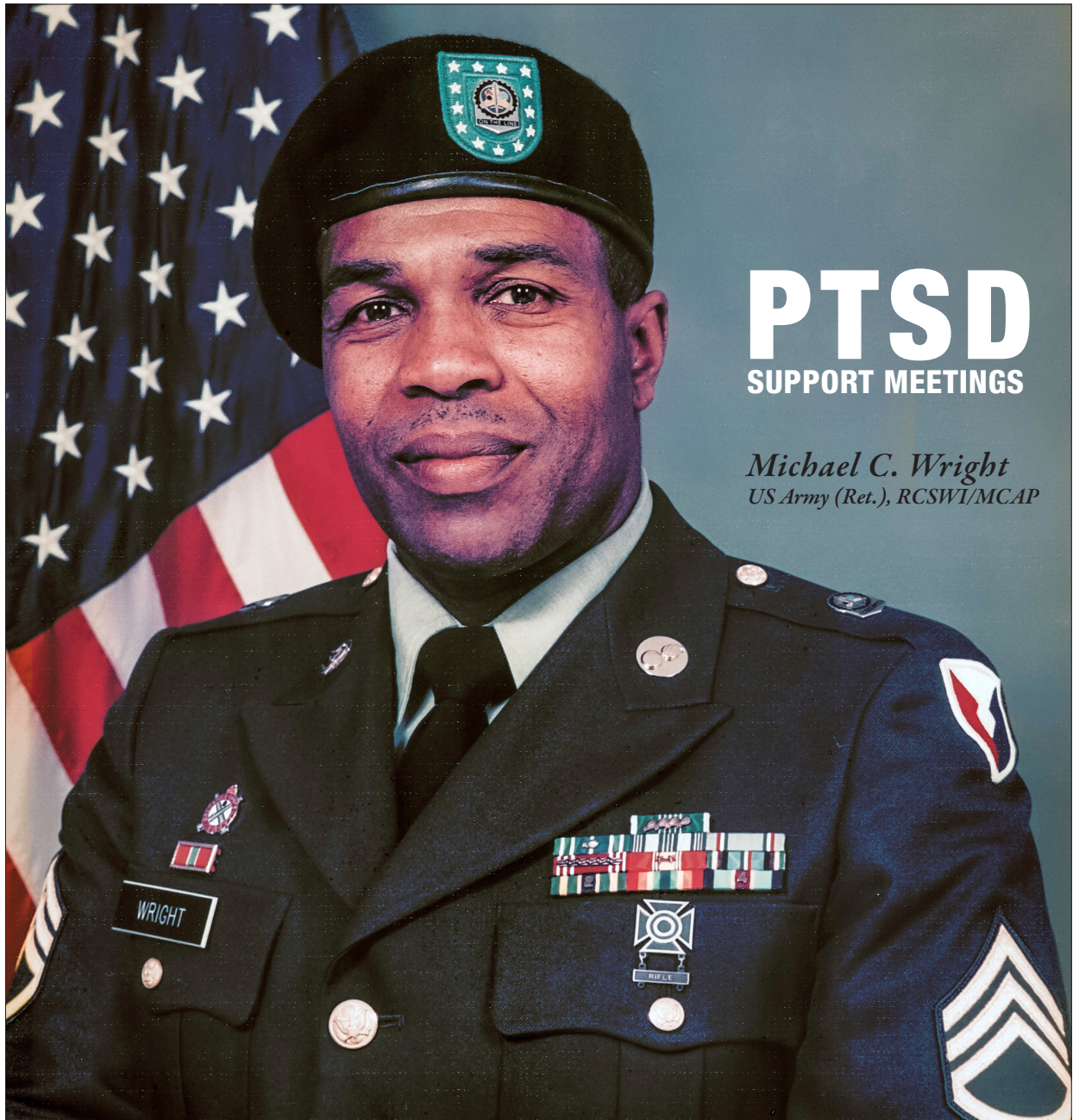


# News PRINTS

Vol. XIX / Issue 1 / Spring 2020



## PTSD SUPPORT MEETINGS

*Michael C. Wright*  
US Army (Ret.), RCSWI/MCAP

**(Above)** Michael C. Wright, retired Army Veteran, Master Certified Addiction Professional and ordained chaplain. Vietnam era veteran; participated in two active campaigns during his career, Desert Storm and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) Meetings Held at DFL Campus.

- GRADUATION 8** Eight Service and Hearing Dog Teams to Graduate at DFL Training Center
- MENTAL HEALTH 10** A Personal Narrative by Michael C. Wright, US Army (Ret.), RCSWI/MCAP
- THEN & NOW 18** 96-year-old WWII Veteran Enjoys 'Talk Session' at Dogs For Life

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NEWSPRINTS

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15 **Sponsorship.** Bridge Tournament update ... Veterans Won!

## Save the Date! 20th Annual Howl-O-Ween Pawrade & Pet Expo October 24, 2020



Dogs For Life's 20th annual Howl-O-Ween Dog Pawrade and Pet Expo will be held October 24, 2020.

Save the date as this year's event is going to be **bigger and better** and you won't want to miss it!

Vendors are invited to contact DFL to secure a spot now by calling 772-567-8969 or emailing Shelly Ferger at office@dogsforlifevb.org.

## From the President

I have served on the Board of Directors for Dogs For Life, Inc. since 1999. My tenure started as a founding member of the Off-Leash Dog Park; then as president, vice president and director of the board, and now in 2020, I'll again serve as president of the board.

I doubled down on Dogs For Life as my charity of choice in 2012, when I chaired the first Bridge Tournament for this wonderful non-profit organization. Since then, the now annual tournament has grown to over 120 players and has raised over \$20,000 each year, for the past three years with the help of Kathi G. Schumann, co-chair of the silent auction and past president of the board.

I can tell you firsthand what a service dog means to its partner because I've had two trained service dogs.



(Above) President Eleanor M. Bengyak with her Service Dog Rufus

Mitzi, my English Springer Spaniel, was my first service dog trained to tap a 911 K-9 emergency phone for my late husband Victor. And now my service dog Rufus, a Golden Retriever, has been trained to pick up things I drop, helps me to balance and accompanies me everywhere.

Indian River County is very lucky to have Dogs For Life and its fine service dog training program right here in our back yard. DFL is only one of five organizations in Florida accredited by Assistance Dogs International and upholds the highest standards of training for service and hearing dogs.

I am proud to continue being on the board at DFL and proud to be in a position to serve our disabled military veterans who have served our country and continue to show their bravery to train their service dogs. □

## Founder and CEO

My goodness, how we have grown!

I stand in awe as many of you may when I see how Dogs For Life and our programs have grown. Each day at the Training Center brings more growth challenges, but just as many rewards.

On any given day you'll hear the telephones ringing or witness people coming to the office making inquiries, and foster families dropping off puppies in the morning and picking them up with their supplies in the afternoon. And while phones are being answered and people are being assisted, and pups are taken into the park for socializing and exercise, staff and volunteers are completing one project and then moving to the next.

These are just some of the activities that our donors may not see.

Another daily experience I have is Veterans passing my office going to and from training classes, saying hello and

expressing their gratitude for your support. Not only do they ask over and over what they can do for DFL, they ask what they can do to help other veterans. The answer has resulted in the creation of the DFL Veterans Training Veterans Program and the PTSD Support Group Meetings.

I want you to know about these daily experiences so that you realize how your support is helping our military veterans and your neighbors and friends with disabilities right here in this community.

As you enjoy this issue of NewsPRINTS, know the time and effort put into each column, interview and event is filled with passion, excitement, gratitude and love. Love for our heroes, our military, our sponsors, our dogs and our capable clients.

We could not enjoy the product of this charity's mission without your unfailing support. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for being either a new donor, a reoccurring donor, a Legacy donor, a Corporate donor or a daily volunteer.

All these avenues come together and create a fast lane. A fast lane that at the end of the road saves a life, one after another and lets you know that you are making a difference in the lives of our veterans and our dogs, the true miracle workers. □

*"As you enjoy this issue of NewsPRINTS, know the time and effort put into each column, interview and event is filled with passion, excitement, gratitude and love."*



(Right) Founder & CEO Shelly Ferger with Service Dog St. Cloud

## DFL Welcomes New Board Members

**D**ogs For Life welcomed four new members to its Board of Directors in January 2020. These new members are Eddie Boatwright, Suzie Gomez, Dr. Nancy Kicherer and Earl Tindol.

### Eddie Boatwright

Eddie Boatwright, a founding member of the DFL Off-Leash Dog Park, has volunteered his time and talents since 2006. He and his wife, Gail, have volunteered with Airedale Rescue for many years and donated the Memorial Pavilion at the DFL Dog Park in dedication to their beloved Rusty in 2009. Eddie will chair the Dog Park Committee and oversee maintenance projects on the property. "We are grateful to finally have Eddie on our Board," said DFL CEO Shelly Ferger.

### Suzie Gomez

Jeff and Suzie Gomez, owners of Coast to Coast Companies, began maintaining the DFL property in 2006. They submitted the lowest bid and have not raised the price in 14 years. During this time, Suzie Gomez has donated her landscaping talents to many fundraising events and the Transition Training House. Suzie has served on the DFL Corporate Committee since 2018 and now co-chairs this committee with DFL Treasurer Kim Prado.

### Dr. Nancy Kicherer

Dr. Nancy Kicherer of VCA-Florida Vet League, has joined the DFL Board of Directors as a veterinary and behavior consultant. Dr. Nancy is overseeing the health of DFL's Foster Dog & Puppy Program. From adolescent puppies to adult dogs, each of DFL's service dogs have individual needs. "We are grateful to have Dr. Nancy on board not only for the physical health of our dogs but also their emotional health," said Ferger.

### Earl Tindol, US Army

Earl Tindol, US Army, brought Arrow, his Golden Retriever, to DFL for service dog training last year. It didn't take long for the DFL staff to recognize talent and soon asked Tindol if he would serve on the Board of Directors. "Earl's experience in business and fundraising is sure to benefit the Visioning Committee for our small, non-profit organization as we plan for our future," said Ferger.



Eddie Boatwright with Sassy, his 12-year-old Airedale.



Suzie Gomez with Prince, her 2-year-old Pomeranian.



Dr. Nancy Kicherer with Bentley, a 2-year-old Goldendoodle.



Earl Tindol (US Army) and Arrow, his 4-year-old Golden Retriever.

*Jim Romanek*  
Executive Director of Veterans Council of Indian River County

## Veterans Council's Services Continue to Grow

**T**he Veterans Council of Indian River County was established in 1987 with an initial focus on providing transportation for veterans to the West Palm Beach VA Hospital, and hosting Memorial Day and Veterans Day ceremonies honoring veterans through the collaborative effort of veteran organizations, civic associations and the local community.

During the past few years, the Veterans Council's focus of Indian River County has grown significantly. It now is affiliated with 25 member veteran organizations and over 45 non-veteran civic, government and business entities. The Veterans Council has become the leading agency in Indian River County providing veteran support and resources. To date, the Council provides various programs and resources for veterans including Upward American Veterans, Veterans Helping Veterans, Vets in the Classroom, Veterans Outreach, Food for Vets, a partnership with Indian River State College to provide scholarships for dependents of veterans, the VA Hospital Bus and mental health and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder services. For more information, contact the Veterans Council of Indian River County at 772-410-5820, online at [www.veteranscouncilirc.club](http://www.veteranscouncilirc.club) or on Facebook, search Veterans Council of Indian River County. □



(Above) Jim Romanek, Executive Director of Veterans Council of Indian River County, with Savannah.

## Still Serving: Veterans' oaths have no expiration date

**W**hen you see a veteran, you see a person who during a special moment in their life willingly raised their right hand and swore an oath to support and defend this country.

This oath has no expiration date. A veteran's desire to serve others, selflessly and with their own life, never wanes. This is why Next Generation Veterans of Indian River County was formed.

Comprised of men and women from all U.S. Armed Forces who served honorably from 1990 to present, NGVIRC has been doing its part to serve not only fellow veterans, but also the community at large. Formed in 2016, NGVIRC is a social group whose mission is to provide a venue for camaraderie, assistance and support for Indian River County veterans.

In addition to social events, meet ups and activities, NGVIRC has launched an effort to build a monument honoring those who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. The monument will be placed near Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary at Riverside Park in Vero Beach. Fundraising efforts are ongoing.

To also further support the veterans of these conflicts, NGVIRC has implemented a support group for those experiencing post-traumatic stress. This is a growing effort to stamp out the stigma associated with this disorder and to help bring an end to veteran suicide.

There are two PTSD Support Group meetings. The meeting for veterans only is at 7 p.m. every Monday at Dogs For Life, 1230 16th Ave., Vero Beach. The meeting for veterans and non-veterans is at 11 a.m. every Saturday, also at Dogs For Life.

NGVIRC is always open and welcoming to new members. General membership meetings are at 6 p.m. the second Wednesday of every month at the American Legion Post, 1535 Old Dixie Highway, Vero Beach. For more information, contact NGVIRC New Member Outreach at [ngvirc@gmail.com](mailto:ngvirc@gmail.com), or call 772-999-6401.

NGVIRC offers thanks for the love and ongoing support of Dogs For Life. □



(Above) Telly Antona, Mental Health Coordinator with Next Generation Veterans of Indian River County, and Lila, an 8-year-old Labrador Retriever Mix.

# American Gold Star Mothers

## Supports Local Veteran Organizations

Michelle Dale, president of the American Gold Star Mothers, Indian River County Chapter, recently presented checks totaling \$30,000 to three organizations serving local veteran communities, representing funds raised at the 2019 Walk-A-Thon for Military Suicide Awareness.

Accepting the donations on Jan. 8, 2020, were Jason Patzer, Commander of Next Generation Veterans of Indian River County; Dr. Nick Coppola, CEO of the Mental Health Association of Indian River County, and Kathi G. Schumann, board member and past president with Dogs For Life.

Michelle Dale founded the Indian River County chapter of American Gold Star Mothers, which received its charter from National American Gold Star Mothers President Becky Christmas on Feb. 19, 2019.

In 2019, all chapters were challenged to partner with local organizations to bring awareness to the national crisis of military suicide. It was hoped that by working with grassroots agencies that provide services to veterans, including counseling, therapy and service dogs, Gold Star Mothers and their partners could reduce, and hopefully one day eradicate, the 22 veteran and service member suicides per day.

Michelle Dale and other local Gold Star Mothers made it their mission to increase awareness to this national crisis by organizing the 2019 Walk-A-Thon for Military Suicide Awareness at Walking Tree Brewery in Vero Beach. The Nov. 16 Walk-A-Thon featured a 2-hour repeating 2K-lap walk to represent the 22 suicide deaths a day by military service members, often a result of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and other service-related conditions. □



(Above) Kathi G. Schumann, Dogs For Life; Nick Coppola, Mental Health Association of Indian River County; Michelle Dale, American Gold Star Mothers Indian River County Chapter; Martin Zickert, Veterans Council of Indian River County and Jason Patzer, Next Generation Veterans of Indian River County.

### Michelle Dale and Dogs For Life

Michelle Dale, president of the Indian River County Chapter of American Gold Star Mothers, also is on the Board of Directors for Dogs For Life. In support of Dale and the 2019 Walk-A-Thon for Military Suicide Awareness, DFL CEO and Founder Shelly Ferger, Trainer Cassie Ford, and DFL volunteer service dog team Michael Stewart and Honey participated in the Nov. 16 event at Walking Tree Brewery in Vero Beach. Also on hand receiving lots of love and attention were Jasper and Savannah, the two newest DFL service puppies in training. □



(Above) Michelle Dale and other local Gold Star Mothers starting the 2019 Walk-A-Thon for Military Suicide Awareness at Walking Tree Brewery in Vero Beach.

# PTSD Support Group Meetings

## Flourish

*thanks to veterans, volunteers, health professionals*

When a PTSD Committee comes together, the members come together big time!

PTSD Support Group meetings are now occurring three times a week at the Dogs For Life Training Center in Vero Beach. This new program has come together almost effortlessly because of a dynamic group of people dedicated to helping veterans diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

What started out as a goal of the Next Generation Veterans of Indian River County is now a reality.

Telly Antona, Mental Health Coordinator of Next Generation Veterans, spearheaded the PTSD Support Group meetings at DFL after DFL President Kathi G. Schumann sponsored a "What Is PTSD?" panel organized by Brett G. Hall, LCSW, MBA, Executive Director of the Mental Health Collaborative of Indian River County.

Thomas R. Metzinger, LCSW, CCHt, therapist and owner

of Progressive Mind Center and a U.S. Marine veteran, served on the panel and immediately volunteered his services to facilitate the PTSD Support Group for Veterans on Monday nights. He shares this group with facilitator Michael Wright, RSCWI/MCAP, U.S. Army veteran, who also facilitates the Saturday support group for veterans, non-veterans and families.

Members, supporters and facilitators of these groups plan to come together again to present a dynamic speaker who will outline an Instructors Course from The Combat Trauma Healing Manual.

Other committee members Chuck Gerrald, DFL Directors Perry J. Martin, and Michelle Dale, President of American Gold Star Mothers of Indian River County and the Executive Director of the Veteran's Council of Indian River County Jim Romanek are all committed to supporting the PTSD Support Groups.

We salute you! □

### PTSD Support Group Meetings

- PTSD Support Group for Veterans meets at 7 p.m. every Monday at Dogs For Life Training Center, 1230 16<sup>th</sup> Ave., Vero Beach.
- PTSD Support Group for families meets at 9:30 a.m. each Saturday; and for veterans and non-veterans meets at 11 a.m. each Saturday at Dogs For Life Training Center, 1230 16<sup>th</sup> Ave., Vero Beach.
- For more information, call 772-567-8969 or 772-999-6401; email [office@dogsforlifevb.org](mailto:office@dogsforlifevb.org) or [ngvir@gmail.com](mailto:ngvir@gmail.com).



## Eight Service and Hearing Dog Teams to Graduate April 4th

Dogs For Life will graduate eight service and hearing dog teams during a ceremony April 4 at the annual Donor & Volunteer Appreciation BBQ at the DFL Training Facility in Vero Beach.

“Four of the graduating service dogs have been trained by their owners who are local veterans and became disabled protecting our nation’s freedoms,” said DFL CEO Shelly Ferger.

Each of the graduates have completed the required six months to one-year of training.

DFL Lead Trainer Cassie Ford will present each team with a service dog vest adorned with a DFL service dog logo and “don’t pet me” patches. Each also will receive a DFL certified service or hearing dog ID card and a certificate of certification.

The DFL Donor and Volunteer Appreciation BBQ is underwritten by DFL Director Kathi G. Schumann. □



Lauren Carr and Cocoa



Jessica Jacobs and Honey



Tammie Mandeville and Poppy



Kimberley Mann-Day (US Navy) and Elvis



Elizabeth McGoldrick and Oliver



Howard Rizio (US Marines) and St. Cloud



Earl Tindol (US Army) and Arrow



Claude Vitali (US Marines) and Beebe

### Service Dog Team Graduates

**Lauren Carr and Cocoa**

5-year-old Havanese

**Jessica Jacobs and Honey**

2-year-old Golden Retriever

**Tammie Mandeville and Poppy**

1.5-year-old Goldendoodle

**Kimberley Mann-Day (US Navy) and Elvis**

2.5-year-old Blue Heeler

**Elizabeth McGoldrick and Oliver**

2-year-old Cavapoo

**Howard Rizio, (US Marines) and St. Cloud**

2-year-old Golden Retriever

**Earl Tindol, (US Army) and Arrow**

4-year-old Golden Retriever

**Claude Vitali, (US Marines) and Beebe**

2-year-old Golden Retriever

### 2019 Donor & Volunteer Appreciation Awards

**Kathi G. Schumann Award**

Beth Stryker

**Military Veteran Volunteer Trainer of the Year**

Bob Cheshire (US Navy)

**Military Veteran Volunteer of the Year**

Steve Defren (US Army)

**Volunteer Trainer of the Year**

Harry Taylor

Joe Taylor

**Volunteer of the Year**

Linda Barberi

Sue Bergmann

Sally Dunn

Laurie Iodice

**Foster Dog Family Award**

Dave Kolesnik and Family

**Individual Philanthropist Award**

Robert G. Bowman

Kathi G. Schumann

**Corporate Philanthropist Award**

Dyer Auto

Coast To Coast, a Juniper Company

## Dogs For Life working to maintain ADI standards

by Cassie Ford, DFL Lead Trainer

Assistance Dogs International sets the standards for the service dog industry across the world.

Dogs For Life was first accredited by ADI in 2010, and has held up those standards for the past 10 years. DFL’s re-accreditation is due again this year and while carrying an ADI accreditation is a huge honor, it’s also a lot of work for the organization.

ADI will evaluate Dogs For Life in various areas and aspects, such as how DFL operates in practice and on paper, the training criteria for clients and dogs, ethical treatment of all involved, and compliance with all legal regulations.

ADI also will send a representative to the DFL training center this year to ensure the training staff meets ADI operational standards, including the care and training of dogs and the safety and cleanliness of the facility. ADI also will interview staff, board directors, clients and volunteers.

People with service dogs need to trust that their dogs are trained to the highest standards as they depend on them to maintain their health and safety. These dogs and the people training them must meet exceptional criteria to uphold ADI’s standards. □



(Above) Cassie Ford, DFL Lead Trainer, with Service Dog Rufus

### Service Dogs In Flight

As the world slowly adapts to the ever-growing service dog industry, transportation services must keep up.

Airlines have recently seen an increase in emotional support animals being brought on board planes and these animals don’t require any training, which can result in some bad situations. As noted in a notice of proposed rulemaking from the U.S. Department of Transportation, 3,065 service animal complaints were received by U.S. and foreign airlines directly from passengers in 2018, a dramatic increase from the 719 complaints received 5 years previously in 2013.

Airlines have struggled for years on how to manage emotional support animals, “fake” service dogs and to avoid incidents on airplanes where people and dogs are in close quarters for long periods of time.

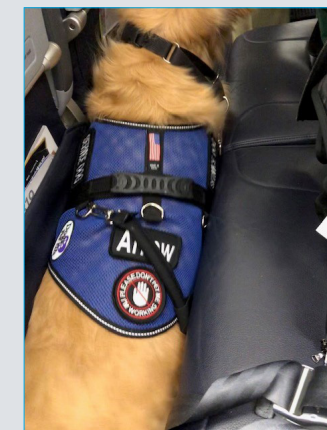
The Air Carrier Access Act, enacted in 1986, is currently being scrutinized to make changes that would limit animals on planes, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation. Instead of airlines being required to allow emotional support peacocks, hamsters and wallabies on aircrafts, only dogs that are obedience and task-trained to mitigate their handlers’ specific disabilities would be welcome on board.

Dogs For Life’s certified service dogs are trained to go into tight spaces, including under seats. Teams try to coordinate with airlines to make sure their dogs will have more space, like sitting in the bulkhead.

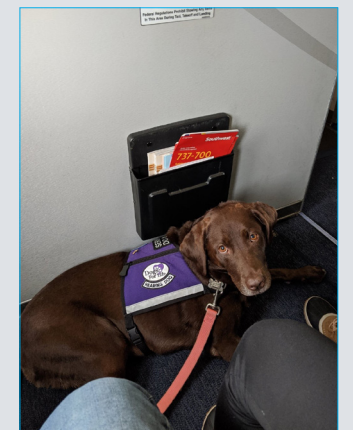
As shown to the right, it doesn’t always work out that way and the dogs have to prove their abilities to fit into the smallest of spaces.

Pictures show Dogs For Life certified teams that have taken flight in the past year.

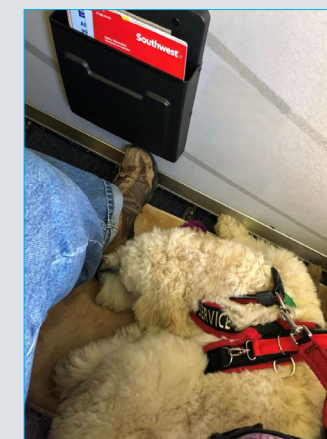
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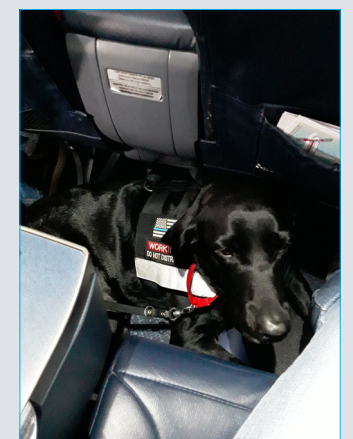
Service Dog Arrow



Hearing Dog Coco



Service Dog Poppy



Service Dog Ranger

Michael C. Wright  
US Army (Ret.), RCSWI/MCAP

# A Personal Narrative



**So the problem was PTSD wasn't diagnosed as such back in the late '60s going into the '70s on and so forth mid-'80s. They had to deal with it the best they could, which they tried to do. But what did they do? It was heroin. It was marijuana. It was a lot of things; it was lashing out at the wife. It was pretty much destroying their families. Not that they wanted to do that but they didn't understand themselves and a host of other things."**

**(Right)** Michael C. Wright at Panera Bread explaining PTSD and how to get help.

and he detailed what the organization did and how it helped vets struggling with symptoms of PTSD. I told him I do that every day in my professional career as a psychotherapist. One thing led to another and that is when a connection was made through the Mental Health Collaborative at Dogs For Life. I was invited to serve on a PTSD Panel last year, which eventually segued into my facilitating PTSD Support Group meetings at the organization.

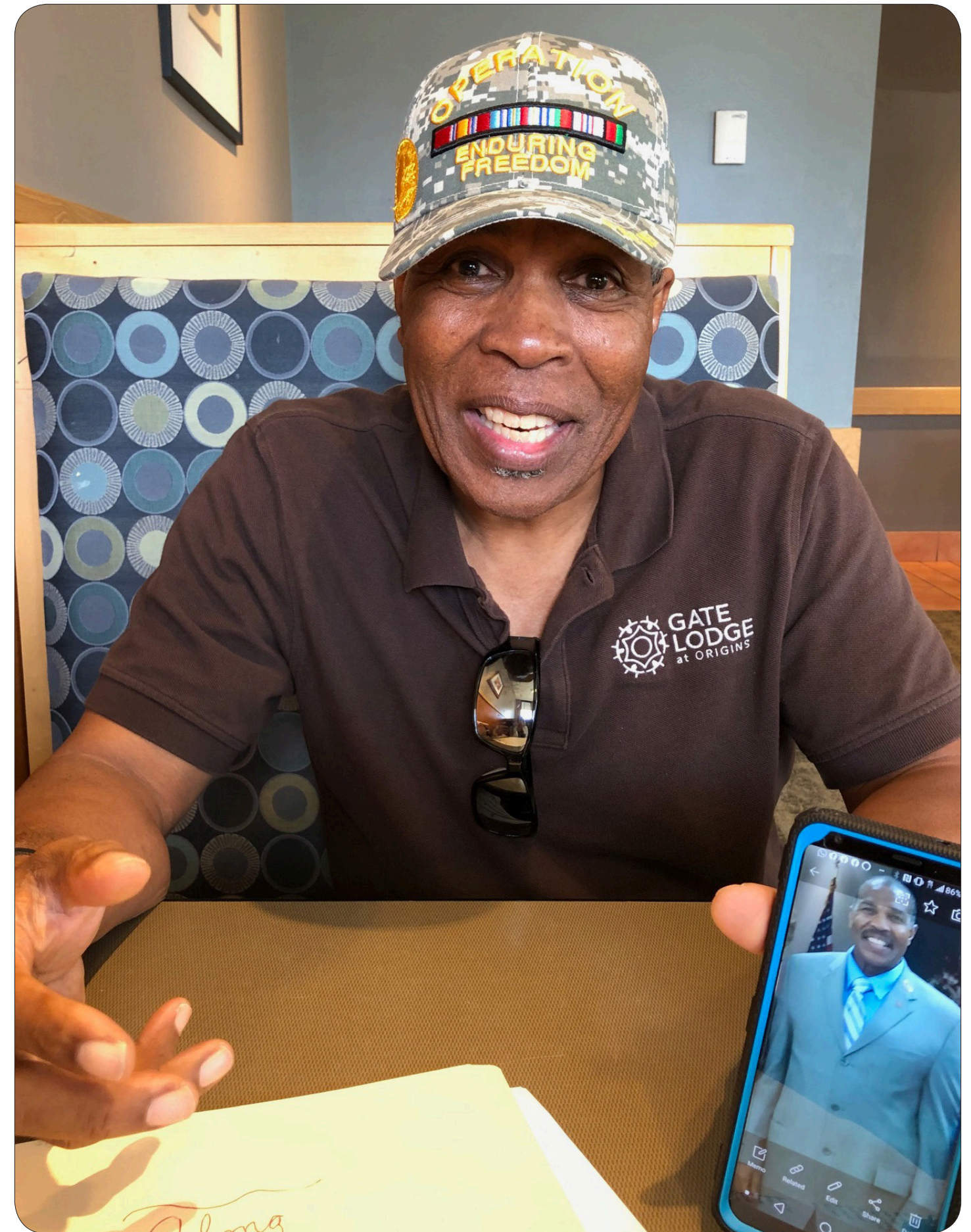
I am a state registered social worker intern, (RCSWI, moving to LCSW this year), master certified addiction professional (MCAP), ordained chaplain and retired Army veteran. I am a Vietnam era veteran (1973-1977), and participated in two active campaigns during my career: Desert Storm (1990-1992) and Operation Enduring Freedom (2002-2003), which is when I retired.

I was asked to write and share a brief narrative of myself, my

To the fine organization called "Dogs For Life," I would like to salute them for having the best interest at heart for veterans and non-veterans alike. The help that these service dogs render to veterans and others probably will never be known in terms of emotional release and comfort, which so many of them need, especially those suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress, Traumatic Brain Injury and other assorted ailments.

My name is Michael C. Wright and I consider it an undeserved privilege to be able to introduce to the public at-large of Vero Beach and its surrounding areas how I became involved with Dogs For Life.

Simply put, exercising at "O-dark thirty," as we say in the military, I happened to run into Perry Martin with his service dog



professional involvement with Dogs For Life and what motivates me to do what I do. I suppose that if I'm limited in time and space, the best way to do this is by way of a couple of personal illustrations drawn from my memories.

As a young enlisted man in the Air Force in the 1970s, I was stationed, among other places, at Hickam Air Force Base in Hawaii. An opportunity arose to be a sponsor to less fortunate children around the world. I always wanted a daughter, but not the way my friends were doing it at the time. So, I joined Foster Parents International (now PLAN) out of Rhode Island and began sponsoring children anywhere from age 5 and stayed with them until they "aged out" of the program at age 18.

I'm proud to say that I have never left that agency to this day, because people always need a lending hand. I learned from my parents to always have concern and compassion about others and to remember that as bad as a situation seems, there are always others who suffer worse than we do. Although I didn't fully understand it then, I guess that admonition stayed with me throughout my military career and indeed, my life.

Fast forward to the '80s and in the Army now, as we were returning from training exercises in Fort Stewart, Georgia, one of my soldiers (of Chinese descent) was apparently bothered about something and started arguing and cursing in his native language. (I and the buck sergeant with me could tell that what he was saying was probably not good based on his demeanor and the finger signs he pointed toward us.) and he suddenly pulled a knife out on me. Quick as a flash, my squad leader (E-5) and I jumped on him and pinned him down, grabbed the knife from him and made him calm down.

Now understand that where this happened was a somewhat isolated place, but near garrison. I had a decision to make, as I knew it was an Article 15 offense or worse, if I took it there. "Sarge, you gotta' slam him for this ... you can't let him get away with this type of behavior just because he's pissed off about something ..."

I knew he was right but what he didn't know was that I had never observed this soldier to be like this before and obviously something was bothering him, but we didn't know what. Believe me, we had roughed him up pretty good, but I decided to delve deeper and see what was really going on with him. Later, when he got hold of his senses, he apologized and explained that he felt isolated, was under financial pressures, had no one he felt he could talk to and suffered from sporadic mood swings.



I suspected that he might need a mental evaluation or intervention, but for the time being, he needed help. I couldn't give him money or anything like that, but he mentioned that if he could just get a truck and move his things out of his apartment, it would help him out greatly. He had tried with his fellow soldiers of his same rank to no avail. I had at least 10 other soldiers to worry about at the time, but I decided to let him use my personal truck to get the job done.

Mind you, I had no idea if he would smash it against a wall or even come back with it, but he had the day off to accomplish his task. He looked shocked that I would even do him this favor and I remember him looking back at me a few times as he walked toward my Dodge Dakota.

As the day was winding down and we headed from the motor pool to the office, this soldier pulled up. After Taps, he approached me, put the keys in my hands and with tears in his eyes, he said: "Thank you sergeant. I'm sorry I acted that way and I know I got a 15 coming my way, but thanks just the same. You took a burden off my shoulder."

The A-15 never came and up until the time that he finished his enlistment, he never gave me or anyone else a problem and was one of my best soldiers. (He was diagnosed bipolar later on, I learned.) That is when I knew that I had a kind of "calling" if you will to be of service

to others, especially servicemen and women who needed someone to "delve deeper" into what is ailing them. That is why I went to graduate school and trained for the current profession I am in. I feel like when we can give of ourselves to others, we gain so much more.

I have seen this as an Airman, a soldier, a social worker and a chaplain and those experiences lead me to believe that though people suffer from mental health issues, diseases, addictions and phobias, that does define who they are, it's just a part of their human tapestry and in that sense, I feel we can be of service in some way, shape or form.

As a psychotherapist, I often hear my clients say that they feel more comfortable with people who have "been through the experience" and not just "book smart" professionals. I understand what they mean, but point out that the doctor who operates on them if they have cancer, may not have cancer himself, but I'm sure they appreciate the knowledge he or she has in the operating room. They usually agree with that analogy.

But to that end, I have had an insidious addiction, for which I wrote my autobiography -- "The Sin Which Doth Easily Beset Us," available on Amazon.com or any electronic outlet -- and shared my shame, defeat and eventual victory over this addiction. Although not liquor, heroin or crack, it was just as (if not more) devastating and almost ruined my marriage, ministry and everything I held of value. That's what addictions do, which is why I feel "called" to serve in some small way to those in need.

Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Coast Guard men and women often present their best face in public view, but afterward feel as though they have very few people who can relate to what they're feeling at the time. Thus, they may seek comfort and release in activities, which left unchecked, can be detrimental to them. I have seen this in real time in my professional capacity.

It is not that they cannot function, because most humans in general, are good at compartmentalizing in order to carry on with the activities of daily living. "Suck it up and drive on soldier!" is a phrase most military people are familiar with and no doubt many civilians. It is that after carrying the emotional trauma and burden internally for so long, some choose psychotropic solutions as a means of alleviating their "pain." Others isolate, distancing themselves from those who care, and still others, choose death.

If God grants me the grace, I will do all in my power to prevent that from happening to vets, or anyone for that matter. □

## WHAT IS POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER?

Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that's triggered by a terrifying event, such as a natural disaster, serious accident, terrorist act, war or combat, by either experiencing it or witnessing it. Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares and severe anxiety, as well as uncontrollable thoughts about the event.

Most people who go through traumatic events may have temporary difficulty adjusting and coping, but with time and good self-care, they usually get better. If the symptoms get worse, last for months or even years, and interfere with day-to-day functioning, you may have PTSD.

PTSD has been known by many names in the past. During World War I, it was called "shell shock" and after World War II, it was known as "combat fatigue." But PTSD does not just happen to combat veterans. PTSD can occur in all people.

Getting effective treatment after PTSD symptoms develop can be critical to reduce symptoms and improve function, according to the Mayo Clinic.

### SYMPTOMS

PTSD symptoms are generally grouped into four types: intrusive memories, avoidance, negative changes in thinking and mood, and changes in physical and emotional reactions. Symptoms can vary over time or vary from person to person.

#### Intrusive memories may include:

- Recurrent, unwanted distressing memories of the traumatic event
- Reliving the traumatic event as if it were happening again (flashbacks)
- Upsetting dreams or nightmares about the traumatic event
- Severe emotional distress or physical reactions to something that reminds you of the traumatic event

#### Avoidance may include:

- Trying to avoid thinking or talking about the traumatic event
- Avoiding places, activities or people that remind you of the traumatic event

#### Negative changes in thinking and mood may include:

- Negative thoughts about yourself, other people or the world
- Hopelessness about the future
- Memory problems, including not remembering important aspects of the traumatic event
- Difficulty maintaining close relationships
- Feeling detached from family and friends
- Lack of interest in activities you once enjoyed
- Difficulty experiencing positive emotions
- Feeling emotionally numb

#### Changes in physical and emotional reactions may include:

- Being easily startled or frightened
- Always being on guard for danger
- Self-destructive behavior, such as drinking too much or driving too fast
- Trouble sleeping
- Trouble concentrating
- Irritability, angry outbursts or aggressive behavior
- Overwhelming guilt or shame

#### For children 6 years old and younger, signs and symptoms may also include:

- Re-enacting the traumatic event or aspects of the traumatic event through play
- Frightening dreams that may or may not include aspects of the traumatic event

### WHEN TO SEE A DOCTOR

If you have disturbing thoughts and feelings about a traumatic event for more than a month, if they're severe, or if you feel you're having trouble getting your life back under control, talk to a doctor or a mental health professional. Getting treatment as soon as possible can help prevent PTSD symptoms from getting worse.

If feeling suicidal, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.

# 2019

Sponsorship

## Ho! Ho! Woof!

### Dogs For Life celebrates holidays

Dogs For Life wrapped up 2019 with three events where staff, members, volunteers and donors celebrated the successful year and looked forward to 2020.

On Dec. 8, Dogs For Life held its annual Christmas Luncheon at Pointe West Country Club, which was attended by 81 DFL board members, staff, distinguished guests and service dog teams. With several dogs by their sides, supporters swapped stories while sitting at tables celebrating the Christmas season.

“Dogs For Life has so much to celebrate and be thankful for in 2019,” said DFL CEO Shelly Ferger. “But we also know that with over 2,600 veterans living with a disability in Indian River County, our mission to train service dogs for the disabled veteran community is more needed than ever.”

Under the direction of DFL Volunteer Veteran Trainer Richie Keller, packages were assembled and mailed overseas to our nation’s active military forces. As a Veteran, Richie knows what these men and women need when away from home and their loved ones. Each package is individually assembled lovingly by Richie and his band of volunteers.

On Dec. 11, DFL volunteer and US Army Veteran Kevin Rockwell -- dressed as Santa Claus -- dropped by the Dogs For Life Training facility to wish the DFL staff, Service Dog Teams and Dog Park members a very Merry Christmas.

It was fun for everyone to take a break from the serious business of service dog training and let “our good little girls and boys” sit on Santa’s lap, or next to him, and have their pictures taken with Jolly Ol’ St. Nick.

A special thanks to Lead Trainer Cassie Ford for organizing Santa’s visit. □



## Dog Park Members Sitting Pretty

Members visiting the Dogs For Life Off-Leash Dog Park can sit comfortably now while watching their dogs play, thanks to new chairs recently bought for the park.

Several members donated money to buy the chairs, but their generosity exceeded the cost so the funds that remained went toward scheduled fence repairs.

Dog Park members also are encouraged to say hello to new Dog Park Ambassador Laurie Iodice, who is known as the “Cat Lady.” Iodice has attended the DFL Veterans Training Veterans Program workshop, the Trainers Workshop, participated in service dog training and has completed the Dog Park Ambassador workshop.



“It seems the Cat Lady has found her niche,” said DFL CEO Shelly Ferger. “Please help our Dog Park Ambassadors feel welcome as they try to help new and existing members become acquainted with each other, and explain dog park behavior when necessary.”

“More volunteers are being trained,” said Ferger, “and under the watchful eye of Dog Park Committee Chairman Eddie Boatwright, who also recently joined the Board of Directors, more maintenance projects will be under way to help keep the park in good shape.” □

# 2020

Sponsorship

## Bid, Play... Veterans Won!

by Katherine Bauman, Assistant Editor

The annual Bridge Tournament benefiting Dogs For Life is truly a family affair.

The popular fundraising event was created by Eleanor Bengyak. Her granddaughter Sharon Caudill and Sharon’s step-mother Betty McCalister volunteer their time each year to help make sure it runs smoothly.

“Eleanor wasn’t able to attend this year’s tournament because she is recovering from health issues,” said Sharon, but Sharon and Betty were there making sure no cards or card players got lost in the shuffle.

Over 80 contract and party bridge players filled the tables set up in the dining room at the Vero Beach Country Club on Feb. 24, 2020. Norman Hinds volunteered as game director.

Hinds is a familiar face among Indian River County bridge players. He’s been a game director for over 20 years, and currently runs the Tuesday and Thursday games at the Vero Beach Community Center.

“Bridge is big here,” said Hinds. “The Vero Beach Bridge Club is the fifth largest in the country.”

Eleanor, an avid bridge player, longtime supporter of Dogs For Life and current president of the Board of Directors, started the tournament the year after her husband, Victor, died. Victor was a disabled veteran whose service dog Mitzi was trained at Dogs For Life. Eleanor now has Rufus, a DFL service dog trained to pick up dropped items and help with balance and stability issues.

Three veterans and their DFL service dogs attended the Bridge Tournament, sharing their experiences with the bridge players, a couple of whom also had service dogs.

“The tournament is always well attended,” said Sharon. “A lot of the same players return each year.”

Linda Barberi, playing Feb. 24 with friends Diane Schoenfelder, Margaret Parker and Mary June Schmidt,

stumbled upon the tournament last year during a visit to the Country Club. Linda said she enjoyed it so much she returned to play again this year.

But her commitment to Dogs For Life goes beyond the Bridge Tournament. In the past year she’s gotten involved with Dogs For Life as a volunteer, becoming the Volunteer Coordinator.

While it’s not a high-stakes game, the bridge players don’t walk away empty handed. Winners are awarded beautiful orchids, bragging rights and ACBL points. The tournament is a sanctioned charity game through the American Contract Bridge League.

But the charity that scores the most points is Dogs For Life. Between tournament fees and income from the silent auction, over \$30,000 was raised this year. Kathi G. Schumann, immediate past president of the board and current director, served as co-chair of the silent auction.

“All proceeds go to the organization (Dogs For Life), which uses the money to purchase dogs for veterans,” said Betty. “The dogs give them their lives back.” □



(Above) Ann Dillon and Pat Pritchard, First Overall winners receiving their prize orchids.



(Above) Beth Stryker and Marilyn Cance, First In Section winners receiving their prize orchids.



## DFL Welcomes \$1,000 Donation from Sebastian Exchange Club



**(Above)** DFL Board Treasurer Sebastian Exchange Club members Kim Prado, left, and Michael Natale, right, present a \$1,000 donation to Dogs For Life CEO Shelly Ferger and DFL volunteer Michael Stewart, with Honey, a DFL Service Dog. Prado is also a DFL board member. (Photo provided by the Sebastian Exchange Club)

The Sebastian Exchange Club recently donated \$1,000 to Dogs For Life to support DFL's on-going mission to train service dogs for the disabled in Indian River and St. Lucie counties.

Michael Natale, president of the Sebastian Exchange Club, presented the check to Shelly Ferger, founder and CEO of DFL, on Nov. 20, 2019, at a luncheon meeting at Capt. Hiram's Resort.

Sebastian Exchange Club member Kim Prado, a DFL board member and Regional Vice President of the National Exchange Club witnessed the presentation, along with DFL volunteer Michael Stewart and Honey, a DFL Service Dog.

During lunch, Ferger and Stewart talked to Sebastian Exchange Club members about Dogs For Life and how a trained service dog improves the quality of life for a disabled person.

With more than 18,000 members and 630 clubs nationwide, Exchange Club serves communities throughout the U.S. and Puerto Rico. Through its Americanism, Community Service and Youth Programs, Exchange Club members support activities that benefit youth, promote pride in country, and honor military and public service providers. □

## DFL Invited to Career Day at St. Helen Catholic School

St. Helen Catholic School invited Dogs For Life Service and Hearing Dog Teams to the school's Career Day on Jan. 28 in Vero Beach.

"Our teams were enthusiastic to present their service dogs to the children," said DFL CEO Shelly Ferger. "The children were as well behaved as our dogs!"

Ferger explained to the attentive students how disabilities are classified by law and how service dogs are trained to assist their owners with everyday tasks, such as picking up a dropped item and alerting them to the sounds of an alarm clock, telephone or smoke alarm.

"Each of our team members explained how they trained their service dogs in obedience and individual task work based on their disabilities," said Ferger.

DFL veterans also talked about how much their service dogs mean to them and have changed their lives by helping them address crowded situations and live more independently.

"Thank you, St. Helen School, for a day that was educational and enjoyable," said Ferger.

Career Day was held in the school's gymnasium. □



## Dogs For Life Visits Vero Beach Woman's Club

The Vero Beach Woman's Club awarded Dogs For Life ambassadors with a generous donation after a recent luncheon meeting with club members.

DFL CEO Shelly Ferger, Lead Trainer Cassie Ford, volunteer and client Barbara Gormas with her Goldendoodle Lola, and USMC veteran and client Richie Keller with his Golden Retriever GiGi visited the Woman's Club on Feb. 4, 2020.

Cassie brought Woman's Club members up to date on DFL's programs, while Barbara and Richie explained how clients train their own service dogs over a six-month to one-year period to reach full public access certification.

Club members showed great interest in the DFL mission and backed it up with a check.

"It's all in a day's work," said Shelly. □



**(Above)** Susan Heath, President of GFWC Vero Beach Woman's Club, DFL CEO & Director Shelly Ferger, DFL client Richie Keller with his service dog GiGi



## DFL Service Dogs Stand Out at TCKC

Veteran Service Dog teams, Bob Cheshire with Bo and Bill Moruzzi with Remi as well as DFL Lead Trainer, Cassie Ford represented Dogs For Life at a Treasure Coast Kennel Club meeting in February. The teams demonstrated what our service dogs are task trained to do and spoke with the members on DFL's need for foster families as our program grows. We hope to work closely with the TCKC while developing our Foster Dog Program in the coming months, allowing us to serve more veterans and non-veterans in our area. □

**(Right)** Jessica Nichols, President of the Treasure Coast Kennel Club, DFL Lead Trainer Cassie Ford, Veteran Service Dog teams, Bob Cheshire with Bo and Bill Moruzzi with Remi



by Kate Carroll

## 96-year-old Veteran Enjoys 'Talk Session' at Dogs For Life

I recently had the pleasure of accompanying my 96-year-old dad Clayton Chalfant to a "talk session" at the Dogs For Life facility in Vero Beach. You might wonder if this is a place where "good old dogs," like my Pop, hang out and shoot the breeze, but this is a place like none other I've seen.

It embraces veterans of all ages, including my Pop, who served in World War II in the First Army, Third Armored Division. He saw action in five battles, including Normandy and Battle of the Bulge.

Under the direction of Shelly Ferger, Dogs For Life houses one of the few programs devoted to improving the quality of life for veterans through the training of service dogs. Veterans with disabilities can receive, free of charge, a trained dog or learn how to train a dog they already own. In addition to being one of the very few Assistance Dogs International programs in the country, it also features a variety of services, including a four-acre, off-leash dog park and support groups for veterans suffering from trauma or other service-related conditions.

When we visited, my Dad was the highlight of the Friday talk group. As a WWII veteran, he was there to tell some stories, his stories. While that was the focus of the gathering, my Dad was immediately taken by the size of the group, which included Vietnam veterans, non-veterans, facility trainers and all their service dogs. In fact, the talk session also was a training session for the dogs, who practiced laying on the floor, aside their owners, ignoring all the other canines in the room. I was waiting for the canine cacophony to erupt, but the dogs were as respectful as the humans!

What struck me immediately was how the group showed my Dad such respect. I'm not sure how many of them had ever talked to a WWII comrade, but they gave Dad a reverent and warm welcome.

While not heard aloud, the heart of the room was beating in unison as my Dad shared his wartime experience at the Battle of the Bulge. Dad relied on my Mom and me for moments when he got sidetracked, but overall, he gave the group a good peek at his 19-year-old GI self in France and Germany.

As time passed, the conversation turned from Dad to others in attendance. Members of the group introduced their dogs and the service they provided to their owners. We met many different breeds who assist their owners suffering different disabilities. What a thrill it was when we got to see these amazing dogs and veterans in action.

One Vietnam vet, who suffered injuries that cost him his hearing and his balance, demonstrated how his dog, Coco, woke him up each morning. Coco responded to the alarm clock, jumped

on the bed and stirred him to rise. She also is trained to help him escape in emergencies, such as a fire.

Another demonstration illustrated how service dogs are trained to dial 911 on a special phone.

Gigi, a Golden Retriever, moved immediately to the phone when her owner instructed her to call 911. Gigi's owner also uses her for balance and support in stepping up and down on a curb, or, heaven forbid, to get up from a fall.

Service dogs Sassy, Ranger, Honey, Coco, Remington and Lola impressed us with opening doors, turning on light switches, picking up water bottles, wallets, and anything else their owners asked of them.

Dogs For Life training varies from breed to breed and the dogs undergo testing to see if they are coachable. The on-site trainers start training puppies in general obedience and then move on to more specific training for certain disabilities. Dogs For Life hopes to start its own breeding program so staff and trainers can ensure the best outcome for their puppies in training.

What stood out in this group was the amazing camaraderie and support for each other and for their service animals. It was obvious they had become a family. In fact, many of the veterans who have completed the program are volunteer/assistant trainers now just so they can still be part of the program. Studies reveal that treatment with service dogs for veterans suffering with PTSD is significantly higher than with medication or talk therapy.

For my final question, I asked how they make this all possible. Where do they get their funding? The answer: Private donations and the generosity of others!

Dogs For Life makes such an impact on the lives of our service men and women. With the average cost of training a client-owned dog estimated at about \$20,000 and higher, I encourage others who love animals and honor the valor of our brave veterans to visit this facility in Vero Beach, or more importantly to remember this program with generosity.

Visit Dogs For Life at [www.dogsforlife.org](http://www.dogsforlife.org) for details. □



(Above) Tech Corporal Clayton F. Chalfant served in the First Army, Third Armored Division in five battles, including Normandy, Battle of the Bulge, Central Europe, Rhineland and Germany, and his daughter Kate Carroll.

## In Memory of Good Girl



On Veterans Day 2019, Good Girl lost her life in a tragic event. Although her life and career were regrettably short, Good Girl fulfilled her mission as a Dogs For Life Service Dog.

Good Girl was a four-legged furry advocate for Dogs For Life's mission to train service dogs for the disabled. Good

Girl was an example of how a service dog should behave in public and she happily worked anywhere she was asked, from one-on-one discussions with clients to groups of 200-plus.

She was written about in the newspaper, made radio appearances and was featured on the Facebook page for International Assistance Dogs.

There are lessons to be learned from Good Girl's death.

First among those lessons is that life is short and to enjoy every day because the future is unpredictable.

The second lesson is that although our service dogs are highly trained, they're still dogs and will occasionally do something unexpected.

The third lesson is that service dogs improve the quality of our lives, they bring joy, relief, help and distraction to those in daily emotional or physical pain.

*The highest tribute to the dead is not grief but gratitude.*

- Thornton Wilder

## IN HONOR OF

**Sally Bricker's Birthday**  
Shelly Ferger

**Mrs. Frances Graves**  
Beth Stryker

**"Lula" Hinds**  
Eleanor Bengyak

**Mark Poziomek**  
Donna Bearup

**Kathi G. Schumann**  
Mae Frances Garrett  
Ruby Hicks  
Virginia McKeown  
Donovan & Brenda Schumann  
Gene & Martha Schumann  
John & Kim Schumann III  
Mark & Cheri Schumann  
B.A. Waggaman  
Barry & Vickie Wyatt

**Chip Schumm**  
Catherine Peck

## IN MEMORY OF

**Janice Cavanagh**  
Justin & Jessica Fairchild

**"Good Girl"**  
Patti Schell

**Vaughn Lang**  
Linda Barberi

**Patrick Michael McCalister Sr.**  
Richard & Cathleen Donner  
Shelly Ferger  
Robert & Jane Ford  
Joyce Leach  
Luis Rivera  
Kathi G. Schumann  
Leslie, Marie, Nicole & Nora

**Peter M. Orrick**  
Holly Cobb  
Richard & Leah Cotton  
Fredy & Olivia Delacruz  
Shelly Ferger  
Anna Nichols  
Dianne Steiner

**Polly Sameth**  
Linda Barberi

**"Tedi"**  
Shelly Ferger

**Boston Torbin**  
Ital & Bonnie Veron



# We're Going to the Dog Park

by Katherine Bauman, Assistant Editor

**E**ddie Boatwright is a familiar face at Dogs For Life.

He became a member of the Off-Leash Dog Park after moving to Vero Beach in 2002. And since retiring in 2017, he said he has been coming three times a day with Sassy, his 12-year-old Airedale.

"Sassy was raised here," the 65-year-old Fort Pierce native said.

Eddie admits he's not the type of guy to seek out the spotlight. He prefers being behind the scenes, but after years of staying in the shadows, DFL CEO Shelly Ferger convinced him to become a member of the Board of Directors by joining the Dog Park Committee in January.

"Eddie will chair the Dog Park Committee and oversee maintenance projects on the property," said Ferger. "We are grateful to finally have Eddie on our board."

But this isn't the first time Eddie has stepped out of the shadows to help Dogs For Life.

Eddie and his wife, Gail, donated \$5,000 toward construction of the Memorial Pavilion at the Dog Park. It was dedicated to their beloved Rusty in 2009. A picture of an Airedale stands front and center on the plaque above the pavilion that reads: "In memory of our beloved pets who have gone over the Rainbow Bridge."

Rusty was one of nine Airedale Terriers that Eddie and Gail have owned since 1976. Rusty came to them through Sunshine Airedalers of Florida, an Airedale Rescue group they joined in 1993.



(Above) Eddie Boatwright, chair of the Dog Park Committee and new member of Board of Directors.

"Rusty was a handful," said Eddie. He had been adopted out three times before he came to live with the Boatwrights.

The mission of the non-profit rescue is to find new homes for Airedales who have lost their previous homes due to their owner's death or inability to care for them. "I can't tell you how many miles I've logged going to pick up rescue dogs," said Eddie.

When an Airedale comes into the rescue program, the dog is checked out by a veterinarian, and if needed, spayed or neutered before being made available for adoption, the group's website states. Experienced foster care volunteers also make temperament evaluations and gather information about the dog, which helps begin the process of matching the Airedale with an adoptive family.

"I will probably foster through our club once Sassy passes," said Eddie. "At least that's the current plan."

Until then, he will continue to bring Sassy to the Dogs For Life Off-Leash Dog Park each day, and because of his new job on the Dog Park Committee, will help keep the facility in tip-top shape.

"There's always something that needs attention: irrigation, fencing, patching holes the dogs dig," said Eddie.

He also enjoys participating in the annual DFL Howl-O-Ween Pawrade.

"I don't think I've missed any," said Eddie. "One year we made the cover of the Press Journal. Rusty, Tetley and Sassy were all dressed up as cowboys."

So, while Eddie tries his best to avoid the limelight, there are times it shines brightly on him. □