some folks speak differently than others. But we get what our pets are saying. We just convey it in another way. A lick is persuasive!
- ✓ And persist! Most things take time to achieve. Do not give up. How many times does it take for your dog to get his walk? Coaxing is part of the action.



IRC Commissioner Joe Flescher, Colonel Marty Zickert, Colonel Tony Young, Colonel Rip Wheeler and DFL CEO Shelly Ferger. Photo credit Brenda Sposato.

Here is a toast to Colonel Marty Zickert. Think of your favorite dog. He shared many of those favorite attributes. (A couple of those aggravations were there too!) But life is clearly a better place for having shared the journey with them by our side.

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

Marcia Adache's Birthday

Marcia Adache
Linda Barberi
Shelly Ferger
Edna Hitzel
Linda Reeve

Kathy Allston's Birthday

Marcia Adache
Linda Barberi
Shelly Ferger
Edna Hitzel
Linda Reeve

Heidi Bates' Birthday

Marcia Adache
Jennifer Ano
Linda Barberi
Shelly Ferger
Edna Hitzel
Linda Reeve

Laura Bonney's Birthday

Marcia Adache
Linda Barberi
Shelly Ferger
Edna Hitzel
Linda Reeve

Sally Bricker's Birthday

Marcia Adache
Linda Barberi
Shelly Ferger
Edna Hitzel
Linda Reeve

Chris Consi's Birthday

Marcia Adache
Linda Barberi
Shelly Ferger
Edna Hitzel
Linda Reeve

Michelle Dale's Birthday

Marcia Adache
Linda Barberi
Shelly Ferger
Edna Hitzel
Linda Reeve

"Rosie" Defren's Birthday

Marcia Adache
Linda Barberi
Shelly Ferger
Edna Hitzel
Linda Reeve

Steve Defren's Birthday

Marcia Adache
Linda Barberi
Shelly Ferger
Edna Hitzel
Linda Reeve

Shelly Ferger's Birthday

Marcia Adache
Linda Barberi
Steve Defren
Edna Hitnel
Linda Reeve

Nancy Kicherer's Birthday

Marcia Adache
Linda Barberi
Shelly Ferger
Edna Hitzel
Linda Reeve

Cheryl Marshall's Birthday

Marcia Adache
Linda Barberi
Shelly Ferger
Edna Hitzel
Linda Reeve

Kathi Schumann's Birthday

Shelly Ferger
Virginia Toddy McKeown
John & Kim Schumann
Gene & Martha Schumann

**Kathi Schumann for
Mother's Day**
Gene & Martha Schumann

In Memory Of

Cheryl Boli
Alexandra Nuttall

Sherrilyn Davidson
Selden Illick
George Spiel

Katie Nesheim Moke
Linda Barberi

Robert Saucerman
Frank and Shirley Roscoe

Barbara & Steve Vladyka
Chris and Robert Perkins

Russell R. Wimberly II
Patrick and Laura Hopkins
Kenny and Julie Stone



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SAVE THE DATE

Military Themed Golden Oldies Dance & Show

3rd Annual Patriots For Puppies



Saturday, February 3, 2024 ★ 5:30 - 9 PM

Pointe West Country Club ★ 7500 14th Lane, Vero Beach

Dancing ★ Live Music ★ Food ★ Silent Auction ★ 50/50 Raffle

A Fundraiser To Benefit Dogs For Life Programs

- ★ Service Dog Training
- ★ Veterans Training Veterans PAWS Act Program
- ★ Service Dogs For Veterans
- ★ Veteran PTSD Recovery & Support Group
- ★ Female Veterans & First Responders Support Group
- ★ Pet Therapy Dog Program - VBPD/IRCSO
- ★ School Therapy Dog Program - IRCSO
- ★ Puppy Raising Program
- ★ Off-Leash Dog Park



For additional information or to sponsor this event contact Shelly Ferger, Founder and CEO
office@dogsforlifevb.org • 772-567-8969 • www.dogsforlifevb.org

