



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. 25 / Issue 1 / Spring 2024



Dallas, DFL service puppy in training, enjoys the 2024 Patriots For Puppies gala with Meg and Don Peterson (USA Ret.).

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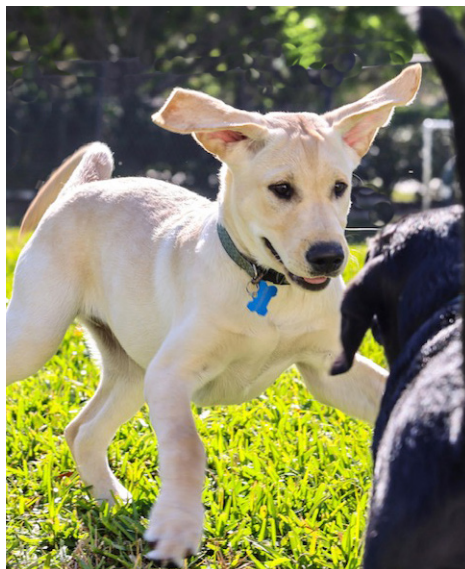
Jimmy Brauer
Volunteer Photographer

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What's New?



Service pup Austin frolics with other service puppies at the Dogs For Life dog park.

DFL Dog Park Members, mark your calendars for membership meetings at 10am on the first Wednesday of each month! These monthly meetings allow members to share concerns, ask questions, and schedule play time with other members. We encourage all members to explore becoming volunteer Dog Park Ambassadors to welcome new park members and help them find compatible groups for their dogs.

While the dog park has a large parking area, parking in front of the training center has been limited -- until now! Check out our new expanded parking area, which will make it easier for clients and guests to visit the center.

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DFL Graduation and Awards Ceremony

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

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to express deep appreciation to all of you who sponsored and attended the 3rd Annual Patriots For Puppies fundraiser in February. This event being DFL's signature fundraiser, we are thrilled that it grossed over \$130,000 to support our programs in 2024.

We encourage those of you who have received the "Invest in DFL's Journey" mailing to return your survey as soon as possible. Doing so will greatly help the Board in our visioning process. If you did not receive the survey and would like to participate, please contact Shelly Ferger, DFL CEO, at office@dogsforlifevb.org or 772-567-8969, and we'll get one to you right away.

Thank you to the DFL trainers for producing eleven graduates this year. The love and compassion they show to our clients as they navigate the training program is exceptional, and you make us all proud. We also extend the heartiest of congratulations to our 2024 graduates.

Finally, all of us at Dogs For Life truly are grateful to the supporting organizations that raise awareness and funds on behalf

of DFL. It is heartwarming and humbling to see that so many others in our community have confidence in our programs. Thank you to all of you for your continued support of DFL's mission.

From *the* Founder & CEO

Twenty years ago, I never could have imagined what DFL would look like today. Our journey to this point has been nothing short of amazing. I am at a loss for words when I think about the growth and continued success of our organization.

With DFL's growth has come increased demand for our services. Recently, DFL began a search for an Executive Director to assume the day-to-day duties at DFL. We hope you will support this endeavor, as it is sure to enhance our growing operation and make our programs better than ever.

Hiring an Executive Director will alleviate the pressure on me to manage DFL's daily operations -- but I can assure you I have no intention of slowing down! I look forward to having more time to devote to the programs I am most enthusiastic about, namely those that allow me to interact with our clients and their dogs. These are "my roots," the programs on which I founded Dogs For Life.

My passion for building relationships between people and dogs truly has gone to a new level since I began "feet on the ground" training with the veterans in the PAWS Act Program. I realized how much I missed working directly with our veterans. Seeing the look of hope in their eyes -- the look that says "just maybe this dog can help me" -- inspires me every day. It is this interaction with our brave men and women who continue to look for quality of life despite their circumstances that has driven me to expand the DFL Apprentice Service Dog Trainer Program. Increasing the pool of DFL certified trainers will allow us to help even more service members and continue to save lives.



Shelly Ferger and service dog Austin

*Thomas R. Metzinger, LCSW, CCHt, CPT, USMC Veteran
Therapist/Owner Suggestible Mind, LLC*

The Healing Paws: How Service Dogs Transform Lives of Veterans



In the heart of a serene facility, a special kind of training is underway, one that pairs veterans with service dogs, promising a journey of mutual healing and companionship.

The initiative, spearheaded by a dedicated agency, has become a beacon of hope for many veterans struggling with the invisible wounds of war. This place is Dogs For Life.

The bond between a veteran and their service dog goes beyond companionship; it's a profound connection that offers emotional and psychological support. These dogs are trained to perform tasks that can alleviate symptoms of PTSD, anxiety, and depression, enabling veterans to navigate the complexities of civilian life with a loyal companion by their side.

The training process is meticulous, focusing on creating a perfect match between dog and veteran. Dogs are trained to recognize signs of anxiety or distress in their handlers and respond with comforting actions, such as nuzzling, laying their head in their handler's lap, or simply standing close to provide a sense of security. This intuitive support is crucial for veterans who may find themselves in overwhelming situations.

For the veterans, the training is equally transformative. It offers them a sense of purpose and responsibility, which are vital for their integration into civilian life. Caring for and communicating with their service dog fosters a sense of empathy and patience, qualities that nurture their mental health.

The stories of transformation are heartwarming and abundant. Take, for example, a veteran who struggled with severe PTSD, finding solace and strength in the unwavering support of his service dog. The dog's presence provided a calming influence, enabling him to venture into public spaces he once avoided and rebuild relationships with family and friends.

Another success story involves a veteran who battled depression and found a renewed sense of joy and motivation through his service dog. The dog's need for exercise and play encouraged the veteran to adopt a healthier lifestyle, significantly improving his mental health.

The impact of these service dogs extends beyond the immediate benefits to the veterans. Families witness remarkable changes in their loved ones, seeing them become more engaged and positive. Communities also benefit, as veterans with service dogs often become advocates for mental health and animal welfare, inspiring others with their resilience and the life-changing companionship of their service dogs.

As we continue to witness the transformative power of service dogs for veterans, it's crucial to support and expand these programs. Donations, volunteering, and advocacy can help ensure that more veterans have access to this invaluable resource. It's not just about providing a service dog; it's about offering a new lease on life, one filled with hope, understanding, and unconditional love.

The journey of a veteran and their service dog is a testament to the healing power of connection. In every nuzzle, every shared glance, and every step taken together, lies a story of triumph over adversity. Through the unwavering support of these remarkable animals, veterans find not just a companion, but a co-pilot on their journey to recovery and beyond.

Pet Therapy Program Flourishing



Ollie spreads miles of smiles at VBPD.

The therapy dog program at the Vero Beach Police Department continues to flourish in partnership with Dogs For Life. Officers and employees in the department really look forward to the regular visits from DFL service dog teams. The dogs naturally know how to soothe anxiety and raise spirits, and their partners, many of whom include veterans or retired first responders, are positioned uniquely to empathize with the stressors of working in a high tempo environment such as the VBPD.

DFL's newest service puppies in training bring smiles all around every time they visit. The puppies benefit, too, from exposure to the elevators and staircases in the VBPD building. Navigating these new obstacles helps prepare them for the public access training they will receive before being paired with their future partners.

Thank you to all the DFL service dog teams who volunteer their time, and without whom the VBPD therapy dog program would not be possible. We extend a special congratulations to the service dog teams of Dani Ley and Ollie, and Sean Timberlake and Judy, who recently were honored as Pet Therapy Teams of the Year at DFL's Donor & Volunteer Awards Ceremony.

Phil Tettleton Joins DFL Board

From client to volunteer to Board member – this is the path Phil Tettleton has taken since becoming associated with Dogs For Life. Phil came to DFL when he was accepted into the Service Dog Training Program and was paired with Sully's Silver Star. Phil quickly became involved in many different aspects of the program, volunteering his skills, expertise, and knowledge as a way to give back to the organization that has made such a difference in his life. Recently he was nominated and elected to serve on DFL's Board of Directors. In addition, his wife Kat has become a DFL volunteer and is helping coordinate other volunteers. They are both retired from the Mississippi Department of Mental Health and live full-time in Indian River County. Please give a warm welcome to the DFL husband and wife team, Phil and Kat Tettleton!



Phil Tettleton and wife Kat with his service dog Sully.

New Year, New Puppies!

Two nine-week-old Labrador Retriever puppies arrived at Dogs For Life on January 8th. The pups are brothers, and were donated by The Dog Alliance, based in Cedar Park, Texas. Like DFL, The Dog Alliance is a member of Assistance Dogs International (ADI)'s breeding cooperative.

American Airlines' employee Brad Criss and his daughter, Rachel Criss, graciously volunteered their time to accompany the pups on their flights from Texas. Brad and Rachel are from the Dallas area, and The Dog Alliance is located near Austin; thus, the pups were named "Dallas" and "Austin."

The pups flew to Florida as part of "Puppies in Flight," ADI's partnership program with American Airlines. Through the program, airline employees volunteer to escort service puppies to their destinations. The employees fly stand-by using their flight benefits, so we

often don't know their arrival airport until the last minute. Brad and Rachel hoped to fly the pups from Austin to Charlotte, and from Charlotte to Melbourne. The Melbourne flights were full, but they were able to catch a flight into Orlando.

Brad reported that the puppies did very well on the flight. They were inquisitive, but then settled down to nap. It is no surprise that they charmed everyone who saw them on the plane and in the airport. DFL volunteers met the flight and brought Dallas and Austin back to Vero Beach.

The pups initially made their home with DFL

volunteer Cheryl Marshall. Cheryl, who previously fostered two pups at the same time, was undaunted. "They fought like brothers and were undeniably cute," recounted Cheryl. "They reveled in getting to be the first one to give kisses and snuggles, always a competition!" After a few days, the pups went to separate foster homes, but they see each other often for play time and puppy class, which began in February.

Just three days after the arrival of Dallas and

Austin, Ranger, an eight-week-old Golden Retriever pup, came to DFL. Ranger is a local, born in Vero Beach, and happens to be service dog Indy's brother. Though younger than Dallas and Austin, Ranger is doing a great job keeping up with his older schoolmates in puppy class, and already shows signs of becoming as



New service puppies in training, Austin, Dallas, and Ranger.

great a service dog as Indy. Indy, who turned one year old on March 3rd, currently is paired with Brian Hughes.

Foster mom Laurie Beebe had this to say about Ranger: "What an honor and privilege it was to be chosen to host a future service dog for DFL. We got to care for, cuddle, and start basic training with this bundle of joy and energy. We watched him learn to play, sit on command, and teach us when he needed to potty or rest. Faces lit up wherever Ranger went, and we know he will go on to make an especially big difference in his future partner's life!"

*Jade Garneau-Fournier, Ph.D., PAWS Psychologist
Center for Development and Civic Engagement, West Palm Beach VA Healthcare System*

PAWS is “Pawsitively” Amazing



We have recently completed our 6th cohort for the Puppies Assisting Wounded Service Members (PAWS) Pilot Program and are gearing up to begin our next one soon. PAWS has reached beyond the bounds of the West Palm Beach VA community, attracting many Veterans seeking care from sister sites, like the Orlando VA and Miami VA.

For many of our alumni, PAWS has become a steppingstone to finding a greater purpose and meaning. What they never thought to do before, they are now leaders of. From some Veterans choosing to train their own dog, others building friendships with Dogs For Life volunteers, to all becoming advocates for the rights of service dog owners within their communities – the impact is far more of a reach than expected.

Hear it from the PAWS Veterans:

“Being around animals and the people helped me a lot, the interaction with the dogs, how important service dogs are, interacting with Veterans, and giving me a sense of purpose giving back to my fellow Veterans.”

“Veterans need service dogs; they are life savers!”

For additional information: VHAWPBPAPWS PilotProgram@va.gov



PAWS Program Graduates pose with DFL representatives. Left photos top to bottom: Cohort 5, Cohort 6. Right photo: Cohort 4.

Watch PAWS Video

Check out the latest PAWS video by scanning the QR code below.

It features fellow US Air Force Veteran Catherine LaVelle sharing ways the PAWS program has been integral to her PTSD recovery.



Nancy E. Kicherer, DVM

Ouch! My Dog is Lame! Understanding Knee Problems

A dog's knee (the medical term is "stifle") is a complex and dynamic joint, with many moving parts held together by four primary ligaments. Typically, it is the anterior ligament that is most often injured, and possibly torn, during routine exercise or due to trauma. The first sign of this condition can be a sudden lameness in the hind leg, meaning the dog is holding the leg up off the ground. If the ligament is injured (strained or torn), it can require four or more months of restricted activity, weight loss, and anti-inflammatory medications to heal. Any lameness lasting longer than 2-3 days should be discussed with your veterinarian.

Conservative management will resolve approximately 86% of knee ligament injuries. If lameness does not improve, your veterinarian



Dr. Nancy Kicherer and her service dog, Stryker.

likely will take X-rays, and possibly recommend seeing an orthopedic specialist, which is covered by pet health insurance.

Knee injuries are difficult to prevent, however, so avoiding frisbee, zig-zagging type of exercises, and jumping onto hard surfaces (such as out of a vehicle onto the road) can be helpful.

Newer treatments exist that are very encouraging and may help avoid surgery, such as intra-articular injections, laser therapy, and stem cell therapy, to name a few. Keep your dog well by staying on the lean side, exercising daily, feeding a weight loss metabolic diet, and avoiding unnatural physical activity.

Announcing Jimmy Brauer as DFL's Event Photographer



sure to smile and "say cheese" — your picture might end up in this newsletter or on our website! We look forward to having Jimmy document our DFL events and programs going forward.

Dogs For Life is thrilled to introduce Jimmy Brauer, our new volunteer photographer. Thanks to Jimmy we have many great photos to share with you, including our best collection of Patriots For Puppies photos yet. If you see Jimmy at DFL events, be

The Treasure Coast Jeep Club "Goes Topless" to Benefit DFL on Saturday, May 18, 2024.



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

Another Successful Walk-A-Thon for Military/Veteran Suicide Awareness!

The Gold Star Mothers of Indian River County (IRC) keep busy doing whatever we can to help our veterans and their causes. We held our annual Walk-A-Thon for Military/Veteran Suicide Awareness and Veteran Resource Expo at Riverside Park on November 5th, 2023. We are thankful to our community for supporting our efforts to bring awareness to suicide among our military and veterans, as this support and awareness are key to bringing an end to this nationwide tragedy.

It was a beautiful November day without any rain showers to dampen the spirits of attendees, who numbered in the hundreds and came out to walk for and alongside our veterans. Proceeds from the event will help continue our PTSD Support Groups in conjunction with Dogs For Life, the Mental Health Association of IRC, and Next Generation Veterans of IRC. We are grateful that our IRC veterans who are struggling with “the battle within” have resources they can access to receive the help they need. We look forward to our next Walk-A-Thon, scheduled for November 3rd, 2024!

Having completed my year as President of the American Gold Mothers, Inc., Department of FL-PR, in May of 2023, I am able to focus my efforts on helping our local veterans and their causes. Our IRC Gold Stars continue to help our WWII veterans, and we are grateful to call them our friends. It is humbling to recognize their service and to get to know them better each time we meet. We hold luncheons and parties for them at the American Legion Post 39 in Vero Beach.



Our Christmas and Mardi Gras parties were a huge success! At the Vero Beach High School Red, White & Blue Concert in March, the eight WWII vets who were able to attend were



recognized by name and branch of service, to the great applause of everyone in the audience. Several were able to make the groundbreaking ceremony, also in March, for the WWII Memorial at Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. We have many exciting events coming up: Plans are underway to give our WWII vets an opportunity to be honored at the Vero Beach Air Show this year, and Memorial Day is just around the corner! In June, one of our WWII vets will be celebrating his 100th birthday. Plans for the party and drive-by are in the making; we look forward to celebrating this milestone with him!

As Vice President of DFL, I am kept abreast of our veterans who receive service dogs for their disabilities, including PTSD. I look forward to honoring our graduates at the Service/Hearing & Veteran Dog Graduation Ceremony on April 27th at DFL. I am truly blessed to be a part of this organization and many other veteran organizations in IRC because it enables me to get to know our heroes who “signed on the dotted line” to keep our country safe and free for all of us. May God bless each and every one of them.

Sponsorship

*Dustin Tackett, Owner/Creative Director
Citrus Three Marketing & Advertising*

DFL Scrapbooks Now Available on the Website



It's now easier to take a look back in time and see how Dogs For Life got started.

The DFL team has been hard at work converting 26 years of physical scrapbooks into a digital format that can be shared with those that support us and want to follow along with our journey. A closet full of binders packed to the brim with newspaper clippings, magazine articles, tons of photographs, and much more, are now available to view directly on the website.

Looking through these scrapbooks, you can really see just how much DFL has grown and expanded over the years, thanks to our donors, and how that support has helped us - and continues to help us - change so many lives.

The process was long and arduous but well worth the effort, as DFL is always looking for more ways to connect and share with those that choose to support our efforts to provide service dogs to veterans and those with disabilities. It started by scanning each individual page from each of the physical scrapbooks - over 1,200 scans. The next step of the process was sorting through and organizing digital photos collected over the years. Once the content was collected and sorted, it was organized into PDF scrapbooks. Next, the team built a new page on the website to house these scrapbooks and give our supporters a place to view them at their leisure.

We're happy to share this news and hope you look forward to perusing DFL's history. You might even see yourself or your dog in these pages.

When it Hits Home

By Katherine Bauman

Jim Hyde spent most of his life showing only his tough side to the public. “As a sheriff’s deputy, you can never show any signs of weakness, PTSD, anxiety, etc.,” he said. “You always have to keep that cape on at all times.” Until he couldn’t.

Jim retired as a Captain from the Indian River County Sheriff’s Office in March 2021, after an impressive 34 years on the job. Jim’s career at the Sheriff’s Office included the Uniform Patrol Division, Narcotics Unit, Criminal Investigations Division, and Court Services Section; he finished up his career overseeing the Special Operations Section.

Prior to retirement, Jim’s father fell ill, and after an eight-month battle, he passed away. “This hit me real hard and triggered a lot of traumas I had endured, both observed and personally, over my law enforcement career,” Jim said. “That’s when my PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) raised its ugly head.”

And that’s when Dogs For Life, its Veteran/First Responder PTSD Support Groups, and Otis, an English Black Labrador, came into his life. “I never knew much about ‘PTSD’ dogs,” Jim said. “I’d known about seeing eye dogs, and mobility- and hearing-assist service dogs, but not PTSD dogs. It was Shelly (Feger, founder of DFL) who told me I was a perfect candidate.”

When Shelly suggested he get a PTSD dog, Jim wasted no time finding a breeder who specialized in service dogs. “I got Otis at eight weeks old, and we started training with DFL when he was nine weeks old.” Jim and Otis graduated in April 2023 after completing the five-phase training program over eight months.

Jim’s neighbor, a Vietnam veteran, invited him to his first Veteran PTSD Support Group meeting at DFL. Jim, 60, is also a veteran. He joined the U.S. Navy after graduating from Vero Beach High School, serving six years, between active and reserve status.

“I enjoy the support group’s counselors,” he said. “They’ve lived the life, which really helps. Unless

you’ve lived it, you don’t know what I’m going through -- unless you’ve pulled someone out of a burning car, worked a homicide, rape, or child abuse case, kicked a door in at three in the morning, or dealt with an officer-involved shooting, you really don’t know.”

One of Otis’ tasks is to provide deep pressure therapy on command when he picks up signals and signs. Jim explained that the body puts off pheromones (scents) when an anxiety attack or PTSD-type episode is imminent. When that happens Otis will lie across Jim’s lap to provide deep pressure

until the anxiety subsides or Jim commands him to release. Otis, who weighs one hundred pounds, also applies deep pressure by lying chest to chest with Jim in bed, to combat restless nights.

“Otis has my back, my six, when out in public,” said Jim, who after 34 years on the job is always assessing potential threats. “My head is on a 365-degree swivel. And while I know COVID is somewhat over, I still prefer people keep their distance,” said Jim. Otis is trained to sit backwards between Jim’s legs and wag his tail if someone gets too close, especially while standing in lines. “In public, Otis legally

doesn’t have to wear his vest, but I like the vest. It’s like a billboard, clearing a path for me,” said Jim.

“I always get emotional when I talk about the impact Otis has had on my life. It’s no exaggeration when I say this dog has saved my life. I have a great support system at home with my wife of 35 years, Lisa, two great kids, and three adorable grandkids who are there for me; but when you’ve worn a uniform for 40 years, the biggest issue when you retire is you lose your identity and purpose. Otis and DFL have given me a purpose and new lease on life. Now my road to recovery is through DFL and all the volunteer opportunities I have to help other veterans and first responders,” Jim said.



First responder Jim Hyde (USN) and Otis

Patriots For Puppies Fundraiser



Stephen and Tori Hume



Service puppy in training, Dallas



"The Dolls" evoked patriotism with their singing.



Service puppy in training, Ranger



Nick Easterling and Paula Sparks



Austin poses by his namesake signage.



Richie Keller (USMC) with Linda Barberi and Bob Marra.



Dorothy Conley petting Dallas and Judy Hansen.



Silent auction items awaiting bids.

— A Record-Breaking Success!



Welcoming remarks concluded with the pledge of allegiance.



John Michael Matthews and wife Carla



Chris and Michael Consi

The 3rd annual Patriots For Puppies fundraiser, Dogs For Life's signature fundraising event, was a tremendous success, raising over \$130,000 for our service dog programs. DFL donors, clients, staff, volunteers, and friends and family honored heroes past and present at the military-themed event held February 3, 2024, at the beautiful Pointe West Country Club. Attendees enjoyed dinner and dancing, with live entertainment by "Touchdown DJ Productions" and "The Dolls." Everyone at DFL extends their heartfelt thanks to our sponsors, donors, friends in attendance, and volunteers, without whom this event would not be possible.



L to R, Cheryl Marshall (USAF Ret.) with Austin, Meg Peterson with Dallas and Laurie Beebe holding Ranger.



Long bids.



DFL CEO Shelly Feger with Richie Keller (USMC) and his service dog Gigi.



The 50-50 Raffle raised \$1006 thanks to Don Peterson (USA Ret.)'s long arm.



Military Themed Dance & Dinner

3rd Annual Patriots For Puppies



A Special Thank You To All Our Sponsors

★★★ “Presenting” ★★★

In Memory of Prinz Schumann

★★★ “Patriot” ★★★

Judith Hansen & Pablo Gonzalez ★ Bob & Sally Arthur

★★★ “Good Dog” ★★★



Linda Barberi & Bob Marra



★★★ “Puppy” ★★★



Darrell & Susan Horn



Laibe Corporation



★★★ “Paws” ★★★

Steve Defren

Patricia Goff

Jack & Susie Ley

Fritz & Bonnie Spitzmiller



★★★ “Tail Wag” ★★★



John & Mary Alden

Robert Grusky

Mike & Laura Hewitt

Matt McManu

Prime Golf Carts

Charlie Watson



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 2017
Corinne Cruickshank and Aya
Mark Poziomek and Ranger

Class of 2018
Richie Keller (USMC) and Gigi
Perry Martin (USAF) and Sassy
Judith Ricard and Fitz
Judy Schmidt (USAF) and Bentley

Class of 2019
Sue Bergmann and Spencer
Michael Bores (USA) and Bandit
Kelly Colmey and Joey
Barbara Gormas and Lola
Bill Moruzzi (USA) and Remington

Class of 2020
Jessica Jacobs and Honey
Tammie Mandeville and Poppy
Elizabeth McGoldrick and Oliver
Kimberley Mann (USN) and Elvis
Earl Tindol, (USAR) and Arrow
Claude Vitali (USMC) and Beebe

Class of 2021
Kris Hasenauer (USA) and Jasper
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
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
Gary Wilson (USA) and Swift
Ingrid Hernandez (USA) and Chance
Sally Bricker and Nick
Andy Watson and Gracie



L to R: Elizabeth McGoldrick with Oliver, Tammie Mandeville with Poppy, and Kelly Colmey with Joey.



First Responder Andy Watson with Gracie.



Sue Bergmann and Spencer.



Howard Teich (USA) and Tucker.



L to R: Dr. Nancy Kicherer and Stryker, Kimberley Mann (USN) and Elvis, and Bill Moruzzi (USA) with Remington.

2023-2024 Graduation at DFL

Dogs For Life clients, donors, staff, and volunteers gathered in the DFL dog park on April 27, 2024, to honor DFL's newest graduating class of eleven service/hearing and veteran dog teams. The graduating class included teams with veterans, first responders, and service dogs of all shapes and sizes. Five DFL-raised service dogs were among the graduates -- the largest number of DFL dogs ever to graduate at the same time!

Trainers Marcia Adache and Gabriele Harrison presented each graduating team with ID cards and a service dog jacket, and representatives from the Quilts of Valor Foundation awarded quilts to first responder and veteran graduates. Founder and CEO Shelly Ferger also recognized a number of DFL volunteers for their efforts throughout the year. Friends and family were on hand to celebrate, and everyone enjoyed this special day.

Graduates

Sally Bricker and Nick
 Guillermo Contreras and Whiskey
 Joan Freeman and Minnie
 Ingrid Hernandez (USA) and Chance
 Brian Hughes (USA) and Indy
 Kymberlee Smits Mitala and Chocolate
 Kisha Ford Torres (USA) and Kolumbo
 Laurie Turner (USMC) and Marley
 Andy Watson, First Responder, and Gracie

IRC Sheriff's Office Pet Therapy

S.T.A.R. Dog Team -
 Robyn Candarini and Spirit
 School Resource Dog Team -
 Ron Garrison and Buddy



Graduates - L to R, Kymberlee Smits Mitala and Chocolate, Joan Freeman and Minnie, Brian Hughes (USA) and Indy, Laurie Turner (USMC) and Marley, Ingrid Hernandez (USA) and Chance, Guillermo Contreras and Whiskey, Sally Bricker and Nick, Kisha Ford Torres (USA) and Kolumbo, Robyn Candarini (IRCSO) and Spirit, and Ron Garrison (IRCSO) and Buddy.



Veteran and First Responder Graduates with their "Quilts of Valor." L to R, Ron Garrison (IRCSO) and Buddy, Kisha Ford Torres (USA) and Kolumbo, First Responder Andy Watson and Gracie, Ingrid Hernandez (USA) and Chance, Laurie Turner (USMC) and Marley, and Brian Hughes (USA) and Indy.

2023 Volunteer Award Recipients

Kathi G. Schumann Award

Eddie Boatwright

Military Veteran Trainer of the Year

Jim Hyde (USN) and Otis

Volunteers of the Year

Kathy Consi and Tammie Mandeville

Individual Philanthropist Award

Kathi G. Schumann

Corporate Philanthropist Award

American Gold Star Mothers of IRC

Puppy Sponsors of the Year

Steve Defren (USA) and Rosie

Judy Hansen and Pablo Gonzalez

Puppy Raiser of the Year

Cheryl Marshall (USAF Ret.)

VTV PAWS Act Volunteers of the Year

Richie Keller (USMC) and Gigi
Marisel Munoz Febo (USAF) and Honcho
Philip Tettleton and Sully

Fundraising Volunteers of the Year

Linda Barberi, Laura Larimore, Lynne Levin,
Linda Reeve, Maureen Turner and Angus

Pet Therapy Teams of the Year

Dani Ley and Ollie
Sean Timberlake (USA) and Judy

First Responder Volunteer of the Year

Tim Barnes and Gypsy

Volunteer Photographer of the Year

Jimmy Brauer



Fundraising Volunteers of the Year - L to R, Maureen Turner and Angus, Linda Barberi, Michelle Dale, Laura Larimore and Lynne Levin.



Corporate Philanthropist - L to R, Michelle Dale and Diana D'Angelo with American Gold Star Mothers.



Puppy Sponsor of the Year - Steve Defren (USA) and Rosie.



VTV PAWS Act Volunteers of the Year - L to R, Marisel Munoz Febo and Honcho, Michelle Dale, and Phil Tettleton and Sully.



DFL Board of Directors - L to R, Dr. Nancy Kicherer and Stryker, Linda Barberi, Kathi G. Schumann, Michelle Dale, DFL CEO Shelly Ferger, Phil Tettleton and Sully, and Rick Lewis.

Apprentice Service Dog Training Program

Many people who sign up to volunteer at Dogs For Life check the “I want to be a dog trainer” box on their volunteer application. Many veterans, once they have trained their own service dog, want to help other veterans train their service dogs.

To make this happen, DFL has created a curriculum to qualify volunteers as service dog trainers. This two-year apprenticeship program gives volunteers the tools and experience they need to be certified as trainers at DFL. The curriculum is composed of academic requirements, practical requirements, and hands-on teaching experience.

This intensive program requires participants to submit written reports demonstrating mastery of assigned materials; earn completion certificates for numerous on-line courses; and pass written and practical exams at the end of the program. Participants receive extensive training on PTSD, other disabilities on which DFL focuses when training service dogs, canine

behavior, and canine health. The program provides participants with real experience instructing clients.

Participants shadow certified trainers and learn how to conduct home interviews, home placements, graduate follow-up visits, and more. An apprentice must successfully complete the entire curriculum to become a certified trainer.

Though the Apprentice Service Dog Training Program sounds rigorous -- and it is -- it is just as rewarding. We want our clients to be in the best hands possible, so that DFL can continue to produce the impeccably trained service dogs for

which we are known.

Not quite ready for such an ambitious curriculum? Start by becoming a puppy raiser or dog park ambassador! For more information, reach out to Shelly Ferger, DFL CEO, at office@dogsforlifevb.org.



Phil Tettleton trains Austin while Meg Peterson (inset) works with Ranger to learn "sit" and "stay."



Puppy Raisers Needed

DFL urgently needs volunteers willing to be puppy raisers. If your lifestyle doesn't allow you to care for a dog full-time, puppy raising may be right for you! Can you provide a loving home? Would you be willing to attend weekly training classes with your puppy? Get a new “leash” on life as a puppy raiser! Contact Shelly Ferger, DFL CEO, at office@dogsforlifevb.org for more information.

Retired Navy Lt. Pelland Recounts Hell Week



DFL CEO Shelly Fenger introducing Frank Pelland (USN).

Dogs For Life welcomed retired Navy Lieutenant Frank Pelland, the latest lecturer in DFL's Speaker Series, on December 29, 2023. Mr. Pelland spoke on his experience in 1954 as a newly commissioned Ensign going through "Hell Week," the first and most grueling of his 12 week training for the Navy's Underwater Demolition Teams (UDT). This 12 week UDT training is what we now know as Navy SEAL training.

While still conveying the misery of Hell Week, Mr. Pelland entertained his audience with humorous anecdotes. He talked about racing (and beating!) his classmates to win the enviable prize of being able to sleep in on the last day of Hell Week, and told inspiring stories of classmates who refused to give up. As Mr. Pelland made clear, Hell Week was aimed at weeding out those who were inclined to quit. The men who didn't survive Hell Week would have considered a task impossible, but Mr. Pelland and his fellow Hell Week graduates had a different mindset; they viewed "impossible" tasks as those that simply took a little bit longer to complete. As Mr. Pelland aptly stated, when your air hose

catches on kelp and you need to share your buddy's air for over four minutes while rising to the surface, you both need to believe, without a shadow of a doubt, that you are going to make it. It is this positive mindset that was (and is) essential to surviving Hell Week.

Mr. Pelland successfully completed UDT training in Coronado, California, and was assigned to Team 12, with which he spent the next five years. After leaving the Navy, Mr. Pelland embarked on a successful career as a lawyer in Washington, D.C., before retiring to Vero Beach.

DFL greatly appreciates Mr. Pelland's willingness to share his experiences. Stay tuned for information on future lectures in DFL's Speaker Series.



This article in LIFE Magazine from June 1955 featured Mr. Pelland's experience of Hell Week.

Robin Hoffman, Space Coast Region Porsche Club of America

Porsches and Paws

Our Porsche Club members like to give back to the community. Every year we do a charity calendar project to raise money for a worthy cause. In 2023 we were moved to support Dogs For Life after meeting one of the DFL dogs at a “Kaffeeklasch” (Cars and Coffee) event we had in Vero Beach. This pup was amazing! He could even pick up a credit card his owner dropped on the ground. We were moved by the good work DFL does in the community and wanted to support our veterans. We have a large number of veterans in our club.

To kick off our fundraising we invited members and their dogs to the Pieloch Dog Park in Viera on August 26th where we enjoyed a beautiful morning. There were treats for the dogs and donuts for the owners. Having members bring their animals out together reinforced the importance of human and animal connections. It was heartwarming watching the interactions. When we were leaving, a group of dogs from a local Beagles Club

came and we were treated to more excitement and lots of howls of pleasure!

Over the next few months, photos of pets, Porsches and their owners came in. Members were encouraged to donate \$50 or \$250 depending on what size photo they desired. Our calendars were given away at our holiday party and then sold for \$10 each. In the end, we received photos of lots of dogs and their owners, but also a cat, a bird, and a horse! It was a fun project, and being able to direct people to donate directly on the DFL website was so easy. In the end, \$3,000 was raised for DFL. It's a small donation, but working on this project gave a lot of joy to our members -- so that's a win too!

Thanks so much DFL! You have a great program.



Left, Emblems representing the branches of service donated by Julie Vergara. Right, Dallas enjoys a drink at one of the new fountains.

DFL Dog Park Unveils New Amenities

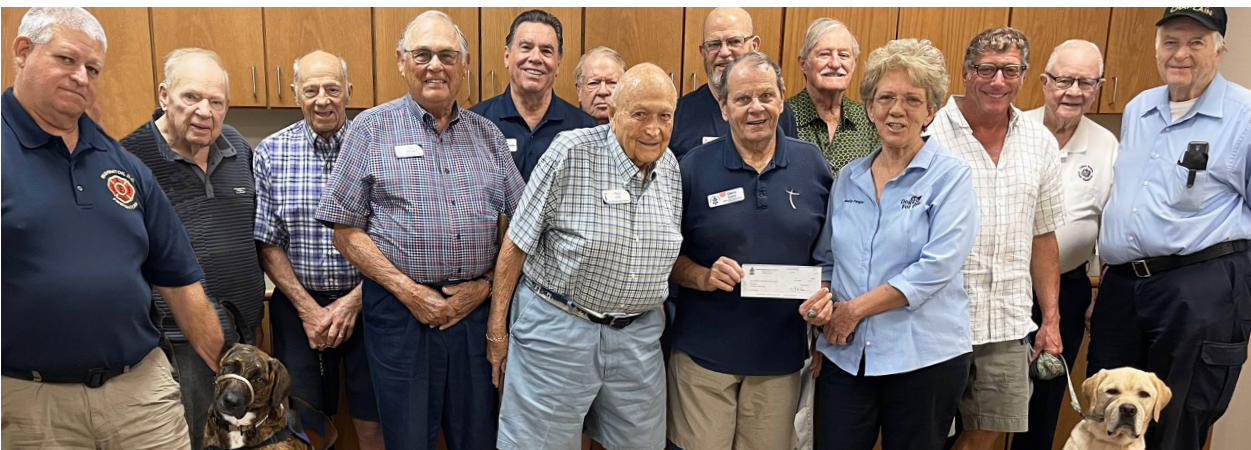
Dogs For Life is pleased to share photos of the latest improvements to the DFL dog park. We recently finished installing five new water stations on our four-and-a-half-acre campus. It certainly can be “ruff” to undertake projects such as this while keeping the dog park open for our clients, but we are very happy with the finished product. We invite you to check out the new fountains on your next visit. Be sure to “paws” at each water station and look for the emblems representing the various branches of service. Especially as the weather gets warmer, we know that tails will be wagging over the new fountains. DFL extends a sincere “thank you” to Dog Park Committee members Eddie Boatwright, Phil Tettleton, and Harry Taylor.

Check Presentations



Elks VBEL 1774 - Left, Shelly Ferger and Laurie Turner (USMC) with Marley accept check from Darlene Short, Past Exalted Ruler, Trustee VBEL. Right, Shelly Ferger and Richie Keller (USMC) with Gigi accept check from Flo Synenko, grant coordinator, and Jack (Tex) McClerken, Exalted Ruler.

American Gold Star Mothers of IRC - Michelle Dale presents check to DFL President Eddie Boatwright.



First Presbyterian Church - DFL Volunteer and First Responder Tim Barnes (left) with Gypsy, along with Shelly Ferger and Director Phil Tettleton with Sully, receive check from church members.



Dyer Subaru - Shelly Ferger and DFL Volunteer Cheryl Marshall (USAF Ret.) accept the Dyer Difference Award from Frank Felky, Sales Manager (holding Dallas), and Jonathan Hardie, former General Manager (holding Austin).



Head, Heart and Hands of Indian River Club, Inc. - Linda Reeve and Lynne Levin, DFL Grant Committee Volunteers, express appreciation for the Club's grant.

Testimonial from 2023 Graduate Charlie Watson (USA)

Service Dog Sam Aids with Tumble

Just wanted to share a quick story about what happened the other night and how Sam responded. We had our pool area pressure washed the other day and the patio furniture and other things were outside overnight.

I took Sam out for his business at about 11pm and as we were walking around the yard in the dark, I tripped and fell into some of the furniture I didn't see. I couldn't believe how hard and fast I went down. I didn't have my phone with me so I couldn't call Susan who was in the house at the time. Sam immediately came to me, licked my face, and then proceeded to nudge me up until I was off the pile of furniture and was able to steady myself on him and some furniture to get up. He was not mobility trained but he sure knew what to do and to do it right. Once in the house all cleaned and bandaged, he laid and leaned on me like he does when he calms the effects of my PTSD.

Early in the morning, Susan and I went to the new Lawnwood ER on US 1 to get myself checked. I thought I broke my ribs but the X-rays and CT scans showed no fractures or breaks. Fortunately, I am only scraped up, bruised, and sore. I'll get over it. As for Sam, he is one great service dog. So attentive and alert to me at all times.

I thank DFL for the training Sam and I had together. The DFL Team is the best. I'm so thankful to have Sam.



DFL Service Dog Team Featured in Vero Beach Magazine

Pick up a copy of the April 2024 edition of Vero Beach Magazine to read about DFL client Ingrid Hernandez and her service dog, Chance. The article, written by Mary Beth McGregor and featuring photography by Steven Martine, is titled, "Chance of a Lifetime: Service Dog is a Godsend for a Combat Veteran with PTSD." It focuses on how Chance came to be paired with Ingrid and what a difference he's made in her life. Thank you to Vero Beach Magazine for spotlighting Ingrid, Chance, and Dogs For Life!

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 and Families of Veterans and First Responders Support Group

Call for additional information.
(772) 567-8969



Testimonial from Jimmy Jenter (USN)

“After my initial trauma I felt as though no one understood me and I did not understand others, until I found the Veteran PTSD Support Group. I was an American in a foreign land, not capable of communicating with the masses in any way. Then I attended the PTSD meeting and began to hear my own language, not just from my own country but my own neighborhood and family. They understood me and I understood them. I now come from a place where the blind see, the deaf hear, and the sick get up from their beds and walk. That place I come from is PTSD recovery on Monday and Thursday nights at 7 p.m. in the Dogs For Life meeting room. Come save your life and the lives of your brothers and sisters. The truth will set you free.”



The Dogs For Life annual Christmas party was held on a beautiful Sunday in December at Pointe West Country Club. The DFL Board of Directors, clients, staff, and key volunteers kicked off the holiday season with an afternoon of food and fellowship thanks to the generosity of Mrs. Kathi G. Schumann.



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Tributes and Memorial Gifts

In Honor Of

Arleen Arsenault's Birthday
Steve Defren
Shelly Ferger

Linda Barberi
Shelly Ferger
Barbara Gormas

Tim Barnes' Birthday
Linda Barberi
Shelly Ferger
Barbara Gormas

Eddie Boatwright's Birthday
Linda Barberi
Steve Defren
Shelly Ferger

Judith Hanson
Shelly Ferger

Gabriele Harrison's Birthday
Linda Barberi
Shelly Ferger
Barbara Gormas

Richie Keller and Gigi
Ricky Deel
Giulana Hodge

In Honor Of

Laura Larimore's Birthday
Linda Barberi
Steve Defren
Shelly Ferger

Lynne Levin's Birthday
Linda Barberi
Steve Defren
Shelly Ferger

Tammie Mandeville's Birthday
Linda Barberi
Steve Defren
Shelly Ferger

Cheryl Marshall
Barbara Baji

Rhonda Martin's Birthday
Linda Barberi
Shelly Ferger
Barbara Gormas

The Masztakowski Family
Julie Brownell

Marisel Munoz Febo's Birthday
Linda Barberi
Steve Defren
Shelly Ferger

In Honor Of

Ann Nolan's Birthday
Linda Barberi
Steve Defren
Shelly Ferger

Toddy Offutt-McKeown's Birthday
Linda Barberi
Steve Defren
Shelly Ferger

Linda Reeve's Birthday
Linda Barberi
Steve Defren
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Kathi Schumann
Linda Barberi
Steve Defren
Shelly Ferger
Mark and Cheri Schumann
John and Kim Schumann III
Barry and Vickie Wyatt

Harry Taylor's Birthday
Linda Barberi
Shelly Ferger
Barbara Gormas

Kathy Vergara
Julie Vergara

In Memory Of

Sherrilyn Davidson
Heather Geismann

**Staff Sgt. James E. Heile
WWII Veteran**
Elaine Heile

Matthew Mandeville
Jack & Leslie Frigon

**Barbara Nearhood
and Steve Viadyka**
Chris and Robert Perkins

Oreo Vergara
Julie Vergara

